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Masking Practices and Kastom in Southern New Ireland, Papua New Guinea: Felt experience and identities.

Isabelle Boiteau

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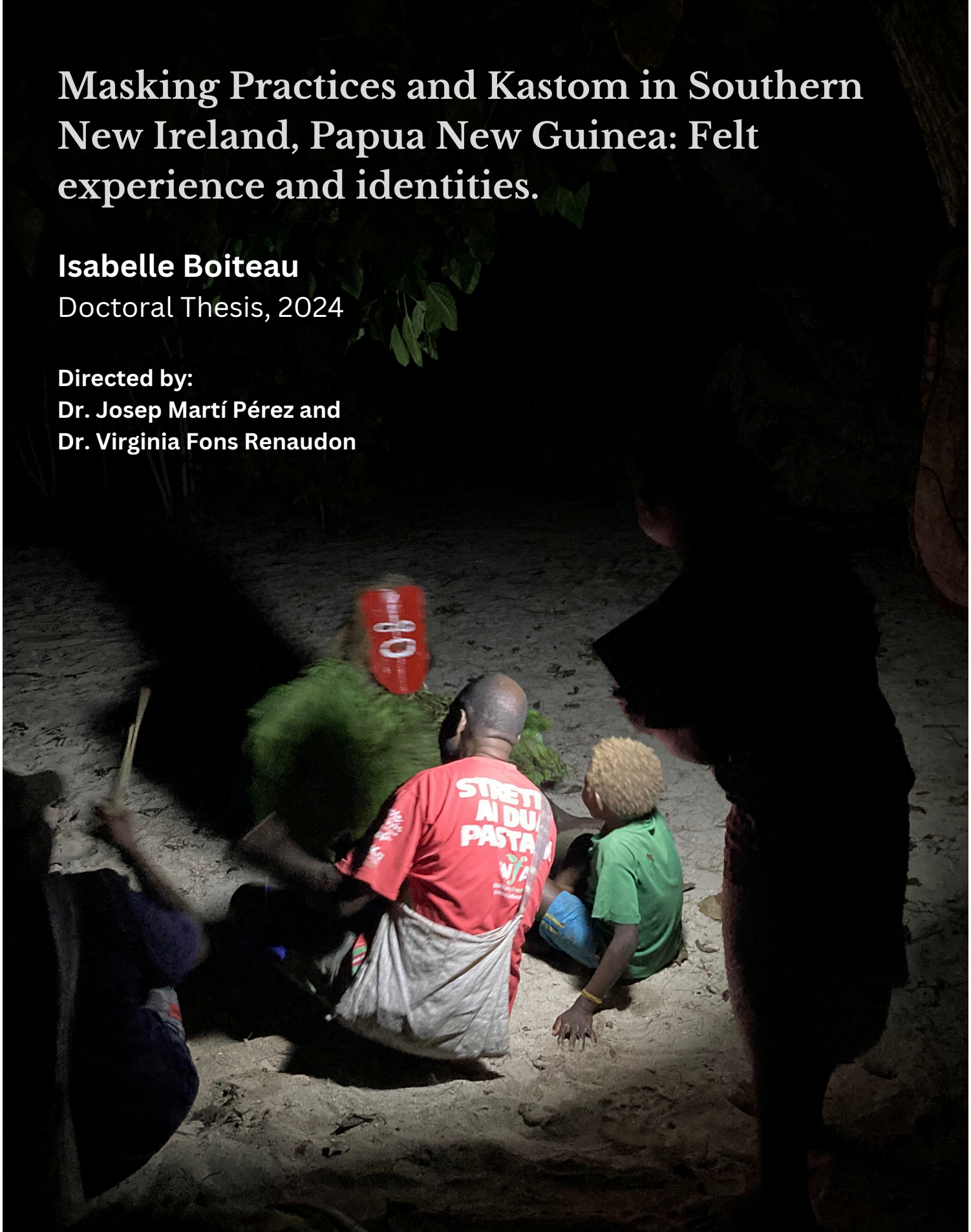
Isabelle Boiteau

Doctoral Thesis, 2024

Directed by:
Dr. Josep Martí Pérez and
Dr. Virginia Fons Renaudon



Dept. Antropologia UAB

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Masking Practices and *Kastom* in Southern New Ireland, Papua New Guinea: Felt experiences and identities.

Doctoral thesis

By: Isabelle Boiteau

Submitted: October, 2024

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I owe a great deal to the people of Samo village, who not only let me conduct research among them but welcomed me into their lives and helped me as I learned to live in the village. Innumerable villagers answered my questions, recommended that I speak with particular individuals and welcomed me into their day to day life. I am particularly indebted to the inhabitant of Tabun: to Daisy, Tinsuken, Gelanu, Frida, Darushila, and Mary, as well as their children, who welcomed me into their little hamlet and helped me not only in my anthropological work but in the most mundane aspects of day to day life. I would also like to thank many others who welcomed me, shared knowledge with me and accompanied me on visits to neighbouring villages. Thank you to Levi and Louisa and their family for sharing their knowledge of *kastom* with me and for the visits to villages nearby. Thank you to Emilia and her family for welcoming me and the visits to villages nearby. Thank you to Gabriel and Anisi as well as all of their family, in particular Elsie, for taking much of their time to speak with me and explaining both *kastom* and *lotu* to me. Thank you to Zabil for accompanying me on bicycle to villages nearby. Thank you to Marlol for welcoming me and for being a frequent translator. Thank you to Tomimi, for sharing many stories and songs. Thank you to Bale for sharing the practice of the *kipong* with me. Thank you to Kukurai for sharing the *kipong* with me and accompanying me out into the bush. Thank you to Kathleen, for the many conversations. Thank you also to Elta, Waspalai and Freddy for many conversations and making me feel welcome.

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Table of Contents

List of Illustrations 10
Abstract 12
List of informants 13

Location - Maps 15

Chapter 1: An Introduction to Samo 17
1.1 Methodology 35

Chapter 2: A Historical Overview 38
2.1 History and *Kastom P*ractices 52
2.2 Anthropology in Island Papua New Guinea 56

Chapter 3: The Study of Masks 60
3.1 Masks and Power 69
3.2 Masks and Women 75
3.3 Masks and the Brain: From the inside and from the outside 79
3.4 Masquerade and Carnival: Euro-centric concepts and their relevance 88
3.5 Concluding Remarks 94

Chapter 4: Masked Performances: *Tubuan* and *kipong* 96
4.1 *Singsing*s in Sursurunga 96
4.1.1 The *Tubuan*: It's serious 101
4.1.2 *Tubuan*: The mask and performance 104
4.1.3 The *Tubuan*, East New Britain and Tourism 118
4.1.4 Participation and Discourse in *Tubuan* Culture 123
4.1.5 *Kipong*: It's just for fun, or is it? 131
4.2 The *Tubuan* and *kipong* in the Ethnographic Record 149
4.2.1 *Tubuan*: A brief look at the history of its study 156
4.2.2 *Kipong* in the Ethnographic Record 161
4.3 Concluding Remarks 164

Chapter 5: *Karuka* Houses 170
5.1 Anisi 171

5.2 Ruth 173
5.3 Rodi 178
5.4 Lina 180
5.5 Seclusion Houses in the Ethnographic Literature on New Ireland 183
5.6 The *Kámgu*: A traditional rite of passage 193
5.7 Making a Woman: Spirits and networks 196
5.8 Past, Present and Future 200
5.9 The Unchanging: Womanhood = motherhood 205
5.10 The *kámgu* in Stories: Power and containment 208
5.11 Concluding Remarks 211

Chapter 6: Felt Experience 213
6.1 The Individual, Individuals, and Society 218
6.2 Emotions and Senses in Samo 219
6.3 Feeling Through the Body: Bodily sensation 226
6.4 Ways of Seeing 232
6.5 Ways of Hearing 236
6.6 The Olfactory: The subtle power of smell 244
6.7 Emotion, Affect, Visceral Reactions: Shaping lives and social worlds 252
6.8 Masked Performance: The sensorial from the perspective of the onlooker 274
6.9 Affect Beyond Masks: Discourses on craziness and social expectations 279
6.10 Concluding Remarks 282

Chapter 7: Secrecy 284
7.1 Secret Societies 295
7.2 Secrecy: Gender and Revelation 298
7.3 Where is the Female Homosociality? What about Female Secret Societies? 310
7.4 Concluding Remarks 314

Chapter 8: Gender and Heritage: *Kastom* and the building of narratives 315
8.1 Heritage in the Present 315
8.2 Heritage: Frozen in time 322
8.3 The Sensorial, Affective and Atmospheric in Heritage 323
8.4 Heritage in the field 326
8.5 Women in Papua New Guinea, Present and Past 332
8.6 Gender Relations in the Field 339

8.7 Heritage and Gender 344
8.8 Concluding Remarks 352

Final Remarks 354

Bibliography 358
Web Bibliography 377

Annexes
Annex A - Sursurunga Alphabet and Pronunciation 380
Annex B - Vocabulary 381
Annex C - Songs 388
Annex D - Stories 398

List of Illustrations

Figures 1-4: Maps of Papua New Guinea, New Ireland and Samo	15-16
Figure 5: Linguistic map of New Ireland	16
Figure 6: Preparing mumu	20
Figure 7: A funeral in Kapsel village	20
Figure 8: Playing *bom* on the beach	22
Figure 9: Feasting after a dedication in Samo	24
Figure 10: *Artabar* after a dedication in Samo	24
Figure 11: Kabingot *hausboi* in Kapsel village	27
Figure 12: A *piknat hausboi* in Samo	27
Figure 13: Another *piknat hausboi* in Samo	27
Figure 14: The UC church in Samo	29
Figure 15: Sunday *artabar* and singing in Samo	30
Figure 16: A *puerparik singsing* in Samo	100
Figure 17: A *kápán liu singsing* in Samo	100
Figure 18: A *singsing* at a school graduation in Waragansaw	100
Figure 19: A *singsing* on the beach in Samo	100
Figure 20: *Tangara* performance at a *singsing* in Nokon	109
Figure 21: *Puerparik* performance at a *singsing* in Nokon	109
Figure 22: Fire eating performance at a *singsing* in Nokon	109
Figure 23 - 25: *Tubuan*s perform in Nokon	114
Figure 26: Ceremonial payment given to *tubuan*s in Kokopo	119
Figure 27-29: *Tubuan*s and dukduks perform in Kokopo	122
Figure 30: Making *ku*	126
Figure 31: Six women dance *kipong* at a *singsing* in Nokon	136
Figure 32: Elsie performs the *kipong* in Muliama	138
Figure 33: Elsie after performing	138
Figure 34: An informal night time *kipong* performance in Muliama	138
Figure 35 - 37: Preparing the *kipong bilas* in Hipakat	141
Figure 38: Bale sits next to the *kipong* mask	142
Figure 39: A *kipong* mask performed in Sena village	147
Figure 40: Four *mangi*s performing *kipong* in Samo	148
Figure 41: Anisi	171
Figure 42: Ruth and her granddaughter Rodney	178
Figure 43: Levi, Louisa and their children at Káptuntun in Kabirara village	178

Figure 44: Lina’s house in Muliama 181
Figure 45: *Sigil* 183
Figure 46: *Tar* 183
Figure 47: Káptuntun 398

Abstract

This thesis addresses questions related to masking practices and *kastom* based on ethnographic fieldwork carried out in the Sursurunga region of southern New Ireland, Papua New Guinea. The present research emerged from an interest on masking practices as well as from an engagement with the field, the limits and opportunities which it afforded me as a female ethnographer. Ethnographic details are presented regarding the two most common masking practices observed in the field, the *tubuan* and the *kipong*, as well as regarding the old female puberty rites of the *karuka* house. There is a focus on the felt experience of these customs. Here it is emphasized that felt experience encompasses a variety of ways in which individuals and groups experience their worlds. A focus is also placed on questions of gender, emerging from challenges encountered in the field as an ethnographer. These led to a focus on the phenomenon of secrecy and a comparative analysis of still commonly practiced *kastom*s such as the *tubuan* and no longer practiced *kastom*s such as the *karuka* house. These analyses get at the ways in which these practices fit into and build social structures, the ways in which they may empower particular parties, as well as how this is enmeshed in changing dynamics.

List of informants

In and near Tabun:

Daisy
Tinsuken
Gelanu
Frida
Henry and Tinpisal
Darushila
Dorothy
Kathleen
Anisi, Gabriel, Elsie and all of their family.
As well as all of the children and teenagers: Manuela, Délissa, Émissa, Lona, Betsy, Macdáush, Peter, Hamilton, Winson, Lois, Tasa, and Leah.

In Samo:

Tomimi
Marlol
Levi and Louisa and their children, especially Joylin and Rodney.
Emilia and her family, especially Gerussa.
Elta
Samson
Eslin and her family
Waspalai
Amon and Joanne
Kwamin
All of the *mangi*
Zabil
Freddy
Rev. Junias Darius
Elsie, Samela and Salita
Kulu
Kukurai

Beyond Samo village (in Hipakat, Lipek, Kabirarah and Muliama):

Lina

Rodi

Ruth

Aminio Bale.

Topin Tomu

Tasen Moab, John Kara and Marsin.

Timoté

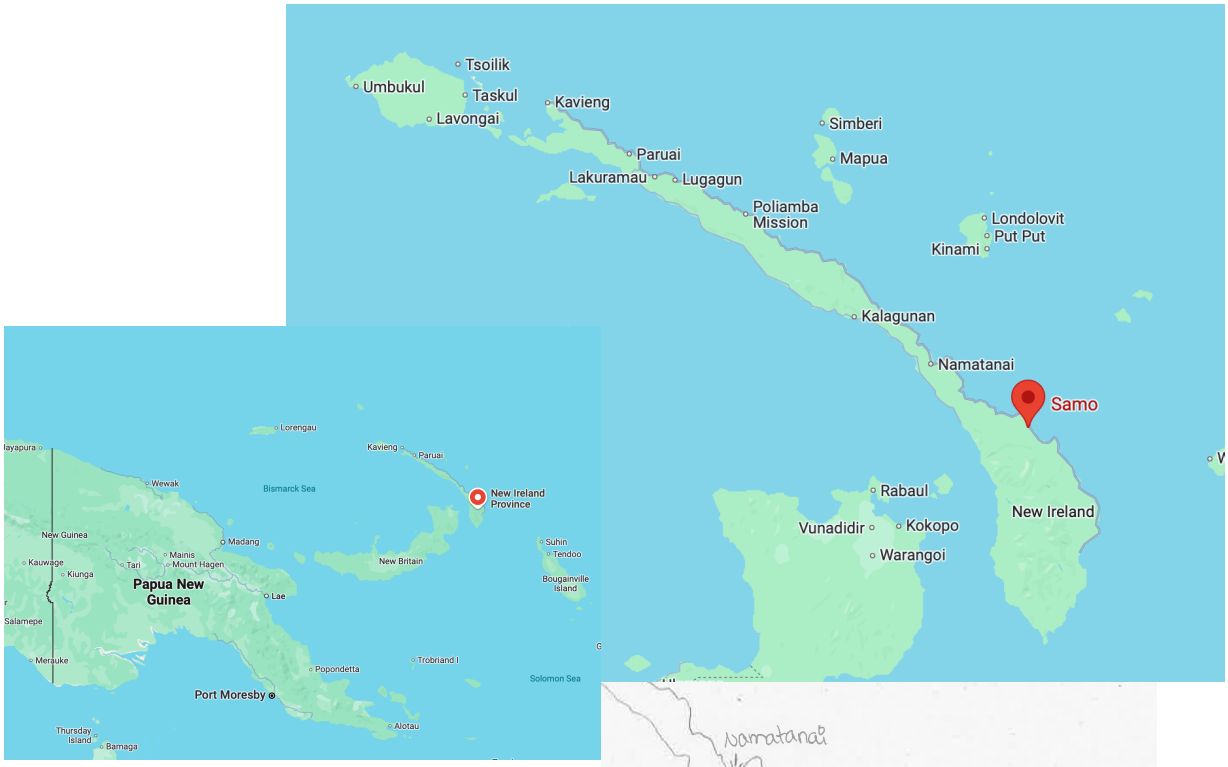
The families who welcomed me in Sena village.

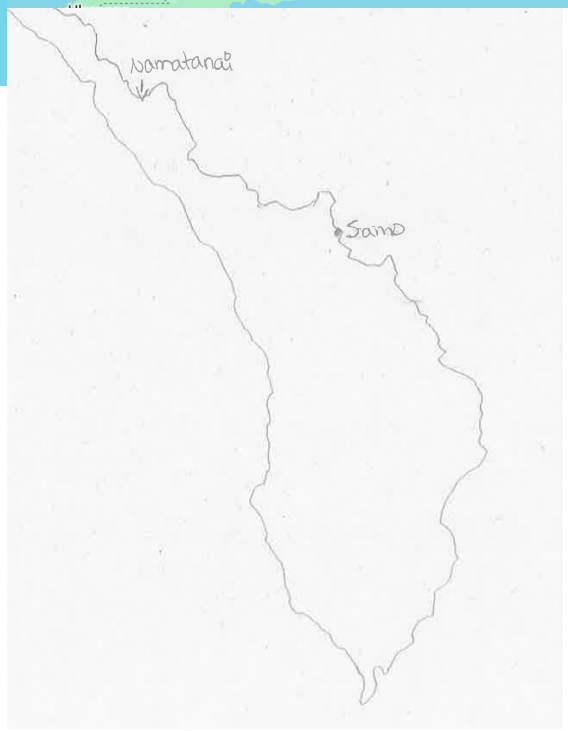
Nora

Dominica, and her family in Muliama village.

Agatha

Location - Maps





Figures 1-3. Top maps depict the location of Samo village within New Ireland (right), and New Ireland within Papua New Guinea (left). The image below depicts a relief of the southern portion of New Ireland, and Samo village in relation to Namatanai, the nearest town.
(Google, N/a; Google, N/a; Boiteau, Isabelle. hand drawn, 2024.)

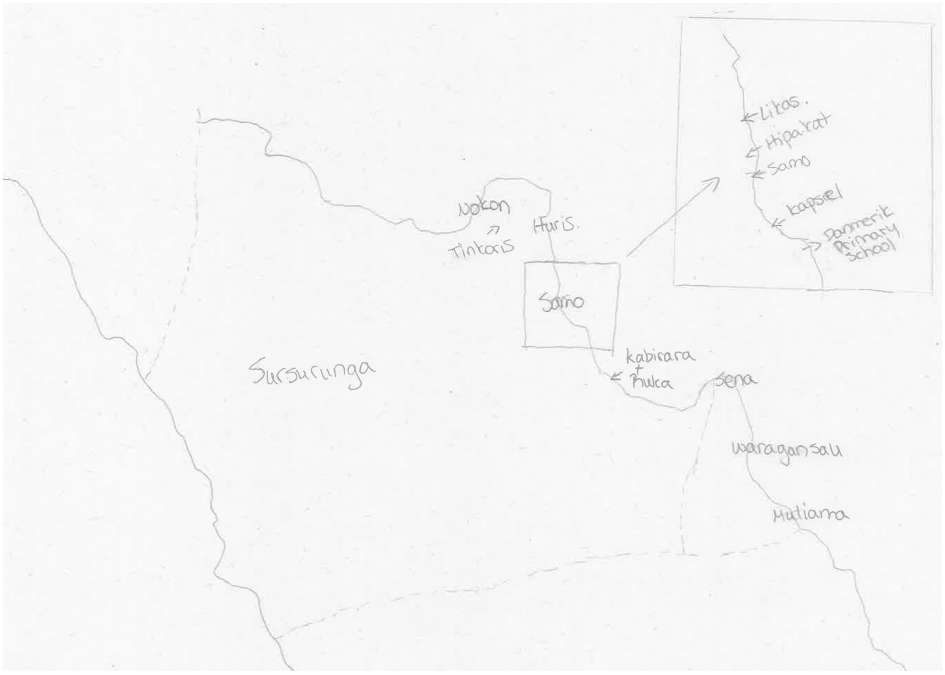


Figure 4. Map depicting Samo and nearby villages, many of which are mentioned in the thesis. The dotted lines refer to the area, roughly, within which the Sursurunga language is spoken. (Boiteau, Isabelle. 2024).

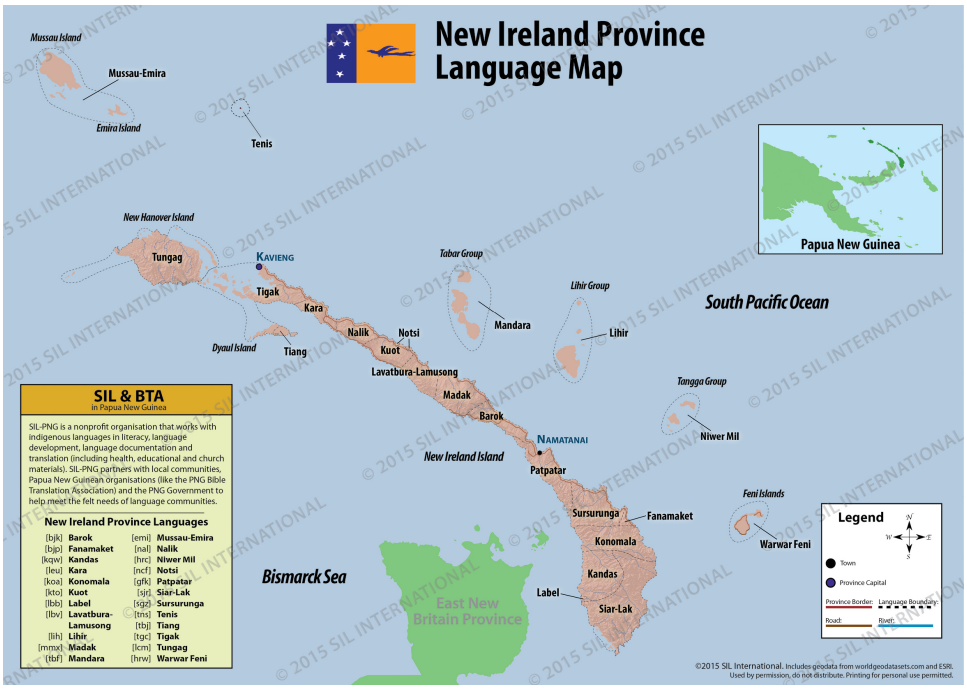


Figure 5. Map created by the SIL showing the distribution of languages in New Ireland. (SIL. Language Distribution Maps: New Ireland Province. Retrieved 25/10/2024: https://pnglanguages.sil.org/resources/provinces/province/New Ireland/map).

Chapter 1

An Introduction to Samo

I stayed in Samo village, in the Sursurunga region in the south of New Ireland. I divided my time in the village across two periods. I first arrived in November 2022, and stayed for two months, and returned for four months in June 2023. I first arrived with a man called Harold, a member of the network of the husband of the woman I had been invited to stay with in Kavieng. I joined him and a small group of men on a trip that they had already planned down the New Ireland coast, ending in Samo village where he kept a house but did not usually stay. When we first met he introduced himself as the next in line to be the chief of Samo village. The men were bringing a man from another region of the country on a tour, hoping that they would be able to work together in the future to promote tourism in the area. I would come to learn that this was one of many projects that Harold was and is involved in. As we drove down he spoke to me about how he had been involved in a *singsing* involving two *tubuan* which he owned in order to honour the arrival of some guests and an NGO to the province. Eventually, as my fieldwork went on, I would learn about more and more of the projects that he had been involved in: having worked in the past at the OK Tedi mine and the mine currently on Lihir island, his involvement in a balsa growing initiative, a construction company that he ran with the help of another man in Samo and a foundation he started based in a village close to Kavieng. I spent my time wondering how to class him: a big man, a great man or a *big shot* (Martin, 2022)? Clearly he was at least one of the above.

Regardless, I arrived to the village as a quasi-member of this group. On arrival I was introduced to a woman, Daisy/Matebun[1], she was a sister (a clan sister) of Harold's and would be in charge of helping me navigate life for the next couple of months. The evening of my arrival was a very exciting affair, as I disorientedly took in my new surroundings, met new people and sat in the dark of my newly assigned house trying to learn numbers in the local language, Sursurunga.

Harold and the group that I had arrived with left a few days later. Leaving me to be able to properly settle into the community. His house, 'mine' for the time being, is located in a small hamlet called Tabun. The hamlet consists of a about seven houses placed in a square formation around a large open area, a couple of shade trees placed in the middle with benches

[1] People often have multiple names and nicknames. In this case, Matebun was my informant's village name and Daisy was the Christian name that she had chosen for herself as a young girl. I refer to her as Daisy henceforth because this is the name that she asked me to use.

underneath. There are two *piknat* clan *hausboi*s (men's houses) to one side and, behind the *hausboi*s, the cemetery and then a small buffer area of bush before the next hamlet. It is positioned between the stretch of the Boluminski highway and the sea, meaning that the ground under foot is sand and the beach and sea are always only a few meters away. People often told me that this was the area of Samo that was first populated when their ancestors came down from the bush to settle in the area near the beach. As such, it is the central area of the village, with many hamlets all together, looking like one large hamlet if one does not know where the divisions are placed.

The people living in the seven houses of which I was now a part were all related. The woman who had been assigned to care for me, Daisy, lived with her baby daughter and adopted son (her older sister's biological son) in one room of a house, the other room of the house being occupied by her sister Darushila and her baby daughter, yet another room at times occupied by two teenage girls, Manuela and Délissa. This was the house that they slept in, they had another house which they cooked in, their *hauskuk* (kitchen house). Another house was occupied by Frida, and her teenage daughter Émissa. Frida was a widow, something which was made evident by the black fabric necklace that she always wore and because she always wore black *meri* blouses and *laplap*s[2]. They also had a *hauskuk*. I later found out that she also had a teenage son but, given his age, he usually slept in the *hausboi* and I rarely saw him. Another house was occupied by Tinsuken, the mother of Manuela and Délissa, and her young son Hamilton. During my second stay Tinsuken would become the person assigned with looking after me. Finally, another house was occupied by Henry, his wife Tinpisal, and their daughter Lona, they also had their own *hauskuk*. Throughout both of my periods of fieldwork these people, and the others who would come to live in this small group of houses, helped me with every aspect of life. I owe them a great deal: in terms of the welcome into the community that they gave me but also in terms of how they helped me on a daily basis with the most mundane tasks of life.

On my first day there, Daisy came to find me to announce that her grandmother in a neighbouring village had died. I remember feeling both sad and excited by this news. Daisy herself did not show much emotion. As such, that afternoon, a group of us all walked together to the neighbouring village of Kapsel, for the funeral. Funerary practices in New Ireland are very long events, the entirety of the ritual not being completed until many years after a death and

[2] These are the clothes most commonly worn by women, particularly in the village setting. The *meri* blouse is a mother hubbard style blouse typical of the islands of the southern Pacific and *laplap*s are wrapped and tied skirts which are typically made of fabric (but can also be made of leaves and grasses for the purpose of activities such as *singsing*s).

there are many steps to the process. Though saddened at the elderly woman's death, I was also very excited, as an anthropologist, to be able to attend such ceremonial events so early on in my fieldwork. We arrived shortly before dark, the area was busy and I was introduced to one of the sons of the woman who had died. We sat on plastic garden chairs to talk despite my still rudimentary Tok Pisin as Daisy and the others went their own way. We sat in front of the house which had belonged to the woman, her body was currently being kept in the same house. Groups of people would enter to sit inside the house, with her. Soon after a group entered, the sound of wailing would be heard. And, perhaps ten minutes later, the group of people would emerge again and head off to a different area of the hamlet. Though the women's children looked incredibly saddened, no one wailed outside of the house. As this was happening there were many women busy cooking large pots of rice (cooked in coconut milk) and greens in a nearby *hauskuk*, and men working at carrying logs and branches and positioning sheet metal in another area of the hamlet. The men were working to build the *hauscri* (mourning house), that the body would later be transported to.

As darkness fell I sat on mats on the ground, with Daisy and the children we had walked with, other women and children joining us at times. I met and spoke with many people, we ate rice and greens and generally waited. I was informed that later in the evening the body would be moved to the *hauscri* and that we would spend the whole night around it singing songs.

After the body was moved to the *hauscri* the women all moved into the *hauscri*: sitting on benches around the periphery of the house. One particularly grieving woman, a daughter of the dead woman, sat in the middle, just next to the coffin, leaning over it, and frequently breaking into wailing. The songs that they sang were all taken from a hymn book. Some workers from SIL went through the Sursurunga area in the 90s/00s and translated both the bible and a book of hymns into the local language. A few worn copies of this book of hymns were being passed around. Someone would start singing one song, others would join in, and then the whole group would be singing. This happened again and again throughout the night. It led to a sort of up and down in the strength of the singing, as the number of people singing varied.

I was invited inside for the first part of the singing. After a few songs, finding the smell of the smoke from a nearby fire and from the women who were smoking a bit strong, I left the hauscri to wander a bit. Outside, I found all of the men. Some were working at boiling water over a large fire to make coffee which they would then have a female helper come collect to take to the women in the *hauscri*. Others were sitting just outside the *hauscri*, around their respective fires.

Mostly just sitting, from time to time one or two of them would join in to the singing of the women, clearly doing so as they felt the emotional pull of the songs and the circumstances.

The next day started slowly. The body had been returned to the house. Those just arriving began by heading into the house, and shortly wailing was heard. Otherwise, cooking preparations and waiting were how everyone was occupying themselves. Women were working at cooking rice and vegetables. The men were off in the bush next to the hamlet, gathering the stones and wood needed to prepare the *mumu*[3] pits to cook the pigs. Yet others were sitting on the beach, resting or telling stories (ie talking to pass the time).

Shortly after mid day, while the cooking was still underway, the body was moved again, this time to the edge of the cemetery. People gathered around to listen to the reverend who had come to speak, they sat on any benches that they could find and on the ground under a nearby tree. Then the coffin was carried to the cemetery, lowered into the ground, and dirt shovelled on top. This entire process generated a great deal of wailing, lasting over ten minutes and peaking as the coffin was lowered into the ground. The wailing seemed to be the domain of women, I noticed no men joining in, though many did bear very sad and pained expressions on their faces. The women, as they wailed, had a tendency to hide their faces (I would notice this again at other funerals that I would attend) using their arms, or balling up a portion of their *meri* blouses.

Figures 6-7. Men preparing the *mumu* at the funeral in Likas; People gather under shade trees while words are spoken over the coffin of the recently deceased, shortly before it is entered.
(Boiteau, Isabelle. Personal photos, 2022 & 2023)

[3] *mumu*ing is a form of cooking where the items are placed in a hole in the ground and covered with hot stones.

It ended with a feast: as the *mumu*ed pigs were taken out of the ground and the cooked vegetables portioned out. It is of course incorrect to say that it ended, but the events of that day did. I returned to Samo, as did Daisy. However, Tinsuken and Manuela stayed for much longer, in fact I did not see them again at Samo until nearly the end of my first stay. This is because funerals are drawn out affairs in New Ireland. Closer family members will usually stay in the village for longer after a death, but I would come to learn more about this when I returned to the field in 2023.

I returned to Samo, and my normal days began. My initial two months in Samo more or less coincided with the school Christmas holidays, this meant that all of the older kids and teenagers of school age were spending their days hanging out in and around the village. This was good for me, as an anthropologist, because it gave me more people to speak with and more opportunities to speak with them. In addition, though it would take me a couple of weeks to find out, the region was in the midst of a drought, this meant that the crops which people rely on for subsistence and to sell for income had not been very successful. This affected not only the diet, but also the amount of time that people spent in the garden. This meant that most of the villagers were spending their time in and around the village, and that I also did.

My days consisted of getting up with the sunrise, making breakfast or helping the family at the neighbouring *hauskuk* to prepare theirs, and beginning my day. At Tabun, the two young mothers occupied their days caring for their babies and the households, filling in their spare time playing *bom* card games for small amounts of money. I spent my time getting to know the village, and the people in it. Going to visit people in the hamlets where they lived or simply heading to the beach or a nearby shade tree, to spend time with people, speak with them, join in with their card games. Then, in the afternoon, we would head to the river for a daily bath and to collect water for the next day's use, before returning to the hamlet to cook dinner. During my first week or so there after dinner curious villagers would come to sit with me next to the fire in front of my house. We would *stori,* a Tok Pisin word which more or less means talking to one another in order to pass the time. During this time I met new villagers and began asking to hear local myths and songs, which people shared, usually accompanied with smiles and laughter. After about a week these evening visits died down. I spent my evenings with the families in the hamlet, writing the day's notes, and occasionally joining the local choir group (quietly).

As I spent time with people, I made my interest in masking practices known. There were no planned performances in the village, but the villagers were still keen to help me out. One informant organized a few children to put on a performance of *kipong*. Another couple of

informants brought me to nearby school graduations where traditional dances were performed, yet another organized a meeting with a mask maker in a nearby village. As such, my weeks were punctuated with occasional excursions walking or cycling to nearby villages.

Figure 8. A group of people sitting on the beach playing *bom* in order to pass the time.
(Boiteau, Isabelle. Personal photo, 2022)

When I returned in June of 2023, my days followed a similar pattern. But, now that the school holiday was over, life was going at its usual pace. During weekdays the village was relatively empty and quiet, with older children attending school and many of the adults going to the garden. Mondays were less quiet, with morning *lain* meetings[4], where the VPC (village planning committee) meet with the village in order to discuss any matters pertaining to organizing the village. The weekends were also full of activity, with organized volleyball and football games on Saturday and church attendance on Sundays.

I spent my days joining in with the activities of the villagers or staying behind in the village to spend time with those who happened to be there. Life in the village was also punctuated by various events. Many of these had to do with church activities or were related to funerary customs. For many of the local residents the weeks were punctuated with church related activities: youth worship nights, cleaning the church grounds, women's church group and other church meetings. There were also many activities on the weekends: baby dedications and occasional visits to a local elder to give food and pray. From time to time worshippers from another village would come and stay for a few days and organize nightly worship sessions in Samo and the neighbouring hamlets. Further, each denomination organized their own activities, resulting in even more things happening in the area.

Life was also disrupted by funerary customs. This happened during both of my stays. During my first period of fieldwork an elderly woman died in neighbouring Kapsel, which, as I already described, acted as my introduction to the field. During my second stay another elderly woman died in neighbouring Likas. Both funerals changed people's day to day habits for many months. The woman who died in Likas, died towards the beginning of my second stay in the field and,

[4] *lain* refers to a group of people who are related to one another, often a family through clan lines. However, weekly village meetings are also referred to in this way.

when I left four months later, funerary rites, for some, were still underway. At the beginning of the funerary period many people, all relatives, from the nearby area and who had moved to cities in other provinces, came to Likas village to mourn the passing of the woman. At this point, they built many houses: one for the mourning of the dead and many others, with walls made from coconut frond mats, for them to stay in throughout the mourning period. At this time, the village was a buzzing center of activity. This gradually subsided, as feasts marked the end of certain stages of mourning and family members gradually moved back to their own houses. Many of the closer family members remained in Likas for months after the elderly woman had passed and there was no clear indication as to how much longer they would continue to do this. Indeed, many anthropologists working in the region have written on funerary customs (ex: Denner, 2010, 2012; Eves, 1995, 1996; Foster, 1990, 1995; Kingston, 1998, 2003; Wolffram, 2007).

The pace of daily life shows the extent to which both the church and aspects of traditional custom are important in Sursurunga. The tension between the churches and traditional culture is sometimes very apparent. Yet, it is not as simple as saying that religious beliefs have eliminated or pushed out traditional ways. I witnessed many situations where the two had been mixed. For instance, in the case of baby dedications. These seem to be more or less the equivalent of baptisms, as babies that are a few months old are taken to church and have words spoken over them. The events always happen on Sundays (or Saturdays in the case of the SDA church) and begin during the church ceremony. But, afterwords the celebration is taken outside. People gather for a feast featuring *mumu*ed pig and various tubers, along with some rice, greens and bananas. At the same time, baskets of food have been prepared for everyone who has helped the mother after she gave birth (bringing her food, visiting the baby, etc…). Everyone eats and then they gather in front of the new parents and the baby. The group will sing songs, hymns from church, as everyone queues up to give *artabar*, small gifts of money and soap, to the new parents. Then the parents give thanks, usually speaking both to the community and the church, and the event is over. This event clearly ties itself both to the church and to traditional customs that give a central importance to feasting and relations of exchange. Much as the funeral that I witnessed during my first days in the area: where the women kept vigil over the body all night while singing church hymns.

Indeed, activities that build on traditional customs of reciprocal exchange were quite common. From time to time there would be an exchange of food baskets for money. These were organized between different villages, one village would prepare baskets of food and the other

would raise one hundred kina[5], there would then be a ceremonial presentation and exchange of these goods. This was used by village and various associations as a means of fundraising.

Figures 9-10. A feast accompanying a baby dedication; The giving of *artabar* during a baby dedication. (Boiteau, Isabelle. Personal photos, 2023)

Further, many traditional customs remain. Feasting and *artabar* are common, as are traditional methods of reconciliation. For instance, one traditional reconciliation happened in neighbouring Kapsel village during my second stay, in September 2023. It would seem that during the funeral that had occurred in the village during my first stay, at the end of 2022, some of the family members had gotten into an argument. As a result a rift had been created within the family and this now needed to be fixed through a reconciliation. The event itself involved a feast and a ceremonial reconciliation where the injured party was given some money by the injurers. After this, the family was reconciled, so their *báls* (stomachs) would be calm (so they would no longer be angry) and that they could go about their lives as a peaceful family once more. This kind of reconciliation was also used in the context of the VPC to deal with disagreements in the community. During the regular meetings of the VPC, or special ones called for the occasion, those involved would come and make their cases and then it would be determined that one party had to pay the other a certain amount of money and apologize. Only then could normal relations be relaunched.

[5] Kina is the local currency. 100 kina equals approximately 23 euros.

Traditional *singsing*s[6] and forms of organization are also still present to a certain degree. The *Tubuan* is the most active of these in the region. The *Tubuan* is a secret male society into which a large portion of the male population in the village has been and continues to be initiated. They will perform their *tubuan* masks at various occasions such as over the course of funerary rites, the opening of a new *hausboi*, the opening of a new building, to welcome foreign politicians, at festivals, etc… The *Tubuan* is a form of traditional culture that in many ways helps to build and maintain the social structures that exist in the community. This was particularly the case around the time that colonial forces arrived, and the *tubuan* continues to perform in traditional contexts, but also performs at events beyond this context, showing its continued importance not just in the community but in the region.

There are also many other kinds of *singsing*. Some of these were only remembered by older community members, others, such as the Solomon style dance, were more fashionable. Further, many events featured *singsing*s. Much as in the case of the *tubuan*, a *singsing* itself, these are performed at a broad range of events that could be fit under the labels of “traditional” and “modern”. They are performed at funerary events, *hausboi* openings, building openings, school graduations, sports events, cultural days, festivals, to welcome foreign visitors (politicians, business contacts,…).

What is generally referred to as *traditional culture* continues to be a strong force in shaping the community: it’s organization and people’s lives within and even beyond it. Ceremonial events such as *singsing*s and reconciliations make this highly evident. They are also evidence of the myriad of other components of traditional societal organization at play.

Samo is a matrilineal society, divided into moieties which are defined in terms of being either *big pisin* (big bird) or *liklik pisin* (small bird). In Samo there are three clans: *piknat, sawon* and *koris*. With *koris* being much smaller than the other two. *Piknat* and *koris* are *liklik pisin* and *sawon* is *big pisin*. These divisions serve to divide and organize most aspects of life. When marrying someone, an individual must marry someone in a clan of the opposite bird from their own. It also divides and defines relations between individuals in the community. As is often the case in the area, one’s mother, father, brothers and sisters are not simply the individuals that western society defines as such. For example, one’s mother’s sisters are also considered to be one’s mother. And, her sisters are not only the girls who were given birth to by the same woman. Since it is a matrilineal society membership in the clan is passed down through the mother. Meaning that any man in the same generation and clan as one’s father is one’s uncle, one’s

[6] This term refers both to events and individual performances which combine singing and dancing.

koko. This means that essentially everyone in the village and beyond is related to one another in some way.

There are a plethora of rules governing all of these relations. Those that are still the most prominent, though not always strictly followed, are the rules regarding marrying into the opposing clan and rules regarding not speaking to certain individuals or saying their name. For instance, someone who is in the opposite clan from you is your *tambu*, and you should not speak their name. During my stay I was placed in the *piknat* clan, a *liklik pisin,* and there was an older woman, Elta who is a member of Sawon, the *big pisin*. Whenever she saw me she would refer to me as *tambu*[7] and whenever other members spoke of her to me they would refer to her as *tambu meri bilong yu, tambu meri i stap antap* (the woman who is your *tambu*, the *tambu* woman who lives across the road), or by a nickname they had for her, *popcorn* (because she had a tendency to just appear, or pop into your field of vision). In order to avoid referring to me by name, she would refer to me through my relation to her, as *tambu*. In an effort to avoid a person's name, their relation to the community was made prominent.

The village is also organized according to *hausboi*s. The hamlet in which I was staying was associated with one *hausboi*, while Ngosngos (the hamlet between Tabun and the sea) was associated with another, although both belonged to the *piknat* clan. As such, there are quite a few *hausboi*s in Samo. The *hausboi* is the local men's house. The house is generally off limits to women, though there are certain occasions when women are allowed inside, or to sit on the outside benches. When I was there, I and many other women were allowed to go inside one of the *hausbois* to eat a meal following a funeral, and on a few occasions I was invited by my informants to sit in the 'atriums' of some *hausboi*s, on another occasion I was allowed in as the villagers wanted me to see a newly built *hausboi*. However, I was never able to distinguish any underlying rule to this. The *hausboi* is generally strictly the men's domain. One of my male informants told me that the *hausboi* is the place of learning for men, that it is where they are taught important information about their land, history, clan rituals and clan *masalais*[8]. From their late teen years forward many men will sleep in the *hausboi*, and simply relax and 'hang out' there during the daytime. For younger boys this can be a way of following local customs that a boy and his sister should not sleep in the same house, for adult single men it offers a place to sleep and for adult married men it offers an alternative place to spend the night. All in all, it is a place for men to get together and spend their time as a group: it is a space for male

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[7] *Tambu* is a word used to refer to a relation across moiety lines, people belonging to an opposite moiety are one's *tambu*.

[8] *Masalai* are place spirits. Usually each clan has their own *masalai*, and these figure in stories about the ancestors.

homosociality. Walking by the *hausboi*s in daily life I would often hear the men talking inside, see them cooking fish or some yams in a fire outside or hear them playing music on a boombox.

Figures 11-13: Newly built *kabingot* clan *hausboi* in Kapsel; Two photos of *Piknat* clan *hausboi*s in Tabun.
(Boiteau, Isabelle. Personal photos, 2022 & 2023.)

The *hausboi*s are also noteworthy in that they are the most decorated structures in the village (though churches are frequently hardier buildings and more cared for). I found it very striking that the houses in the village tended to lack decorative elements. Some would have some landscaping, some colour or decorations around the windows, etc… But the *hausboi*s were all colourful structures, usually with images or designs painted onto them. Some were older, leaving the decorations faded from exposure to the weather, but the decoration was still very present. Further, the times that I was able to see inside, I noticed that many of them are also highly decorated inside: with paintings on the wall, perhaps a carving in the middle. The exact nature of the decoration varies between *hausboi,* but it's presence does not. The care that is put into these structures indicates that they hold important roles within the community. It is also clear that the decorations point to culturally significant elements, such as figures that are important to clan history and livelihood. I was lucky enough to be invited inside a *hausboi* in neighbouring Likas village. This *hausboi* was fairly new and filled with vividly coloured paintings. The man who had invited me in explained that these depicted the cone hats of the *tubuan*s associated with this *hausboi*, as well as the figure of an octopus, the *masalai* of their clan.

*Hausboi*s used to be the center of power in the village. It was where men gathered to discuss important issues and to make decisions on what was to be done. With the arrival of colonial powers and missionaries other centers of power arrived to the villages. However, the institution of the *hausboi* remains strong to this day (Tararia, 2022:164). Indeed, between my two periods in the field a new Kabingot *hausboi* was built in neighbouring Kapsel village. It also remains a politically relevant institution. This has been noted recently by Tararia in her work (2022). It was also pointed out to me by one of my informants, Marlol. A woman in her fifties, she returned to the village a couple of years before my arrival after having worked as a teacher at a secondary school in Kokopo and was keen on helping the village to develop. Having completed

some of her education in Australia, her English was very good and she often explained things to me with great insight. Between my two fieldstays she made it into the local VPC. She was the only woman that I ever saw on the VPC and wasn't sure herself if she was the first or not. During one of our conversations about her being a woman in a position where extremely few women find themselves in the country, we talked about the *hausboi*. She spoke regarding how decisions are still made largely in the *hausboi.* This may not be as formally arranged as it once was, but the men still gather and talk and make many decisions during their time spent there. This is a space for discussion and decision making that she and no women have access to. She talked about how, because of this, it was critical for her to turn the ways that the men in the VPC saw the issues at hand, for her to have allies amongst them, if she was to accomplish her goals for the community.

The VPC is another institution that holds power in the community. It is a part of the overall political organization of the country, being the most local echelon of political order, any issue that is too large to be handled at the community level will be sent up to the next echelon (in this case, they will be sent to Namatanai, the nearest town). The VPC holds *lain* meetings every Monday morning. Villagers gather in an open space under the shade of a few trees and members of the VPC speak on the relevant issues of the week. These may be regarding issues that have arisen at school, with regards to church, about any upcoming activities, regarding any fights that have occurred recently, and villagers may then speak and bring up their own issues. The day of the meeting is sometimes referred to as "community day" and after the meeting people will head out to do some work for the bettering of the village, such as cutting grass or/ and cleaning a particular area of the village. The VPC and the Monday meetings play an important role within the community as they are a place where issues can be aired and solved and a means of organizing the community towards common goals. As many things in the region

it remains either unfunded or poorly funded, as such it is extremely self-reliant and only able to do so much. It remains one of many institutions working to organize the community and really does seem to be understood as such by the villagers themselves.

Aa already mentioned, a very large force in village life is that of religion, of christianity.. Indeed, by far the largest and most well kept of the structures in the village was the United Church. In Samo, inhabitants attend one of four different churches, all christian. The biggest is the United Church, which first arrived in the late 19th century. There is also a Seventh Day adventist Church in neighbouring Hipakat. As well as two charismatic revival churches located near the beach in the other hamlets of Samo: a church that was alternately referred to as Governing and Destiny (New Covenant Ministry International) and ALC (Association of Local Churches). The ALC and Destiny churches were often presented to me as a group, defined according to the rules that they places on their congregations to not drink (or do drugs), to not swear and to not chew betel nut with lime and mustard (meaning that it could be chewed, but only in a way that did not turn the mouth red)[9]. While the SDA church was introduced as being a church where worship (the word that locals use for attending church events and praying) was done on Saturdays as opposed to Sundays. At times people would emphasize these and other differences between the churches, at others they would say that they all prayed to one God, the same God, so it was all the same.

Figures 14-15. The Samo UC (United Church) (this page); Women giving *artabar* on a Sunday afternoon (following page).
(Boiteau, Isabelle. Personal photos, 2023.)

In Samo, religion permeates everyday life and thinking. A lot of time is dedicated to church activities. There are the Sunday (or Saturday for some) services. Not only do people attend these, but they do so wearing clothes that are clearly purchased, reserved and cleaned solely

[9] Chewing betel nut is the subject of many regulations. Particularly in towns and cities it may be viewed negatively in the same kinds of ways as smoking often is and it is prohibited to chew in many public areas (the red spit that it generates can also cause staining). Here, it is unclear what the exact basis for this partial prohibition is. It could be because there seems to be an association between the colour red and Satan; it may also have to do with hygiene as chewing betel nut with lime and mustard stains the teeth and mouth eventually turning them black; it may also be because it is perceived as a drug.

for that purpose. They also limit the amount of work that they do. For instance, they do not go to the garden and though there were often men who would take their *takups* (canoes) out and fish, more than once I heard people commenting on how this was not good behaviour on a Sunday (not that anyone refused to eat the fish that they caught). On many Sunday afternoons, a few hours after the end of the service, there would be another church event where a group of people would go and give *artabar* to an elderly person in the community. This consisted of a group of people, mostly women, going to the person's house and singing a few hymns, listening to the reverend speak briefly and giving food to the elderly person.

It was not only Sundays that were devoted to the church (or Saturdays for those in the SDA). During my second field stay the community had started a youth worship on Monday nights, and though officially oriented to youth it was attended by adults as well. In addition, there were often other worship events. More than once a truck full of women wearing identical meri blouses and singing hymns pulled up to the village and stayed for a few days. These women had come to 'spread the good word', every day that they stayed they would hold worship nights in Samo or the neighbouring villages. One week, this meant that some people attended church five out of the seven days in the week. Similar events happened at the Destiny church, where people came from another area of the province to spend the entire night worshipping at the church in Samo. And, shortly after, the Samo congregation travelled to their village to do the same.

On top of worship, many groups and activities formed around church work. At the United Church, one day of each week was devoted to cleaning the church grounds. At the Destiny church, people would clean the grounds and prepare resting areas in the week before an event was set to occur. There are also many church groups, generally women's church groups. Tinsuken, one of the women in my host family, always went to these. These meetings, on

Wednesdays, were an opportunity to teach one another sewing and basketry skills and at least a few women were trying to push an agenda of promoting education through these meetings. In addition to these weekly women's meetings, there were also many church meetings where church affairs, activities and the allocation of funds were discussed. These events occurred at the UC, but similar ones occurred in the other churches as well. At the Destiny church there were weekly prayer group meetings, and at the SDA there were meetings every month or so.

The church plays an important role in the community not just through the creation of its own calendar of activities, it also permeates other aspects of life in the village. It does this by shaping the way people see and understand the world, their beliefs, ideas and behaviours. Indeed, many people spoke to me about religion: I was frequently asked what my denomination was (in fact, people who describe themselves as speaking only broken English use this word), and various people spoke to me about God or the Holy Spirit. God and the Devil were mentioned in stories and the topic came up when judging people's incorrect behaviour. This was common to all age groups.

Indeed, I was interested in learning about practices related to magic and the *tumbuna* (ancestors) as well as their *ples masalai*[10]. As I asked around about these, on a few occasions I was given warnings by some of the women in the village. Even towards the end of my stay, the family that I was staying with was concerned both at my interest in visiting villages further south in New Ireland and at my interest in visiting an old burial site in the bush, they warned me that these things were dangerous, as they were related to the Devil. Earlier in my stay Marlol, with her excellent English, had explained local beliefs to me. She explained that people were worried at my interest in areas further south in the province, as sorcery still existed in those parts, which meant that someone could kill you without even touching you. She also explained that according to their religious beliefs (It should be mentioned that she herself attends the Destiny church, though she was also translating for a group of people which included a woman who preached at Sunday services in the United Church. As such, it is unclear to what extent the beliefs she describes belong to members of one church or to all of them.) there are three types of people: believers, non-believers and those who believe in the powers of the Earth. Their belief is that the more people there are who believe and who pray the more good there will be in the world, that when bad things happen it is because the forces of Satan are taking over and more prayer is needed.

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[10] *Ples masalai* (*masalai* places) are places that have a special association with the clan spirits and ancestors. These may be general areas or specific rocks, trees, etc… These places are common throughout New Ireland.

Belief in christianity has been combined with beliefs of the past, usually positioning the ways of the past as evil and those of christianity as a good. Storytelling combines elements from traditional culture with elements from christianity. On more than a few occasions, when I asked people to share *stori tumbuna* (stories either from or about the ancestors) with me, they told me the story of Adam and Eve. On other occasions, I asked people to explain their religious beliefs to me and they told me bible stories with the same structure as they would have told a *stori tumbuna*. On yet other occasions, the characters from these two realms were both present in one story, for instance I was told an origin story for the masked figure of the *kipong* which involved Adam and Eve. A common character in *stori tumbuna* was Mister Tambaran or Satan, both essentially taking on the characteristics of 'the evil figure' of any story. Visibly, religious belief has come to be an integral part of how the world is perceived and told. The integration of religious belief into traditional beliefs has however not been a value neutral one. It is also clear from the ways that people speak of past times, before the arrival of missionaries and colonial forces, that the times *tumbuna* are viewed negatively. One man very literally referred to the time *tumbuna* as "the dark ages": a time when everyone fought with everyone and people would eat you if you left the area of your village. This theme was common anytime people spoke about the time of the ancestors, they would define it by saying that it was a time when people did not know any better and ate other people. It was clear that the changes brought by missionaries are seen as having been positive and that people hope that these sorts of positive changes will continue.

The politics of the place are also imbued with christianity. This is inevitable given that it shapes how people involved in politics think. Though it is also visible at more of an institutional level. This is particularly the case with the United Church, as it is the largest church in the village. The Church must be included in deliberations concerning what will happen in the village, in fact, not just included, but it must agree with the decisions made. As far as I can tell, there is no specific rule or law stating this, but it is understood by all. For instance, during my 2023 stay, there was tension between the local elementary school teacher and the United Church. The two were located just next to one another, and though it is not visibly apparent, I was informed that the school was actually built on land belonging to the church. The elementary school teacher was not a native of the village, he was from a village about ten kilometres south, but had been assigned to work in Samo and was living there with his family. He was frustrated by his inability to work as he would have liked in the local school and had undertaken to have materials provided to build a new teacher's house. This came to a halt as the local UC was not in agreement with his plans. The situation was brought to Monday *lain* meetings, for resolution and, to the local anthropologist at least, the whole thing seemed rather unclear. Both parties claimed that the other was in the wrong and that they were behaving poorly. However, it

eventually came to light that underlying all of this was a tension between the UC and the government located in Namatanai, who were both trying to establish their control over the communities in the south of New Ireland. Regardless of who was right and wrong, when I left the field the house still had not been built, the timber for it was waiting in a pile near the teacher's house, and the teacher was hoping to be assigned a new village to teach in.

This case played into issues regarding the church's authority as well as many others. However, it was not the only such case, and it is likely that there were many more that I simply never became aware of. For instance, not long before my departure the village planning committee organized a culture day to display some of their traditional *singsing*s for me (since they knew that this was where my interests lay). Marlol, a member of the VPC and a frequent translator for me, explained that before they went ahead with their plans they needed to run it by the United Church. She was very much a politician and very diplomatic in all of her answers to my questions, but clearly a spin needed to be put on the event and it could not have gone ahead if the reverend, in the name of the church, had disagreed.

There are also outside influences, beyond the church, that take important roles in the village. During my second stay sports days were organized in the village every Saturday, and large swaths of the village population formed teams and competed. These games were taken very seriously: the boys would train throughout the week and twice fights broke out among the women over score keeping. The games were also taken seriously as a means of development: people would sell food during the matches in order to "make some coins", the village received funding for the organization of the games and serious effort was put into raising money to give prizes to the winners. It is not a trend unique to Samo either, the whole region (and province it would seem) met for sports days during the national Independence Day holidays, as opposed to putting on performances of traditional culture, as had been done in previous years. I travelled further away in the province in hopes of finding such cultural performances and did not find any, it seems that in 2023 the government had only funded the organization of sports days.

The importance of education was also sometimes evident. Villagers often do not complete their education, many completing only until somewhere between grade 7-9, usually finishing when they are around twenty years old. The reason for this is often said to be a lack of money to pay for school fees. Though this is frequently true, reasons also often relate to problems at school: these could be related to drinking, stealing or, for women, pregnancy. It is also not uncommon for both boys and girls to remain in the village as they feel content with the life that it provides. However, those who do complete their high school and go on to get further education are looked

up to. Anyone who returns to the village after having received an education is regarded with respect. And I generally got the impression that most women want their children to get an education as they believe that it will provide them with better futures.

There is a deep desire to develop and modernize the village. People are working hard to try to educate themselves, to bring money and higher quality infrastructure in. A lot of this is happening through the VPC. They are in charge of organizing the village, and conduct meetings both amongst themselves at the weekly *lain* meetings with the whole village. They work to organize groups to do work in the village, generally to clean areas around the road, to bring up and try to resolve issues in the community and to organize projects to help the community. When I left they had just been awarded some money and were making plans on how to best spend it, though, even at such a local level, corruption and the misspending of funds can remain an issue.

Other issues with regards to development are a lack of help coming from the outside in. About a month before I left local law enforcement officers came to the village (they traveled and visited all of the areas under their jurisdiction) in order to share with villagers the ways in which laws and sentencing had recently been changed. The meeting began particularly late, to the displeasure of community leaders and the law enforcement officials, but in the end there was a large crowd in attendance. What became evident was that the local displeasure was not with these people coming from the city to impose their rules on them, but rather with the fact that everyone knew that these laws would not be enforced. Both the community and the law enforcement officials were particularly concerned with the growing consumption (and growing or making) of marijuana and alcohol in the region, as well as with the improper use of PMVs (public transportation running between the villages and the main town). Villagers voiced their agreement that marijuana and alcohol were problems in the community, and that those involved in it also scared them, they were concerned with the potential for retaliation if they were to provide police with information on these activities. The police answered very diplomatically, but not helpfully. The same kind of answer was given concerning the problems with PMVs: as these are usually overloaded with passengers, with many sitting on the roof, and are often driven by drunk drivers. Villagers were asking the police to come down to the Sursurunga region and patrol more frequently, as they saw this as a problem that would not be solved without a greater police presence. They were met with a very diplomatic answer, which more or less stated that the police were doing what they could with the resources that they had. This episode speaks to many things. It speaks to the desire and willingness of the community to engage with and join the world beyond their villages. It also illustrates the struggle that this presents, the lack of

resources being devoted to the community and the community's resulting need to rely on itself. Though this is a strategy that has worked for them in some respects it remains a limiting and challenging path.

Though fieldwork in Samo could have led to work on a broad range of subjects, I entered the field with the intention of studying masking practices in the area. However, as in all ethnographic fieldwork, despite masking having been my focal interest, it only made up a small part of the information that I collected and of what I learned during my time in Samo village and Papua New Guinea. I hope that this brief introduction can serve as a background to help the reader imagine the place out of which this work emerged.

Masking practices are the focus of chapters 3 and 4 of this thesis. In chapter 3, I provide a brief background to the study of masks or masking practices. In chapter 4, I delve into what emerged as the two dominant masking practices during my stay in the field, the *Tubuan* and the *kipong*. After this I branch out, often returning to these two masking practices. First, I examine a female seclusion rite which I was told about during my stay, that of the *karuka* house (in chapter 5). I then go on to examine these in relation to felt experience, to the importance of secrecy and examine how the practices are changing in relation to heritage and how they are reflected in women's issues, in chapters 6 through 8. Before all of this, I begin with a brief historical overview of the region and, here, with a brief methodological overview.

Methodology

As this chapter has demonstrated, this thesis is based on traditional ethnographic fieldwork. I carried out two periods of fieldwork: an initial two months in 2022, followed by four months in 2023. While I would have liked to spend one long extended period of time in the field, this organization into two phases as well as the timing and length of each period of fieldwork, was determined by the logistics of obtaining and renewing visas for two countries. However, it proved to be very effective: the first period of fieldwork allowed me to identify a fieldsite and establish ties in Samo village. I was then able to return for my second period of fieldwork prepared for the specificities of my particular fieldsite and to step right back in to the community.

In terms of methodology, my work primarily draws on participant observation. I spent my days living with Samo's villagers: my fieldwork was not limited to interviews and formally asked questions, but extended throughout daily life, as I lived with and next to villagers, witnessing day

to day life in the village, and participating where I could. This method builds off of Malinowski's foundational conception of anthropological fiedwork. Malinowski argued that it was essential not only to question locals but also to live within a community in order to witness and experience daily life, such that one might come to understand the "imponderabilia of actual life" (24:2013), the little things which make up day to day life and provide insight into a society or culture. I follow these foundational anthropological principals. And, indeed, not only did observing daily life and experiencing life in the village prove to be deeply informative, but additionally many of the most interesting and informative conversations occurred in these contexts.

Within the process of participant observation, I also conducted many informal interviews and collected various materials. These were conducted both with the aim of gaining a better and more detailed understanding of the individuals in the community as well as of my particular subject matter.

I initially conducted many informal interviews regarding masking practices and *singsing*s in the region as well as regarding life histories. Life history interviews were primarily done as a means of breaking the ice: of getting to know community members (especially those beyond the hamlet I was living in) and introducing community members to the reasons behind my presence as well as my habit of asking questions about everything. Interviews regarding masking practices and other types of *singsing* were conducted as a means of establishing what kinds of practices were present in the region and initial data on these, as well as as a means of communicating what my primary research interests were (indeed, having understood that I was interested in matters of *kastom*, people would occasionally inform me of happenings or share brief stories). Later on, I carried out a few more formal interviews with particular individuals in order to collect more detailed information on particular practices and in the hopes of learning about the experiences of individuals involved in these. However, I tried to de-emphasize the interview. Most interviews were rather informal affairs, which found me and the interviewee, often times surrounded by a translator (or many) sitting on the ground or on a bench and me jotting down notes as we went, occasionally recording the interview as well. Much of the information which I collected came from conversations and participant observation.

My presence in the community of course gave rise to quite a bit of curiosity. This mostly died down within a week or two of my first arrival. As I went along curiously learning about the people with which I was living, they also went along curiously learning about me and my world (or worlds?). I always tried to do my best to answer the questions which they asked me. I did this both because past experience abroad where I had not had the role of "anthropologist" or

“ethnographer” had taught me that this was normal. Further, in a context where I was incessantly asking about everything and trying to understand them, it only seemed fair to give their questions the same kind of attention that I wished mine to receive - if I didn’t answer their questions, and well, then how could I possibly expect them to do so? This proved to also be an educational process. Not only because of the sorts of questions which often arose - focusing on the length of my journey and my family relationships. But also because of how challenging many of these proved to be. I was once asked how funerals were where I was from. A question which I, following in the steps of many anthropologists in the area, had been observing in New Ireland. Yet, I struggled to answer, and I fear that I was incapable of providing a clear and accurate answer: as I struggled to explain that there really was no one way, there were certain things that tended to occur, but then and again, depending on circumstances they might happen or not. I am sure that this is far from a novel experience when it comes to conducting fieldwork. However, I feel that it should be emphasized, as it reveals to us what we already know but often forget as we work: that all of the practices, phenomena or social structures which we are studying are incredibly variable and that the pictures which we stitch together hopefully grasp at this but will inevitably leave some pieces behind.

Aside from interviews, I also collected recordings of songs and myths. I collected song recordings, accompanied whenever possible by lyrics and meaning, as masks are usually performed as a part of *singsing*s. As such, collecting materials on *singsing*s was potentially helpful to my initial research interest.

I also collected stories: myths and narratives. This was done in part as myths are commonly included in ethnographic work and in part as a means of getting an understanding of local narratives. I also attended as many events including masked practices or *singsing*s as possible. Masked performances are not always frequent, nor do they follow a specific schedule. As such I moved around throughout the region and to neighbouring East New Britain in order to attend these events. Many villagers were of great help in this, many accompanied me to events in nearby villages and many even went to the effort of organizing for me to be able to witness *kipong* performances. Though I have already mentioned this in the acknowledgments, I am deeply indebted to the villagers of Samo and the many people beyond the village that they introduced me to, as they went to great lengths to welcome me into their community and to help me in my work.

Chapter 2

A historical Overview

Initial occupation of what are today the Pacific islands is thought to have occurred in waves arriving from South East Asia from 60,000 - 30,000 years ago (Ernst and Anisi, 2016:588). In New Ireland the oldest archaeological evidence goes back to 39,500years ago (Leavesley, 2006:191) from the cave sites of Buang Merabak in the center of the country and Matenkupkum in the Sursurunga region (near Hilalon village[11]) (Leavesley, 2006:191). Archaeological evidence on the island also suggests that the inhabitants of that period were involved in the movement of goods between islands. This comes from evidence dating to around 20,000 years ago in the Buang Merabak and Matenkupkum caves, which contain cuscus bones and obsidian which would have had to have been brought from another area (Leavesley, 2006:192). As far as the archaeological evidence goes there is then a gap of information until approximately 12,000-10,000BP, when local archaeological sites “show their highest rates of cultural deposition” (Leavesley, 2006:193).

Aside from information available through archaeological work, linguistics also provides some relevant evidence. Almost all of the languages spoken on New Ireland are Proto-Oceanic, with one being Papuan: Kuot (Rubel & Rosman, 2021:n/a). It is thought that around 5,000 years ago the Lapita culture arrived to the region, though none of the typical pottery has been found, the culture would have brought with them their Proto-Oceanic linguistic mark (Rubel & Rosman, 2021:n/a).

As such, it is important to emphasize that though a great deal of focus is placed on the ways in which European presence and influences altered local ways of life, such inter-cultural communication and resulting adaption and modification of practices has always occurred in the region, both amongst groups nearby and with others further afield. The period of European contact beginning in the 1500/1600s and hitting full swing in the 1800s is given more focus as it is the most recent and due to our own biases, but also simply due to the fact that we have access to information concerning this period through various written records. The period(s) between the archaeological record and the arrival of European colonial forces remains largely a mystery as we do not have any sources of information covering those years.

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[11] Which I have later referred to as Hilolon.

From the 1500s there were many European expeditions in the area that are forms Papua New Guinea. European arrival to Papua New Guinea begins with the arrival of the Portuguese Jorge de Meneses in 1526 (Burn, 1887). In 1527, a Dutch arrival to New Ireland placed the island on the map, followed by another such exploration by the Spanish in 1756 (Kuchler and Forty, 1999:65). In the 1600s it was common for European ships heading through the area to stop at a natural harbour at Lambom island (at the very tip of New Ireland) in order to stock up on fresh water (Albert 1987:16; Wolffram, 2007:7). And, in the mid-1800s British and American whalers hunted in seas around New Ireland. They also stopped to exchange goods, giving goods in exchange for fresh food (yams, coconuts, etc…) and other goods such as copra, bêche-de-mer and tortoise shell. (Denner, 2010:14).

From the earliest of contacts with European ships (and likely going back to undocumented times as well), trade was an important part of contact. The earliest European navigators in the region came in search of products such as spices, sandalwood, bêche-de-mer and pearl shell not available in their home countries, as well as routes to carry these goods.

Early on, New Ireland had a reputation as being both one of the last 'untouched' areas (as Papua New Guinea was colonized and christianized later than much of the rest of the South Pacific). Its inhabitants also had a reputation for attacking and cannibalism, though also for being welcoming. Romilly's account perhaps best exemplifies this. Romilly was a British explorer in the Pacific in the late 1800s, though he was not based in New Ireland he has left memoirs recounting a visit to a man he knew from the island (1886). His memoirs recount how they exchanged formalities, the local men allowed him to visit their sacred house and indeed both parties helped one another in their respective projects. He happened to witness a battle which broke out during his stay, which he recounts in detail, including the fact that those slain in battle were cooked and eaten afterwards. An enormous feast to which he and the men from his ship were welcomed (1886:44-58).[12] This contradiction of locals who are kind and welcoming, yet ready to kill and eat their enemies is the image with which early arrivers were faced. It has also become a part of how locals understand their histories. Many individuals in Samo, on various occasions, when speaking of how things were in the past, would refer to these times as dark and dangerous times, and exemplify this by recounting, with all the talents of good storytellers, that it was a time when men ate other men and one could not venture even to a neighbouring village for fear of this.

[12] Parkinson also notes on his experience with cannibalism in the region in the late 1800s. He states that it was far more common in more isolated areas and recounts an encounter with a series of boats off of the coast of New Hanover having returned from raiding a village, he states, for this purpose (1907:203-4).

Throughout the territories are today Papua New Guinea and New Ireland the arrival of colonialism, trade and missionaries occured at various times and how events took shape varied greatly, due to both variation in the people arriving and to the great cultural diversity of the area. Making it such that effects were felt differently in different parts of the country. As such, here I focus on information available regarding what is today New Ireland province. Though, when addressing the province, the history of neighbouring East New Britain also remains relevant, not just because, through the Tolai, they share many cultural similarities, but because, as Brenda Clay states: "New Ireland became a hinterland to the more concentrated colonial effects occurring on nearby New Britain and Duke of York Islands." (Clay, 2005:x)

In both areas, trade arrived around the mid-1800s and colonial administration was put in place a few decades later. Both provinces were a part of the German colony, yet another way in which the two were affected similarly by colonialism. Given these dates of initial arrival and establishment of European presence, it is generally noted that changes in lifestyle began to be seen and felt around 1900, with much of the initial changes occurring in late 1800s. Indeed, in the early 1900s it was already noted that traditional customs previously common were no longer being practiced (ex: Chinnery *in* Groves, 1933b:331; Groves, 1933a; Parkinson, 2010). Perhaps some of the most visible evidence of these changes may have been that western dress was adopted in the early 1900s (as this is indicative both of access to and desirability of these).

Trade established itself in New Ireland from the mid 1800s. In 1840 there were already trading posts established along the shores of New Ireland (Kuchler and Forty, 1999:65). The first official trader to establish themselves in the region was Hernsheim & Co. in 1880 on Nusa island (Denner, 2010:15; Parkinson, 1907:199). Early trade posts faced difficulties such as attacks and the killing of the traders (Parkinson, 1907:199).

Around this time, New Ireland was also a common location for blackbirding. From approximately the mid 1800s ships would come to the Bismarck Archipelago in order to collect labourers to take to plantations in nearby areas such as Queensland, Fiji and Samoa. Much of this manpower was collected forcibly (Panoff, 1979:163) and many died. Though it was in theory paid labour, Denner notes that: “the indenture system soon became equated with slavery” (2006:14). In 1884 there was an act meant to put an end to blackbirding, the Pacific Island Labourers Act, however it did not eradicate the practice, and many evasions of the decree were noted (Denner, 2010:14).

There were also many German copra plantations set up on New Ireland itself, the trade beginning around the turn of the 20th century. By 1905 there were already 6,000 hectares being used for copra plantations (Derlon, 1997:26). Local men were recruited to work on these plantations, much of this labour was also forced and if it was payed, then poorly so. The copra industry on the island lasted far beyond German control. Even today there are swathes of land planted with tall coconut trees, clearly marking where these plantations were located. Some of my informants, likely born in the 1960s, remembered the presence of these plantations, still being run as plantations, from their youth.

Forced labour and the general presence of European traders and colonizers had disastrous effects on the population of New Ireland. The population dropped dramatically in the early 1900s. For instance, the population of the Tanga islands (located off of the north east coast of New Ireland) was estimated to be about 12,000 in the 1880s, but by 1908 it had dropped to 8,000 and in 1953 there were only 1.466 inhabitants left (Scragg, 2010:58). This was due to large numbers of the population leaving and dying from blackbirding, as well as the proliferation of diseases and the effects that all of this had on birth rates. Colonial presence brought with it the arrival of many diseases, which added themselves to the already endemic malaria (Scragg, 2010:57). There were epidemics of chicken pox and dysentery and an increase in sexually transmitted diseases (Scragg, 2010:58). Not only did these lead to dwindling population numbers as they caused death, but it also affected women's fertility rates. Decreasing population rates were the result both of the removal of individuals from communities and to a decreased rate of reproduction of what remained of the population. The situation was so serious that, in 1912, a Dr Hoffman wrote an alarming medical report on the state of things. When he wrote, he was concerned that if things continued at their current rates, extinction was immanent (Derlon, 1997:28). This no doubt fed into ideas of rescue anthropology already playing out throughout the Pacific.

From the 1880s to the early 1920s what is today the territory of Papua New Guinea was occupied and administered by both British and German colonial forces. What are today the provinces of New Ireland, then referred to as Neu Mecklenburg, and East New Britain were under German administration from 1884 until control was taken over by Australian authorities from 1914. From 1884 to 1899 the administration was carried out by the Neu Guinea Kompagnie and from 1899-1914 this power was transferred to the imperial government. The governor of the German colony from 1896-1914 was Albert Hahl. He was based in East New Britain and as such he and his policies are mentioned in records made in the region in that period. He implemented many policies limiting traditional practices such as the *tubuan* (AL

Epstein, 1998:17; Simet, 1991:312) and the *iniet* (AL Epstein, 1999:274), but is also said to have undergone initiation into the Tubuan himself (Salisbury, 1964:226). He offers an example of what were often very ambiguous stances towards local people and their customs: some of which were appreciated and even joined in with and others which were rejected and seen as immoral.

In 1914, due to WWI, the Germans lost their colonies. As such, New Ireland passed into the hands of the Australians. At first, being under Australian military occupation before being officially handed over in 1919. (Denner, 2010: 16-17).

The presence of imperial controls and administrations had great effects on local populations, varying in different moments and in different places. As administrators and local communities each navigated situations slightly differently, though perhaps with some overarching common principals. Common approaches were, first, to pacify populations and to organize them such that they could be incorporated into imperial systems of control. These changes, even separate from the changes put in motion by the influence of missionaries arriving around the same time, altered social organization and social life.

New Ireland underwent this period of pacification in the first years of the 1900s (from 1900-1904) starting from the north of the Ireland (Derlon, 1997:27). This process is known as the *pax germanica*. Governor Hahl commissioned Franz Boluminski to establish a government station in Kavieng (Denner, 2010:16). Boluminski, aided by eight men, went to the region, established, and pacified it. They built the first two hundred kilometers of what is still known as the Boluminsky highway running down the eastern coast of the island. This was of course achieved through the use of forced labour (Derlon, 1997:26-7). Construction of this highway greatly disturbed local ways of life. First, as it was built with forced labour and henceforth as each village was responsible for the upkeep of the stretch of road going through their village (Groves, 1933:343). Groves recounts that older men would still tell stories of that period with great fear. Noting that not only had they been compelled to build the road but that it had disturbed their regular gardening practices, such that they had had to survive on coconuts alone for weeks on end and that it had resulted in a subsequent food shortage which led many men to seek wage labour beyond the village (1933:344).

A few years later, in 1904, governor Hahl sent William Wostrack to establish a government station in Namatanai, in order to aid in the pacification of the local population (Denner, 2010:16; Wagner, 1986:13). This regional center remained into the 50s and 60s as a pristine colonial

administration subdistrict during the period of Australian control, though post-Independence it had lost the characteristic attributes of these colonial administration towns (Wagner, 1986:118).

German colonists not only established their own presence and ended the practice of warfare, but sought to restructure local villages. Pacification also involved the moving of villages. Previously villages had been located inland: usually some were well inland while others only a mile or so from the coast (Rubel & Rosman, 2021). These were moved to the coastline, both for the sake of peace and so that the Germans would have easier access to labourers (Derlon, 1997:27-8) (for work in copra plantations, to maintain the road, etc…).

Local men were also given roles as community leaders by the administration. Powdermaker notes that this was because there were no chiefs, these positions were created so that colonial administrators would have someone to deal with when they came through (2012:52). These were the roles of *luluai* and *tultul*. A system created by Governor Hahl in 1897 (Denner, 2010: 17). These leaders were always men, and usually older men. By choosing only men to fulfill their roles, colonial administrations imposed what were at the time typical European norms of patriarchal leadership. *Luluai*s were essentially ambassadors of the colonial administration in their communities and *tultul* were their helpers. They were deemed necessary as a means of communicating with and pacifying the many small villages present in the region. Indeed, there were many, in 1903-1904 there were 93 *luluai* in New Ireland alone and in 1909 there were 250 under the Namatanai authority alone (Denner, 2010:17).

Though these roles were created by colonial administrators for their own purposes, local men often sought and used these roles for their purposes as well. Anthropologists from the 20th to the 21st centuries have noted that local big men also used these roles to build their status as the *luluai* role presented an opportunity for big men to extend their power (Clay, 2005:71). Bell relates that in 1927 General Wisdom reported from Tanga that one of the girls undergoing the local initiatory tradition of the *dafal* was a *Luluai*'s daughter. The *dafal* ritual (further discussed in chapter 5) is not one that all girls go through as it is expensive (requiring resources as well as time) and it is often a way for daughters' fathers to build their status within the area. As such, that one of these girls' fathers was a *luluai* indicates that he was considered an important man both by the colonial administration and by his community. It also clearly indicates that men seeking power through positions such as that of the *luluai*, also sought power through the performance of 'traditional' customs. The positions were attractive because of the power that they could bring individuals. And, this new source of power could sometimes alter current structures of power, as Foster states: "To the extent that big men could interpose themselves

between their followers and German, later Australian, recruiters and officials, the imposition of administrative control over Tangan society offered new possibilities for creating inequality within Tangan society." (1987:60). The system was approached in many ways. For instance, in one case, in 1913, a *luluai*, Kiapat, led some Germans into an ambush in the Sursurunga area, where they were killed and eaten (Bolyanatz, 1994:56). One elder woman in Samo told me a story strikingly similar to this. Telling that in the time when white men were just arriving, some people in the area had lured one or a few of these white men, coming from Namatanai, into the bush where they had attacked and eaten them. She then recounted, that this had angered the officials in Namatanai such that they had sought out the individuals who had killed and eaten their fellow official, and punished them accordingly. Her account fits strikingly to the historical record, and her tone is indicative of modern attitudes.

The system began under German rule and was kept during the period of Australian control. (Bolyanatz, 1994:56). It was eventually replaced, in 1945, by local level councillors and representatives. (Bolyanatz, 1994:56).

In the 1940s, the south Pacific was affected by WWII. The area of New Ireland was under German occupation from January 1942 to September 1945. It may not be an everyday topic of conversation, but the territory bears the marks of the presence of this conflict. In Samo, at the beach nearest to my house there was a round hole in the coral that was often used as a swimming hole (as it was deeper and the absence of coral made it less painful on the feet), I was told that this hole had been left as the result of a bomb falling during WWII. A little further down the beach, there was a rusted old piece of equipment made out of thick metal, sitting just in the water at high tide. This was also a remnant of warships or vehicles from the time. Occasionally some of the elders in the community told me stories that involved the war. Bulu told me of his father's involvement, proudly asserting that his father had been the first local man to shoot a gun. Another woman told me that they had been in the village and all of a sudden they had seen enormous ships coming to shore, and that a father of hers had grabbed her and taken her up into the bush. Stories from this period were rare, but clearly show that the region and people living there were very much affected by the conflict.

Missionaries came throughout the south Pacific, and have had incredibly lasting impacts in the region as a whole, as it now counts incredibly high rates of Christianity. According to ARDA in 2020 94.80% of Papua New Guineans were Christian (ARDA, n/a). In Papua New Guinea Christianity is even enshrined in the constitution as a principal to follow, stating that they: "pledge ourselves to guard and pass on to those who come after us our noble traditions and the

Christian principles that are ours now" (*emphasis mine*, Constitution, 1975:1). In the region the church and the act of worship are both referred to as *lotu*. This word, adopted into Tok Pisin, is Tangan in origin and came to Papua New Guinea via Fijian missionaries (Tateyama, 2006:75).

Christianity arrived to the Bismarck Archipelago in 1875, when George Brown arrived in the Duke of York Islands on August 15th after having spent 14 years working in Samoa (Tateyama, 2006:18). He was a Wesleyan missionary and worked with other 'local' evangelists from Tonga, Samoa and Fiji (Webb, 2015:285)[13]. 1875 also marked the official start of the christianization of New Ireland, as two catechists arrive in Kalil village (Derlon, 1997:29). Catholic missionaries arrived in East New Britain in 1882 (Tateyama, 2006:19) and in New Ireland in 1885, where, having to go where there was not already missionary presence, they largely ended up in the south of the island. In 1905 they set up a catholic mission site in the new regional center of Namatanai, which was run by Father Karl Neuhaus from 1911-1929, and established missions down the east coast as far south as Silur (Wolffram, 2007:8; Denner, 2010:18). While Methodist missionaries set up between 1900 and 1913, with their headquarters and main mission being in Omo village, near Kavieng.

Different missionaries took different attitudes to their work and regarded local customs in different lights. Some of this went by denomination and some of this varied between individual missionaries. Some saw all local customs as pagan and heathen, needing to be stopped so that local populations might find God and become civilized. Many acted as ethnographers in their own right, learning local languages and customs and noting detailed information regarding them. Most acted along a continuum between these two extremes: learning local languages in order to be able to communicate the word of God. Most allowed some customs, as long as they were not seen to interfere with christian practice or ideology, of course what was seen as interfering was highly variable.

At this time, it is unclear whether one of the churches was more or less accepting of traditional customs than the other. In New Ireland, Derlon notes that it was the Catholic missionaries who were not accepting of local customs, while the Methodist missionaries offered a bit more leeway, allowing practices to a certain extent (1997:30-35). While Tateyama notes that in East New Britain it was Catholic missionaries who were eager to learn about local customs, while Methodist missionaries usually saw the local *Tubuan* as tyrannical (2006:86). Regardless, even

[13] Melanesia was among the last regions in the Pacific to convert to Christianity (Ernst & Anisi, 2016:594). Many missionaries who came to work in Papua New Guinea were from Samoa, where colleges had been established to train missionaries - Malua Theological College in 1844 and Oiula Theological College in 1868 (Ernst & Anisi, 2016:592-3).

when missionaries were relatively accepting, their presence still had an effect on local customs as they did fight against the elements that they saw as being incompatible with christianity. These incompatibilities included: the manipulation of human remains, exclusion of women and long periods of seclusion, the later as they interfered with individuals' ability to take part in christian practices (Derlon, 1997:34). As Derlon argues, these changes made it so that many of the practices came to lose a lot of their sense. This initial partial acceptance of local custom seems to have been of limited duration though, as in 1919 the Methodist Church in East New Britain passed a resolution stating that members would be disciplined for participating in the *Tubuan* (Tateyama, 2006:83). The resolution was passed in East New Britain, as New Ireland often seems to have been affected by these policies though also not at their center, it is unclear to what extent the resolution would have been adopted in New Ireland as well. However, it is highly indicative of the attitudes of missionaries in the region at that point in time, regardless of their exact location.

Conversion happened quickly in the region. In East New Britain there were converts as early as the 1880s (Tateyama, 2006:96) and Derlon notes that by 1941 there were about 50,000 converts to Christianity in the Bismarck Archipelago (1997:30). She states that it may have been in part due to the impressive effect of things such as the singing of hymns and the organisation of ceremonies.

> "La fascination qu'exercèrent les puissants hymnes méthodistes chantés dans une langue inconnue aux accents ésotériques, comme l'origine des catéchistes venus des îles du Pacifique auxquels succédèrent plus tard des pasteurs locaux, joua probablement un rôle dans les conversions, tout comme l'organisation de grands rassemblements religieux susceptibles de rivaliser par leur caractère spectaculaire aves les cérémonies traditionelles." ("*The fascination which the powerful hymns sung in unknown languages with esoteric accents, just as the origins of the catechists from the Pacific islands who were followed by many local pastors, likely played a large role in conversions, as did the organisation of large religious gatherings susceptible to have rivalled with the spectacular characteristics of traditional ceremonies.*") (Derlon, 1997:30 - *my translation*)

Indeed, Webb argues that missionaries and particularly those singing and composing hymns were viewed as powerful spirit men of their own cultures (2015, 184-187). For instance, George Brown is said to have been given a piece of ginger on one occasion, after he had sung a new hymn, indicating that he was seen as a ritual specialist (2015:186). The sung portion of Christian rites may have had a particularly strong effect on indigenous populations, as, following

customary practices, songs were something which came from the spirits (Webb, 2015:296). Meaning, that this was something which needed to be approached cautiously, but also to be respected for its great power. Similarly, Tateyama mentions that when missionaries arrived to the Tolai region, the Tolai sought out their knowledge recognizing the *lotu* as a form of *malira* (love magic) and the missionaries as *tena buai* (ritual specialists) (2006:75). As such, he argues that: "They wanted it out of a desire for power." (2006:75), that the Tolai welcomed and sought out Christian knowledge in order to empower themselves.

The acceptance and rejection of indigenous customs by missionaries was very fraught territory. This is particularly evident in relation to the *Tubuan* society and practices of East New Britain and New Ireland. As some of the earliest missionaries arrived in the Duke of York islands and the Gazelle peninsula there is ample writing regarding their interactions. For instance, in the early 1900s, some missionaries decried the terrible practices associated with the *Tubuan* institution, while yet others collected information as ethnographers or/and witnesses and participants. Officially, both the Catholic and Methodist churches present at that time saw the *Tubuan* as the work of the Devil (Tateyama, 2006:77). Yet, in his extensive historical work Tateyama notes that Fr Hermann Zwinge (present in New Britain from 1909 until his death) and Fr. Carl Laufer (who lived in New Britain from 1929-1955) were both initiated into the *Tubuan*, with Fr. Carl Laufer even having his own *tubuan*, called "IaLotu" (2006:91-92). Yet, in the same time period, Fr. A Leintitschen of the Sacred Heart mission wrote a monograph on the Tolai stating that:

> "How many brutalities, cruelties and vices of all kinds may have taken place on the Tereiu [secret meeting place]? How many cases of murder, theft and rape may be hidden behind the mask of the Tumbuan? And these excesses last not merely days but weeks and months. During this whole period the natives are incapable of anything positive. The initiated indulge exclusively in unrestrained pleasures. Night and day the accompany the Tumbuan and Dukduk and behave like wild animals. The uninitiated, especially the women, do not dare to leave their hamlets" (Kleintitschen 1907:353-353, translated and quoted *in* Sack 1972:101)."

A bit later, in 1926, four priests signed a letter calling for the abolition of the *Tubuan.* Yet, Tateyama notes that this letter did not represent a unified opinion on the part of catechists, but rather a portion of an ongoing debate (2006:88).

There were also periodical attempts to reveal the secrets of the *Tubuan*. As will be discussed later (see chapters 4 and 7), the secret society of the *Tubuan* has many secret practices and it guards these from the un-initiated, particularly women. Tateyama, speaking of incidents in New

Britain, notes that a priest in Tavuiliu revealed secrets in the period between 1902-1913 and that as a result the men tried to secretly kill him (2006:92). Further incidents occurred at the end of WWII, when Tolai catechists shared secrets and received threats as evidenced by a letter in which they are referred to by name, called “meri” (women) and threatened with black magic (2006:93). And another incident in Tavuiliu where men beat a catholic priest who had shared secrets from the Tubuan, and who were later punished for their actions.”

Indeed, friction and cohabitation of the *Lotu* and the *Tubuan* seems to have been ongoing ever since christianity arrived in the region. And continues to be, as people navigate worlds where traditional ‘*kastom*’ and christianity are both deeply important.

Traders, colonists and missionaries were not the only people who came to the Bismarck Archipelago in this period. Most ill-famously the Marquis de Rays attempted to form a colony at Port Breton (near today’s Lambom island, at the southern tip of New Ireland) in the 1870s and 1880s. He left from Barcelona, carrying many European peasants hoping for new beginnings and better futures in what they had been told was a paradise. De Rays was however a swindler, and this a scheme of his, as when they arrived, there was nothing prepared for them and their promised paradise quickly turned to hell. There had been 572 passengers originally, but many died before they were eventually rescued and taken to Australia, or back to Europe, a few even ending in New Britain. (Wolffram, 2006:7). There were also many researchers, including ethnographers and anthropologists traveling to the region. In 1882 Richard Parkinson arrived in New Britain. He is known for the ethnographic work which he completed in the Bismarck Archipelago. He lived in the region and was involved with those around him. He is reputed to have helped Queen Emma[14] set up her plantations and was initiated into local societies of the Tolai people. In 1884, two expeditions set out with with the support of Australian newspapers, in order to collect birds. (Swadling et al, 2019:270). In 1900, Bir, the conservator of the Budapest museum made a trip to New Ireland. There was also the Deutsche Marine Expedition of 1907-1909. This was an ethnographic and anthropological trip organized by the Berlin ethnographic museum, in order to investigate the German colony. It was lead by Emil Stephan, who was replaced by Agustin Krämer when Stephan died of malaria. They were accompanied by Edgar Walden, Emil Schloginhaufen and Otto Schilling. At first, they based themselves in Muliama village and then Krämer moved them to Lamasong village further north along the east coast (Denner, 2010:23-25).

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[14] Queen Emma is a well-known historical figure in the region. Emma Coe, her real name, was of mixed Samoan descent and built a business empire centred in the Gazelle peninsula. Her main business focus was copra, she owned and managed thousands of hectares of plantations in East New Britain, New Ireland and Bougainville; she also opened the first hotel in Kokopo. She is well remembered (Papua New Guinean Association of Australia, N/A).

By the 1960s, the effects of colonization had been felt even in more remote regions of the soon to be independent country. This influence was felt to varying degrees, but even where it was felt less strongly, it included elements such as the end of cannibalism and the imposition of sanitary measures (Feld, 2012:7). One of these sanitary measures had to do with methods of dealing with the dead. In 1968 Australian authorities imposed a rule mandating that the dead had to be buried. Indeed, in Samo it was highlighted to me that one of the changes that the 'white man' had brought about was that people now buried their dead (this was always related with tones of approval). It is unclear exactly what methods were used previously. There remain some caves and rock outcroppings in the area with a few human bones in them, however these are meant to have been the bone of chiefs and influential people in the community, further they do not contain complete skeletons. There are mentions, from other areas of New Ireland, of burial at sea, burial followed by the digging up of certain bones, placing bodies covered in lime powder in the rafter of roofs and, of course, cannibalism (ex: Codrington, 1891:347; Groves, 1933:340; Parkinson, 1907:118; Romilly, 1887:35-60). However, it remains unclear which of these things were done when and to whom, including whether other methods were used for people who did not have the correct status to be disposed of in one of these ways.

This period was also one of continuing and changing religiosity. In 1968 the Methodist church changed its name, becoming the United Church (the name remains to this day) (Derlon, 1997:30). There was also a growing pressure coming from Evangelical christianity (Feld, 2012:9). Indeed, Derlon notes that in the community where she worked in the northern portion of the province, the local united church was infiltrated by evangelical influence under bishop Ben Lenturut in 1972 (1997:37-8).

In the years after WWII, as soldiers returning from war made people abroad more aware of the region, there was a renewed interest and missionaries from various churches went to the region seeking converts. Some of these were: the South Seas Evangelical Mission, the Christian Brotherhood, the Church of the Nazarene, the Apostolic Church, and the New Tribes Mission (Gibbs, 2014:639). In short, the country was already deeply religious, and the exact tones of this were changing. By the early 1980s, Derlon notes that: "la Nouvell-Irlande offre aujourd'hui le spectacle de sociétés fortement acculturées et christianisées." ("New Ireland today presents the spectacle of highly acculturated and christianized societies") (1997:33 - *my translation*). Forty years later, in Samo village, and everywhere in the province and country, it was clear that society was deeply religious. One of the first questions that a visitor is asked is what denomination they belong to, and Samo village featured at least three churches (strictly within

the confines of the village, one or two more were also attended by villagers, though technically located in neighbouring villages).

This period was also one of great focus on Independence and the various things that it entailed. There were political groups forming, discussing these matters and moving for Independence (ex: the Matugnan group in East New Britain and Port Moresby). However, it has been noted that Papua New Guinea is an interesting case, as there was no real movement for independence. Rather, they were granted Independence from Australia as the 1970s marked a time when former colonial authorities were letting go of their colonies, as such, Papua New Guinea was also granted Independence. As such, the period was one of intense development of the kind of organization and infrastructure needed for a smoothly running independent state. For instance the country's first university, UPNG (The University of Papua New Guinea) was founded in 1966. And, in 1975, the local village court system (Tuzin, 1997:42) was set up, and a new currency produced and adopted. Finally, a constitution was written and the country gained Independence on September 16th, 1975.

Around this period there was also a renewed emphasis placed on traditional customs, also known as *kastom*. In the post-colonial run to Independence and post-Independence atmospheres, there was a desire to break from the colonial influence of the 'white men' of Europe and Australia, for the nation to define itself. This work of self-definition reached to combined elements of Melanesian traditional *kastom* and to christianity. Indeed, the constitution states that the country is based on paying "homage to the memory of our ancestors" and pledges to "guard and pass on to those who come after us our noble traditions and the Christian principles that are ours now." (Constitution, 1975:1).

As I will discuss in more detail in chapter 8, Bernard Narokobi distilled this gaze back towards *kastom*, referring to it as the Melanesian Way (1983). Which emphasized the ingenuity that traditional Melanesian societies had had in the millennia preceding European arrival, and the need to look back to these ways in order to move forward in a way that was truly Melanesian, truly their own (1983). There was a move to distance themselves fro the colonizer, represented by 'modernity' coming from the West (ex: 1983:14). This created many awkward situations, for women in particular, as they attempted to move beyond the restrictions of their traditional patriarchal societies by adopting Western customs, but were limited by an additional need to stand by their countrymen which required that they not adopt the ways of the colonizer.

The Melanesian Way, though it emphasized *kastom*, also emphasized that moving forward Melanesian identity would be based on a mixture of these with christian moral principals (Narokobi, 1983:5). As such, Christianity became an important force within the political domain as well. It became (and continues to be) a defining trait of the country.

Placing these together was often a challenge. Much as in earlier years of German and British colonial presence and European missionary presence when some practices were permitted and others not; some missionaries permissive of some things, others other practices and others of nothing at all. The same issues continued through to the post-Independence period. What is perhaps a most illustrative example is of a 2013 incident in the capital city involving the theft of nineteen carved masks and a totem pole from the National Parliament house (RNZ, 2016). The National Parliament house had been designed to represent a new and incredibly multicultural nation, it needed to bring these 800 plus different cultural groups together. The approach taken had been the creation of intricately carved lintel pieces, meant to be reminiscent of those in the famous men's houses, combining symbolic elements from each of the country's provinces. In a sense, bringing people together through their diverse *kastom*s. As Toyoda has written, this was a way of "neutralizing locality" (2006:43). One of the main designers of the building was a Scottish man called Archie Brennan, who stated in an interview that the team of architects had: "worked very hard to design something which we felt belonged to this country yet for which one could not immediately say; yes that is Sepik, yes that is West (sic) highlands, that is Trobriand." (*in* Toyoda, 2006:43).

However, by 2013 a group called The Unity Team, active in the Parliament at this time, did not approve of the iconography in the lintel. The group, and their RRMP plan, were focused on christian ideology and saw these ornaments, particularly given their location on the national Parliament as impeding the country's move forward and out of poverty as a christian nation (da Santos, 2021:896, 903). As such, they ordered their removal. This lead to a division between those aligned with The Unity Team in Parliament and those aligned with the National Museum. However, as Santos da Costa puts it, this represented "two different elite nationalist projects for the country" (2021:902). As those involved in the dispute were all a part of an educated 'urban middle class' (2021:899) which does not necessarily represent the majority of the population who live in rural areas and receive little education.

It was eventually ruled that the removal of these pieces had been a theft and that they had to be put back (Ewart & Connors, 2016). However, the incident speaks to the ways in which a post-

colonial navigation of the influences of *kastom*, christianity and the global ('modern') world is incredibly tricky.

History and *kastom* practices

I now turn to a brief discussion of the history of *kastom* practices in New Ireland and also in East New Britain in so far as their shared practice of the *Tubuan* is necessary in understanding the history of the practice in New Ireland. Much as with the general history of the region, it is incredibly hard to understand what life may have been like prior to the arrival of Europeans, and their written records. Further, as it is clear that different cultures have had contact with one another for centuries, if not millennia, it is clear that the '*kastom*' practices that early europeans witnessed were the most recent iteration of practices that were in constant evolution and renegotiation. Making it even harder to understand where practices may have originated and what they might have looked like perhaps a century earlier.

Further, the arrival of European colonists and missionaries in the late 1800s had deep and lasting impacts on local society both in direct and indirect ways. Many of the effects were felt indirectly, as various projects relating to trade and pacification greatly altered social organization and setting, having impacts on traditional beliefs and customs. For instance, the decimation of the population as a result of forced labour and due to disease spread also affected the transmission of knowledge between generations (Derlon, 1997:28). One of the big changes implemented during the German administration was the relocation of villages to the coast, so that they would be easier to control and obtain labour from. This disrupted life styles and moved people farther away from ritually important sites.

European presence also affected power relations within the community. The region is known for its big man style of leadership. A form of leadership in which villages do not truly have chiefs who hold power and must be obeyed, but where certain individuals acquire power by performing acts that both benefit the community and their own reputation, such that they end up accumulating groups of followers. This is a rather informal form of leadership, noted to be fairly unstable, as different individuals gain and loose renown (see: Lederman, 2015; Sahlins, 1963). The presence of traders, colonial administrators and missionaries, all offered various opportunities for ambitious big men to expand their spheres of power. Some chose to do this through involvement in the *luluai* system, others by adopting religious beliefs. Local trade

initiatives made it such that some individuals were able to become rich in ways that had not previously existed. Changing power dynamics, and the foundations of these, in communities.

There were also more direct actions taken to control local customary practices. for instance, various rules were put in place regarding the use of local and European currencies in the colonies. From the 1890s onwards there was an increased use of the German currency (Lomas, 1981:7) and in 1901 Germans declared that only money and not shell money could be used in transactions between indigenous and European people. Limits were also placed on the activities of the *Tubuan* and of other similar secret male societies. For instance, when Governor Hahl was in charge of the German colony, he limited *tubuan* ceremonies to 3 months of the years (Simet, 1991:312) and in 1905 he banned the *iniet* (AL Epstein, 1999:274). And this despite having been, himself, initiated into the *Tubuan*.

Though there are a wide variety of customary practices in the region, the *tubuan* has received much attention. Having been written about by many of these early arrivers and, now in the 2020s, also occupying a position of cultural importance. Despite this strength, the *Tubuan* appears to have gone through a brief collapse in its practice. Tateyama refers to there having been a decline in its practice in the 1930s (2006:84) and when AL Epstein arrived in East New Britain in the 60s he noticed that the *tubuan* hadn't been raised in years (1998:16). Similarly when Bradley, writing in 1977, was in the field she noted that the *tubuan* hadn't been raised since before WWII in the Gazelle Peninsula and that no one owned a *tubuan* (AL Epstein, 1998:17). However, since then it has undergone a resurgence.

Now, the *Tubuan* is again an active and strong institution. Despite various individuals' strained relationship with *kastom*, I attended or heard of the *Tubuan* being brought out on at least 5 separate occasions around the time of my stay in New Ireland[15]. Even going back to the 1980s, Albert, who worked further south in the Siar/Lak region, noted that though he had initially thought that no one participated anymore he eventually learned that locals had simply been hiding their participation from him, that the *Tubuan* was indeed as active as ever (Albert, 1987:18). It is also incredibly active in the Gazelle peninsula, where it is one of the crowd drawing performances of the yearly National Mask Festival and Warwigara and still appears at local ceremonial occasions (one was held a few days after my departure in Matupit).

[15] Two before my initial stay: near Kavieng to honour visiting members of an NGO, to open the new hospital at Tinkoris ten kilometers north of Samo. During my stay: one in Nokon village and another further South in Rei and Mimias. Another occasion in between my stays, to open a new Kabingot *hausboi* in Kapsel village.

The *Tubuan* is now so present, as a source of authority, a voice of the authority of *kastom*, of tradition. That there have been incidents where members and supporters of the society have come into conflict with religious congregations and certain members have attempted to combine the authorities of the *Tubuan* and of governmental law. Martin relates some of these incidents. For instance, in 1986 on Matupit there was an incident which led to what was referred to as a 'holy war' (AL Epstein, 1998:18). On another occasion a *tubuan* danced across the lawn of an SDA church. And as a result there were classes between three different churches (despite cross-cutting kinship and marriage ties) (AL Epstein, 1998:19; Martin, 2020:370). Another incident occurred in 1988 when a *tubuan* was dancing and destroyed a government building in Toma. As a result, the police entered and arrested them but, within the community, people protested this arrested, saying that the police had no right to do this (AL Epstein, 1998:18).

Of course, these incidents occurred decades ago and in a different province. They remain relevant, as they illustrate the extent to which, despite a dip in adherence, the *Tubuan* has returned as a powerful practice that has made itself relevant in contemporary Papua New Guinea. Further, though these incidents are now over thirty years old, the tensions between *Tubuan* (or *kastom* more generally), church and government remain. Today, some church groups allow participation in customary activities, others only allow observation or a modified form of practice, while others completely prohibit them. Further, the relationship between *kastom* and government remains. This can be seen in relation to the 2013 incident of theft from the National Parliament. It can also be seen in the case of the *Tubuan*. Martin notes that in the 2000s there were various tensions in the Gazelle peninsula. Particularly regarding some *big shot*s who were regarded as using the *Tubuan* for personal financial gains. These *big shots*, also involved in politics, tried to pass a law that would have made it mandatory to follow the rules of the *tubuan* (this was never enacted due to a political turnaround). This law would have cemented the authority of a few powerful men - effectively combining *kastom* and governmental law for their own gain.

While the *Tubuan* has had a strong resurgence, it would seem that many other practices have not fared quite as well. In the early 1900s Parkinson noted that on the Tanga islands there were no more masks, despite there having been many previously (1907:522). I have not encountered any mention of a resurgence of practices in the area.

The *Malagan* is perhaps the most well-known customary and masking practice in New Ireland. It also suffered from exposure to European forces, and though it remains, it has not made a resurgence. As early as around the turn of the 1900s, it seemed that the practice was loosing its

importance. Particularly from the 1930s to the 1960s, the practice seemed to essentially die. In 1925 the *uli* type of *malagan*, whose rituals included the manipulation of human remains, circumcision and sexual license, disappeared. This occurred two years after a missionary set up in the region. (Derlon, 1997:34). In 1929, in Logagon village, practitioners let women see the ritual objects, effectively ending the practice of the ritual (Derlon, 1997:34 Powdermaker, 1933:289). In the 1920s and 30s the Australian anthropologists Chinnery and Groves spent time in northern New Ireland, noting that "indigenous institutions have either died our, or, like the (*maligans*, are tottering to extinction with scarcely a hope of surviving the present generation" (Chinnery *in* Groves, 1933:331; Groves, 1933:349). In the 1950s the last ceremonies of the *dawan* and *pinivu malagan* types were held (Derlon, 1997:34). And, finally, the 1960s are generally agreed upon as having marked the end of *malagan* practices, though since then there has been the occasional episodic ceremony. For instance, in the 70s and 80s Wilkinson and Gun observed a *Malagan* ceremony in the Tabar islands (Derlon, 1997:33).

The practice remains present today, as there are still a few carvers alive in a few village along the north east coast, and in the Tabar islands. Indeed, Derlon notes that there was a sort of pre-independence revival of the practice in 1972-1974 with the creation and sale of about seventy *malagan* sculptures which thirty dancers used for a dance performance in Rabaul (Derlon, 1997:35). However, the customary practice has largely disappeared. Further, what remains of the practice is highly subject to issues of 'authenticity'. Amongst the carvers still alive today it is generally accepted by specialists who have travelled to the area that some are examples of the 'real tradition' while others are a part of an inauthentic version of the tradition, presumably shallower, which caters to foreign tourists.

Additionally, it remains difficult to evaluate actual levels of practice and belief, as people are not always forthcoming regarding these things. This is in part due to the nature of the customs themselves. For instance, Albert had such difficulty in initially becoming aware of the widespread practice of the *Tubuan* as his wife had accompanied him to the field and local men had been afraid that he might share exclusively male secrets with her (1987:18). Adherence to religion, particularly evangelical, pentecostal and charismatic branches, make the relationship to practice very difficult. Indeed, Robbins examined a case among the Urapmin in the Western Sepik region of Papua New Guinea where local communities abandoned their traditional spiritual practices, taking sacred figurines out of their dwelling places and removing them to distant corners of the bush (2004:145-55). Yet, even as such, these figures and the beliefs surrounding them remain influential, as many have become afraid of these sections of the bush and Robbins does not completely discount the idea that they might be retrieved should it ever

be felt necessary (2004:146-51). The same can be said of New Ireland. Derlon conducted fieldwork in the north of the province in the 1980s and found that only with great difficulty she was able to get her informants to admit to her that they still engaged in practices such as garden magic and that they used skulls to control the sun and the rain. Further, When church authorities found out what she was doing, they visited her primary informants, and an important religious leader made her a target during one ceremony, to the extent that she had to buy a Bible in order to calm the situation. (Derlon, 1997:38)

Anthropology in island Papua New Guinea

The European presence was actually felt in the islands region for much longer than on the 'mainland', but it is generally less well-known than the anthropology that emerged from the Highlands, the Sepik, and the Trobriands.

The history of anthropology in the region is deeply tied to colonialism and missionaries. The earliest ethnographic records go back, in certain regions, to the late 1800s. These are exclusively written by explorers or individuals related to the administration of colonial regimes under various forms, or missionaries of various denominations. Their relationship with local people, and their appreciation for their customs, varied greatly from one individual to another. As such, in New Ireland, many of the earliest ethnographic material comes from missionaries such as Codrington, Parkinson or Peekel.

While, other records do come from anthropologists who arrived in the region in the early 1900s, such as Chinnery and his wife Sarah, Groves and Bell. Indeed, Both Chinnery and Groves were government anthropologists, working with the Australian colonial administration, providing reports based on their anthropological findings. Their work is an important resource on life in the region as it was beginning to be affected by colonialism.

Some of the earliest records in the region from from Codrington and Parkinson. Codrington, was both a priest and an anthropologist. He was able to document practices from many islands within the area of the South Pacific referred to as Melanesia, including East New Britain where he wrote about practices associated with the *dukduk*. He is likely best known for his translation of the word *mana*, which has come to be known popularly worldwide. He wrote to a friend that: "There is a belief in a force altogether distinct from physical power, which acts in all kinds of ways for good and evil, and which it is of the greatest advantage to possess or control. This is Mana." (1891:119), While Parkinson is known for his work based on three decades spent in the

south pacific. As noted previously, he is well known for the work that he conducted documenting in details practices in the Bismarck Archipelago around the turn of the 20th century. Describing, among many things, the *tubuan* and *kipong* (which he wrote “kepong”) (1907) practices which I will address in this thesis.

Towards the 1930s records of the way of life in the region come from Chinnery and his wife Sarah who both travelled throughout the country and lived in Rabaul in the 1920s and 1930s (Chinnery,1998:3-4). Groves also worked in the region in the late 1920s and early 1930s, as an anthropologist for the Australian government. He spent time in the early 1930s in Fissoa village (which he spelt Fisoa), on Tabar, in the islands north of Kavieng, in Rabaul and in many other areas on the main island of today’s Papua New Guinea. He spent a year in Fissoa, where he focused on the documentation of cultural change, looking at how European contact had affected local populations. He saw the population as being “sick” as a result of these changes, and sought to diagnose them (1934). As, he was involved with the government, he sought to understand the current situation, such that it might be rectified. For instance, he saw certain missionary efforts as giving people the purpose in life which they needed (1934:221). Bell, another Australian anthropologist, wrote about the Tanga islands. There he observed local masking practices and noted on the female initiatory *dafal* practice, tattooing practices, food and mortuary customs, amongst other customs and ways of life on the Tanga islands in the early 1900s (ex: 1934, 1936, 1938, 1949).

Very few anthropologists who were unattached to missionary or government efforts worked in the region prior to WWII. Amongst these there is Hortense Powdermaker, who stayed in Lesu in the 1930s and wrote a monograph based on her time there (1933). There is also Alfred Bühler, who worked on the island in 1933, unfortunately his works do not appear to have been translated from German.

There is more of an ethnographic record in neighbouring East New Britain. This is because missionary presence was first established here and because Rabaul was a regional centre. Still, there were very few anthropologists working solely as anthropologists who came to the region prior to WWII. In the decades following the war, the region was studied by many anthropologists including: Bradley, 1985; Corbin, 1984; AL Epstein, 1998, 1999 ; TS Epstein 1962; Errington, 1974; Errington and Gewertz, 1993; Fajans, 1997; Fingleton, 1985; Martin, 2010, 2023; Neumann, 1988,1992; Pool, 1971; Salisbury, 1964; Sack, 1972; Simet, 1991; Webb 1995.

These anthropologists worked primarily with the Tolai and the Baining, the two largest cultural groups in the area. Work conducted among the Tolai usually included an analysis of the practice of the *Tubuan* (which was also sometimes referred to as the *dukduk*) as it has a strong presence among the Tolai. As such, work emerging from the region is often relevant in terms of a study of the practice in New Ireland.

In New Ireland, It is also after WWII, but particularly from the 1970s onwards that anthropology in the region seems to have kicked off. Most anthropological studies carried out prior to the 1980s focused on the north eastern coast of the island, which is closer to the capital of Kavieng and more easily accessed. As there is striking cultural similarity in certain respects throughout the province, elements of these ethnographic works remain relevant to my work in the south of the province. It is later, starting in the 1980s, that anthropologists began to focus more on the area south of Namatanai, along the eastern coast and in the neighbouring islands.

Some of the earliest anthropologists, both before and after WWII, in the region worked on the north east coast (ex: Ballingall, 1958; Groves, 1933; Powdermaker, 1933). And anthropological presence in the region has continued up into the present. Clay worked with the Mandak (1992) and Wagner with the Usen Barok (1986). George has written on female facial tattooing practices (1995). Many have written on the ceremonial *malagan* practice (ex: Billings, 2007; Derlon, 1994; Küchler, 1987, 1988, 1994; Gunn, 1988, 1990; Sykes, 2010). Though more recent work has moved away from this focus as the practice has become incredibly rare and far more touristic. Were has also written on design and pattern in material culture in the region (2003). Most have addressed christianity in their work. Some by writing articles devoted to the topic (ex: Eves, 2011, 2022; Were, 2007), others addressing the topic in their ethnographic analyses (ex: Derlon, 1997). While others have examined cargo cults (Billings, 2002). Sykes has focused on gift exchange and moral economies (ex: 1996, 2010). Jessep wrote on the legal aspects of property rights (1977). Foster worked in the Tanga islands, a bit futher south, and wrote regarding mortuary rites in the region (1995). He has also worked on histories of the region (1987) and concerning engagements with modernity and globalization (2002, 2005). Richard Eves has written extensively on customary practices and dances (1995, 2004, 2009, 2014) as well as regarding local conceptions of the body (1996, 2010). And, many have established fieldsites in the various islands off of the eastern coast of New Ireland (ex: Bainton, 2008; Denner, 2010, 2012; Foster, 1995; Gilespie, 2018; Hemer, 2016; MacIntyre, 2003a, 2003b).

Albert, Kingston and Wolffram have all worked in the southernmost region of the island, the Lak/ Siar region. Albert worked in the region in the 1980s, while Kingston and Wolffram conducted

their fieldwork in the late 90s and early 2000s. All three wrote about the elaborate mortuary practices in the region and about the male secret society called the *Tubuan*, as well as other ritual performances and institutions. Further north, though still south of the regional town center, Namatanai, Stephan Jackson and Alexander Bolyanatz both worked in the Sursurunga region in the 1990s (Jackson, 1995, 1996; Bolyanatz, 1994,1995). Bolyanatz centred his work in Tekedan village. Finally, Antje Denner, worked in the Anir islands in the early 2000s. Her work focused on the various ritual performances common in the region and the categorization of these as well as their relation to one another (2010, 2012).

These anthropologists have all left traces throughout the region. During my time in the field on many occasions I spoke with individuals who had worked with them, who mentioned portions of their names and work that they remembered. Before I even arrived to Samo I spoke with a woman from the Tanga islands who had grown up with an anthropologist around, and remembered fondly how he would play with the children and recounted with pride how he had spoken with them in their own language. Later on, I met a chief from the Siar/Lak region who had worked with a man who, he proudly recounted, had eaten the *buai* that they had given them. Later, on a truck ride to town I sat next to a woman from further south who had known a woman called Antje who had come around collecting information on their *kastom* and had later written a book based on this work. In fact, one of the women in Samo, a *tambu* of mine, said that she had spoken to a woman who had come through collecting *tumbuna* stories and similar information many years before. Finally, the traces that had been left in Tekedan were incredibly strong. The village being nearby, many people had known the couple who had settled there and, in partnership with SIL, learned their language and provided the area with a translation of the Bible. They loved the idea that in some far off country there would be people speaking their language amongst themselves which no one around them would be able to understand, that this would truly allow them to have secret conversations. In short, the history of anthropology in the region is not only an academic one, the evidence of it is not only found in academic journals and in the theories advanced in books published, read and then discussed in university classrooms. It is also one that has left a multitude of very real and felt traces amongst the communities that these individuals have passed through.

Chapter 3

The Study of Masks

The word mask can evoke a variety of things. The concept of masks and masking are generally understood as a means of concealing, of deceiving, sometimes for good and sometimes for bad. A concealment which can be achieved with a small black mask that surrounds the eyes, with a ski mask, with the strategic use of makeup, with a dark night and shadows, etc… In Western cultures masking can be used idiomatically to refer to hiding the truth, no physical hiding of a person and their face needed. Indeed masks and masking can carry a broad range of meanings, of uses, of purposes. Further, masks have existed across history and cultures, the continued presence of this phenomena indicates that masking must be important not only within the cultures in which they appear, but also more broadly to humans. I argue that through analysis of masking practices very interesting insights can be made into local life and even more broadly into human nature.

Given the wide range of things that this term can evoke, before beginning, I will need to specify what I am referring to. I follow Pernet's definition in talking about masks. That masks are objects that fully or partially cover the face (Pernet, 1992:6). That being said, I base myself on this definition for reasons of practicality and clarity, not because there aren't a wealth of interesting aspects to be analyzed beyond the limits of the definition that I will set.

I follow this definition for two main reasons. First, because the masks that I studied in New Ireland are physical objects that cover the face. While these masks fully covered the face, I do acknowledge that many masks do not fully cover the face. Further, as I will explain later I follow the idea that those who observe masks are involved in a process of suspension of disbelief and are well aware of the identity of the person behind the mask, as such whether the mask fully covers the face or not does not necessarily make a great difference. Second, I choose to follow this definition because of it's simplicity. Many definitions make reference to transformation and to the inclusion of elements relating to realms beyond the human. For example, Crumrine and Halpin define masking "as the ritual transformation of the human actor into a being of another order." (1983:2). This is, in many cases, very true. However, such transformation can occur without the use of a mask and sometimes masks (physical objects covering the face) do not accomplish this. I do not wish to invalidate such definitions, they were built for certain uses and served those uses very well, leading to very interesting results. However, they can limit the

inclusion of certain practices and my interests lie, as the definition states, in those practices where a physical object is used to cover the face, and in what occurs in these situations.

Masks have existed across history and cultures. To provide a true overview of this practice would be misleading, as something would always be missed. If only because of new archaeological finds. It is clear that the use of masks goes back very far in time. Archaeologists argue that ancient Egyptian representations of humans with animal heads represent mask wearing, as it would fit with with traditions of mask wearing, such as wearing a jackal mask during funerary practices that are known (Krzyzaniak & Kroeper, 1991:59). Going back even further, there is an antler mask on display in the British Museum dating to 7,500BCE and Israeli archaeologists recently discovered a mask dating to 9,000BCE corresponding to the Neolithic period in the Levant (Hershman, 2014:8).

Between the ancient history discussed above and the present day a lot has happened, far too much to get into here. What is important to note is how masking has come to be perceived in the West. The West is often and rather unfairly given prominence and treated as important in academic and non-academic texts. Here, I refer to it as important as I am writing from within this context - for both myself and many of my readers this context forms the backdrop of our understandings and therefore influences how we understand the concept of masking, making it important to take into consideration. In the West, masking has come to have a generally negative connotation. In academic terms, this usually gets traced back to classical Greco-Roman influences. First, back to Ancient Greece, as in this time and culture, the eyes were viewed as a window to the soul (Almila & Inglis, 2017:279), a concept which we still hold dear today. Indeed, people generally think that in order to see how a person truly feels it is necessary to look into their eyes. There is an idea, that no matter what a person may say (truth or deception) their eyes will betray their true feelings or/and intentions. As such, to hide the eyes means to deprive the interlocutor of the ability to verify whether the masked individual is being truthful. And, why would one want to do this other than to deceive? Further, this negative view of masking can be attributed to the concept of the person that we have, one which we owe to Christianity, came to be in the Middle Ages and is attributed to Augustine (Tseelon, 2001:4) of the person as an individual who has ownership over their bodies - who are “conscious, autonomous, free, and responsible” (Mauss, 1985:18) - and a possessed of a soul. A conception of the person which is owed to the influences of Latin and Greek moralists and Christianity (Mauss, 1985:17-19).

This is quite different from how masks are used in various theater traditions around the globe. For instance, in traditional Chinese forms of theater, characters were always masked, and continue to be, and the mask does not conceal, it provides information. Just by looking at the masks of the actors or/and how their faces have been painted, spectators know their age, social position and moral character (Bogdanowska-Jakubowska, 2010:84). They function more or less as a set of stock characters. Indeed, it was the same with the characters of commedia-dell'arte masks. Where the masks acted as extensions of the actors and indicated to the audience what the character's temperament was like, what it was that they were and were not likely to do (Chaffee & Crick, 2014:15).

A further way in which the 'western' context in which we live has shaped our understanding of masks is the influence of the museum. Within western culture there has been a certain 'museumification' of masks. When Western explorers, academics, individuals go abroad and see the masks that other cultures use in various rituals at various events they see them as beautiful objects to be taken away and preserved. Travelers in the 19th century and earlier collected these objects and brought them back to Europe to be placed in museums. Today, tourists go to these places and buy carved souvenir versions of these masks to decorate their homes. However, the aesthetic lens through which these people see these objects does not necessarily reflect how these objects are locally perceived. In the Western view objects of art are individual objects that hold their value within themselves and may therefore be moved and placed in a great variety of places, alone or with other objects, without loosing their meaning (Rea, 2017:106). This is based on a contemporary western view of possessive identity. Views, which the anthropological literature has emphasized, are not shared in the Melanesian context (ex: Strathern, 1988:11-17; Gell, 1998). Not only do these objects not act alone, but an understanding of them as objects of purely aesthetic appreciation may not exist nor have been relevant to their use (ex: Gell, 1998:ix).

These are the two main ways in which Western perspectives on masking have affected the study of masking practices across cultures. As always, it is hard to get past these pre-conceptions, since they are so fundamental to the ways in which we think and see the world. But, putting our masking practices in the same field of study as those of other cultures, engaging in comparative studies, may help with this and could even lead to some insights into human nature.

Masks have been analysed in a multitude of ways: to construct grand theories (Pernet, 1992:7); as a means of law enforcement (Mack, 2013:20); as having a didactic purpose (Napier, 1986:9),

as a means of social control (Okafor, 1994:7); as contributing to the building of communities (Strother, 1998:16); as a cultural political tool (ex: Dömötör, 1984; Creed, 2011); as a means of liberating individuals from their mundane lives (ex:Bakhtin, 1984; Seidman, 2008; Stewart, 1986:289-91); as institutions of males domination (ex: Kasfir, 1998:18); as tools to communicate with the spirits (ex: Rysdyk, 2014:136-143); as spirits (ex: Tateyama, 2016:26); as components of theater performances (ex: Coldiron, 2000; Emigh, 1979). However, it is important to note that, as Tonkin states: “The uses to which certain masks are put can't be used to explain the existence of masks.” (1992, 230-1) since all of these things can also occur without masks. As such, in analyzing masks in general, in getting at what they are and why they have the effects that they have, I will move my focus away from the concrete results that they have in particular circumstances to focus on the masks (and the elements of the context that assist them) themselves. However, while I completely agree with Tonkin's argument, there are times when particular cases may illuminate a more general effect. Further, when analyzing a particular case, or region, the study of what masks do, what effects they have and how these effects are used, once again become of central importance to a thorough analysis. Though the uses of masks do not determine what they are and how they work, an examination of these uses, and a consideration of just how variable these are, is an element of a detailed and localized understanding of masking practices.

I will now provide a brief overview of some of the main topics or themes which have been addressed within the academic study of masks. I aim to provide a brief backdrop to the study.

A feature of masks which regularly arises in analyses is their ability to transform. This ability plays out at various levels: the transformation can be at the level of individual identities, group identities, in relation to ancestors, in relation to spirits. It can be seen as something reassuring or something threatening. The transformation is evident to those watching, as it is to those in the masks - though it remains to be seen if and to what extent these perceptions of transformation match.

Masking practices are frequently discussed in relation to the realm of spirits. Analyses often emphasize that there is at least a group of individuals who believe, or are supposed to believe, that the masked figures are in fact the spirits. For instance, Tooker writes that: "Men do not propitiate the gods; they become the gods by the mere act of putting on the mask. (1968:1774). However, most authors note that this is more of an agreed upon suspension of disbelief than an actual belief. For instance, Kasfir notes that in Africa the idea that masked figures are the embodiment of spirits is a common structure of belief (1998:18). It is very similar in Papua New

Guinea where masked figures are often meant to be taken to be spirits by non-initiates (ex: Balmaseda Barroso, 2016:11; Lattas, 1989; Read, 1965; Tuzin, 1980).

Generally a focus is placed on how masking practices may embody spirits or allow for communion with them. An instance of such an analysis is that of a Balinese Topeng performance carried out by Emigh (1979). His analysis follows the preparations for a performance, which his friend and informant Kakul gave. Emigh describes Topeng as being informed by a tradition in which spirit possession existed, but as a theatricalized version of this. As he writes about Kakul's preparations, it becomes clear that the mask has an important role in the performance and that it lends something to it which goes beyond the force of the individual human. Before performing Kakul had, as his father had before him, placed the mask at the foot of his bed so that the mask would appear in his dreams (1979:17). And, as he prepared to put on the mask, he dedicated himself to finding the will of the mask (1979:17). Ultimately, this meant that while performing, the mask had an effect on Kakul, on his performance, yet it did not mean that Kakul was embodying a spirit nor that he was possessed: "the dancer was not possessed; but his behaviour was transformed." (1979:17). Indeed, locally the word *taksu* can be used to refer both to an actor's presence or to ancestral spirits (1979:16). There is a clear connection between the realm of the spirits and masked performance. It is also clear that the mask has a sort of 'life of its own' which deeply shapes the performance. Yet, the performance remains a performance.

Emigh's work focuses on the journey of one specific performer, yet it remains external. Most analyses of masking practices are done in this way: from the outside of the masks (though it should be noted that Emigh did study Topeng himself and did go on to perform masked) (Foley, 2011:451). First hand information from masked performers is scarce and even the information that is available may not get us far. According to Ottenburg little is known about the experience/ feeling of the masked person in performance (1982:156). Most accounts are from external observation and even those who have both performed masked and written about the experience, have had difficulty translating it. Indeed, Margaret Coldiron, herself a masked performer notes the difficulty that she has in remembering exactly what it was like when she was in the mask (2004:299). Emmanuel Onwuzolum who was himself initiated into an Igbo masking practice found that it was difficult to establish the extent to which participants actually felt and believed "it is difficult to describe with certainty and clarity, the precise quality of perceptions and beliefs shared by people with respect to these matters." (*in* Crumrine & Halpin, 1983:220). The very fact that people themselves cannot describe the experiences that they

undergo is an important piece of data, indicating that the experience is indeed different from that of daily life.

Interviews with performers also support the idea that a transformation does occur. Onwuzolum notes that in interviewing Igbo masquerade performers “I was told that the dancer felt himself undergo some sort of transformation” (1977:4). Reed recounts the same thing saying that Geue Gbe told him that: “From the instant that he places himself behind the mask, he becomes different. He is inhabited by a wisdom, he is transported, he transcends and at the moment, he becomes at the same time the physical mask that you see, and he becomes at the same time spirit.” (2003:87). Evidently masking is a process which leads to transformation, though the exact nature of this transformation remains unclear, or ambiguous.

Another feature of masks which regularly arises in analyses is that of ambiguity (ex: Meineck, 2011; Napier, 1986; Tonkin, 1979; Tooker, 1968; Tsëëlon, 2001). Masks are not one precise thing, they do not serve a precise function, but that is exactly what makes them so alluring and gives them their power. Indeed, portrait painters find ambiguity more important than neutrality in their paintings, as ambiguity has the effect of drawing in the attention far more. (Meineck, 2011:134). Just as in portraits, the fundamental ambiguous characteristic of masks helps to make us pay attention to them, it can account for the attention grabbing effect that masks tend to have on us. Emigh analyses the facial expressions on masks to make just this argument (2011). He shows that the facial expression on demon faced masks are not quite the expression that would be expected from a display of threat, almost, but not quite (2011:127). Thus leaving us unsure of what we are seeing, the ambiguity making our attention linger. However, it is not just the physical facial expression carved into the mask that creates this ambiguity, it is also the context, the sociocultural and personal circumstances surrounding a viewing of the mask. Emigh uses the Rangda mask as an example, Rangda is a well-known Balinese mask. He tells us the story surrounding the mask, how this shapes people's expectations, interpretations and experience, but also that for each individual experience the emotions can be different, further that these may even vary within the same individual from year to year (2011:132-133).

Tonkin, in her classic analysis of masks says that masks have to be ambiguous, because they are creations of the human imagination and imagination implies ambiguity (1979:240). She thinks that looking at cognitive aspects, cognitive acts, is important and hasn't (or hadn't) been done sufficiently by anthropologists (1979:238). I follow her in this. Though anthropology, very correctly, places an emphasis on either society or culture (or both), our brains and bodies, cognitive and somatosensory elements, are also very important to how we experience the world

around us. And I will delve further into how these elements can shed light on masking practices later in this chapter.

This element of ambiguity is also noted for how it's ability to give a great deal of power to masks. Tooker notes that it can be argued "that it is this ambiguity that both gives the study of masking its fascination and indicates why masks themselves are so often regarded as having power." (1983:13). In this sense, the ambiguous and transformative aspects of masking go hand in hand.

The study of masks also relates to the study of selves, of personhood, of identity. Analysis of masks, has emphasized how masks allow people to leave behind their everyday personhood. Masks make it easy to shed conventions that constrain people in their everyday roles because by concealing the face they divorce the actors' normal personal identity from their current conduct giving them the ability to transcend, "to soar beyond the level of commonplace reality" (Honigman, 1977:278). Sometimes this may be in favour of a sort of identity-less anonymity (such as that given by Venecian masks), sometimes in a sort of inversion (as in carnivals when the poor dress as the rich and the rich as the poor). It can also be in order to take on the identity of spirits or ancestors. In the case of the Ge, Reed notes that everyone knows that it is a man behind the mask, but that in discourse this is not acknowledged, in discourse the mask is a spirit (2003:88). This is a common trope present in Sursurunga in the practice of the Tubuan (described in detail in chapter 4) and in the practice of the *urtarang* (during which women hide inside houses as men wander the village playing instruments which represent the sound of spirits). Sometimes the mask serves to convey anonymity and another identity, such as in the case of executioner's masks (indeed, as I reference later this may have been one of the origins of the kipong masking practices in New Ireland).

Masks have also been analyzed in terms of semiotics and symbolism. This analysis is often rooted in Western ideologies which imagine masks as art objects, to be examined in the same sort of way that one would a piece of 17th century art hung on a museum wall. This sort of analysis is difficult to entirely leave behind as the masks, body coverings, music and other elements present at masquerades are rich in symbols and references. For instance, in the case of *tubuan*s, each conical 'head' has it's own design and the designs, the various elements within it, have symbolic meanings and make references which may be understood by those with the necessary knowledge. To ignore how these designs represent certain things, and then hold meaning for groups involved, would be to miss important pieces of information. However, it is

impossible to truly understand the role of masks, how they work, how they are used, etc... in a particular context or in general if you limit yourself to this kind of analysis.

Analyzing masks as symbols, or signs, etc... is also valuable because it places masks within a whole semiotic system. This kind of analysis goes much further than one that treats masks as western-styled art objects, getting at how the semiotics of masks can be used to erase and create identities, to shape social relations and hierarchies, and to shape people's ideologies. It gets at how masks are a part of narratives, how these narratives are shaped by various players and then work to affect the worlds within which they exist.

According to Saussure, the study of semiotics is about studying the signifier and signified of signs (Britannica, 2024). Following this framework, the physical object that is the mask would be the signifier. Much as the written or aural sound of a word are the signifier. They are both the concrete part of the sign. While the signified, in the case of linguistics is the meaning that is attached to this concrete signifier. So, with masks it would be the meaning that is associated with that physical object. This analysis would be most likely to work in terms of masks such as those of traditional Chinese operas. In these operas there is a very specific set of characters, or rather of tropes. Each of these has a corresponding mask. The audience, just by looking at the mask will be able to know if the character represented is good or bad, rich or poor, what gender they are, etc... There is a clear relationship between the signifier, the mask itself, and the signified, the meaning that this mask refers to. However, I follow Tonkin, who does not consider masks to be Saussurian signs (Tonkin, 1979:241). She says that they cannot be seen as such because while some communities may interpret their masks as such, not all do, which means that masks as such cannot be interpreted as Saussurian signs (1979:241). Indeed, returning to Emigh's example of the Rangda character in Balinese masking practices: the same mask can come to mean - to signify - many different things to different people or even to the same person over many viewings. Rangda is not a sign that has a particular constant signified, what is signified varies between people and time. As such, it is important in a study of masking practices to take into consideration the roles of individuals.

The other dominant framework in semiotics is Piercean. Pierce placed signs into a three-fold typology of: icons, indexes and symbols. The icon is something which denotes the object through a shared resemblance. The most common example being that of the man/woman drawings on bathroom doors. Indexes denote the object through an actual connection. The example here being that smoke is an index of fire. And, there are symbols, which denote the object only through interpretation. Donald Pollock uses Piercean semiotics to analyze masks

and argues that "just as the expression of identity calls upon certain culturally ordered semiotic media, so too the masking of identity." (1995:592). He builds his analysis on the framework that both identity and masking are semiotic processes. He uses this semiotic framework to move away from previous analyses which have focused on what masks do in order to look at how they work. His view is that they work semiotically, by combining the iconicity and indexicality of the signs of identity (1995:581-2). In his view, answers are to be found here, not in looking at psychological or cognitive frameworks (1995). Because identity is not something that comes from inside, it is not something that is fixed or that exists prior to one's position in the sociocultural world. He is looking at personhood, and follows Harris in viewing persons as agents of meaningful actions (1995:582). This means that personhood is something that is defined by a particular sociocultural context, that it is not equivalent to the individual or individuality. This kind of personhood is defined by society, by indicating to society, in ways that they are capable of reading - ie. through predetermined indexes and icons, that you are a particular person. Indeed, it is particularly relevant here, in a Melanesian context, as Melanesia is known for featuring societies where personhood is configured relationally.

Further, Pollock does not believe that the mask works by acting on the face. As there are many other times when the suspension of disbelief can happen even without the face being covered, or with it being covered only partially. Since these things can all happen without face coverings, he believes that one also cannot look at the face to identify how masks work (1995:584). This leads him to conclude that the mask has no special ability beyond that of the semiotic.

He provides a rich analysis and makes many strong arguments. However, an analysis of masks, and of anything for that matter, must rest on a multiplicity of analytical view points if it is to truly be complete. When it comes to symbolical or semiotic analyses of masks, there are valuable insights to be garnered. Symbolical analyses allow us to understand the decorations and depictions of the masks and their accompanying costumes. Allowing for a better understanding of what they represent and how they fit into the lived experiences of those involved: how they come to mean various things for various people and how people may use these signs to their advantage or disadvantage. However, to reduce the study of masks to any single paradigm would be to limit the knowledge that we are capable of collecting on these practices.

While the suspension of disbelief may be possible without a physical mask, this does not mean that the mask does not act on the face. Many things may achieve similar results, through both similar and very different paths. It is not only by covering the face that the mask works, but this is a contributing element. This is evident simply because of how masks, objects that cover the

face, are so common cross-culturally and historically. I will further discuss the effects of covering the face when discussing how masks and the brain work. Though the fact of having the face covered can have semiotic meaning, it also affects performance, fits into frameworks of secrecy, etc....

I believe that including an examination of cognitive and psychological aspects is very important. I understand the cognitive aspects to be those that have to do with cognition: these need to be looked at both in terms of biology and the brain. The human body is built in particular ways, these can (and are) altered by culture. How we see and understand anything is a product of a mixing of these two things. Additionally, while anthropology and psychology have long kept separate, it is impossible to understand instances of masking without understanding the individual circumstances of both the performers and the audience.

Masks and power

Power is intertwined with masks and masking practices in a myriad of ways. Masks have been associated with law enforcement and social control across cultures, but they are also associated with rule breakers. Masks are also tied to power in that they have the power to change identities, to render anonymous, to provide with various kinds of new identities. Across all of these cases we see how masks are powerful, yet this power does not seem to work or to be oriented in any particular way.

Masks are often associated with law enforcement, especially in smaller scale societies in Africa and Oceania and even more so in historical accounts of these societies. The *Tubuan*, one of the masks still in use in southern New Ireland, acts as a rule enforcer. Accounts from the turn of the 19th century, when missionaries, merchants and colonizers were arriving, tell of a place that had no clear system of leadership but where the *tubuan* acted as enforcer of rules and punisher (Tateyama, 2006:77-83). Even today, the *Tubuan* is still in charge of infractions to rules relating to the *Tubuan*. Around the same period, in neighbouring Vanuatu it was noted that the local *Tamate* secret society and maskers performed the same functions as the *Tubuan*s did (Coddrington, 1972:69-75). Indeed, across the Pacific Islands, missionaries and colonizers did not like these societies (each for their own reasons) and wanted to do away with them, but found that they couldn't "In truth, the social power of these societies was too great to be dissolved..." (Coddrington, 1972:74)

This is not just a reality of a particular time and place. Many of the masks performed in the grasslands of Cameroon used to be worn by executioners (ex: Argenti, 2019:59). Indeed, in Europe, in the Middle Ages, executioners often wore masks to protect their identities (Grimes, 1975:515; Makarius, 1983:196-7) and mummers sometimes wore masks as a cover for real attack (Tonkin, 1992:229). The masks of the Mmuo society, in present day Nigeria, were used as police and executioners (Onwuzolum, 1977:101). And masks are often used to punish offenders of their own laws. Sande masquerades have a mask called *ndoli jowei* which is used to punish the male offenders of Sande laws (Sande masks are a relatively rare example of a female masquerade - the question of gender and masks will be touched on later).

Further, masks may also act as a kind of law enforcement upon their members. Mack and Argenti have both noted that the men who perform these masks are usually young and unmarried (Argenti, 2019:190; Mack, 2013). They are no longer children but have not yet to establish the bonds of marriage and children which will not only make them fully adult, but beset them with social obligations and keep them well within the outlines of society. If there were nothing to keep these men occupied, to do so in their local area and within the strict guidance of their elders, they could go and do anything. Indeed Onwuzolum also noted on this in the context of Igbo masking. Noting that initiation into the secret societies responsible for masking practices gives these young men a traditionally valid avenue for expressing their hidden impulses and that, through rigorous instruction, structuring of emotional responses and the presence of a cohort, it avoids fights between sons and fathers (1977:103-104).

The previous are a small selection of examples, that demonstrate how masks have been used in societies to help maintain law and order: whether this be policing behaviour in the community as a whole or within members of a group. We can see that masks are used to keep social order, whatever the terms of order of that particular society may be. What we see in these examples is the use of masks for maintaining peace and cohesion in society. How masking groups act to create social cohesion and purpose amongst young men who might otherwise not have socially validated means of expressing themselves. We also see how masks are used to police and punish bad behaviours. In extreme cases such as those of execution, wearing a mask provides the wearer with both authority and anonymity. By wearing a mask they are separating the nature of the acts that they are carrying out from their everyday person. Indeed, many different individuals may at different moments don the mask. Making it such that responsibility does not fall on the individual behind the mask - responsibility as attributed by members of the groups as well as by the individual themselves. Further, narratives regarding the mask and how it is seen will give it more power in these situations than any particular individual might be able to collect -

it may be seen as being connected to spirits, to devils, to powerful people, etc... and these associations may lead to people regarding the mask with fear, respect, etc… Ultimately giving greater authority in these situations.

Narratives and the emotions that they elicit are very important to the power that these masks assume in the keeping of social order. Narratives not only give the masks the power that they have to punish in a particular moment, but lead to the perpetuation of systems within which they will continue holding this power. For example, there are frequently heavy punishments for disrespecting the masks themselves or for sharing information which is supposed to remain secret. This impedes the ability of those who may not enter the secret societies from acquiring information about the masks that might diminish the authority that they hold or allow those outside of the secret societies to appropriate some of this power for themselves. Systems of initiation also uphold the narratives and social hierarchies needed for the masks to maintain their authority. Initiation involves educating young members in the practices but also involves an emotional aspect that makes the hierarchy very clear. Indeed, Kingston analyzes modern *Tubuan* practices to argue that they are a way of reproducing the social world. stating that it: “is the poetic image produced by and for the ongoing reproduction of the Lak social world.” This reproduction is a part of the power of masks. It is not that the physical masks are responsible for the reproduction, but rather that the power that masks have in situations of law and order stems from social realities that have placed them and also maintain them in these positions of authority. And that performances of the masks contribute to this reproduction. So, the mask both holds power and is a part of how it is created.

However, masks are not always used by those following the rules, they are not always worn by those whose aim is the maintenance of social order. Indeed, in the modern world we often associate masks with those who break rules. Bank robbers wear ski masks to hide their identities and assist them in committing their crimes. While carnival goers wear masks, also to hide their identities so that they may behave with license. These are two different situations in that the aim of one is quite serious and potentially harmful to others, while the other is primarily about having fun. Yet, they are also extremely similar. Both are about giving anonymity so that a person may break social norms while avoiding that their day to day identity be affected by these behaviours (much as in the case of masks worn by executioners).

The mask can be used by both rule enforcers and rule breakers because of it's power. This is because of the mask's transformative power and how it acts on personhood. Putting on a mask allows one to temporarily step aside from one's day to day person. Thus, allowing one to

behave in ways that will not be associated with that person and their identity. "Person and personhood are important for social interaction, but impersonality and anonymity are requirements for social enforcement or social violation." (Grimes, 1975:122-3). Here the word “impersonality” perhaps best captures the situation, those involved have momentarily left behind their regular social person and personality, instead they have adopted the social role of the mask. The social role of the mask being one of anonymous impersonality since it does not belong to any particular human being. This suspension of the person, of personhood itself, allows people to act without fear of reprise, as it creates a space of non-violence around the masked figure (Makarius, 1983:199), something which onlookers know and instills a certain unease. The nature and degree of this unease will depend on the mask and how local narratives position it within that society. For example, the carnival mask will not stir the same unease as the masks of the Ku Klux Klan. The one being understood, within a 'western' cultural context, to be a way of freeing oneself from the unpleasant constraints of day to day life, the other being seen as allowing racist individuals to hurt other human beings.

The fear that people often have of masks can be seen through their constant regulation. This shows how people are very aware of the power that masks provide. This power, in modern western discourse is often phrased as freedom. The idea being that when you put on a mask, such as those worn at carnivals or masked balls, you have the freedom to behave in ways that you would not normally allow yourself to because of your fear of social reprisal. The power is in the mask in the sense that when someone puts on that mask they may take on this power. For example, anyone who puts on an executioner's mask may become the executioner and anyone who puts on a carnival mask may live the carnival with license. This transformative ability, or freedom, is precisely the power of the mask, and it is a power which can challenge that of others. We see the fear that this freedom generates amongst leaders, government and other powerful institutions in the frequency with which there have been laws and regulations placed on masks. A well known example is the long history of the Venetian regulations on who could and couldn't wear a mask. Though Venetians did not view masks as sinful or demonic (Johnson, 2011:105), they did still recognize their power and feel that this needed to be limited in certain situations. For example, prohibitions were placed on wearing masks in churches (which are also institutions of power). And a range of varying prohibitions were placed on when women had to, could and could not mask. For instance, in the 16th century prostitutes were not allowed to wear masks, facing punishments if it was found that they had (Johnson, 2011:107) and, later, in the 18th century, all women who were required to wear a mask at the theater (Johnson, 2011:108). Despite their acceptance of masking as a legitimate and valuable practice, authorities were also

clearly aware of its power and strove to limit it for particular groups of people and used it to demarcate certain groups of people.

Looking at masks as having transformative power places a needed focus on how they do not just take away identity but also create and enact identities. In the case of the executioners' masks in the grassfields of Cameroon, anyone who puts on this mask will be able to enact the identity of executioner.

Masks can also transform identities through their strategic use in arenas of identity politics. Not only do they transform the identity of the individual wearer, but this transformed identity can be played in ways that will then serve the interests of particular groups after the masks have come off. A great example of this is given in de Jong's ethnography of the *kumpo* masquerade in Senegal. This masks is associated with secret societies and traditionally it is associated with spirits and with maintaining order in villages, but is also increasingly being performed at various festivals and in other events made possible by a modern global economy (2007). De Jong comments on a performance where the *kumpo* was used to create a shared identity between those performing and the politician that they were performing for. The hope being that if they created a sense of shared identity they, the group of people involved in putting on the performance, would be able to gain political favour in the form of access to state resources (2007:79-81). Along similar lines, in Papua New Guinea the state has organized many festivals focused on masked performances in the hopes of achieving peace between groups with a long history of conflict, of drawing in tourists and their money, and of creating a national identity (to bring together what are otherwise hundreds of ethnic identities). Here we see an interesting crossroads of powers: the masks themselves are powerful and can achieve these kinds of goals, but there are individuals and groups choosing how to use the power of the masks. Once again, ambiguity dominates.

This is similar to the power that theater performances have. Those using masks or not. The performers, the play, the show being performed, have a grasp over the audience. The audience's attention is completely drawn into the narrative and emotions that the actors on stage appear to be living. By suspending their realities and immersing themselves in this performance the audience even feels some of what the characters must be feeling. The draw, the capture on their attention, is powerful. Not only in the moment, but also in terms of how the story told to and felt by the audience affects their ideas and beliefs. Stories often reinforce the narratives, tropes and values of a society. But they can also question these. And they can change people's views. This has been proven in many cases with the use of radio and television

dramas to promote certain behavioural changes. For instance, the soap “Tinka Tinka Sukh” in India was designed to promote gender equality and led to individuals changing their opinions, as evidenced by many leaving behind the practice of dowry (Singhal and Rogers, 1998). It has been used to build awareness of HIV/AIDS in Tanzania (Brown et al, 2003). Miguel Sabido put this to use in many Mexican telenovelas of the 1970s and 1980s (Brown et al, 2003:92). This was also done earlier when Elaine Perkins used radio soap operas in the 1950s in Jamaica in order to promote such diverse things as mosquito control and family planning (Brown et al, 2003:92).

Stories are powerful. In the case of performed stories, the power seems to be exerted by the performers, they are after all what we see delivering the performance to us. But how this power is directed is controlled by people other than those delivering the powerful performance, often even beyond those writing the powerful script behind it. In the previous example of the initiatives carried out through the medium of Indian soap operas it was conducted by a concrete entity. However, generally there is no such concrete entity, it will be be the values and beliefs of the people involved in organizing the performance (writing, directing, funding, providing theater space, acting, etc...) that shape these performances. Making the performances a way for the continued reproduction of social realities, but realities into which small alterations make their way. This is why I argue for taking individuals into consideration and in particular for an anthropology which includes an examination of the sensorial, affective and atmospheric (which I will discuss further in later chapters). Further, this points to some of the issues that may arise as practices become heritage, a process which codifies and stabilizes practices that are in reality dynamic (see chapter 8).

Masks are a part of a performance, they are only one element of the performance and the performance itself is organized according to the ideas and desires of many involved parties. No matter how captivating and powerful they are, they are subjected to power as well. In the 'modern west' we often think of the person underneath the mask as being free to behave however they wish. Ottenburg, who has written an analytical overview of masking practices in Africa (1982), notes that the freeing aspect of masking do not mean that the performers are omnipotent and not subject to rules themselves (1982:172). In fact, usually masked performances are highly coded behaviours and "They are ultimately under the authority of the leaders of the community.” (1982:172). Indeed, in the case of *Tubuan* masked dances, performers are chosen amongst all of the young men in the secret society of the same name by elders. These elders chose them because of how well they are able to follow the very strict and precise dance steps. Then, before performing, they must undergo very strict regimes of

isolation, fasting and ritual preparation. While they dance, older men who know the dance steps will watch carefully to see that they are accurately performing all of the steps. These performers are by no means free to use the transformative powers of the mask in any way. They only dictate how things are in so far as they follow traditionally valid norms.

Once again the ambiguity of masks arises. They both remove and establish identity. They are clearly powerful, but their power derives from narratives and customs and is kept only insofar as they act within the bounds provided by these.

Masks and Women

An analysis of masks and power that did not address the question of women and masks would be incomplete since women are excluded from many masking practices around the world. Exactly what they are excluded from may vary, sometimes they may not wear and perform the masks, sometimes they also may not know the some secret knowledge behind the masks, sometimes they may not see the masks, being required to run and hide when the masks come out. They must respect these restrictions on threat that harm may befall them. The exact nature of the harm varies, but is always a bodily harm of some sort, usually one affecting their reproductive ability: rendering them infertile, making them abort on the spot, etc…. There are also threats of bodily harm such as having boils erupt all over the body and, in the most severe cases, death (ex: Denner, 2012; Marriott, 1899:23; Gillison & Gillison, 2020:1; Hays, 1988:98; Tuzin, 2017:345). Indeed, following on what has been said in the last section, it seems that in many cultures men have capitalized on the power of masks in order to enact, maintain and assert their dominance in society. Though women may be excluded in the aforementioned ways, this does not mean that they are excluded. In many cases they are actually central to performances. Women are often involved in preparing food and other elements of the events at which the masks perform (ex: Argenti, 2019:189; Gagliardi, 2018:744; Harley, 1968:33; Knauft, 2004:88; Powdermaker, 2012:88). Further, when women are excluded from the masked performance, they are not excluded from the performance as a whole as it is often for them that it is being put on. They are the audience, whether visible or hidden, and the audience is also a part of the performance.

In the South Pacific (as well as parts of Africa), masks are often associated with secret male societies. As their name indicates, these societies are exclusively male and women are strictly forbidden from participating in their activities and from knowing exactly what this knowledge is. Of course, anthropologists have questioned the degree to which women are actually ignorant of

what the men are doing. It would seem unlikely that no woman had had her husband tell her a few pieces of what was going on. Indeed, Tuzin, gives an example of men sharing some pig meat from the men's houses' secret activities with their wives (2017:349). This was a highly taboo act, but men still seemed to think that it was a fair and right thing to do. For example, the West African Komo and Kono societies are male secret societies which include most of the men in the village. These societies will hold masked performances and strictly exclude women from these. Depending on the particular village in which the society is located the severity of this exclusion varies. In some villages women may see the performances while in others they may not see anything. For instance, Gagliardi worked in western Africa, here even she, the anthropologist - a person often granted special access to these sorts of things - was not allowed to see the masks ever, in performance, in storage, or in picture (2018b).

Discussions have risen over the question of male domination of women through these practices. Many have simply argued that masking practices and other practices of male secret societies are a means for men to assert their power over women (ex: Eves, 2009:184; Neumann, 1988; Bradley, 1982; Tonkin, 1992). Some have argued that it stems from a male insecurity (ex: Bamberger, 1974; Herdt, 2003). Many have pointed out that women either do or likely know much more than they let on and play along with the role of not knowing (ex: Tuzin, 1980:215; Knauft, 2004:187; Johnson *in* Willis, 2017:64; Onwuzolum, 1977:8; Ottenburg, 1982:155; Pernet, 1982:47-8; Read, 1965:146). Leaving unclear whether it comes from an existing dominance, a place of insecurity or something else entirely. Indeed, at this point the question has become unanswerable. It has become a question arising from the imposition of academic gaze and not from the contexts themselves. As such, the best hope of elucidating the question in any given context might be by referring to Mahmood's take on agency (as explained in chapter 6) as something which does not have to be about breaking down norms but may be about how individuals actively seek to shape themselves and their surroundings in order to obtained certain desired outcomes (2011:155-7). Such an analysis could emphasize the ways in which women may desire and find it beneficial to play their roles within these contexts, much in the same way that men may find it beneficial (but also constraining or perhaps limiting) to play their roles. Still, I cannot disagree with those who, in many of these cases, argue that secret male masking practice are tools for male domination though each case has its own intricacies.

It is also difficult to address questions regarding the presence of women in masking practices and their opinion on it for a variety of reasons. The first being that much of the ethnographic data collected is from male anthropologists speaking to male informants. The second being that it is not actually all women who are forbidden from seeing the masks. The third being that even

when women are not wearing or seeing masks, they are involved because they act as audience members. And the fourth being that our own Western view on the world often captures an inaccurate picture of how indigenous peoples understand and live their customs.

To begin, anthropology was for a long time a male dominated domain. It is no longer. But many ethnographies, especially from earlier research in Papua New Guinea, were written by men (Bonnemere, 2004:2). These men primarily spoke with male informants and these male informants told them how they saw the world. This is very true in places like Papua New Guinea where the separation of men and women is pronounced. This means that male informants have a view on the world that is informed by other men and by their culture's male outlook on the world. This is what ethnographers would have been told, written down and taken to be the factual truth which then made it into their ethnographies. However, there is no way of knowing that women agreed with this outlook, that they would not have provided contradictory information. Given the gender segregation of general life in these areas, it is very likely that they would have had at least a slightly different take on the matter. However, that same gender segregation kept local women from being able to communicate with male ethnographers as freely as the male community members. This does not mean that ethnographies collected in this way are entirely inaccurate. They did after all collect a perspective on the world and valuable information about customs, much of which they would not have been able to collect had they only spoken to women and not men. The information remains unbalanced and it is difficult to make conclusions about women's position in relation to masking practices without having collected their perspective.

Secondly, while it is often claimed that women are excluded from masquerades this isn't entirely accurate, as this restriction doesn't always apply to all women and women do have a role. Many help with the preparation of food and drink, as well as with other logistics of the event such as grounds keeping or bookkeeping involve women (ex: Argenti, 2019:189; Bonnemère, 2004:58; Gagliardi, 2018b:744). There are also special exceptions to the rules given to certain women at certain times. For example, many times older women who are no longer fertile may see or touch the masks and many times the wives of chiefs are allowed to see the masks. (Pernet 1982:49). Some women may be born under the protection of a mask and therefore be allowed to see its performance (ex: Gagliardi, 2018b:749).

To give more detailed examples, I previously mentioned Gagliardi's work with the Komo and Kono societies and their masks in Africa, including how even she was not allowed to see the masks. Indeed, when the masks came out she ran and hid with the rest of the women in the

community (2018). Yet, some women are allowed to work for the Komo and Kono organizations. But, this is in very particular roles, usually helping to prepare food and tending to gardens (2018:744) which mean that they never come into contact with the masks. In the Sanga region where Hogon masks are performed, after masked performers from these societies have completed their performances some of the older women who are no longer fertile will go to pick up pieces that have fallen off of the dress of performers (Pernet, 1982:53). They will safely keep these and, when a woman dies, they will perform what amounts to a kind of masquerade of their own (Pernet 1982:53). Further, the men know about this and accept it as a reasonable way for the women to vent their frustration at being excluded from the masquerades (1982:53).

Here there are many things that are interesting to note. First, it is only the women who are no longer fertile who see or come into contact with the mask's costume. That is, the power is of danger not to women as such, but to their fertility. Indeed, the threat is not really to women as such but to the entire community because what is being threatened is the community's ability to reproduce, regenerate, itself. We also see that the men understand that the women are not happy with the situation and allow them space for what have been dubbed rituals of rebellion (Gluckman, 1960).

We also see that women are interested in these rituals, enough to want to perform similar ones of their own. But also that they take to heart the threats that contact with the masks may pose to them during their years of fertility. Western ideas of agency have made it so that we tend to see resistance and fighting as signs of agency, but agency can also be exercised while moving within systems of thought very different from the modern Western one (Mahmood, 2011). Here, we see that women also believe that their reproductive abilities would be put at risk by contact with the mask, something that is too important for them to jeopardize, but also a desire to participate in masking practices. The influence of western feminism may lead us to want to place blame on men for their treatment of women as beneath them, but the reality of gender relations within these kinds of masking practices are far more nuanced.

Women are not necessarily forced or coerced into their role in these events (or, at the very least, no more so than men are coerced into their roles). As Pernet notes “we are forced to note that in all these cases the masks do not drive the women away. Rather, the latter participate to various degrees in the enactment.” (Pernet 1982:50). Pernet gives the example of Dogon masquerades, where women run screaming for the cover of their houses as the masks approach. However, they do not do this because they have actually been duped into thinking that the masks are spirits. In fact, the men carry the masks, they do not put them over their

faces, so their identities remain clear to see (1982:47-8). Rather, the women enact their role in this event: that of being afraid and of fleeing while screaming. The women's act of fleeing is just as much a part of the performance as is the men's act of performing while carrying the masks on their heads. Indeed, during her fieldwork, Gagliardi ran and hid along with the women during local masked performances (2018b:756). She was able to observe them and to speak with them on the subject. This leads to the conclusion that: "On the whole it is best to regard the assertion that they [the women] are deceived as a dogmatic way of expressing the truth that women support the custom of masking and that without their support the custom of masking would not continue." (Boston 1960:56) The fear is also a performance, one that the situation calls for. Though women often appear to be excluded from masking practices, the acceptance and performance of this exclusion is just as much a part of masking practices as are the actions of the men who wear the masks.

Masks and the Brain: From the inside and from the outside

Masks, like most things, interact with our brains. This happens to those wearing them and to those seeing them from the outside. While cognitive and neurobiological concerns are not the most common aspect of anthropological analysis, I believe that it is crucial to include them. This is because they are a thing that affects how we see and experience the world, whether we like it or not. It is not to suggest that society, culture and personal experiences are not crucial, they are, but so are cognitive and neurobiological effects. All of these factors combine to create the experience and views that we have of the world.

First, masks, according to the definition under use here, are objects that cover the face. The face plays important roles in human interactions. Covering it will alter these human interactions. Looking at how it disrupts and affects these interactions can help to understand masking itself. To begin, facial recognition is a crucial part of day to day interactions, reciprocal eye contact and mental connectivity are important ways that humans communicate emotional states among themselves (Meineck, 2011:114). And emotional states are a crucial aspect of human interaction, it is by understanding an interlocutor's emotional state that we know how to respond appropriately and it is by communicating our own emotional states to our interlocutors that we can be assured to get our ideas across. Some people are more skilled at detecting the nuances of these kinds of things, but we all do it without even having to think about it. As Merleau-Ponty put it "I live in the facial expression of the other, as I feel him living in mine." (1964:146). Much, though not all, of our cues to this process come from the face. So, if someone's face is replaced

by a mask, an object which may or may not bear the same expression as their faces underneath and whose expression is far more fixed, our brain's usual reactions will be affected.

Masks also do not eliminate the face. They place a knew face over the physical one, a face with an expression that is different and far more fixed than a human face is, but a face nonetheless. As such, we can not turn away from the topic of faces quite yet. It is interesting to consider how we look at faces. It would seem that there are certain elements of the face that we focus on more prominently than others and that the order in which we go over the various elements of the face follows certain patterns. Studies of visual tracking have shown that we tend to look at the eyes and mouth first, before looking at the rest of the face (Meineck, 2011:126) and that when we are trying to read a face we focus on the mouth, nose and eyes (Emigh, 2011:126). Further, when we are trying to communicate with people, identify them or/and understand them, we tend to focus on the face, hands and tongue and quite little on the rest of the body (Emigh, 2011:126). This means that even though the mask itself only covers the face it has great potential to alter our ability to communicate. But it does not rid the body of a face, so it does not eliminate or invalidate our usual tendencies for face reading, it plays on them. In fact, even masks whose designs don't seem all that reminiscent of a face can still stand in for one. This is because of the the facility with which we are prone to seeing faces and to focusing on the figures of other humans. Humans tend to seek out and focus on the presence of other humans at all times. When surveying a scene our eyes will always fall on a human figure (if there is one, or if we think there is one) (Meineck, 2011:125). In addition, we are very prone to seeing human faces, it takes surprisingly little for use to identify one (Meineick, 2011:133). And, when we do find a face we tend to focus on certain parts: the eyes, mouth and tongue (Emigh, 2011:126-129). These are all parts of the face which masks, cross-culturally, tend to over-emphasize (Emigh, 2011:126-129). This indicates that masks are indeed made to draw the prolonged attention of onlookers. It emphasizes that it is not just the narratives behind the masks and ideas about who should feel fear or happiness that make people react to masks in the ways that they do. It is also the way that their design works on our brains. However, and I emphasize this, the two things are never really truly separate.

When talking about how masks disrupt the normal facial recognition process, it is easy to jump to the conclusion that one of the ways in which it does this is by remaining fixed and that how our brains see this fixed expression will always be the same. After all a physical object does not have the range of emotion that a face, with it’s approximately sixty muscles (Adegbenro *et al*, 2024), does. Actually, even a mask that seems to represent one fixed expression can represent a range of expressions. Researchers carried out an experiment using Noh masks (Meineck,

2011:130-2). These masks were presented to both American and Japanese test subjects, to control for cultural differences. The masks, always the same ones, were shown at different angles, and test subjects were asked to say what expressions they saw. The test subjects all said that they saw different expressions when the masks were placed at different angle. The American and Japanese test subjects did not report the same expressions, but they did both report changes in expression at the same moment (Meineck, 2011:130-2). The difference in their interpretations is not surprising since socio-cultural backgrounds would have taught them to read particular expressions in a particular way. Demonstrating the importance of local world views on the perception of masks. But, significantly, the test subjects all perceived the changes in expression in the same places. For the study of masks this shows that one mask is not as limited in expression as we may intuitively guess it to be. For the study of emotions it is even more interesting, since it suggests that while our context teaches us what to read into facial cues, we all notice these cues. Returning to the study of masks, this means that masks may have a certain cross-cultural power that reaches beyond the narratives underpinning each of them (perhaps contributing to the draw that masks can have on international tourists, and on anthropologists).

Indeed, Emigh argues that masks act as a kind of interface between the abilities of our brains and socioculturally constructed aspects of life. That they are a sort of physical projection of the mind's sketching and paradigm-making abilities, which allow for communication of our visions out beyond the individual. Such that they may mix with those of other individuals: "affirming and denying, remembering and forgetting, assimilating them into old categories, forging new ones, blending fantasy and reality in fragile images inspired by our biological selves." (Emigh, 2011:137).

Despite the mask's ability to communicate in these complex ways, as already noted, very little is known about how the mask wearer feels while wearing a mask, about how they experience their time inside and performing the mask. (Ottenburg:1982:156). This isn't surprising, after all it is extremely hard, if not entirely impossible, to really understand the experience that another is going through in general. This gets even more difficult when, as anthropologists do, you are working with individuals from cultures radically different from your own.

Despite these difficulties there are a few accounts available from people who have performed masks as well as accounts based on experiments that have been done while masks were being performed. This still does not amount to a great deal of knowledge and is an area which would benefit from more research. Then, there is the issue that performing a mask seems to be an

experience that those who have lived find themselves incapable of fully describing. Margaret Coldiron conducted research on Japanese Noh and Balinese masked drama masks and performed Balinese masks herself. But, despite this, she notes that the experience is one that she cannot quite put it into words. “I am able to envision and imaginatively “feel” the sensations but they are virtually impossible to describe in precise detail through words.” (2000:305).

This does not mean that many have not tried to capture this feeling, and it must be emphasized that the experience of masking is one that builds on the felt: on emotions, on sensations, on atmosphere, etc… Making it into an experience that is at once deeply powerful and rich yet also impossible to entirely pin down (and, as discussed above, in this ambiguity lies the power of the mask). For instance, Seidman, who has worked on the carnival in Trinidad relates that:

> “In Carnival, I can become these things. I can become my desire, my pain, my addiction: their gestures, movements, even a new body, or a spectacle of rottenness. I become my mythical ancestors, their enemies, and their dreams. I can become these deepest desires so complicated and even unethical, that there is no category for them.” (2008:2).

Her words evoke the deeply felt nature of the experience, as well as how this is tied a large array of possibilities. From a more scientific perspective, Young-Laughlin and Laughlin have stated that: “we suggest that a major intention of masked drama is the incubation and evocation of direct experiences rooted in a culture's cosmology. Based in part on the effects of changing the internalized body image of the actors.” (Young-Laughlin and Laughlin, 1988:73). Though their writing is far drier and seems to come from the laboratory more so than from the crowds of a carnival, we still see an argument concerning how masks alter an individuals experience of themselves by playing on notions that have been created and rendered important by the sociocultural context, such that participants experience themselves in what feels like a radically different way.

I would suggest that perhaps the elusiveness of this sensation, the inability to precisely pin it down is essential to the process of masking. It is the feature of ambiguity which is central to the mask, giving it its versatility and its power. However, I still advocate for a study of masks that focuses on the felt experience of those involved. Not only as it is essential in capturing what is experienced, but as it will bring further to the fore the richness of these experiences and their incredible variety. Allowing us to understand the sociocultural and personal contexts within which they are created and from which they emerge.

Masks affect people at an individual level. This is not to say that they do not also affect groups of people, both small and large. However, the mask itself - the physical object - affects the wearer as an individual. Psychologists argue that individuals build a notion of the self through processes of presentation and monitoring of that presentation and how it is received (Cooley, 1902). The mask, of course, breaks this process: it alters how the individual is received and thus alters (quite radically as it is a sudden shift, quite different from the gradual cumulative ones of daily life) their sense of themselves, of their reality, of reality. This break allows for the kind of anonymity and freedom often associated with masking.

The physical object of the mask not only breaks this feedback system, it also affects the sensory experience of the wearer. Coldiron notes that the experience of being masked is “a neuro-physiological recipe for empathy” (2004:xxii). The mask may restrict vision and breathing, thus reshaping the body and its relationship to its surroundings. For Coldiron, the sensory deprivation caused by the mask is important (2004:299). Further, she notes that the physical difficulties that this causes lead one to focus even more strongly on the rhythm of the music (2004:299-300). However, it is also about what the individual brings to this situation. Rouget speaks of Arabic trance dancers, who alter their consciousness through a focus on the music. However, this change in consciousness, in experience, does not happen to just anyone listening to this music. It’s both about the beat and about how one receives the beat. He refers to it as calling on a person’s sense of the beautiful (Rouget, 1985:315). Indeed, as I will continue arguing throughout this section, it is a combination of physiological effects -the beat of the music on the human body - and sociocultural, as well as deeply psychological and personal elements. All, in combination, are necessary to create the particular feeling and experience of being inside a mask.

The physiological effects are not limited to the effects of the beat of the music. There are many, and we can be fairly sure, given the scarcity of materials on the topic, that they have not all been studied. Coldiron, in her research, has gathered evidence on the topic relating to masking practices. Xygalatas has also conducted research on the physiological effects of rituals. Though he focuses on rituals and not masking practices, masking practices are often considered a type of ritual (or appear during rituals), so his findings are highly relevant, though most likely only a partial view of the physiological effects of masking practices. Both discuss how endorphins rise during these practices, rising during the activity and remaining high for a while after as well. Endorphins are considered to be the brain’s natural painkiller and high endorphins are known to cause feelings of euphoria and ecstasy (Xygalatas, 2014:169-172). These physiological effects change how the situation is perceived. Xygalatas also comments on the presence of heightened

dopamine levels, which lead to heightened awareness and a sense of tremendous importance (2014:176). These physiological changes may account for some common aspects of masking practices: that they are felt to be very special and that those performing them usually get a ‘high’ from performing them, that the performance makes them happy, and lastingly so (ex: 2014, 174). But, and Xygalatas emphasizes this, it’s not just about the physiology of it. It’s also about how the sensory and emotional states that these physiological alterations induce are open to interpretation. For him human experience is about cognition, biology and culture, all together, shaping one another and the human experience (2014:189-191).

Coldiron argues that the masked performer needs to cultivate an altered state of consciousness. She states that this state does not come automatically, but is an important part of masking traditions (2004:295-300). I take her point, and put it to further use, to say that it is important to cultivate this altered state of consciousness because it allows for a break in identity, the transformative and ambiguous properties, that are so typical of masking practices.

To return to the arguments on how the self is constructed through a whole series of feedback circles. The mask breaks these circles, first by creating a physical barrier. In addition, through the cultivation of different states of awareness, our interpretation of feedbacks given changes. The process of cultivation is a highly regimented one, with rules based in cultural traditions, and by following these rules masked performers can evoke and experience in ways that are different from the ordinary but very much a product of cultural construction.

Masked performance is even more transformative than a normal performance, because of increased separation from one's normal personal identity and because the physiological effects of wearing a mask heighten the perception of the experience. Performers experience it differently from other performances due to both sociocultural and physiological effects.

It is, of course, not only on the masked performer that masks have an effect, but also on those experiencing them from the outside. While descriptions of what it is like to be inside a mask are fairly few those of the observation of masks abound and really capture the felt experience of finding oneself in the presence of a or many masked figures. Ethnographic descriptions may capture some of this. Gerard Creed studied Kukeri masks in Bulgaria, he writes of their performance: “The visual attraction of the masks, the hypnotic sound of the bells, the intoxicating taste of wine or brandy, the bracing smell of animal-skin costumes, and the sheer feeling of physical exhilaration combine to monopolize the senses. To be present is to be absent from all else…”. (2011:29-30). While de Jong studied the Kumpo masking practice of the Jola in

Senegal. He writes of the appearance of Kumpo that: “At nightfall the young women gather and line up at the central square. They then begin to sing and dance, using old spades for rhythmical accompaniment, and are later joined by the young men. After some time Kumpo appears, stalking around and frightening the children. […] Every now and then Kumpo intervenes and corrects the dancers. Kumpo admonishes the youths to take the dance seriously, participating in the dance himself. He sticks his pole in the ground and whirls in circles around it, displaying great speed and agility. The pattern of Kumpo participating on and off in the dance continues well into the night.” (2007:156-7).

An important thing to be noted through these examples, is that it is not the mask alone that creates this effect. Masks in performance are not like masks in museums, they do not occur in isolation, they usually occur as an event, often a part of a larger celebration or festival. I refer to these events as masquerades: the performance of a mask accompanied by music, dancing, alterations in the consumption of food and drink, a sense of an interruption to daily life, the presence of crowds, etc... The combined effect of all of these things means that: “It may not be only the actor who experiences an altered state of consciousness in the theatre.” (Coldiron, 2004:xxii).

The audience also plays a central role in masking practices. Gagliardi states that: “Audiences constitute critical but long overlooked actors in the study of masquerade.” (Gagliardi, 2018b:746). And “events imply audiences, even absent ones, and audiences do not just passively receive the activities happening around them.” (Gagliardi, 2018b:755). Though we tend to see audiences as removed from performances, simply observing them from a distance, they are also performers. Audience members have to comport themselves in certain ways: there are actions, reactions and emotions that are expected of them. If the audience did not perform their role well or decided that it simply did not want to perform at a particular event, then the show would not be able to go on. At the very least, the show in it's particular form would not be able to go on.

Imagine actors performing a play, but instead of performing it at a theater they are performing it next to a busy sidewalk. Suddenly they do not have an audience, there are people walking by, maybe some pay attention to the actors for a few minutes, many others fail to even notice them, too absorbed by their own conversations, their own problems. Compare this to a traditional play where the audience is in a theater, seated, quiet and focused on the actors. These are both forms of performance that exist in the world, and both can be accomplished using the exact same plays (and performers), what role the audience takes radically changes the meaning of

this performance. One might be a commentary on how we are disconnected in the modern world while the other is a means of sharing a story and the messages contained within the story. The interaction between performers and audiences works much in the same way as the interactions between two or more interlocutors in a conversation: one or more may speak and the others listen attentively to what is being said, all the while considering what these words mean in light of what they know about this person, their position within their sociocultural world, and they will reply accordingly. If a person begins to speak and their interlocutor simply walks away, or listens but fails to take into account what kinds of reactions are expected given both of their positions within their sociocultural worlds and given their particular relation, then this will lead to radically different interactions (at the very least it is likely someone will be offended or go on to tell their friends about an odd interaction that they had earlier in the day).

This has interesting implications for questions of agency, power and dominance. As I have already discussed masks are related in multiple ways to power and to structures of power. They are also, particularly in Papua New Guinea, practices of secret male societies which may be involved in the creation of hierarchies between men and women, as well as amongst men.

Many of these events seem to involve the oppression of women. Such as when Gagliardi talks about how women must run and hide when they hear the masks approaching. This interrupts their activities and, once they are hidden inside the huts they cannot even keep on a light or they might be accused of trying to watch. The same occurs in the case of the *Tubuan* (discussed in chapter 4), though women do not need to run and hide, they must not look at the figure from nearby and may not look into the eyes of the figure, all as a means of expressing respect for the *Tubuan* and avoiding physical harm that the powerful *Tubuan* could inflict on them. Such situations appear to place women in positions where they have no agency, either creating or reinforcing gender hierarchies. Giving men, the performers, agency and taking it away from women, who are forced to remain in the position of audience (since they are not allowed to know anything about the masks, let alone join as performers). However, building on Mahmood, a non western-centric take on agency must look at it as something which is enacted as individuals act within the contexts in which they find themselves (2011). Gagliardi refers to this kind of agency in her analysis. When speaking to the women that she ran and hid from masks with, she found that they did not feel themselves to be oppressed by the masks nor that they lacked agency. Many of the women looked forward to masked performances, many even travelled to nearby villages to be able to 'see' theirs as well (2018b:756). She further found, while hiding out inside a hut with the women, that they enjoyed their participation as unseen audience members. In addition, many would interact with the masks through the walls of the

hut, as the masked beings reprimanded the women on situations in their lives and gave them advice on how to resolve interpersonal issues (2018b:758). In her work, she found that women actively participated and, though fear was an element of the practice, they could also enjoy their roles.

Pernet speaks similarly when addressing the question of the apparent exclusion of women in masking practices. Women are very often not allowed to wear and perform masks, but they do take active part in rituals surrounding the practice. He argues that their behaviour can be understood as an obligatory expression of emotion, that it is an obligatory part of the rite, not just an individual expression of emotion (2006:163). Women may run in fear from the Komo and Kono masks described by Gaglardi, but they do this as a part of the performance, something that on an individual level they may actually quite enjoy doing (or not). And that is the point: the the emotion expressed has no necessary relation to the one that they actually feel.

Perhaps masking practices involve more equality than we would think. After all, if the masked performers stop performing the performance ends. But if the audience is also a part of the performance, that would mean that if they stop performing their role as audience - including all of the behaviours and emotions that are characteristic of that role - then the performance would also end. Or, in both cases, if the performance did not end, it would at least be radically altered. However, a brief look at what happens when either party lets go of their end of the deal demonstrates the the power and status of the two are not so equal after all. For instance, in Papua New Guinea, some many male secret societies which feature masking practices have ended their practices by revealing their secrets to the women (ex: Robbins, 2004; Tuzin, 1997). This put a sudden end to the whole practice, so sudden that it may be given a specific date (Tuzin identifies September 1984 - Tuzin, 1997:1). This does not happen when an audience decides that it no longer wants to participate. In these cases, the attention or constitution of the audience simply changes. But this does not lead to the sudden end of the practice, it leads to a slight change in how it is practiced, in the meaning that it may have. For example, with the *Tubuan*. It is now performed at both local ceremonial events and at festivals for national and international groups. Local audiences are now very aware of the global world that we all live in, ideas put forth by the Tubuan no longer dominate in their minds as they might once have. Many are now slightly bored by the Tubuan, it simply doesn't capture their interest as much anymore. On the other hand there are also audience members coming from elsewhere, who do not understand the role that they are supposed to play as audience members to the Tubuan. But this does not spell the collapse of the Tubuan, instead it alters the performance and its meaning. It now comes to stand for local people as indigenous people with important knowledge and a

place in the world. There is indeed no performance without an audience, however, the roles of different actors are different.

Masquerade and Carnival: Euro-centric concepts and their relevance

Masks cannot be discussed in isolation (Tonkin, 1979; Mack, 2013). The idea that masks, as objects independent of their context, have value is a a Western construction, a part of the ideological underpinning of museums. However, masks are a part of larger events, often referred to as masquerades: where there is a mask, there is a costume, there is music, there are people, there is hot or cold, there is a consumption of substances, there are underlying narratives, etc… Indeed, in the brief analysis that has been done so far, many elements going beyond the physical object of the mask itself have been considered, as it is extremely difficult to separate the mask from the whole that is the masquerade.

Masquerades, in the english language are defined as: “a party or dance where people wear masks […] or other disguises […]” (Cambridge dictionary, N/A). However, I do not generally use the term here. This is because the term “masquerade” is generally associated, as in Cambridge’s definition with events that are seen as parties, though they may indeed be highly significant events, the definition emphasizes the entertainment aspect of the practices. While these are indeed incredibly important and present in the context which I discuss in this thesis, it also overlooks what are often very serious and not always fun aspects of these practices. As such, I usually refer to the complex whole of masks and everything that surrounds them at the events as masking practices. There is considerable overlap between the concepts, for instance Ottenburg who studied secret societies and their masking practices in Africa uses the term masquerade (1982). Indeed, it could be that there not only is considerable overlap, but that the two are one and the same. However, as I do not wish to emphasize nomenclature, but rather the practices themselves - the ways that they work, the meanings they can have, the ways they are utilized and navigates - I have chosen a more neutral terminology throughout this thesis.

Within the study of masquerade there is the question of whether they serve to reproduce reality or to alter it. I would argue that the answer seems to be that it is a bit of both. Indeed, this will be clarified later in this thesis, as I discuss masking practices in relation to felt experience and discuss the important roles of individuals. As the practices do serve to reproduce realities, social structure, ideology, etc… but are also subject to the subtle and constant changes that come from always having different individuals engaging in them.

Another important aspect of the study of masquerade is that of communitas. The concept of communitas has been advanced by both Victor and Edith Turner (V Turner, 1987; E Turner, 2012). Victor Turner, who wrote of rites of passage, saw communitas as the strong relationship that was created between individuals who were initiated (and passed through a liminal stage) together (1987). Edith Turner has elaborated on it, in a book (2012). Edith Turner begins trying to describe it by saying that it is beyond definition: “The sense cannot be fully put into words.”, and can only be conveyed properly through stories (2012:1). She describes it as a state of pure possibility in which individuals identities do not merge but are kept to their fullest. That is a state of exciting seamless unity, a sense of togetherness itself. Something which occurs, at times, when people perform actions together, in unison. As such, she goes on to note that it cannot be artificially created (this of course, does not mean that the sensation cannot be manipulated). It is also important to note that this sense of communitas can extend to the audience as well. As has already been noted, the audience are also participants in the event, as such it is only natural that they would also come to feel in or feel with.

Carnival is another phenomena commonly discussed and associated with masks. Carnivals are events held on particular occasions where people come out into the street in celebration, often with music, dancing, food, alcohol, special dress, etc… According to Rabelais: “one might say that carnival celebrated temporary liberation from the prevailing truth and from the established order; it marked the suspension of all hierarchical rank, privileges, norms, and prohibitions.” (Bakhtin, 1984:10). Carnival is not only a sort of festival, a celebration, a time of public revelry in the streets. It is also about freedom, about a break from the norms and statuses that normally weigh individuals down. A large part of the revelry is about these underlying notions, which are a part of but also go beyond the parties and entertainment of the events.

Carnival can at times blur with the masquerade, as there are frequently mask wearers or/and masked performances at carnivals. However, carnivals do not necessarily include masks and even when they do many of the performances and the people involved are not masked. The mask is not essential to the carnival. In Papua New Guinea, masks are often performed at events called *singsing*s, where many numbers of song/dance combinations will be performed all together. These events resemble carnivals in many ways, as they are special out of the ordinary events, featuring song, dance, eating and a general sense of festivity. However, the term carnival, with its Christian and Latin origins, is generally used in ‘Western’ contexts such as the carnivals of Europe or those of the Americas. Further, though many of the masking performances present in Papua New Guinea are performed at *singsing*s, this is not always

thought to be an ‘authentic’ context for their performance and is rarely the only context within which they are performed. Further, the underlying ideas of freedom, reversal of role, a relief from the mundane are not necessarily present and if something akin to these is present, they remain highly different, informed by the history and beliefs of local groups. Though the two are far from being the same, they can inform one another.

In terms of carnival, themes of freedom, of releasing the tension between classes, of civilization often arise. The carnival is associated with this sense of absolute freedom from the forces which normally bind members of society. It is a period of a few days, where these may be inverted or done away with completely, before the return to the normal state of things a few days later. Indeed, this leads to a common discussion topic in relation to the carnival: that of whether it subverts of reinforces the existing social order. De Matta argues that in New Orleans carnival a pursuit of aristocracy can be seen, while in the Brazilian one a pursuit of equality can be seen, he argues that it is because the first has an equal society and the other a stratified society (da Matta & Green, 1982/1983:166-7). In short, we always want what we don’t have, or, the grass is greener on the other side. Of course, as with all of these questions, there is no specific answer: carnival can do both and does accomplish both. What stands out in studies of the carnival is the ways in which it asserts the freedom of those involved, by creating a time and place for them to live their strongest desires.

Bakhtin is perhaps the most closely associated with this in academic circles, with his discussion of the carnivalesque. It stems from a study of European literature from the Middle Ages and the Renaissance in particular, not from an ethnographic study of carnivals in the present or recent past. This means that there are some incongruities when it comes to applying it to situations such as the one that I am focusing on: on practices in the present and in a part of the world quite far from Europe. But the concept remains central and defining of what carnival, the ethos surrounding it and the behaviours within it are about.

He discusses the folk carnival in the Middle Ages. This is kind of an ideal incarnation of the carnivalesque. It is an occasion defined by it's laughter, a laughter that is of all of the people together not of a single individual, a laughter that can be directed at all including those laughing, and a laughter that denies, revives and renews (Bakhtin, 1984:11-12). Indeed, the carnival in this period was a celebration that was about the "temporary liberation from the prevailing truth and from the established order; it marked the suspension of all hierarchical rank, privileges, norms, and prohibitions." (1984:10). Bakhtin describes the carnivalesque as defined by how it allowed for not just a reversal of roles and status, but a momentary erasure of these. Indeed, he

states that the carnival can not even be seen as a kind of theater, because that would mean to acknowledge a separation between performers and spectators (1984:7). Yet, this does not mean that it was a time to forget about society, about life, about everything. He also defines it as a time for renewal, for transformation. Indeed, he saw the folk carnival of the period as sanctioned by the world of ideal s(Bakhtin, 1984:9). It was ideals that made it such that the festivities could occur.

However, the carnival as it appeared in the Middle Ages did not last forever. In the Renaissance the nature of it changed, moving away from the carnivalesque. He notes that the 17th and 18th centuries were a period where there was a gradual narrowing of the carnival, that the state encroached on it, turning it into a parade and other elements were moved into the home and family life (Bakhtin, 1984:33). These changes reflected changes in how the human body was conceived. In the Renaissance the body was conceived of as closed: a finished product, fenced off from others (1984:29). Anything contradictory was ignored or hidden. Along with these changes, the view of the the grotesque also changed. The grotesque is a term that developed through an association with the caves of Titus' baths which were covered in free and fanciful ornaments depicting plants, animals and humans, all interwoven. This lack of separation reflected ideologies on the nature of the person from the Middle Ages, in those times it was something that could be jovially laughed at and celebrated for the possibilities of renewal that it gave. Changing concepts of the person, as delimited, in the Renaissance, changed perspectives on the grotesque, it now took on a quality of madness and of somber tragedy. Now, how does this relate to masks? Because the take on masks underwent the same fate, being tied to the concept of the grotesque. In folk culture of the middle ages "The mask is connected with the joy of change and reincarnation, with gay relativity and with the merry negation of uniformity and similarity; it rejects conformity to oneself" (1984:39). The mask, with this lack of boundaries, much like the ornaments in Titus' bath, is grotesque. As such, with the Renaissance's need for a bounded and unchanging individual, the connotation of the mask changes. According to Bakhtin "It is stripped of its original richness." (1984:40) coming to be an object that hides something, that keeps secrets and deceives, it almost looses its regenerative nature and becomes something somber (1984:40)

The implication is that we have never quite returned to the understanding of the carnival and the mask that existed in the Middle Ages. Bakhtin notes that the Renaissance conception of the person remains clear to us today, that we still to a certain extent live according to it (1984:29). However, he also acknowledges that these two categories that he is talking about never really existed in a true form (1984:30). So, though the Renaissance conception has been here a long

time, it does not mean that the carnivalesque has completely disappeared. In fact, the concept of the person which Bakhtin is discussing is strikingly similar to conceptions of the Melanesian self put forth by classical anthropologists. Margaret Strathern discussed Melanesian personhood as *dividual* (1998:13) and Roy Wagner spoke of *fractal persons* (1991:159-173). Roughly, both of these, referred to the idea that Melanesian self-hood was not built up from inside the individual (as the western self is) but rather the result of entering into various relationships. These theories, particularly that of the *dividua*l, have been criticized since they were put forth, notably because they dichotomized the western and Melanesian self too strictly, when elements of both types of personhood may be present in both regions (exs: Carrier, 1992; Thomas, 1991, Weiner, 1976). However, Melanesia remains an area where relationships are highly valued. Within a Bakhtian framework this would point to Melanesian masking practices tending towards being regenerative and rich.

Tseelon makes the same dichotomy in terms of perspectives on masquerades: as transformative in an empowering way or as something that deceives (2001:5-6). Stating that the first definition is how masks are seen in ancient and tribal worlds while the second is how they are seen in the modern western world (2001:6). Indeed, adding some of the details of Tseelon's analysis to Bakhtin's helps to construct an interesting lead into the 'modern' worlds that we live in and are familiar with. He discusses the Renaissance in more detail. Discussing modernity's uncomfortableness with ambiguity, which can be seen through the popularity of taxonomies which arose precisely during the Renaissance. This brought about a moral shift that placed focus on both physical and moral homogeneity. However, it was not just that individuals had different ideas, but also due to the rise of the nation state, the homogenization and state control that came with it. Tseelon notes that during the period "legislative effort was invested in ridding European life of the rowdy spirit and transgressive potential of carnival and popular festivity." (2001:7). This does not mean that there was absolute success. Bakhtin notes that no one conception dominated singularly. And people have a tendency to fight back. It is during the Renaissance, in 18th century Europe that the domino mask was used by certain women to protect them from rigid norms and give them a certain degree of unofficial sexual freedom (Tonkin *in* Bauman, 1992:229). As I have already noted, masks are powerful: holding both the power to uphold and to subvert authority.

This push and pull between state encroachment and rigidity and the human desire to break free can be seen in an analysis of the Trinidad carnival by John Stewart. Carnival was brought to Trinidad in the 1780s. Stewart discusses how, from the very beginning, the carnival was never separate from politics and gives a detailed overview of it's history. The aarnival has a long

history of regulations regarding who could participate and what activities they could or could not do, all of these stemming from the various racial, social and political struggles of the moment. But, throughout, people continued *fêting* (celebrating), changing the type and location of their *fêtes* to fit the new regulations and sometimes fighting back against the regulations or regulating forces. Stewart writes from the 1980s, a time when he noted that many Trinidadians preferred to spend the carnival period away on holiday (1986:310), no longer finding the Carnival to have the attraction that it once had. Indeed, it seems that extreme rigidity is what has turned local interest away from it. He notes that in 1970 a policy declared that the carnival was to "be pursued as a venture in cultural patriotism" (1986:306). Since then (and up until at least the 80s) it has been dominated with band competitions and increasing constraints on competitors, their costumes, their performances, etc... while there has been a decline in street dances (1986:307). Much like Bakhtin and Tseelon discussed, the carnival has been loosing it's carnivalesque. Indeed, he notes that the only people who get a good experience of the carnival now are the tourists, because their travel to Trinidad has already given them the status of license, they are free to jump around to listen to the bands, to eat and cavort and then travel back home (1986:314). Their experience, though highly individual, does still stir the sense of possibility and renewal that the carnival is supposed to (1986:314).

This is just one example, which is meant to demonstrate how carnival and masking are practices that are frequently regulated. Because they are themselves powerful practices, they are frequently subject to various types of surveillance and social control. Something which points precisely to their power of freedom, for equalizing. Though attempts to control these phenomena are nothing new, they are becoming quite common in the contemporary world. These are things happening across the globe at the moment, as they always have, in the contemporary world this is both happening and being discussed under terms such as patrimonialización, heritigization, folklorization, festivalisation, etc… Processes which I will discuss further in chapter 8.

Though my discussion of the carnival ends here and I have just utilized very specific examples from beyond Papua New Guinea, they are relevant to the study, in a Melanesian context, which I undertake here. Discussion of the carnival underlines themes regarding the loss of identity, of erasure of the audience and performer dichotomy and of issues of control which are extremely relevant to my work and will come up throughout the chapters. Though discussions of the carnival are relevant in many ways, there are also moments when they do not seem to fit with this particular context. Particularly the reference to laughter as a force to fight power, “Laughing truth is a liberator. It makes a fool of power.” (Bakhtin *in* E Turner, 2012:34). While very true in

the context of the carnival, it is strictly prohibited during *Tubuan* performances. The *Tubuan*, as seen in chapter 4, is understood to be a deeply serious and generally fear invoking practice and mask. To laugh at one, near one, or during a performance would be a grave affront, a disrespect of the *Tubuan*, and anyone daring to do so would be seriously punished. However, laughter is present when the *kipong*, another mask which I analyze in this thesis, performs. Though the *kipong* has a history as a serious practice it is now understood to be for entertainment purposes only. Suggesting that the carnivalesque may be more fitting when applied as an analytical tool in regards to practices that are deemed to be for entertainment purposes and less so in relation to practices that are related to male secret societies.

To bring it a bit further, Bakhtin makes a difference between folk carnivals and feasts. Feasts are formal and structured events that re-create the dominating structures (Bakhtin, 1984:9-10). Masks like the *Tubuan* do exactly what Bakhtin's feasts do: they follow rigid structures and recreate the social relations according to which the current social world is built. In fact, the *tubuan* is usually performed at events where feasts are held.

Yet, in Stewart's analysis of the Trinidadian carnival, which we would expect to be carnivalesque (and which is), there is also a presence of many of the elements of Bakhtinian feasts: rigid structure controlled by those in power, to reaffirm this power. However, we also see dissatisfaction among the locals, the only ones who enjoy the carnival are the tourists: for them rigid structure makes no difference, the experience is a means of freeing themselves of their daily constraints and reinvigorating themselves regardless. Stewart also notes that many locals are leaving the carnival behind and that there is a long history of people fighting to *fête* in a way that is free of this rigidity. So, it would seem that carnivals, as institutions can exist in rigid contexts. But the carnivalesque, or the spirit of the carnival, is by definition in opposition to constraint and limitations. As such, I do not refer to the masking practices that I am studying as parts of carnivals, there is simply too much structure - whether it be from secret societies or government cultural organizations. What I will do however, when it occurs, is refer to the carnivalesque aspect of some of the practices.

Concluding Remarks

In this chapter I've provided a brief overview of and background to the study of masks and masking practices from the social sciences. What I wish to emphasize is the recurrence of themes relating to ambiguity and power, at times together and at times not. Clearly both are important aspects of masking practices, whatever their form or the time and place of their

occurrence. These are themes which also stood out when I was in the field, particularly in relation to the *Tubuan* and *kipong* masking practices which I discuss in the next chapter.

I have also focused on some aspects which go slightly beyond the concern of traditional anthropology. Examining the felt experience of both those inside and outside of the physical object that is the mask. I believe that this is important. It offers an area for an overlap between disciplines to occur, for scientific experiments, data collection and results to be brought to bear within socioculturally focused analysis. Here, in order to focus on the felt experience of those involved I turn to questions of sensory and affective experience, as well as to notions of atmospheres, which I will explore in further detail in chapter 6.

Chapter 4

Masked performances: *tubuan* and *kipong*

*Singsing*s in Sursurunga

*Singsing*s are a common cultural form in Papua New Guinea. The term is used to refer to events that feature songs and dance, usually together. There are various types of *singsing* in each region and throughout the country. *Singsing*s do not necessarily involve masks. I mention them in a thesis on masking practices because masking practices are generally kinds of *singsing*s: they are performed while singing and dancing.

*Singsing*s occur in a broad range of contexts. They are a traditional custom that may be performed at funerals, in the context of initiations or at the opening of a *hausboi*. But are also prevalent in modern contexts such as at festivals, school ceremonies, the opening of new buildings and to honour or welcome foreign visitors. In short, when there is cause for celebration, it is likely that a *singsing* will be held as a part of the event.

*Singsing*s are not only fun, they serve social functions as well. They may establish and display social relations. Many *singsing*s involve bringing together large groups of people and having them perform complex movements in time, for an individual to be able to organize this demonstrates their leadership and standing in their community. To be invited to perform and to do so creates and solidifies ties between those performing the dance and those that they are performing for. Organizing a *singsing* requires a great deal of resources and as such becomes a way of demonstrating and solidifying one's standing in a community or region.

It also displays the social relations between groups of people involved in the dancing and those watching. For example, one common and fun practice is that of *bukur*. This is a practice where members of the opposite moiety from a person dancing go and throw lime powder, charcoal or water on them in an attempt to distract them from their dancing. This is always met with uproars of laughter from the audience. And, following it, some members of the audience may even decide to join in the dancing.

In short, *singsing*s are occasions for fun and celebration but they are also very serious occasions that fulfill important social functions. Masked *singsing*s behave in much the same way: combining fun and seriousness in their own particular ways.

During my time in the Sursurunga area I saw and heard of two primary masked *singsing*s: *tubuan* and *kipong*. I also saw, heard, and even learned the basics to other un-masked types of *singsing*. There were far more of these: *tangara, libung, utun, puerparik, pinpidik, Solomon style, tuturai natnat, wágin, tiko*, etc.… Indeed, Don Hutchisson, who worked with SIL on compiling a grammar and dictionary of the language recorded the following list of local singsing types: *bulolo, bilolo, gar, goigoi, inngas, kamkarwas, káhkáh, kángkáng, lahlah, libung, patpatep, párpárik, pinpidik, rengen, sasale, sikwáu, tabaran, tagara, tamalagen, tiko, tukul, utun, wágin, walau, warbat*. Some of these are more popular than others, some are heavily associated with particular events and others frequently performed in a variety of contexts. Some are no longer performed, some have become quite popular. Aside from this some are performed only by a particular gender, while others may be performed by anybody. And, the type of *bilas* worn while performing them may also vary, from none, to a few decorative elements to a mask and *bilas* hiding the entire body. Here, I have focused on those which include masks, face coverings.

In the field, I often asked people to tell me about their masking practices. When I did so they would usually give me a quite factual run down of the different types and their main characteristics. Though I was told about a few different kinds of masks these often varied depending on who I asked and if I asked in a different village a few kilometers away. The two that always came up were the *tubuan* and *kipong* masks. The *tubuan* is a very well-known mask, in academic and also touristic terms. So it did not come as a surprise that it was always mentioned. While *kipong* is not as well known in academic or touristic circles, it always came up and was even shown to me at times. While both were well and widely known, the two were presented to me in quite contrasting terms, and this despite the fact that they also share many characteristics.

The *tubuan* visually resembles a big puffy ball of leaves covering the performer's body, topped by a large cone with circles painted on it giving the effect of a head and eyes. It is made of a bodice of locally collected leaves and topped by a large cone which may have circular motifs, the eyes, painted on it. When done properly, it completely covers the performer and renders them unidentifiable. The mask is quite well-known, across the country and even internationally. There are usually *tubuan*s performing at the National Mask Festival and Warwigara, a large

cultural show styled festival held yearly in Kokopo in East New Britain. It is a mask that originated at the southern tip of the island of New Ireland, before spreading out into a slightly wider area of New Ireland and crossing St George's Channel into East New Britain when the Tolai moved into the area. It is the Tolai people, who hold the position of a kind of cultural elite within Papua New Guinea (AL Epstein, 1998:24; Martin, 2010:541; Martin, 2013:10), who have made this mask well-known, primarily through performances at the National Mask festival and other cultural shows.

In any particular region where it is performed the *Tubuan* may present slight differences,[16] but there are many elements that remain the same across these regions. To begin, it is associated with secret men's groups that men must be initiated into before they may gain knowledge concerning the *Tubuan* (and the *tubuan*)[17]. Uninitiated men have the same status as women: they are not allowed into the area where the *tubuan* is practiced, the *taraiu* (the men's secret meeting place - generally located in the bush and sometimes along the beach), and are not allowed to know any of the secrets of the *tubuan* or of its performance. Those who have been initiated are repeatedly warned that they must keep these things secret, under threat of punishment [18] . The *Tubuan* is, in this sense, more than a mask that appears to entertain at various events. It is also a secret society, which goes by the same name. This secret society is tied into regimes of social control and power, as usually the chief of each *hausboi* (a subset of a clan) will be a member of the *Tubuan,* and each *hausboi* will have their own *tubuan* - a specific mask design that belongs to them. As such, the t*ubuan* is much more than a mask for fun festival performances, it is a part of the sociocultural regimes of power, authority and control. It is an integral part of the institutions that form local social structures.

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[16] These differences are in the physical aspects of the mask: the eye designs and other designs on the cone-like 'face' of the *tubuan* differ between each individua*l tubuan* and between regions, they may also be taller or shorter and the cone itself may take a slightly different shape. Differences may also be apparent in the practices surrounding both the *tubuan* and the *Tubuan*. Different *tubuan* may dance differently, to the accompaniment of different types of songs and drums, be accompanied by different taboos. There may also be different rules regarding the initiation required to participate (ex: Eves, 2009:183).

[17] As I will explain in this chapter, the *Tubuan* incorporates various elements. When referring to the institution or practice as a whole I refer to it as the *Tubuan,* and when referring to a particular performance or mask as *tubuan*.

[18] Many of the men that I spoke with warned me that there were things that they could not tell me, that if they did so and others found out they would get a *tanget* - this is a type of plant that is placed before someone's house when they have broken one of the *Tubuan*'s rules and are expected to pay a fine. Historically, this is one of the ways that the *Tubuan* would punish offenders. There are also records from the turn of the 20th century, stating that the *tubuan* would burn the houses of those who did not comply and was even able to kill (Parkinson, 1907:446; Rickard *in* Sack, 1972:97). Even today, some of the villagers in Samo did refer to the *Tubuan* as having power over life and death. They were not able, or willing, to provide any concrete examples, but the idea does live on.

The *kipong* is another mask that kept coming up again and again during my research Though barely spoken of in tourist guides or academic works concerning the region, it was mentioned frequently. It is present throughout New Ireland, from Lavongai to the southern Siar/Lak region, and is present in some of the smaller islands off of the coast (such as the Tanga islands, Anir islands and on Lihir island) (Denner, 2012:64). It also varies a lot in appearance. Some masks that were shown to me where nothing more than a piece of painted cardboard with leaves attached to cover the head, combined with body coverings that consisted of strings of banana leaves and the leaves of other local plants tied around the body, arms and legs, in combination with paints. Others, being sold in art sales, are solid wooden creations, with fierce expression and detailed carving, slightly reminiscent of *malagan* masks. Indeed, this is how one host from the Tanga islands described the masks to me: as akin to a *malagan* mask, but with a more square shape and a fierce expression. Through this range, what stands out about *kipong* masks is that, though they are a part of traditional customs, they are conceived of as fun. They are not explicitly tied into systems of secret societies and authority. Though they are usually said to remain within the domain of men and an emphasis is placed on inducing fear in audience members (an emphasis that the performers and audience both independently comment on).

Though these masks both have a wide geographical range and were always mentioned to me when I asked about masks, they were presented in very different and contrasting ways. The *Tubuan* was presented as serious and secret while the *kipong* was presented as fun and open. I was always told that the *kipong* was something that was done just for fun, that it was for children (or anyone), that it could be performed at any occasion and by anyone. While discussions of the *Tubuan* always brought forth an emphasis on "secret": on things that could not be shared, on how only specific people could perform it, only specific people could make the masks or know how they were made. This constructed a dichotomy according to which one practice was more 'real' and 'important' than the other. The *tubuan*, by virtue of all of the restrictions surrounding it and it's association with customs and clans, was made out to be the more important mask. While constantly saying that the *kipong* was 'just for fun' that it could even be done by 'children', emphasized it's unimportance, it's irrelevance. This discourse hierarchized the two practices: placing the *Tubuan* very high and minimizing the practice of the *kipong*. Of course, this hierarchy doesn't just apply to the masks themselves, but to those who practice them and to the values that they instil. It emphasizes the legitimacy to the *Tubuan* and everything that it stands for, while limiting the same traits in the *kipong*. This is not surprising given how the *Tubuan* has previously been tied into authority and social organization in societies in the area.

Figures 16-19. Depicting various non-masked singsings. From top (clockwise): Women perform *puerparik* dance in Samo village, September 2023; Tomimi performs a *kápán liu* dance in Samo village, July 2023; School children perform a singsing at a graduation in Waragansaw, December 2022; A *mangi* performs an impromptu dance on the beach in Samo village, July 2023. (Boiteau, Isabelle. Personal photos, 2022 & 2023).

The Tubuan: It's serious

Information on the *Tubuan*, despite it's deep secrecy, abounds. Here I give a brief rundown of what I was able to learn in the field. It should be noted that, given that I am a woman, I was not allowed to be told very much about the *Tubuan* since it functions to the explicit and strict exclusion of women, both local and foreign.

I headed into the field having already read about the *Tubuan* society, as such it is difficult to completely separate the things that I learned of in the field from those that I learned before or after. Especially since my previous reading allowed me to affix my attention to certain words and concepts that I might not have noted as particularly important otherwise.

The *Tubuan* is three things (at least): it is a mask, a dance and a male secret society. In my writing I refer to the secret society as the *Tubuan* and the mask and dance as *tubuan.* The *Tubuan* is present in New Ireland and East New Britain. It is perhaps most well known for its association with the Tolai in East New Britain. The Tolai were amongst the first ethnic groups to be exposed to European contact when the region was colonized. Due to this they were some of the first to convert to Christianity and to have access to education in Papua New Guinea and have now come to occupy a wide variety of white collar positions (Martin, 2010:541). They hold positions of power in a country where large portions of society do not complete primary school or stop their schooling after primary school. Because of their position they are generally able to include their *tubuan* performances in big culture shows like the yearly National Mask Festival.

However, the *Tubuan* is said to have originated in the Siar region at the southern tip of New Ireland. The Tolai then left the area, and crossed St George's Channel to East New Britain. The practice remains very much alive today in New Ireland as well, where it also expanded beyond it's origin point. It is now practiced from the southern tip of the island until the area near Namatanai town. At times it has even spread a bit further north, as Eves noted it in the Lelet area (2009). It is practiced in the Sursurunga region in which I was based. Though, it is generally more deeply entrenched in local culture the further south one goes.

It is a secret society into which members must be initiated. It is difficult to ascertain exactly what percentage of the community's men are initiated. The younger men always seemed to be less willing to speak to me on the topic - most likely due to fears of reprisal and cultural norms. Indeed, I was told by one informant that one of the many secrets of the society extends to telling

the non-initiated who is a member. This rule did not seem to be extremely strict, as I was often able to ask men if they were (or had been members) and if they had ever danced the *tubuan* and, the older men at least, generally answered me without any trouble. However, in the past most, if not all, men were initiated. This has changed today, due to changing ideals and constraints of modern life in the region. Initiations and celebrations have been adapted to fit the schedules of those who attend school and the religious beliefs of many prevent them from becoming members.

Membership entails going through initiation. There are many rungs of initiation. The initial initiation makes men basic members: they are allowed into the secret area in the bush, called *taraiu*, and are let in on some of the most basic secrets. But in order to gain more knowledge, in order to perform the *tubuan* and in order to design new *tubuan* or to control one, further levels of initiation are needed. The initial initiation used to be performed when boys where very young (under ten years of age). And this may still happen today. One host's fourteen year old nephew had been initiated. But I was also told that today it is usually older boys who are initiated, towards their late teens. However, it is desirable for them to undergo initiation when they are younger, as the initiation will be less painful. When older boys are initiated they are beaten with sticks and stinging nettles, while younger boys are spared most of this.

Near Samo village there are approximately two or three *taraiu*s. Since I am a woman I was never told their location. I also never accidentally stumbled on one (to my best knowledge), suggesting that they are indeed a little ways away from the village. On a visit to nearby Ruka and Kabirara villages we had to alter our path away from the beach as there was a *taraiu* there and I as well as the women I was walking with could not go through the area. I suspect that there was one not too far from the road in neighbouring Likas village, as I was once able to hear the sounds of men practising for a *singsing* in that area.

The exact activities that occur in the *taraiu* are, given that as a woman I was never able to visit one, not entirely clear. It is the area where men prepare the masks and dances, as well as the area where they practice. In the *taraiu* there is a wider range of initiates who are allowed to dance, while public presentations are put on by the best dancers as selected by an elder (and tired performers may switch mid-performance, meaning that there may be many more performers than masked figures). It is also the area where men spend most of their time when they are fasting and preparing for performances.

The *tubuan* mask and dance are performed at particular kinds of events, usually in ritual contexts. They appear at certain stages in funerary rites. Funerary rites in New Ireland are long events, featuring many stages that can be spread out over the course of several years. The *tubuan*, if it does dance, will dance during the secondary rites which in my fieldwork were referred to as the cementing of a grave. These events happen about a year after the primary rites (though the exact date will be determined according to variable such as the availability of pigs). They will also perform when a new *hausboi*, a men's house, is opened. These types of traditional performances still happen (I witnessed a performance in Nokon which had combined these two types of occasions; a *hausboi* was opened in Kapsel village in April 2023, and a grave cementing performance was held in Rei village in September 2023). *Tubuan*s also perform at more modern occasions. I just missed a couple of performances that happened before I began my fieldwork in New Ireland, one was at the opening of the nearby Tinkoris hospital and another was put on in Kavieng (the provincial capital) in honour of the arrival of the members of a new NGO active in the region. The *Tubuan* is an institution that is making itself relevant in changing times, that it is applicable to both highly traditional and newer contexts.

As is the case with many traditional customs in Papua New Guinea, the *Tubuan* is not always compatible with the strong religious beliefs present in the country. As I already mentioned, this varies greatly according to religious denomination and has changed over the course of the last 150 years. Many people that I spoke to said that they either would not join and dance the *tubuan* because of their religious beliefs or that they had stopped doing so because they had adopted religious beliefs. I spoke to one older man who remembered the exact year when he had stopped, another who stopped after hearing the good news and said that he did not like seeing performances because they reminded him of how it felt to dance. I also spoke to a couple of young men from beyond the Sursurunga region who said that those who dance dances such as the *tubuan* are dancing with the spirits, and cited this as a reason for not wanting to dance.

Religion and traditional customs in Papua New Guinea have a troubled relationship to say the least. Many people, everywhere I went in the country, affirmed that Papua New Guinea is a Christian country[19], but there are a wide variety of denominations, some of which allow and even work with local customs and others that strictly prohibit it. As well as a lot happening between these two extremes. One of the strictest prohibitions comes from the SDA church (present in the communities just neighbouring Samo), which doesn't allow any kind of traditional custom, and also prohibits chewing betel nut and the eating of pork. Many evangelical and

[19] According to a 2011 census 98% of Papua New Guinea's population is Christian (US Department of State, 2023).

revival churches also prohibit their congregations from participating in these kinds of customary practices. Samo village included two of these kinds of churches: ALC and Destiny. Though neither seemed to have the strictest of rules. For instance, their congregations are allowed to chew betel nut, just not with lime and mustard (together they create a chemical reaction which turn it red). However, the relation of these churches with customary practices exist in what are, in practice, grey areas.

One day, I was in the next village over, Hipakat, where Aminio Bale and his family were showing me the process for making *kipong* masks (which he would perform that evening). During this, two of the leaders of the local SDA church came through on their way to the river. They stopped to chat and take pictures of the mask and *bilas* that were being made. They were happily smiling as they got to know what was happening and the preacher had someone take a picture of him standing next to a man wearing the mask and *bilas*. Given what I had heard about the SDA church this confused me, and I inquired about it, it was explained to me that the prohibitions were on participating, not on looking. On the other hand, many participants in these religious movements seem to be eager to separate themselves from the worlds of traditional customs. At a funeral I spoke to a woman who was from the area but lived in Kavieng, she introduced herself using her christian name, saying that she used to be called something else, but that that name came from the *tumbuna*, this was heathen, so she had changed it.

Indeed, as I mention in chapter 2, there is a complex history of churches trying to eradicate these traditions and the *Tubuan* in particular. In Samo, I was told that in the past the *Tubuan* and various other traditional dances were always performed at church openings and church celebrations. But, that in the past 20 or 30 years or so, this has not been the case, there have in fact been very few such performances. While, other sources that I will get to later discuss ways in which the two have influenced each other: with *tubuan*s incorporating religious symbolism and performing at church events.

The mythical history of the *Tubuan* does not give an age to the practice. Though one source says that in the Tolai area at least, the practice had most likely only been present for no more than five generations when the colonial powers arrived (Parkinson, 1907:252). And, in the Anir islands, Denner notes that very powerful practices such as the *Tubuan* were adopted and included into already existing belief systems (2010:310). As such, it is not clear how old the practice is, but it is most likely to have been practiced for the longest period of time in the southern portion of New Ireland, from where it originates. There are mythical origin stories of the *Tubuan*. However, these are not extremely detailed. In fact, I was never told a story as such

during my stay, I was simply told a few times, on separate occasions, that the *tubuan* originally belonged to the women and that the men then took it from them. This was never one of the first things that I was told about the *Tubuan*, and both male and female informants told me about this. One male informant explained to me that the men had taken this practice from the women due to the men's cultural superiority.

The secrecy surrounding the practice is an integral component of the practice and of how it comes to have the wide impact that it does on wider society. Here, as in many cases, secrecy is most likely more important than the secrets themselves. Different individuals may draw the line on what information may and may not be shared in different places. To a certain point this is inconsequential. What is important is the aura of secrecy that surrounds the secrets and the very real structures that keep it in place. These build the practice as one that is powerful, one that has authority and must be respected. It also creates roles for people to enter, according to how much they are supposed to know and how this positions them in their worlds.

One of the clearest structures that the *Tubuan* has in place to maintain secrecy is a system of punishment for those who reveal too much. If someone reveals secret information, a *tanget* will be planted in front of their house, indicating that they have to pay a fine to the *Tubuan*. Simply refusing to pay the fine does not seem to have been an option. In the past, at least, if someone had refused to pay the fine their house could have been burnt and they could have been killed. At best, they would have had to leave the community forever. Except that, given how the clan system works by making almost everyone related to everyone else, you probably still wouldn't be safe. This clearly demonstrates one of the ways in which the *Tubuan* works as a sort of social control device, as a lawmaker and enforcer, all as a result of secrecy.

Tubuan: The mask and performance

The *tubuan* mask resembles a pig puffy ball of leaves topped by a cone with a face drawn on it and with feathers sticking out of the top. It should completely conceal the identity of the wearer and may only be performed by specific individuals, as determined in the *taraiu*. The exact materials used to make the mask and *bilas* (body decoration) were kept secret from me, the information is however available in past works of research. It is however, based on extrapolation from how the *bilas* for other dances are made, possible to guess that the ball of leaves is achieved by superposing various *laplap*s of leaves. That is, skirts which are made using a rope from the bush to tie a series of leafs together. The cone is made in such a way that to the

audience it looks opaque. But, when I asked if performers could see, I was always assured that they could see everything, very clearly and a female informant told me that the eyes were made with a special kind of mesh. The cone is always toped by a decorative piece of feathers, these vary in colour and size. The cone that acts as a sort of face always has eyes painted onto it: these are a series of concentric circles (though some are rectangular or triangular). It may also have many other designs on it. These designs are very important, they are particular to each individual *tubuan* and are owned by the clan or lineage who own the *tubuan*. They are essentially copyrighted by the owners, anyone who uses these designs without the right is breaking *tubuan* law and will have to pay compensation to the *Tubuan*.

Tubuan performances are done to the beat of *garamut* bamboo drums. There will be a group of men sitting on the ground, wearing matching *laplap*s (made of fabric) and some with small sprigs of leafs hanging from their hair, around their necks or tucked into the tops of their *laplap*s. These men sit in a dense pack, those at the front are in charge of beating the drums and they all sing. The *tubuan* songs are all sung so that only audience members who are 'in the know' will be able to understand them. To this end, the songs are usually written in a *tumbuna* language or/and a mixture of languages, which local language speakers will not understand. As mentioned above, the *Tubuan* is about creating social realities, details such as this are clear ways of delineating social groupings, hierarchies along the lines of those who are able to have knowledge and those who are not, while displaying this to the entire group.

Only one *tubuan* song was ever shared with me, it is from the west coast Sursurunga.[20] And it's meaning was not given.

> *Yumande wé uwa linguria nalé au uñal*
> *yumande wé urakon utié lumba lumba*
> *maewandé urakon*
> *Mantiwai luriau*

During performances there is always at least one slightly older man walking around and shouting what appear to be orders at the dancers. This man, like those playing the drums and singing, is wearing a matching *laplap* and sprigs of leaves. He usually also has spots of lime

[20] The Sursurunga region and linguistic group is primarily located on the East coast of New Ireland, but there is a small area of Sursurunga speakers on the West coast. This is because previous to colonial rule, the inhabitants of the island lived in the bush. When colonial rulers had them come to the beachfront, most of the Sursurunga speakers headed for the East Coast, but some also went to the West coast.

powder on his face and/or body. Generally, at any one performance, there are a few of these men. They are often seen shouting at the dancers. Walking around with strict expressions on their faces. Occasionally, executing some of the dance steps.

The *Tubuan* is a deeply rooted tradition that is continuing to make itself relevant in modern contexts. Traditionally, it was important to the creation and maintenance of social fabrics. It created divisions and hierarchies between various groups of people: between men and women, between man and non-initiates (women and children, mostly), between younger and older men. It defined the roles of these groups within society and who owed respect to who. It also allowed certain men to climb the ranks, that it created, and in so doing accumulate the kind of power and networks needed to assume powerful roles in the community, such as becoming chief. This continues today. The *Tubuan* has maintained it's place as an important institution that defines and creates the realities that individuals must navigate. It continues to maintain the secrecy and high levels of membership which are necessary for the function of the organization. And has remained relevant by inserting itself into modern settings such as various building openings, honouring the arrival of international organizations and by performing in festival settings.

The way in which it creates hierarchies and power has also helped those who are members to achieve positions of power in both the modern and traditional realms of current papuan life. As such, the structures that it creates between men and women and amongst men who are more or less powerful have largely remained in place.

I will examine individual performances that I witnessed or heard of during my stay, these will further illustrate how the *tubuan* is present in contemporary life in the region.

The first *Tubuan* performance that I was able to attend was in Nokon village, on June 28th 2023. Nokon village is located about 10kms north of Samo village, it is still within the Sursurunga area. The event was at local politician Walter Schnaubelt's house, he was the host, and it was to celebrate the combination of a grave cementing and the opening of a house. The details concerning the day, the events, and what they were for, were hard to come by. Everyone knew that there was going to be a *singsing* at his house, but the dates, times and what it was all for were not clear.

The previous day I had made my way to a chicken farm nearby, in Kilak, having been told that there would be *singsing*s there, only to find that this was not the case. The area was mostly deserted, with the exception of a few groups of men near the river and four women which I

eventually found sitting under a shade tree. I sat with them for a bit and they were the first people to provide me with truly accurate information. The area in Kilak was where the groups who had come from out of town were going to stay, indeed, there had been two long tent structures set up for that purpose. The women were there because they were in charge of cooking the meals of those who would be staying. They informed me that 700 people would be staying in Kilak for a few days. They would be coming from the Tanga islands as well as from the Siar/Lak area. Visibly this was an important event, as it was able to draw so many people from such a large area. Further, though many of the *singsing*s are performed by men and the individual organizing it was a man [21], there is a great deal of hidden women's labour going into these events. Further, it sounded as if these women were being paid for this work. As such, they were also benefitting from this event.

On my way back down from that area to the main road, I began to hear the sounds of drums beating and singing coming from the bush. As I neared the main road I met a man that I knew and his friend, I asked them what this sound was, where it was coming from. He replied that it must be somebody playing a boombox over in the next valley. This was very clearly a lie, the music was obviously being played 'live' and not from a recording, and it would not have been able to reach that far. I then reached the intersection and I met with various groups of women and children who were waiting under a tree, they told me that they were waiting for cars to bring them up to Kilak to see the *singsing*. It is most likely that there was a *taraiu* nearby that the men were practising their dances for the next day in. Most likely, all of the people waiting under the tree (and most likely those who had informed me that there would be something happening there on that day) knew that there was a *taraiu* there and that they would be able to hear the singing and music from the road.

[21] As far as I can tell though there is no explicit rule that only men can organize these kinds of events, in practice it is only men. Though there are mentions of women being able to gain enough power to control *tubuans* (Neumann, 1992:311) or even performing (Denner, 2012:75) and of older women participating in dances outside of the *taraiu* (Parkinson, 1907:444-5). The organizers of these kinds of events are usually motivated by a desire to gain prominence in their communities, often for political ends.

The following day was the day of the main events, which mostly occurred in Nokon village. Early in the morning, at around 5am, the *tubuans* arrived on the sea, in a *kinavai*[22]. Later in the morning many of the attendees headed up to Kilak for the grave cementing, where a pastor spoke. Due to the limited information I was working with, I missed these events. I arrived mid-morning and spent a few hours getting to know people in the village before watching the main *singsing* in the afternoon.

Figures 20-22. A group of men wait to enter the performance area and perform a *tangara* dance (top left); Men eat burning charcoal logs during a "fire eating"[23] performance (top right); A group of woman dance a *puerparik*[24] and at

[22] The *kinavai* is when the *tubuan*s arrive over the sea early in the morning, they will dance on the boats and then, much more, once they reach the shore. According to Parkinson the *kinavai* marks the birth of the *dukduk* to one (and only one) of the *tubuan*s which will be dancing (1907:452-3).

[23] Fire eating: Though fire eating as such is not a dance, there is a dance performed before the fire eaters begin to eat. This is a practice which is said to originate from Himao village, which is about thirty kilometres north of Samo in the Sursurunga region. It is a rather impressive performance and as such is usually considered one of the highlights of an event.

[24] Puerparik and pinpidik: these are two *singsing* styles usually performed by women, in pair numbers. They are fun dances, they may go on for a while, as the women move twigs of leaves that they hold in their hands, and perform manoeuvres in pairs. Practices such as *bukur* often occur during this kind of dance.

the right edge of the group two women from Schnaubelt's family have joined in alongside them after having interrupted the performance to perform *bukur* (bottom). (Boiteau, Isabelle. Personal photos, 2023).

In the morning, people waited around the village and the beach, preparing *mumu* and cleaning pig intestines in the sea as trucks full of people slowly started arriving. I sat on the beach and was quickly joined by some teenage girls who lived in the village, as well as their family, some also living in the village and some visiting for the performance. We talked for a while, they told me about the 5am performance that I had missed and before I left them, the women warned me that I should not get too close to the *tubuan*s during the performance.

The *singsing* occurred in the area between the front porch of Walter Schnaubelt's house and his beach. His house was notable from the moment that I arrived in the village. Most houses in New Ireland villages are made of bush materials: the walls are made of wooden beams and bamboo and the roofs of *kunai* grass. Some houses are made of permanent materials, of painted timber and sheet metal. They are usually fairly small and many of the houses made of permanent materials sit on stilts, elevated from the ground. Walter Shnaubelt's house was enormous, it stood out from the rest of the community and from the surrounding landscape. It was large, firmly planted in the ground, and surrounded by an assortment of trucks and shipping containers. All of it painted red[25].

The performance started in the early afternoon and lasted almost until sundown. It was striking to see the differences between the groups of those attending. Schnaubelt and his family (maybe around fifteen members), all of mixed origin and many having come from Australia for the occasion, were lounging about on a large porch at the front of the house: they had food, they wore visibly imported clothing and had ceiling fans keeping them cool. Everyone else had come into the compound via the beach and was packed around the area that would be the show ground, sitting on a few benches and mostly on the ground. The social division could not have been more glaring.

The *singsing* began all of a sudden - so much so that it made me jump - with the beginning of the drum beat and the first *singsing* group headed for the show area. Many *singsing* groups performed that day: there was a *tangara* from Tanga; a *kipong* from Tanga; some *puerparik* and *pinpidik*, fire eaters and, finally, the *tubuan*. The *singsings* were all quite impressive. The *puerparik*, *pinpidik* and some impromptu dances being those that most exuded a feeling of fun,

[25] This has to do with local politics, he is working with a campaign that stands out due to it's catchphrase "pasim ai dua" (opening all doors) and the red colour of all of the paraphernalia.

with people coming down from the house to perform *bukur* and join in the dancing, all provoking much laughter.

After the fire eaters, it seemed as if the performance had ended. I wandered around the compound with one of my informants. She brought me to see a mother of hers who was working to prepare food in one of the small houses made of bush material nearby. Indeed, all the while the performances were happening, there were many women hard at work in the *hauskuk*s next door, preparing the feast that the hundreds of attendees would eat after the performance. We walked around for a bit, she holding her baby. Finally, we headed back to the show grounds as I realised that there would indeed be a *tubuan* performance, she sat further back than she had for the previous performances as I headed as close to the front as I could get. At this point, many women warned me that I could not get too close to the *tubuan*. They continued to do so even as I pointed out other women positioned even closer than I was.

Then the first *tubuan* came out, it performed and I recorded as best I could. Having come all of this way, after reading so much about the *tubuan*, I was elated to finally see one. I was ensconced in the performance, smiling widely as I tried to hold my camera relatively still. Then, the woman standing next to me (who had helped me to get a good spot) noticed that I was moving my body to the beat of the drum, she sternly instructed me stop, that as a woman I could not dance the *tubuan*. I already knew this, what I did not realize was how far the restriction extended. In fact, it really surprised me, I had, before, when speaking to men and asking them about the *tubuan* made more pronounced *tubuan* like movements - grasping my shoulders with my hands and rotating my body slightly from side to side - movements which I had seen the men make, and which, in turn, had always made them smile and chuckle. But, in this context, restrictions were more strongly enforced.

What surprised me was that, over the course of the entire day, I found that it was women telling women how to behave in relation to the *tubuan*. I had been told about these kinds of restrictions by everyone before, but on that particular day - when it became particularly relevant - I did not hear from one man. I did speak with many, but none reminded me to keep my distance. Later in the performance, after a *tubuan* had danced along the beach a pair of teenage girls decided that they were going to walk away from the performance passing through an area where the *tubuan* had been, I heard a middle aged women yell out to them: “Yu nemi mat!” meaning, “you want to die!”.

This performance really made the importance of sensorial experience stand out. The way that different individuals observed the performance, their physical location in the audience and their disposition to the performance affected their perception of the event. Those on Schnaubelt's balcony would have felt far more included in the performance than those standing under the sun and looking over other people's heads at the backside of the performance. Much as how the women, giving themselves constant warnings to not approach and having to look over the densely packed heads of the men, would have felt a degree of fear and exclusion not felt by the men in the first row or up on Schnaubelt's balcony. When the woman stopped me from swaying my body to the performance, even in this short period of time and not having had a lifetime of warnings, it altered my perception of the performance. I felt far happier perhaps even included in the performance while I was swaying along with it. After I stopped, I became much more conscious of myself, much less conscious of the performance. I could no longer "get lost in it". This made me think of the way Edith Turner described *communitas* (2012), a feeling which is intuitively understood by all, as we have all attended events such as concerts where we came to feel a sort of unity with the crowd and the event. Here, I had begun to feel this way, and this woman's warning had quickly created a rupture. Even such a small and isolated event affected how close I felt to the performance, the amount of fear that I felt. Had this been a lifetime of warnings given to me (and as a member of society, not as an analytical anthropologist) I can only imagine the degree to which it would have affected my perception of the performance. This is critical because how the event is experienced is a part of how social realities are both created and maintained.

The performance itself involved two parts: first one *tubuan* came out and performed for a bit, then four more *tubuan*s came out and they all performed.

The first *tubuan* came to the show grounds accompanied by approximately five men. This *tubuan* was from Kandas (on the south west coast of New Ireland) and it's name is Toundu[26]. The men accompanying the *tubuan* have been described by other ethnographers as *yain pidik*. I was never told what their role was, but it was always clear that they are leaders of some sort. They all wear matching *laplap*s, just like the men who sit and sing and beat the drums do. These men accompanied the *tubuan* into the performance area, one of them carrying a staph with a decorated top and another wearing leafs in the back of his *laplap*, which are a kind of

[26] This information was given to me a few days later by a chief from the Siar/Lak region.

biar[27]. Behind them were more men wearing matching *laplap*s, they set up in front of the porch, where they sat and played drums and sang.

The Kandas *tubuan* danced at least two dances and between them spent some time walking around. In it's dances, it moved at first by jumping from side to side and leaning it's body in the direction that it jumped in. It then approached the front of the performance area (the porch) and gyrated a bit, while lifting some of the layers of its *bilas* up and down. Finally, it jumped from foot to foot, a movement which also made the leaves of the *bilas* jump. I was too far to hear any sound above the drumming and singing, but this movement of the leaves would have created a sound audible to those positioned closer.

There was then some time spent waiting, it even seemed that the performance might be over. Then three more *tubuan*s arrived. These *tubuan*s were different. I was later told that they were from the Siar region. Their *bilas* looked lower and wider and the conical heads were of a slightly different shape, with more of a sloping back. Some even had leaves that gave the effect of hair on the back portion of the cone. These *tubuan*s also moved differently: as they stepped they took longer strides with a little jump in each one. When they began to dance they would jump from foot to foot on the spot, setting all of the leaves of the *bilas* into motion. Then they would suddenly move the conical head downwards, sideways, etc… and it would repeat. After dancing for a bit, the music stopped, and the *tubuan*s headed down towards the water.

At this point the performance seemed as if it was pausing for a bit. Some of the *tubuan*s walked out along the beach front for a bit. One settled into a crouched position next to the water. At this point, the men who had been standing around the periphery of what had until then been the performance area of the *singsing* were now very close to the *tubuan*s, sometimes standing less than a meter from them. After a period of this another *tubuan* came out. This one stood out as a portion of its neckpiece was bright pink. At this point, the *tubuan*s, danced again, this time all together. They made motions where they would strut from one foot to another, making the leaves of their *bilas* shake in the process.

The additional *tubuan* also came with additional *yain pidiks*. During the dancing, the *yain pidiks* would sometimes shout things, sometimes whirls leaves in the air and jump around. Their expressions were always serious, there was no laughing or smiling. This was clearly a serious

[27] This term refers to the bundles of leafs that the men wear on their backs. What they are made of and their purpose is secret.

performance, meant to impress the audience. Then, they all stopped and the *yain pidiks* organized to have the crowd part so that the *tubuan*s could exit the performance area.

This was not the absolute end. After the performance ended, some of the *yain pidik* came back out, in order to receive a payment of *mis* from Schnaubelt. this portion of the performance was also very important because it referenced relations between groups and what are essentially transactions of power. Schnaubelt is a very powerful man and the entire event had been put on as a political move to reaffirm, to solidify, his position within the community.

Figures 23-25. The first *tubuan* to come out and perform, called Toundu and coming from Kandas; During a pause in dancing, a *tubuan* is crouched on the beach; Three *tubuan*s and a *kámgoi* dancing. All taken at the *singsing* event in Nokon village, June 2023. (Boiteau, Isabelle. Personal photos, 2023).

Another performance featuring *tubuan*s occurred a few weeks before my initial arrival in the field to celebrate the opening of a new medical center about 10kms north of Samo village (in Tinkoris). As a part of the opening there were many *singsing* performances. While I wasn't able to attend, when I spoke to villagers about their experiences with *singsing*s this opening was frequently mentioned.

It seems to have been an event that people enjoyed. But people's comments were also never all that strong, nobody was elated or extremely enthusiastic nor did anybody hate it. This would lead me to believe that though those who attended had enjoyed the performance it also hadn't been an event that was of central importance.

Given that the *Tubuan* is such a powerful performance, that the society is entrenched in the social fabric, and that the *tubuan* is meant to represent the spirits or/and ancestors, how can this be? First, as I was explicitly told by a few individuals, the tradition is simply less strong in the Sursurunga region these days. Though it remains stronger in the southern Siar/Lak regions, in the Sursurunga area other phenomena are taking on increasing cultural importance. Religion is very important, and though no one cited it as an explicit reason for not attending it is clear that some of the local families usually do not participate in these traditional *kastom* events for religious reasons. Even for those who do, most of the population adheres to some form of Christianity, meaning that the spiritual elements of the *Tubuan* cannot be taken to account for 100% of their cosmovision. There is also the question of exterior influences as many leave to work at the mine in Lihir or head towards one of the main towns in the province. Though access to information from the exterior world remains limited - for example many have phones, but due to the cost of it, few have access to internet and when they do it is in small tidbits and often 'fake news' - it exists. And values are often oriented towards constructing a future where one's children will become educated and be able to get a job beyond the village or/and contribute to the community's development. This is to say that the *Tubuan* is far from being the only cultural phenomenon shaping the fabric of the social world. It is a phenomenon that shapes local sociocultural worlds, but perhaps not in an all encompassing way.

Not being all encompassing does not mean that the society and the *singsing* are not important parts of local social worlds and that it is not important for individuals to engage with it. If not, why would Schnaubelt have gone to the trouble of organizing a performance like the one I attended in Nokon? Which was undoubtedly highly expensive. Before entering politics Schnaubelt was a businessman, my informants told me that that is how he made the money to be able to live the way that he does. A business man would not have decided to organize such an event, or would have done so on a far smaller scale, it it wasn't a smart decision. Clearly, the expense was based on the calculation that an even bigger pay off would follow. These kinds of events are examples of the big man style leadership which is traditional in Papua New Guinea and continues to be important in politics throughout the country.

Bigmanship is a type of informal achieved leadership common in Melanesia. The term comes from the Tok Pisin phrase *bikpela man* (literally "big man") (Lederman, 2015:567). It was defined by anthropologists working in the area after WWII (Lederman, 2015:567). It can be defined as: "male leaders whose political influence is achieved by means of public oratory, informal persuasion, and the skillful conduct of both private and public wealth exchanges." (Lederman, 2015:567). This type of leadership is achieved by individuals who cultivate a coterie of loyal

followers (Sahlins, 1963:290) through a series of calculated maneuvers that are meant to show their elevated status (though this status is entirely of their making) (Sahlins, 1963:289). It is known to be an unstable form of leadership (Sahlins, 1963:292), as there is always any number of men trying to achieve this elevated status and because maintaining one's status as a big man requires constant work. Though this term originated in the study of small scale societies in mid-20th century Melanesia, it remains relevant to this day, as the form of leadership continues to thrive. As Lederman puts it: "Hardly relics, big men are everyday facts of life in the urban and rural communities and the provincial and national governments of twenty-first century Melanesia." (2015:569).

Harold, is another example of a successful man, a big man, who chooses engage with traditional customs as a means of furthering his ambitions. Harold is the man who brought me to Samo village, let me stay in his house, made sure that his fellow clansmen would look after me and organized for me to be let into the *piknat* clan, with the local name Tintai. For this I owe him a lot. He is clearly involved in a wide range of projects, knows how to do well for himself and is willing to help others. He is a man most likely in his 50s with heritage from both New Ireland and East New Britain. He has worked in at least two mines in the country, the OK Tedi mine and the mine currently on Lihir island. He did not tell me much about what he did in these mines, the villagers told me that he had been a big man at the mine on Lihir (I suspect that this means something in the lines of project manager). He is a highly connected man, both within the country and abroad. He is also currently working on building a foundation in his village near Kavieng, he is working to protect the environment and promote tourism in the province. He also has a very large number of kids, so many that he could not give me a precise number.

I mention him here, as a sort of case study, as he shows how the *Tubuan* is deeply enmeshed with power, and that this affects both the traditional and modern realms (I understand that modern is not the best word to use here, however it does denote the kind of contrast with traditional custom that I want to discuss here). When we first met he told me that he owns two *tubuan*s. He had brought these *tubuan*s out not too long before my arrival in order to honour the arrival a few members of an NGO who had come to visit from abroad. He told me about this, no doubt because of my interest masking practices. However, he did not give me much information about the masks, in fact, beyond saying that he owned some and that they had performed, he told me nothing. The way he told me about it almost seems like a manner of boasting. To be able to own and to host a *tubuan* performance is a signal of one's standing in a community. In order to own a *tubuan* one has to have undergone not just initial initiations into the *Tubuan*, but many further steps as well. All of these steps involve payment of a fee and some kind of test of

physical endurance. In addition, being a member of the *tubuan* gives one an extensive network, not only a network but one in which hierarchies of who owes respect to whom are well defined. A high standing in the *Tubuan* means that a man is someone who is owed respect by a lot of people. It is also a sign of one's standing in the community, because it means that one's network and standing within that network is strong enough to make it desirable for a *tubuan* to come and perform at one's event. Further, being able to host a *tubuan* performance means that one has the financial means to host such a performance, since the *tubuan* will not perform without receiving payment. At a later date, he came by and spoke about how he was a member of all of the secret societies in New Ireland. In the south, of the *Tewel,* in the area, of the *Tubuan* and of another the name of which he could not remember in the area around Kavieng. He spoke about the initiation to the *Tewel*, how they cut initiates' backs and then put a substance in the cuts so that there will be no scars[28]. He mentioned these things, giving just enough information to make it all seem impressive, to show his high standing in a wide range of communities. Enough to show that he was a big man, an important and influential man, but never enough to let the listener in on any of these societies' secrets.

This behaviour extends beyond the purely traditional realm. As the 'traditional' and 'modern' worlds blend to a certain extent (the labels marking a fictitious division). For instance, one of his projects is bringing balsa farming, as a cash crop, to the region. He was growing balsa saplings at his own house and trying to set up a nursery in Samo. The idea being that people would buy the saplings for a price now and after a few years be able to sell them for a good profit. This business was being run through traditional clan based networks. The man that he had hired to build the nursery in Samo was a clan relative of his. Clan relations provided a network to help him in his business endeavours.

Though he had achieved success through his work in the mines and in his business ventures and held a broad network through his clan and male association relations, he was still aiming to gain more status in the village. Indeed, he was vying to be the next chief in the village. The current chief of Samo is still alive, and, though aging, remains in fairly good health. Indeed he helped me a good deal over the course of my fieldwork, telling me stories, singing songs and putting on a small dance performance. From time to time, he expressed frustration with Harold. When I first met Harold he introduced himself saying that he was the next chief in the village. I asked how he knew this and he did not answer, simply stated that he was. I discovered within

[28] Wagner also refers to a similar practices among the Usen Barok. There the practice is referred to as the "Taberan". It features cutting shows, where people are cut and their cuts heal quickly because a be-spelled lime powder is put in them. Wagner was told that the entire thing is a deception and that the secret power lies in the lime powder. (1986:133)

the first two weeks of my fieldwork, that from the perspective of the community this was not entirely the sure thing that he had made it seem. Most likely bringing me in with the impression that he was the next chief was a means of helping him to obtain the position. All in all, I cannot be sure of whether Harold will or will not be the next chief. There are many people and factors involved in this kind of outcome. I discuss it because it gives a fuller picture of the ways in which powerful individuals become powerful in New Ireland. Additionally, because it goes to show that power in the traditional realm and power in the modern world are not separate. Someone seeking power must do so in both realms if they are to truly succeed in Papua New Guinea.

In New Ireland, the *hausboi* is still a central part of politics. Decisions are made in it and if you want to have influence on the shape of the province you need to have a say at that table. The *hausboi* is tied to the *Tubuan* and the chief who is in charge of the community. As such, in order to move one's plans forward it isn't enough to go and be a good architect, a good business manager, it is also essential to have a high standing within these traditional structures are rarely mutually exclusive realms. This is most likely a large reason why the institution of the *Tubuan* remains so relevant today. It may explain its staying power. Because membership remains desirable, beneficial to individuals, even as opportunities are expanding.

The *Tubuan*, East New Britain and Tourism

In mid July 2023 I attended the National Mask Festival and Warwigara in Kokopo, East New Britain. Kokopo is it's capital, located approximately a 2hr boat ride from Namatanai in New Ireland. The dominant cultural group in East New Britain are the Tolai people. The Tolai are well known in the country and in the anthropological literature. As I have already mentioned, East New Britain was one of the first areas of Papua New Guinea to be colonized and where missionaries first arrived, and, as a result of their long contact with the 'white' world, the Tolai have become a kind of cultural elite.

Though this festival was being held in a different province it remained relevant to my work because the Tolai are said to have come to East New Britain from the southern tip of New Ireland. It is thought that sometime, no more than a few centuries before European arrival, they were chased out of the province by groups that they were at war with (Tateyama, 2006:16). They brought with them the culture of the *Tubuan*. The *Tubuan* is now, in touristic circles at least, most associated with East New Britain and the Tolai due to their prominence and their

performances at cultural events with large national and even international coverage, such as the Mask Festival. The cultural continuity of the masking practice made it relevant to my work.

I was also interested to see the practice in a context that was far from traditional. Even though it is clear that even within this, efforts have been put in place to maintain ties to the traditional use of the *Tubuan*. Indeed, at the very end of their performance, the *tubuan*s all crouched on the performance field and a man came out with an arm full of shell money, placing a few strands in front of each *tubuan*. This is because traditionally the *tubuan* do not perform unless they are paid as a performance is a way of passing *bisnis,* it is an exchange between two parties that also establishes a relationship between them. Similarly, though a lot of the dancing happened on a large field set aside as a kind of festival ground, the appearance of the *tubuan* happens at 5am on the first day of performance, on the sea, at a *kinavai*. This is a traditional form of *tubuan* performance where they appear over the sea and come towards the beach.

Figure 26. Payment of shell money at the end of the performances of the *tubuan*s and *dukduk*s, held on the first day of the festival. (Boiteau, Isabelle. Personal photo, 2023).

Within this context which mixes the local and the international, the gender division of the audience at times was upheld and at others was not. This was particularly condensed at the *kinavai*. About ten minutes after arriving to wait for the performance, I suddenly realized that all of the people around me, many foreign tourists as well as local guides and curious locals, were all women. Then, maybe half an hour later it was pointed out to me that the *tubuan*s had actually started their performance: they were in the distance on the beach. They were so far away that I could barely tell that there was some kind of shape on the beach, let alone make out any kind of figure. As I set out to get close enough to be able to see, the gender of the crowd changed. As I got close to the centre of the beach I suddenly found myself surrounded by nothing but men and only meters away from the *tubuan*s who were strutting back and forth on the beach and occasionally heading towards a changing area built from woven mats.

The time that I spent in this area spoke to the way in which gender rules regarding the viewing of the *tubuan* are inconsistently navigated in a changing world. As I first arrived I was the only woman around, and then a few more arrived to the area, while the local woman accompanying me remained farther behind me. After maybe ten or fifteen minutes a middle aged man somewhere in the crowd made a comment on how women shouldn't be in that area, and I moved a bit farther away. No other comments were made, and I remained, As time past, and the boats carrying the *tubuan* out on the sea could be seen to be gradually approaching the beach, more women arrived. At first this was mostly tourists and some of them set out across the rope that I had been staying behind. Some local women approached the crowd standing behind the rope, some of these carrying containers of food that they were selling and they mixed into the previously male crowd. More camera toting tourists arrived, and I went to sit on the beach, even closer to the performance. Then, an asian woman walked straight through the crowd, heading to the front of the beach with a sure step and no hesitation whatsoever. She was accompanied by a local woman carrying her umbrella and they walked straight through the men crowding together to stand on the beach and wait for the *tubuan*. The woman I was with informed me that she was the owner of one of the large department stores in the city. Finally, the *tubuan,* which had been out at sea on a couple of boats slowly heading for the shore, arrived to the beach and, in an instant, the crowd of people waiting rushed forward towards the boats and the *tubuan*s disembarking. The woman accompanying me, who had previously thought that we were getting too close, now rushed ahead of me. The crowd remained densely packed around the *tubuan*s until their performance was over.

At the beginning of the event there was clearly an effort to maintain traditional norms for viewing the *tubuan.* These rules were quickly relaxed, but not as quickly for everyone. Local women were the last to be allowed to break the rules. Foreigners are the first to be allowed access. As curious outsiders who have made the trip for the purpose of seeing this event they are given privileged access, though not from the very beginning. Throughout my time in the field it was evident that this hierarchy exists: the foreigner is seen as a person that needs to be welcomed and protected, as well as someone who is entitled to far more. This never seems, outwardly at least, to be presented with resentment, it seems to fall more within a framework of respect. This is a framework, or discourse, which is deeply entrenched in the cultures of the region. It was very interesting to see the woman who owned one of the department stores walking straight through. There was no hesitation on her part or on anyone else's. She even had what appeared to be an employee purely in charge of holding her umbrella for her. She is a Chinese woman, which does give her to some extent the same kinds of privileges as those given to the tourists.

However, she has presumably lived in the city for many years, meaning that she is not so much of a transient foreigner/stranger as a tourist. The big difference was her standing in the community: she was in a position of great power and wealth. It seemed to be these things which allowed her to simply walk through, no one standing in her way, everyone noting her arrival and her right to behave as she did.

Later that morning the performance moved to Kalabond field, the festival grounds. The *tubuan*s and *dukduk*s performed for a few hours. There was a relatively small crowd, forming an incomplete circle around the performance area. Here, all genders were standing first row with very clear views of the *tubuan*s. A very stark contrast to how it had been at the performance in Nokon. What this performance did share with the one in Nokon was that a clear hierarchy between various members of the audience was maintained. In Nokon, members of the politician's family, who had been sitting on the house's porch, had had a clear view of the performance. Here, it was tourists who were given front row access and even an elevated stage from which to watch.

The *Tubuan* is not just about enacting gender relations in local communities, it is about power in a much broader sense. As such, the Chinese businesswoman in Kokopo was allowed to head straight for the front row because she was powerful. Her power and status in the city were more important than the status that she should have had as a woman. It reflected the old adage that the powerful attract the powerful. Much as in big man style leadership, where each move is calculated to benefit the big man, to make him big. It is in the *Tubuan*'s interest to associate themselves with other powerful groups and people, by doing so they are showing that they are just as (or perhaps even more) powerful than them. Something similar is occurring when the *Tubuan* is used politically. This happened at the festival, where tourists, the international representatives, were given special status. It also happened in Nokon, where Schnaubelt put on a performance as a calculated political move. It also happened when Harold organized a small performance for the international NGO. All of these performances were designed to be attention drawing performances that people would enjoy. But that was not their primary purpose for those organizing them, rather these performances served to show their status in their communities and to build their networks across all of those who came and who would share the events in their communities after returning home. The performance at the festival did this on a larger scale, as it involved the international community, in many ways it was aimed at it.

Two types of *tubuan* masks performed both in the morning and on the field, the *tubuan* (also known as *nantoi* in the south of New Ireland) and the *dukduk*. *Dukduk*s are the child of the

tubuan, the *tubuan* is said to be the mother and is gendered female. The biggest visible difference between the two masks is that the *dukduk*s do not have eyes. Their head cone is also a bit more slender and taller than those of the *tubuan*s. In keeping with their not having eyes, I noticed that whenever they came to and left the field there was always a *yain pidik* walking next to them, it seemed that they were guiding them out. Further, in the morning on the beach, there was a small dip in the sand in one area and every time the *dukduk* walked by this dip seemed to take it by surprise (a small and subtle surprise). I didn't witness any *dukduk*s in the Sursurunga area, they are most common in East New Britain and the Siar region. However, there is ample information on them in the ethnographic record (this is partly due to a confusion in nomenclature in the turn of the century literature and a subsequent need to clear this up). The *tubuan*s also presented minor differences from those that I had seen in New Ireland. Though *tubuan*s across all regions are strikingly similar, the *tubuan*s on Kalabond field all had a little something on them hanging from a string down at their sides. To me it looked a lot like a price tag. This was actually a little package of magic, most likely protective magic.

In the morning the *tubuan*s and *dukduk*s mostly walked back and forth on the beach. There were two sets of approximately three banana boats that had been tied together and approached the shore from different sides, meeting in the middle out at sea before heading for the beach. The musicians and singers were packed onto the boats, with the *tubuan*s at the outside edge, performing there. They then came aground at the beach. It was impressive to see, but not easy to photograph.

Later, on the festival grounds they danced, sometimes two at a time and sometimes more. Their movements emphasized jumping, which made the leaves jump up and down as well and rustle.

Sometimes they would stand on one foot and leave the other in the air, with their bent knee back, usually to the company of a slower beat. At other times they would set both feet wide, forming a triangular shape, and jump up and down. most impressively, they would bend at the waist and turn, sometimes they went as far as to make the tip of the conical headdress hit the ground.

When the performances were over a man came on over the loudspeaker to explain what would happen next. The *tubuan*s all came out, and crouched/sat on the ground in a line. Then, a man came out with an arm full of traditional shell money and proceeded to walk in front of each *tubuan* and lay a few strands in front of it.

All in all, the performances at the mask festival had a strikingly different feel from those in Nokon. This was in large part, from my perspective at least, due to my having been able to get far closer to the the *tubuan*s during the performances at the mask festival. This was a direct result of my distinct positionality at this event and the different aims of the two performances.

Figures 27-29. (Previous page. Left to right) A *tubuan* followed by three *dukduk*s walk along the beach at dawn, as men packed on a wharf watch behind; A *tubuan*, a *dukduk* and a *kámgoi* wait for the *kinavai*, the boat carrying *tubuan*s, *dukduk*s and musicians which can be seen out at sea; In the afternoon, two *tubuan*s dance on the festival performance grounds. (Boiteau, Isabelle. 2023. Personal photos, 2023).

Participation and Discourse in *Tubuan* Culture

While performances are being adopted in changing circumstances, such as in festivals and the multifaceted domains of politics, they are also still being used in traditional ceremonial contexts. One occurred between my fieldtrips in the village of Kapsel, about 4kms south of Samo. The performance in Kapsel happened in the context of the opening of a new *hausboi* of the Rongol clan. It was a part of three days of *singsing*s. Many of the villagers went to see the performances. When I returned to the field many people told me about the event.

Within a few days of my arrival, one informant took me to see the new *hausboi*. On arrival I was allowed in (despite *hausboi*s generally not being allowed to women) and was shown a video of the *tubuan* performances. I was able to ask many detailed questions about the *tubuan*s in this video, which the *mangi* showing me answered without mention of secrecy despite the fact that a pair of middle aged women and many children were huddled around us.

Four *tubuan*s performed at the *hausboi* opening. One was black, or rather it's 'head' was black. This *tubuan* is called Togolgol and is from the Kamri clan. At the backside of the cone it has a design in the shape of a skeleton's hand, symbolizing it's power to kill and its black colour symbolizes sorrow. Another was red, for blood. It's name Towanimar and from the Rongol clan. It had a butterfly motif above the eyes. Another was green, representing the forest. It's name Bun, from the Rongol clan. It had a motif that looked like a red heart above the eyes. Finally, there was a brown one, the colour representing skin colour. It's name Manpup, and from the Rongol clan. It had a stone motif above the eyes. There was also a group of men, all bare backed and wearing identical *laplap*s, sitting on the ground next to the performance. On top of their *laplap*s they all wore *biar*, a bunch of leaves that they wore on their backs. When I asked about these the information was less forthcoming. Suggesting that these elements are more strictly secret than the others.

There were also many villagers who did not attend. Most people who did not attend cited being tired, not being interested or their parents needing them to do some work as reasons for not going. Though these are all potentially true reasons, it is likely that they also didn't attend for other reasons. For instance, one informant, Louisa, who was perhaps a bit more honest. Told me that though she is a member of the Rongol clan, she couldn't go due to disagreements between different groups in the Rongol clan over a company that they had started (Tigaikut). Since there had been no reconciliation between the clan groups, so she couldn't attend.

Clearly people hold different relations to the custom and many variables play into individual interest, attitudes and participation. I spoke with many villagers about their experiences with the *Tubuan*, as well as masking practices more broadly, in order to get at some of these variations.

When I spoke to men I often tried to ask them if they were members of the *tubuan*, and if they had ever had the chance to perform. It is likely that I did not always get accurate answers, given my gender and the secrecy surrounding the practice. This is especially the case with younger men (under the age of about thirty or thirty-five). These men, or *mangis*, were often hesitant to speak, even to answer extremely basic questions like if they were members, if they had attended a performance, etc… This is in part independent of the topic of questioning, as younger men were often more hesitant to speak to me, partly because of my gender and partly because of their status in the community as youths. Indeed, this shows the deeply entrenched nature of local values concerning the authority and respect that younger men owe to older men.

I was able to get some information by simply asking them about the first time or the last time that they had seen a masked performance. These generally ended up being *tubuan* performances. When the *mangis* spoke about having attended these performances, they spoke about how it had made them happy and had made them want to join, had made them want to dance as well. One man his thirties who had performed even fairly recently said that just thinking about the *tubuan* makes him happy.

Despite the secrecy surrounding the custom, quite a few men were willing to speak to me about being or having been members and their experience performing, though not in complete detail. Much like many of the *mangis* that I spoke to, two middle aged informants told me that they had first seen the *tubuan* perform when they were children and that it had made them think that they would join when they were older (which they both did, at least one of them also going on to perform). Indeed, one man in his forties was able to tell me the name of the first *tubuan* that he had seen (in 1983, the *tubuan* Piku). Others said that they had first joined because a family member had told them to. One younger man said that he had joined at 18 because a *bosman* had told him to, another because he was taken to the *taraiu* as a small boy. This is in line with what another informant told me about the feeling of joining the *tubuan*: that one has a sense that something important is being passed from one generation to the next. And yet another, that joining the *tubuan* was about becoming a man. Joining the *Tubuan* is about becoming a man, it is about human beings who were previously children stepping into the roles of grown men, as they do so they feel that they are entering a new phase in their lives, a new position in society.

Not all men who join the *tubuan* will go on to dance the *tubuan*. Even fewer will go on to dance it outside of the *taraiu*, where non-initiates and women will be watching the performances. I spoke to at least three men over the age of 45 who had joined the *tubuan* and never danced. For some this was most likely because they were not chosen by the men in charge inside the *taraiu*, for others it was due to the course of their lives, because they left the village for school or work at the time when they would have been able to undertake the steps to be able to dance the *tubuan*.

Many of those with whom I spoke had danced the *tubuan* at one point. I was told that they were able to see while inside the mask and that, because of the things that they wear, it smells nice inside. They generally underlined that they felt *hamamas* (happy) or *orait* (alright) while performing, but that after the performance they would feel tired and sleepy, even sick, because of the substances that they had consumed beforehand. Some also mentioned feeling *shortwin* (out of breath) during the performance, and one middle aged man told me that this had been the

reason why he had stopped dancing. Others told me that they preferred to perform other dances like *utun* and *libung* (*libung* in particular is noted to be related to the *tubuan*, to be a dance that must be learned before one can learn the *tubuan*) quite specifically because they did not have to consume special substances in order to perform these dances, meaning that they would not have to go through feeling tired and sick after the performance.

A few mentioned feeling *langar* or *langoron* when performing. This is a concept which is central to the *tubuan* and has come out in the work of Wolffram in the province (2007; 2011[29]). I hear it mentioned by men 25 to 70 years old. It was described to me as an *arapela kain peelin* (another kind of feeling), as a feeling of *hamamas* (happy, happiness, joy, enjoyment, etc…) and as feeling strong. It was described either generally as a feeling of happiness or strength or as something from the skin, my informants in a nearby village described it by saying *skin bai hamamas* (skin will be happy). I was also told that the feeling came from eating a substance called *ku* just before the performance. *Ku* is a substance made from coconut, it is made by scraping and milking multiple coconuts and then placing hot stones into the mixture. The result is that the coconut milk will separate leaving behind a clear oil and white conglomerates, the 2 can then be separated and mixed with other substances before being eaten. This is what happens with the *ku* eaten in the context of performance, it is mixed with secret leaves before being eaten by those who are about to perform.

Figure 30. Making *ku.* This *ku* was plain, but the base substance may have other elements added to it, such as for the making of *langoron*. (Boiteau, Isabelle. Personal photo, 2022).

This is most likely why many people see the *tubuan* and similar kinds of practices as something where men are dancing with the spirits. One informant in Samo referred to the practice in this way, as did a younger man visiting from Rabaul and another that I spoke with in Port Moresby.

[29] Wagner, working further north with the Usen Barok, also mentions the word. However, here it refers to a magical wand (1986:144).

What these men all had in common was their religiosity. Most people in Papua New Guinea are christians, for many this does not interfere with traditional practices, but for many others it does. Interestingly, these sorts of references to the spirits were only made, and shared with me, by those who were no longer in the *tubuan* and had left for religious reasons. Those who were still members, or who had stopped for other personal reasons did not make these associations. And this would not have been for lack of vocabulary, churches and religion are very present in Samo and all neighbouring villages, the words and concepts of spirit are well known to all. This suggests that the difference is most likely a difference in perception of the practice by individuals with particular religious convictions and those without.

This division was very important for these men. One man in his 60s told me very specifically in which year he had left the *tubuan* because of the church - 2006. Another told me that he had left after joining the church because he feared that the practices that he had learnt could affect his family. He told me that the *tubuan* was akin to martial arts, in that there was a spirit that you had to get into before practising it (this conception of spirit could perhaps also be understood as a "state of mind"). This comparison struck me. Martial arts are present in the village - people will gather to watch movies on cellphones and some *mangis* practice the arts - but it is not a comparison that remains within the traditional realm. It is a comparison that is the result of contact with cultures from further abroad. As I have noted before, and will again, this is not new in the region. Cultures in New Ireland have been in contact with one another and with cultures from nearby islands or/and those coming through on boats to trade for at least hundreds of years (see chapter 2). Most of the local traditional customs are already the results of mixing with and adaptations to exterior influences. But, here, we have a an influence that is a newer arrival.

These sorts of divisions are not solely applied to the practice of the *tubuan*. The same informant shared that he also did not like to see performances, because to watch the performance was to watch people dancing with the spirits. And, indeed, I noticed that when there were performances nearby his family never attended - though his wife and children never gave this as an explicit reasons for not having attended. The same occurred with many other people that I spoke with, especially those who were in families involved with the Destiny and ALC churches. They never mentioned explicit prohibitions on attending events displaying traditional culture, but many did not attend these performances and when I, the nosy anthropologist, went about asking them why they would say that they had been too busy or too tired. It seems unlikely that all of these people failed to attend performances quite near to their houses for these reasons. At the same time it was not all of the members of these churches who did not attend performances. There is a lot of variation in how the intermingling of these belief systems work.

Indeed, the same man who spoke about not liking to see performances where men were dancing with the spirits mentioned that he and his wife had attended a performance in 2012. Though they had not liked it very much because the performers had been drunk and had not put on a very good performance, they had been disrespectful. In the end, it seems that to them the most important thing was being respectful of a tradition, of elders, of the way of doing things. They expressed regret at how the *mangis* of today did not take these traditions seriously as they once had been, that they no longer had respect for their elders (this was a common complaint in the area). Here we see the complex ways in which value systems do not make it straightforward to simply turn towards or away from a different belief system. As the deeply engrained value of respect for superiors or elders makes it so that they are both keen on following the church, and keen on seeing young *tubuan* dancers follow the *tubuan* properly.

We also see the power that these performances hold. Even those who are turning away from them, are doing so in a way that reaffirms that they are powerful. The *tubuan* is a performance that is meant to inspire awe and respect, the *tubuan* is meant to be feared by both men and women. Those who turn away for religious reasons, or because they do not want to feel sick after performing, are in their own ways reaffirming this central fact of the *Tubuan*. In so doing, they are also contributing to making the *Tubuan* the enduring force that it is.

I also spoke with women about the *tubuan*, though there are no explicit rules against women sharing with one another, they do not speak much about it. The main thing that women will share, especially with an outsider who is new to the tradition, are the rules regarding how to watch a *tubuan* performance. That it is important to not get too close and to not look too directly. Many mentioned to me the tradition of having the men put a special lime powder next to the corner of the eyes before watching a performance, some spoke to me of older traditions where women would put baskets over their heads before attending, as a sing of respect. However, much of these discussions were more about providing their local anthropologist with data and much less about what was currently happening. The one element of this discourse that remained relevant and important was that concerning keeping one's distance during a performance. Before I attended the performance in Nokon, these discussions, or warnings, became far more frequent, intensifying as I sat waiting for the performance on the day of. What was most remarkable about these warnings was that as I went around collecting information they were given to me by both men and women. But, on the day of the performance they were only given to me by women. They reminded me, even as the performance was minutes away, of the need to look from afar. During the performance, some teenage girls walked through an area

of the beach where the *tubuan*s had been and a middle aged woman called out to them asking if they wanted to die. No men seemed to have bothered to take notice of the two girls. Indeed, though the *tubuan* is a male secret society, women's participation, in their given role, with the institution is essential. And women make sure that all women are performing this role as they should.

In day to day life in Samo, women do not usually outwardly show a great deal of interest regarding the *Tubuan*, but are curious. Everyone in the village knew that I was interested in the topic and I would occasionally broach it with them. Most women did not speak much about the *tubuan*, or other masks for that matter, they would answer my questions about whether they had attended performances and what they had thought of them without seeming to pay them much attention. They would mention feeling afraid, having been afraid as children, being curious about what it might be like to attend a performance, that the performance had felt powerful. They never spoke much on the topic, and never went into much of any details. Likely this sometimes had to do with there not being much to tell, many of the younger women (teenagers and those in their early twenties) hadn't seen a performance, some for lack of opportunity, some because of their family's religious beliefs. But many had had the opportunity to attend performances, yet still did not speak much about them. On the one hand, this is not particularly odd, as people were not generally likely to expound on their thoughts and impressions regarding much of anything. However, it seemed to be about more than this. One informant had initially told me that she had never attended a performance, or had vaguely seen one as a child, but didn't remember much. Then, after we both attended the performance in Nokon, she said that she had seen a performance in the neighbouring hamlet as a child in the early 2000s, which had greatly scared her, she then compared it to the one in Nokon, which she had found interesting. Women likely have quite a bit more knowledge of the practice than they let on. However, as the *Tubuan* requires female participation - in the role of the excluded and unknowing - women are also not at liberty to discuss the practice.

That being said, many did still speak about the *tubuan.* Mostly, they expressed a mixture of fear, apprehension, boredom and curiosity. For instance, the aforementioned informant said that she had seen the performance in the neighbouring hamlet, *ngosngos*, when she was younger and that it had scared her. She said that she had found the performance in Nokon interesting. But during the performance in Nokon she kept her distance, moving further away than she had been for the previous dances and as soon as another performance broke out after the *tubuan* she moved forward smiling and laughing at the performance, in contrast to her demeanour during the *tubuan*. Another informant, a few years younger, told me that that she was scared of the

tubuan, because it could kill, that she knew of cases of this (though she did not share any of them). Few referred to the power to kill as she did, but many spoke about having felt afraid at a performance, especially when seeing it as children. I asked many of these women what it was that they had found scary about these masks, the performances, and common responses focused on the eyes of the mask as well as the way that it had been painted. One woman simply said that it looked bad.

Indeed, there seems to be a certain expectation that this is what will be felt. When I was asking a small group of people about their experiences with masks, a young teenage girl, Siciléu, said that when she had seen the masks at the Tinkoris hospital opening she had been scared. An older teenage boy sitting in the group, who told me that he had enjoyed the performance, added that this was because she was a girl. Indeed, she was too old to have found it frightening only because of her age, she had most likely reacted in a way expected of a girl.

Though women often do feel some degree of apprehension in relation to the *tubuan*, they are also curious. For instance, a woman in her fifties spoke to me with a look of relish on her face about a time when she was younger and had put lime powder on the corners of her eyes in order to be able to watch the *tubuan* perform. she spoke of it with a look in her eyes of someone speaking about the wild stories of their youth, of someone telling the story of how as a teenager they had broken the rules to go out and have fun with their friends. And it was not only her, or only older women. Many younger girls who had never seen a performance said that they would like to, just to see what it was.

Indeed, this relation of fear and attraction can be well exemplified in an analogy with the telling of scary stories around a campfire. On many occasions during my stay I asked people to share stories with me, from the ancestors or whatever most interested them, and many times I was told tales where the Devil appeared and bad things happened. Other times I was told tales as people came back from the beach at night, recounting that there had been no one in the *hausboi* but that then something had moved and they had run away, afraid. These tales were all told with paired elements of fear and relish. It spoke to me of childhood parties where we would tell scary stories to one another: taking relish in the fear we caused both ourselves and others, the fear and the glee both building on one another. It would seem that something similar was happening in Samo, not just in the case of evening story telling, but in the way that local women interacted with the *tubuan* - particularly in the way that they told stories to one another about it.

Though curiosity and apprehension came out strongly, so did boredom and plain lack of interest. One women in her 50s was the first to tell me in specific words that sometimes the *tubuan* could become simply boring. She said that in past times it could come out so frequently, disturbing their ability to work in the gardens and the village, that it simply became boring. She never mentioned that it became an annoyance, but it felt like that could have been an idea that she was also getting at. Additionally, participating from a distance is likely not a very exciting role if one has to repeat it many times.

A lack of interest is also the result, for some, of their religious beliefs. One woman in her sixties, who was well informed in village matters and often spoke to me. Spoke about a performance that had occurred in the village a few years earlier but that she had decided to ignore. She was a member of one of the nearby Revival churches, and explained to me that their church believed that the *Tubuan* was akin to worshiping icons, this was not right and would not have helped her, so she did not attend the performance. This informant was very open about her reasons for not attending, but it is likely that many others in the village felt a similar way. When I asked people whether they had attended recent performances many responded that they had and shared what they had seen, while many others said that they hadn't and gave me reasons such as having been busy or tired. Many of the people giving me these reasons were also members of the local churches with pentecostal, revival or charismatic attachments. Making it likely that these were not the entire reason for their not having attended.

People's relation to the *Tubuan* is a complex one to untangle (indeed it is likely not possible to truly untangle it). The power that it holds over different individuals and the degrees of knowing and not knowing that secrecy create as well as the combinations of fear and curiosity that it elicits make it both complex to untangle and the influential institution that it is. Further, relations to it are currently changing, though the state of change has been a constant in New Ireland history, todays change are particular in their own ways. For instance, Marlol told me that the *Tubuan* of her youth was very different from today's, stating that it used to be "imbued with an essence". Yet, even in more recent times, Tinsuken had attended the masking festival in Kokopo and she had been able to feel the power of the masks and the institution. As such, though the *Tubuan* is undoubtedly undergoing change, as it continues its struggle to remain relevant, it remains a powerful institution.

***Kipong*: it's just for fun, or is it?**

Kipong masks consist of a helmet style mask and a *bilas* body covering. The masks themselves are highly variable, they may be made quickly of painted cardboard or of carved wood. The helmet it made by using some kind of natural fibres to create hair which covers the head of he wearer (materials I saw used for this were the skin of a torn up coconut, water plant roots and leafs akin to ferns). The mask is held onto the head either via the hair, or it is tied by a rope from the bush. The body covering is made much in the same way as the body covering for most performances: by taking a rope from the bush and tying various leafs to it in order to make a *laplap*. Depending on the design of the *kipong* these can be worn around the shoulders or waist, there can be one or two.

I refer to the mask as *kipong*, as this is the way it was pronounced when I spoke with people in Samo. I also write it with a minuscule “k” as it is currently not tied to a secret society as the *Tubuan* is. However, to the south in the Tangalamet and Siar/Lak speaking areas it is called *tepang* (or *tipang*). When I speak of masks that I saw in Muliama I refer to them as *tepang,* as this is how villagers referred to them and I wish to remain truthful to the ethnographic context. Though the mask is far less present in the ethnographic literature than others like the *tubuan* or *malagan*, it is present and has been found throughout the province and neighbouring islands.

Kipong masks and performances stand in contrast to the *Tubuan*. When I asked people about them, they usually answered me with something akin to a shoulder shrug and told me that it was 'just for fun'. The name refers to both a mask and a performance that includes masks, costumes, dance, songs and music. There is no society related to the *kipong*. As such, there is no need to be initiated in order to perform, though I was often told that it remains something that only men can do (I say often because many people very convincingly told me that a woman could not perform. But, on visits to other villages I was told that some women do perform *kipong* and saw two performances by women.). Performances can also be done for pretty much any reason. In fact, the *kipong* performances that I saw were impromptu shows put on for me with new or old masks purely because I had shown interest in the topic. One such performance was organized by a male informant in Samo, who got together a group of boys and helped them to prepare masks and costumes before the performance. He was helped by some younger men and some women who beat a slit bamboo drum and sang while the boys danced. The whole event was very informal and all involved were smiling and enjoying themselves. It was indeed *just for fun*. Similarly, on another occasion, when I visited another village, Sena, I was brought to the house of a mask performer, who gave a small performance of a mask that he had used recently while his family beat a drum and sang. All involved were smiling and laughing, and the man himself was beaming as we spoke afterwards. When it came to *kipong*, everyone I

encountered was open and happy to share their customs with me, even going out of their way to do so.

While sharing about the *kipong* two emotions came up again and again: fun and fear. Though everyone laughed and smiled when showing me the *kipong*, they also told emphasized how the *kipong* is a mask that is designed to inspire fear and that when they perform it they always try to be as scary as possible. And performers are successful at causing fear in their performances. One of the first stories that I heard about the *kipong* was from a host in Kavieng. She had grown up in the Tanga islands, where the *kipong* is also present. She told me that as a child, when she saw these masks, she felt very afraid. And though she now told me about this with a big smile, she still did not see the masks as something fun, some of that fear remained and coloured her perception of them to this day. In Samo, I asked many people to tell me about their experiences with masks. Many replied that they felt fear when they had seen a mask and when I asked what had made them fearful they often replied that it was the mask's expression. But, the mask did not elicit fear for everyone, many also replied that it made them happy, or even bored. The fear seems to be most strongly elicited among young children, who often run and hide when they see a mask. This fear may or may not remain and colour the adult's experience of the mask.

It is interesting that the discourse of fear is present on the side of both the performers and the audience, that it is information that they independently volunteered. Though it fits the cultural script, it also doesn't seem disingenuous. Further, much as in the case of the *Tubuan*, there are a lot of people who are very ambivalent, who simply do not seem involved in the practice, not feeling fear or much of anything else (that they are willing to share at least) regarding it. Indeed, the similarity of these reactions to those regarding the *tubuan* and the consistency of reactions suggest that the *kipong* is also, at least somewhat, an institutionalized practice.

Though the *kipong* is always presented as strikingly different from the *Tubuan*, and that attitudes towards it are quite different, when getting down into details regarding the accompanying songs and dances, it actually presents many similarities. The songs used in *kipong* performances are not specific to a particular performance and are known by many people, including women, who will sing them throughout the performance. The creative process behind these songs is strikingly similar to that behind *Tubuan* songs. The lyrics to these songs are usually not in one specific language, they are created using a mix of languages, making them unintelligible to those who are not in the know. In addition, I was told that the lyrics to these songs are written by select individuals who get their inspiration by eating special leaves and dreaming them. They

then remember, record and share them. The lyrics to *Tubuan* songs are also unintelligible (indeed, this is an intentional means of keeping *Tubuan* knowledge secret from audience members) and written by a specialist who dreams them after having consumed unnamed plants. The dances are also quite similar. I was told that they have different steps (and there are different rules to follow in preparation for their performance), but, when I asked, I was told by more than one person that dancing the *kipong* feels quite similar to dancing the *Tubuan* (though, dancers do not feel sick after, as they often do after dancing the *tubuan*).

Indeed, the two practices also resemble one another in the ways that their lyrics are sung. Wolffram in his work on the *Tubuan*, mentions that the songs that are sung must be sung in a way that will protect the knowledge that they contain (2011: 183). If members of the *Tubuan* were to sing their songs clearly and in their local dialects, even if they were to encode the information, members of the audience might still be able to figure out their secrets. As such, songs are often sung in older languages, that are not known to the population at large. Singers will also used a method called 'keeping words in the mouth', which amounts to pronouncing only the vowels of the words (Wolffram, 2011:183). During my fieldwork I was often told that songs were in a language *tumbuna* or that they were in a mixture of languages from the region. A look at some of the *kipong* songs suggests that they are also written and sung with these methods of obscuring in mind. One of the songs that a man called Bale introduced to me and sang a few times goes:

> *Wa si ko le* x2
> *Kipong e la o la*
> *Kipong e la o la e*
> *Kipong e la tama*
> *Kipong e la o*
> *Kipong e la tam.*
> [Audio: Annex C, Recording 10 pt1 and pt2]

Listening to the song, one can make out the sound of very few consonants beyond the word *kipong*. Despite seeming to contain few words, Bale told me that the song has a meaning - that it is about the *kipong* is getting ready to rise. It is unclear which language the song is in. Many songs are in a mixture of languages, or/and in languages that are not local. This is done as a means to stop everyone who hears them from understanding their meaning. In this case, if the song is indeed in Sursurunga, it would be consistent with the meaning that Bale gave me. Most words are too short to properly look up, and the difficulty of potentially different transcriptions

makes this even trickier. In Sursurunga, the word *wa* is an exclamation of surprise and the word *wah* refers to sorcery (Hutchisson, 2020:726, 727); the word *koh* refers to *bua*i that has been buried in the ground for further use (Hutshisson, 2020: 335)(and, though chewed daily, *buai* is also used in many magical and spiritual endeavours); the word *lah* refers to an author (Hutchisson, 2020:362; and *tam* (which could have had the suffix -a added here, which may give the word a future or irrealis tense), refers to either a strong taboo or a fragrant leave, it is said that this fragrant leave is used in places where spirits dwell or rituals have been performed (Hutchisson, 2020: 648.53)[30]. The emphasis that these words place on taboo, spirits and rituals is highly consistent with the meaning that Bale gave me.

On another occasion, I was also told by an older male informant that the *kipong* used to be a disguise worn when men fought and killed, to hide their identities. Yet another older male informant told me that the *kipong* used to be something that would go and take care of things when you had bad blood with someone. While many people of all genders told me about the origins of the *Tubuan*: that it had originally belonged to the women. These stories were only told to me by a couple of men. Knowledge concerning the *kipong* and it's history seemed to be less widespread. Coupled with the stories I was told, it is evident that the *kipong* used to play an important and very much serious role in traditional culture in the region. But that this role faded away long enough ago to not be widely known today.

Then, there is the issue of gender relations. The *kipong* was always introduced to me as a mask that was for everyone and anyone. Yet, shortly after I would also be told that only men could perform it. Yet later, given the chance to observe what actually happens, I witnessed women singing songs and beating drums during small performances, helping with the preparation of the masks and was told of another village where women did indeed perform the mask. What my initial informants were getting at is that the *kipong* doesn't require any initiation or prolonged period of ritual preparation from performers. This means that the mask is not deeply enmeshed within traditional social organization in the way that the *Tubuan* is. Thus opening the possibility for much more variation in how it is performed, by whom and when/for what reason. I would hypothesis that the variations in what I was told and observed are reflective of social changes within these villages. My initial informants were middle aged men, who most likely approached the mask from a more traditional perspective. While I was told about the existence of female performers by a younger female informant, who had travelled within the country and spent time with people from other countries. Her perspective reflected changes that are occurring in the

[30] In Sursurunga a final -*h* has no clear pronunciation, in my transcription of the song I have omitted this letter as there is no way for me to know whether or not the words include it.

country with regards to women's' positions. Precisely because it is not so deeply entrenched in traditional social structures, how the *kipong* is practiced and viewed by different individuals and communities is a good way of seeing how the changes that the country is undergoing are affecting and viewed by these various individuals.

Over the course of my fieldwork I had the chance to see a few performances of *kipong.* The first female performance of *kipong* which I witnessed was at the *singsing* event in Nokon, put on by Walter Schnaubelt. The *kipong* was the second dance at the performance in Nokon. It stood in contrast to the first one: it was less impactful than the male *tangara* dance that preceded it, the crowd's interest seemed lesser. This was probably because it was the second dance, while the previous dance was the first so all of the built up anticipation made it seem that much more exciting. But, it wasn't just the position in the lineup, there was the contrast in the performances themselves. The music was less loud and both the music and the movements were less sudden and jarring. It was softer and flowed more smoothly. Even though these dancers were masked and the others hadn't worn masks, their costumes drew less attention. It was easy to see how someone other than the local anthropologist, excited to see a relatively rare case of women performing masks, would not have been as drawn in by this performance.

The performance consisted of six dancers and a few more women beating slit bamboo drums and singing. They all walked in together and the six dancers prepared themselves, heading off in pairs to different areas of the performance grounds. They began the dance by crouching on the ground in three separate pairs, they stood one pair at a time to make their way to the center of the performance area. Each pair would first move the small branches of leafs in their hands in rhythm with the music and slowly rise, once standing they moved around while making a back and forth sideways shuffle motion accompanied by a sideways moving of the arms and the leafs in their hands from the bent elbow. They then danced all together, using a variety of steps. Switching places with their partner many times.

The second performance by a woman that I was able to witness

occurred near the end of my last stay in the field, in a village about thirty kilometers south of Samo. This village is in a different linguistic area, the Tangalamet, and here the *kipong* is referred to as *tepang*. My visit to the village had been in the works since my first field trip when I visited a neighbouring village with the family of the elementary school teacher. I met his niece who taught me some local songs and dances and told me that in the village of Muliama,there were women who danced the *kipong*. At that point, my informants in Samo had all told me that while *kipong* was for anyone, and could be performed by anyone, it also could only be performed by men. As such, this information grabbed my attention. I was particularly intrigued since mask performance globally, and particularly in Papua New Guinea, is extremely male dominated and generally to the exclusion of women.

I was finally able to organize a visit to the village towards the end of my second research stay. I travelled to Muliama with the mother of the woman who had originally told me about these women, Dominica. We hopped on a truck together and made our way to her family's property in Muliama, where we stayed for a brief couple of nights. As they knew that I was interested in seeing these masks, and knew the people in the village, they were able to organize everything for me. For the duration of my stay in the village I mostly saw and spoke with women. Indeed, at the moments when dances were performed, there were no men around.

On the evening of my arrival, the women in Dominica's family gathered around under a permanent house belonging to one of them. Under the light of a couple of solar bulbs, they performed various traditional dances for me, even getting me to join in with them at one point. It felt like a large family gathering (in many ways it was), with everyone sitting in together, feeding one another yams and greens and coffee. All the while everyone talked over one another and broke out laughing. While in Samo I could understand many of the words of the local language, here, in a different language area, I understood none. But I did note the rapidity and loudness with which people spoke in their language, Tangalamet, which was a stark contrast to the slow and repetitive way in which most people in the village spoke Tok Pisin. On my first evening there, there was no formal *kipong* performance. The women performed Solomon style dances, which are a popular kind of traditional dance at the moment. Then, an older woman, Agatha arrived. Before we left for Muliama, Dominica's husband Nelson had suggested that I go and find Agatha. She was the local pastor's wife and I was told that she was knowledgeable regarding traditional dance. That night, she walked up to the house where we all were with an enormous headlamp on, as she had plans to attend a mission meeting in neighbouring Manga mission the next day. She performed *tuturai natnat*, a kind of dance which she knows particularly well which is about a mother who has a newborn and is hesitant to let the father hold it.

Figure 31 (previous page). Six women dance *kipong* at the *singsing* in Nokon. They are in pairs, and dance facing a group of women sitting on the ground playing bamboo drums and singing. (Boiteau, Isabelle. Personal photo, 2023).

Figures 32-34. An informal *kipong* performance held in Muliama village and the performer, Elsie, afterwards. Agatha dancing an informal *tepang* with a hastily made mask and costume, at night below a family member's house in Muliama village. (Boiteau, Isabelle. Personal photos, 2023).

As the night drew on I was able to ask her some questions. And, she and Samantha, a teenager and family member, performed many dances, including a very informal *tepang.* This *tepang* was made on the spot, by finding a piece of cardboard and cutting it to shape. She then put on a skirt and stuffed something in the back, before performing to the cheers and laughter of those gathered around. At the end of all of her performances, she was smiling and slightly out of

breath. She, like everyone around, seemed to truly be enjoying herself. And when I did ask her how dancing made her felt she simply replied “hamamas” (happy, joyful).

What this goes to show is the incredible degree of informality that *kipong* can reach. There is the occasional *kipong* mask in museums or collector’s sales[31], these are generally older and are made of carefully carved wood. Even the mask that I saw the next day was carved out of wood and painted, it had clearly taken time and effort to put together. But the category of *kipong* is a broad one, and seems to include mostly any mask that is not a part of a ritual ceremonial complex such as the *Tubuan*.

Indeed, when I returned to Samo after attending the National Mask Festival in Kokopo, I showed my photos of the events to some of the villagers. Since we had received so little information at the event, I asked if they recognized any of the masks. Some pointed to some of the performances and said that it was *kipong*. Others, when referring to the masks of the culture groups in East New Britain, talked about them as *kipong bilong em* (their *kipong*). This further shows that *kipong* masks are more of a category than a specific type.

A more formal, though still informal, *tepang* performance was put on by Elsie the next day. I first met Elsie on arrival to Muliama. She met Dominica and I as we disembarked the truck and walked with us, carrying her young child on her shoulders, as we headed to Dominica’s family’s property. She was young and happy, happy to meet new people, to be walking around her village with music coming out of a boombox she carried in her basket. The next day she came to the property with a mask that her father had carved and that she had performed in before. She kept it hidden in a little room in one of the houses. She performed the mask twice. Both times there were only women and children around the property. She went into the room where the mask was kept to change and prepare. She emerged, unannounced and in character. It was clear that she was an experienced performer, she knew how to tilt her head in various directions in order to give life and movement to the mask. She also knew how to position her body, when standing still and when dancing, to give the performance energy and to separate this character from her day to day self. When performing she walked and danced underneath the house and between the houses on the property. She walked with a bent body and an exaggerated slow step that did give a certain scariness to the creature. She would back towards adults while wiggling her butt, to laughter from all and particularly those being wriggled at. She would wander around and cause small children to burst into tears when they caught sight of her, again to the

[31] The MFA in Boston and MBAM in Montreal have objects listed as “Kepong”, however, they closely resemble the *malagan* masks found in the north of the province. One for sale on the Chinese Christie’s webpage and called “Kipong” bears a stronger resemblance (Christie’s, N/A).

laughter of all of the adults. The *kipong* is again and again associated with entertainment and fear, this performance embodied that.

When the last performance was over, Elsie was sweating and you could tell that she was tired. But, she was still smiling and happy. I gave her some rice and tin fish, an exchange for this performance and spoke with her for a bit. She did not learn to perform in any particular way, she has simply been performing since she was young and does from time to time put on official performances, at events like school graduations, etc…. The mask was made by her father. Indicating that though women may be performing, it is not a domain entirely dominated by women or/and free from male influence. It also isn't clear if her father making the mask means that women cannot make masks, or if it just happens to be the case here. If women are prohibited from making masks, this could have strong implications on the gender division of society as well as revealing that the *tepang* are indeed masks that are rooted in traditions similar to those of the *tubuan* and other masks, that they have relations to the supernatural and sacred, despite performances now having been relegated to pure entertainment.

It also speaks to the lack of cooperation that I often faced on the part of my male informants. Dominica's husband Nelson, before we left to go to the village, had suggested that I go to speak to Agatha about the *tuturai natnat* dance. He had said that there were no women who performed *kipong*, that the male elders wouldn't be happy if they found out that I was there (and, most likely, asking questions about their traditional customs), and tried to reduce the length of our stay to just one night. Yet, he did also provide me with information on the practice. He told me a story about the history of the *kipong*. He recounted that the *kipong* used to be masks worn by men when they would fight and kill, presumably to hide their identities[32]. That these men could be called upon by individuals who had been wronged by someone to go and kill that person. That this was the reason why *kipong* are masks that make people afraid. He also recounted how the men had taken the *tubuan* from the women, implying that the same had happened with the *kipong*, because of their cultural superiority. In the end, he both was and wasn't helpful in terms of providing me with ethnographic data on the practice. What he did demonstrate though, was a desire to control the narrative that I would be able to tell regarding the *kipong*, he was concerned with showing me that ways in which it was a practice belonging to the culturally superior men and limiting my ability to witness the ways in which it belonged to women. In a

[32] This is likely true, similar phenomena have been documented in Papua New Guinea. Harrison, notes that the Avatip wore masks to disguise their identities in battle (1993:120); early ethnographers in the Gazelle peninsula noted that the *tubuan* could be hired (Rickard *in* Sack, 1972:97).

way, acting out the very narrative that he was telling of men having used cultural means to take the practice from women.

This stood in contrast to the welcome that I got from the women. First, from his daughter Nora, who had immediately spoken to me and shared traditional dances with me, even telling me about these women in Muliama. As well as to his wife and her family, who welcomed me in and showed me their dances and masked dances with no hesitations. In fact, they were incredibly open and willing to share concerning their customs. They immediately put on performances for me, got me to perform alongside them and answered my questions. When I asked questions about the mask the next day, they had me try it on. I even ended up asking Elsie, the *tepang* performer, if I could take photos of the mask to later make a 3D print and there was no hesitation as she and all around her answered yes-yes-yes.

Most of my male informants, when giving me an overview of the various types of masked practices, had said that only men can perform *kipong*. Evidently this was not true, since I was able to see female performances. But, throughout these performances there were many similarities and some differences (fin the dance steps, the songs used, etc…).

Many villagers went out of their way to help me in my work. One of these is Aminio Balé, who lived in neighbouring Hipakat, agreed to show me how a *kipong* was made and a small performance. In exchange, I had to buy and bring the red paint. I initially met him in Likas village, when an informant brought me to meet some men in the village who knew traditional songs so that I could record them. When I met him he was sitting cross legged on the ground next to his friend, in front of a small fire, a few steps from the beach. He was incredibly enthusiastic and frequently *tok pilaid* (to play talk - to kid around, to joke, etc…) with me. He very happily performed some *kipong* and other traditional songs for me to record that day and we agreed that I would come back a few days later with some red paint and that he would show me how the masks were made. I returned a few days later, to his home in Hipakat and spent the whole morning with him and his family, learning how the mask and *bilas* are made, being provided delicious snacks the whole time.

Bale worked slowly and meticulously while a younger male family member of his worked very quickly, expertly, and completed the mask that Bale performed later that day. His friend, another elderly man mostly sat and watched. The women and teenagers living on the property came to curiously watch, speak with me and helped the men by going to collect the materials that they

needed. While they went to collect various leafs, branches, etc…. they never helped the men to put these together.

Figures 35-38. Preparing the mask and *bilas* (this page); Bale sits next to the mask shortly before performing (next page). (Boiteau, Isabelle. Personal photos, 2023).

At one point a couple of men who worked with the local SDA church walked through on their way to the river. They seemed delighted by the scene that they had stumbled on, the newly arrived minister took photos of himself standing next to the man in the *kipong bilas*. This surprised me because at this point the main thing that I knew about the SDA church is that their members aren't allowed to participate in traditional customs. However, I was told that while members are not allowed to participate, they are allowed to watch. This may also account for why the women helping the men only went to fetch items and did not actually help with assembling the *bilas*.

The masks were cut out of a cardboard box and the features of the face: eyes, nose and mouth, drawn on with a piece of charcoal. They then cut the eyes out of the mask, making sure to put it against their face from time to time, to measure. After, they painted the cardboard red, using a brush made from a branch that had been made a bit frizzy at the end. after the paint dried, features were added again in charcoal and were painted on using lime powder mixed with water. The white was applied with more care and attention. This could have been due to a lesser ease of application or to a meaning underlying the use and placement of the lime powder

- though white is always achieved using lime powder, lime powder is also used in many magical and spiritual contexts.

The masks were not just painted as they are a kind of helmet mask. Before painting the masks, they punctured a couple of holes in the side and tied a rope (a natural one taken from the bush) through, putting it on their heads to check for size, and pulling to make sure that it held. Then, they needed to add hair to the mask. Here, this was achieved using a some water roots that the women had gone to fetch and that were left to dry in the sun for around an hour.

The younger man worked at making the *bilas*. The *bilas*, the body covering, consists of *laplaps*. In this case there was only one, but there can be many of these, they can be worn around the neck, around the waist and at any point in between. They are made by getting some long ropes from the bush and many leafs. The rope is taken and tied to a tree, it is the main structure of the *laplap,* to which all of the leaves will be tied. Another rope is used to tie knots along the main rope, the leafs are taken and their stems bent around the main rope and the second rope is used to secure these, one handful at a time, to the main rope. No one told me which particular kind of leafs were being used. Indeed, it seems like every performance I saw a different shape and size of leaf was being used. However, the process for making the *bilas* remains the same, regardless.

When the *bilas* for one *kipong* was finished, it was set aside and we talked for a bit. Arrangements were made for Bale to come to my house in Samo to perform later in the day. And he shared a story about the *kipong*:

> In a time before a being called Airime gave birth to two children, a boy and a girl. The two children were sitting behind their house when they saw all of the men go, so they went inside and their mother hid them.
>
> Time passed and they grew up. The boy was now a man, a fisherman. Everyday he went doen to the sea to fish and brought the fish back to the house, where the family spent the day gutting them.

One day when he went to the beach, he sees a young woman. This woman has been looking at him. She gets up and says that she is going to marry this man.

Another day, the man and his sister are gutting fish in the area near where this woman lives. He goes for a walk along the beach and the young woman comes and takes him. She takes him back to her house. The man cries and fights her, but she is too strong, and he cannot escape.

Meanwhile, his sister gets up and sings a song. She sings:
Wa san to e
Wa san to lara
Kipong e la o ra
Kipong e la o ia e[33]

Now, the Kipong is up and about. The man hears the song and tells the woman to let him go because his sister and mother are looking for him. The sister and mother are very worried about the man, they continue to sing:
Wa si ko le x2
Kipong e la o la
Kipong e la o la e
Kipong e la tama
Kipong e la o,
kipong e la tam.

The man fights with the young woman. This time, he wins. Meanwhile his mother has been looking for him and has come down from the bush, reaching the beach and heading into the water. The man runs after her and wants to get to her, but she has already disappeared. And so the two are now in the water, they are the whales.

[33] Much as in the previous analysis of this song, it is unclear which language it is in and if it has been modified to obscure its meaning, and, if so, in which way. Here the word or syllable *ra* appears. In Sursurunga the word *rah* may refer to dirt or dust as well as refer to something which is finished (Hutchisson, 2020:547). Following previous information, this would suggest that the kipong is emerging from the dirt, from the ground, or that it is emerging in order to finish something.

The fact that such a story exists suggests that there is some sort of spiritual or magical rooting of the tradition. It is likely that in the past the *kipong* was also a 'serious' masking practice, akin to the *Tubuan* and others in the region. In addition, the content suggests that the mask is a non-human and non-animal figure, most likely something from the realm of spirits and ancestors. Further, the character in the story calls it up at a time when her brother is in trouble and she wants to help him, this is congruent with what Nelson told me before my trip to Muliama. He said that the *kipong* is something that individuals can have help them to go after someone who has hurt them. Which is exactly what the the sister does in this story, calling up the figure to help her defeat the woman who has trapped her brother.

Bale later sang the *Kipong é la o la é* song which is featured in the story for me. Telling me that the song was both about and for the raising of the *kipong*. It is consistent with this story, even though there is no mention of a figure emerging, we do still see that it is sung in a time of distress, when help is wanted and it does give the man the strength needed to fight and break free from his captor. Since there is no figure that emerges it could be read as an expression of the sister's strong internal emotional turmoil and how her support, the support of his family, helps him to feel and actually be stronger. Particularly, to find strength in the face of a woman whose intentions are to marry him and pull him away from his family. The cry of the song reminds him and the story's audience of the importance of family. This is especially relevant in a Papua New Guinean context. It is commonly accepted within anthropology that the self here is not based on the individual, it is relational (also known as *dividual* or *fractal* selves). As such, the young girl who has fallen for this man poses a real threat to the self of the young man, just as she does to their whole family.

It is also especially meaningful that the emotional part of the story, the one that pulls on our heartstrings, is sung. Melanesian societies are known for not being very communicative about their internal emotional states (see chapter 6). That when emotions do occur they are communicated through song is important. This use of singing while story telling is common. Quite a few stories include brief songs. They are usually when a mother cannot find her child. They are a rare emotional exposition given that Melanesian society has been noted for individual's lack of a willingness to share their emotions.

My experience on this day stands in contrast to the experience that I had with another mask maker from the same village, Tasen. I met both Bale and Tasen on the same day. Both were kind and helpful on that day, though Bale was far more enthusiastic. Tasen had originally not agreed to making a mask so soon because of a funeral that was happening in Likas village at

the time, he had said that we could meet and make a *kipong* mask a couple weeks later instead. While Bale did not have the same qualms about making and performing a mask during this period in time. This seemed quite reasonable though, both the one not wanting to perform during a period of mourning and that the two men would have different ideas on what was and was not appropriate behaviour. (different individuals draw the line on what they consider appropriate and not differently, regardless of the similarity of their backgrounds). The stranger thing was that my encounters with Tasen then always got pushed forward and never worked out, until Tinsuken eventually just suggested that I *larim*, let it go. Not wanting to share this process with me indicates that there is a difference between types of *kipong* masks, perhaps between those that are cut and drawn and those that are carved. When Tasen spoke to me about the process for making a *kipong* mask, he told me that it involved eating a special plant from the bush and falling asleep and dreaming. This obviously was not a part of the process for making cardboard ones, which I saw people make on various occasions, without going through any such steps beforehand. this difference wouldn't be surprising given that *kipong* seems to be a broad category rather than a specific mask. And, given that such a process of consuming a secret kind of plant and dreaming of the mask (or the songs and dance movements) is reminiscent of practices such as the *Tubuan*, which are very much off limits to women, it would not be surprising that this was not something that the men were willing to share with me.

I was able to see another carved wooden *kipong* mask, which had likely been made by following such a process of eating a *diwai* and dreaming. During my first visit to the field a few of my informants brought me to school graduations in the area, as these are events where *singsing*s are frequently performed. During one of these visits, to the village of Sena, about twenty kilometers south of Samo, my informant brought me to see a local mask carver. The visit was very brief. But the man, and his family, kindly welcomed me and he went to get the mask and showed it to me by giving a brief performance. I sat on a bamboo bench on their property along with an informant, while the man's family gathered around their house, making a beat on a piece of bamboo used as a drum and *singsing* the accompanying song. Which went:

usa sa ing usa so ing (repeated)

The family members present were all women and children. He came out from in behind the house, with the mask on and holding a couple of leafy branches in his hands. He performed only one song, before posing so that I could take clear photos. He then went back to remove the mask before returning to talk to me. He was kind and shared the words to the song. He had made the mask a few months earlier for a performance, and still had it. I asked him about how

he prepared the mask, as well as the accompanying dance and song. He answered that inspiration for the song came from eating a special kind of leaf and then dreaming. On waking up in the morning, he would sing the song. The song is sung in an unknown language and, though very short, it is meant to be about a *masalai* story.

This and the mask that I saw in Muliama were the only two that were carved. Clearly both men and women can perform wooden carved versions of the mask. However, it may be only men who are able to carve the masks. In Muliama, though the performer was a woman, she was not the one who carved and made the mask. Here, the man performing was also the man who had made the mask. The methods for making one can't be logistically or technically impossible to teach women, and in Muliama Elsie (who performed) was well aware of the materials and tools (the same as for carving a *takup* canoe) that had been used. Even when Bale showed me the process for making an un-carved mask, though the women in the area helped, it was only the men who worked at putting the mask together. Perhaps while performance is open to adoption by various individuals, the process of creation remains in the male domain. Particularly when this domain is also that of the spirits or ancestors.

Figure 39. *Kipong* mask performed by Topin Tomu in Sena village. (Boiteau, Isabelle.Personal photo, 2022).

The last performance that I saw was held a few days before I left the village, when the villagers organized a few *singsing* performances for me. One was a *kipong* performance. This *kipong* was of a very different style from the other performances that I was able to see. It was performed by four *mangis* from the community, all of whom I knew though I only specifically know the identity of one of the performers. These *kipong*s were not different in terms of their masks, like many of the other masks that I saw, they were made of cardboard, painted and had water plants placed on top to look like hair. The difference was in the *bilas*. It had been made

with leafs that fell long and flat, covering the performers entirely in a way that looked a bit like a bigfoot costume. While the leaves on a *tubuan*'s *bilas* stand out and then flap up and down against one another as they dance, these fell down straight, though they also made distinctive rustling sounds as the performers moved.

They started preparing more or less a week before the performance. A couple of days beforehand I noticed the finished masks placed in some branches behind the *hausboi* where the boys who performed spent a lot of their time. I never saw any trace of the *bilas* being made or where it was kept, this means that it was likely made in the bush and stored either in the bush or the *hausboi*. I was told that the performers would wear a necklace made of *kawawar* (wild ginger) under this bilas. They practiced the dance steps at night, for a few days beforehand. The night before the performance I was heading to the beach around 2am when I heard them, in the pitch dark, singing and likely dancing. I was not the only one, the next morning, as I spent time with people in Tabun, many were singing the words to the songs that the *mangis* had been practising last night, chuckling about how the *mangis* had been awake overnight.

The performance occurred in the afternoon. The four figures walked to the performance area, coming from the *hausboi*. They walked to the sound of a slit bamboo drum being beaten by some young boys and walked in behind an older man. They arranged themselves in a square shape and performed two songs. For the first song they moved their arms from one side to the other, on one side with a bent elbow and on the other with it straight. They performed this movement while facing in various directions and on occasion were most likely bending their knees or performing a kick of some sort, making the bottom sections of leaves move as well. They then performed well choreographed jump shuffles to one side and the other. Before abruptly ending and walking out.

Figure 40. The *kipong* performance of the four *mangis* depicting old men jumping to and fro. (Boiteau, Isabelle. Personal photo, 2023)

They performed to a song which is about an old man jumping to and fro. The lyrics of the song are in a mixture of the Tangalamet and Tolai languages, this mixture is designed so that the girls from the area will not understand.

Tamana lukai, tamana pongolo
mai lokalo, mai lokalo, tamara pongolo
(and repeat)

Kipong is a highly varied practice, the masks and costumes can look quite different. It is most likely a category encompassing various specific types of masks. It is known today as being a practice that is for fun, but it likely has a deeper history. The mythic history, the processes for making masks and writing songs, suggest that it is a powerful and serious practice akin to the *Tubuan* (or at least that it once was). And the continued gender division in some respects of its practice suggest that these ties have not entirely disappeared. That men claim that women cannot perform it likely reflects a lingering reality og older rules. Much as its continued connection to the *tumbuna* world as a source of inspiration continues to place many aspects of *kipong* in the male domain.

The *Tubuan* and *kipong* in the Ethnographic Record

The *Tubuan* has been written about extensively. The *Tubuan* is a secret male society, a mask and a danced performance. The *tubuan* is this mask and performance. The *tubuan* is female (Albert, 1987:19; Banks, 1990:109; Parkinson, 1907:448; Sack, 1972:96), it can have children and another similar masked figure, the *dukduk*, is the *tubuan*'s child. (Albert, 1987:19)[34]. The word *tubuan* refers to the combination of mask and wearer, not the mask alone. (Simet, 1991:314). The *tubuan*s (and *dukduk*s) are owned by clans. Though a *tubuan* belongs to a clan, they are usually owned by individual men who have interest in leadership roles and who, in this interest, will acquire ownership on behalf of the group. (Simet, 1991:333). And each *tubuan* has its own name.

Much of the publicly available knowledge concerning the logistical details of the *tubuan* comes from work that has been conducted among the Tolai, as such there are likely to be small differences from the *tubuan*s found in New Ireland. The mask and *bilas* is made in three pieces:

[34] Though it is generally stated that the *dukduk* is the *tubuan*'s child, on the Anir islands, Denner was told was told that the *dukduk*s are male and that they are the sexual partners of the *tubuan* (2012:71-2).

headpiece, feathers and strap-piece (Simet, 1991:314). In the Tolai region, it is only required to wear one of these parts in order to have a *tubuan*, since the spirit of the *tubuan* (in the Tolai language, *tabarani ra tubuan*) inhabits every part of the mask. Despite this, when the *tubuan* is seen outside of it's sanctuary - outside of the *taraiu* - it can only be seen as a whole.

The details concerning these parts and how it is made are secret knowledge that is passed down between the generations "so that the identity of each *tubuan* remains the same" (1991:316). Further, this knowledge is known by only one or two clan members. Despite the secrecy some information is still offered on how the various parts are built.

In the case of the *dukduk* (and likely similarly to the *tubuan*) the cone is made of small strips of bamboo called *aur* and are covered with dried fibrous plant materials called *pakara*. The cone is made with care, leaving holes which the wearer will be able to see through (Parkinson, 1907:447). The result is that the audience will not be able to see the man beneath the mask, but that the man wearing the mask will be able to see "quite clearly" (Simet, 1991:317). Indeed, this is consistent with *tubuan*s in Sursurunga, as I was told by all of the men that I asked that they could see everyone clearly while they danced and even one of my female informants told me that the eyes were made with a special kind of mesh so that the performers could see well but those outside could not. Aside from this, in the case of the *dukduk* at least, the eyes are referred to as *kiok* and the long decorative tip of the cone as *taukane* (Parkinson, 1907:447).

Then, the middle part, called *iwuna*, is the feathers. Indeed, *tubuan*s and *dukduk*s bear some relation to birds, as Parkinson notes that when he was in Melanesia older people would still refer to some of these figures as *beo*, the local word for bird (Parkinson, 1907:252). These are made up of eight to twelve rings of cane leaves (Simet, 1991:317), which are held in place by two shoulder straps called *taltal* (Parkinson, 1907:251). Though more may be needed, because the leaves need to stay green, so over various days of performance some may need to be replaced (Simet, 1991:317). They are put on with the arms raised upwards, and the last ring covers the arms, so the arms are free but can't be lowered (1991:318). This is apparent when you see a performance, the lifting of the leaves as the dancer jumps creates a larger space between the layers where the arms are. And, when demonstrating how the *tubuan* is danced, men will always raise their arms, with the elbows bent inwards, to make the required motions.

After they have been used the masks and *bilas* are dismantled and pieces such as feathers and wooden carvings are stored, while the rest is packed into places such as house rafters (Parkinson, 1907:454). Parkinson notes on this in the context of *dukduk*s which are used in the

first level initiatory rites. He notes that the mask is kept stored in this way, as the boys (or men) being initiated will generally not be able to pay for their initiation and will as such have to work for the adult men who will sponsor their initiations. It is when they have worked off this debt (something which may take years) that the later stages of initiation may occur. It is only after this, and the celebrations that it entails, that the remaining of the *bilas* is burned. On the other hand, Simet notes that certain parts of the *bilas*, such as the *lok*, the circular piece of cane used to form the bottom of the cone is the only piece of the mask that is not destroyed at the end (Simet, 1991: 317).

When comes time for a performance there may be many *tubuan*s visiting from other areas and as such the *taraiu* becomes much busier and fuller, temporary *taraiu* like sites called *manamanaung* in Tolai language may be erected (Parkinson, 1907:447). The *bilas* of the *tubuan* is usually stored in the taraiu and to accommodate the additional *bilas*, posts called *tagor* (in Tolai) may be erected on which to hang the various pieces of the *bilas* (Parkinson, 1907:446).

The design of each *tubuan* is unique and is subject to what is essentially copyright, as they are owned by clans or lineages (Simet, 1991:312). This applies to the designs that are painted on the cone that forms the 'head' of the *tubuan*, as well as to the decorations at the tip of the cone and the design around the 'neck' of the *tubuan*. But the most important and closely guarded of these copyrights is around the design of the concentric circles that form the *tubuan*'s 'eyes'. To copy these without permission is considered a grave offense. As Denner puts it: "Les yeux, qui sont les traits les plus marquants, sont intimement liés au pouvoir que détiennent les différents masques tombuans" (Denner, 2012:71). Indeed, many of the rules regarding how women (and non-initiates) may look at the tubuan involve the eyes. For instance, women who stare at them will die, abort or become sterile (Denner, 2012:23) or other bad things will happen to them (Denner, 2012:69). In addition, a few days before the death of the *tubuan*[35] their eyes are covered in black paint (Denner, 2012:72[36]).

The *tubuan* also has a distinctive cry, called *takaun* (Wolffram, 2011:180). This cry consists of high-pitched woop-woop-woops that go on for a period of 10-30 seconds. It sonically defines the realm of the spirits and announces the presence of the *tubuan*. The *tubuan* is also associated with a specific genre of songs. As a woman when I asked about these they were referred to

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[35] After a series of performances *tubuan*s will die. In Sursurunga it was explained to me that there would be a *kastom* were pigs would be eaten in order to perform this ceremony.

[36] After a performance the *tubuan* is symbolically killed, this effectively separates the spirit and the mask. Though it is unclear where the spirit then goes (Simet, 1991:342-3).

simply as *tubuan* songs, though depending on the region where one is and the exact type of *tubuan* there are various types of *tubuan* songs[37] and different kinds of *tubuan* may respond to either or both the *kundu* and *garamut* drums (Simet, 1991:320). Regardless of the type of song, what they all have in common is their incomprehensibility to those who have not been let in on the secret. This is due to a belief in their power and in order to maintain secrecy. In the field, I was told that they are sung in *tumbuna* languages. In the Siar region, Wolffram found that singers do something called *moh ep sak sak* (blur the song), This process can also be referred to as 'holding the words in the mouth' (Wolffram, 2011:183). The singers will sing the words, but without pronouncing the consonants, making it very difficult for those listening to identify what they are singing about. While Parkinson, in East New Britain, mentioned that meanings were obscured by adding endings to words and replacing the meaning of certain common words with others (1907:450).

The *Tubuan* is said to have originated in the Siar/Lak area of southern New Ireland. It has since spread to cover a much larger area. It is common throughout the south of New Ireland, in the areas south of Namatanai town as well as in the nearby islands of Tanga, Anir and Lihir. Though it may also be found further north (Eves was able to study it in the Lelet plateau of central New Ireland). It is also well known for it's presence in East New Britain. It was brought to East New Britain by the Tolai people who used to live in the south of New Ireland but were forced to move to East New Britain due to waring occurring at the time. This move is thought to have happened no more than a few centuries before the arrival of Europeans in the late 1800s (Tateyama, 2006:16), meaning that it could have occurred as late as the 1700s.

On the other hand, Sack states that the tradition is relatively new, having only been around for two to three generations before arrival of colonizers (in East New Britain at least) (1972:102). Parkinson also notes that when he arrived in the 1880s, it was a relatively new practice. He spoke to various elders who remembered and were able to tell him of the specific individuals who had brought the *Tubuan* to the Duke of York islands, leading him to posit that it had arrived to the islands sometime around 1820-1830 and then a few years later to the Blanche Bay area (where Rabaul is located) (Parkinson, 1907:449). It is difficult to know how far back the practice goes, as there is a lack of historical records before the colonial era. Though there is an underlying idea that most of the traditional practices of Papua New Guinea come from some kind of mythic remote past, this is likely not the case. For instance, Denner notes that it is

[37] In the Siar region they are referred to as *kapialai* (Wolffram, 2007:193). In the Tolai area different kinds of *tubuan* may dance to different kinds of music, such as *kabakawir* songs, (Simet, 1991:320)

probably only just before the arrival of colonial powers that the *Tubuan* society made it to the Anir islands.

Further, after the arrival of European powers in the region the prominence and power of the custom has had its ups and downs. There were policies against the practice and they did have consequences on the tradition. Neumann notes that in parts of the Gazelle peninsula it had disappeared in 1960. But that it was then followed by a resurgence, and places that had once had only one *tubuan* came to have many (1992:311). He is not alone, AL Epstein notes a similar dip and resurgence in the area (1998:17). And Bradley noted on a decline of the *Tubuan* in the 70s, only to find, on her return in 1981, that there had been a revival (Tateyama, 2006:46). Though New Ireland did not have the same kind of contact with European colonizers as East New Britain, the *Tubuan* was also outlawed there until, in the 1960s and 1970s, two men went to the local catholic authorities in Kavieng to ask to have the law abolished, and it was (Wolffram, 2007:92).

What is clear is that a couple of decades ago belief was not in decline. Indeed, this is the conclusion that AL Epstein comes to in his discussion of belief in sorcery among the Tolai, adding that it seems to him that the belief system will last for a long time. (1999:293). A few years later Tateyama found no evidence of its immanent demise (2006:48). This would be supported by the ethnographies of Albert (1987), Eves (2009), Kingston (1998), and Wolffram (2007) from the turn of the millennium. All note on performances that occurred during their stays and on the continuing strength of the taboos surrounding the practice. Even today, this belief seems to continue just as strongly as it did when these authors were writing.

The *Tubuan* is a male secret society, as such initiation is also a very important aspect of the society. Unfortunately, as a women, I was not able to gather much information on this in the field for the Sursurunga area, aside from the general fact that it does happen, can be painful, and that there are different levels to initiation. What is clear from the literature on the topic is that most, if not all men, in most areas where the *tubuan* is active do get initiated. Initiation is not strictly speaking mandatory, but it is desirable. For example, in the Tolai are, if boys are not initiated they may be referred to as *maana*, which is a derogatory term meaning non-initiate, but “It can also mean naivety, being uninformed, being stupid and simply being classed as one of the women.” (Simet,1991: 326-7; Tateyama, 2006:33). Parents also generally find it desirable, because a boy who does not know what the taboos are may accidentally commit one and be fined. Making it cheaper to just pay the initiation fee (Brown *in* Sack, 1972:101). My informants also told me that initiation is generally less painful for younger boys, as boys who wait until their

late teens to be initiated will be beaten with nettles and younger boys will not. Initiations are also desirable for those involved in the *tubuan*, as they are an important source of wealth for big men (Albert, 1987:22).

The process of initiation rests on playing with the emotions of young boys: first creating fear and then building male solidarity (Albert, 1987:24). Albert, who worked in the Siar region in the 1980s, recounts that the boys are led astray when walking in the bush and find themselves in a place where normally they would not be allowed to go. At this point, they are confronted and grabbed by a *tubuan*. What is revealed to them in the initiation process is that the *tubuan* is not a spirit, that there is a man behind it. He states that: “The entire initiation procedure rests on a delicate balance between uncertainty over the true nature of the *tubuan* and recognition that the *tubuan* demands certain responses, such as fear on the part of the initiates and women, and subordination on the part of men.” (1987:24) This makes it rather unclear to what extent boys know what awaits them. On the one hand Albert says that they do not know, citing that some even lose control of their bowels. But then he also emphasizes that it demands certain responses. As such, the degree to which anyone knows what is going on is unclear [38] and to a certain degree irrelevant since what truly matters is adherence to the expected responses.

In the Tolai region, Simet makes similar statements about initiation, affirming that is is frightening and can be painful. “For most of the initiands, young as they are, this is a very frightening experience. For the older ones it is not so frightening but it is painful because they actually get beaten with the sticks and clubs (which is another reason why parents want their children to be initiated early).” (1991:328) Indeed, initiation is known to involve beatings. Though it seems that younger initiates usually receive fewer of these. This is also what one of my informants in Samo told me.

According to Wolffram, these beating serve to ‘kill’ the initiate, and then allows them to enter the spirit grounds. (2011:180). Indeed, initiation into the *Tubuan* can be fit into a rite of passage model. In a rite of passage neophytes are taken through a ritual that separates them from their previous social state, takes them through an undefined liminal stage and then reintegrates them as a new social being (V. Turner, 1987). Here, the boys begin their initiation as boys, as children. The beating before they enter the *taraiu* serves to metaphorically kill this social being. It is critical that it is done just before they enter the *taraiu* and learn the most basic secrets of the *Tubuan*, as the *taraiu* is an area that is off limits to boys. The neophytes then enter the *taraiu* and learn what they need to know in order to become men. Later, when they return to their

community, with more knowledge and experience than before they will be men. Indeed, many of the men that I spoke to spoke of how joining the *Tubuan* had made them feel like they had become men.

This initiation is a part of a long process. Initiation involves most, if not all, of the community as various individuals are involved in many ways (which may or may not be directly evident) as the Tubuans rise, are involved in the initiations, make their appearances outside of the initiation areas and die[39]. As such, the initiation practices referred to here form only the initial stage of initiation, there are many stages through which men may progress. In the Siar/Lak region Eves identified three main stages of initiation: first the *warwolo* into which boys of 8-12 years old are usually initiated, then the *rang dawai*[40] into which 12-15 year olds are usually initiated and finally the *nidok,* into which men in their 20s or 30s are initiated (2009:182)[41]. The *nidok* is more arduous and takes about a month. These ages are however not strict requirements, some may be initiated when they are older.

There are also preparations for a performance, which take place in the bush and are secret to those not initiated. These includes fasting, for at least 1 or 2 weeks, and sexual abstinence. Here, fasting does not mean eating nothing. Rather eating little and only specific kinds of foods, all with the aim of creating a light body. A typical fasting food is ku, this is a special kind of coconut oil that is made by scraping the milk of many coconuts and adding sizzling hot stones to the liquid, creating a separation of the substance allowing for the oil to be drained off. Other foods such as bananas may then be dipped into this oil (Eves, 2009:188). In addition, substances may be added to the ku, including some that cause vomiting and diarrhoea, in order to make them lose weight fast. (Eves, 2009:188)

On the day of the performance special care will be taken to empower the performers and to protect them from any bad magic. Before performing they will chew ginger for strength and will wear protective magic (2009:188). But it is not just the performers who protect themselves, it is also the audience that needs to be protected from the power of the *tubuan.* As such, during performances, any leafs and other debris that fall from the *tubuan* are carefully picked up. This is both because they are powerful and could harm anyone coming into contact with them later

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[39] For details on this process, in East New Britain around the turn of the 20th century, see Parkinson 1907:451-457.

[40] Parkinson notes that this is the name of a feast that is held at the end of the first stage initiatory rites (1907:452).

[41] Names given for these stages are not always the same. This is to be expected, as data is collected in different areas and different individuals decide differently on the secrecy of information. Tateyama notes that among the Tolai of East New Britain the stages are: *papakat warwolo* (first stage), *nidok* (second and last stages) and the *matamatam* (2006:287).

and because they could be used to perform negative magic on those performing (Eves, 2009:190). This is worst for the women. For instance, among the Lak it is said that they may die or spontaneously abort (Eves, 2009:190).

Mythically speaking it is said that the *tubuan* was first discovered by women and then taken by the men. I was told this by a few of my informants, though none told me the myth itself. Wagner tells of one myth, told by the Usen Barok in central New Ireland. According to this myth, the dances of the *tubuan* where first revealed to a woman of the Lamawan clan in Katanden village. she made the mask and then showed it to her husband. But, because women have a force called *laram* which makes them heavy, it was found that when she danced her movements were slow and lacked energy. So, it was taken from her and women were forbidden to dance or to see the figure before its display because of this force (1986:50).

The *Tubuan* society is exclusively male to the explicit exclusion of women, There is disagreement as to whether or not the society's purpose is the creation and/or assertion of male dominance over women. Christine Bradley is usually cited as a proponent of the *Tubuan* as a system of female oppression. She worked with the Tolai at the end of the 1970s. She found that many women kept their brideprices and that the *tubuan* was a means for men to gain access to women's resources (Neumann, 1992:311). And Cynthia Louise Banks also mentions that: "The subordinate position of women in Tolai society was also emphasized by their exclusion from and victimization by the men's secret societies: the 'Dukduk' and the 'Iniat'" (1990:119). Others pull the focus away from this, pointing out that there are ways that women can gain power without the *Tubuan*. For instance, Neuman cites that they can become leading elders, that they can sell land and that they can even control and own a *tubuan* (1992:311).

Regardless of disagreement on this topic, it remains clear to all writing about gender relations and the *tubuan t*hat gender is of central importance to the *tubuan*. Even Neumann states that "the fame of the Tolai *tubuan* depends more than anything else on the significance attached to it by Tolai women, and thus, to put it in general terms, on gender relations within Tolai society." (1992:312). Just as Albert states, women's participation as excluded members is critical (1987:26).

***Tubuan*: A brief look at the history of its study**

The *Tubuan* has been studied and written about by many ethnographers - from early colonizers and missionaries to early and current anthropologists. The first ethnographic report on the

tubuan was completed by George Brown, in East New Britain, in 1877 (Tateyama, 2006:41). Indeed, Brown not only recorded the tradition but was also a theorist, he put forth the idea that the *tubuan* was a local form of government and jurisdiction. It is reflective of the ways, both positive and negative, that the *tubuan* was depicted by early ethnographers as a means of organizing society and punishing those who did not obey. According to Tateyama, in these early years "The institution was demonized in some accounts and romanticized in others." (2006:42-3), but regardless ethnographers always portrayed it as a dying tradition that was in need of being recorded before disappearing.

Early accounts tend to look at it as a central authority, as an institution for law and punishment (something which can be painted more or less negatively) (Banks, 1990:108; Brown, 1910:270; Powell, 1884:61). Many accounts paint a negative picture of the institution: emphasizing that it is a system used by a few individuals for their own gains in the form of power and money.

An illustrative example of what many of the ethnographers who painted the tradition negatively wrote is how Rickard describes the *Tubuan* going to obtain a payment that is due to them:

> "It is often a pretty sight to see perhaps 100 men with torches winding their way up a hill while all are whooping, and the *Tubaun* often interjecting her name. The errand is generally known beforehand and they are met with the *tabu*. If it were refused, the man's house, if he himself escaped, would be torn to pieces and burned, in which case the *tubuan* only would be said to have done it. Dreadful violence and license are allowed to the *Dukduk* or its representative the *Tubuan*. She may murder men or women with little or no excuse, and little or nothing is said about it lest the secrecy of the institution be violated." (Rickard, 73 *in* Sack, 1972:98)

Rickard is not alone in describing the *Tubuan* in this way. Many ethnographers who wrote about the Tolai region in the late 19th century and early 20th century, took similar perspectives as they focused on the *Tubuan* as an institution that helped select groups of individuals obtain power and money. Rickard himself argued that the institution was run by one man in an autocratic fashion (Sack, 1972:100), such that members of the *Tubuan* were basically shell money extorters (Sack, 1972:98). Pfeil also wrote at end of the 19th century. He describes how at all of the customary performances the uninitiated were obligated to make a payments. He states that the *tambu* system forces people, who otherwise are not keen to spend their money, to pay (1898:190).

This leads to the question of power. While many followed in Brown's line of thought, construing of the *tubuan* as a form of law and order, or painting it as a means for men to obtain resources or gain influence (ex: Brown, 1910; Rickard, 1890; Sack, 1972). This is not surprising, given the way systems of government and jurisdiction are generally also systems within which individuals or groups can build their power and influence. It also seems that who was able to achieve retribution through the system of the *Tubuan* depended on their relation to the institution. For instance, Parkinson wrote that if an initiate's wife was found cheating, then the adulterer could be killed by the *Tubuan*. Painting the *Tubuan* as a strict and harsh judge was common, Powell also wrote that: "[No] man is allowed to lift his hand against him, but must submit to everything the *Dukduk* does, if not his life is not worth a day's purchase, as the chief of the *Dukduk* district will find a method of putting the offender quietly out of the way." (*in* Sack, 1972:96). Evidently, much as Wolffram argued, the *Tubuan* is a "power practice" (2006:123). How this is depicted and valued did and continues to depend greatly on the perspectives of those writing.

Tateyama notes that there is a gap in the literature on the *Tubuan* in the inter-war period (2006:40). This was probably due to the higher level of development of the Tolai and the prevalent idea that anthropologists should study 'primitive' cultures. But, as mentioned in chapter 2, starting in the 1960s this changed, in the Tolai area at least, with many professional ethnographers coming into the region. A similar trend in the ethnographic writing on the south of New Ireland occurred, with more professional ethnographers writing on the region in the second half of the 20th century.

In the 1980s Albert headed to the Siar region for his fieldwork. He wrote a detailed account of the presence of the *Tubuan* there, though he notes that many details were excluded in order to respect local secrecy. Indeed, he notes that the secret is so well maintained that for months after his arrival he believed that the practice was no longer present, as he witnessed no signs of it, it was only later that he realized that almost everybody in the village was involved (1987:17-18).

His analysis moves away from that of older ethnographers. Though he notes that big men make a lot of wealth through the initiation process, he does not see the practice as being *for* the purpose of gathering wealth (1987:25). Instead, he focuses his analysis on the distribution of knowledge and how it works to create relations of inclusion, exclusion, certainty and uncertainty, of which all are critical to the existence of the organization. He emphasizes the the incomplete nature of the knowledge that anyone has of the *Tubuan*. Lower level initiates know that those who have been initiated to higher levels know more than they do, but even those who have

reached the top rungs of initiation still do not know how complete their knowledge is. This is because the *Tubuan,* though often referred to as an institution, has no centralized authority. Meaning that members a few villages over may not hold the same knowledge. As such even the most highly initiated man is aware that there could be somebody out there who knows more than he does. As Albert states: “Initiates can never know if they have been shown the true nature of the *tubuan*” (1987:26).

He argues that this uncertainty is critical, that it is what drives the system. He also argues that this is why it is not an institution of male superiority. Instead, he acknowledges female exclusion from the institution and sees it as essential to the survival of the *tubuan*. “Exclusion of women and conscious trickery on the part of men is actually fundamental to *tubuan*. If women were not interested in the *tubuan*, and if men did not work so hard to disguise *and* hint at their connections to it, much of the significance of the *tubuan* would be lost. […] It gains this rich meaning from this game of exclusion and partial disclosure.” (1987:26). This is one of the fundamental principles of secrecy: that it creates power for those who are in the know, only in so far as those who do not know are aware of their lack of knowledge. It is what Nooter refers to as “broadcasting secrecy’ (1993:58). Because if there is no exposing of the fact that a group holds special knowledge, then there is no social gain from holding that knowledge.

In the late 90s Wolffram and Kingston also studied the *Tubuan* in the Siar/Lak region. Their focuses were different. Wolffram wrote about the soundscapes of the area and Kingston analyzed it using a symbolic framework.

Kingston argued for a return in anthropology to the analytical use of forms (2003:681), following in the steps of Alfred Gell to see it as a means of disarticulating the distinction between material and mental (2003:704). Kingston argues that the *tubuan* emerges from the bush, a socially formless area, in order to socially disarticulate the dead during secondary funeral rites (2003:687). The social articulation and disarticulation of persons is essential in all societies, and here the tubuan serves this purpose. The *Tubuan* accomplishes this, not just through its roots in the formless and appearances at funerals, but through a careful management of attention, something which he notes as a key theme in the region (2003:684). Those who do not participate in the creation of the *tubuan*s are compelled, through a series of spiritual rules, to watch but not to do so too closely. As such, Kingston argues that the *Tubuan* is central to the Lak world, that it “is the poetic image produced by and for the ongoing reproduction of the Lak social world.” (2003:705).

Wolffram placed a focus on the auditory in his work. Talking about soundscapes, about the different sonic geographies. He talks about sonic geographies in the shape of two distinctive sound realms: the bush and the village (2011:172). Which also have a gendered division of sorts as women only occupy the village and men may occupy both.

While Kingston focuses on the symbolism of these practices, Wolffram argues that they are more than symbolism that they actually *are* these things, that "a dance performance does not symbolize order, power and control; it is these things in action." (2006:122). That "The Lak literally perform their social relations." (2011:181) He also discusses how dance is a means of articulating individuality and relational personhood. It is a means for individuals to distinguish themselves, by taking part in a relational activity. He argues that these practices are essential to Lak society, because Lak society is a "performance society" (2006:122-123), and as such they perform themselves into existence (2006:131). As such, he refers to the *Tubuan* as a "power practice" (2006:123)

He also doesn't see the *tubuan* as being one specific thing, he argues that is isn't a spirit, a man, or a mask, rather: "they are all of these things" (2006:124). This is important to note, as a lot of the literature on masks emphasizes that they are the embodiment of spirits or places an emphasis on the aspects of theatre and performance, etc… Wolffram makes clear why it is so difficult to pin down exactly in what way the *tubuan* is understood: because it is not understood as any one thing. In order to study it effectively one needs to focus on all of these elements and how they are intertwined.

Richard Eves was also able to study the *Tubuan*, although further north in New Ireland, among the Lelet. His focus is not on the aural or on the symbolic, instead he takes a view partially inspired by Alfred Gell to analyze the *tubuan* as a work of art. He looks at this art as a presentation of power that is intended to affect its audience in certain specific ways. (2009:181) As such, he aims to combine the study of action and meaning, through an examination of the *Tubuan*. Eves, to a certain extent (2009:189), follows Gell and his work on technologies of enchantment. These are technical strategies that humans adopt in order "to secure the acquiescence of other people in their intentions or projects" (Gell 1988:7 *in* Eves 2009:185). As well as taking up Gell's definition of agency as something that causes things to happen (Eves, 2009:186). This leads to a different conclusion on the practice, he does not not see the production of the *tubuan* as foundational of social relations, rather he sees it as eliciting particular responses from others (2009:189).

The thing that most of these ethnographers have in common is that they are men, as such, in the field their informants would have been fairly willing to share information with them. This makes it interesting to look at the contributions of a female ethnographer. Antje Denner worked in the Anir islands, they are located off the coast of the Tangalamet linguistic area, just south of Sursurunga. She was there around the turn of the millennium and provides far less information on the *Tubuan* and far more information on a wider variety of practices (2010; 2012). She draws an inventory of the various masked practices present on Anir island. And then draws a genealogy of how they are related to one another (2012). It gives a full picture of traditional practices in the region. Also showing very clearly how these practices do not exist in isolation, how adaptation and change have led to various offspring of the practices. Surely a longer historical record would allow this genealogy to have more nodes going further back.

She discusses this importance and how various practices coming from the island and areas nearby have been integrated and/or transformed. As well as how these practices have been integrated and/or transformed into forms coming from beyond the Melanesian world, such as religion (ex: 2010:290,298; 2012:56-6). She gives the example of one spirit that a father was sent to get rid of, but after his efforts she came to a *tena buai* in a dream in order to ask why this had been done to her and explaining that in the process she had been baptized. This changed her name, before it had been Tingkutur, now she said that it was Mariakutur. (Denner, 2012:56-7). Examples like this illustrate how different ideological systems come to coexist. They show that the coexistence is not reached without struggle or through easy acceptance of the others, but that with some negotiations the two systems comes to alter one another and do achieve coexistence.

Kipong **in the Ethnographic Record**

The *kipong* is not very present in the ethnographic record. This is in part because the *Tubuan* (and even more so the *malagan* in the north) are very powerful organizations. They are powerful in the current day and were so when colonizers and missionaries arrived. Whereas in the modern day, at least, the *kipong* is not given much ritual significance, and it is unclear how far back this goes.

It is also unclear because it holds many names, or rather spellings given to it: *kipong*, *kepong*, *kipung*, *kipuung*, *kepang*, *tepang*, *tipang*, etc… (I use the spelling *kipong* throughout, because it aligns with how I heard the word pronounced in the Sursurunga region and for the sake of

consistency). This is partially due to different linguistic groups and partially due to the work of ethnographers writing words that they have only ever heard and never read. It is also because the mask itself is not truly “a mask”, it seems to be more of a category of masks. Denner defines them as masks made of a carved and painted wooden face with a frame of natural fibres that cover the head (2012:85).

There are brief mentions of *kipong* in ethnographies of the Lak/Siar region. Kingston does not analyze the type, but mention it’s inclusion in certain rites (Kingston, 1998:184,247-9) and in the feast marking the end of a female initiate’s seclusion (Kingston, 1998:247). Kingston says that *tipang* (the Tangalamet and Siar words for *kipong)* should strictly speaking refer only to a kind of bushman that appears before the *tubuan*, to indicate that there are t*ubuan*s up and about but that now the term refers to masked figures that are ‘not quite human’ (1998: 248). He also notes the atmosphere around this mask, that “The tone of the *tipang* is generally otherworldly and often humorous.” (1998:249).

While Wolffram discusses funerary rites that he observed in 2004. Funerary rites are long, extending over many years and multiple ‘events’. Here, he discusses events that occurred throughout the night, as people stayed up and entertained themselves. One such funeral that I attended simply consisted of the women gathering to sing hymns and drink coffee all night. In the event that he saw two *tipang*s performed which he describes as “to the amusement of the adults and the terror of the children who were woken especially to watch.” (2007:199)

Antje Denner is probably the ethnographer who devotes the most time to describing them. In the Anir islands she was able to identify many kinds of traditional practices and to place these in relation to one another, drawing a kind of genealogy of how the practices are related to one another. Two of these are the *tedak* and the *kipung* (*kipong*). She places these together as villagers told her that they “*bilong amamas tasol* “ (are just for fun) (2010:314). She identifies the *kipung* (local pronunciation of *kipong*) as masks made of wood that have fairly similar shapes throughout New Ireland, from Lavongai to Siar (2012:64). And the *tedak* or *tadak* as a tradition having come from the Tanga islands (2012:64). Though the two types do seem to be quite similar.

She notes the same division that I did between practices that are seen as powerful and others that are mere entertainment (2006; 2012). Also noting that it seems that the practices used to be “serious” just like the *tubuan* is. She draws this conclusion after some of her informants shared details with her. That many of the of the rules about the making and maintenance of the masks

are quite similar to those of *tubuan* masks. (2010:314). That they were once associated with bush spirits who could attack and harm people. She thinks that this change is due to a combination of historical changes and religious influence. She thinks that most likely new practices were brought to the islands from other areas and that these took over in importance, perhaps because these were regarded as more powerful (2010:315-316; 2012:87). The increasing belief in christianity would also have led to a decrease in the belief that they embodied spirits. Finally resulting in their status as forms of entertainment.

Other than these brief mentions *kipong* does not figure in local ethnographic works. This is not too surprising giving how un-emphasized the practice is. Further, it is not surprising given that most ethnographers who have worked in the region were male and were therefore given access to the *tubuan*. Indeed, one of my informants outright told me that, had I been a man, they would have taken me and initiated me, let me in on everything. Looking back at the ethnographic record, in the region, Wolffram was initiated (Wolffram, 2017 - into the *Buai* practice), and looking further back even the German governor Hahl, who enacted many policies against the *Tubuan* and once burned a mask, was initiated into the society (Tateyama, 2006:145). Lutkehaus and Roscoe in their work concerning the presence of women in rituals in Papua New Guinea argued that one of the main reasons that this presence was overlooked was simply because most of the anthropologists coming in and looking at questions of ritual were men (1995:xv). As such, they spoke primarily with men and, when speaking with women it is likely that these were less likely to be open with them. Here, given the large amount of male ethnographers who have worked in the region[42], it is no surprise that the emphasis of their works would be slightly different.

Regardless, even locally, it is emphasized that the *kipong* and the *Tubuan* are not the same kind of thing. The *Tubuan* is a society, there is a process of initiation, a series of taboos, it is something that has power. Whereas the *kipong* is nothing more than a form of entertainment. There is no doubt that the local categorization has also influenced its small presence in the ethnographic record. after all, anthropologists generally work in an attempt to present in their findings what is important to the people that they have been studying, to present as much as possible how the world is seen by these people. If the people in question affirm that a practice is not particularly important, it only follows that in their writing the ethnographer will also give it minor importance.

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[42] Many male ethnographers have worked in the region: Albert (Siar/Lak region in the 1980s), Bolyanatz (Sursurunga region in the 1980s/90s), Eves (central New Ireland, 2000s), Foster (Tanga islands, 1980s and 1990s), Kingston (Siar/Lak region, around 2000), Wolffram (Siar/Lak region, early 2000s), as well as the many ethnographers who worked in the region as missionaries or for colonial powers.

Concluding Remarks

The two main practices, the *Tubuan* and the *kipong*, exist in relationship to one another. In Samo, the emphasis that was placed on the *kipong* being *arapela kain* (another kind), *just for fun*, and *for anyone*, diminished its importance. While the *Tubuan* was presented as something with great power, to be feared and respected. The contrast in the discourses surrounding each practice also serves to define their relative positions. The *tubuan* is serious and therefore more consequential, to be taken more seriously, while the *kipong* is to be relegated to the side. It creates a hierarchy between the practices.

This is reminiscent of how the secrecy surrounding the *Tubuan* also creates categories and hierarchies between groups and individuals. As Wolffram concluded, it is a “power practice” (2006:123). The power of secrecy is that it creates at minimum two groups: those who have knowledge and those who don’t. Here this line is drawn between initiates and non-initiates. Since only men can be initiated and most men are initiated it creates a mostly gender-based division between those who know and those who don’t. Indeed, many of the men that I spoke to in Samo said that joining the *Tubuan* was to become a man, after joining they had felt like they were one of the men now. This creates a hierarchy where men have more knowledge and are therefore more powerful. Though the hierarchy does not end there: the men themselves are not all equal. The *Tubuan* involves at least three different rungs of initiation, and men who have been initiated to higher ranks have authority over those who have not. These men are also generally speaking older than those just entering the society, as such there is also a hierarchy of authority and respect amongst the men with older men generally holding more authority and being owed more respect. As such, the *Tubuan* society creates categories and lines that divide and organize wider society. In today’s society there are many influences at play, dividing, organizing, and placing values according to their own logics, and the *Tubuan* remains strong amongst these.

To focus in too closely on the gendered divisions that are created would be to succumb to a sort of myopia. The practice does divide and organize society, but also does much more and is only one element in a society where many influences converge and are navigated differently by different individuals. It is still interesting to look at the question of gender in these practices for a bit longer. Particularly in terms of the relationship between *kipong* and *Tubuan*. When I was in the field it was made clear to me that the *Tubuan* remains a practice where secrecy from women

is critical. In the ethnographic record there is the occasional example of female researchers who have been given information normally forbidden from women (Herdt, 2003:128; Parkinson 1907:xx). But this did not happen during my fieldwork. One informant even told me that had I been a man, they would have taken me, initiated me and let me in on everything, but that since I was a woman they could not. Time and time again, my gender impeded me from learning about the practice. This was a rule that was, if anything, becoming stronger as contact with 'western culture' became greater.

While the *kipong* was being performed by women, though not always made by them. I saw two performances by women. One at the performance in Nokon, where six women from Tanga danced in cardboard *kipong* masks. Another in Muliama, where Elsie informally performed a carved *kipong* mask (one which she had performed in before and would be performing in again). Yet, evidence indicates that the *kipong* most likely used to be a 'powerful' performance akin to the *Tubuan*.

I would argue that the comparative discourse that I heard takes into account this transformation of the *kipong* and is done somewhat intentionally in order to strengthen the *Tubuan* and the social benefits that those involved in it may obtain.

Indeed, whenever I spoke to male informants about the *kipong* they would tell me that anyone could perform. For clarification I would then ask them if that meant that a woman could perform and they would clarify that no, only men could perform, but they did not need to be initiated and could be children. These very same men must have known that there were in fact women performing these dances. The performance in Nokon was very well attended by the villagers from Samo. Further, the father of the woman who told me about the female *kipong* performers in nearby Muliama village, on the day before I was set to visit the village, denied that there were women there who performed these masks. He clearly knew that there were women there who performed this mask, but did not want me to go and speak with them. He purposely suggested that I go and speak to a different person about a different kind of unmasked dance and tried to shorten the visit to the village.

Most likely, the information that I received from informants was shaped by their own personal agendas. It has been noted that the absence of women from the ethnographic record on rituals in Papua New Guinea is partly due to the effect of male anthropologists speaking to male informants and only getting the points of view of these informants (Lutkehaus and Roscoe, 1995:xv). Something similar occurred during my research as well. While, I was not a man

speaking to men - and this was made abundantly clear to me - men still seemed to want to control the information that I received.

The informant who tried to shorten my trip to the village of Muliama, also volunteered some information about the *kipong*. Concerning how the practice used to be used by men who would conceal their identities when they went to kill. And concerning how, much like the *Tubuan*, it had first belonged to the women, but the men had taken it from them because they were culturally superior. He also suggested that I speak to a woman in Muliama who was the pastor's wife and known for dancing a dance called *tuturai natnat*. He seems to have wanted to stop me from seeing the ways in which women used these practices and to want to turn my focus towards the male history of the practice and towards female practices that emphasized the centrality of motherhood. Indeed, throughout New Ireland (historically and currently) values orient men towards political goals and women towards motherhood. He most likely wanted to transmit these values to me so that my depiction of his society would be in line with his values and perception of it.

Though *kipong* is performed by both men and women, there are differences in how the two perform this mask. Given that the name of this mask seems to applied to a broad category of masks rather than to one very specific one, it could be that certain types of *kipong* may be performed by men and others by women. However, it being a broad category does not mean that it necessarily encompasses various highly different types of performance. For instance, the *Tubuan* also presents many variations, there are different subtypes of *tubuan*s and related *dukduk*s, and these will perform different dance steps to different songs and have different taboos surrounding them, even different origin stories. Yet, they are still all considered *Tubuan* and of one kind. It is likely that the *kipong* is a similar case.

One of the most striking differences in male and female performances of the *kipong* are the dance steps. In their examinations of New Ireland societies and of *tubuan* performance Wolffram, Kingston and Eves all note on the conception of women as heavy and of men as light (Eves, 2009:187; Wolffram, 2006:120; Wolffram, 2011:179; Wolffram, 2017:105). This is often given as a reason why women cannot perform the *tubuan* and why men must stay away from them during the period before their performances, so that the women's heaviness does not weigh them down. This way when they perform they can give an ideal performance: one which emphasizes their lightness. This will be achieved with a lot of movement, particularly vertical movement, jumping up and down (Wolffram, 2011:182). On the other hand, women are regarded as heavy and so incapable of this kind of movement, and their dances will usually

involve less rapid movements with much shuffling around: moving from one side to another, changing places with a partner, etc…

Though no one spoke to me of this conception of women as heavy and men as light, it was evident in their different dance styles [43]. The dance that the women in Nokon performed was very similar to other women's dances that I had seen (ex: *pinpidik*, *puerparik*). They moved their arms to the rhythm of the music, holding bunches of leaves in their hands, they would wave them from one side to the other with the elbows bent. Their feet movements also emphasized movement on the horizontal plane. While the *tubuan* performances emphasized jumping upwards. These performers would move from side to side, and then perform a series of manoeuvres where they would change places with the person in front of them.

The movements to Elsie's performance in Muliama were quite different[44], but remained on the horizontal plane. She would move her feet so that her movements were very smooth and sometimes it almost seemed more as if she were gliding. But, most of the performance was in the way she moved the head and crept up on people in various ways designed to scare them or make them laugh.

It is also interesting to compare the audience reactions to the two practices. The *kipong* is said to provoke fear. This was explained by Nelson given that it used to be worn by men who were out to kill people. And the masks do indeed provoke fear. One informant who grew up in the Tanga islands told me that she still did not like the *kipong* masked figure, because it was to her a fear inducing one. And younger children do sometimes get very scared of the masked figure. In Muliama one little girl of perhaps 5-7years old got so afraid that she would not stop screaming and crying, as the adults around tried to laugh off her reaction and to get her to go hide inside the house (all to no avail, she simply kept crying).
But on the whole, the *kipong* provokes quite a bit of laughter. When Bale performed, those around me were laughing. When Elsie performed, everyone was smiling and she would purposefully wiggle her butt at people to cause laughter, even when scaring the children, she would be provoking laughter from the adults. Other ethnographers noted the same thing. Wolffram writes that two *tipang*s performed one night "to the amusement of the adults and terror of the children who were woken especially to watch" (2007:199), and Kingston notes that the

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[43] Actually, it was also evident in the sports activities that each gender participated in. Sports have become a big part of village life. In Samo (and it seems across New Ireland) women played volleyball while boys played soccer and rugby. It was striking how the movements that women performed in the volleyball field were rather limited, while the boys spent their time quickly running around an entire field.

[44] This could be a result of it being a different style of dance or/and because she danced solo.

tone of the performance is generally humorous (1998:249). It is indeed a practice that is ‘just for fun’ in the sense that it is very much enjoyed by those in the audience.

The *Tubuan* on the other hand inspires awe, fear and respect, the feeling of being face to face with power. Indeed, when I asked Tinsuken how she felt when she had seen *tubuan*s perform in past masked festivals in Kokopo, she said she had felt that they were powerful. Many other people spoke to me about how they were both afraid and curious of the *tubuan*. Then there were the endless warnings by both men and women that it could not be watched in a normal way, that you had to look from afar, not too closely and to place lime powder next to your eyes. This was a conventional discourse, emphasizing that what one is supposed to feel in front of the Tubuan is a certain amount of fear and apprehension, but not enough to completely dull the curiosity that motivates one to attend and look from the corner of one’s eyes, indeed perhaps just enough to really stoke the fire of curiosity.

Even with the *kipong*, there remains some concern with ‘secrecy’. In the sense that the performer dons the *bilas* away from the gaze of those that they will perform in front of and also remove it away from this gaze. But, here, this feels more related to performance as it is done in the theatre, where actors don and remove their costumes away from the eyes of the audience. This is powerful and important, it allows for a separation of the person under the mask and the masked character. It is important to suspension of disbelief for both the performer and the audience. But it is not done in a way that emphasizes secrecy and power as it is in the case of the *Tubuan*.

It is not just these two masked performances that present these contrasting audience reactions. It is a difference that is present between many different kinds of men’s and women’s dances. This holds for other *singsing* performances that are or are not masked. These dances also contrast in terms of the kinds of atmospheres that they create. For instance at the event in Nokon village, the first dance was a *tangara.* This is an unmasked male dance. The men wear necklaces that form dense circles of leaves sticking out from their necks and a long and slender conical hat and dance with their arms bent at the elbows and folded inwards. There were five dancers and they danced to the beat of about a half a dozen *kundu* drums and many singers. The drumming began so suddenly that it made me start and throughout the beats remained very loud, the movements of the dancers very well coordinated with one another and to the drum beats. The entire event was very attention catching, everyone’s attention was on the dancers and while everyone was happy that the *singsing*s had begun the atmosphere was still fairly ‘strict’. People were attentive, but they were not laughing. This contrasted greatly with the

women's dances that came later in the afternoon, the *pinpidik* and the *puerparik*. These dances featured around eight women, wearing *bilas*, but a *bilas* that was smaller and worn on top of their *meri* blouses and *laplap*s. They also danced to the beat of drums and to singing, but the sound was far quieter than it had been for the *tangara*. The dance moves were also less jarring. In the *tangara*, dancers made sudden movements, all at the same time and as the beats were struck. With the women's dances this was far more relaxed, it's movements seemed to flow, it was still very well prepared and coordinated, but far from 'strict'. Further, these dances provoked much smiling and laughing on the part of the audience. Especially when some of the women from the large house came down to perform *bukur*. *Bukur* was only done during these female dances. The dances were also much longer than the male ones, making it seem as if they had no strict or set ending point, but rather would go on for as long as they were well received.

The event at Nokon is not an isolated case. The same occurred at a primary school graduation that I attended in 2022. The students performed a few *singsing*s, all unmasked. The girls performed fairly informal and relaxed *singsing*s, with a *bilas* of no more than small headpieces and a few sprigs of leafs in the hands, all worn over their everyday clothes. During these performances, many family members made their way into the performance area to perform *bukur* on the performers. To the great glee of all in attendance. The last performance was by the boys, they performed wearing larger *bilas*: with necklaces of dense stiff leaves and *laplap*s of similar materials and an effort had been made to cover the clothes that they wore underneath. Family members also performed *bukur* during this performance, but the first few to do so were not met with the same kind of cheering as there had been during the girls' dances. The leader of the dance even displayed his unhappiness with the individuals who had come in for the *bukur*. This quickly gave way, and many family members came to *bukur,* to the great laughter of all. The dance leader himself performing moves for the sole purpose of making the audience laugh.

Chapter 5

Karuka Houses

I first heard of *karuka* houses about a week or two into my stay in the village. I had gone to speak to Emilia and her family about her involvement in the local women's association and, after talking about the association I also asked her about local traditional customs. She mentioned one no longer in practice, where women were placed in a small house and had to stay there for many months at a time. This of course intrigued me and I inquired about her personal experiences with this. Though she is probably about 40 years old, she had only ever known of one woman in the village who had gone through this ritual. She remembered having gone to see her after she had emerged from the house. She remembered her as having been incredibly beautiful: that her body was fat and decorated and beautiful.

This conversation piqued my interest, and I started searching for women who had had the experience of spending time in a *karuka* house, as well as speaking to those who might have been on the outside of one. Over the course of my two stays in the field I was able to speak with four such women, though, in the villages that I visited, I heard of six different women having gone through *karuka* houses. The youngest of these women were in likely in their mid forties to early fifties.

The houses themselves are referred to as *karuka* houses, getting their names from the type of pandanus leafs of which they are made. Sometimes there is one house and at other times there is a smaller house placed inside a larger one (usually a pre-existing house, like a *hauskuk*), in this case, in the Sursurunga area, the smaller house is called *moh*. The girl who goes inside is called a *kámgu*, this word refers to female initiates.

What people told me about the karuka house and the processes that women who stayed in them went through, was very consistent. Emphasis was always placed on how she emerged very fat and beautiful. People also always noted on how the house was very small, that she did not have enough room to lie down and stretch out, that she could not leave even to go to the bathroom, she could only do this at night, and that she was given a lot of food, that it could not be any food, it could not be store bought and had to be *mumue*d. Everyone noted that she was naked, wearing only a black *laplap* and that when she emerged for a celebratory feast she was

covered in paints and shell money and naked except for this *laplap*[45]. Many people also noted on the smell of the woman and the house. Saying that many plants were placed in the house and that the girl's body was washed with special plants in order to make them smell good.

Anisi

The first woman that I spoke to about her time in a *karuka* house was Anisi, a woman of around sixty. She was the only woman in Samo village, still alive, to have spent time in a *karuka* house. Anisi and her family were extremely welcoming during both of my stays and helped me a great deal with my work. I interviewed her about her experience in the *karuka* house with the help of her adult daughter, Elsie, as at the time my Tok Pisin was only basic and my Sursurunga near to non-existent. Anisi underscored that for her the experience had been very positive, allowing me to understand how this custom was (and even continues to be) understood in the area. Before entering seclusion, she had had a job, and before having a job she had had the kind of endless chores that I observed all teenage girls there doing, so she enjoyed not having to perform any of these tasks (such as fetching water, cooking and caring for children) during her stay in the *karuka* house. Further, she explained that she had felt like the whole community came together to look after her. In short, she enjoyed the experience and told me that she thought the custom was good.

Figure 41. Anisi, who spent a few months in a *karuka* house as a teenager, with her granddaughter Rejoyce and sitting next to fellow villager Nora. (Boiteau, Isabelle. Personal photo, 2023).

She went into the *karuka* house in 1984. She told me that this was when she was 20 years old. That in 1983 she had finished grade 6 (most villagers do not complete very high levels of formal education, and when they do they are usually a few years older than their western counterparts) and returned to the village. Here, she had gotten a job working for some Japanese people who worked for a logging company, called Gaisho, in Porpop village (about five kilometers north of

[45] This emphasis is most likely due to modern norms for women's dress, which are the result of the influence of colonizers and of strong belief in christianity. As a result, women usually wear a mother Hubbard blouse with a cloth *laplap* wrap underneath. Younger girls will wear t-shirts and bermuda shorts, but though it is common many older women consider this to be inappropriate,

Samo[46]). She was their babysitter, caring for one baby. She seems to have enjoyed this job. As many women in the village she seems to derive real joy from caring for babies and young children. Further, she pointed out that she found the job easy as all she had to do was look after the baby, she did not have to do other tasks which she probably would have had to do when she lived in the village like going to fetch water and preparing family meals. It was her employer who was interested in having her go through this ritual. This is relevant, because it was never all girls who went through this initiation. It was only a select few, and to put a girl through the ritual required that one be wealthy. Not necessarily wealthy in the modern sense of having a lot of money, but the ritual requires that one have access to the resources to care for the girl while she is in the house and for the feast when she emerges. As such, resources in the form of shell money, pigs and garden food are required. In this case, the resources came from her Japanese employer, who would have been able to pay to obtain these things.

Because of her work obligations, she stayed inside the house for only three months. When it was time to go into the house she returned to the village, the house had already been built and a *bubu* (grandparent) of hers told her what to do. Before she went in she had to remove all of her clothes and she was given a black *laplap* to wear. Her stay in the house was coordinated and supervised by an elder's mother.

Inside the house she slept all the time, the space was too small for her to stretch out her legs and it was always dark as it was covered in *karuka* leaves. She was not allowed to eat foods bought from the store like rice and tin fish, she was fed only *kaukau* and *mumu*. She was also not allowed to wash with water during her three month stay, instead, she was washed with the water of a *min min* leaf that had been squeezed, this made her skin smell nice. Finally, she wasn't allowed to touch the ground. Inside the house, the bed was built on a post. And when she needed to go to the bathroom, some women would carry her to the beach, so that she wouldn't touch the ground.

At the end of this three month period there was a big feast organized in her honour. People came from everywhere to see her. Before attending the feast, the women came and decorated her. They placed *mis* (traditional shell money) on her neck, hands and legs. Her hair was painted red and she wore only a black *laplap* around her waist. A woman then carried her on her

[46] Though during my time there a company involved in carbon trade called Tahima was being set up and giving the villagers involved their first pay outs, logging had been present in the area before. At least one villager had made the money that allowed him to build his permanent house from a logging payout. And, here and there, there are old logging roads heading from the Boluminski highway up into the bush. There is currently logging happening 30kms south of the village in the Muliama area and north of the village in Namu. The logging companies are generally foreign owned, often from Asian countries.

back to the *hausboi* where the celebration would happen and she sat there on a chair with planks under it, so she would not touch the ground. She stayed seated here for the whole duration. People came from various villages, they had a big feast and people danced, doing it all so that she would see and laugh. After everyone left, she was carried back to the *karuka* house and for the first time in three months, washed. After this, she returned to normal life.

She stated that she was the last woman to have done this *kastom* in Samo. I asked her what she thought about this, why she had not had her daughters do this *kastom* too. Though she emphasized that she thought that the custom was good and that she had enjoyed her experience, she attributed it to things being different now. Saying that they have only kept the easy customs. Since the 1980s it would seem that the largest changes that have occurred in the region are related to religion. This is slightly odd given that religion has been present in the region since the late 1800s. She spoke in general terms, speaking both of church policies and of the number of people already dead from sorcery. Saying that religion changes all, it changes people's minds and now they worship God only because they know that God is true and made us all. Indeed, this is consistent with what I came to know about her and her family. She is married to Gabby, who is the pastor for the local church called Destiny (New Covenant Ministry International). This is a charismatic revival church, which does not seem to strictly prohibit traditional customs to the extent that the SDA church does, but still limits activities considered to be bad such as smoking, alcohol and the chewing of betel nut with lime and mustard (it is only accepted if chewed alone). It is a church where worshipers speak in tongues and that holds the belief that is is important to convert non believers as this will allow them to go to heaven when Jesus comes.

This would also explain the fact that religion is cited here (and was on a few other occasions) as the reason for the decline in practice of traditional customs over the past few decades, despite the fact that christian religions have been present in the region for over a hundred years. There has been a change in the type of religion and in the degree and kind of engagement on the part of locals.

After speaking to Anisi, alongside asking people about masks, I would also often ask them about *kámgus* and *karuka* houses. A few people shared memories of what it was like when there was a *kámgu* in their community. And I was able to find a few more women who had been *kámgus* and speak with them as well.

Ruth

The local elementary school teacher, Levi, spoke to me about one that happened in his village when he was a child, how he remembered having sat outside one at night singing. While his wife, Louisa, also remembered these from her village when she was young, but said that she had been scared of them. Aside from these brief remarks, both spoke to me less about their personal experiences and thoughts on *karuka* houses and shared much regarding the information that they had collected from their family members concerning the *karuka* houses and how they fit into the broader social fabric.

One day while I sat with Levi speaking on the topic, he drew one in the sand by our feet, showing it as a kind of cone that he said was just like the houses of Native Americans. He then addressed the relation to the social fabric, saying that they are also a kind of mask. Then, that they are the secret/taboo places for women. Then, that it is a means for women to find a partner, a relationship, so it is a kind of courtship custom.
Indeed, all of what he said is quite accurate.

The *karuka* house does function as a kind of mask. It hides the human being inside from outside view. And in many ways denies (or *masks)* the existence of this human individual: she is not seen, she is not referred to by her name, only *kámgu*, she is covered in perfumes, she may not touch the ground and she does not participate in day to day life. This is indeed similar to many masking practices where, once the mask and *bilas* are donned, there is no human performing but instead the presence of a different being. It is also a mask in the sense that it masks her existence as she goes through a critical transitional phase from childhood to womanhood, the masking process ultimately allowing her to undergo this transition.

It is also true that they are the secret places of women. Though this will become clearer, further ahead when the material I collected in and around Samo is combined with other ethnographic data from the province. Still, it is clear that women are primarily the ones in charge of caring for the *kámgu*, usually older women. It would be only logical that these older women are teaching her, at the very least, the basics about her menstruation and changing body. It is, however, very hard to determine if any such teachings are past along. During all of my subsequent interviews I tried to ask the women if they conversed with the many people who would come to sit on the other side of the walls of the house and spend time with them, or with the women who helped them go to the beach. It seems unlikely that no one would have talked about anything during this time. And, given the predominance of male secret societies in the province, who share privileged knowledge with initiates, it would make sense for there to be a sort of female

equivalent. Of course, much as with the secret knowledge of male societies this very secrecy makes it hard to obtain information. Further so in this case because I was rarely able to speak with women without some sort of a male presence. In my day to day life in the village I often found myself spending time with groups of women, but in the slightly more formal context of interviews with women who had been *kámgus* themselves, there was always a husband sitting nearby, a son translating and eagerly adding tidbits of information, men sitting nearby, and simply other people (who, regardless of gender, might not be discrete with anything that they learned). It is also likely that a lot of this knowledge had to do with the female body and reproduction. Due to the influence of the church, these are things that people are not entirely comfortable discussing. As such, it is hard to know what was taught during these periods of exclusion but likely that it was a place for teaching.

Karuka houses and the *kámgu* ritual process are also clearly related to courtship customs. Traditionally, a woman would have gotten married within a few days of her emergence from the house. As men would have been coming to bring gifts of food to her family during her stay in the house and they would have already worked out the marriage arrangements. This, in the cases of the women that I interviewed, had not been the case. All of them had had men come to admire them and one did get married to a man who had come to admire her on that day. But none got married the following day, most simply went back to living their regular lives in the village and got married a few years later. Regardless though, the ritual remains related to courtship as it marks the transition of the girl to adulthood, meaning to sexual maturity. To being physically and socially ready to enter marriage and to bear children.

After speaking with Levi and Louisa, I was able to interview Ruth, who was a *kámgu* in her youth. We went to see her in her village, Kabirara, about ten kilometers south of Samo and still in the Sursurunga linguistic area. I spoke with her inside her house. She sat on a bed, surrounded by various things, bed linens and pots, and I sat on another bed across the room from her. She spoke softly and though she knew and spoke some Tok Pisin she mostly replied in Sursurunga. I was accompanied by both Levi and Louisa, who sat next to me and helped to translate both my questions and her answers. This was incredibly helpful as my Sursurunga was simply not good enough to hold an entire conversation.

She went into the *karuka* house in the 1980s, at the time, her father was a wealthy man, with a lot of pigs and shell money, so he was able to organize for his daughter to go into a *karuka* house. It seems that it is always the relatives that decide whether a girl will do this ritual or not, though she is made aware of the plans before it happens. She told me that she knew before

going into the house what would happen, that her parents prepared her for it. At the same time, whenever I asked what she thought about this or any other aspect of her experience in relation to the *karuka* house, she would simply reply “nogat” (there isn’t), and went on to explain that she did as her parents told her. In this and all of the other cases that I interviewed it seems that the girl is not involved in preparations for the ritual including in the decision concerning whether it will go ahead, but at the same time she is quite willing to go ahead with it, sometimes even happy. This is not surprising given that, even when the ritual was more common, it was never all girls who did it, which would make it quite a special thing for those who did do it. Further, the local culture places an emphasis on respect, of elders, of fathers, of husbands, authority based on these merits is generally considered good and followed.

She went into the house when she was around fifteen years old and most likely before her period started or just after her first period. She stayed inside for six months. While inside she did not do much, she mostly ate, slept and grew fat. When I asked her what her fondest memory of the time was she replied that it was of just sitting and eating, that that was all she could think of now.

She was however not always entirely alone. Her mother and grandmother were allowed to go inside the house to spend time with her. Though she didn’t share what it is that they talked about during these times, her son said that it was about life, about bringing up a family and “particular areas of life”. It is presumable that these particular areas have to do with menstruation, her body, sex, married life and childbirth. Given the changes that usually happened to the girl’s body between her entrance and exit from the house, it is hard to imagine that no one would give her some information on the topic. And as she was usually ready for marriage on exit, it is difficult to imagine that her female family members (these include members of the family through clan relation) would not have prepared her for these new phases in her life.

It was not just her family who came to visit her. At night, her friends would also come. They would sit inside the larger house that the *moh* was placed inside of. They would sing songs and beat the sides of the *moh* with their hands. She said that she felt *hamamas* when people were singing to her in this way. Only women were allowed inside of this area to sing and the songs that they sang were *kubak* songs. *Kubak* songs are primarily love songs. Though Ruth at first said that she didn’t remember any of these songs, she then sang one for me to record and Louisa (her daughter-in-law) helped me to transcribe and translate it.

kak pup sang a' idi a bop i balang on kak pup sang idi a saksak idi sál tur.
Kak pup sang er a bop i balang on.

This songs refers to a woman laying with her husband and becoming pregnant.
It is in the Sursurunga language.
[Entry #14 in Songs Annex and Recording 12]

Then, one night, these women came and stayed for the whole night, singing and banging on the sides of the *mo*. The following morning, they came and took her out of the *mo* and hid her for the members of her own moiety to go and find. Some members of her moiety went to find her, they found the house that she had been hidden in and some people of the opposite moiety blocked the doorway. Her moiety members worked at removing these people from the doorway and went to get her from inside. They then brought her back to the *karuka* house and put her inside it. She stayed inside while the men and women outside worked on preparing the *mumu*: of pigs and yams. During this time, some women came and washed her and decorated her (put on her *bilas*). They hung mis on various parts of her body, she indicated this with motions of her hands, saying here, and here, and here. They also took some chicken feathers and added these to the *bilas*. She was then taken to the *kastom* area, where she sat in a special place above the ground. And she watched as everyone, the men and women, came to see her, as they sang and danced, and ate. When this was all over the entire *kastom* was over.

I frequently asked her how she felt about things or what she thought. The answer was always that she didn't. In fact, I am afraid that I may have ended up frustrating her a bit with this repeated line of questioning. She explained that she did not think, she simply followed what her parents told her to do. She believes that it is important to follow what one's parents tell one to do, saying that if you do as you are told, then you will live a long life. She gave herself as an example, since she was indeed quite old. I did still ask how she felt about the custom having ended, I couldn't ask why she did not do the same with her daughters, since she only has sons. At first she said that she did not think about it, she just followed her parents instructions, but then agreed that it was good that the custom had ended. She then conferred with Louisa and Louisa with me, using as an example the fact that girls are now allowed to wear trousers, but that when she was young this hadn't been permissible, the idea being that there are customs that are lost, as the ways of the world change. This is not surprising, this kind of simple acceptance is an attitude that I frequently encountered during my time in the field.

Figures 42-43. Ruth sitting in her house during our interview; Levi and his family standing in front of *káptuntun*, a series of naturally sculpted rocks in Kabirara where *kámgus* were brought to wash and a place that figures in local *stori tumbuna*. (Boiteau, Isabelle. Personal photos, 2023).

Rodi

The next woman that I interviewed was Rodi Tinutang. She lived in Likas village, about five kilometres north of Samo village. I spoke with her after hearing from some villagers who had witnessed her seclusion years before. The mother-in-law of one of my key informants, told me that she had participated in the stealing of the *kámgu* (Rodi) on her final morning in the house. My informant's mother-in-law recounted that they had stolen the *kámgu*, taken her, and hidden her in some *kunai* grass in the bush, and, because her clan did not succeed in finding her, they had then returned her to the *karuka* house. She spoke about the whole experience smiling, her voice inflected with the joy of a fond memory. She mentioned that it had been akin to a fun game. At the time, the late 1990s, my informant's mother-in-law was already an adult, she had already had her firstborn, but this is still the only *kámgu* that she saw in her life. This indicates that even in the 70s and 80s this ritual was not common, and is in keeping with what I was told, that it was never all women who did this ritual but only a select few whose families could and wanted to afford it.

My informant's mother-in-law spoke, as everyone who spoke to me about the kámgus did, about how the *kámgu* did not wear clothes, and of the smallness and darkness of the house. As well

as of how fat and beautiful the girl was when she emerged. She also spoke a lot about the leaves that the kámgu had rubbed on her body - *gorgor*, amongst many. She spoke of how this smelled very nice and that you could smell it from outside of the house, like perfume. Timoté, a resident of Likas village, of a similar age to my informant's mother-in-law, also remembered this *kámgu*. He remembered a couple different women in Likas village who had been *kámgus*. Like my informant's mother in law, he remembered how the girl and the house had been covered with various flowers and leaves that smelled good.

When I finally went to interview Rodi, she and her family were incredibly welcoming and spoke to me openly. I arrived at their property and was directed to her by what turned out to be one of her older sons. We sat, me, Rodi, her husband Moab and at times one or two of her younger sons on some wooden benches under the walled-in awning of one of the smaller houses on their property. Their property beyond this house was large and grassy, heading from the road down to palm trees which hid the ocean that lay just beyond.

I introduced myself and Rodi shared her story. She finished school in 1994, returned home the following year, and entered the *karuka* house in 1995, when she was around fourteen years old. The *karuka* house, the *moh*, was built inside a *hauskuk*. It was round with no windows, only a door for entry and exit. She couldn't go outside and couldn't wash. Instead of washing with water, as I had already been told by those who witnessed her seclusion, she washed with *gorgor* that they brought from the bush. In this case, it is her father who collected it and brought it down from the bush. It was then squeezed into a special dish and she washed with it inside the house. This *gorgor* water has a smell that she liked and that everyone walking by the area could smell and enjoy. *Gorgor* was not the only perfumed plant involved in the ritual, her *bilas* included many smells, all of which could be smelled from the other side of the house. As all of the others I spoke with, she stayed naked inside the house wearing only a black *laplap*. And, she noted that by the end of her stay she had become *fat nogut tru* (really fat) and her skin had lightened.

For the equivalent of about a week before she came out, people came and sang songs on the other side of the house all night long. Those who gathered would sing many kinds of songs, *kubak*, *gogygoy*, etc… and some men would blow conch shells. Those singing the songs would sit in two *lains* (groups, usually family based) on either side of the house, one would sing a part and the other would sing back in reply.

She sang a part of one of these *kubak* songs. This song, in local languages, tells of how while she stays inside the house she knows that she has a man waiting and she loves him to death, that while she stays in seclusion she knows that she has a man, and that this man truly loves her. (Entry #15 in Songs Annex, Recording 13).

Finally, on the last night before she was meant to come out of the house, on top of the singing, a *támsakio* came out. This being is a man that comes from the bush and makes a sound resembling that of a bird.

Then, on the morning of her exit from the house, just as my informant's mother-in-law had recounted, the clan of the opposite moiety, the *kongkong* clan, came and ran away with her. They took her into the bush and her clan had to come and find her. On this occasion, they didn't find her, so the *kongkong* clan brought her back. They brought her back to the house and, there, some women decorated her: they strung *mis* on her and painted her skin red using the *tar* plant. All of the women then picked her up and carried her to the other side of the house. She was brought to the big *kastom* in her honour, where people came to see her. As all of this happened, she recounted that she had simply sat.

She did not get married at the *kastom*. When it was over, she spent some time living in the village with her parents before a man approached her parents and arrangements were made for a traditional marriage ceremony with her husband who was also present during the interview, Moab. They have no daughters, so there was no opportunity for them to do the same for their daughters. Both said that they could have done it if they had had a daughter, but neither stated with any certainty whether they would have or not. According to her husband this custom has been lost because the new generation doesn't think much about customs, about tradition. In his view, it is not good that this tradition has been lost, as these kinds of customs should be passed down through the generations.

Lina

My final interview was with an older woman in Muliama village, about thirty kilometres south of Samo. Though this village is in a different linguistic group, the Tangalamet, the seclusion house is still known under the same name and the process much the same. I spoke to the woman, Lina, with the help of my local informant, Dominica, and one of Lina's daughters. Lina's house is located up a small hill reached via a path through the bush, the house itself is set next to some well tended to gardens. We sat on two wooden benches placed near her house, and later, as it

began to rain, we moved underneath the metal awning at the front of her house. She is a smaller woman, and was well dressed for the occasion, wearing a black and patterned *laplap* and a beige sweater.

Figure 44. The gardens in front of Lina's house and her house in the background. (Boiteau, Isabelle. Personal photo, 2023).

She recounted her experience. She was born in 1964 and entered the house in 1980/81. She isn't sure how long she stayed inside, it was probably for about five or six months. I asked about the period before she went inside, when she knew about the plan and how she felt. She answered that she knew about it because people worked on sewing together the leaves to make the house. And she said that she did not think anything, that she was happy and not afraid.

Inside the house there was no light, and she was naked with only a *laplap*. The house was inside of another house and had two stories, the one on top for sleeping and the one on the bottom for eating. While she was inside the house they all decorated her with various flowers and plants and she slept in the bed on top of these. There were many plants and flowers, including *meh*, *singil*,and *kawawar*. Some of the people hanging around the interview went to fetch some pieces of *singil* and *kawawar* for me to smell, they did indeed smell beautiful. Finally, like the other women that I spoke to, she was washed not with water, but with *gorgor* that had been smashed in a special dish.

She didn't do much inside the house, mostly she ate and slept. And she mentioned feeling happy. When she needed to go to the bathroom, some of her aunts, who were in charge of looking after her, would accompany her and cover her on the way to the toilet. People would also come and talk with her through the walls of the house, about pretty much anything. In addition, women would sing outside of the house and, as they did so, hit the sides of the house with their hands. Lina demonstrated this by lifting her hands with the palms open and flat. At first, she claimed that she did not remember any of these songs, but a bit later she sang a bit from memory.

On the last morning, she too was stolen. She is from the small *pisin* clan, so the big *pisin* clan stole her. A group of women did this and when they came to steal her there was a certain amount of pushing and pulling and some people even threw buckets of water at one another.

After she was stolen and returned, there was a large *kastom*. Beforehand, a group of people came to *bilas* her: they put *mis* on her head and on various parts of her body (indicated with hand gestures: *hia, na daun long hia* (here, and down around here), they painted her skin red using *tar* and put some chicken feathers in her hair. She was not wearing clothes. When everyone was done decorating her she was brought outside and she simply sat in a chair as everyone came to see, or rather, to admire, her. They came for this because she had changed while she was inside the Karuka, Indeed, one of the first things that she noted was that before going in she hadn't had any breasts and after she did. At the event, many men came to *mangalim* her. This is a word which more or less means *to admire*. One of the men who came to *mangalim* her on that day ended up marrying her. In fact, her husband is a man from Morobe province who had happened to be there at the time and to admire her. After admiring her, he went to see her mother and father to negotiate brideprice. After which they got married. When she spoke of these events, of how her now husband had *mangalim* her, she blushed and smiled and laughed. A little later, when we were still talking, a man walked by and someone pointed him out to me, saying that this was her husband, the man from Morobe, I took notice and when he realized what was happening he reacted in exactly the same way as his wife had.

She has two daughters, indeed, one of her daughters was sitting with us and helping to translate. Neither went into a *karuka* house. She explained the change by saying that before people followed the customs, but now not so much, that the older men and women had died with the customs. While her daughter explained that the custom wasn't as strong anymore, that people now follow what the *white man* does.

All of these women told strikingly similar stories of seclusion. All of them spoke of spending months at a time in a small house, often inside another house. Of having eaten a lot and spent their time in the dark, such that they emerged with transformed bodies: with breasts and a good deal of corpulence. They also all spoke of the presence of a multitude of perfumed plants and of people singing outside their small house. They spoke of these things with a similar kind of fondness. The songs that they shared were all love songs. In keeping with the idea that the seclusion house was meant to transform girls into women, ie into sexually active, fertile women.

It is not just the customs that are strikingly similar, it is also their disappearance and the attitude of the women towards this. The women all had fond memories of their time in the seclusion house, though they began by recounting the technical factual details of the process, they would then start to recount memories and they would smile or blush or laugh. As Anisi emphasized in my first interview, this was lived as a positive experience. Yet, none reacted strongly to the custom's disappearance. In fact, the person to express the strongest negative reaction to it's disappearance was Moab, Rodi's husband. The women seemed to accept this change, to see it as an inevitable result of changing times.

Figures 45-46. Though most of the plants used in the *karuka* house remain unidentified, these pictures show two plants used. The first is of *sigil*, which smells beautiful; the second of *tar*, which is used in various contexts for its red colour. (Boiteau, Isabelle. Personal photos, 2022 & 2023).

Seclusion houses in the ethnographic literature on New Ireland

The *karuka* houses and *kámgu* are not isolated cases. Similar female initiations happened throughout New Ireland and the nearby islands of Tanga and Lihir. The ethnographic record is spotted with references to these, though they all hold different names. There is the *dal* in the Siar region (Kingston, 1998, 2005; Wolffram, 2007), the *dafal* in Tanga (Bell, 1936; Foster, 1995:47), the *tolup* in Lihir (Hemer, 2013), *eandavan* in the Mandak region (Kramer, 1925 *in* Gunn, 1990), the *davan* in Northern New Ireland (Gunn, 1990), the *kihal* on the west coast

(Rickard 1892, *in* Bell, 1936), the *Ladaven* in Lelet (Sykes, 1996), the *dzafunfun* near Fissoa village (Groves, 1933:349-50; 1936:233).[47]

There are only a few reports and little has been written on the topic. Indeed, Kingston, a rare case of an ethnographer who did write about female initiation in the province, states that "no other ethnographers have either noted on them or questioned their relationship with other cultural traits in the region." (Kingston, 1998: 231). This is no doubt due to the fact that it is no longer a common practice. In fact it seems to be a practice that has gone extinct. In the Sursurunga region it was no longer practiced, the most recent cases, the ones that I was able to interview, were from the 80s and 90s and no one seemed to be motivated to revive the practice. In the Siar region, Kingston speak of having witnessed two very short versions (of only one or two nights) of the *dal* initiation (1998:231). However, these were around twenty years ago already as such it is hard to say if these are still happening today. If they are, then it makes sense that it would be in the Siar region as it is the most isolated of the regions on the island, being furthest from the provincial capital and most of it not connected by road. In Sursurunga, people often spoke of this region, also known as *last Kona* (last corner), as a place where tradition was still very strong.

Despite the ritual not being common today, it is interesting to review the available material on the topic, to further understand how the ritual fit into society when it was practiced and to better understand what it's current disappearance (or transformation) could indicate.

Many of the early ethnographers around the turn of the 20th century noted on seclusion practices, an early account comes from Brown, recounting what he witnessed in 1876 (1910). He describes seeing multiple girls in structures which he refers to as "cages", that there were many of these grouped together inside a fenced in area. He learned that the girls remained in these "cages" for many years and were looked over by an old lady (1910:105). Their "cages" had one room and were small, they only had enough room to sit in the dark and, as they were hot, they would sweat a lot. He wanted to see the girls, and prepared some shell money to give them so that he would be able to see them. They had to exit the structures in order to get the money that he was offering them, but as they could not walk on the ground, the woman caring for them had to go and get some planks to lay on the ground for them to walk over (1910:106). When he saw them there were various girls in the structures, who would remain there for three

[47] Similar seclusion practices are also found in various regions of Papua New Guinea beyond New Ireland. Ex: Daulo menarche rites (Sexton *in* Lutkehaus and Roscoe, 1995:206); Chimbu menarche rites (Ross 1965, Whiteman 1965); Orokaiva (Banks, 1990:123); the Rauto (Maschio *in* Lutkehaus and Roscoe, 1995: 155). And in the 1990s it was found that 83% of New Guinean societies practice female initiation rites (Lutkehaus and Roscoe, 1995: xv).

to four years (1910:106). Finally, he mentions that not all young girls were placed in these structures, there was an alternate means of completing the custom: by wearing fringes over the breasts and back. This seems to have been the custom used by parents who couldn't or wouldn't pay for the "cages" (1910:107).

A little later, in 1936, Bell wrote about the *dafal* ritual that he had observed in Tanga. Already at the time, he referred to older texts citing many ethnographers who had witnessed similar rites. Bell mentions that Geroge Brown, RH Rickard, Rev I Clooney, General Wisdom and Pearson Chinnery had witnessed and described similar rituals in New Ireland and on Tanga in the late 1800s and early 1900s (1936:83-85).

As Bell was not in the area at the exact moment where festivities occurred he relied on his informants for detailed information (1936:86). He did not personally witness any rituals, but heard about three that happened on Boieng island (now Boang island). Speaking with the men, he learned that it appeared to be the men, and particularly the chiefs, who decided if and when (and with who) these rituals would happen. They were not frequent rituals, with about three to four years going by between a performance of them. To some extent this all had to do with the expense of it. It is an expensive ritual, but its performance is desirable as it increases social prestige. This is of course due to the showing off of one's wealth. But also to the cultural importance of family pride, which rests on women bearing many children.

When the men decided that a ritual would take place, they appointed an old woman who acted "as a permanent servitor and guardian" (1936:90). Then, the girl's entry into the house was celebrated with a feast. While she was inside the house her body would be rubbed with scented oils and she would wear a *bobo*, a breast covering, which, along with the inhalation of the perfume, had the power to make her breasts grow (1936:91). Women would gather outside the house and sing *folfol* songs, and the men would every now and then come and put an end to this by throwing containers of water at them (1936:92). The girl would stay in the house for ten to twelve months and the outside activities would intensify as the date of her exit approached (1936:92).

When the day for her exit came, women from the opposite clan took her out and held her in their house, there was then a ritual search and fight for the girl. She was then brought back to the house and decorated with red ochre and shell disks (1936:93-94). That day there was a feast where her breast covering was ceremonially removed (1936:94). Contrarily to the accounts that I was given, this was not the end of the ritual. She was then brought back to the *dafal* for three

more days of seclusion, after which there was a small feast for family only (1936:95). At this feast the chief dabbed lime powder, used for removing taboos, on her head and she took a bite of *kaukau*, marking her first consumption of food in public (1936:95). She was then washed and returned to normal life (1936:95).

Older descriptions such as those provided by Brown and Bell tend to be highly descriptive and also to place the value judgements of the men collecting the information onto the practice. More recent cases in the ethnographic literature are often less rich in details, as they come from a time when the practices were less common and being modified to fit changing worlds. But, newer accounts also take different attitudes to presenting the customs, being far kinder and trying to understand the customs on local terms. for instance, the structure in which the girl is enclosed is now referred to as a house, or by its local name, not as a cage.

Kingston is a rare case of an anthropologist in New Ireland who has written about female initiation rites. He observed them in the Siar region of New Ireland, at the southern tip of New Ireland. Though it is a different linguistic group from Sursurunga and culturally different in many ways and particularly because it is less accessible. It is also culturally similar, as it is also dominated by the *Tubuan* society and it's associated culture. His work is also notable because it is relatively recent (from about twenty years ago) and he was able to witness rituals that had been shortened to fit modern demands.

Female isolation houses in this area are called *dal*. The word refers to both the house and the girl, though it can also be used in storytelling to refer to a young sexually active woman. The ceremonies are expensive here too and generally sponsored by the girl's father (Kingston, 1998:234). It is held both for the girl, as she can be teased and called 'kurmakmak' if she is not initiated and as a means of displaying the host's grandeur (1998:234).

The house, called *goh,* is built inside a larger house (1998:235). In the case that Kingston observed it was the grandmother's house (1998:234). Many herbs and plants are attached to the house in order to attract the spirits. The *goh* has a conical roof that is reminiscent of a *duk duk* and it is made of the same type of pandanus leaves as certain kinds of capes that are associated with the Tubuan and used in making baby cradles.

When the house is ready and before the girl goes in there is a ritual play fight between women of the two opposing clans called *arso*. During this fight men tend to keep their distance from the village and if they are found by the women they may be thrown into the water, indeed they may

be thrown in the water at any point during the period of the *dal* (1998:236). The fight is led by an older woman, usually the maternal grandmother, who wears a *tanget*[48] around her neck (usually an insignia of the *kamgoi*[49] and not worn by women) (1998:236). The result of the battle is that the opposite moiety 'forces' the *dal* into seclusion (1998:240). At this point the *dal* has already had her hair coloured red and her eyes encircled with white powder in a design that is reminiscent of those of the *tubuan* (1998, 236; 2003:174).

Kingston was in the field when one such period of isolation occurred. As a man, he was not allowed to enter the *goh*. But the *dal* was fed greasy foodstuffs and washed in plant oil called *kartung* (Kingston, 1998:243). Further, "The quality of time spent there now was described as akin to a children's party, with friends joining the young *dal* in singing songs and impromptu dancing similar to those outside. Even 'traditionally' no knowledge was imparted, except sometimes about the timing and care of her menstruation." (1998:243). When the *dal* emerges she will be a beautiful and sexually attractive woman who is fat and pale, will have breasts and be menstruating (1998:243)

In a previous time women would also have been given face tattoos at this time. This is particularly interesting because many of the women that I met in the field, above the age of approximately thirty, had face tattoos. These were not large, usually they consisted small lines on the cheeks, forehead or chin, there didn't seem to be any underlying logic to the variety of combinations. I frequently asked these women about their tattoos, and they did not know either. They had all been tattooed as young women, probably more or less around the time of first menstruation, as young teenagers. They had all been tattooed by older female relatives and because these relatives had thought that it was the time to tattoo them, not, it seems, at their own request. None of them knew the significance behind these tattoos or the act of tattooing. They would simply tell me that it was because it was the custom. It was custom, so they had followed.

In light of initiation through seclusion being an expensive process that only a select few girls did, perhaps tattooing was akin to the fringes that Bell describes some Tangan girls as wearing. Perhaps it was a more accessible and common means of marking the transition from girlhood to womanhood.

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[48] *Tanget* is a particular kind of croton plant, it is used in many ritual contexts, including in the *Tubuan*.

[49] The *kamgoi* is a leader in the *taraiu*, the secret men's area in the bush, and in male ritual performances.

It is also a practice that had died by the time I made it to the field. Though many women had traditional face tattoos, none of the younger girls did. Amongst the girls in their twenties and teens, none had face tattoos and no mothers seemed to be planning on tattooing their daughters' faces. However, of those in this age group who had been to the city, many had tattoos. This appeared to be much in the same way that many people in the "west" have tattoos: they had liked the idea of getting a tattoo and that particular design, so they had gotten the tattoo. Further, these tattoos were never on the face, they were usually on an arm, a shoulder or a leg. The absence of traditional tattooing could be a further marker of the end of female initiation rites, even in more abbreviated and accessible forms. (This of course remains speculative, and is a knowledge gap to be further explored).

Much as in the other accounts I collected, while the *dal* is in seclusion, women will gather outside the *goh* to sing *kumbak* songs. Kingston was fortunate to be able to collect some of these songs. Still, he notes that many were poorly understood. What could be understood, were clear phallic references based on snakes. Snakes which are also related to place spirits of the area. The songs referred to snakes eating the girl's vagina and causing her to bleed. The eating being a euphemism for sex. All together, Kingston concluded that this "references a spiritual phallus initiating the girl's menstruation" (1998:245-6). As such, female attributes (like male ones) come from the ancestral realm. Kingston states that: "This domain is enacted and controlled by men, and hence that men are the source of children and female fertility is, of course, one of the main ideological correlates of Siar gender relations." (1998:257). Thus he argues that seclusion ritual are also a means of male domination, or control, over the female realm.

Another fairly contemporary description of the *dal* comes from Wolffram, who also worked in the Siar region in the 90s/00s. When Wolffram was in the field the ritual had been shortened, so it was completed in two to three days (2007:88), quite similarly to the rituals that Kingston reported on. With the exception that, while Kingston notes that there was never really any transmission of knowledge during their seclusion, Wolffram notes that women would teach the initiates both knowledge and *kamkombak* songs (2007:88).

Wolffram also speaks of local rituals in terms of *pidiks.* Noting that there are two primary female pidiks: menstruation and birth (2007, 87-88). The *dal* rituals do include some minor male pidiks,

in the form of masks - Tipang and Lor[50] - as well as the production of sounds to imitate birds and the spirits (2007:88).

Similar customs have also been observed further north in New Ireland. This area, in addition to containing different linguistic groups is also a different cultural area. In the south of the island, the *Tubuan* acts as a kind of overarching cultural motif, whereas in the north the *Malagan* acts in a similar way. Still, New Ireland is known for having had large degrees of cultural contact and influence going far back before the arrival of colonial powers and missionaries. There are also many cultural similarities between the areas: such as matrilineality, the division of society into moieties and the importance of the institution of the *hausboi*. Further, the practices of female seclusion described by authors who have worked throughout New Ireland are strikingly similar (ex: Hemer, 2013; Gillespie, 2009:18).

Michael Gunn has worked throughout the island, he wrote about seclusion rituals on Tabar island in the late 1980s (ex: 1986; 1990). He briefly describes a ritual similar to the *dal* and the *karuka*, here called *davan* and tied to local *Malagan* culture and customs (1990:85-86). He discusses how a particular *Malagan* is passed down between women (abnormal for the *Malagan*), usually to the first born woman (1990:85). The firstborn girl was also confined for a period around adolescence. Her confinement occurred in a house inside the men's area of the graveyard. This period of seclusion was called *davan*, but it was not undergone alone, as the girl would reside with about twenty other children, both girls and boys. Staying in this house made them into potential leaders (1990:85). Much like other accounts of female seclusion, a large celebration occurred on the day that the girl exited her seclusion. Here, she was brought to a platform in the center of the village and placed underneath the great *Malagan*. The celebration involved her and her family eating from a taro and both her and the *Malagan* above her being draped with shell necklaces. And after this there was 'play' between the women of the two clans (1990:85).

Another account from northern New Ireland, in the 1990s, is from Sykes, who worked in the Lelet region, a Mandak speaking area in inland central New Ireland. Her account focuses on how seclusion traditions have been reinvented to suit new contexts. This region used to practice a female ritual initiation called *linnendaven* in which the initiate was known as the *Ladaven* (1996:104). At the time of Sykes' research this ritual had already ceased to be practiced (1996:108). What Skykes argues is that this ritual had been replaced by girls going to high

[50] Parkinson notes that in the Gazelle peninsula all face masks were referred to as *lor* (whether *dukduk* or other types) and that this meant skull (1907:461).

school. Going to high school was approached in the same way as going into the seclusion house. This was true in terms of the fact that the girls were not around to participate in the daily life of the community and in that it was a means to make them into women who would be of value within the community (1996:106-7).

She describes how the *Ladaven* ritual went. That a ritual host would collect the youths to be initiated and they would live in a dark house for many months (1996:116). They would be housed in a small house built inside a larger one, built by the organizers of the feast that was held once they exited the house. During her time in the house an older woman, who had also been a *Ladaven*, would work to feed her meats and fatty foods, which would make her fat and shiny (1996:116). Further, staying in the house and therefore away from the sun would make her skin paler, and this paler skin would be painted red. The result was “The shining red corpulent body, created by the seclusion and feeding, symbolized self-indulgence and epitomized female sexuality.” (1996:116). However, though the feeding of the girls was supervised by elderly women, there was also male involvement in the initiation. It was an elder man, called *lunkak*, who oversaw the construction of the house and all of the symbolic and ritual aspects of the *Ladaven*. It was the *lunkak* who was in charge of all of the magical aspects of the ritual. For instance, of the magical formulas that were included in the red body paints, designed to elicit desire (1996:116).

Sykes argues that the *Ladaven*, in traditional and modern forms, acts in two ways, first to ensure that a woman will be powerful in the future and secondly by providing “the ultimate image of womanliness” (1996:105). In both cases it assures the woman’s future by placing her in a web of relations in her village. In the *Ladaven* ritual she is indebted to those who financed her stay in the house as well as all of those who cared for her, brought her and her family gifts of food, while she was in seclusion. These obligations then allow her to be an active and contributing member of the community when she leaves seclusion. The same happens when girls head to high school. School fees are paid in a ceremonial way, creating debt to those who helped her attend school. Further, going to school means that in the future she will be able to get a job and better contribute to her community (1996:112). The creation of the image of true womanliness also plays into this. In both cases, great emphasis is placed on how the woman to be must present herself, how she must cover and present her body (1996:113-115). Further, both seclusion and going to school make a woman a more desirable marriage match. In both cases, a woman is encouraged to marry shortly after her return to the village. It is thought that it is only once she is married that she can truly start working for, contributing to, her community (1996:111-2).

Sykes writes at a similar time to both Kingston and Wolffram. Though they are in different areas of the province, they all write about ways in which the female initiation ritual has been adapted to changing times. In the Siar region, this has been achieved through making the traditional rite far shorter and, in the Mandak area, by changing the situations that a meaningful transition into womanhood are attached to. Sykes writes about how Papua New Guineans are negotiating their modernizing worlds in ways that are truly Papua New Guinean as opposed to just following the ways given to them as examples by foreign powers like Australia. She gives the example of schooling for girls as a way in which local populations have found ways to make truly “Papua New Guinean women” as opposed to strictly following the pattern that places like Europe or Australia give as examples (1996:114). Both the Siar and Mandak adaptations are means of making the modern world one that does not leave behind tradition, of making it a distinctively Papua New Guinean modern world.

However, in Sursurunga, there seemed to be no such adaptation of female initiation rites in order to include them in a ‘modern world’. The tradition died and people spoke of it with fondness, with fond memories. But also with regret at the fact that custom, in general, is no longer as strong as it once was. No one spoke of adaptations of these rituals, no one playfully teased one another with words like *kámgu*, *karuka* or *kurmakmak*. It was something that came up in conversation when the local anthropologist, interested in traditional customs, came around asking questions and not otherwise.

These difference could be due to any one or combination of factors. To begin, it could be due to regional differences. Siar and Lelet are both regions that are fairly isolated from central government and its influence. The Siar occupy the very tip of the island, most of which is not accessible by road. The Lelet live in the Lelet plateau which is the only inland area of the island that it inhabited, as such it is removed from the Boluminsky highway which runs down the island and connects all of the villages. Samo village and the Sursurunga area, are located many hours travel from Namatanai and even further from Kavieng, the journey to Kavieng in particular is prohibitively expensive for many, but it remains that these villages have easier connections to influences from the outside world. Influences which could have contributed to the demise of seclusion customs.

There is also the fact that Kingston, Sykes and Wolffram all wrote in the 1990s or very early 2000s. This is already twenty years or more ago. This, in itself, is a long period of time. The authors were all writing about how seclusion customs as they had been when the likes of Brown

and Bell wrote on them were definitively over but had been adapted to fit new circumstances, by shortening them or applying them to new situations. In the course of the last twenty years it is no surprise that the way that these customs are practiced would have continued to evolve, perhaps simply disappearing. This is even more likely given that the last twenty years have brought many changes to the region. Cellphones have become common throughout the region, allowing New Irelanders greater access to the outside world, a gold mine was opened on Lihir island in the late 1990s, offering working opportunities, and charismatic revival churches have grown in popularity. These are only a few changes, but they have all had a great impact on the region, changing values and priorities.

Given time and the changes that it has brought it is hard to know how common seclusion practices are anywhere in New Ireland at this point. But what does it mean for these practices to have disappeared, what allowed for their disappearance and what effects will it have? Clearly, at one point, initiation was common throughout region, further it seems to have been a means for women to learn about what it means to be a woman. Hemer, even argues that on Lihir island, the ritual was tied into a system that gave women their own wealth and power that was completely separate from the men's (2013:169). On the other hand, early ethnographers portrayed the girls as caged prisoners, Bell notes on the passive role given to girls in the ritual and Kingston argues that it is a means for men take responsibility for and control of the female realm. The ritual has been painted both as a means for men to dominate women and as a means of female empowerment. I do not wish to argue that it is the one or the other, as these questions tend to not have clear answers. But, it does raise questions about what the disappearance of the custom means for women's place in society now and in the future.

This question is especially relevant if men are still undergoing traditional initiations, while women are not. It is difficult to determine whether there ever were similar practices for men. Gunn briefly makes reference to two references to a male equivalent in the Mandak area (1990:85). In the area with the *davan*, both men and women would be isolated (Gunn, 1990:85). Foster also briefly mentions a male equivalent to the dafal in the Tanga islands, called *tamnon* (1995:47). But the information on this is incredibly sparse. Further, the common presence of male secret societies suggests that this would not have been needed, men were already socially made through initiations into these societies. And secret societies such as the *Tubuan* are still very present and active. Though some informants mentioned that the *Tubuan* did not have the kind of essence or authority that it once had had, it was still very present and its authority followed. In this sense, I would argue that men's initiation processes still exist. While women's traditional initiations into womanhood have disappeared.

The *Kámgu*: A traditional rite of passage

The rite of passage is a classical concept in anthropology. Put forth first by Van Gennep (1960) and popularized by Victor Turner (1987). According to this concept, when individuals move from one stage of life to another there will be rites marking the change that allow them to pass from one stage to the other. These rites have three main stages: separation, liminality (also known as margin or limen), and aggregation (or incorporation) (Turner, 1987:239; Vizedom, 1976:897-898). As individuals go through a rite of passage they will be separated from the social position in which they originally found themselves, before being reintegrated into society in a new role. In between these two stages there is a liminal state, one where the individual finds themselves between structures that define them, leaving them in an indeterminate state, the liminal. Turner is well known for having referred to this as being "betwixt and between" (1987:236), it is a paradoxical state in which "they are no longer classified and not classified yet" (1987:236), meaning that the individual has a physical reality but not a social one (1987:237).

This is exactly what happens to the *kámgu*. A girl, before going into seclusion is just that: a girl. She is classed as a child in society and lives her life according to these expectations. She may play, she may help her female relatives with household chores, she may attend school. In the rite of passage paradigm, there is often a ritual that marks the individual's separation from the group as they enter the liminal stage. None of the women that I interviewed mentioned such a ritual. They spoke of witnessing the preparation of the house and of their families preparing them for what lay ahead. If one is to follow these accounts it would seem that the separation from the stage of girlhood is quite simply the removal of the girl's clothes and her entry into the house. If entry into the house occurs at the same time as her first menstruation (it seems as if officially this is when entry should have occurred, but that in reality the preciseness of this varied), then her first menstruation would have been the event causing a separation from girlhood. First menstruation in particular is a logical separation from her previous stage of childhood, since it marks the beginning of her ability to bear children, and in the region womanhood and motherhood are almost interchangeable concepts. However, Kingston's account also provides us with a ritual marking the separation of the girl and her entry into the house. He describes the play fight of *arso*, where women of the two opposing moieties in the community engage in a playful fight and then grab the young girl and carry her into the house to more playful struggle on the part of her family. This ritual more readily exhibits the traits of a

separation, a tearing away even, from her previous role in the community into seclusion, into the margin, the liminal.

Once she enters the seclusion house she looses her social definition, and for the months of her seclusion is left with no new social definition. She is not visible, she is not referred to by name, she may not even make contact with the ground. For the period of her seclusion she is not of this world. Though she remains a physical reality: one which must be fed, perfumed, spoken to and sung to. In this sense, she does also have a social reality, as various people will interact with her in pre-determined ways. During the period of her seclusion her presence is felt, but she is not an active member of society. Much as Bell noted, her role is extremely passive (1936:97). The characteristics of the liminal stage are working to make her over into the person that she will be when she re-enters society. As a neophyte, an individual going through the liminal stage, she has no active role in her own transformation. She experiences the liminal, she lives it, she may make some decisions concerning how to act within this space, but she does not define the space which is in the process of defining her.

She then re-enters society, in the stage of aggregation (or incorporation) first when she is stolen from the house and then at the *kastom* event that marks her exit from the house. The ritual stealing and searching of her that occurs on the morning of her exit from the house marks a sudden tear from her previous state quite similar to when she first entered seclusion (especially in areas where the *arso* fight is carrie out). While this ritual tears her out of her stage of betwixt and between, it also does not fully aggregate her. It does re-incorporate her into her relationship with the women in the community through her ties to each of the moieties. Indeed, the women who steal her belong to the clan which she must marry into. The push and pull between the two clans perhaps standing in for the situation of belonging in which the girl finds herself, as a girl attached to the clan that she was born into, a clan which she will maintain membership in and eventually pass on to her children. Yet, her proximity to marriage also marks her imminent ties to the opposite clan. As such, the ritual stealing and finding of the *kámgu*, marks the beginning to a process of aggregation in which her relationship to the clans will be different from when she was a child.

Once she has been re-incorporated into the community of women who are members of each moiety, they become responsible for presenting her for full aggregation into the community as a woman. At this stage, a great deal of attention is paid to her appearance. Indeed, the entire process of seclusion is in a way a means of achieving a desirable body. Women are fed and kept away from the light: resulting in a fat and pale body, which is considered desirable. They

are also covered in perfumed herbs (there is without a doubt a pragmatic purpose to this: to cover the smell of her menstruation and unwashed body) that are meant to attract. All of the women that I spoke to readily mentioned that when they exited their bodies were completely different from when they had begun seclusion. They all mentioned not only that they had grown fat, but also that they had developed breasts. Focus was placed on this, it is likely that it was a change that affected them as it does girls at adolescence anywhere, but also that it was noteworthy on a cultural level. Motherhood is incredibly culturally important in the region and so is breastfeeding. As such the development of breasts is an important element of the girl's transformation into a woman in the social sense as well.

When she attends the large feast in her honour, all of these elements of her body are emphasized: she is bare breasted, has mis hung from various parts of her body and is painted in red. As Sykes argued, these things all emphasize her sexuality and fertility (1996:115-6). That is, they emphasize that she is now a woman. And, everyone comes to admire her. Indeed, much love magic is performed to elicit desire around her and she is the subject of much erotic teasing (1996:115).

What is interesting is that though this part of the ritual is visibly a part of the girl's aggregation, of her re-introduction to society as a woman. She is still not fully integrated. As the *kastom* occurs, she remains in her passive role, simply watching as everyone around celebrates in her honour. She may still not touch the ground. A group of women carry her out to the *kastom* area, and she sits on a special platform, before being carried out again at the end. In this sense, she is still a part of the social realm, she has not reintegrated society as a woman, as a social being.

Her exact moment of re-integration seems to vary. In Bell's description of the dafal on the Tanga islands, the woman takes a bite of taro and this marks her first time eating in public (1936:95). However, in the case of the *karuka* house and the *kámgu* there appears to be no such element to the *kastom* held in her honour. Rather, aggregation seems to occur after the *kastom* is held. After she is returned to the house, she may wash with water for the first time since before entering seclusion and then she returns to life in the village, but now as a woman.

One analysis of this could emphasize gender relations. Kingston has made the argument that in the Siar region, the highly similar *dal* ritual is a means for men to assume control of childbearing by claiming that they control the spirit world, which through the ritual is defined as the root source of women's menstruation and childbearing abilities. That it is a means of claiming female sexuality and fertility (1998:257). I do not disagree with Kingston's argument, I also do not think

that the ritual can be explained solely in this way (though he also does not explicitly make this claim). However, in the *kámgu* ritual, traditionally arrangements for marriage would be made while she was in seclusion and on her exit. Indeed, Lina met her husband as he had come to *mangalim* her on that day and had proceeded to make marriage arrangements with her parents. This can be read as indicating that a girl's full transition into the social category of woman requires that she be married, that it requires her relation, through the paradigm of marriage, to a man. Indeed, given that the ritual is meant to turn her into a sexual and fertile person this is not surprising. Further, the decline of the ritual comes at a time when both men and women are increasingly free to marry the person of their choosing, to not marry their partners at all, or to opt for life paths where education or work are primary focuses.

Her aggregation is finally marked by the act of washing. This is a very literal removal of the elements that characterized her in her liminal stage. It is a washing away of the unwashed dirt, of the perfumed herbs, of the red paint she was covered in. It washes away her social indefinability. It also brings her back into contact with the mundane world: as she touches water and will now touch the ground and be seen by others without her ceremonial get up.

In this rite of passage, everything that happens to the *kámgu*, that happens around her seclusion acts to construct her position in the community once she emerges from this, so that she may return to her community as a woman and step into that social role.

Making a Woman: Spirits and networks

Both Kingston and Wolffram note the parallels between elements of the ritual seclusion of the *dal* and the *Tubuan* ritual system. Indeed, the girl has circles painted around her eyes that resemble to design on a *tubuan* mask (Kingston, 2006:175). The enclosure is in a conical shape, much like the *tubuan*'s hat (Kingston, 2006:175). Further, the elderly woman in charge of the *dal* is given many of the implements of authority used by the *kámgoi* in the *taraiu* (Kingston, 1998:236). These elements articulate the *dal* and her seclusion not only with male spiritual practices of the *Tubuan* but also, more generally, to the world of spirits. Indeed, she isn't allowed to touch the ground, isn't referred to by her name and only eats greasy foods (Kingston, 2006:175). Though none of my interviewees mentioned having had white circles painted around their eyes, the rest of Kingston's descriptions correspond to those that I collected.

A connection to the spirits was never explicitly mentioned to me. However, the connection to the spirit world was also generally not mentioned when I spoke to men about their participation in various masking practices. Some who had left referred to these practices as “dancing with the spirits”, and many spoke of eating special substances to induce dreaming. But clear and explicit references to the theme were not present, the words “spirit” or “spirit realm” were never used. It is likely the same in the case of the *karuka* house ritual. In order to determine whether the world of the spirits is involved, one needs to look for evidence of this and not rely on explicit mentions, and, the evidence does point towards its involvement.

This step through the spirit world is a part of the liminal stage that the *kámgu* occupies. She is neither a girl nor a woman, she is not a participating member of society in the sense that she has no social reality within the day to day world of human life. She does have a social reality of sorts as the community comes together in order to care for her. People will cook for her, they go collect perfumed herbs for her, they help her to go to the toilet unseen, they come to speak to her (to pass down knowledge or to pass the time) and they come and sing to her at night. While she is in a liminal stage and is separated from society she is also deeply embedded in it. As she spends her time in seclusion, community members are well aware of her existence and the changes that she is undergoing. The liminal stage positions her transition as being one that occurs through contact with the realm of spirits all the while involving a great deal of participation from those in the human realm.

Indeed, Kingston argues that through this relation to the world of the spirits, women and the entire ritual system are subordinated to men (1998:257). Men, through their ritual system, control the world of spirits. That women must go through this spirit world in order to become women, in order to become sexual and fertile beings (2006:175), means that they must go through a domain controlled by men in order to assume their reproductive abilities. Giving men the claim to control over female reproduction as well. Indeed, Kingston argues that “This domain is enacted and controlled by men, and hence that men are the source of children and female fertility is, of course, one of the main ideological correlates of Siar gender relations.” (1998:257). The same could be said of Sursurunga gender relations.

Sykes, in her analyses of the changing *Lindaven* ritual discusses how the ritual functioned to embed a girl within the community, within a network of obligations (1996:109). Essentially arguing that it was through returning the debts that she owed that the girl would become a woman within her community. By stepping through the world of the spirits in order to enter

reproductive adulthood, the initiate is being placed within new networks, the *kámgu* is being re-embedded within her community, much as the *Lindaven* is.

Socially embedding the girl into the community, since this is a *rite de passage*, is also about re-embedding her as a woman. In New Ireland, family is highly valued (ex: Bell, 1936:86), this requires the birth of many children. As women bear children and are then responsible for most of childcare, it becomes their life's work. Indeed, it is considered sad to have no children or only one child. During my time in the field I was often asked about my own family, and every time that I shared that I was an only child I was met with the same response: "*sori!".* In this sense, a woman's sexual, and therefore reproductive maturity, is essential to her social adulthood and participation within the community.

As such, the *karuka* house ritual emphasizes the sexual maturation of women. Everyone that I spoke to commented on how, when they entered the house they had no breasts, but by the time they came out they had developed them. Breasts hold additional cultural importance because they provide milk for raising babies - to *susu*, or breastfeed, is something that women gave a great importance. It is also a kind of menstrual house, traditionally at least, women go in either before or at the time of their first period and when they come out they are now menstruating. It also seems that some of the knowledge imparted during their time in isolation has to do with caring for their cycle (Kingston, 1998:243) as well as regarding the roles that they will be expected to take on after their seclusion. As such, the seclusion is carried out at a time when the girl is physically or biologically becoming a woman and allows women to teach the girl about her new role.

The songs that are sung outside the *kámgu*'s house also emphasize her sexual maturation. I was always told that the main type of song sung were *kubak* songs and that these were love songs. I was only able to record snippets of a few (included earlier in this chapter). Rodi sang a snippet of a song recounting how a girl loves a man who is waiting for her outside and knows that he loves her back. This song is not particularly explicit, though it does position the girl in the role of a woman - of a person who is in love and will most likely become married and bear children. The song that Ruth shared was a bit more explicit, it focused on how a man and a woman lie together and she becomes pregnant. Finally, Kingston was able to collect some songs from the Siar region, though he also noted that knowledge of the songs and their content was not complete at that time (1998:244). The songs that he collected were far more explicit, making phallic references to snakes, who would bite the *dal* and thus start her menstruation.

In all of this, the girl's passive role is striking. Though she is the one undergoing a transformation, she does not seem to be the one responsible for any of the changes that are happening, she seems to simply be undergoing these changes. She essentially spends her time doing nothing: she sleeps and eats. She is not even able to go to the bathroom without being assisted. In the 1930s Bell also noted this, stating that: "we cannot but note the passive role assigned them" (1936:97). He did not go much further than this to draw any conclusions from this passivity. However, it is not very surprising given that Melanesian societies are generally said to feature relative conceptions of personhood. In such systems, the idea of an individual self-reflecting and defining themselves according to the conclusions that they draw does not quite work. Instead, individuals are defined as persons by the roles that they take within their communities, by how their actions make those around them define them. In this sense, they are a composite of relations. Meaning that in order for a person to change so must the nature of their networks.

This is exactly what Sykes is referring to when she discusses how the *Lindaven* ritual makes girls out of women by placing them in relations of debt to various members of their community. The girls are not entirely passive, on exiting their seclusion they will actively work to be able to repay these debts and become women of good standing within their communities. However, during the ritual, it is true that they do very little. Even the ritual itself, is not something that they decide on or control. This was very evident in my fieldwork. None of the women spoke regarding their opinions on the ritual, they did not speak of having prepared for it with their families, they did not speak of what they did to pass the time inside. They spoke of it all in a rather factual and detached way - of course, this is common of the area, I always had difficulty getting people to give me their opinions or feelings regarding any subject. It also does not mean that they feel nothing, when they did get talking, especially about the perfumed herbs, the singing, their bare chests and the potential resulting romances, it was possible to see their faces light up, blush, and their tone and pace of speaking changed. Visibly they had many fond memories of many of these experiences. But it was recounted as something that happened to them, not in a way that gave them individual agency.

They never spoke in detail about the process of entering the house, though some of the ethnographic accounts suggest that there is a feast and then a ritual fight where she is carried and placed into the house. The women I interviewed, when asked, said that they knew what would happen beforehand, mostly because preparations such as the sewing of the *karuka* leafs to build the house began. Either way, the girls are not given, nor do they seem to try to take, any individual agency for themselves with regards to the undertaking of the seclusion. It is the same

during their stays: they are rubbed with scented oils, they are fed, they are sung to. They do not take an active role in any of these activities. As Lina said when I interviewed her, she simply sat and ate. When I questioned the women about their thoughts on it at the time, they always replied that they had done as their parents had told them. Ruth even spoke about how it is good to obey one's parents and that doing so will guarantee one a good and long life, like hers. The implication being that to have and express thoughts and opinions would be wrong, an affront perhaps.

There is the idea that a girl's transition to adulthood is something which happens to her, through the community caring for her, not through actions of her own. Much like Sykes argued, it makes her an adult, by socially enmeshing her in the community through the relations of debt that she has to all of those who helped during her seclusion. For her to become an adult it is necessary not for her to internally understand herself as such, but for her community to understand her as such.

Past, Present and Future

I want to address the comments of the women on the death of this custom. None expressed much in the way of emotion. Though this is common in the area: when asked about their opinions and feelings on pretty much anything, people rarely present these. They will usually speak in factual tones, and maybe say that they feel happy or scared. In depth analyses and personal opinions are simply not given. But, they all spoke about seeing the custom as being a good thing and of it's death as being due to changing times. Despite these changes, it remains painted as something good. As Anisi explained, she felt like the whole community had come together to take care of her. And Rodi spoke of feeling happy when women gathered around outside her house and sang at night. Though the western impulse, as it was for Brown and many of the earlier ethnographers, may be to see the houses as cages, this is clearly not how they are perceived by those involved. Rather, it is lived as a time that is relaxing and even fun, one where the girl feels supported and taken care of by her community. Those outside of the house, also speak of it positively, of how beautiful the girl is when she comes out, of the fun of the ritual stealing, they smile fondly at memories of the smell of the house and the nightly singing. The ritual does effectively bring the whole community together.

Gunn recorded an oral tradition from the Mandak area according to which there used to be a *Malagan* for which concentric circles would be drawn surrounding women's navels, indicative of a scaring tradition in which each woman had her own personal design (1990: 86). Kingston

notes that face tattoos used to be given during periods of seclusion (1998:243). I saw a lot of women with face tattoos, all of them over thirty years old. Younger women do get tattoos, but not on their faces and the tattoos are not given to them by their older relatives. When I spoke with women who had face tattoos none told me exactly when and how they received these tattoos or their meaning. But, they did get them as young teens, so most likely around the age of first menstruation. They all said that it was simply the custom so they had followed. This is likely truthful, as obedience is highly valued. I include these tattoos here as I would like to posit that perhaps these facial tattoos could be evidence of female initiations or markers of the transition from girlhood to womanhood of some sort still occurring, quite widely, until much more recently than the practice of seclusion huts. Especially in light of Bell's mention that in the Tanga islands there used to be a less expensive version of female initiation in the form of a necklace that was worn for a particular period of time (the *bobo,* Bell, 1936:91; Brown mentions a similar "fringe" 1877:143-4). Perhaps in the Sursurunga region, akin to these necklaces, tattooing might have been a more common way of marking these changes in a girl/woman. Even if this is the case, this form of initiation too would have ceased to be practiced. This would indicate that a lack of time and resources (which seclusion requires a lot of) are likely not to blame for the cessation of female initiation practices.[51]

Sykes discusses the Lelet region, of north/central New Ireland. She discusses how the traditional female initiation ritual has given way to a certain structuring of the treatment of girls who go away to school. She discusses the ways in which the ritual used to not only assure the girl's transition into womanhood, but also place her within a network of gift-induced debt (1996:109). She would be indebted to all of those who had brought her food or otherwise helped her and her family while she was in isolation. These networks, gave her a place within the community as an adult, one that was defined by helping. Sykes saw girls going away to school being treated similarly (1996). First, there are the surface similarities: that while at school she is not an active member of the community and that both make her into a person who will be able to contribute to the community (1996:107,110). Further, in order to go away to school, girls will often receive financial help to pay for school fees from various family and community members

[51] Indeed, evidence from other areas of Papua New Guinea supports the idea that these tattoos held significance and marked a girl's passage into adulthood. In central province tattooing used to be common. There, the designs which girls received depended on their relations: as each tattooer had their own designs and some designs indicated a relation to powerful men (Tovi Amona, personal communication, 2024). In Oro province, Barker and Tletjen wrote about the facial tattooing practices of the Maisin (1990). They noted that girls typically received tattoos as a part of a transition from childhood to adulthood, though the tattoos were not an initiation as such as there were other practices which constituted initiations in the formal sense, they served primarily aesthetic purposes and as proof of the tattooed girls' endurance (1990:225). They also noted that though the practice in this area had not disappeared, it was no longer considered an essential part of a transition to adulthood and had acquired significance as a marker of identity within a multicultural society (1990).

(1996:107). This puts them in debt, it creates the expectation that they will return and repay this debt not in money but by helping the community to move forward. The debt is not between the two individuals, it is between the woman to be and the community. Because of how this modern institution acts in much the same way that the traditional institution does, Sykes argues that attending school is essentially becoming the modern Papua New Guinean version of female initiation (1996).

I did not notice this in Samo village or in the Sursurunga area. Though some girls do go off to high school and maybe even pursue further education (very few do) and those who do do receive financial help from family members, from the community. I met women who had received an education abroad, through exchange programs in Australia, who had come back and were working to help develop the community. One woman, Marlol, came back in her fifties and had made it into the VPC, where she was working hard to motivate villagers to better the community and to get funds to be able to help the community. Another woman, in her forties, came for a few days during her time off from work and we spoke about how she had filled out applications for aid to have streetlights put in and was working on taking censuses, to make it easier to fill out applications and get the money needed to help the community develop. Clearly, educated women from Samo return to their communities in order to help them. However, the explicit or even implicit link with the *karuka* initiation does not seem to be present here. It seems to be more of a case of enduring values and of social structure remaining in place and functioning across a broad range of situations.

People always cited that the practice had died because of changing ways, because custom was less strong. This is most likely due to the arrival both of religion and of a particular take on religion. The past few decades have seen many changes, not just in religious practice, but also in terms of opportunities provided by education and employment. However, the opportunities provided by school and work do not seem to conflict with traditional customs in the same way as religious beliefs may. For instance, during my first stay in the field, my informants brought me to see school graduations, as there were many traditional *singsing* performances at these. Anisi, the first woman that I interviewed about her stay in a *karuka* house, was actually able to go into seclusion because she was employed and her employer was ready to sponsor her. Indeed, three of the women that I interviewed mentioned that they had finished attending school before coming home and going into seclusion. On the men's side, I was told by an informant in nearby East New Britain, that *Tubuan* initiations had been reorganized to fit into school breaks. Indeed, school and employment do not appear to be antithetical to traditional custom. These instances all show that traditional custom has been accommodated within these domains or slightly

restructured to allow for participation in both of them. Though the demands of school and work may take away from the time and resources that individuals have to devote to traditional rituals, it seems unlikely that they would singlehandedly be responsible for individuals leaving these customs behind.

It may also be due to changing gender dynamics. One of the things that struck me and never stopped bothering me was that the men's traditions were still present and strong (though some told me that they did not have the kind of power that they used to), while the women's weren't. On the one hand, this could signal a lessening of hierarchy between genders: it is no longer accurate to say that male rituals encompass those of the women. And, as a result, women's rites have been dropped. Or, it could be spun the other way around: to say that women are tired of being subordinated and have dropped the rituals in order to end this subordination.

I would argue that neither is the case, I would argue that changes in the practice of female initiation have more to do with pragmatic considerations. First, that women have far more responsibilities then men. This was glaringly obvious amongst the teenagers who lived in Tabun. The girls were responsible not only for going to school and getting good grades, but also for helping their mothers: for collecting firewood and food, for preparing meals, for doing laundry and for childcare. In fact, on two occasions I heard a teenage girl be beaten by her mother for failing to complete these household tasks as expected. Even very young girls, under ten years old, were expected to help wash pots and carry firewood. They would be chided by older relatives if they left these tasks to go and play. While the teenage boys did not have any of these expectations. They had to go to school, and after would spend their time in and around the *hausboi* with their peers. Their families would cook food to give to them, if they happened to want some, and they rarely if ever participated in taking care of the household. These differences mean that young girls actually do not have the time to complete these initiations. If a girl were to cease all of the work that she does to help her family, even for a period shorter than a few months, it would be a large loss. For girls, it is not like for boys, where initiations can simply be moved to fit with school or work breaks, because girls are always working.

These pragmatic consideration have acted in combination with changing ideologies. Even when it comes to male secret societies, many men told me that they had left after hearing the good news - i.e. adopting new religious convictions. And, as I traveled around the country I spoke with some younger men who were deeply religious and not willing to join these secret societies because of how the members 'danced with the spirits', which was unacceptable in the context of their religious beliefs.

Across Papua New Guinea more women than men are involved in the church. Indeed, at one Sunday service in the United Church in Samo I counted over forty women in the church and only about five to ten men. The gendered relationship to religion is also manifest in daily life, as many women are far more involved in the church and leave behind traditional customs to do so. For instance, I once spoke to a woman likely in her fifties, asking her if she knew any traditional songs. I was interested in hearing some songs from women, as I was always being sent to men for information on traditions. She said that they did not remember. She now belonged to the *lotu*, so she had forgotten these things. Yet, her husband was highly involved in traditional customs: he was a *kamgoi* in the *Tubuan* (to become a *kamgoi* one must undergo far more than the basic levels of initiation) and an active leader in the community, he had shared traditional songs and stories with me. On another occasion, at a funeral, I met a local woman who now lived in Kavieng, she introduced herself clarifying that the name that she had given was her christian one, that she had changed it from her previous heathen *tumbuna* one.[52]

Both men and women who join the Church, will often see it as a turning point in their lives, choosing to leave behind their past lives in the interest of becoming better people and building better futures. However, as there are far more women involved in the churches, there are far more women doing this.

This is a phenomenon that is occurring throughout Papua New Guinea. Bruce Knauft wrote about how female participation in traditional culture is changing among the Gebusi, in Western province. Though he notes that similar changes are occurring throughout the country (2004:198). He first conducted fieldwork in the area in 1981 and then returned in 1998. On his first trip initiation had been present, but on his return he noted that it was practiced by very few villagers (2004:198). He found that this was due to changing beliefs concerning the roles of men and women. That it was due to ideas that men were endowed with economic agency, they had business; and that women, who had the church, were markers of morality and propriety (2004:198-199). The result was that women were too embarrassed to dance bare breasted as they had in previous times during initiation ceremonies. When women danced at these events, it

[52] These are perhaps remnants of what was once a far more confrontational situation between churches and traditional customs. As the churches present in Papua New Guinea up until the 60s and 70s often outright banned many traditional practices (including the *Tubuan* and some seclusion practices). And up until today, some churches such as the SDA forbid participation in these practices. Indeed, when people tell their history they usually speak of the time before the arrival of the *white man* as the dark ages, a time of cannibalism, where people simply did not know better. The effects of Religious antagonism towards traditional culture continue to be felt, and the history is simply too long and complicated to get into here. For more information see: Derlon, 1997:19-35; Hemer, 2013:148-171; Tateyama, 2006:73-127).

was only the older women. This leads him to conclude that: “In general, the onus of modern sexual propriety in the public display of Gebusi initiations weighs more heavily on young women than on young men. This change has directly changed the style and degree of young women’s ritual participation.” (2004:198)

It is not just changes in the lives of women which have affected these practices. It is also the ways in which the lives of men, particularly of powerful men, are changing. Both Bell and Foster, working in the nearby Tanga islands, noted on how those who chose which girl would go through the *dafal* process and when, were the men. Not any men, the big men of the community. Foster notes that one of the *dafal*s that Bell speaks of was sponsored by Kepgas of Boang island, who was a *luluai* in the 1930s (1995:47), ie the daughter of a very powerful man in the community. Even in the more recent cases of the *kámgu* this can be seen: Anisi’s seclusion was sponsored by her employer, the others all had their seclusions sponsored by their fathers, who were rich men in their communities. As such, the ritual was not just about the girl and her transformation, the ritual was also about the men hosting them and the prestige which they could hope to gain from doing so. In keeping with the big man style of leadership, it was necessary for powerful men to organize large festive gatherings which helped to both reaffirm and build networks of relationships which they relied on for prestige and standing. Since the 1930s, when Bell conducted his work, the importance of these kinds of ceremonies and the predominance of big man style leadership have been following. The presence of a nationstate and its correlates, of educational opportunities, of economic opportunities tied to various industries and of national and international politics, have changed the means of obtaining prestige. The time, money, resources and effort which a ritual seclusion requires are unlikely to be worth it to these men anymore.

The Unchanging: Womanhood = motherhood

Despite all of these changes, from times where ritual seclusion was common until the present, the role of motherhood in womanhood has remained. In New Ireland, female, particularly the adult female, identity is defined by motherhood and childcare.

This was highly evident during my time in the field. There was a women’s association that held meetings on a few occasions. Whenever people spoke of this, both men and women, they spoke of it as a meeting for all of the *mamas* in the community. Men and women would refer to it in this way when telling me that it would be happening, and afterwords when discussing what

had happened. Members during the meetings also referred to themselves in this way. So much so that I ended up asking one of my informants who spoke good English and was therefore likely to understand my confusion whether the meetings were only for women who had had children or for any woman, even if they did not have any children. I was told that this did not matter, any woman could attend, and everyone returned to referring to themselves and the group as *mamas*.

It was also evident whenever I met new people, which I frequently did. The women would immediately, and enthusiastically, present their children to me, giving me their names and ages and other information. They were visibly incredibly proud of their children, this was visibly their life's work. On the other hand, when I was introduced to men they never began by mentioning their children, this is not to say that they did not mention them or that they did not feel immense pride for them, they did. But, for the women this came first and for the men it did not.

The continued importance of having children is also evident in the rituals that occurred frequently in the community. During my stays there were many dedications, celebrations where a baby that was only a few months old would be brought to church on Sunday (on Saturday for members of the SDA) and then a traditional feast and *artabar* held outside. These rituals occurred often and combined elements from church and traditional customs.

In his analyses, Kingston notes that first menstruation was considered to be a kind of first step in conception and that this was why it was considered to be, along with birth, one of the two female *pidiks* (1998:232). It would seem that in today's Samo, the *pidik* of birth remains, but that it has been detached from the *pidik* of menstruation. It would seem that the separation of these two *pidiks* has allowed for one to continue, with the same importance as always, while the other has been left behind.

The importance of motherhood has not been downplayed by the arrival of christianity. In fact the importance of the family (mother and father and their children) has been emphasized. This was evident to me during my fieldwork and through the ethnographic record.

For instance, during my time in the field, law enforcement agents from Namatanai (the closest headquarters) came to speak to the local communities about changes that had been made to the law. Amongst the speakers was the magistrate, a Tolai man who was in charge of the districts that encompass southern New Ireland. He ended the meeting by making a speech concerning the importance of authority and peace. His speech was deeply religious, he made

references to the Bible and frequently spoke about the Holy Spirit. He also heavily emphasized the importance of the family (in its Christian heterosexual form). He stated that it was people's duty to get married, that "*without family i nogat community* (without family there is no community)" and emphasized that in order to achieve a healthy community you needed to have a good family first. A good family being one where men and women get married and have children. One where the man is the family's voice of authority, good authority in his family then leading to good authority in the community. He voiced deeply religious and patriarchal values. He also argued that if these norms were not followed, the consequences would be embodied by the women. That a failure to follow these guidelines for social organization would cause women to sell their bodies, and to consume alcohol and drugs. The consumption of alcohol and drugs are big issues in the area and their consumption is viewed very negatively. As such, his speech, made in the name of the law and as a representative of government, emphasized the importance of women being mothers. His speech promoted the importance that both men and women be involved in the creation of families, however it placed the consequences for the failure to do so on women only. As such, non-traditional influences on local society continue to promote the importance for women to participate in patriarchal societies and to have children. Not only has motherhood remained important, it has been given renewed importance through its placement within new frameworks.

Hemer writes about the influence of Christianity on women's traditions in nearby Lihir island (2013). Lihirians also used to practice ritual seclusion around the onset of a girl's first period, here is was known as the *tolup*. However, Hemer noted that by the time she began her fieldwork the ritual was no longer practiced, though its demise had been recent (2013:169). She discusses how religion seems to have introduced a certain prudishness when it comes to questions of sex, sexuality and desire. She argues that menstruation rites were about making a girl into a sexually desirable being, of underlining her transformation into a fertile and therefore sexual being. New ideas about appropriateness, due to the influence of the church (on Lihir this is primarily the Catholic church) make these sorts of presentations undesirable.

Similar patterns can be noted in Sursurunga. The seclusion ritual there was also designed to make attractive and sexual women out of young girls. It was frequently noted on that they entered the house with no breasts, and emerged with them. It was also noted that when they emerged from seclusion they were incredibly beautiful: they were fat and covered in red decorations and beautiful smelling perfumes. While in the house they were sung to, the *kubak* songs which were typically sung where love songs, often explicitly so. Finally, their entry into seclusion was generally around their first menstruation, marking the beginning of her biological

fertility, and when she exited the house men would come to admire her. In Lina's case, she even wound up marrying one of these men. In short, the *karuka*, much like the *tolup*, is designed to make women into sexually desirable and fertile women.

In Samo too, there is much prudishness surrounding this. One of the first things that people mentioned when talking about the *kámgu* was that she was naked inside the house (though she was not indeed entirely naked, since she wore a black *laplap*) and that at the custom marking the end of her seclusion she was bare-breasted. Before the arrival of missionaries and the introduction of the *meri blouse* this would likely not have been abnormal, but now it was. Locals spoke of it in the same way, with the same tones of voice and fascination, as a North American might speak to their friends about the traditions that they had learned of while on vacation in Papua New Guinea. This kind of nakedness is no longer thought of as acceptable, even within a ritual context.

It would seem that systems of belief introduced through religious belief have led to a weakening of customs surrounding menstruation, because these are tied to an emphasis on female sexuality and desirability. While beliefs concerning motherhood have remained, but divorced from previous associations with menstruation and sexuality.

The *Kámgu* in Stories: Power and containment

The *kámgu* only appeared in two stories which I was told in Samo (though Kingston also notes that the equivalent term in Siar is used to refer to sexually active young women in stories) (2003:232). In fact, both stories were the same, though in one case I was told that the story was about the rise of the *kipong* and in the other version there was no *kipong* involved. In both stories there is a non-human mother who is a tree or a branch (*diwai*) and who gives birth to two children, a boy and a girl. The boy grows up and occupies his time going down to the ocean to fish for himself and his family. There is a hamlet or a village not too far from where he goes fishing and a girl has been placed inside a *karuka* house near the area. This girl sees the boy and decides that she likes him, that she wants him, that she will marry him[53]. So, one day after the boy has fished and is sitting on the beach gutting the fish she comes and grabs him and takes him away. The boy is not happy about this and fights her but he can't get away because

[53] Marriage does not always have the same meaning as it does in the West. With the rise of christianity there are more and more cases where this does indeed refer to a Church or legal wedding. However, generally a couple who live together will be referred to as married, regardless of whether a legal, religious or traditional marriage has occurred.

she is too strong[54]. At this point, his cries alert his mother and sister and they come running from their home up in the bush to come and help him. In the tale which involves the *kipong* it is at this point that the boy's sister begins to sing a song which raises the *kipong*. In both stories, the mother comes running to the beach and runs out into the sea. The boy manages to gather his strength and break away from the girl, running towards his mother in the sea. But, by the time he gets there she has already drowned.

In this story the *kámgu* (the word *kámgu* was not used, they spoke of a girl who was in a *karuka* house - but that was likely because I tended to speak more of *karuka* houses than of *kámgus*) is depicted as being dangerous. Her danger comes from her individual, internal sexual/love desires. And, she is a particular danger to the family unit, as we see that ultimately even though she does not get the boy who is the object of her desire, these desires and her actions lead to the death of the boy's mother.

Further, she is a human woman, while the boy that she falls for was born from a *diwai* (a tree, a branch), indicating that he might be a *masalai* or some kind of place spirit. This is interesting as the *kámgu* is undergoing a rite of passage and finds herself in the liminal stage, a stage which is anti-structural, within which she is not entirely human because she lacks a socio-cultural reality, as her previous being as a girl is being transformed into that of a woman. The networks and relationships that made her a girl are being broken and transformed into networks and relationships that will make her a woman, leaving her undefined and to a certain extent devoid of personhood. This is emphasized by many of the elements of the ritual, which emphasize her connection or closeness to the spirit world, or to the world of the more than human. This is evidenced through the use of perfumed plants (perfumed plants may also at times be used to mark areas as taboo or/and as where magic or spirits have been present), she is not allowed to touch the ground or to wash - she may not come into contact with the grounded mundane world -, and remains invisible to the community and inactive in community life. As such, she is closer to the realm of the beyond human, a realm which the boy presumably inhabits given that his mother is not a human being.

However, this also presents a contradiction. It has been noted that in New Ireland spirits are considered to be light, while women are thought to have a force within them which makes them

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[54] Harrison, in talking about the Avatip, mentions that to cause an emotion in someone is seen as a kind of attack, love magic has the power to do this and while women become angry when they find out that men have used love magic on them, the opposite is simply unthinkable: "It would be unthinkable, men say, to allow women to use love-magic, because it would allow women's Spirits to dominate their own: a woman may indeed become infatuated with a man, but the reverse is impossible or disgraceful. Women's spirits are weaker, and must remain so; men are autonomous and women dependent, men act and women are acted upon." (1993:122).

heavy (Eves, 2009:187; Wagner, 1986:50; Wolffram, 2006:120). This heaviness is said to come from a woman's menstrual bleeding and from her procreative ability. This is why men must stay away from women when they are fasting before a dance performance (Eves, 2009:187). In the past there were a whole host of menstrual taboos, today these are not necessarily followed, but throughout the province the rivers in which everyone bathes are divided into men's and women's sections, the men's section is always upstream of the women's in order to avoid their polluting forces. The girl in the *karuka* house has just begun menstruating. We see how contact with her "brings down" the beings from the spirit world. The boy, at first, cannot escape her grip, her strength (or perhaps her heaviness) and his non-human mother dies as a result of the girl's involvement.

However, there is another girl in the story: the boy's sister. She is not presented as dangerous. She is also a part of the family unit and she is also most likely not entirely (if at all) human. However, we could also presume, if the *kámgu* was present on that beach, that it is likely that a village is located nearby. And that the boy spent quite some time fishing next to it with no problems before that one fateful day. It is the girl's state of not being fully contained by the human world which made her able to see him. It also outlines the danger which a woman's internal lustful desires may present. As I noted before, the *karuka* house ritual places the girl in a quite passive position. Yet, in this story, this is not what we see. Here, she takes a very active role, she is an individual agent, who acts on her internal desires. And, this is portrayed as dangerous: dangerous to men who will not be able to fight these strong desires as well as to the family unit, to social cohesion. It points to the dangerous strength of internal female desires, particularly as a girl reaches sexual maturity, and to the need to keep these contained and to orient them by embedding a girl socially into the community.

In fact, Fergie studied a practice in northern New Ireland called *vevene* (1995)[55]. The vevene is a sequence of practices which is related to a woman's first pregnancy, but also celbrates pubescence which is a precondition for this (Fergie, 1995:114). One of the elements of these sequences involved women performing sexually explicit dances and young girls who were initially embarrassed being encouraged to follow suit (1995: 119-120). Lutkehaus argues that the aim of this practice was to keep the girl's sexual and reproductive powers under social control: "During the Babae *vevene* ceremony, older women […] exert control over the budding sexuality of pubescent girls in an attempt to channel it in the socially acceptable direction of marriage." (1995:21) as does Fergie who states that: "a young woman's untamed sexuality is

[55] The *vevene* is performed by the Babae, this name is a pseudonym for an island Melanesian society, invented by the author out of concern that the practices be respected (Fergie, 1995:130).

appropriated and domesticated by the congregation during her first *vevene* performance." (1995:127). As she turns into a woman a girl is in a place where she could become an active agent. This is dangerous, particularly in a patriarchal society. Indeed, this points to another purpose of these sorts of puberty rituals: orienting these newfound powers in ways that are socially acceptable and productive within the community.

In this story, the *kámgu* is not only dangerous and powerful. But the fact that she goes out and choses her own mate is also problematic to the social fabric. And, as it leads to the ruin of the boy's family it is painted as highly dangerous. The ritual of the *karuka* house is a part of preparing a girl for marriage. I was generally told that in previous times a girl would have been betrothed during this time and soon after married. Indeed, Lina told me that she was married to a man who had come to *mangalim* her at the feast marking her exit from the house. Further, as these rituals were usually sponsored by the girls' fathers, big men within their community, the ritual could be a means for them of establishing and maintaining relations with other clans (Bell, 1936:97). As such, for those sponsoring the practice it was important that the girl's powers be contained and articulated in very particular socially accepted ways. Indeed, this may also point to the reasons behind the death of the practice - as there are now different institutions and ideals orienting individuals' relations to one another.

Concluding Remarks

The *karuka* house is a female rite which no longer exists in the Sursurunga region, its demise was likely a long and gradual process, one which ended about two decades ago. This is typical of female rites - however one may wish to refer to them: as initiation rites, menstrual rites, seclusion rites, etc… - in the province and even within the region. The women which I was able to interview underlined the nostalgia and positive memories which the practices evoked. However, changing values, ideals and priorities appear to have led to its demise. The ritual emphasized the girl's transformation into a woman through her sexual maturation into a fertile being. The emphasis which it placed on her sexuality seems to have been a part of the reason for its demise, as ideals regarding sexuality and its expression have changed particularly as a result of the predominance of conservative christian ideology in the region. However, it would also seem that the custom became less interesting, less relevant, due to the time and resources which it required - making the custom less desirable to perform both for the women involved and the men sponsoring it.

Despite no longer being in practice, the *karuka* house remains a relevant practice to study. If only because female initiation practices have not been a focus in Melanesian literature[56]. Here, I have found it important not only to mention this practice but also to give it at least as much space as I have given to other practices as I believe that it can contribute to an understanding of gender relations in the region: how these have and have not changed as Papua New Guinea develops as a nation and what this reveals about both continuing and changing patriarchal influences. I have only briefly discussed this here and will address it again in chapter 8. Aside from providing insight into gender relations, the practice also provides insight into the cosmovision of local communities, providing additional information regarding interactions with realms beyond the human as well as information regarding social organization. I will address this further when looking at sensory perspectives in chapter 6.

[56] Though it has been noted that this may be in part due to precisely to this lack of information and to the practices no longer being extant (ex: Lutkehaus and Roscoe, 1995:xviii).

Chapter 6

Felt experience

In the contemporary West, we are taught as children that there are five senses: sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch. Like most things that we are taught, this is a sociocultural construct. It is very true that these five senses are senses, our bodies do pick up information through these five pathways. However, different means of categorizing can lead to far more or even fewer pathways being identified. In the West, the idea of the five senses is not new. This may be a part of why it seems like such an unlikely candidate for a socio-cultural phenomenon. This categorization goes back to ancient Greece, some say it was first put forth by Aristotle and others that it was Democritus (Howes, 2014:16). However, this system of classification is not the only one. Howes, who has written extensively on the senses, notes that there are systems that count ten senses and others that count as many as 33 senses (2024:33).[57]

Further, while categorizing them as separate senses makes them seem self contained, they are not at all, the various senses affect one another (Rosenblum, 2010). An easy example of this would be restaurants where patrons eat in the dark, in this context people can not rely on their sense of sight in order to interpret the food that they are eating. The result is that meals can actually end up tasting rather bland and similar to one another, as, in a person who is normally able to see, the visual input is an important part of triggering the body to react in specific ways to particular foods (Renner et al, 2016).

The way people perceive and define the various senses can be referred to as a sensorium (Geurts, 2003:5; Ong *in* Howes, 2003:160). These are often learnt from a young age. They are also very closely associated with the body, with its biology or physiology. As such, there is a tendency to take sensoriums for granted, to view them more as human physiological faculties than as sociocultural constructs. Both are true, as physiology and the sociocultural, as well as the personal within both of these, intermingle to create the senses as they are experienced by individual bodies.

Precisely because of the way that the sensorial is so embodied, understanding the senses is an important part of understanding the experiences of others. Geurts has worked on the senses

[57] Indeed, he recommends looking at the following website - sixthsensereader.org - to consult a full list of faculties that are considered to be senses (Howes, 2014:17).

amongst the Anlo-Ewe in Western Africa. She focuses on how sensoriums differ from culture to culture and how they affect the raising of children and eventually peoples' sense of self (2003:17). She argues that the senses "are ways of embodying cultural categories, or making into body certain cultural values or aspects of being that the particular cultural community has historically deemed precious and dear." (2003:10).

This is evident in the contemporary West, our culture can be referred to as oculocentric, or of the image. Not only do we post endless photos on social media. But we value the sense of sight above others. It is understood to be the most objectively true of the senses. We say "I'll believe it when I see it". We have a large vocabulary to describe how things look: what colour they are, the texture, etc… while we often de-value senses such as smell and touch. Think about it, trying to define a smell is particularly challenging, our vocabulary is limited, as are our skills. And the sense of touch has been particularly undervalued - this became particularly evident during covid lockdowns which led to "touch deficits" because the need for touch was not thought of in creating policies. An element of sensoriums is the relative valuation and devaluation of certain senses. As Geurts noted this is both dependent on a community's values and the values of a particular point in history (Geurts, 2003:10-17). To return to the 'West', before the rise of modern medical practices in the late 18th century, sight was not the central evidence giving sense that it is today and odour was often used to identify disease and even thought to spread it (Stoller, 1989:8).

I follow Geurts' and many other anthropologists' example (Geurts, 2003; Howes, 2003; Stoller, 1989), by seeing the senses as a fundamental unit of analysis in anthropological work (Indeed, the senses are so entrenched in our lives that even to write this sentence I refer to a sense, without even thinking of it, and even though neither I nor the reader can literally "see" the senses, simply because I come from an environment that values sight.) In order to both understand the people with which we are conducting our work and to then be able to properly communicate it we need to examine the sensory worlds of the area in which we are working.

We must also then write ethnographies that can transmit this information. In this respect I follow Paul Stoller, who argues for a return to more descriptive and narrative ethnographies. Stoller argues that anthropology is becoming more and more of a scientistic discipline (1989:8). This is a means for anthropologists to bring more validity to their work, by associating themselves more closely with the 'hard sciences' which are often viewed as being more serious and truthful in their findings. He states that: "with very few exceptions, anthropological writing has become flat, neutral, and sludgy as the prose of the natural sciences, as anthropologists have attempted to

legitimize the scientific nature of their discipline." (1989:50) To Stoller, this means that anthropologists end up speaking only with one another and he suggests that a path out of this "is to write ethnographies that describe the sensual aspect of the field." (1989:9). This kind of ethnography is highly descriptive and bears a closer resemblance to literature than to the writing of the 'hard sciences' because it takes the time to include descriptions of the surroundings, of events and even of how the actors might be feeling (1989:8). Stoller argues that this is what anthropology originally was about, he quotes Malinowski who said that anthropological writing was about giving "the reader a sense of what it is like to live in the land of others" (1922 *in* Stoller, 1989:8). This kind of ethnography will give the reader not only a better sense of what life is like for these actors, but also how the writer's presence and perspective influenced what they were able to see (again - the Western sensorium is deeply embedded).

Though I believe that there is a lot of interesting work emerging from collaborations between anthropology and more scientistic disciplines such as psychology, neuroscience, ecological sciences, etc… I am also a proponent of a return to more narrative ethnography. There is something about descriptive ethnography that transports you to a place, that allows you to understand it and the actors much in the way that a good novel takes you into a place and the characters' lives: letting you see and understand it from the inside. And, ultimately this is what anthropology is about: understanding the world from the perspective of others.

There are many examples of great narrative ethnographies written by anthropologists who spent time in Melanesia, as well as many that are not strictly speaking narrative ethnographies but that incorporate descriptive elements. For instance, Kenneth Read wrote in the 1950s about his stay in the Highlands with the Gahuku-Gama. This ethnography carries the reader into the village, as in the following passage, where Read describes hearing the sacred flutes:

> "In later months the same notes came at many times of day, but they always carried the quality of this first encounter - the predawn air chilling my arms and shoulders, the glimmer of light in the empty street, and the whole valley lying exposed and unsuspecting as it slept. Their sound eludes description. It had too many different elements and contradictions, and the music was based on an entirely alien scale. The clear air offered it no resistance, and the notes, coming from a distance, seemed to wind at will through an echoing void, tracing such a capricious path that their origin was successfully concealed. they struck with a hollow, pulsing beat in the bass register, a continuous explosion of notes like a cry of hunger torn from a distended, disembodied throat. More shrill calls played in and out of this rhythmic background in repetitive patterns that after a while could be identified as tunes. Both

> elements were deliberately joined, contrasting and complementing, designed to produce a unified effect. The shrill notes fluttered avidly around the deeper cries, possessed of the same need and urging the stronger on to fulfill it like vultures wheeling in a cloudless sky, dependent on their predatory fellows." (1965:142-143)

The ethnography can be easily read, as a novel would be, all the while allowing the reader to understand the activities and attitudes that regiment daily life, even to understand how these are changing as the foreign forces of "modernity" that Read represents change the possibilities available to the Gahuku-Gama. Read describes with great care the people that he lived with, speaking of their character as well as of their role in various situations, as well as how they interacted with him and how he understood these things. Through such descriptive writing we are able to learn about these people, their customs, their daily life, to see them as individual people with happiness and struggles. We are also able to see Read's presence both physically in the village and more figuratively between the reader and the Gahuku-Gama. He describes his own struggles and limitations, such as how he finds the heat inside the houses oppressive and that, try as he may, he was never able to remain inside one for more than a few minutes (1965). We also see his struggles in relating with and understanding the villagers: he describes the marriage of a girl called Tarova. The girl was around twelve and since he was a man he was never able to spend much time around her, but when she is married he expresses ambivalence at the situation as he tries to imagine what Tarova must have felt (1965:251).

Another Melanesian ethnographer, Hogbin, also does this (1970). Though his ethnography is a bit less narrative in style, it remains highly descriptive. In describing women's initiation rights he offers detailed insight into the procedures but also into the attitudes of various actors involved and how his relation to them affected the information that he was able to collect (and now share). He attended this event as a man, and as such whenever the men were required to stay behind, he stayed with them and was only able to learn what the men told him of the women's activities during this time (1970:127-135). He speaks of the disposition of the men towards the women's activities, noting that they often make a point of ignoring the activities that are clearly going on nearby (1970:135) and "Next day, in response to my enquiries, they remarked that they supposed that the women's conduct was as bad as it had been on the mountaintop." (1970:135). Further, the little information that he is able to acquire in these contexts shapes the conclusions that he makes. As can be seen in this case, when he supposes that one of the ceremonies is an expression of fun and nothing more: "A short ceremony for the women followed. Nobody could explain its purpose, though it is always performed. I have no theory

about why it should be regarded as significant, and possibly it is little more than another expression of lighthearted fun." (1970:134).

Because his ethnography is so descriptive the reader is aware of the fact that there are gaps in the information and that some of the information has been shaped by the dispositions of those that the ethnographer spoke with. Further, this recording of dispositions and attitudes may allow for further analysis concerning any number of topics: gender relations, ritual structures, sensoriums, local emotions, future cultural changes, etc…

Much as Stoller notes, narrative ethnography better allows us to see our own biases (1989:154-5). Through Read's descriptions we are able to understand that the material that he is presenting us has already been filtered, through his own ability to partake in and understand the situations and people involved. Scientistic writing may hide this type of uncertainty: it will not be evident that the information collected excluded the events inside the stiflingly hot houses, that our pre-conceptions on periods of childhood/adulthood, group belonging, excitement and fear, belonging and not, may have shaped our data on events. Here, they are in plain sight. Yet, they do not interfere with the transmission of data. In fact, more information is transmitted, as the reader is indeed carried to the place and compelled to reflect on it with their own set of biases and information.

Further, this form of ethnography brings to the fore the fact that individual actors may or may not agree with and/or follow socially and culturally dictated modes of behaviour. By focusing on individuals and wondering what their experience is, it reminds us, both as humans and academics, that these things that we speak of "the social", "the cultural", "norms", "women's roles", etc… do not have a solid invariable existence. Rather, they have a kind of nebulous existence, that comes to be through individual interactions with and navigations of the possibilities for thought, action and belief. The degree of individual variation and the role of individual action and agency (or lack thereof on some occasions) within any society is something which I would also like to emphasize through my focus on *felt experience*. Focusing on the sensorial (and emotional) gets at a deeper understanding of the constraints and freedoms that individuals on the ground have available to them and how they choose to navigate them for various purposes. This not only leads to deeper and more readable ethnography, but also to a better understanding of how societies respond to changes. Indeed, it could even lead to a better application of pragmatic interventions: help development initiatives by helping those going in to understand the best ways to effect the kinds of changes that they are seeking.

The Individual, Individuals, and Society

Individuals and society/culture cannot be separated from one another. Nor can various individuals be separated from their interactions with one another or these interactions be entirely separated from the individuals. This is true both within a community and between communities. It is true within the communities that anthropologists study and exists in the relationships between the anthropologist(s) and the community, between the anthropologist and the academic community, etc…

To address these issues, I build on the work of Peter Mcnaughton. He has written on the paradox of being human, about how: “We are individuals intertwined.” (2008:106-7). He writes about the ways in which the things that we know as individual human beings or as societies cannot exist without the other, that they are dependent on the other for their existence as well as subject to changes because of this relationship. He argues that “There are no firm borders between social and personal.” “Both are critical” (2008:121), so that ultimately it can be said that “We are individuals intertwined.” (2008:106-7).

I argue that a study of felt experience - referring to a variety of things that can be referred to as emotions, feelings, the senses, affects, atmospheres - is a means of getting closer to this complex reality. Both in terms of understanding how those in the communities we are studying approach their lives as well as how we the ethnographers are approaching and shaping our subject. This is because the realm of felt experience is also at once deeply individual and at once deeply personal. It is deeply individual as emotions, sensory perception, feelings, are all felt by the individual. Yet, the frameworks through which these are constructed and understood are deeply social, further the simple fact of being in a group can alter felt experience, and different relations between different individuals will construct different felt experiences at the individual level. Individuals are intertwined in very complex ways, the study of felt experience allows us to see how this is experienced at the individual level. This is particularly critical in anthropology, which at its origin was meant to be a discipline that focused on understanding the lived experience of different people from their own perspectives.

McNaughton does not only speak of “individuals intertwined” (2008:106-107), he also advocates for a focus on the individual within ethnographic study. To remember the individual in ethnographic study, to focus on their experience, helps the ethnographer to understand the

society that they are studying. It helps them to understand why it takes the shape that it does, as well as the stability or instability of the system.

For instance, he asks us to remember that systems that look stable throughout time to the ethnographer looking in from the outside and studying the society over time, are not felt in this way by the individuals actually living inside the system. he states that the “elements composing that very stability constitute fresh, new experiences.” (McNaughton, 2008:122).

The individual level is also one where changes can occur. He, in line with past anthropologists (he cites Malinowski, Firth, Gluckman, and Bateson as examples (McNaughton, 2008:111-117)) refers to individuals as “the wild card in the life of societies” (2008:117). “This is much of what makes society and human life vital. If we were to strip poeple of the uniqueness of their individuality or see them as just parts of larger wholes, we would lose track of how history is made, how societies change, and how persons can articulate their sociability to live fulfilling lives.” (McNaughton, 2008:118). We need to remember that individuals cannot be reduced to the gloss that is applied to a whole society in academic texts, individuals remain just that, individuals. With their own ideas, personalities, opportunities, opinions, etc… and since the social is dependent on all of these individuals, they have the power to bring about changes in social systems (just as they do to maintain the status quo).

By including an analysis of felt experience, we are enabling a focus that is more individually-oriented without being solely individually-focused. An analysis of the senses and of feeling allows us to understand better the forces that are shaping individuals’ perceptions of the world that they navigate as well as the ways in which certain groups may be utilizing these as methods to shape the world in particular ways. It allows us to understand the world that people have to navigate and the kinds of possible pathways that will open up for them. It helps us to understand the ways in which the social shapes individuals, which then allows us to understand the ways in which individuals will navigate their worlds.

Emotions and Senses in Samo

Emotion can be a challenging topic to address in Papua New Guinea and Melanesia as a whole. This is due to a tendency that has long been noted in ethnography of cultures where people do not like to speculate or comment on the inner workings of the mind, their own or those of others. Mead encountered it in her work in Samoa where she noted that while people

enjoyed gossip, they didn't question the motives behind people's actions, "Village gossip is interested in the facts but shrugs its shoulders before the motives." (1928:123, *in* Duranti, 2014). This kind of an attitude has been referred to by Robbins and Rumsey (2008) as the doctrine of the opacity of other minds. The label refers to exactly what Mead described almost 100 years ago: that people do not question the *why* behind actions and occurrences. It does not mean that they are incapable of musing on these topics, but simply that culturally they have learned that these things aren't interesting, aren't relevant or shouldn't be spoken about. Indeed, when Robbins speak of the phenomenon among the Urapmin he tells of how the Urapmin speak of the minds of others as "private places" (Duranti, 2014:179). He also refers to Stasch, who notes on the Korowai that introspection is "cast as a morally dubious activity" (in Duranti, 2014:185-6). Duranti defines the opacity of mind phenomenon as something that isn't the result of an inability "but in the need and willingness that members of different communities express and demonstrate to engage in introspection or in guessing what others might be thinking, wishing, or feeling." (Duranti, 2014:175). As such, the opacity of mind doctrine acts both internally and externally: there is a negative valuation placed on focusing on one's own internal thoughts and motivations as well as on doing the same with others. Or, there is a negative valuation placed on showing that one is engaging in these activities. A negative valuation on asking others for their motivations, or even on sharing our own. Actually, this could be a negative valuation or simply viewing the contents as irrelevant.

In Samo, villagers tend to abide by the principles of the doctrine of opacity of mind. Whenever I asked them about events that had occurred I was given a very factual run down of what had happened. Sometimes people would even slip out of "I" and "me" pronounces into the third person as if they were describing the activity in the way that an encyclopedia entry would. Even when I pushed them for more information on their experience, asking them what they had thought or how they had reacted, I received very limited answers. When I asked people, in this way, about their experiences with masks they would reply that they had been afraid, that they had been happy, etc… They tended to answer using only a few words and to not expand on their answer. Those who did were generally people who had significant exposure to life beyond the village, through education in larger centers or abroad. Even those who had extensive contacts outside the village due to work or religious belief tended to offer quite short and superficial answers. The same occurred when I interviewed women who had gone through initiation as teenagers, who had been *kámgus*. I always made sure to focus my questions on what their experience had been like and what they thought about what seemed to be the death of the custom. This was particularly important to me as, from a western perspective, the isolation that these girls went through would not be lived in a positive way as such I was highly

aware of my own biases and wanted to make sure that I understood what their experience had been. However, I received very limited replies, most of the women simply said that they thought that the custom was good. None commented on how it had felt to be in a small dark room surrounded by people singing and banging on the walls all night - though some insight into this could be gathered from the moments at which they smiled, the kinds of details that they provided. Smiles and alterations in tome of voice indicated that it is most definitely not that these things are not felt, it is simply that they are not generally expressed. Or, at the very least, that they are not expressed in the kinds of ways that western academics expect people to express themselves.

For instance, during one of my stays a large meeting of the women's association was held. People came from various villages in the Sursurunga region and many important people came to speak. It was a big affair. However, not many villagers chose to attend, only those who were usually involved. The next day it became clear that the women were not satisfied with the organization's work and had seen this meeting as a continuation of it. One of my informants, Louisa, came to speak with my host family at Tabun. She was visibly angry: it could be seen in her body language and her tone of voice. She spoke at length with the family about the things that were upsetting her and the women around nodded and added their own comments in agreement. However, at no point did I hear her refer to herself as "angry", nor did I hear her refer to her internal stirrings or thoughts, she stated facts: about how nothing had been done, that the money they had been given had disappeared, that the meeting had lead to no changes (as all of the same people had been voted in again). She expressed her anger and beliefs clearly, but without referring to her personal thoughts, feelings or wishes.

Indeed, it would seem that in Samo, people express how they are feeling not by stating that they are feeling a particular way, but by speaking of actions that have or have not been taken. Much as Louisa did when communicating her anger over the lack of help that the women's council was providing local women. In fact, this is also evident in the Sursurunga language, in its vocabulary. Before heading to the field a second time I had downloaded and done my best to study the language resources available through SIL - a dictionary, some word lists and a small grammar. One of the word lists featured a list of question words, and I was struck by the absence of a word for the question *Why?*. When I got to the field I asked a few people, those who knew English, what the word would be. I was told that I could use the word that the dictionary had indicated meant *What?* or another question word that more or less functioned to add a questioning intonation to the end of a sentence. But, when I finally used these words to ask others questions I found that they answered as if I had asked them *What?*. For me, given

my ‘western’, academic, and personal backgrounds this was quite frustrating as *Why?* is a question that I ask all the time and of all the W-questions this is the one the answer to which generally interests me the most. However, in Samo this is not the case. There people are not interested in what thoughts were going through someone’s mind when they did something or how that person may justify their actions, it is the actions, the results, that matter (and perhaps also which indicates what is going through a person’s mind).

In another attempt to learn about local conceptions of emotion: how they were categorized, which ones were more or less important, etc… I asked about 25 people to write a quick list of words to indicate emotions. The idea being that it would be a quick exercise that would provide me with a good deal of information and serve as a starting point for further conversations. Yet, despite my giving examples and explaining in multiple languages almost no one wrote words indicating emotions. A few wrote happy (3 out of the 25 to be exact) and a couple of others wrote angry and love. By and large people wrote words for physical, body sensations or for actions that might indicate a certain disposition. For instance the most common words written were: pain (10), sick (8), tired (6), hungry (6), and sleepy (5). These words do not indicate specific emotions, but they do indicate ways that individuals may *feel*. They refer to feelings that are quite general: they are feelings that affect the entire body as well as one’s mood. As such, they do refer to how one is *feeling* in terms of personal internal dispositions, but through reference to a far more general state that is physically felt but also socioculturally constructed. Many people also wrote words regarding daily actions, or emphasized not moving about and feeling in a down sort of way. A frequently mentioned daily action was *saliu* (to walk around with no specific purpose) or to bathe (this can mean both wash or swim). These words, to me, did not seem to refer to any emotion or feeling of any kind, they seemed to be nothing more than verbs indicating daily activities. However, I believe that people wrote these words as the actions indicate that they are of a certain state of mind. For instance, it is unlikely that one would *saliu* when one is feel sad, ill, or stressed by large amounts of work. The action is indicative of the mood that someone is in and can be written down in this exercise in order to refer to the kind of light happiness that one feels when completing this action.

This could actually have been partially a by-product of my framing of the exercise. When I asked people to write these words I primarily asked them and explained the exercise in Tok Pisin asking them to *wraitim wanpela list long words bilong peelings, long sampela samting yu can peelim* (write a list of words about the ways that you can feel). But I also wanted to make sure that they would be comfortable writing these words in the language of their choosing, which would most likely be Sursurunga. So I would then clarify what I meant by feelings by repeating

the word in Sursurunga. I found the word in my dictionary: *ásásla* for feeling and *ásla-i* for emotions. However, as I flipped through the pages I also realized that *ásla-i* had been placed as the equivalent word for “experience” and “conscious of”. I tried to ask a few villagers about this, to see if they could clarify the various meanings of the word and provide me with the word that I was looking for. This did not work. Many people starred at me, it seemed as if some had not heard of this word before (the dictionary had been made a few villages over - perhaps there were linguistic differences? or was it just that I was asking about a term that they never used?). It seemed that there were very few resources within the language itself to ask about this topic. Yet, the same wordlists that had lead to my question about the word *why* also included a very long list of emotion words (78 words to be exact). It clearly was not that the language lacked vocabulary.

Indeed, according to the wordlist, there is a quite decent vocabulary for speaking about emotions. There are words for various kinds of anger, fear, happiness, excitement, sadness, cockiness, love, etc… Yet, a quick search tells us that the English language has at least 1,759 words for emotions (Bak: 2022) and still there are a proliferance of internet pages telling of words denoting emotions in other languages for which the English language has no equivalence. As such, 78 words and likely a few more expressions that were not included in the wordlist may not be that many. This is likely a product of many factors, including the fact that the Sursurunga language is a relatively small language, my limited resources in making this reference, as well as multiple cultural differences. What does remain clear is that referring to emotions through a specific name - a label if you will - is not a prominent phenomenon. It would seem that communicating feelings and emotions, when it is considered appropriate to do so (or not, but done anyway) is often done through other means. I noted that instead of using a label to how they were feeling people often spoke of actions that had or hadn’t been taken or, in the case of storytelling, the register was changed to that of song.

Using actions to indicate someone’s state of mind is also used in storytelling. It is common in all stories I was told: characters usually make their way through a series of events without there being much indication of their internal states of mind. On occasion something will scare a character and this will be mentioned. But other easy states to mention such as happiness, sadness or love were not mentioned. Instead, these were indicated through the actions that the characters took. This is clear in a story that Louisa told me: The story is about two brothers who live up in the bush. One day the younger brother heads down to the beach, climbs up a branch overhanging the water and sings a song for calling sharks. The older brother hears this and comes running down to the beach. But it is too late, the song has drawn a shark to the shore

and the younger brother jumps into the shark's mouth. The older brother then runs back up to the bush where he burns what had once been their home and gardens before taking a knife and slitting his throat. Indeed, for the Western writer it is difficult to tell this story without adding emotion words to indicate how the characters are feeling, it seems natural to write that the older brother, on hearing his brother sing became alarmed or worried; that he then ran back up to their homestead in tears, pained, in agony, not knowing what to do, etc… But when Louisa told the story she did not include any such words, yet still conveyed this. This is in part as she told the story orally, using intonation and the pacing of her voice to create tension in the story. The emotion in the story was indicated through both her telling and the actions of the big brother. By saying that he ran down to the beach, we know that he is deeply concerned about his brother. And, far more dramatically, the ending where he burns their homestead and kills himself indicates the pain that he feels at the loss of his brother. The actions are highly evocative of the character's inner turmoil.

The opacity of mind doctrine not only includes a lack of willingness, or simply not seeing value in, considering and expounding on the internal states of others. It also involves a reticence to do the same with oneself. In his definition Duranti speaks of "the need and willingness that members of different communities express and demonstrate to *engage in introspection* or in guessing what others might be thinking, wishing, or feeling." (2014:175). Opacity of mind is not only relevant to how others consider others in interactions but also in the relationship to the self, or at least to how this relationship is expressed. It is also common for there to be a lack of willingness to engage in introspection, much as Stasch noted among the Korowai for whom this was a morally suspect activity (*in* Duranti, 2014:185-6). Introspection is also viewed in this way in Samo. To sit alone and particularly to sit alone without doing anything was viewed negatively. For instance, I frequently went to sit on the beach, partly because there was a nice view and a cool breeze, but also to collect my thoughts, write notes, or simply to relax as I was not as accustomed as the villagers to the constant presence of other people. One of the things that I tended to do while relaxing was listen to podcasts that I had downloaded before arriving to the village. One day, as I was doing just this one of the villagers, Dorothy - a middle aged woman who often spoke to me and was both very kind and very loud, walked to the water to wash something. She saw me apparently sitting and starring into space and asked what I was doing. As I explained that I was indeed doing something, she answered *orait* (alright) and said that it was good that I was doing something because if I had just been sitting there and starring into space it would have meant that I was *longlong*. I found this particularly alarming as *longlong* was a word generally applied to two types of people in the village. There was an older woman, most likely suffering from some form of dementia, the villagers cared for her but also referred to

her as *longlong*. *Longlong* was also used to refer to the young men who wandered the village often high or drunk, behaving in odd ways. One in particular was known for his drug consumption (and growing). He was not liked, but also people also often joked around with him, largely laughing at him. He was referred to as *longlong.* I understood the term as meaning "crazy". And I was particularly alarmed that I had come very close to joining the ranks of these people, relieved at my narrow escape. This event, amongst others, made clear that introspection is not viewed positively in Samo. If one does not feel like working, then one is expected to relax by *storying* with others, by sitting in a group and chatting to pass the time. If that fails, then a nap is also alright. But to spend time awake and alone is indicative that one is going crazy.

This may make sense within a context of Melanesian personhood. As I already briefly mentioned, anthropology in Melanesia has identified a local conception of personhood which stands in opposition to the dominant Western conception. Melanesian personhood is considered to be relational. An individual's definition as a person does not come from within the individual, from a self-conception, but rather arises through their various relationships and actions within the community (or beyond). These relations must be constantly maintained, and as they change so does the identity of the person (or rather, their selfhood). This is most famously referred to as the "dividual self" by M. Strathern (1998) and the "fractal person" by Wagner (1991). It is also evident in the previous analyses of the *kámgu* rites: where a girl entering seclusion and a woman exiting seclusion are different people in part because the networks within which they are placed and their actions within these are altered.

Given a context in which this conception of the self is dominant, it could mean that one is not whole when alone, one is not really fully oneself - and this is dangerous both for oneself and for the group. If there is no one around to give them definition, if they are not actively engaging in the relations that build their self, then this implies that they are becoming another person. Further, it is dangerous at the group level because the entire group relies on and is built around the position that this individual, as a person, occupies. In a context of small communities, which rely on gardening and fishing for food and one another for care, this is an important loss. It is also a loss at a larger level, precisely because personhood is relational, everyone else is also dependent on that individual for their personhoods.

This context makes sensory ethnography particularly relevant. I will look ethnographically at a few of the senses. I do not regard any of the senses as truly separate from one another. However, for a simplicity of analysis and communication I have chosen a few of these to focus

in on, partly due to their relative importance and partly due to the availability of information on them.

Feeling Through the Body: Bodily sensation

I argue that in Samo general body sensation is important, it acts in a way that combines western conceptions of sense and emotion. Indeed, much as the words *ásásla* and *ásla-i* do: referring to feelings, emotions, and conscious experiences.

In the contemporary western world we tend to regard emotions as something that is mental. As things that occur in our minds, not as physical sensations. We generally divide the feelings that come from our minds as emotions and those that come to us through physical sensation and the body as the senses. This is of course our own cultural construction of the phenomena. Both the senses and emotions are intrinsically both physical and mental. This is something that we have known for a long time, and the history of the academic study of the topic takes in an age-old debate over whether emotions are in fact physiological things or socio-culturally (and perhaps individually) constructed things.

A classical example of the case for emotions as being primarily physiologically felt, or bodily expressions is William James. He wrote his most famous works on the emotions in the late 1800s and has remained foundational to much psychological and neuroscientific work (Armstrong, 2018:134). He argued that emotions are bodily expressions (Ahmed, 2013:5; James, 1884:189-90; Leavitt, 1996:525). That what happens first is perception, then followed by expression and that as this expression occurs, the emotion also occurs (James, 1884:189-90). According to his theory of the emotions the physiological reaction is primary, it occurs first and is what triggers the emotion. He helps his readers to understand his perspective by asking them to participate in some thought experiments. He asks the reader to try to describe funny without imagining any laughter and asks the reader what would be left? He also asks the reader to think about times where they have been listening to music and felt a “cutaneous shiver which like a sudden wave flows over us, and at the heart- swelling and the lachrymal effusion that unexpectedly catch us at intervals.” (James, 1884:193).

In the early 1900s James’ view, which was the dominant one, was confronted to another theory of emotions, the Cannon-Bard theory, put forth by Walter Cannon and Philip Bard. Cannon, in his experiments, carried out on cats and dogs (not humans), he focused strictly on the

physiological aspects of emotions and later worked on grouping these according to their physiological traits (Dror, 2014:17). He concluded that emotions did not emerge from bodily reactions, these were simply too slow, he posited that emotions emerged from the thalamic processes of the brain (Cannon, 1927). This theory simply did not acknowledge individual experience, from the outset deeming it irrelevant.

James and the Cannon-Bard theory offer a quick and extremely simplified snippet of the kinds of debates that went on in the psychological and biological study of emotions in the early 1900s. Outside of these disciplines, anthropologists have tended to take the view that emotions are more so socio-cultural construction than physiological reactions (Berger & Luckman, 2016; LeBreton, 2012; Lutz & Abu-Lughod, 1990:7). Given that our topics of study are the social and the cultural, this is no surprise. While the 'hard sciences' have tended to focus on the physiological basis of emotions. This is, again, no surprise given their general material of study.

Lisa Feldman Barrett is a neuroscientist, who has become well-known for her work on emotions and whose arguments bridge this divide. She follows a theory of constructed emotion, according to which a social construction of emotions leads to a physiological reaction (2017a:xviii). She speaks regarding how we experience various physical reactions to various stimuli, but how these get grouped into the perception or feeling of an emotion has more to do with context and how our cultures have taught us to read them. An example that she gives of this is the sensation of butterflies in the stomach. In the context of a date, we tend to interpret this as meaning that we are falling in love. But, the same feeling of a fluttering stomach, after an iffy meal, will indicate that we are about to get sick (2017a:111). This take, though constructivist, does not divorce emotions from physiological reactions, it brings together the physiological and the social or individual experience. The model she argues for is one which is predictive, rather than reactive, where individuals learn to react to particular situations in particular ways and to read certain reactions in particular ways based on past experience (and as such, these models are continuously being updated as we go through life) (2017b:7). I follow Barrett's take on emotions, as it offers a reading of them that combines the physiological, sociocultural and personal aspects of the phenomenon.

In the contemporary West there is an emphasis on the internally/mentally felt experience. There is an awareness of the physical correlates: things like sweaty palms and a heightened heart rate when one is nervous, etc… But when we speak with one another about how we feel, or felt, we share words referring to emotions, we speak of our internal or mental states, not of the sweaty palms, the racing heart. Through the words we speak both of these things are understood but

the emphasis is placed on the internal mental state. In Samo, the emphasis is on how the body feels. Emotion is seen as being deeply embodied. This is in part due to the de-emphasis on mentalisation of the Melanesian tendency towards opacity of mind.

For instance, in the Sursurunga language, the emotional perception organ is the stomach (or gut), the *bál*. Idiomatic expressions referring to emotions, moods, states of being often reference the gut. For instance *bál mos* (stomach angry) refers to feeling angry; *bál sak* (stomach bad) refers to hidden anger and jealousy; *laklak i bál* (stubborn stomach) refers to a person that is determined to not obey; *mat i bál* (dead stomach) to a person with a quiet personality; and many more. This emphasis has translated over into the commonly spoken Tok Pisin, in this language a common phrase is *bel i hat* (stomach is hot), which is used to refer to a person that is angry.

However, with Tok Pisin, and even more so with English and the influences that the presence of these languages represent, it becomes clear that other organs can also be understood as the emotional sensory organ. During church services a commonly sung song speaks of "*yu lewa blo mi*" ("you are my liver") and when I asked my informant Daisy where emotions were in the body she answered the heart.

It cannot be said that in Samo feelings are thought to come from the stomach. The reality is much more complex, it seems that at least three organs can be understood as the bodily residence of emotions. I wish to emphasize the way in which references to the stomach/gut are made. References to the liver and heart are made in much the same way as they are in the West, often in contexts that speak of love and caring for others. These references are also used in contexts that involve western influence. I only heard references to the liver as an emotion-carrying organ in the context of the church. It would seem that along with the translation of the Bible and putting sermons into local languages, the importance of the liver was carried from other areas. Nowadays the church plays a central role in village life, indeed it has for many generations now. As such, everyone has grown up within it, and has learned that the liver is an organ where loving and caring emotions are. The case of the heart is similar. My informant who told me that the heart was where emotions were felt had been educated outside of the village (up until the 10th grade), she spoke good English and had some access to foreign films through cellphones. Further, as I, the strange anthropologist, was asking her this question, I believe that she simply wanted to give me the 'correct' answer.

The heart and liver are only referred to as emotion-organs in contexts that have had heavy western influence, such as the church or in relation to movies and other media. They are also

reserved for expressions of love, of caring, of adoration. The most common use of this is of the liver in devotion songs (*song blong lotu*). One of the most commonly sung devotion songs across the region and in Samo is one called *Yu lewa*. Translations of this song indicate that the reference to the liver is meant to be a reference to the heart and to speak of the great love and devotions that the singers have to God. A line in the song that is repeated many times is "*yu holim lewa blong me*" (you hold my liver), this holds the same kinds of meaning as someone singing in English "my heart belongs to you", "my heart is yours". It expresses great love and trust in another person (or entity). Yet another often repeated part of the song is "*yu lewa, yu lewa blong mi*" (you are my liver), this would be similar to singing in English "you are my heart", it would be a shortened repetition of the previous line expressing that one's heart belongs to the other, that you are theirs. As such, the liver here is an organ that stands metaphorically for emotions. The organ itself does not change states, it is offered to someone and as such represents something. What it represents does not vary: the liver stands for an emotion that encompasses love, caring, trust, and adoration. It does not stand for different things at different times.

The way in which the stomach is spoken of, in both Sursurunga and Tok Pisin, is quite different from references to the liver. The stomach/gut can change state or have things happen to it and it is these changes that indicate how a person is feeling. If a stomach/gut is hot, then someone is angry, as in the case of the Tok Pisin *bel i hat* (stomach is hot/hot stomach). Or, if something is laid down in the gut, as in the case of the Sursurunga *bop i bál* (lying in the stomach), this indicates that something is important to one. In Sursurunga there are many more such examples, if one's stomach is dead, as in *mat i bál*, then one has a quiet personality; *gas i bál* (happy stomach) refers to being content or satisfied; *gáwár i bál* (cold stomach) indicates that someone is no longer angry that they have forgiven; etc… Here, the organ in reference changes states and the state of the organ indicates how the person is feeling.

The emphasis on bodily states is also seen in the ritual realm. Throughout New Ireland fasting is a common practice in preparation for performances. And, within the *Tubuan*, a substance and feeling referred to as *langar* or *langoron* is also important. Indeed, shaping bodily sensation is done through various means: some directly related to shaping the body and others achieved through olfactory or aural means.

Fasting is a very common practice throughout New Ireland, including in the Sursurunga area and in Samo village itself. Fasting is generally done in preparation for a performance. Usually dancers will fast for at least a week, though in some cases it can be for as long as a few

months. It should be noted that fasting does not necessarily mean that fasters eat or drink nothing (though there are cases where no food or water is consumed - ex: Wolffram, 2017). Generally, they will eat and drink very little and consume only specific kinds of foods and drinks. To this may be added the consumption of substances that are designed to make them purge, so that they may lose weight faster. These practices are considered essential to a proper performance, as they shape the body into the form that it must take in order to perform.

For instance, Eves, who has written about *tubuan* performance speaks of how the fasting makes it so that the dancers have what is considered to be an ideal body type: extremely light (2009:187-8). The lightness allows them to move on a vertical plane with ease, makes them closer to the spirits and affects their lived experience (2009:188). Indeed, I met female nest dance performers in Lasigi, who spoke similarly of the purpose of their fasting. One woman emphasized that fasting was needed as otherwise their bodies would be too heavy and they would not be able to balance in the nests as they danced and would end up falling. Here fasting was very literally important for a successful performance: for one where the performer was able to maintain their balance and complete the performance.

Starvation affects the body in multiple ways. This is generally known. A brief period with no food, of only one day, can quickly be bounced back from with the consumption of food, while longer starvation has more lasting effects. Generally, as the body enters starvation a person's mood will be affected, they will become irritable. They will also feel very tired and may have trouble concentrating or with mental function. In time, as the body requires nutrients to continue functioning, it will begin to consume itself. Meaning that the body will attack stores of fat in order to keep going, and as these are depleted it will eventually attack itself, it's muscles and organs until eventually, by doing this, it attacks the heart. There is no exact number of days that a person can survive without eating, but a rough number is forty. As such, death through starvation is a long and painful death (Brink, 2016). That being said, the fasting that dancer engage in is generally not complete. They do still consume certain items, but they consume a highly restricted amount of calories and only particular types of foods. Extreme calorie restriction leads to many of the same effects as starvation does: it affects the mood, energy levels, and weight. Indeed, many performers engage in starvation in order to achieve a particular kind of body. Eves describes *tubuan* dancers who fast in order to achieve a lightness and buoyancy in their movements (2009:187), while the female nest dancers that I spoke with fast to achieve a light body that will allow them to stay balanced in their nests.

There is a village called Himao which is about twenty kilometers north of Samo and still in the Sursurunga area. It is famous for its fire eaters. These are performers who perform at *singsing*s, as do the *tubuan*, the *kipong*, the *puerparik*, the *pinpidik*, etc… The performers may perform a small dance, or at least some members of the troupe do, and then they proceed to pick up smoking logs that have burnt down to charcoal and they begin to munch at them[58]. Much like the *tubuan*, it is generally one of the highlight performances at a *singsing*: it is highly anticipated and the audience, which may have been laughing and jumping into the previous performance to perform *burbur*, watches in silent amazement.

Before the performance the performers will fast. According to an ex-performer their fasting lasts for months at a time[59]. My informant specified that the fasting was done so that the performers would come to feel a hunger for fire. So that the fire will feel to them as something you find delicious feels to you. In short, the fasting is done in order to work on their bodies. Here, the goal is not physical lightness, it is a particular kind of hunger. The goal here is bodily sensation not appearance.

It is clear that bodily sensation is important in the region. Here, the way the body reacts, is experienced, is intricately tied to how one feels. This can be seen through the many expressions that relate a person's feelings by referring to how the state of their stomach has altered. It is also clear in the ways in which performers in *singsing*s will engage in practices in order to purposefully alter their bodily states. This is perhaps even more important given that Melanesia is known to be a region where there is a tendency to not believe that it is appropriate to extrapolate on the interior mental states of another, or even of oneself. As such, it would appear, that being in tune with alterations in the body and referring to these comes to act as a means of expressing these sorts of reactions. It would appear that the focus moves from felt experience as an intrinsically mental experience to one that is intrinsically physical, embodied.

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[58] Though they are referred to as fire eaters it would seem that what they are really eating is charcoal. At a performance, small fires will be lit in the performance ground. By the time that the performers start to eat it, there is no flame anymore, there is simply a pile of black and still smoking logs. I was told that in preparation for eating they do not coat their throats with anything and that they do indeed eat the fire as they do swallow it.

[59] I am skeptical that this remains true today. My informant on this topic had performed when he was younger, likely 20-30 years ago. I also believe that he was trying to get a certain reaction. The preparation periods for many traditional customs have been shortened in recent years and it would be likely that it is the same here.

Ways of Seeing

Sight is the most valued sense in the contemporary West, which is a visual/image society (Classen, 2020:1). It is also valued in Samo, this is evident through the ways that the sense is controlled, particularly in relation to the ritual realm. Through this association with the ritual realm (and via this, to the realm of the spirits and ancestors) it is also a highly gendered sense.

The *tubuan* masks have eyes. Indeed, the various patterns of concentric circles (or triangles, rectangles, etc..) that form these are one of the distinctive features of the mask and also one of the main features that allow one *tubuan* to be distinguished from another. Each *tubuan*, each clan that the *tubuan* belongs to, have a particular and copyrighted eye design. Particular care is taken so that women will not look into the eyes of the *tubuan*s during their performances and, after their performances there is a ceremony to mark the killing/death of the *tubuan* where their eyes are covered in black paint (2012:72). It would seem that the eyes are a feature of the *tubuan* that hold special power. Indeed, Antje Denner notes that:

> "Les yeux, qui sont les traits les plus marquants, sont intimement liés au pouvoir que détiennent les différents masques tombuan, mais la signification des motifs qui les distinguent les uns des autres sont des secrets bien guardés." (“The eyes, which are the most attention drawing trait, are intimately tied to the power which different tubuan masks hold. But the meaning(s) of the motifs which distinguish them are well-kept secrets”) (2012:71 - *my translation*)

The sight of performers and audience of the *tubuan* is also affected. The *tubuan* mask appears to entirely cover the heads of performers and thus to impede their sight, however, I was told that performers can see everything while they are inside the mask. Having read an ethnography that spoke of masked performers not being able to see (Rood, 1969) I asked some of my male performers if they could see inside the mask, the answer was clear: yes. It was also clear that this emphasis on sight was not only in response to my question, but that it functioned as a kind of warning, that those performing could see and knew what was happening. Further, it was not just my male informants who were aware of this information. One of my female informants, no doubt aware of my interest in the matter, once told me that the masks were made with a special kind of mesh, so that those performing were able to see out. As such, the line of sight of the *tubuan* and the *Tubuan* is clear.

On the other hand, the line of sight of the audience is not. There are various very serious rules regarding if and how women may look at the *tubuan*. The most basic being that they may not

look from close. The next most common being that they should have the men place dots of special be-spelled lime powder at the corners of their eyes before seeing a performance. Though older rules included things such as placing baskets over their heads to impede their vision and show their respect. In all cases, it is said that they should be particularly careful about looking at the *tubuan*'s eyes. Should these rules not be followed women are likely to break out in sores, become barren, become sick and even potentially die. As such, it is clear that the eyes of the *tubuan* hold a special significance. But also that the control of sight, of who can see and of who can see what, holds special significance.

Further, while the *tubuan* has eyes, the *dukduk* does not. The *dukduk* is a mask that is less common in New Ireland and more so in East New Britain, though it is present in both areas. The *dukduk* and *tubuan* bear a very close resemblance to one another. In fact, older texts from the East New Britain area may refer to the *tubuan* as the *dukduk,* as earlier record keepers were not always aware of the differences between the two practices (ex: Sack, 1972:96). The *dukduk* looks like a *tubuan*: it is a big ball of leafs with a large cone as a head. It is generally said to be the male child of the *tubuan* (Albert, 1987:19)[60]. There are many subtle differences in the shape of the cone and body, the biggest is that the *dukduk* does not have eyes. The cone is often decorated with bands of colourful paints, feathers, etc… but it cannot see.

It is interesting that the *tubuan*, this being that can see, and that women can't look into the eyes of, is a female. It is controlled by men and off limits to women, yet it is said to be a female being, a mother even. Further, the *dukduk*s, are said to be the male children of the *tubuan*, and they do not have eyes, they cannot see. As such, in these figures there seems to be a sort of reversal of the dynamics playing out between initiates and non-initiates. While initiated men have the greatest ability to see, the *dukduks* are blind. And while women have strict limitations on how and what they can see, the female *tubuan* figure is presented as one which sees all.

It is clear that the visual is valued because of the many limitations that are placed on it within ritual contexts. Indeed, following the principals of secrecy, these rules actually play integral roles in the creation of the importance of the visual realm, of what it is that it is prohibited to see and of those who control the things that may not always be seen. These prohibitions have a clear

[60] Though Denner notes that in the Anir islands she was told that the *dukduks* were male and the sexual partners of the female *tubuan*s, that they were not inferior to it. (2012:71-2)

gender division, with women being the ones either prohibited from seeing or having to look in particular ways[61].

To begin with the *Tubuan*, the dominant ritual practice in the south of New Ireland and one that is built on the explicit exclusion of women. The practice is prepared for in the men's private meeting place in the bush (and occasionally on a beach) called the *taraiu*. This means that men may go there to be out of the sight of women, that women are not allowed to see what goes on inside this area. *Taraius* may be located far enough away from villages and roads so that women cannot see, hear, smell, or touch anything inside the area. But this is not always the case. Sometimes *taraius* are close enough to a village or road for women to be able to hear what is going on inside, particularly when men are playing drums in order to practice for an upcoming performance[62]. Though it is not explicitly stated that women are allowed to hear this it is also not explicitly prohibited. The explicit prohibition is on women entering or getting too close to one of these areas. As such, the men are kept out of the women's sightline. Depending on where a *taraiu* is located it may or may not affect their daily activities, as they may have to avoid certain areas, perhaps make detours in order to avoid them. As such, they may serve as daily and even bodily engrained reminders of the fact of their exclusion.

The clearest rules on sight are concerning how women may "see" spiritually potent performances. The *tubuan* is the most common and widespread of these. In the past women were not allowed to look at the *tubuan*, I was told that out of respect they were required to wear baskets on their heads in order to 'look' at the *tubuan*. More commonly, in order to see a performance they should have the men place dots of lime powder at the corner of their eyes and afterwards remain careful to not approach the *tubuan*s too closely or look at them too closely, particularly at their eyes. Though lime powder is commonly available in the villages, this lime powder is a special magical lime powder which the men have and place on the women's faces. The women themselves do not know how to and may not produce this lime powder, as such, men maintain control over women's viewing of the performance. Further, though women's ability

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[61] It should be noted that within the *taraiu* and the *Tubuan* there are also rules about who may know and do what. As such, the sorts of rules spoken of here as creating divisions between men and women, may function similarly to create divisions between men within those realms. However, as a woman, I was not able to access these areas and to collect data. Still, the points made remain relevant, though perhaps incomplete.

[62] This happened the day before the *singsing* that I attended in Nokon village. I had been told by many people that there would be a *singsing* in KilaKila, a small farm located a few kilometers before Nokon. When I got there, the place was almost empty and there would clearly be no *singsing* happening on that day. However, when I made my way back down the road I could hear the sound of drums being played from somewhere in the woods. And, I reached a cross-roads at which many women and children were waiting supposedly to make their way up to Kilakila, but from which the music could clearly be heard. I suspect that villagers knew where the *taraiu* was and that music would be audible from the road, that this is likely why they had sent me there on this day.

to see it limited, it is also mandated. While I was in the field I was told of no particular rules forcing people to attend performances, however, it would seem that in the past, women were compelled to attend these performances through a series of taboos on performing daily chores (Kingston, 2003:687, 697). So, we have a case of both compelling to see and to not see - of compelling to see in a particular way and therefore to see a particular thing. This works much in the way that secrecy does, it is actually an element of the secret practice: where controlled revelation is critical to the creation of hierarchies and power. Here, control over a sense speaks to social organization.

This control of sight occurs in other traditional practices as well. The *urtarang* is another practice which occurs in various areas of southern New Ireland. It is akin to the various flutes and bullroarers that anthropologists have written about throughout Melanesia: they are long tubes which the men move around in order to create sounds which they tell the women are the sounds of the spirits. The women may not see them using these bullroarers and neither should they know that the sounds are produced by bullroarers. When the *urtarang* approaches a village it makes itself known through its loud roars. When the women hear this they must run and hide inside a nearby house, many will also place *laplap*s over their heads to make sure that they do not see. While they sit inside the men will wander around the village using the bullroarers to produce the cries of the spirits.

That women are an unseeing audience here is critical. Secrecy's need to both hide and reveal itself is achieved through controlling and forbidding one sense while emphasizing and making mandatory another. The secret is created by forbidding women to be seeing audiences, such that they will not know what the men do: namely that the sounds are produced by them and not the spirits. While the women's knowledge of the existence of special knowledge unavailable to them is guaranteed by their presence as listening audience members. In actual fact, women may know that the men are producing these sounds (the informant that I spoke of at the beginning of the chapter on secrecy did), however, they perform the role of individuals who do not know this and who believe that the sounds are those of the spirits. They play their role in the ritual performance, just as the men moving around the bullroarers do. As such, this removal of the access to one of the senses isn't just about "blinding" or removing access to this sense. It is also not just about removing access to the knowledge available through that sense - it is partially about this, since in theory women who cannot see should not be able to know that the men are producing these sounds, but this is not essential to the function of the ritual. What is essential is what the different levels of access to, of control of, or of framing of the senses indicate. The different relation of different groups of people to the senses, here of sight, bind

them together as groups and define the kinds of knowledge and resultant social positions that they may hold.

Women are also blind in a similar way during their isolation in the *kámgu* puberty rites. While these rituals are funded by male relatives, the rituals themselves and their content are carried out by senior women. However, the girl herself remains both unseeing and unseen. She is not visible to anyone in the village, despite her presence being very well known - as she must be cared for and her house announces itself olfactorily. Further, she herself cannot see. Both in the sense that she does not see what is happening outside her isolation house, due to the walls, but also because the space in which she finds herself is constantly dark. Her own sense of sight is cut off, as she is also out of the visual realm of the villagers. As such, the transformation into female adulthood occurs out of sight. It is hidden from all, except perhaps the few women who help the *kámgu* to bathe with *gorgor* water and to make her way to the toilet.

Prohibitions on seeing generally occur within the ‘traditional’ realm. Activities that are the result of Western influence such as school, employment, and international travel do not have these kinds of visually restricted elements. Not everyone may get to travel to these various locations and see these places. In some cases this can come to have the same kind of effect. For instance, the act of going away to school, a time during which a girl is away from and unseen by members of the village and from which she returns a grown woman, can be a modernized version of the female initiation ritual (Sykes, 1996). The same could happen with international travel (for instance, many young adults in the area are heading to pick fruit in Australia). Further, both school fees and travel costs must be paid by someone, as such the same structures of power that once allowed individuals to pay for feasts and other important celebrations and benefited those who did, can be transferred to these more contexts. An important difference is that no explicit prohibitions on sight exist in these realms (at least in the secular ones), the absence of sight is generally simply a result of distances and is now being diminished as more and more villagers are gaining access to cellphones and internet.

Ways of Hearing

The aural is also an important sense. Villages in Sursurunga are very public places, to someone coming from abroad the almost complete lack of privacy is astounding. Each family has a house for sleeping and one for cooking. However, very little time is spent inside either house. Even when one is inside a house, the walls are very thin and there are many people sharing a room.

As such, everything can be heard throughout the village. From time to time, the sound of fighting can be heard and people will either gather or stand at a distance while listening intently. The sounds of crying can alert one to a recent death. And the sounds of music and young men having fun can often be heard emanating from the *hausbois*, sometimes late into the night.

Aside from the human element, there are other things playing on one's sense of hearing in the village. Large portions of Samo village are built right next to the sea. As such, the sound of waves are a part of daily life. On some days there is the hissing of the wind, and on others the sound of rain falling, sometimes hitting metal roofs. There are often crows and other birds making their noises and songs. This becomes accentuated away from the village, in the bush, where the sounds of the sea are no longer present and there is more wildlife, perhaps the sound of leafs moving in the wind, of wild pigs in the distance.

The difference between the sounds of the village and the bush comes up in the ethnographic literature, as Wolffram has written about the "sonic geographies" of the Lak (2011). *Sonic geographies* are the sounds, or soundscapes, of various environments. He compares the very different sounds of the village as opposed to those of the garden or the bush. The village is dominated by human, domestic sounds. While the garden and bush present rich soundscapes with a mixture of the sounds of birds, insects and many unknown elements (2011:172). The two are also not mutually exclusive, many of the sounds of the bush encroach on the village (2011:172). Wolffram then goes on to argue that these realms are also symbolically tied to the human and spiritual realms, the bush being the residing place of the spirits, along with inspiration and creativity. While the village is the residence place of humans, where the tasks of daily life are carried out, it is associated with reproduction and women (2011:173). Following these delimitations, when it comes to practices such as the *talung*[63] and *tubuan,* it is the men who will go out into the bush and engage in practices such as fasting in order to make their bodies as light and spirit like as possible. It it also the men who will bring these spirits to life, as figures such as the *tubuan* enter the village on particular occasions, altering the sonic geographies of those spaces. In short, Wolffram looks at how the sonic geography of the place is tied into conceptions of spirit and human, and how these shape the ways practices are carried out and their meanings.

Though Wolffram worked with the Lak, his analysis could have been carried out in most regions of New Ireland. In Sursurunga the same kinds of divisions apply. The bush is an area that

[63] The *talung* is a spirit that is central to a male secret society in the Siar/Lak region. It is similar to the *urtarang* in that when it comes out women must run and hide, and it can then be identified by the sound that it makes which "is distinctive, a mixture of whirring, pulsing and throbbing" (Wolffram, 2011:174).

women only enter to go tend to gardens, to collect firewood, or to collect water: to carry out domestic tasks. The bush, with it's wide range of sounds, it's wildness and association with spirits or ancestors and creativity is a realm that men enter. This space may be inhabited by men. There are many *ples masalai* and burial areas that are located in the bush. Certain men know where these are and may go to them, while most women proclaim that they are afraid of these places. Men also go out to hunt wild pigs in the bush, wild pigs which are then used on various ceremonial occasions. And, their *taraius*, secret meeting places, are generally located in the bush. These are the places that they head to when they are fasting and preparing for a *tubuan* (or other serious *singsing)* performance, when they require proximity to the realm of the spirits/ancestors.

Through Wolffram's sonic analysis, we see a further association between men and spirits as opposed to women with domesticity and reproduction. It is similar to the divisions created through control over sight. In the case of sight men will control what women can see, such that men can see the spirit world but women cannot. This division may seem less rigid with sound, but is just as rigid. Women may hear the spirits, as they do make their way into the realm of the village, sometimes as the sound travels from the bush and sometimes because they will invade the village, such as under the form of a t*ubuan*, the *urtarang*, or other ritual representation of the spirits. However, it is men who have a privileged association with the realm and who control it's exit from the bush.

Another important aspect of the aural realm is that of songs and music. The importance given to these is in some ways a product of my own ethnographic gaze, as I entered the field with an interest in the topic and my interest lead to people sharing these with me. Songs and music do remain an element of the aural make up of both the village and bush sonic realms as these may be played (or sung) casually in the village, on religious occasions, at *singsing*s or in conjunction with a masked performance.

The creation of the songs, dances, masks and *bilas* that are performed at *singsing*s, and particularly masked ones, occur under circumstances where who can know and/or produce what is highly controlled. These elements of a performance are not said to come from individual creative inspiration. Rather, the men who create them will consume certain plants and then go to sleep, as they sleep they will dream of the songs, masks, etc… When they awake they will remember these and write the song, or carve the mask, or share a choreography. As such, many of the elements of a masked performance, of a *singsing*, ultimately come from the world of the spirits or ancestors. This means that it is only those who have access to these worlds who

will have access to the production of songs, masks, and dances. Though this faculty is about more than just the aural realm, the control of who knows what these substances are, and who may rightly consume them, in turn controls who may dream of these things.

Lindstrom writes about Tanna, that the powerful men there say that the songs they create do not come from individual creativity but rather come from "experienced ancestral inspiration" (1984:300). In this way, by controlling who has access to ancestral inspiration, it is possible to control who is capable of producing this sort of content (1984:299-301). Without the limits imposed by secrecy there is potential for anyone to write a new song, carve a new mask, choreograph a new choreography. Though it would be possible for mostly anyone with the correct creative ability to write these sorts of songs, the discourse concerning how they are the product of ancestral inspiration occurring during dreams keeps it a realm that is exclusive to and controlled by certain men. The realm of the aural is controlled through the creation of an association with the realm of the *tumbuna* (spirits/ancestors). This produces different levels of access to who may both hear and produce what kinds of sounds, and to who may understand the sounds that they hear in what way. This takes on additional significance in the context of a culture where the oral realm and the oral transmission of knowledge is still central.

The Sursurunga region, before the arrival of missionaries and colonial forces, was an oral culture. It did not have an alphabet or a way of reading and writing. Today the Sursurunga language does have an alphabet and there are even a few books in the language. People learn to read and write their language as well as the national pidgin language and English. The codification of the language was achieved by the SIL International. It is a Christian organization that works to document languages and to translate the Bible into the language. Many villagers told me that a couple of missionaries working with SIL had come to Samo and had translated the Bible and a book of Hymns into their language[64]. They all seemed very happy with the missionaries and to be proud to have such important books available to them in their language. Aside from this, I was able to find a few old children's books at the local school, which had been written in Sursurunga. On the whole there were very few books in Samo. The conditions in the houses was not favourable for their keeping, there is no library nearby (though some efforts may have been underway to build one in the nearby school), and no one had enough money to buy books. From time to time someone would get out a notebook and pencil and carefully write something out, at times schoolwork, at times record keeping, at times keeping the score for the weekend sports games or, in the case of a few older men, writing the lyrics to songs. In short,

[64] This is likely Don and Sharon Hutchisson who worked with the SIL and compiled grammars and a dictionary of the language (which is available through the SIL's website).

reading and writing are not typical activities in the village. And, with the exception of the two men I met who kept records of their songs, the practices were associated with “modern” activities. The two most important books in the village were the Bible and the United Church’s hymn book. Whenever a service was held, or singing begun, someone would run back to a house and return carrying a worn copy of one of these books.

But, even these books, were intricately tied to the aural realm. Both held words that were spoken or sung. The words in the Bible were spoken by the reverends, pastors, preachers, etc… And the songs were particularly important, they were known to all and sung not just at religious services but at all kinds of occasions. During my first few days in the field I attended the funeral of an elderly woman. As I attended I was reminded of having read an ethnography by Powdermaker who worked nearly a hundred years earlier in Lesu village in northern New Ireland, entitled *A Woman Going* Native (2012). In it she recounted having attended a funeral, how the women had stayed up all night, singing songs (2012:85-90). At that time, the songs had been traditional songs, now, the songs were hymns, taken from this book. As the women sat around the coffin and the fire under the metal roof of the *hauscri* many of these hymn books lay open and were leafed through as the songs changed (though many also had no need for this, knowing the words by heart). In this sense, the most successful of the books has been the one that is tied to the aural, to the realm of singing. Most likely as it builds on the tendencies of the previous oral (and aural) culture.

Indeed, I asked many villagers what their favourite song was. The great majority of people answered with a specific hymn (*paia* was a common one) or simply by saying gospel or *song bilong lotu*. Such *lotu* songs were also often heard throughout the village. During my second stay one of Harold’s friends, Freddy, stayed in Tabun for a month. In the evenings he would frequently turn on a radio boombox and the sound of gospel songs could be heard. I once asked him about his preference for this kind of music and if he also listened to other kinds of music. He said that he only listened to gospel, that he did this because he did not usually attend church and it reminded him of christianity in his daily life. It seemed that it was a way to remind himself of the beliefs and tenets of the religion, so that he would be sure to follow them.

Freddy was far from the only one who liked to listen to gospel music. During my second stay there were also Monday night youth worships and at some of these events groups of youths would get together and perform dances, all to gospel songs in an amazing array of styles. Some would dance to songs that had a pop sound, or a reggae sound, or sounded like some of the traditional styles, some were upbeat and others more dark and moody. Beyond these organized

events, from time to time in daily life someone would play music from their phone and more often than not this would be a gospel song (one comes to mind where the singer endlessly repeats a list of his body parts that are blessed). Further, these came in a wide range of musical styles, much as non-*lotu* music does.

As such song is common, it speaks to people, and is a part of their daily lives. Though this does not necessarily mean that Sursurunga is a more auditory culture than say the contemporary Western one that we always speak of. After all, music is all around here as well. It is in the background as I write this, it is at concerts, it is there when I do my grocery shopping, when I go out to eat, etc… and, it also exists in a wide range of styles (and languages too). It remains an effective way of reminding people of the foundations of ideologies, of bringing these ideological principals into both individual and collective life.

Storytelling is also very common in the region, and blends traditional as well as christian motifs. I heard many *stori tumbuna* (stories from or about the ancestors) and *pukpuksa soi/tora* (two Sursurunga words to indicate telling myths). This is in part an anthropological bias, as I went around asking people to tell me these. However some stories came up repeatedly, indicating that they are indeed well known.

One thing that stood out was that people were clearly very good story tellers, oral story tellers that is. I was often sent to ask the senior men in the community about theses stories. But I also collected stories from my young informants Daisy and Gelanu, as well as from the *mangis* who spent much of their time hanging out on the beach. All of them knew how to tell a story (a skill which I may have admired so much because I do not share it). First, they remembered the stories despite not having any written notes with them. Then, it seemed remarkable to me how they knew to repeat certain words to indicate that an action was longer (*em i go nau, i go, i go, i go, na em i painim…* - they went along now, and went, and went, and went, and they found….). They also knew how to modulate the tone of their voice, to make their interlocutor listen, to indicate the tone of the story or to imitate the characters in the story. People's story telling skills also got better as they aged (though my teenage informant Délissa told me one well known story with a great deal of skill - perhaps she had learnt from her mother who was also a good story teller). Tinsuken, the women in charge of taking care of me on my second stay, was a woman of perhaps fourty years old, she mostly worked to take care of her family and had in the past worked to care for others' children in Kokopo, she told me that she had received no formal education (due to an injury in childhood). She was a particularly good storyteller, she knew how to add details to a story, the small details of daily life, in order to take one into the story - much

like a good author does when writing a book. The village chief, an older man who I frequently spoke with, Tomimi, was a particularly skilled story teller as well, on top of adding details and pacing the story for maximum effect, he also used his voice: he would speak in slower hushed tones at times, loudly or more quickly at others, when characters called out he would do so too and many of his stories even included sung portions. His body as well was animated and when branches snapped in the story he would mark it both with the intonation of his voice and a sudden movement of his hands.

This style of storytelling was also used to tell Bible stories or stories that had been passed along concerning events in other areas of the country. Visibly the style remains, while the material in the stories evolves with the materials available and the concerns of the times. Many times, when I asked the *mangis* to tell me some stories (to *pukpuksa soi*) they ended up telling me bible stories, such as Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden. The stories were told in the same way as the others: that there was once these two people, action verbs were repeated to indicate that an action went on for some time and the voice was paced in similar ways. Nowhere did the storyteller pause to say that the story was from the Bible, or more broadly to say that it was a *lotu* story. It was a story that made up the narrative backdrop of the culture just as others concerning ancestor figures and various animals did.

I would like to return for a moment to Tomimi's story telling. His storytelling skills were remarkable. One of the means by which he brought the listener into the story was by including sung portions. In one of the stories that he told me, a woman's daughter and young son run away from her because she spends all of her time in the garden away from them. After they run away, the mother hears that they have gone and she runs down from the garden where she is in order to find them. She eventually catches up with them at the base of a *tapiok* plant (a cassava plant), before her daughter utters a few words and the *tapiok* plant swallows the two children. In this story there are a few sung lines that are repeated as the children run away from the mother and the mother runs after them. It builds the tension in the story, and makes it emotionally poignant. This is particularly effective with a good story teller such as Tomimi, who would, through his singing voice communicate the frustrations, taunting, and desperations of the characters.

It would seem that spoken word and sung word allow for different degrees of emotional communication. It has already been noted that Samo fits the paradigm for opacity of mind common in the south Pacific. In this sense, in the realm of the spoken word, it is not usually acceptable to speak of the internal mental state of others. Storytelling follows these rules: very

little is said about what is going through the minds of the characters as they make their way through the story, an emphasis is placed on the actions that occur. This changes in the realm of sung word. When words are sung they do work to convey the confused and strong internal mental and emotional states of the characters. In this particular story both the mother and the daughter sing at various moments. Both are experiencing strong emotional states and internal mental reactions to the situations at hand. If the story were to stay in the realm of the spoken word, it would go something in the lines of: the daughter took her brother and ran away, the mother heard that her children had ran away and immediately started to try to catch up with them, both ran as quickly as they could, until they eventually met at and chased one another around the base of a *tapiok* plant.

Such a story is not going to captivate an audience, it is truly what is going on emotionally with the characters that makes the story compelling. So, these portions are sung. Indeed, both of the characters sing. There is a also a sort of back and forth between the daughter's singing and the mother's. It is almost as if they are having a conversation: telling one another how the other has hurt them and how much they mean to one another. The sung portions of the story communicate this emotional intensity without having to make a direct reference to it. In some ways, by evoking these highly complex and nuanced states, they are communicating them more clearly than the use of words could. Visibly sung and spoken word are different registers, to which different rules for communication apply and that serve to transfer different sorts of information. With the sung register serving to transfer information regarding the interior and felt experiences of the characters.

The sung portions of the stories are also very memorable. they are an effective means for the transfer of information. Another story that Tomimi told me included the sung lines: *Wir wir wir ruben dalo*[65]. In the days, and even the months that followed, I heard one of the neighbourhood children, MacDeutsch, walk around singing this song. She knew no more than I did what these words referred to, but still found the music compelling and 'catchy' enough to continue singing. Much as I did, months later, as I found myself humming the song under my breath after having transcribed my recording of the story.

The aural also goes beyond the realm of sounds being produced and heard, It expands into the ways in which it is referred to, used, in discourse. Further, to the ways in which it may be used in discourses in various languages, across local languages, in the national pidgin language and in

[65] Despite asking, I was never told what these sung words mean. They do not appear to be in the Sursurunga language.

English. Indeed, in Tok Pisin, the word to hear, *harim*, is used in reference to many different forms of hearing. In Tok Pisin it is common to hear people talk about how people have or have not *harim tok* (literally: heard the talk/what was spoken; meaning: listened to, obeyed). Respect, authority and obedience are very important values in the region. The use of a reference to hearing reflects that the values are based on tings that are usually spoken by some and heard by others. This is likely affected by the fact that the Sursurunga and many other cultural groups in the country are oral cultures, meaning that rules would have been given orally and not in written form. It also ties into the value that is placed on the hierarchical relations that exist between different individuals and respect of these, which is in a sense enacted through the acts of listening to what those in positions of authority say and then following through on this in one's actions. The association of this sense with what some of the central values and organizing principles of society point to its great importance.

Finally, as in the case of sight, there is, again, a ritual control of this sense. In some ways the control on this sense is far less strict than that on sight. Everyone is allowed to hear the songs that accompany dance performances, to hear the sounds produced by the spirits, to hear the stories. Many of the performances that women are not allowed to see (such as the *urtarang* or even preparations being made in the *taraiu*) they are allowed to hear. Where there are strict prohibitions on sight, there is not necessarily a strict prohibition on hearing. However, the sense does remain controlled. Though women must run and hide in order to not see the *urtarang,* they also must hear it, and they must hear it as the cries of the spirits.

Additionally, there is a great deal of control of how songs are produced and understood. Control over the production as they are said to come from dreams, rules regarding who can produce a song that will be reproduced, who can produce a song that will have meaning within the community and its institutions. There is also control over the degree to which they are understood, it is common to create songs in a mixture of languages that most villagers do not understand, specifically so that women and non-initiates will not be able to understand them. Ultimately all of these controls create environments, various contexts, that shape people's understandings of their worlds.

The Olfactory: The subtle power of smell

In Samo the olfactory is much more important than it is in the West, though it remains less prominent in daily life and also seems to be somewhat gendered.

I asked many people what their favourite smell was. Most answered with a particular kind of flower (such as frangipani, *gas* or *morega*, or still yet ones for which the name could not be translated), lemongrass was also a very common answer as were the smells of some fruits and some cooked foods. However, when I asked, people's chuckling reaction clearly indicated that smells are not generally considered to be of central importance. On the other hand, when I asked people about the *karuka* house rituals they volunteered information regarding how they had been able to smell the house from a distance and smiled fondly at the memory of the perfumed plants that were used to wash the *kámgu*. This is also present in the realm of male *singsing*s. Though people were far less open with me regarding these practices, they still volunteered information regarding the wearing of *kawawar* necklaces under the *bilas* and the ethnographic literature makes many references to the substance of *langar/langoron* which is perfumed (Wolffram, 2007:218; Wolffram, 2011:485).

It would seem that in the area the olfactory does play a role in daily life, but one that is not necessarily taken very seriously. Perhaps reminiscent of how the sense tends to be perceived in the West. Whereas, on entering the ritual realm, the sense takes on a much greater importance.

Indeed, perfumes are not really used in daily life. When I asked people what their favourite smell was they were able to share smells that they may come across in daily life, of flowers or of food. But I didn't observe much effort being placed into these, for the sake of their smell, in daily life. People did not pick bouquets of flowers and place them in their houses to make them smell nice, they did not pick flowers or herbs to rub on themselves so that they would smell nice, there was nothing akin to aromatherapy candles or air fresheners. The closest thing would have been the occasional bottle of lotion purchased at one of the local trade stores and the occasional *mangi* who would purchase a bottle of cheap perfume from the same trade stores. Though the olfactory was appreciated, it was not emphasized.

On the other hand, the olfactory becomes highly important in ritual contexts, especially when there is some relation to the world of the ancestors or spirits. The olfactory is emphasized in the *kámgu* ritual and in *singsing*s. Further, it appears in *stori tumbuna*, and in these stories it is never the human characters who have special olfactory abilities but the *masalais* and other not quite human characters.

The olfactory is taken into consideration during *singsing* performances. When four of the local *mangis* put on a *kipong* performance at a small cultural day that happened before my departure

I learned that in addition to their masks and *bilas* they had prepared special necklaces to wear as they danced. Beforehand, one of the *mangis* who was going to perform, told me a bit about their masks and bilas and he mentioned that they would be wearing necklaces of *kawawar* (a wild ginger), which they would be able to smell as they performed.

Kawawar is a specific type of wild ginger. In Papua New Guinea more broadly it is common for ginger, many different varieties of it, to be used for magical purposes (ex: Eves, 2009; Gell, 2006), and its smell is important to the fulfillment of its magical functions. For instance, Gell describes an Umeda magical rite for hunters which uses ginger. In this rite, hunters will sleep with bundles of ginger under their heads, this bundle and the smell that they will breath in as they sleep, will help them to dream of a successful hunt, in turn helping them to actually have a successful hunt (Gell, 2006:8). Magic, often involving ginger, is also common during *singsing*s in New Ireland (Eves, 2009:188). It's purpose in this context is generally secret, but, it is possible to glean from the literature and other cases that the ginger used in these performances has a magical purpose. The magic may be to make it so that the audience will like the performance (as I was told) or to protect from any negative spells that may be placed on the dancers by those who might like them to perform poorly. As such, what the *mangi* told me is just a small example of what is a quit common practice. But, what the *mangi* told me does make it clear that either in addition to or as a part of these magical purposes, the ginger is meant to be smelled by the dancers as they perform.

This is interesting, it is both in line with what is known about *langoron* and with what is known about the potential medical properties of ginger. To summarize briefly, it has been found that ginger has been used by almost all medical systems throughout history (Malhotra & Pal Singh, 2003:296). Across these systems, and according to what Western scientific studies have found, ginger is thought to have anti-inflammatory, anti-nausea and pain relief properties (Malhotra & Pal Singh, 2003:296). Most of these effects are achieved through the consumption of the plant. However, practices such as aromatherapy indicate that the plant can also have strong effects when smelled, it is said that it both stimulates while reducing stress and other negative feelings such as dizziness (ex: Kitamoto et al, 2019). These effects would be very helpful to the dancers. First, giving them more energy so that they can perform the dance. Secondly, though this particular performance did not involve any fasting or other special preparations beforehand, many do. Fasting is known to cause weakness, dizziness and fatigue. As such, the ability of ginger aromas to counteract all of these effects would help performers who have fasted beforehand to put on performances. In all cases it would also affect the way that performers experience the performance, making it far clearer and more vivid as they live it and

subsequently in their memories. Further, this is all supposing that these smells exist in a fictional vacuum, where there are no sociocultural and personal framework within which to fit and experience them. Given the frameworks within which these olfactory experiences will occur, they are likely to be even stronger.

The use of ginger in *singsing*s is reminiscent of the substance and feeling of *langoron*. This word refers both to the feeling and to a substance that is rubbed onto the body just before the performance begins. Wolffram says that "Langoron is both a substance that is rubbed into a dancer's skin and hair in order to generate a magical state and a feeling generated by dance performance." (2007:208). The substance is made by cooking coconut milk to make a coconut oil called *ku*, which is mixed with the baked tar plant and three different kinds of strong smelling wood scrapings. These are placed into three separate recipients and allowed to dry in the sun for a few days. Once dried some magic is performed over them: a qualified man will hold a young coconut in his hands, speak the magic, and drink and spit the coconut's water into the receptacles. The receptacles are then closed (2007:209) and, just before the performance the substance is applied to the dancers' bodies (2007:211). Then, when the dancers go out to perform and dance they will feel the feeling of *langoron*. Wolffram notes that this feeling is not entirely due to the substance, it is only achieved in combination with the dance. Further he notes that "the feeling seems to be felt through the skin" (2007:219). Clearly here the bodily sensation is due to a mixture of factors, as the *langoron* alone will not result in the feeling of *langoron*, it is only in combination with the dance: the movement, the sounds, etc… But, it is important that the substance is both perfumed and applied to the body. The implications are that it works by seeping into the performer’s body but also that it will work as he will be able to smell it throughout the performance.

This substance, though it is applied to the body and a feeling that arises through the body in conjunction with the dance, is also a perfumed substance. The plants that are placed into it, and only referred to here as plants as they are kept secret, are odorous. As such, though the feeling itself is described as one that is felt through the body, the smell emanating from the substance is playing a role in this feeling. Indeed, the senses are not separate, as we usually construe them to be, they act together and the information received by a sense informs what is received by the others, The olfactory is an element of the sensation of *langoron*. Wolffram clarifies that that the feeling of *langoron* that *tubuan* dancers experience cannot be experienced without the dance. It would seem that the *langoron* substance, it's smell, are associated with the dance and the feeling, they trigger memories and a predisposition, but are not the sole cause of the resulting feeling.

Constance Classen et al have written extensively on the history of the senses, they note that smell is used as a means of bringing people together or to push them apart (2020:123). They note that if participants in a ritual all breath in the same smell this is a way of bringing them together, as they are experiencing the same thing at the same time (2020:123). This is exactly what happens in the case of masked dances: as all of the performers smell and feel the *langoron* (or the effects of the *kawawar* or other plants in use). Further, it is not just a means of connecting all of the participants in that particular performance, but of connecting all of the dancers in any dance: past, present and future. Smelling and experiencing *langoron* is something that they have all felt, as it is only they and not those who have never performed, who use this substance, it is something that they share, that ties them all together. The combined sensation and smell of *langoron* act to bind together those who have performed the *tubuan* and to exclude those who can not, all the while making it desirable for those who could dance it to adhere to the *Tubuan*'s rules so that they will be able to dance and be a part of this.

The ritual seclusion of the *kámgu* is also full of olfactory components. In fact, when I interviewed people or casually asked what they remembered of these rituals, they often brought up the smells: of the house, of the 'water' that the girl was washed with, etc… When they did, it was always clear that this made for fond memories, people would smile, their voice would take nostalgic tones. Here we see what Classen *et al* are referring to when they write about the ways in which smell is tied into our memories (2020:2).

The olfactory goes beyond triggering memories in this ritual. The *kámgu* is washed with a 'water' made from the *gorgor* plant. Part of the reason that she is washed with this is that it smells nice and accomplishes the pragmatic goals of covering the smells of the unwashed girl and of her menstrual bleeding. Its purpose goes far beyond this. When the girl enters the house she is just this, a girl, but when she exits, she exits a woman. This transformation is by and large physical: there is the fact of her menstruation as well as physical changes to her body as it becomes larger, fat and full breasted. These are physical indicators of her fertility, of her sexual maturity. These changes are achieved while she is in the *karuka* house and the plants with which she is washed, and surrounded, are thought to play a role in her growth, in her transformation. It is not their smell alone that causes this, the *gorgor* is after all rubbed on her body, and the smell of these plants goes beyond the house yet does not make those outside grow as it does the girl. Clearly, here the senses are multiple and interacting. But it is critical that the perfumed plants play a role in her transformation.

Further, these plants are not collected by just anyone. It is always the men who go and collect these plants (herbs, flowers) in the bush. Rodi, who I interviewed in Likas, told me that it was her father who had gone to collect these plants during her seclusion. In Muliama village, when I asked about the types of plants that they had used it was the men in the surrounding area who went to collect a couple for me. And, inevitably, when I curiously asked where these plants could be found, interested in going to find a few and see what they smelled like, I was told that they could only be found in the big bush. The big bush is the bush that is furthest away from the village. This implied that I would not be able to access and smell these plants. It also means that knowledge and the skills to find and collect these plants is guarded. This is in line with the ways in which the plants that are consumed during preparations for masked performances and those that are consumed for artistic inspiration are secret male knowledge. As such, though the *karuka* house and *kámgu* remain largely female rituals that a young girl undergoes, under the care of older female relatives, men may control and claim the transformation of the girl into in adult. This is an argument that Kingston makes regarding the *dal* seclusion house in the Siar/Lak region: that the men, by claiming control over certain portions of the ritual that are associated with the spirit realm, also claim control over and responsibility for the girl's transformation into a fertile being, thus appropriating her reproductive ability (Kingston, 1998:232). What we see here is the role that the olfactory plays in this. What the men control (or perhaps one of the things that they control - it is after all hard to know what information I may not have been given, intentionally or not) is access to and availability of some of the perfumed plants that play a critical role in the ritual.

In fact, access to perfumes seems to be more male dominated. In the case of already exclusively male *singsing*s this is not at all surprising. As such, access to the odorous plants used during *kipong* and *tubuan* performances is, officially at least, male knowledge. Just as access to *gorgor* and other odorous plants used during the *kámgu*'s seclusion also appear to be controlled by certain men. The ritual, though it has a girl at its center, is largely organized and put on by the big men in the village. Of the women that I interviewed, all of them noted that it was a male relative or employer who had paid for their seclusion. Lina's father has been a big man in the village, as had Rodi's and Ruth's. This is also reminiscent of Kingston's analysis of the ritual of the *dal* further south in the Siar/Lak region, as well as Bell's work on the *dafal* in the Tanga islands. They both note that it is the male elders, or local big men, who decide which girl will be put into seclusion and when (Bell, 1936; Kingston, 1998:234). Kingston also notes on the male rituals that are a part of the process (Kingston, 1998). Indeed, it would seem that, by controlling access to certain critical elements of the ritual transformation of a girl into an adult, men also claim a degree of control over this transformation. We may return to Lindstrom's

argument that the control of knowledge is a common means for the creation of inequality in Melanesia (1984:291) and that access to knowledge is controlled by big men (1984:302). It appears that precisely this kind of control, a central feature of secret societies like the *Tubuan*, is also at play in the *kámgu* ritual. Here as well, whether or not the event may be held is determined by big men (who are the ones funding the events) and secret knowledge such as that regarding the powerful scented plants that the *kámgu* is washed with remain controlled knowledge. In this way, though the ritual's focal players are female, the ones in charge of it are in fact male.

The contrast between the presence of the olfactory in daily life and in the realms of rituals, spirits and ancestors can also be seen through its presence or absence in stories. In stories the sense of smell is rarely mentioned, particularly when the characters being followed are humans. However, in stories that deal with supernatural beings, such as the *masalai*s or devil-like characters, the sense of smell is often this being's means of identifying others: it is their means of telling that there is a hidden intruder or a family member.

In two stories that I was told there was a character referred to as the Devil (or *dewel)*. This is common in storytelling in the area. Sometimes the character is referred to as the Devil, sometimes *dewel* or *tewel,* sometimes they are referred to as Mr Tambaran. Either way, the name indicates that they are a strong and evil character, it does not mean that they are *the* Devil as understood in christianity, just that they are *evil* approximately as understood in christianity. In both of these stories a human character gets lost somewhere in the bush and must hide from a Devil, i.e. from a moody male cannibal character. As they do this, on their own, or with the help of a benevolent female figure, the Devil proclaims that he can smell a human.

In yet another story, a *stori tumbuna*, about a local *masalai* called *Kurleu* (the first *masalai* of one of the major clans in Samo: Sawon). In the story, *Kurleu* goes on a journey across much of New Ireland and the neighbouring islands in order to find her child. As K*urleu* does this it is at times welcomed and at times chased. As it enters different territories the *masalai*s of that place will proclaim that they smell something. In Huris the local *masalai* tells *Kurleu* that they smelled something (her child it is implied) the previous day. Closer to Namatanai, the local *masalai* can smell *Kurleu'*s arrival. Finally, *Kurleu* reaches the base of a bamboo, where it can smell it's child. And at that point the two continue their travels together.

These stories must be understood in context. They are set in a remote past that incorporates many elements of the real history of the region and what life was like before the arrival of

missionaries and colonial presences. In those times (perhaps two hundred or more years ago), the region was divided between many groups, war and fighting between these groups was common. Up until the late 1800s there was a great deal of fighting between various groups. Today, people define their past as a time when it was not possible to travel to villages close by, as if one did one would be killed and eaten by the people there. The presence of these various *masalai*s in these places is a marker of how the area was divided, it also relates to how the territory was protected: outsiders were detected and dealt with, they could not simply walk through.

Aside from this, many of these characters exist in a realm that is a combination of the natural and the supernatural. They are mythical beings, but also animals (*Kurleu* is a snake) and present some anthropomorphic traits. And, it would seem that these supernatural beings have a fine tuned sense of smell. An interesting note is that this may be a part of their animal nature. For instance, we all know that dogs have a particularly strong sense of smell: they often wander with their noses to the ground and smell their surroundings to understand who has been there. Humans have even trained them to hunt, by smell, lost people (ex: Kalmus, 1955). Given that *masalai*s are often animal characters it is not at all surprising that they would take on some of these animal traits, such as this strong sense of smell.

It is also good to remember, though we may not always like to, that humans are also animals. Though we tend to forget both this fact and about our own olfactory abilities. In *Kurleu*'s story we not only see *masalai*'s identifying intruders through scent, but *Kurleu* identifying her child through scent. This is also an ability that animals have. It is an ability that is shared by human animals. Experiments have been conducted showing that parents and children are able to recognize one another through their body scent alone (ex: Porter et al, 1986, Schaffer & Croy, 2023). *Kurleu'*s story includes this ability. As such, the olfactory links the supernatural, animal and human aspects of the *tumbuna*. It also emphasizes culturally important values. In the story *Kurleu* sets out to find her child, and in the end her sense of smell helps her to identify the child. This is indicative of local values, which place a great deal of importance on reproduction and family. It is particularly the women, the mothers, who are responsible for this. As such, the story gets at elements that are both fundamental human realities and emphasizes cultural constructions and values.

Finally, sensorial analysis points to different use of the senses in mundane and ritual contexts. It points to a gender inequality, expressed in terms of a control over the senses in ritual contexts. Control of the senses is intricately interwoven with the principals of secrecy and power. Control

and structuring of perception through the various senses is a part of the work of secrecy. There are prohibitions and controlled revelations. This is particularly true in relation to masking practices. In these there are strict rules prohibiting women from seeing most of what happens and, when there is permission to see, strictly guiding how this may be done. At the same time as the visual is being limited, the auditory is being emphasized, but in a guided and limited way. Further, though this control is most visible at the line separating men and women, the same process occurs in between different men, leading to the creation of a hierarchy based on the same kinds of processes.

To summarize, though the olfactory is not emphasized in daily life it does appear to be emphasized, along with the senses of sight and the aural, in relation to the realm of the ritual, particularly when there are connections with a realm beyond the strictly human. Further, much like in the cases of sight and the aural, when it is present in these contexts, it is a sense which is controlled. Pointing to how people may use the senses in order to build and maintain social structures by building different felt experiences for different categories of people (though whether this may be done with explicit intention or not is unclear - and to a great extent irrelevant).

Emotion, Affect, Visceral Reactions: Shaping lives and social worlds

Emotions also have felt bodily aspects, they include various physiological reactions in the body as well as visible physical presentations. These physically felt aspects are also subject to sociocultural interpretations. Classen *et al*, who have written extensively on the senses, conducted a survey with the students in her class, she asked them to rate various smells as either positive or negative. What she and the students realized was that these likes and dislikes were tied to emotional associations (2020:2). Leading her to note that: ”The perception of smell, thus, consists not only of the sensation of the odours themselves, but of the experiences and emotions associated with them.” (2020:2). I refer to an example of the senses here, first, because from a western perspective we tend to more readily accept that the sensory is something physically felt while we equally tend to forget that the sensory is also dependent on the ideas and perspectives of the one sensing. The same can be said for emotions, that they are an intricate mixture of physiological, sociocultural and individual. Further, I chose an example regarding the senses to underscore the close relation of the senses and emotions. Both are types of *felt experience* and the two affect one another with emotions affecting perception and vice versa. No clear dividing line can be placed between the two, and, to underscore this, I place them both side by side in the same chapter.

Remembering the physical (or physiological) aspect of emotions is particularly important when attempting to study emotions within an area that by and large appears to adhere to the opacity of mind theory, such as Samo. In these places, though it may not be common to expound upon emotions - when talking to others or when thinking about oneself. They are still felt and experienced. Not only this, but these reactions are utilized and manipulated, sometimes intentionally and sometimes less so, in order to maintain adherence to social norms.

Before addressing the ways in which emotions sometimes figure in Samo, and in particular in masking practices I will briefly overview some of the theory on which I build.

All of the theory on which I build itself builds on Foucault's work, in particular his notion of biopower. Foucault sees biopower as a form of power coming from the state that infiltrates the human body, controlling and shaping it in small everyday ways, such that the very act of living is one of embodying the controls of the state. Such that life may not be lived outside of state control, because state control is a part of one's bodily existence. The biopolitical state controls the living of human life at the individual micro level as well as at the macro level, that of the population (1976:183). Foucault's argument comes out of an analysis of the history of the Western state over the past few hundred years, of how the throwing out of the monarchy also meant a change of the leader's power over the right to life or death of its subjects to a right to help live. However, the concept of power and of biopower that arise from it can be usefully applied to a wide variety of contexts. He also states that the purpose of his research is to mix the viewpoints of history and biology (similar to the mixing of the sensorily felt and the emotionally felt experiences presented here), precisely to underscore that these are not separate:

> "le but de la présente recherche est bien de montrer comment les dispositifs de pouvoir s'articulent directement sur le corps - sur des corps, des fonctions, des processus physiologiques, des sensations, des plaisirs; loin que le corps ait a être gommé, il s'agit de le faire apparaître dans une analyse ou le biologique et l'historique ne se feraient pas suite, comme dans l'évolutionnisme des anciens sociologues, mais se lieraient selon une complexité croissant a mesure que se développent les technologies modernes de pouvoir qui prennent la vie pour cible." ("*The goal of this research is to demonstrate how the devices of power articulate themselves directly onto the body - onto bodies, processes, physiological processes, sensations, pleasures; far from the body having to be erased, it is about making it appear in an analysis where the biological and the historical are not*

presented one after the other, but would be intertwined with increasing complexity as modern technologies which take life as their goal are developed.") (1976:200 - *my translation*)

In looking at emotions in Samo and the nearby area, I build on many authors' work on various kinds of felt experience and on agency. These works build on Foucault's notions of power as they understand that power is not simply a force applied from external social leaders, but one that is exerted from many places all at once, including from individuals themselves, and that is expressed and felt through controls placed on individual bodies.

First, I turn to affects. Spinoza defined affects in the following way: "Por afectos entiendo las afecciones del cuerpo, por las cuales aumenta o disminuye, es favorecida o perjudicada, la potencia de obrar de ese mismo cuerpo, y entiendo, al mismo tiempo, las ideas de esas afecciones." (*in* Surallés, 2005:2). ("*By affects, I am referring to the affectations of the body, those by which the ability to function of this body is augmented or diminished, favoured or harmed, and, at the same time I understand it to be the very idea of these affectations.*" - *my translation*). Affects blur the line with emotions, feelings, sensation and atmospheres. They are affectations, something which is felt and moves us (or others, or narratives, or discourses, etc…) in any myriad of ways. According the Sara Ahmed, affects do not reside in bodies or objects, they arise out of encounters between them. She gives as an illustrative example the fictitious meeting of a child and a bear. In such an encounter neither the child nor the bear are fearsome on their own, the fear comes out of their encounter. "So the fear is not in the child, let alone in the bear, but it is a matter of how child and bear come into contact." (2013:7). Despite the fact that affects are not stored in any body or object, it is these bodies and objects that circulate in the world. If that is the case, then how is it that certain affects tend to arise when certain bodies and objects are present? The answer is that these bodies and objects are "sticky" (Ahmed, 2013). As bodies and objects move through the world, they pass through a myriad of encounters out of which affects arise and the objects become sticky from these. "Such objects become sticky, or saturated with affect, as sites of personal and social tension." (Ahmed, 2013:11). As such, they will then tend to call forth these kinds of affectual reactions. However, this never means that the affect actually resides within the objects, it is simply that they tend to draw or to not draw certain affectual situations.

These affects are important. They are in a way the building blocks of the world (except that they are in no way whatsoever actual blocks). They are what social bonds, and eventually society is built of. Indeed, as Ahmed states: "the social bond is always rather sensational" (2010, 35).

This is because affects (sensations, feelings, emotions - call them as you may) direct us in our behaviours and orientations in and to the world. Sensations tell us whether to value things positively or not. They also tell us who is like us and who isn't (2010:35). Indeed, this is how sensations become an important part of the formation of social differences, and part of how sensations come to have very concretely real effects in the world.

As such, Ahmed's work is in line with that of most of the authors collected here. She does not see emotions as being individual internal emotional states. She sees them as social and cultural practices. (2013, 9). But, social and cultural practices that are felt in the body, that are embodied. I should clarify here that Ahmed does not talk about emotions, she speaks of affects. Part of what I am doing here, in this chapter, consists in blurring these definitions, in lurrin gthe lines drawn between terminology. Affects, emotions, atmospheres, the sensory: they are all a part of felt experience and, as such, cannot be entirely or truly separated from one another.

Returning to Ahmed's discussion of affects, what this leaves us with is questions regarding how individuals (or groups) can affect these affects. Surely we do not go through life and the world aimless and bumbling, simply allowing these affects to naturally occur and accumulate and then shape us and our societies. How is it that control is exerted over affects, over which affects objects come to be sticky with? I look to three authors to examine the ways in which people can intentionally modify this process. First, I look to Hochschild, whose work predates Ahmed's, on the idea of "emotion work", then I look to Mahmood on ideas of agency and finally to Hayes-Conroy and Hayes-Conroy who address the ways in which sensation can be leveraged for achieving social change.

Hoschild wrote on the governing of emotions through what he terms "emotion work", which is "the act of trying to change in degree or quality an emotion or feeling." (1979:581). This is work that can be done by the self upon the self, the self upon others, and others upon the self (1979:562). And it is based on "feeling rules", which, much like any rule can be followed, enthusiastically or barely, or willingly broken (1979:566). He argues that the domain of emotions is much like any other domain in life, that there are ways that things are expected to be done, that things are expected to happen. That much like in any other domain, individuals must work in order to achieve these results. He argues that there are situations where the expectation is that we will not only look happy, present happiness to the outside world, but also actually feel happiness. But individuals may not always necessarily simply feel happy, they may need to work at feeling this. His argument is that we are aware of expectations regarding our emotional

reactions and that we actively work, using emotion work, to achieve these reactions in ourselves.

Where Ahmed argues that affects arise out of situations, not objects, though the sticky objects present in a situation may pull the situation towards the elicitation of certain affectual reactions. What Hoschild argues is that we know that certain situations call for certain emotions and work both to show the world that we are reacting appropriately but also to show this to ourselves. Perhaps on meeting a bear we know that we should feel afraid. So, even though the encounter may not elicit fear at first, we work to show and feel this fear, we scream in fear and we work to remind ourselves that the bear is fearful until we actually do feel our heart race and our limbs shake.

Sensation - be it affects or emotions - is the underpinning for the formation of social groupings. And individuals will work to feel the way that is expected of them either in the group that they generally are a part of, or so that they may become a member of their desired group. Indeed, Hoschild takes his argument further, to say that feeling rules are the bottom side of ideology (1979:566). I agree with her and, no doubt, it is likely due to my agreeing that I have chosen to focus on the felt experience of masking practices. As I believe that it is impossible to understand practices without understanding this felt experience, that is because how experience is felt is directly responsible for the creation of social realities. In short, for the world, the various worlds, as we know them, as well as for the many instantiations that there have been and that there will be, these feeling rules, as well as how individuals decide to interact with them, are responsible both for maintenance of the status quo and for any changes made to it.

Mahmood also writes about the work that people place into shaping their bodies - their affects, their feelings, their felt experience - to fit into particular expected ways of being (indeed, one could say, in order to fit feeling rules). Mahmood has written critically on the notion of agency. She notes that agency has often been used as a synonym for resistance to norms, but she argues that this is incorrect, that agency is not just about this resistance (2011:155). She developed her notions of agency through analysis of Muslim women in Egypt, who, in behaving according to conservative islamic norms, are exerting forms of agency. As they are actively shaping their bodies, minds, their lives, in order to adhere to these norms. That they are taking conscious and active roles towards these (2011).

She draws on the example of four muslim women that she often spent time with. One day, they discussed an islamic norm called *al-haya*, which roughly translates to shyness or modesty. One

of the women spoke of how given that she was not naturally a shy person she had had to at first create this shyness, until it eventually became a part of her (2011:156). Mahmood draws on this example in order to show that “it is through repeated *bodily acts* that one trains one’s memory, desire, and intellect to behave according to established standards of conduct.” Thus, by intentionally making herself behave in a shy way, over time the woman was able to make herself remember, desire and think according to the norm of modesty. Thus underscoring both her active intention and work in achieving this outcome and the way in which “desires and emotions” are shaped by individuals’ actions over time (2011:157).

Her conception of agency is critical in an analysis of emotions and the sensorial as she argues that it is the body itself, and a highly trained use of it, that elicits certain desires (2011:157). Following these desires, and shaping the body in ways that elicit certain forms of desire are all forms of agency - whether this be done as a means of resistance to norms or as a means of performing norms. What she is arguing for is a kind of conscious and active work that is done at an internal level. She does not see these acts of agency as “manipulable masks in a game of public representation.” (2011:158). They are much the sort of thing that Hoschild refers to as “emotion work”. They are actions that are taken such that the body itself will take shape and come to desire the norms that are sought.

It is also reminiscent of what Richard Sosis writes about rituals (2003). Sosis concludes that participation in religion is often a very high cost behaviour, as there are many rules to follow and generally speaking it would be more beneficial for the individual to simply claim that they are members while not following it up with any of the work or actual belief (2003:92-5). However, through the performance of small and constant rituals from a young age, people become members of these groups without noticing the cost and in such a way that they really do believe (2003:100,108). It is the repeated actions, the daily rituals, often individual ones, that lead individuals to adhere not just because it is generally beneficial, but due to belief. What Mahmood, and Hoschild too, are saying, is that individuals can actively work to shape their bodies and beliefs to these norms. Often through small repeated daily actions. Further, the work is not just a surface to display but also internal.

This kind of internal work affects how the body reacts. It affects how the body feels in relation to the situations it encounters, in relation to its world. It affects feeling at the emotional level and at the sensorial level - as these are never separate, but always deeply intertwined. This kind of internal work carried out on the part of individual actors is an important part of the creation and

continuation of socio-cultural realities (of cosmovisions, of lived realities and of the dispositions of those navigating them).

Acknowledging, becoming aware of and using this reality can also be put towards creating social changes. This is what Hayes-Conroy and Hayes-Conroy argue (2008, 2010). They make arguments that relate to and also present variations on Mahmood's interpretation of agency. They look at the study of gastronomy from a Foucauldian perspective, from the perspective that a bodily phenomenon can be a political issue (2008:466). They work to argue for such an approach not out of a concern for academic methodology, but because they see it as a means that activists could tap into in order to bring about the kinds of changes in the world that they are seeking (2008:468; 2010;1274). In this sense, the arguments that they are making are in line with those of Hoschild and Mahmood. They argue that bodily perception plays an important role in society: that it affects how individuals relate to themselves, to one another and to the world around them.

They do not speak of emotions, senses, or affects, etc… they speak of the visceral. They define the visceral as: "the realm of internally felt sensations, moods and states of being, which are born from sensory engagement with the material world". In this definition they include the cognitive mind, "visceral refers to a fully minded-body"(2008:462). They also emphasize that bodies interact with one another in what they refer to as "chaotic ways". This is reminiscent of McNaughton, who emphasize the role of the individual as the wild card in society. But, here, the emphasis is placed on the feedback between these wild cards and other wild cards: that these relations are not linear, are not unidirectional, do not have any particular order or real underlying logic, they are all over the place, all the time, chaos, "of chaotic, unstructured ways in which bodily intensities unfold in the production of everyday life." (2008:462). They use the concrete example of the appreciation of ice cream. It is commonly understood to be an uplifting food, something that is consumed on happy occasions and that improves our mood. But, "rather, memory, perception, cognitive thinking, historical experience, and other material relations and immaterial forces all intersect with individuals' sensory grasp of the world, complicating one's visceral experience of the ice cream eating event." (2008:465).

They argue that by understanding the kinds of complicated elements that build the visceral realm for any individual or group, it would then be possible to change visceral perceptions and then, in turn, material realities.

This kind of effect can be seen in the case of masking practices in New Ireland and Papua New Guinea more broadly. Some young men who had become deeply religious spoke to me negatively of practices such as the *tubuan*, saying that those who performed these dances were "dancing with the spirits". Their religious formation had informed their visceral reactions to these practices. It had the material, or concrete, consequence of making it such that they were not willing to engage in these practices. And, had enough men come to be of this opinion it could very well have led to the tradition being left behind. As such, changes to the visceral, though they may seem small, can come to have repercussions on the material realities of society.

Further, though these changes in belief are the result of participation in repeated actions such as *lotu* services, reading the Bible, etc… which have led to these men believing in this particular christian rhetoric. It also underscores the role of agency and emotion work in both making and maintaining this ideology. For instance, one of my informants, Levi, mentioned that in his youth he had participated in practices such as the *Tubuan* and fire eating. But, when his family heard the good news, i.e. became christians, he left these behind. On one occasion, he mentioned that he did not like to attend performances of these dances, as they reminded him of what it felt like to dance. His discipline in staying away from something which he knows will trigger in him feelings which do align with his beliefs demonstrates exactly what Mahmood discusses when referring to agency. It also demonstrates the very explicit work which he is putting into feeling in the sorts of ways which he believes he is supposed to. In short, much agency and work go into following this particular strand of christianity's feeling rules. Levi is well aware of this and consciously making sure that his felt experience is in line with his beliefs.

What all of the previous theories underscore is the deep importance of felt experience (affects, emotions, visceral experience) in shaping people's lives: in shaping beliefs, ideologies, concrete realities, and even felt experience itself. The ways in which the world is lived and understood are deeply dependent on our interactions with it through felt experience. And, as it always is, felt experience is not a simply unidirectional phenomenon: it is a chaotically interwoven mixture of personal experiences, social norms, previous felt experiences, personal and social pressures. This is felt in Samo as it is absolutely anywhere in the world. What I wish to do now is to focus in on particular emotions and the ways in which they feature in local masking practices. I am particularly interested in fear, as it is an integral part of the *tubuan* and *Tubuan* practices and, though it claims to be for fun, of the *kipong* as well.

The *Tubuan* and *tubuan* performances are deeply dependent on fear. Fear is an integral part of the narrative surrounding the practice. Women fear the *tubuan* as it is said that it can cause

them to become sick or to spontaneously abort. They fear it because it is understood that it has the power to kill. They fear it because they have spent their whole lives exposed to the warnings of older women and men telling them that it is a powerful being that they should fear. They fear it because they are supposed to fear it. And no doubt, they fear it for many, many more reasons. The same can be said of men. Young boys who have not yet been initiated fear it because they know that one day they will go through initiation and though they do not know exactly what it will entail, they do know that it will be painful and that they should be afraid (Albert, 1987:24). Initiated men fear it because this is a part of what their initiation taught them: that they should fear the *tubuan*. They fear it because it is powerful, because if they disobey it it can harm them, even kill them. And again they fear it for many, many more reasons. The effect of all of this is the creation of an atmosphere of fear around the practice. The narratives and discourses surrounding the *Tubuan* make it and the objects representing it "sticky" with fearful affects. To put it another way, the narratives and discourses surrounding it create a disposition to a visceral reaction of fear and avoidance, but with an undercurrent of curiosity. This is a part of the play, a part of the necessity of broadcasting secrecy all the while keeping it secret (more on this in chapter 7). Multiple elements are at play in order to create bodily reactions that create and continue the reality of the *Tubuan* as a dangerous authority figure to be respected. This is no doubt why the secrecy of the practice continues to be so strongly guarded. To allow the non-initiated to know the secret would change bodily reactions and would change the socio cultural reality of these communities.

But how is this achieved? To understand we must look at the various ways in which discourses of fear are created and perpetuated. It is also important to understand how these work in order to maintain the status quo. As McNaughton points out, individuals are important players, they are the "wild cards" in society that can create changes (2008:117). As such, it is important to examine how these discourses of fear work in ways that do not give individuals the space to move in certain directions, that do not give them the option of straying from discourse set by the institution. It is important to examine the ways in which individual actors participate in the maintenance of this system, the kinds of emotion work that they do to fit it's feeling rules and the ways in which they work on themselves in order to gain a sense of control, of agency, within the options available to them. It is important to understand the ways in which the discourse of fear both creates and maintains certain realities.

From the very beginning, when new members are initiated into the *Tubuan*, there is an intentional manipulation of emotion. Indeed, the emotional roller coaster that initiands are taken on is a large part of what makes the initiation work, of what makes it into an initiation. Albert

relates the ways in which initiands react to the process (1987:24). He notes that young boys are often anxious in the face of their impending initiation. They are afraid of what will happen to them, the fear resulting from a mix of the unknown and the known - namely that there is pain involved. Albert describes how young boys are forcibly taken and carried down an unknown path by a strange figure (1987:24). Then something happens and it is revealed to them that the *tubuan*, until then thought to be a spirit, is actually a man (1987:26). This is a shocking revelation. And the shock, the strong emotional reaction, is a large part of what makes this memorable and emphasizes that it is an important thing.

Here, I refer to McNaughton again, as he emphasizes that to us, the anthropologists studying the society as a whole from the outside, initiations appear to take certain regular systematic forms. But, to the individual undergoing the initiation the experience is not only vivid but also entirely novel (2008:122). Indeed, this can be further analyzed by reference to Whitehouse's work on ritual. He has divided rituals into two types: the doctrinal and the imagistic (2004:8). The doctrinal being a kind of ritual that has a high frequency but a low level of arousal (2004:158). These are rituals such as church attendance on Sundays. Imagistic rituals are ones that occur rarely (it could be once in a lifetime) but that have high levels of arousal (2004:9). These are events such as weddings, or initiations into secret societies. They have a strong emotional impact (this could be felt to be positive or negative, or ambiguous) and as such mark an individual's memories in such a way that they will often reflect on it, building meaning over time (2004:70-2). Following in Whitehouses's work, Xygalatas has conducted experimental and qualitative work on these kinds of rituals. He has found that people are far more likely to think about these kinds of imagistic rituals, to try to find their own explanations for the rituals and their purpose (2014, 2022). Making it into an experience that marks them and that remains with them, allowing them to think it through and build on the narrative surrounding it over an extended period of time. Indeed, as these behaviours have already been completed, and cannot be undone, they are reflected upon and given meaning, as such "behaviours can influence attitude and beliefs" (Xygalatas, 2014:162). Further, the experience itself and the memories which it generates are affected by the state in which the person was as they lived them. As such, Xygalatas mentions the effects that elements such as a sense of community, physical exertion, dopamine, monoamines and endorphins (2014, 167-182), as he notes that change in brain activity affects the meaning of these rituals (2014:168).

This is exactly what happens during initiation (at least initial initiation) into the *Tubuan*. The initiands are intentionally made to live something that will cause in them a high state of arousal - thus making a vivid and memorable experience. By creating a situation that arouses strong

emotions they are also creating an important life experience. They are creating memories to which strong affects will stick. These sensational experiences will remain with those who have lived them, it will allow those who have lived the same thing, who are affectually aligned, to feel an affinity, it will create a sense of a coherent group among members. And one that excludes those who have not had these experiences. Not only will it define group identity going forward, but it will affect dispositions towards the world. To frame it in terms of affects and visceral reactions, by putting initiands through an emotional roller coaster they are creating the framework for future affectual and visceral reactions. As people and objects may become sticky with affects, here the people and objects related to the *tubuan* are becoming sticky with certain affects - this builds a framework so that going forward the initiates are likely to feel certain ways in situations involving these objects. It is no guarantee, but it is a push in a certain direction. The same can be said in terms of visceral experiences. the emotional roller coaster that they go through will make these situations, certain objects likely to arouse similar visceral reactions in the future. These will shape individuals' interpretations and opinions and then go on to affect their behaviours and actions in the world. As such, initiation is far more than simply revealing secrets, or perhaps a few magical formulae, it is about revealing through experience the ways in which the world should be seen, interpreted and lived. It is about setting new initiates down certain life paths.

Of course, none of this guarantees that all individuals will be affected in exactly the same ways by initiation. Even though the young boys undergoing initiation all come from fairly similar backgrounds (they do after all come from the same village, or perhaps a few neighbouring villages, in the same area of rural Papua New Guinea) but there will always be a multitude of individual variations. This is where it is good to remember Hoschild's work on feeling rules and emotion work. Because though initiation is focused on teaching individuals by showing them and making them feel certain ways rather then by theorizing on it (Albert, 1987:24-6; Nooter, 1993:57; Luhrmann, 1989a:147) in so doing it also defines a set of feeling rules. They may not be laid out in a clearly written list, but a good deal of what is learnt in initiation is about how one should or shouldn't comport oneself. As such, individual initiates are also responsible for carrying out the emotion work necessary in order to follow these shoulds and shouldn'ts.

Of course, though theoretically (and to some extent really) the option to not follow the rules exists, there are many mechanisms in place to make this truly undesirable. For instance, one of the things that initiates learn during initiation is that they will have to keep everything that they learn a secret. They learn not only the rules of the *Tubuan* and some of the information that will be kept secret, but also the things that could happen to them should they fail to obey the

Tubuan. They are presented with the threat of physical violence should they fail to follow these rules. Indeed, one of my informants, now a middle aged man who was not active in the *Tubuan,* told me that he feared sharing too much information as, even though he was no longer a member, the *Tubuan* could still give him a *tanget* (a fine) or even kill him or endanger his family. Yet another time I asked an informant what would happen if they simply refused to pay one of these fines. The answer was that the *Tubuan* could burn your house and that you would essentially no longer be allowed to live in the community, you would have to leave (and given that the area is reputed to have had a lot of inter-group violence in the past, this could also have meant your death). As such, again we see fear popping up as a mechanism to make sure that members of the *Tubuan* will follow the *Tubuan'*s indications. We see the use of more fear in order to stop individual wild cards from trying to disengage from the system.

Fear of consequences may come in many forms: there can be legal sanctions, social sanction, formal and informal sanctions, etc… According to Charles Tittle, "any general theory of social order must reserve a prominent place for informal social control." (1977:592), his analysis reveals that social sanctions are the most effective motivator for social conformity, though legal sanctions may play a role over periods of time (1977:592-594). Here, the two appear to go hand in hand. Though there are punishments: such as fines, house burnings and potentially death, these formal punishments will be accompanied by social sanctions. Breaking the rules of the *tubuan* not only leads to punishment, but to an alteration in how one is perceived within the community, it damages an individual's status. The relationships that are built in the *tubuan* and the *taraiu* as well as the network that progressing within the *tubuan* gives one, are critical for obtaining status and authority in the community. And relationships within the community may also be critical when moving outside of it (for instance, these relationships can help individuals to get jobs in the nearby mine on Lihir, or in Namatanai town, etc…). Indeed, when I was speaking with my informants, I asked them what would happen if one simply continued to not cooperate and didn't pay the fine. Clearly, this was not viewed as being a realistic course of action. And the answer that I received was clear, that if one did not cooperate with the *tubuan*'s rules, the eventual outcome would be complete banishment from the community, whether this be by forcing someone to move away (a social death of sorts) or through their physical death. People are clearly aware that to not follow the *tubuan* would lead to severe social sanctions and have severe repercussions on their place within their communities.

Emotion, and particularly fear, is not just present in the work of initiation. It is present in day to day life, in attitudes and ideas relating to masking practices and to other practices as well.

The fact that the whole community is experiencing these together is critical in fostering a sense of togetherness and community. Further, a very important function of ritual is the creation, fostering and assertion of group membership. Indeed, this is also one of the effects of the secrecy of the practice. As, different emotional connections will be created between various individuals, depending on what they are supposed to know. And these, in turn, affect behaviour, belonging, and rights (given and taken).

The *tubuan* breeds fear. It is expected that it will be feared. It is a part of its status as a "serious" practice. This is very clear during performances. Performances occur at *singsing*s: events where many different types of song and dance combinations are performed. The atmosphere that reigns when the *tubuan* comes out as opposed to when other *singsing*s are performed is quite noteworthy.

At the performance in Nokon, during the performances of *pinpidik* and *puerparik* there was an atmosphere of joy and fun. Members of the audience (the higher class audience that is) came down and performed *bukur* on some of the dancers, some even danced alongside them. Everyone cheered and laughed as they did this. In contrast, while the *tubuan* performed the atmosphere was heavy and, indeed, serious. The *tubuan*s danced to instructions yelled by the *yainpidik*s and no one laughed at anything. There was no *bukur*, there was no going to join the dancers, photos were taken from further away. Before the *tubuan*s came out, a crowd of children had gathered on the steps of the house and in a very public display the little girls were removed - inculcating the gender difference in how one relates to the *Tubuan* from a young age. Amongst the adults, the men stayed at the front (they almost seemed to be creating a barrier around the entire front) and the women stayed back or moved even further back. While the crowd had once been joyful, it was now full of fear and anxiety, mixed with curious trepidation. This was an emotion that was naturally felt by many, and naturally promoted by the occasion: by people's behaviour and their positions in the space. It was also an emotion, or perhaps more of an atmosphere, that was closely guarded, anyone who did not follow the rules was reprimanded immediately. The situation both was fear inducing and was one that called for fear, but a fascinating attractive kind of fear. It was not the *tubuan*s in and of themselves, or acting alone, who were fear inducing. Nor did the fear truly reside in the crowd, or the individuals making it up. It circulated between them all and it arose from the situation as a whole, it was the "feeling rule" for that situation: the result of long and continued work.

This is easily seen in the anecdote that I shared in chapter 4. It is during this performance, the first that I had seen, that I began to lightly sway my body to the movement of the music. I was

soon reprimanded by a woman standing next to me: told that I was a woman, that this meant that I could not dance. My bodily disposition was showing an inappropriate reaction to the performance: this was a serious and not a light performance. It was to be watched, still and stiff. This bodily disposition is important, as it informs the individually felt experience of the performance. A performance that I watch while swaying with the music not only indicates externally that I am enjoying it, that I am having fun, that I am happy and likely not afraid (things which, in a Western context, are desirable to display when attending a performance). But, these are not correct reactions to a *tubuan* performance (as a woman in particular, but men also did not dance along). The woman was also correcting my felt experience of the situation. Should I watch the performance while bopping along to the music or while standing stiffly will change my perception of it. Here, we can return to Mahmood's discussion of agency. She refers to how the muslim women she spent time with would consciously act in certain ways in order not only to better follow the norms that they believed in, but such that following the repetition of these actions they would eventually become embodied and cause them to feel in particular ways (2011:156-7). Similarly, a *tubuan* performance should be experienced in a certain way. To achieve this experience one must work at it, one must shape one's body in order to feel the experience properly. The situation has certain feeling rules, and it is important to put in the work so that one feels it in an appropriate way. I was not doing this work, or not doing it correctly, as such those around me intervened. This underlines not only that the *tubuan* is a serious performance, but the ways in which our lived experience is the result of various individuals intertwined and the active effort that they all place into constructing certain realities.

Later, after the *tubuan*s had finished performing, the event quickly became lighthearted again. A few young boys, clearly skilled dancers, began to dance at the edge of the performance area and a circle of people formed around them. The previously serious atmosphere had immediately lightened. In fact, one of my informants, Daisy, spent most of the performance watching from under one of the tree near the performance area, before the *tubuan*s had come out she had moved much further back and had watched the *tubuan*s from the *hauskuk*s nearby (I am not sure how much she would have been able to see from where she was). Now that this informal dancing had started, she smiled as she moved in to see and indicated that I should follow her. The return to lighthearted fun only highlighted how serious the previous performance had been.

Demonstrations of the *Tubuan*'s seriousness and power, as well as the work placed into creating ambiences of fear and trepidation surrounding it happened not just at performances such as the one in Nokon, but even more so in daily life. The work was a result of broader norms and

ideology in the region. Yet, it was not entirely a result of these, rather it was enmeshed in these broader ideological systems.

For instance, when I asked women and men about a time when they had seen a mask perform and what their reaction had been, many women (of all ages) replied that they had felt afraid. I asked one teenage girl this question, as we sat in a small group under a shade tree one afternoon. She was shy and said that when she had seen a mask, she had felt afraid. A *mangi* also sitting under the tree exclaimed that of course she had felt fear, it was because she was a girl. Clearly she had felt afraid when seeing the mask, most likely as a child. Yet, at the same time she was expressing the expected narrative. Her personal experience and the general narrative were not separable.

Other younger women, in their early twenties, also expressed fear towards the *Tubuan*. Daisy, one of my main informants, was by no means a woman who was afraid of things, in daily life she liked to enjoy herself and to play and kid around, but was also clearly a very strong woman. Yet, at the performance in Nokon she had moved further away from the performance area for the *tubuan*'s performance. Later, when I was asking her about her experiences with masks, she recounted that as a child she had seen a performance in the Samo hamlet of Ngosngos, and had been very afraid. But that having been to see the performance in Nokon, she had been more curious and thought that the experience had been interesting. Another of my other main informants, a resident of Tabun, was Gelanu. Also a young and spirited woman. She did not go to see the performance in Nokon, as she was pregnant and had a young child. One day at Tabun she told me that the *tubuan* could kill. I asked if she knew of any particular instances and she did not reply but also did not tell me of any specific cases. Clearly, both women had learned and to some extent internalized that the *tubuan* was something to be afraid of. They also contributed to the continuation of this narrative. But they were also clearly aware of and playing with the ambiguity of this. Though Daisy had clearly felt fear in relation to the *tubuan*, she was also intrigued by it. And though Gelanu repeated the claim that it could kill, she did so with the kind of relish of one trading scary stories at summer camp - the story was meant to be scary but it was also a juicy, thrilling story. The fear only served to make the story more compelling and attention catching.

This goes to show the great deal of ambiguity that there is in relation to the narrative of fear. For instance, if we return to the performance at Nokon. In the middle of the *tubuan* performance there was a slight lull, a couple of the *tubuan*s walked up and down the beach and even sat down at various points as they and everyone else waited for the next part of the performance (or

perhaps the wait is a part of the performance?). As I recounted in chapter 4, after the *tubuan*s moved back to the main performance area and the men formed their barrier around that area a couple of teenage girls decided to leave the area that they had been watching from, to move away from the performance. To do this they walked across the beach, across an area where the *tubuan*s had walked. as they did this a middle aged women called out to them “Yu nemi mat!?” (You want to die!?). The teenage girls heard this remark and reacted as teenagers often do, a derisive I’m not listening smile and ignore. What this goes to show is the range of adherence to and true belief in the narratives surrounding the *Tubuan*. It shows both that there is a great deal of work that goes into performing the fear of the *tubuan* that women are supposed to feel as well as how it both is and is not felt.

Indeed, despite the behaviour of these two girls, the narrative of fear was particularly strong among younger girls and women. Older women, from around the age of perhaps fifty, did not express quite as much fear in relation to their experiences with masks. This is not to say that they had become fearless (or that younger women were necessarily fearful). Rather, it seemed to denote a change in their relationship to the practice, one that was a result of a long exposure to the practices and to exposure to other ideologies. One older woman, Elsie, who had spent a good portion of her life living in Kokopo and whose husband was involved in the *Tubuan*, told me of how when she had been younger she had seen a *tubuan* perform. The way she told the story felt like when someone tells of a memory from their adolescence, when they broke a rule: there is a certain relish in how the story is told, a glow in the eyes. This is exactly how she told of having prepared to see the *tubuan*, of having had the lime powder placed at the corners of her eyes. Though the spell of the illicit had visibly long since been broken, she conveyed this sense in her story. And, through the telling of the story (in particular to a curious but rather clueless anthropologist) she was working towards the continuation of this sort of a disposition towards the *tubuan*: building it as something secret - that cannot be known but that draws one’s curiosity. Her narrative was a part of the *Tubuan’*s narrative.

Other women her age, spoke of masking practices in general with various emotions: with nostalgia, with annoyance, with dis-involved respect. It was clear that their attitudes to the practices had changed throughout the years, most likely due both to their aging and to their exposure to other influences.

Marlol is another woman over fifty with various relations to masking practices as well as other traditional practices. She received an education abroad, worked in the city and is a member of the Destiny church which believes that adherence to traditional (pagan) practices are a part of

the cause for all of the evil that there still is in the world. In this sense, she has moved away from masking practices and the institutions that they are tied to. However, she also spoke on some occasions with a great deal of what could be read as nostalgia regarding the way these practices were when she was a child in the village, when her father had been in the *Tubuan* and even for later, when performers from Samo had taken the *tubuan* to performances in Kokopo (in the early 2000s). She said that at that time the *tubuan* had been “imbued with an essence”, that when the church celebrated special occasions there would also be traditional dances. She spoke of this with nostalgia for a time that was now lost. On the other hand, she was also extremely forward oriented. And the future that she was aiming for was one of greater socio-economic comfort, and deeply rooted in christianity.

Yet another woman slightly over fifty, Frida, who also lived in Tabun did not seem to have such a complex relationship to the *tubuan*. She seemed in equal parts bored and annoyed by yet another performance. It was half explained to me at some point that this was because there had been so many performances in the past. It would seem that the exciting novelty of seeing one of these performances had long since passed for her. Though that did not seem to be the whole story, there seemed to be a deeper annoyance, not just a true boredom. This was most likely in part because she was also an avid churchgoer, though she attended the United Church, which does not prohibit participation in traditional practices. I would guess that it would also have something to do with the sorts of rules that are placed on what can and cannot be done around performances. Likely, a combination of these factors had led to the sense of fear and excitement that younger women may feel having long since faded.

It is important to remember that it is not only women who fear the *Tubuan*. It is feared by all. Though, when I asked them about how they had reacted to past performances, men did not generally answer that they had been afraid. Some did, those who had been boys when the performances happened had been afraid. The fear related to the *Tubuan* is experienced differently by men, especially those who are older. They do fear the *tubuan,* but differently. Their relationship to the practice is different. Fear remains, this is evident in the small number of men who would speak to me at all about the practice and the little that those who spoke would mention. It is noteworthy that the *mangis* are those who spoke to me the least, often simply ceasing to speak at all. This is likely because they are new *tubuan* members and have been warned to not share any secrets, they are at lower stages in the hierarchy, they have less standing than older men. But even older men who are willing to share some, would always stop at certain points.

For instance, one of the local elementary school teachers, a man of maybe fourty or fifty, often spoke with me. He visibly no longer agrees with the practice. This is due both to his being religious and involved in education. This made him willing to help in my project, oftentimes sharing a bit more than others did. Still, there were topics where he remained unwilling to share, to break the rules of secrecy, and he very explicitly stated that this was because the *Tubuan* can punish and kill. That it doesn't matter if he isn't involved anymore, he could still get into trouble.[66]

Then there is the case of two men in their 50s/60s whom I met in neighbouring Likas village. They were both very willing to help me. Both volunteered to provide me with additional information. One came to find me as I was passing through the village, enthusiastically telling me that he knew songs that he could share with me. The other, as we sat in the local *hausboi* talking of the recent *tubuan* performance, had gone to fetch pictures of a performance that had happened in Samo in the early 2000s. They were both kind, inviting, and did not give me the impression that they were unwilling to speak. However, a chief from a village further south in the Siar/Lak region had been staying in the village and heard of me and my project. He disagreed with the idea that someone both foreign and female was asking questions on these topics. Following his visit, the men who had previously been willing and even eager to speak to me ceased to share information with me. Though no one ever explicitly said anything, it was evident that the opinion of this chief, likely a man of higher ranking than those that I had been speaking with, mattered more than anyone else's. He had a higher ranking and, as such, the other men had headed whatever he had told them. Not only does this demonstrate the universal truism that different people within any context will have different views on where to draw lines between right and wrong or secret and not, but it shows the extent to which hierarchy and the fear (which is at times referred to as respect) of those higher in the hierarchy is real among men in the region.

These example show that fear plays a key role in the Tubuan. It plays a key role in separating men into hierarchical relations. The younger men, the *mangis,* are generally unwilling to speak on the topic because, having only just recently entered the society, their ranking is so low. They do not yet hold a position of authority within the society and so are far more careful. Older men do not have the same reticence to speak. Clearly, they have reached a point where they have a

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[66] It should be noted that his lack of willingness to share was likely more complex than the reasons that he explicitly gave. This is because he was also not willing to share when it came to secret practices related to fire-eating or magical formulae, practices that are also male and secret but not a part of the *Tubuan*. In the end, he may have been construing himself as someone who was willing to help in part due to his religious and educational beliefs but also in part due to a desire for personal gain.

deeper understanding of the *Tubuan* and how the society works, they have learned which 'secrets' can be shared and which not, so that the secrecy surrounding the practice may work its best. That they have this knowledge also indicates that they have risen, at least somewhat, in rank within the society. However, the case that I experienced in Likas makes clear that even these older men who have achieved some rank are not at the top of the hierarchy, there remain certain men who have achieved higher standings and ultimately make the calls. Not only is it clear that these men are involved in hierarchical relations, but these are clearly governed by a sufficient amount of fear for them to follow the rules set by those above them. Indeed, I met no one who was willing to break the rules of secrecy. Even the school teacher, who claimed that he no longer believed in the practice and would give me more information, did not tell me much more than any of the other men did and made references to his own fears of what could happen if he told too much.

On the one hand, this play of both giving and withholding is an integral part of secrecy: the men who gave me tidbits of information were contributing to the secret of the practice by giving me enough information to keep me interested and make me intrigued, but not enough to actually understand. As such, our exchanges can also be understood as integral parts of the function of the institution.

Indeed, here ideas of fear and respect are deeply intertwined, if not to some extent synonymous. When I was in the field, I often heard the terms referred to together, or interchangeably. For instance, it was often said that women respected the *Tubuan*. I was told a couple of times that in the past women had been required to place baskets over their heads in order to 'see' *tubuan* performances. I was told that they had done this as a sign of respect. Indeed respect is an important part of the culture, as I heard the word used on many occasions by a wide range of people and in many contexts. Everyone seemed to know the word in English, despite it not being the most basic of words and that many spoke what they themselves described as "broken English" and some only a few sentences. Another English word that everyone seemed to know was "denomination", indicating the importance of religion in the region. Similarly, this would indicate the deep importance of respect in the region. The word was used when speaking of how people followed norms set by the *Tubuan*, I also recorded it being used to refer to following the rules of custom, to obeying husbands, obeying the church, obeying the rule of law, obeying what the big men in the community had said, etc… In short, respect was generally used to refer to acts of obedience to a power greater than oneself, this would involve an element of fear, as one must obey because the other party is more powerful and will punish one otherwise. This dynamic is present in the *Tubuan*: for both men and women. All must obey

and respect someone (or many) who is higher in the hierarchy than oneself, on threat of punishment and/or the associated loss of status.

As such, fear is an integral part of the *Tubuan*. The *Tubuan* would not be the *Tubuan* without an element of fear. It is not simply a part of a narrative surrounding it, that makes the performances resonate in a particular way. It is an integral part of what makes the custom into a "serious" practice, into a practice that has real repercussions on society. The *Tubuan* is a part of the organization of local social worlds. It contributes greatly to the creation and upholding of a heightened status of certain individuals - men in general, and particular individuals. These status differentials then allow for socio-political power to fall into the hands of certain people and remain out of access to others. Not only does it allow for socio-political power to be held by these individuals, but it justifies their right to hold this power and justifies their decision making. Indeed, as I will show in chapter 7, this is in fact what secrecy does. What this analysis adds, is that secrecy cannot be accomplished without being placed in an affectual environment. Here, it is placed in one saturated with fear. As affects tend to be experienced on an individual basis, it places into the bodies of individuals the sensation that these structures are real, important and immutable. Thus creating and reinforcing social structure, ideas and beliefs as these are enacted by these individuals.

However, despite the ways in which it seems to have been ingeniously designed, the *Tubuan* has not existed forever. In certain senses it has existed since times immemorial, but only in the sense that in this region of the world the written record generally only goes back a couple of centuries at best. As I have already mentioned, scholars have date the arrival of the practice in neighbouring East New Britain to as late as the early 1800s. There is no information on when the practice would have begun in New Ireland, though it is commonly understood that it originated there. Regardless, it is unlikely to have existed for thousands of years undisturbed. It is more likely to be a few hundred years old. Further, its arrival to regions beyond the southern tip of the island, such as the Sursurunga region, have happened more recently and the practice would have had to be integrated into existing systems of belief and governance. Further, across New Ireland many *kastom* practices are strikingly similar, suggesting that there has continuously been a good degree of cultural communication throughout the island[67]. This is to say that the *Tubuan*, much like all other masking practices in the region has undergone adaptations and has

[67] Despite there being approximately 20 languages on the island, the institution of the *hausboi* is found throughout. Further the island can roughly be divided into the *Malagan* practice, common in the north, and the *Tubuan* practice, common in the south. Though the two are quite different, they are both dominantly male, involve secrecy and are intertwined with practices of governance and social hierarchy.

changed with time. Like all sociocultural practices or institutions it is not static. However airtight secrecy may seem - it is not.

As such, it is also interesting to look at the shapes that fear may take in a practice over time. Due to a lack of historical records on the topic or/and going back far enough, this cannot be done by looking solely at the *Tubuan*. However, other practices such as the *kipong* can be informative on this topic.

Kipong performances and masks do not evoke the kind of fear that the *Tubuan* does. Indeed, it is not classed as a “serious” performance, it is classed as a “fun” one. Yet, both performers and individuals who have seen performances will say that it is “scary”, men will say that it is important that the mask and performance be designed to induce fear. And, mentions of it in Wolffram’s work demonstrate that adults may in fact take glee in causing younger generations to feel fear at the hands of this mask (ex: Wolffram, 2007:199). However, when the mask performs, the ambiance surrounding it is largely one of fun: people smile and laugh, *bukur* is common, and there is joy in the air.

There are still secrets regarding the mask. How it is made remains somewhat secret. I sat and watched as Bale and some of his family members made a mask. But, I was also told by two mask-makers that their inspiration for the design came from consuming special plants and then dreaming the whole thing. This creative process was kept secret. Yet another mask maker who had originally promised to show me how masks were made did not do so, avoiding me completely, after the chief from further south had made his way through. This indicated some kind of association between the practices. Had the *kipong* been as much of a “just for fun” practice as other *singsing*s such as the Solomon style or more local traditional ones like the *pinpidik* or the *puerparik*, my interest should not have been a problem.

Indeed, it would seem that the *kipong* is a practice in transition. As such, it is both associated with fear and fun. It is associated with the fun parts of fear, those that startle one and make one jump back before breaking out into laughter. This unexpected juxtaposition of emotions (or affects) is actually quite common. Across cultures people tell one another stories that are designed to scare those around them, these stories are both told and listened to with glee. We watch horror films, we go visit haunted houses. Fear, within a controlled and safe environment, and fun frequently go hand in hand. The same is true of masking practices. Many masks are designed to look like threatening creatures, their behaviour remains somewhat unknown to us, many will make sudden moves into crowds as if to attack (sometimes truly attacking). Yet,

people attend these performances, people will even travel distances to attend these performances. And even as the terrifying creature leaps into the crowd making those in the area run in fear, everyone is laughing and smiling. Much of the fun, or the entertainment value, of masking practices comes from their unpredictability, the presence of an element of fear. It is essential to remember and include this element in an analysis of the masks.

Here, I will look to the work of Nicholas Argenti, who writes on this combination of emotions in relation to the masks of the grasslands of Cameroon. He writes about both palace masks and village masks. The palace masks are controlled by the palace, the local governing entity, and are extremely fear inducing due to their tendency to violence (2019:1-57). Of one of the palace masks he states that “a description of the effect of *Mabu* [the mask] that does not recognize this ambivalently pleasurable emotion would only be telling half the story.” (2019:1,62). Because despite its violent tendencies, the fact that it is clearly dangerous, people still attend performances and enjoy attending performances.

He also addresses the source of some of the fear and dread that these masks elicit. Their context is quite different from that of *tubuan* and *kipong* masks, but the ways in which fear and dread are elicited through inexplicit references to painful histories and guilty secrets is relevant. Argenti discusses the ways in which, historically, palace masks were tied to the slave trade in the region as well as how some of the masks acted as a disciplinary branch of the palace, with certain types even being in charge of carrying out executions (2019:59). At the time when he conducted his research none of these things were happening anymore, but the performances still carried their weight. The performances still carried this weight despite the fact that his interviewees never made any explicit references to historical or political issues (2019:141). Still, he concludes that “The palpable sense of dread or eeriness so effectively cultivated by palace masks thus underscores at once the coercive power of the palace and the guilty secret of the source of its power.” (2019:136) . While, the mask that was once worn by palace executioners: “Today, the masks of the *kwifon* [the palace leaders] no longer execute people or sacrifice slaves, but they are still the object of a visceral fear that cannot be explained by the actual dangers that they pose.” (2019:92). To refer back to Ahmed, one could say that these masks, these performances, the objects in them, have become sticky with these violent histories and morally corrupt pasts. Though people may no longer speak of these things, they are still prone to feeling their lasting effects.

To return to Papua New Guinea, something similar seems to be occurring in the case of the *kipong*. Historically, it was a mask that was used in order to perpetrate acts of violence. A couple

of my informants recounted that it had once been a mask that could essentially be hired by people who had had trouble with others in order to go and seek a sort of retribution - a violent retribution. In a sense, they were justice imposers, or, much like the masks n the grasslands, executioners. As such, at the time, to see a *kipong* coming towards one would have been a truly terrifying experience. Further, the masks were designed to transform the people wearing them into intimidating and terrifying beings as well as to hide their identities. Today, the masks have retained their fear-inducing aspects. My informants told me that the masks were designed and performed with the intention of causing fear. While at actual performances most adults enjoy themselves and do not experience any actual fear, children do. Children often scream and cry on seeing the *kipong* and many adults remember having run to hide behind their mothers on seeing a *kipong* as a child. As such, even though today the practice is done for purposes of entertainments, we see in the reactions that it causes reverberations of its history.

Masked Performance: The sensorial from the perspective of the onlooker

I now turn to what the sensory experience of masked performance may be for members of the audience. As such, I will provide a brief analysis of my own experiences attending performances of masked dances in the field. The aim is to provide a wholistic view of what I have argued in this chapter. Following the organisation of this chapter so far, I will proceed sense by sense. Once again, I must clarify that this does not mean that these senses are discrete separately perceived phenomena, nor that there are not others at play which I may have failed to isolate. I organize my text in this way for the sake of clarity and organization. I begin by looking at sight. I begin here as my sensory analysis is highly personal and I come from a Western context where sight is typically the most highly valued sense.

When I attended *tubuan* performances in both Nokon and Kokopo, I was very excited to be seeing the *tubuan*. However, in both cases, it struck me, even as I was at the performances, how my ability to see reflected my social position. The clarity of my field of sight was determined by where the various traits of my person (traits such as gender, researcher, foreigner, degrees of power and money) permitted me to position myself. In this sense, the *tubuan* performances which I attended in Nokon and Kokopo put me in different positions.

In Nokon, for most of the *singsing* and the entire *tubuan* performance, I was positioned amongst the villagers. The performance faced those who sat on the balcony of the large house: meaning that their field of sight was the clearest and marking them as people with high socio-economic status. Amongst the crowd, I could not stand in the first lines, I stood behind many people,

having to keep my distance. This obstructed my field of vision and placed the *tubuan*s dancing at an increased distance from me. Though I moved around, trying to stand on objects to increase my height or strategically between heads, there was no way to obtain a clear and unobstructed view. It even seemed as if the wall of men at the front were intentionally blocking the view of those in behind, as no one crouched or made any effort to provide a better view to those behind. Indeed, as I have already noted in this chapter, the ability to see, the clarity (or in this case, lack of clarity), with which one sees the performance seemed to be a means of reminding individuals (and teaching those who were not in-the-know) about their relative position in society, This was something which I very clearly felt during the performance.

The same occurred during the *tubuan* performances which I witnessed in Kokopo. The difference being that there, my positionality was different. At the morning *kinavai*, I first found myself surrounded by women, all of us so far as to barely be able to tell that there were figures moving on the beach in the distance. At this time, degrees of visibility seemed to emphasize one's position in society, much as it had in Nokon. And, once I realized what was happening, this was once again something which I felt keenly. Except that in this situation my position was different. I was still a woman and a researcher. At first these positionalities were emphasized. But, as the arrival of the boats to shore approached and the light of morning came out, the positionalities emphasized changed, my positionalities as outsider and tourist were emphasized, just as my proximity to and ability to see the *tubuan*s changed. I approached the beach where they were waiting and walking about, finding myself incredibly close to the figures, sometimes within only a few meters. From this close I was at times able to see the figures clearly, though still from behind the shoulders of those standing in front of me. This changed the nature of my curiosity and excitement. It made me see (or rather feel) the ways in which men's position in the crowd of onlookers leads to a very different experience for them, one of access, one of inclusion. From a distance, my lack of sight had frustrated me enormously, made me worry about my research outcomes and made me feel excluded. Now, these thoughts almost disappeared. The figures became far more impressive, as from closer they appeared larger and I was able to see some of the chaos as figures headed in and out of what I assumed was a changing and resting area.

Later on, as the *tubuan* performances moved to the field where most of the festival would be held, there were few people in the audience. There, I had a perfectly clear view of the figures, as I stood first row, next to equally fascinated tourists from various countries. We all left a few meters of open grass between us and the dancing figures. Being able to see the figures so well, without the frustrations of shoulders and heads blocking one's view was a wonderful

experience. However, without the surrounding chaos the figures in some ways felt less impressive. Further, the clear line of sight did not mean that I understood what I saw. Being able to see well only went so far as, my knowledge of what I was looking at remained (and, even after all of this research, remains) limited. As such, even with a clear line of sight, I still felt my social position, as an outsider. In all of these cases the social structure both built and enforced through sensory access was inescapable.

My visual experience of *kipong* performances was quite different. All of the performances which I saw were highly informal, many organized for small groups and only one as a part of a village wide activity. As such, there were no visual constraints, everyone in attendance could see well. At the time of the performances, this meant that I did not focus much on the sense. In retrospect, I understand that this contributed to a sense of casualness and fun, to an openness and inclusivity which is characteristic of fun and laughter, indeed, which is reminiscent of the carnival as described by Bakhtin.

Still, the field of sight was not left entirely open. Performers made an effort to change in and out of their *bilas* out of sight. Elsie in Muliama did so in a small room under one of the houses, Bale did so somewhere off in the dark, the four *mangis* did so in and around the *hausboi* and Topin Tomu did so in a hidden area behind his family's house. In this sense, the visible and invisible were still played with. However, here it was far more reminiscent of the ways in which theater performers do so, it had much more to do with the play on the visible needed to cause a suspension of disbelief in the audience. Indeed, though I still did not understand the meaning of what I was seeing, of the movements, of the designs on the masks, I was able to see these clearly, even to see them when they were not being performed or worn. The practice was visually inclusive and open, though not to the extent of giving everything away.

The aural was in many ways similar across all kinds of performances: *tubuan*, *kipong* and in other *singsing*s. In all cases, it is highly repetitive and provides information which is not comprehensible to most listeners. The bamboo drums which are played for musical accompaniment are the same instruments and produce very repetitive beats. The lyrics are also often fairly limited, consisting of only a few lines which are repeated many times, indeed, it often seems that they are simply repeated for as long as those singing, the musicians and/or the dancers wish the song to go on. In this sense, because beats and lyrics recur so frequently, the listener is drawn in. Even an outsider, such as myself, can fairly quickly learn the words and the rhythm and join in. The knowledge of this music then draws everyone together, as they feel that they are participating all together.

However, the lyrics to these songs are frequently not in languages that are understood. There are of course different degrees of this. For example, the Mong songs to which the *tepang* is performed in Muliama. These songs were not necessarily in unknown languages, they were commercially produced. For me, the anthropologist, this did not make a difference, I could not understand the lyrics regardless. It was a part of the normal degree to which things sounded strange and incomprehensible. There was no need to put special effort into concealing the lyrics in order to mystify me, my position made me susceptible to this. To other listeners this would have been different. And, even for me. When attending *tubuan* performances, I knew that no one would help me to transcribe and translate the lyrics after. This made me try to listen particularly closely, trying to make out any word which I might recognize. Of course, this was to no avail. But it made the experience of listening to *tubuan* performances and *kipong* ones different: though I understood just as little of both I was more tensely focused during *tubuan* performances, my disposition was indeed far more serious.

Then there is the question of surrounding noise. This depends more on the event than on the type of mask being performed. At Nokon and in Kokopo there was much buzzing, as many in attendance talked amongst themselves. While at the informal *kipong* performances that I attended, smaller crowds meant that there was less of this. A striking difference which I noted between *tubuan* and *kipong* performances was that the audiences at *tubuan* performances tended to be quieter, or perhaps more muted. I do not mean this in the sense that everybody stopped speaking. Rather that at *tubuan* performances, people spoke to give warning on how to behave, they kept one another in line. At Kokopo, tourists watched with a mixture of curiosity and respect. On the other hand, during *kipong* performances not only were there no such warnings, but people frequently broke out laughing. When Elsie performed, she interacted with the audience specifically to make them do this. Of course, both practices were also meant to elicit fear. Elsie also interacted with the audience in order to scare them. For the older children and adults this meant that laughter was frequently heard, but it also triggered the very audible cries of some of the younger children. On the other hand, the *tubuan*, which is meant to be viewed from positions of fearful respect, did not elicit audible demonstrations of this fear: just as no one broke out laughing, no one broke out in tears.

Next in line in my analysis is the olfactory. This sense was heavily dependent on event location since my position as an audience member meant that I was too far to detect any odours coming from the performance area or/and the *bilas* of the performers. As such, in Nokon, what I most remember is the smell of body odour, as large amounts of people arrived to a village built for far

fewer, overpowering the background pleasant smells of sea air and sun burnt sand. On the other hand, in Kokopo, the weather was overcast and rainy. As such, I mostly remember the smell of fresh wet air, accompanied by that of people, but not overpowered by it. In fact, in trying to remember odours, I begin to think of the ambiance, the atmosphere (both literally and figuratively - as the effects of the weather and collective mood merge in my memories). I think of the burning sun and its incredible brightness in Nokon and the heat (heavy for me, normal for others). Or, in Kokopo, of the rain: how in the pre-dawn morning the temperature was pleasant and the atmosphere seemed heavier and reflected the collective slightly sleepy waiting of the long line of people along the sea shore. How, as I moved into where the action was and things became more chaotic with people moving around on and off of the beach, the weather also became more unpredictable: raining in short bursts. Smells seem to have been more connected to environment and surrounding bodies than anything else (of course, perhaps this is no surprise given that the western sense of smell is undertrained).

As such, scent leads me to body sensation. Perhaps a natural transition given that scent is said to be the most viscerally experienced of the senses, the most embodied. The primary body sensation for me at most performances was one of discomfort, a discomfort which one needed to bear with in order to get to see the much anticipated performance. This discomfort tended to stem first and foremost from the heat, often a mid-day heat, from sitting in various uncomfortable positions, from eating on an odd schedule. A lot of boredom. All paired with a mental alertness and tiredness. All of which is forgotten as the performance begins. The only times that these were not, or less, a part of the experience were during informally held *kipong* performances, where there was a little less uncomfortable waiting all the while never knowing exactly when the performance would happen. Still, even at the most informal of performances, these elements never fully disappeared.

While writing this analysis it has been impossible to entirely separate these sensorial perceptions from emotional and affectual experiences of the performances I attended. My ability to see the performances had a strong impact on my how I felt during the performances, about the performances. Just as cooler rainy air during the morning *kinavai* in Kokopo leads me to remember the experience fondly, before I even start to think about the masked figures and their performances. Or, how remembering the sounds of laughter as Elsie and Bale performed *kipong* brings a smile to my face before I even begin to think of the performances themselves. As I have argued here, these “different” modes of sensing, of feeling experience are not separate, they are deeply entangled.

Affects Beyond Masks: Discourses on craziness and social expectations

There are many affects aside from fear that play active roles in shaping social life in Samo. These affects are not tied into masking practices, but do actively shape society through the discourses regarding them and narratives surrounding them. Examining them also allows for a deeper understanding of what is and is not valued in Samo as well as how people live in and navigate their worlds.

One of these affects was referred to as *longlong*, which seems to be more or less translatable to “crazy”. I refer to it as an affect here, though in reality it exists in a kind of ambiguous state not really being an emotion, a feeling or an affect. Rather, it is more of a label that is placed on people or their behaviours to indicate what their state of mind may be like and that itself engenders affects.There were two people in the village who permanently had this label associated to them, and, from time to time it would be applied to others as they went about behaving in ways deemed to be *longlong*.

The first of these was an older woman. I am still unclear on what her exact relation to the people in the community is. Daisy once said that she was a mother of hers. Suffice it to say that she was older, at least over sixty years old. She had, in the past, led a normal village life, she had born and raised four or five children. Now, she seemed to wander past from time to time and when she did she would sometimes sit with our group in Tabun. She was difficult to understand, her speaking no longer clear. From a western medical perspective, it is likely that she had something in the lines of dementia. In the village, people generally treated her kindly: accepting her impromptu presence in their circles, trying to stop her from smoking (which she was not supposed to do with her bad lungs), I even saw some people helping her to wash. Further, every time I saw her she was well dressed, in new clothes, even wearing necklaces (people in the village may be extremely poor, the ability to afford to always wear clothing that looks new is generally an indicator of some funds coming from outside the village, wearing jewelry even more so). As she would not have been able to work in her state, someone (or many people) were visibly caring for her.

On the other hand, she was known as the *longlong meri* (crazy woman). Though as far as I could see people treated her well, they also told me that others did not treat her so. There was also a certain distance taken from her. People often teased her and laughed. At times this seemed like friendliness in an awkward situation. At other times I wondered whether it was due

to awkwardness or more of a making fun of. What was obvious was that she made people uncomfortable. This is not at all surprising, after all, in the West, people with the diseases of old age such as dementia and Alzheimer's also make us uncomfortable. They suddenly break with expected behaviours in a way that suggests that who they are is breaking. Not only does it break our image of the person and our relation with them, but it shows us how fragile a state we all live in. These individuals bring us face to face with very uncomfortable realities.

Here, the word *longlong* was used to indicate that she was perhaps ‘going out of her mind’, she was not behaving in expected ways. The label was used as a means of identifying her, as this state was permanent, it had become a defining trait of hers. The word indicates that she is someone who does not behave in the ways expected by society.

Another person, Samuel, who was generally referred to as *longlong*, was one of the *mangis*. In a sense it is not correct to call him one of the *mangis,* as he did not entirely belong to their group. He was of the correct age to be a *mangi,* and a peripheral member of the groups of *mangi,* but also not truly an integrant. He was well-known for being a disrupter and for taking drugs. There is a drug problem in the region. Many people grow, consume and presumably sell marijuana. This leads to violence in a myriad of ways, mostly due to fights regarding the acts of planting, selling and consuming, and there is a tendency for those who are high to act more erratically and violently. The general attitude towards marijuana is strikingly different from that in the West (I come from a country where the consumption of the drug is legal). In the region marijuana consumption is viewed extremely negatively and seen as a large social problem. This is most evident in new legal rules which impose a fine of one million kina on anyone found growing marijuana (in contrast, many people found that the hundred to hundred and fifty kina return trip to the capital Kavieng was prohibitively expensive).

As such, he was deemed *longlong* for his very involved participation in activities deemed socially illicit. He was also called *longlong*, as he behaved in ways that could be called “crazy”. He was often high, and generally not a creator of peace. He would get into fights with some of my younger informants, to the point of having stones thrown at him, which he would escape while smiling and laughing, visibly pleased by his ability to anger. At other times he would not actively disturb, but would walk around with an odd look in his eyes: eyes red, glassy, etc… There was an aura around him, that people could never be sure what he would do. He was outside of the socially acceptable paradigm, his behaviour was not predictable, and this caused discomfort.

Still, he was not entirely outside the group. He often spent time with the *mangis*. Yet another time, he was with the *mangis*, as they were training for their weekly football matches. They were running along a stretch of the beach, he was following (he was not the fastest runner). The *mangis* all ran by me and a couple of other young women that I had been talking with as we sat on the beach. Samuel ran by with the rest of the group, struggling to hold his pants up as he ran (he always wore them nearly falling off). This made the young girl I had been speaking with roll over with laughter on the beach. Clearly, despite being categorized as l*onglong* he was still not rejected by the community.

The term is also applied to people whose behaviour is not explainable for shorter periods of time. To people who are *being longlong*, or who are behaving in a way that indicates that, for the moment, they are *longlong*. For instance, one day in nearby Hipakat village, a woman was hit in the head by her husband. She was eventually taken to the nearest hospital. As I walked back to Samo along with the others who had gone to find a car to help the woman, I asked one of the women from Samo village if she knew what had happened, what might have caused the woman's husband to do such a thing. I knew at the time that it was not a question that would give me much of an answer, but it was the only thing on my mind, so I asked anyway. She simply answered that he must have been *longlong*. Maybe his wife hadn't listened, had talked back too much, and he must be a *longlong* man. This is a rather serious example, but it goes to show that *longlong* can be both a transient category and a permanent label, that either way it is applied to people who are not behaving *well*. Indeed, it is used much in the way that people in the West used to use the term crazy. People can just be crazy, or they can act in crazy ways, they can also be pushed to act in crazy ways. In ways that are outside of expected behaviour, in unacceptable ways.

In addition, it often seems to be a way of explaining things without having to go too far into it. A means of explaining internal workings when these are hard to ignore but, as in the opacity of mind framework, it is undesirable to expound too much on internal mental workings. These are situations where it is almost impossible not to look at these internal motivations and thoughts. This is almost jarring in the last example where a woman was badly hurt by her husband, it is almost impossible to not wonder at what was going on inside the perpetrator's mind and equally inside that of the woman and her close family. Yet, culturally it is not common or desirable to expound or reflect too deeply on these things. *Longlong*, does this, without having to go into too many details.

In addition, *longlong* is also a useful example of the arguments that I have made concerning how the various types of felt experience cannot be separated from one another because they are not actually separate things. *Longlong* is also a means of naming or explaining certain affects that give rise to certain visceral reactions. Though the region is not one where it is common for people to expound on their thoughts, opinions, etc… These occurrences clearly have affectual effects, as there is a discomfort and weight present in these situations. The situations, the actions that led to them become "sticky" with these affects. They define what is seen as good and bad behaviour. They act as cautionary tales. They create categories of normal people in opposition to those wha are crazy (all the while reminding everyone that it is easy to become crazy or to be hurt by the crazy). And, lead people to avoid behaviours, situations and people who will get them into these kinds of situations.

Indeed, here we see how the felt, the emotional, or what I have here been referring to as the affectual is tied to what we often refer to as the sensorial. That the two are part and parcel of one another. Here, we can return to Geurts, who spoke of the sensory and of how the senses are involved in a process of embodied learning which all members of society go through. Her application was to that of bodily sensation, of what in western terms is thought of as the five senses, as something more physical, physiological. What studies of affect, atmosphere and the visceral show us is that those things which are often thought of as internal mental sensations are deeply embodied. As such, I argue that Geurts' arguments continue to be valid in this context. These situations which I will call affectual are embodied, they are a part of how individuals learn what is correct and incorrect, they are a part of how individuals learn about the world.

Concluding Remarks

Studying emotions or even affects can be rather difficult in Melanesia, which is known for featuring what is referred to as opacity of mind. A sensorial perspective not only offers its own insights, but offers a kind of route around this. It is also extremely appropriate to the context as local conception of feeling do not seem to impose the same strict division as we do in the West between emotionally felt things and physiologically felt things. An examination which includes the sensory, the affectual, the atmospheric all at once is thus better suited to the situation.

When applied to daily life it provides deeper insight into the values of community members. This is because this focus allows one to take into account the influence of individuals within the

community. As individuals live and breath within their environments, they will also act and react in ways that, while informed by the context, are also deeply theirs.

It also provides deeper insight into *kastom* practices. For instance, we see that certain senses are valued differently in different realms and contexts, with sight and hearing being given no particular special treatment in daily village life, but being intentionally controlled and manipulated in relation to these practices. This takes additional significance if we consider the deeply embodied ways in which individuals learn. Indeed, this will be addressed in the following chapter, as this form of learning is generally emphasized during initiations into secret societies. It also points to a deep understanding of the ways in which the senses are involved in the creation of individual persons in contexts where personhood is dominantly relationally conceived, as well as in the creation and maintenance of forms of social structure.

Chapter 7

Secrecy

Secrets are something that we are all familiar with. In contemporary western cultures secrets tend to be viewed as something negative. But they are necessary to our lives, to our individual lives and for the functioning of society. In a Goffmanian sense we keep certain information secret in our day to day interactions. Then there are things such as state secrets. There are also secrets that are secret only to people of certain age groups, like the fact that Santa Claus isn't real. Secrets also underly the mysterious power of many institutions such as religious ones.

Anything can be a secret (Bok, 1984:5). Any piece of knowledge can become a secret. All that is necessary is that some piece of information be concealed from the view of certain groups of people and this information will become a secret. The information that the secret contains does not have any requirements. Secrecy is not defined by the content of secrets, it is defined by the process of keeping the contents hidden. This concealment, the various processes and methods used to accomplish it is what secrecy is. And this process of concealment is the defining trait of secrecy (Bok, 1984:6).

Secrecy is indispensable to human life. Yet, in contemporary western society, transparency is highly valued and, as such, secrecy is often viewed negatively or simply thought to not be present. Herdt is well-known for his work on secrecy. He discusses the path that lead to the current valuations of secrecy and calls our current perspective on it the "romantic-cynical attitude" (2003:47). In our contemporary "Western" cultures secrecy has come to have a negative connotation. We live in cultures where knowledge and access to information are important values. We expect governments and businesses to act transparently, and if they happen not to it surely means that they are up to no good. On the other hand a premium is placed on privacy. People are taken to have the right to live their personal lives without having microphones listening in or devices illicitly tracking them. People get angry if governments and businesses do not respect their right to live their own lives without being observed. This has lead theorists to define the two terms: secrecy is information that is hidden without consent and privacy is consensually hidden information (Warren & Laslett, 1977:43). This is the legacy of historical social analysis of secrecy coming to us from the likes of Durkheim, Freud and Simmel (2003:47). These theorists focused on secrecy as a form of lying and a means of protecting weak information from criticism. Durkheim having argued that no institution could be built on lies

(2003:47) and Simmel having argued that secrecy was a means of protection, that secrecy forms a kind of second world in which members and their ideas are protected from the criticism of the outside world (2003:50). For Simmel this meant that secrecy is weak, because a simple outing of the secret would send the whole construct crashing (1906:463). These views are echoed by Bettleheim, who argues that secrecy protects beliefs from the criticism of the outside world, beliefs that would otherwise not be able to hold up to these criticisms (Herdt, 2003:50). Sissela Bok also critically discusses this feature of secrecy (Bok, 1984:25). This line of analysis has continued into the late 20th century and forms the foundations of our common perception of secrecy (Herdt, 2003:47).

Herdt discusses the practice of male secret societies in both Victorian American society and in Melanesia. In both cases he comes to the conclusion that these are practices that promote male homosociality at times when there is a deep sense of insecurity, that the structures provided by the secret society provide roles and a space for socialization for those involved (2003:4-11, 28, 34). In the Melanesian context, the one most relevant here, he argues that secret societies, or *ritual secrecy*, emerges at times when social relations are so unstable as to stifle a society's ability to function, it is as such "the cultural and psychological solution to an otherwise intolerable and perhaps ultimately unsuccessful sociality." (2003:34). The ritual secrecy of secret societies offer structures through which boys are turned into men, they are transformed into people who are capable of occupying the roles of the previous generation. Ritual secrecy creates a hierarchy of dominance and respect that creates the social identities of boys and men, and allows individuals to make their way through these steps. Not only does it allow them to do this, but it reassures older generations, as it secures younger generations' participation in these roles, assuring that social structures will be secure, will be perpetuated going forth (2003:38-39, 47). In this sense, Herdt disagrees with previous theories that male secret societies were for the purpose of male domination of women and children, he sees it as a means of creating and perpetuating male social roles (2003:38-39). Secrecy does become one of many routes to power, but only one of many amongst a complex interplay of power relations (2003:42).

Herdt's writing shows that secrecy is a complex thing that goes beyond shams and hoaxes and that can have constructive effects in society. He is not the only one to have looked at secrecy in this way. Though being critical of secrecy, Bok also discusses its relation to identity, power, and it's use in governments and the sciences, looking at both the more positive and more negative effects of it (1984). Even Simmel, which Herdt cites as an influence on the way to the "romantic-cynical attitude", did caution against a too negative view of lies as impeding the ability to see the positive sociological significance that secrets can have in certain situations (1906:448). And,

Tanya Luhrmann has written about secrecy, trying to take the focus away from all of its negative connotations and focusing on how the creation of a separate world can have therapeutic effects for those living in them (1989a).

In Papua New Guinean villages the built environment and local ways of life make it extremely difficult to achieve what Western people would speak of as privacy. Houses do no offer sound protection, sometimes not even protection from sight and are inhabited by large numbers of people. Not to mention that much of life is carried out outside - gardening, work, socializing, etc.... Privacy, in the sense of not having one's personal life known to and on display to the outside world is extremely difficult, if not impossible. But, secrecy is alive and well. There are many secret societies. Many of these have faded over the past hundred or hundred and fifty years, but many continue on. These societies are perhaps exclusively groups of men. Who go through an initiation in order to become members of societies who meet at various points in special locations in the bush and put on performances (often masked) in the village. All to the explicit exclusion of non-initiates (usually women and children).

This leads to some of the big points that analysts of secrecy and secret societies have discussed, whether they viewed secrecy under a more positive or a more negative lens. These are the creation of: power, boundaries, and identities.

Indeed, it would seem that secrecy is power. And the power is not about the contents of the secret. As stated before a secret can be anything. It is the same when it comes to creating power, the information being kept secret is itself not necessarily very important at all, what is important is that there is something being kept secret and some people who are in the know and some who are not and cannot be. This creates power along the lines of the old adage that 'knowledge is power'. Not the contents of the knowledge but the knowledge itself - the possession of knowledge.

Urban, building on Bourdieu’s notion of capital, argues that secrecy is a strategy for building capital (1998:219). He also builds on Luhrmann (Urban, 1998:220), and argues that secrecy needs to be understood in terms of its forms and strategies, not its content (1998:210). As a result, he defines secrecy as: “the tactics by which social agents conceal or reveal, hoard or exchange, certain valued information.” (1998:210). When knowledge is understood in this way, it becomes something that can be possessed and exchanged (Luhrmann, and its value no longer lies in its content, but rather in the fact that it can be and is exchanged (Urban, 1998:241). There is a creation of delimiting lines between those who possess knowledge, those who don't, and

those who cannot. This creates boundaries between different groups of people and a hierarchy between those who hold knowledge and the access to it and those who do not.

We can take the example of male secret societies that most men are initiated into around their teenage years. Though not all will necessarily get initiated anymore, they have the option to do so. Young boys fit into the category of those who do not know. While young girls and women, who do not have the option of being initiated, fit into the category of those who cannot know. However the creation of groups and boundaries is not limited to this, as even more hierarchies are formed within the secret group: as those who have been there longer and know more than initiates or new members will have power over those individuals, thus also creating various hierarchical grades amongst men who are in the know.

But what is it about having a secret that creates hierarchy and not just different but nonhierarchical groups? Two things appear to emerge, that there is a kind of awe in front of the mystery created and curiosity that draws those with no knowledge towards the knowledge. As Luhrmann states: "secrecy also elicits awe and deference towards its hidden contents." (Luhrmann, 1989a:137). By associating themselves with the group that has knowledge, individuals are placing themselves in a position where awe and deference also sticks onto them. While those who do not have access to the knowledge present awe and deference to the knowledge and those keeping it. Thus creating a hierarchy between the two groups. Fear (discussed in chapter 6) is a component of both awe and deference. And the power of secrecy comes from it's push and pull: it comes from the fear that it creates by making people want to avoid it and respect it, combined with a curiosity that makes people want to approach it and know.

This push and pull is achieved through the processes of secrecy, which work to make people aware of the existence of the secret and feel a certain way towards it. If the secret were simply kept secret, no one spoke of it and no one knew that there was a secret, let alone who knew the secret, then there would be no creation of groups and hierarchies. It is the process of secrecy that creates this.

As such, secrecy is not truly about knowledge, it is about power. Returning to Herdt’s classical analysis, he argued that men were becoming members of secret societies because they felt like they lacked control and agency in their own lives - ie that they lacked any power within their own worlds (outer or inner). Secrecy is not really about the protection or learning of knowledge, it is

about the power structures that can be built around the supposed holding of knowledge (the holding of knowledge may or may not be true - in the end it is not what is important here).

One of the ways in which it is powerful is that it creates boundaries that prevent criticism and/or intervention from both the inside and the outside. This has been a source of criticism for secrecy (ex: Bok, 1984:7; Simmel, 1906:448). As individuals do not have to face criticism and arguments against their beliefs they are able to keep them and even build on them without having to question them in the kinds of ways that having outside eyes on them would force them to. This has often been a source of criticism for secrecy, as it is seen as a means of maintaining weak and likely erroneous views (Bok, 1984:25,50). But can also serve positive purposes, as Luhrmann argues that it can work therapeutically (1989a:145,158,162). Essentially, it provides a protective space for individuals and groups to work on themselves, whether this be seen as work that is for the best or for the worst. In this sense, secrecy changes people: the barriers, the divisions that it creates provide spaces for people and groups to change.

It also changes people in a a social sense. For instance, when it comes to Melanesian secret societies. These are often associated with initiation processes that boys go through as they reach their late childhood and teenage years. It serves to make them into men - to make them into a sociocultural entity understood by both themselves and society at large as men.

The boundaries created by secrecy form a kind of special space, a second reality which allows individuals to develop, to separate from who or what they are in their daily lives. This separation can serve to further beliefs and ideology that are dominant in a particular place, such as when secrecy is used during initiation practices and makes boys into men. It can also be used in order to protect ideas that may not well perceived by dominant society from criticism, as suggested by Bok and Simmel. Stated otherwise: the power of secrecy can be used both to support or to undermine authority.

For instance, archaeologists working in Zambia have found art on cave walls that are related to a male secret society present in the region (the Nyau) (Smith, 2001). This secret society is strikingly similar to the *Tubuan*[68]. Smith notes that though it has become well advertised through touristic endeavours, that this advertising of its exclusivity has only strengthened the society, noting that: "Perhaps the advertising of the withholding of information is integral to the nature of ritual secrecy, the knowledge itself being less powerful than the process of exclusion…" (Smith,

[68] As the *Tubuan*, most men were initiated into the Nyau, but it depended on women both as audience members and for food preparation (Smith, 2001:191). Further, it carries its own set of laws and colonial records show that in the past people were put to death for revealing its secrets (2001:196).

2001:188). Smith notes how the practice was driven underground and was a sign of resistance for many years as it met with disapproval in the late 1800s from a local group, then from missionaries and into the colonial era of the 1950s and 1960s the practice was banned (Smith, 2001:202-203). All of these challenges drove the practice underground and strengthened it. Further, as it was a rather disparate, village-based organization, if it disappeared in one area it did not mean that the practice as a whole disappeared (Smith, 2001:204). After all of this, he notes that the first Malawian president, Dr Hastings Kamuzu Banda, utilized the practice to help his campaign even using mask wearing to punish those who did not support his campaign (Smith, 2001:204). Yet, yet again, a few years later, the masks were again being used to show dissension (Smith, 2001:204). Not only are this mask and its male secret society strikingly similar to the *Tubuan*, they also exhibits the same kind of power: one both to help maintain or to undermine power.

Urban also details a similar situation, that of the Kartabhajas. The Kartabhajas are a religious sect from West Bengal who were most active in the 18th and 19th centuries, they did not follow the then prominent rules of the Indian caste system and their practice focused on the recitation of mantras (1998:229-232). This was originally meant to be a group that supported and appealed to lower classes. By publishing its mantras widely, by making them accessible to the masses, it was meant to subvert the power being imposed on local groups by British colonial rule. However, in the end, the highest level Kartabhajas ended up becoming some of the richest individuals in the region. They ended up charging their followers a “corporeal taxation”, a tax for the use of the bodies that they were living in (1998:245-246). At the beginning the sect had been built to free people from the oppression of colonial rule and its tax levies, but in the end they simply ended up living under a different but equally oppressive system. Building on this example, Urban argues that secrecy inevitably builds hierarchy and tends towards oppression, even though it may start as a means of subverting the very same sorts of forces (1998:212).

This is an interesting phenomenon. For the hierarchical dynamics of secrecy to exist the compliance of those who are being construed as inferior is needed. To look at this, I turn to another example, this time from Papua New Guinea. Andrew Lattas has worked in West New Britain with the Kaliai people. The Kaliai people have a male secret society which from time to time organizes the performance of masked figures, one of which is called *varku* (Lattas, 1989). Lattas writes about secrecy in light of what he learned of both men’s and women’s relation to the figure. Over the course of his fieldwork, he learnt that Kaliai women may be skeptic of the idea that *varku* is a spirit, however this does not matter as long as they do not voice this skepticism (1989:458). This then lead to the question of why they do not voice their skepticism. If men are

indeed using this as a mechanism to build themselves up as the members of society who are more powerful, as opposed to the women who are less powerful. If women know that this is untrue shouldn't they voice this concern and, in so doing, free themselves from the lower hierarchical position that the system places them in? It seems as if simply voicing their lack of ignorance would be enough to topple the system of domination. How is it that this kind of open secret survives even when it does not seem to benefit them (and may even work to their detriment)?

The answer is undoubtedly complicated and multifaceted. Some modern ethnographers note that in situations where there are male secret societies women often go along with the open secret as an act of allegiance - whether it be to show their support for their husbands, brothers and fathers, or to show their support for their traditional culture in the face of changing worlds (ex: Argenti, 2019:189; Gagliardi, 2018:749, 756; Kasfir, 1998:23; Knauft, 2004:187; Lattas, 1989:458; Pernet, 1982; B. Reed, 1998:71). There is also the emotional charge. Both those who do and and do not benefit from secrecy have lived their lives within it, they have been told stories, heard of the experiences of others, had their own experiences. These all carry weight, making it such that compliance with the system enacted through the process of secrecy is not a simple question. A large part of the compliance of all of those involved, even those who do not benefit from the secrecy is due to other factors, to other concerns. This is resumed in the case of the Kaliai, by Lattas: "Terror plus a proud allegiance to custom leads to a complicit participation by women in reproducing the ascribed female naivety on which male ritual power depends." (1989:458)

This emotional response, a result of living in a context within which control over knowledge is power is common to all members of society. Those who generally do not benefit from the resulting hierarchy comply due to what Lattas describes as a combination of terror and allegiance to custom (though there is no reason that a myriad of other feelings may not at others times have the same result). Those who benefit and those who may benefit from secrecy are equally taken in by this kind of reaction. Many ethnographers have written about how neophytes who are taken to be initiated often do not want to undergo initiation, that they are afraid or even terrified. Many are very much afraid, Herdt notes that some boys run away (2003:40) and some may panic (2017:56), while Albert notes that some are so afraid that they loose control of their bowels (1987:24). Indeed, even the men who reach the top grades of the Tubuan continue to hold fraught emotions. This includes doubt. As Albert emphasizes, they do not know if what they know is the whole truth, the real truth (1987:26). Making it such that even those at the very top of the hierarchy are not able to question the knowledge that they have and that they continue to

perpetuate. Barth, who worked with the Baktaman, a Mountain OK people in Papua New Guinea, speaks about the way in which the various echelons of secrecy that members of these societies climb through can be built in order to build this very uncertainty. He speaks of how the Baktaman, as they are initiated are taken through a series of steps which he likens to Chinese boxes, in that each level obscures, confuses and reveals the deception of the last (1975:219). The result is that even the most senior men who have been initiated to the highest levels of the society cannot trust the knowledge that they hold (1975:220). In short, the initiations are not about revealing secret knowledge, they are about constructing an attitude towards knowledge. They are about constructing an attitude to knowledge which discourages speculation and curiosity, ultimately building an environment in which individuals dislike sharing or even thinking about information (1975:219-221). Here, information is not “good to think” it is “good to act” (1975:221). The purpose is not the information itself, it is the effects that it has in the world, the actions and the social structures that it makes possible. It is the secrecy not the secrets.

The hierarchy built by secrecy acts in a self-sustaining kind of way. This is because of the uncertainty which it fosters at all levels: an individual can never be sure that they know all there is to know, that they know the whole story. It also allows those who appear to control the whole story to, in a sense, do just this by managing the construction of social reality.

Lindstrom argues that this is what big men do in Melanesia. He argues that given that the economic realm is not used for the creation of differentiation and hierarchy, it is instead the possession of knowledge that is used to create social hierarchy. He argues that: “big-men manage meaning in a social construction […] of reality” (Lindstrom, 1984:313). Information, action, beliefs, may come from anyone, but they will only stay, become valid, through the approval of these big men. “Anyone may produce novel information and ancestral instruction but this is sifted and validated, or discarded by those who control the truth and legitimacy of knowledge consumption.” (1984:301)

This works well because in many Melanesian societies knowledge is not something that is seen as coming from individual creative inspiration, it is generally something that is passed down, through dreams, from the ancestors. Lindstrom conducted his fieldwork in Tanna, where he found that knowledge was created in this way. The same is often true in Samo and the Sursurunga region. There, the design of *kipong* masks is said to come to individuals in dreams that they have after having eaten special plants. As are the lyrics to the accompanying songs and the choreography of the accompanying dance. As are the well-guarded *Tubuan* songs. Indeed, this may be used to exclude other groups from participating. As the exact plants that are

used are kept secret, and this knowledge only passed on to a select few at a time when the older men who possess this knowledge decide that they are ready to pass it along. Much as Lindstorm argued, this leaves the management of meaning up to a select few men (some may not strictly speaking be big men, but they are all slightly older men with a good standing in their communities) as they get to decide which information is put out creatively. Should another person come along and create a mask and song without having used these particular secret plants it would not be considered to truly be a mask of that sort. The same occurs in the context of the karuka house, where the use of scented plants are aplenty and significant to the ritual, but kowledge regarding what all of these are as well as where they can be found appears to be held only by particular individuals. To be a valid form of that type it must be validated “by those who control the truth and validity of knowledge consumption.”

Ultimately practices of secrecy are not the only phenomena at play in any one community. As long as there are a multiplicity of sources of knowledge, the social reality constructed through secrecy may be altered, the structures of inequality may end up collapsing (though, much as in the case described by Urban this does not mean that it won’t be replaced by another similar system). A classic example of how this can make a system based on secrecy collapse is that described by Tuzin concerning the Ilahita Arapesh. When he visited for his first fieldwork in 1972 a ritual secret society and its performance called the Tambaran was quite active, but when he returned he found that in the meanwhile it had completely disappeared (1997). What he found was that, due to various factors, the men had decided to make the system collapse by revealing to the women the secrets of the *Tambaran* (that they, the men, were the ones behind these figures and spirts). The result had been the complete collapse of the *Tambaran* (1997:1-16). But, here, with the *Tubuan* especially, local communities are working hard to stop this sort of thing from happening. They are working to keep their secrets secret and to obtain the power that this gives them, they are even seeking to have this work on a larger, national and international stage.

This is evident first and foremost by the continued and strict secrecy surrounding the practice. Though many researchers and ethnographers have come to New Ireland and East New Britain hoping to learn about the practice, they have maintained their policy of not speaking to women. Male ethnographers may undergo initiations in order to learn about the society[69]. On many

[69] Many men who have written on these practices or lived for extended periods in the area have been initiated. It is noted that various catechists present in the region in the late 1800s were initiated or otherwise associated to the Tubuan (Tateyama, 2006:91-2). This includes Governor Hahl (Tateyama, 2006:145). More recently, anthropologists have also been initiated, including: Keir Martin (Martin, 2023); AL Epstein (Tateyama, 2006:47). And Paul Wolffram was initiated into another practice, the *Buai* (Wolffram, 2017).

occasions I was very blatantly informed of the gender-based difference in openness. Once, one of my informants very blatantly told me that had I been a man they would have taken me, initiated me, and let me in on everything. On another occasion, I met a chief who was visiting from further south, he very proudly told me about a male ethnographer who had come a few years earlier and "eaten the *buai* that they had given him" (this means that he was initiated) all the while very clearly stating his displeasure with the idea that a woman study the topic. Even before my arrival to Samo, as I met and tried to gather preliminary information around the provincial capital of Kavieng I was told by a foreign female government worker, whose husband, an anthropologist himself, had been initiated into the *Tubuan*, that I would likely have no success gathering information on the topic given that I was a woman. A little later, the owner of a guesthouse in which I stayed welcomed me to the region but stated that he did not support the sharing of information regarding these secret customs, as he felt that it diluted them. Clearly the maintenance of secrecy, along gender lines, is something that continues to be strongly protected here. This emphasizes both the continued strength of the practice in the region and the central importance of secrecy to the institution.

It is not only when people curiously come to the region that secrecy is given central importance. It is also given a great deal of importance as the practice and its depictions move abroad. As they enter the national tourist scene and travel internationally to museums, in photography, etc…. For instance, the chief who came to visit from further south and had been present for the initiation of another male anthropologist spoke to me of a case that he had been working on along with a group of like-minded chiefs. He recounted that a Chinese man had come to East New Britain and purchased a *tubuan* from a man, he had then taken it to Hong Kong where it was on display in a museum[70]. He and his group were upset, they said that it was not right to have done this to a *tubuan*. That the man who had sold it to the Chinese person had not had the right to do so. As such, they were trying to mount a case to bring the figure back. Though I have not been able to confirm whether or not this story is true, it's truth is in many ways irrelevant.

One of the things which it shows is how the boundaries of what are secret vary between individuals and how these boundaries can be utilized by different individuals in order to gain power and authority in certain situations and/or in relation to various individuals or groups. Though the *Tubuan* is an important practice throughout the region, different individuals hold different relationships to it, they hold different views regarding the nature of the practice itself and how it should be 'used' (or not) by members (and non-members).

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[70] Despite my best attempts, I have not been able to find any record of this tubuan or/and of the museum that it might be in display in, the people who bought and sold it, etc…

Martin has addressed the non-homogenous nature of indigenous people's understandings of their practices, noting as an example that amongst the Tolai there is a dispute over the "nature and meaning" of the *Tubuan* (2023:105). He has discussed how during his fieldwork in Matupit (East New Britain) in the early 2000s there had been a controversial proposal for a law protecting the *Tubuan* (2020). There has always been tension between the *Tubuan* and certain religious groups, however, in this case tensions were not solely present along these lines. Those who had proposed the law were members of a new elite, which Martin refers to as *big shots* (though not all *big shots* agreed with the law) (2020:363). Those proposing the law argued for it because for them the *Tubuan* was a real thing that truly existed and, building on this, argued that the *Tubuan* could not speak for itself and needed protection from those who denigrated it or did not respect it (2020:365). However, many people who were members of the *Tubuan* and also thought that the *Tubuan* was a real thing, disagreed with the proposed law, precisely because they thought that the *Tubuan* was real, but also dangerous (2020:365). While others who participated in the Tubuan understood it to be something controlled by men and opposed the law for this reason (2020:367). In addition, many disagreements ran along socio-economic lines, as the proposed law was seen as being proposed by and favouring an elite that had been enabled by colonialism (2020:364), such that: "for many opponents it was a feeling that such legal sanctions reinstated elements of colonial era governance" (2020:363).

These cases show how members of the *Tubuan* and the communities in which it is practiced understand and relate to the practice, how it is continuing to make itself relevant, through processes of negotiation which may not always be the same for everybody. I will discuss this further in chapter 8, as it bears on the ways in which masking practices and their power dynamics are shaping and being utilized in shaping Papua New Guinean futures. Here, what is noteworthy is the extent to which members will go to maintain the principals of secrecy. If the very processes of secrecy were not essential to the existence of the practice and the structures that it enacts, then this level of caution (and work) would not be necessary. In fact, many of the secrets of the *Tubuan* have already been revealed. Early missionaries and ethnographers of various trades did not work with the same ethical codes as modern ones do and published many of the secrets. Additionally, Martin notes that in the early 2000s there was a trend of new religious converts 'revealing' secrets (2020: 358). Though the information may be difficult to access today, it is presumably out there. If the critical aspect of the practice was the secret knowledge that members have access to, then the practice would already have lost its power. But it has not. And, what is being guarded most strongly are the principals of secrecy, the rules of the *Tubuan*. Much as in the case of the bush Kaliai that Lattas described. It is not so much

doubting the veracity of the claims that men make regarding *varku* that is dangerous so much as their voicing. It is the principals, the structures of secrecy that matter. So long as these are followed what people do and do not know (or think) is not critical.

Secret Societies

Secret societies are nothing new. We know about secret societies in Europe in the Middle ages (Keightley, 1848), and from a myriad of cultures in Africa and Melanesia (ex: Harley, 1968; Hoffer, 1975; Marriott, 1899; Murphy, 1980; Onwuzolum, 1977; Rood, 1969; Webster, 1911). They exist all over the globe, have existed in various time periods and across diverse cultures. Still secret societies are remarkably similar across time and space. "It is remarkable to see how similar certain elements of the rites are from one secret society to another, no matter how different their garb or how exotic or ordinary their symbols and secret signs. They often combine the same devices to impair judgement, disorient, and weaken resistance: silence and chanting at set intervals, darkness alternating with or succeeded by light, deprivation of food and sleep, inducement of trance, isolation from daily life, and solitude alternating with heady or oppressive group activities." (Bok, 1984:50)

The *Tubuan* is one of these secret societies. A society that at one point all boys were eventually initiated into, now many, though not all, are. Initiation involves beatings, the use of painful nettles on the body and the consumption of various types of plants (these could be psychotropic or for purging, the exact types of plants remain secret). Initiation and activities are carried out in areas away from the villages and strictly forbidden to non-initiates. This is similar to many other secret societies in New Ireland, Papua New Guinea, and Melanesia.[71]

One of the common traits of secret societies is that one must be initiated into them. Initiation generally occurs at a younger age and is carried out by men older than the initiates. These initiations often follow a *rite de passage* structure, with initiands being separated from their old lives, kept in a liminal state throughout the process of their initiation and then reintegrating society after their initiation as new individuals, as men. The process of becoming a member of a secret society, a male secret society, is often tied to the process of becoming a man. Of a transition from childhood to adulthood, to male adulthood. Indeed, many of the men which I spoke to in Samo mentioned that for them joining the *Tubuan* had meant becoming a man,

[71] In New Ireland there is the *Buai*, the *Tamberan* (or *Tambaran*, or *Taberan*). In East New Britain there is also the *iniet* (also spelt *iniat*). In nearby islands there are or were also the *Tamate* and *Matambala* and *Qatu* (Codrington, 1891:69).

following in the steps of their forefathers. For this transition to occur, initiands are taken into the adult male social structure: they are given the knowledge and relationships that position them as such. However, this process of transition to adulthood is not only that, it is also a process of teaching initiands what their position is in society as well as what the positions of other individuals are. To become adults, they must understand the order of things within local social worlds and within local cosmovisions, and they must become a part of these. This is what Keen notes writing about the Yongu in norther Australia, when he states that: “For young men especially, initiation was not just part of the process of separation and incorporation into the categories of older males; it was also a technique of socialization in a broader process of control, and an aspect of the religious *dispositif*.” (Keen, 1994:189)

Becoming a member of a secret society means not only social transformation but also a new understanding of and membership in local social and ideological organization, whether these be dominant or subversive forms. Bok discusses how repressive states are fertile grounds for the creation and presence of secret societies (1984:46). These occur on all sides. Secret societies may help the repressors enforce their repression and may protect those working against repression (1984:46). She gives as an example that in China, during the conflict that led up to Mao's power there were secret societies involved on all sides of the fighting (1984:47). This emphasizes how positive or negative connotations cannot really be applied to secrecy as a whole. Secret societies are social forms or institutions or strategies that can be used in many ways and for many ends. What we do see, is that in all of these cases the secret nature of the groups allow them to remain powerful by being untouchable.

This is just as Herdt has discussed in his work on secrecy. He notes that secret societies were more or less "rituals of solidarity” (2003:11), they gave those involved a sense of solidarity, purpose and identity. These societies built on general human social tendencies, as human life in general requires “shared symbolic reality” (2003:33), the rituals of secret societies created their own symbolic reality, one shared by all the members of the secret society and thus creating a kind of separate or second world for them. This second reality being one that gave them a much needed sense of identity, belonging and order in an otherwise changing and anxiety laden world. Herdt's main argument regarding secrecy - in the Victorian era, in Papua New Guinea, or elsewhere - is that it is the result of uncertain conditions. "Secrecy as a collective force in human societies typically emerges in historical situations in which humans suffer deeply unstable relationships. Faith is insufficient in such a world; trust is required to create alliances against an uncertain world." (2003:26).

We see that at the group level secret societies emerge out of situations of uncertainty to create a foundation of solidarity for group members. A solidarity that endures despite outside influences, as it makes its own second reality. Indeed, "The personal and institutional outcome is to create an alternative, hidden cultural reality in society." (2003:xi).

This might be able to account for the strikingly violent behaviour that occurs in some of these societies, particularly during initiation. Ethnographers working in Melanesia have struggled with this for a long time. Read worked in the Highlands in the 1960s and wrote about how torn he felt observing some of the last occurrences of male initiation among the Gahuku Gama, as he valued traditions and their maintenance but was also shocked by the ordeal which the boys that he knew well were put through (1965:160-177). Tuzin, who worked in the Sepik, wondered at the contrast that he saw between the sometimes cruel practices associated with initiation and the men that he knew, noting that even the men themselves acknowledged that some of the acts were cruel, though they also saw them as necessary (2017:325). The same could be said of the people that I met in Samo. I saw people play with their children, truly happy and friendly, and wishing nothing but the best for them. Yet, I then heard about the ordeals that boys go through on initiation into the *Tubuan*: being beaten, beaten with nettles, and the fasting and purging that they may have to go through. As well as the violence that seemed to continue after initiation, as men remained afraid to speak due to threats of fines, physical violence and even death. Indeed, Barth argued that Baktaman knowledge grades were designed to make it such that people ceased to trust their knowledge, so that they would not be curious and question what they were learning, but simply follow and act accordingly (1975:220). It would seem that a fundamental trait of secrecy is the creation of an environment where beliefs, ideas and actions are not subject to the same kind of questioning as they are in the outside world.

Evidently secrecy offers a kind of protection to beliefs and ideas, it protects those involved. This protection, I would argue, much like secrecy, is neither inherently good or bad. Like most things, it has no inherent positive or negative value. It can build a sense of community among individualsl, it make violent practices acceptable, it is a tool that can be useful in many contexts and for many projects. What is most interesting, and valuable, is to see what its features are and how these have been used by humans. That protecting beliefs from outside criticism allows them to develop differently and allows people to live in realities that are highly different from their day to day ones.

Secrecy: Gender and Revelation

Male secret societies have been widely studied in both Africa and Papua New Guinea. These societies are by and large male societies, that explicitly exclude women. In Africa there are many instances of female secret societies[72]. However, in Papua New Guinea, they seem to be completely non-existent, to date I have not heard any mention of them existing.

The gendered nature of these societies is something that has caught the attention of academics since their arrival to the field. The big discussions that arise around the topic tend to be about questions of power and dominance. Leading those writing about male secret societies to wonder if these were indicative of male dominance or male insecurity which indicated female power (ex: Herdt, 2003; Gregor & Tuzin, 2001:13; Tuzin, 1980). Secret societies and their rituals seem to claim that it is men who are dominant, but while also always begging the question of why a group that is already dominant would need to go to all of that trouble. This usually leads to a conclusion that is more or less along the lines of Herdt's assertion for secret societies in general, that "its it's own means to it's own ends." (2003:29). That is that the secret societies create male dominance. Of course, to say that the question has been answered and that this is the end would be far too simple. Just because the rituals of male secrecy create male dominance, or power over women, doesn't mean that men or women are necessarily the dominant group in that society. There are far too many other factors to be considered.

But it does seem to point to situations where men are insecure about their positions in society, and so resort to secrecy as a means of forming secure positions in society. Following Herdt (2003), it would seem that within the Papua New Guinean context, these societies are, or were (as many of these practices have died out over the past 50 years or so due to the arrival of the 'global western world' - and how it has affected social structures, possibilities and ideologies) about creating men. An in depth analysis of this was done by Tuzin, who studied the Ilahita Arapesh. As I have already mentioned, the Ilahita Arapesh had a secret society called the *Tambaran*, complete with all of the fixings of your typical secret society: painful initiation for young boys, initiation grades, masked performances, taboos forbidding women from knowing much of anything. Between his first and second visits to the field the practice was abandoned, the abandonment having been the result of many factors of social change and culminating in a revelation by the men to the women that the secret was that there was no secret. The picture that Tuzin paints of the state of things post-revelation is quite bleak. It is one of men who have

[72] For instance, the Bundu in Sierra Leone (Hoffer, 1975); the Izzi (Okafor, 1994); the Katahwiriba (Marriott, 1899:21); the Sande (Kauer, 2023); the Takumbeng in Cameroon (Tanga, 2006:44); and many more.

too much free time and do not know what importance or role they should have, as men, in society. There has been an increase in alcoholism and domestic violence, and men spend large portions of their time idly (MacIntyre, 2008:182; Tuzin, 1997:190-3). We see here the kind of intolerable situations that Herdt was referring to when he talked about what pushes men to form and join secret societies.

Though Herdt doesn't seem to go as far as Tuzin, he does point out that men continue with their secret practices far into old age. While, once women reach menopause they are not required to follow many of the taboos that younger women do (Herdt, 2003:227)[73]. Yet, their womanhood is never in question. It would seem that man-hood is a contingent state. Emphasizing the degree that the identity of manhood is tied to practices of secrecy in these societies.

An important part of the identity and boundary making of secret societies is the art of balancing concealment and revelation. While secrecy itself may be about concealment, for secret societies the veiled revelation of their secrets is just as important. In these contexts, where secrecy is leveraged for social and political means, having a secret that no one knows that you have accomplishes nothing. To be clear, it is not that secrets in general accomplish nothing when people who do not know them don't know about their existence. Individuals and groups may keep information that they do not want shared secret, and results such as group solidarity and therapeutic effects can occur without anyone else knowing that these people have secrets (or, more likely, knowing what kinds of secrets they have). Secret societies in Melanesia play larger social roles as integral parts of hierarchy and structure both within and beyond the confines of the secret society. Here, the truly important thing is not the information that is being kept secret (as it usually is in the case of personal secrets) but the the creation of boundaries that the keeping of secrets effects. In order for an effective boundary to be formed between those in the know and those who do not know, those who do not know need to know that they don't know and, furthermore, that they cannot know.

Nooter discusses this phenomena in relation to African art. She discusses it in terms of two central processes: concealment and revelation (1993). Arguing that both are important to secret societies and that the play of the two can be observed in African art. The art that she analyses is art that is produced by secret societies. Papuan secret societies also produce art (or at least what we in the West would call *art* - perhaps *objects that are aesthetically impressive*), and the production of this art is essential to their existence, it is a part of "broadcasting secrecy

[73] Indeed, in some cases post-menopausal women are allowed to see or even handle the sacred objects which are prohibited to women (Hays, 1986:81; Hays, 1988:108). Pernet notes that this may indicate that the concern has less to do with women coming into contact with masks and more to due with concerns regarding fertility (2006:153)

(1993:58). Stewart and Strathern also refer to this process stating that: “secrecy is a way of producing and storing power, but this power can only be made operational when its products are revealed in visible and tangible form” (2014:80), tangible forms being practices such as dances or various practices which the Western eye would class as art. Secret societies need to conceal their practices from those that are not involved but they also need to reveal, or broadcast, these. This is because the ownership of secrets is a form of power (1993:58). By broadcasting that they have secrets they are broadcasting their own power and the lack of (or lesser degree of) power of those who do not have these secrets. This creates both boundaries and hierarchies.

Indeed, Urban also speaks of the importance of broadcasting secrecy, referring to it as advertizing to secrecy and concerning how these means of advertizing are generally subject to interpretation. He emphasizes how individuals must learn how to interpret the material that they have before them in order to understand it. He worked among the Kartabhajas in India. Here, materials were kept secret, but well known, through the dissemination of a series of mantras. These mantras were widely available and advertized themselves through what he terms a “skillful dialectic of lure and withdrawal” (1998:236). Further, they are built through a use of skillful obscurity, metaphorization and semantic shock (1998:238-240). Obscurity and metaphor allow for these mantras to be widely distributed without people knowing what information they contain, while the semantic shock (Urban builds on Ricoeur in using this term to refer to the use of weird and jarring juxtapositions - 1998:239) “maximizes the aura of danger, the "sexiness" and power that surrounds a particular statement, making it appear all the more awesome, mysterious, and even potentially dangerous." (1998:240). As such, it is through the act of broadcasting or advertising secrets, that secrecy works both as a means of concealing the secrets themselves and as a means of building power for those who control the secrets. This is achieved by making the secrets seem attractive, alluring all the while excluding those who have not or/and will not be allowed *into* the secret.

Read, worked in the Highlands with the Gahuku Gama whose secret practices were tied to the playing of the *nama* flutes. In his ethnography, he writes about the first time that he heard these flutes, as well as the subsequent occasions on which they were played. The flutes were played by a group of men from the village and were not supposed to be seen by the women. He writes that one afternoon the flute players climbed up to a ridge while playing and "I was struck by the thought that they may have wanted to be seen, that they were aware of the effect they made, that each step filled them with a mounting pride and drew closer in the bonds of a common emotion." (1965:147)

These examples show how secret societies create groups of people and lines delimiting the groups. Broadcasting secrets would seem counter-productive to the ultimate goal of a secret: which is to keep information unknown to outsiders. However, institutionalized secrecy (as opposed to personal secrets) is less about the contents of the secrets and more about the formation of boundaries, about social organization. This can be seen by the prominence of the open secret. And here, broadcasting and advertising is essential.

Open secrets are secrets where everyone involved acts as if there is a secret all the while everyone knows the information supposedly being kept secret. This is common in cultures with masking practices where the identity of the person is meant to remain secret. Many secret societies will intermittently put on such masking performances. The women and children observing are not supposed to be able to tell the individual identities of the men performing the masks, sometimes they are even supposed to believe that the masks are in fact spirits and not men. However, the reality is that it is usually only young children who are fooled. Women are usually well aware of the fact that the men of their community are performing these masks. Indeed, this fact would not be very difficult to guess, given that the men will be absent from their communities for extended periods of time and that they may identify parts of their body such as the feet. However, women go along with the secret, often seeing it as a means of supporting their men, and often enjoying the performances (ex: Argenti, 2019:189; Gagliardi, 2018b:749, 756; Kasfir, 1998:23; Knauft, 2004:187; Lattas, 1989:458; Pernet, 1982; B. Reed, 1998:71). Knauft talks about this as a kind of meta-collaboration or collusion, where women help to maintain the fiction of their ignorance (2004:188). As discussed in the chapter on masking, this is because spectators are just as much a part of a performance as the performers are. When applied to secrecy, this means that those who are not supposed to know must perform not knowing regardless of whether or not they do know. Through these actions they are thus supporting the individuals involved and the institution as a whole.

Boston states that: “On the whole it is best to regard the assertion that they [the women] are deceived as a dogmatic way of expressing the truth that women support the custom of masking and that without their support the custom of masking would not continue.” (1960:56). How voluntary this support is, is however questionable. When having to explain their behaviour to an outsider this may be the reason given, but it is not so simple (after all, nothing ever is). The institution of secrecy also includes a myriad of punishments for those who do not perform their roles correctly. This applies to members of the secret society. For instance, in *Tubuan* and *Sangsangmat* performances on Anir island older men carefully watch the performances of younger men, checking for mistakes. If they make mistakes these will be attributed to the leader

who chose the dancers (Denner, 2012:74). Women's performance is also rigidly defined and held in place by punishments. To return to the example of the *Tubuan*, women are required to observe from a distance, if they want to look at the *Tubuan* they must place protective lime powder in the corners of their eyes and they should not look directly at the *Tubuan*. There are further rules for everyone in relation to the *Tubuan*, regarding interdictions to share secrets and to not laugh at or make fun of it. All of these are punishable either through the magical qualities of the *Tubuan* which can give women boils or render them infertile or through a system of punitive payments made to the society. As such, even though women may explain their reasons for keeping the open secret as being a means of supporting the men, they are also not entirely free to decide whether or not to keep the secret. This is not to say that the motivations that women are sharing with anthropologists are untrue, it is simply to say that their field of potential agentive choices is highly shaped by local discourses surrounding these institutions.

The main means for individuals to not follow this seems to be either in turning away from the system or in a loss of interest. Which, in southern New Ireland, has happened with individuals moving away from their communities, focusing on education and finding work, or with individuals turning to religions that do not allow participation in secret societies. The other means of not following the practice seems to take a large portion of the first reason, a change in interests, and combine it with group action. Such as when the Ilahita Arapesh told the women the secret of the *Tambaran* in 1984, thus ending the reign of that secret society in the community (1997:1). However, similar actions on an individual level do not work. There are recorded instances of individuals in East New Britain who told the secrets of the *Tubuan* to a few women. Tateyama found archival evidence that a Catholic priest who worked in Tavuiliu from 1902-1913 had revealed some of the *Tubuan*'s secrets to some women, as a result people tried to kill him in secret (2006:91), he also found that post-WWII it had been common for Tolai catechists to reveal some of these secrets to women and, following this, they would be threatened. One was sent a letter which referred to him as *meri* (woman) and threatened him with black magic (2006:93-4). Here, instead of tearing down the entire institution of the *Tubuan* - as the revelation of the secrets did in the case of the Ilahita Arapesh's *Tambaran* - the result was that the individuals who revealed the secrets were heavily punished with fines and cast as sorts of social delinquents.

In this sense, the maintenance of secrecy involves far more people than those who are supposed to be bearers of knowledge. Still, as one reads about secrecy there is a constant bugging sensation, questioning: Why don't those being told secrets simply not put up with it? And, how does this all get started and perpetuate itself?

The literature on Melanesia includes many examples of situation in which researchers witnessed young boys not wanting to undergo initiation. Anthropologists note that the boys are fearful: they do not know exactly what will happen, but they do know that it will include pain. Not too surprisingly, this is something that they view with fear and apprehension. There are many accounts of boys running away in order to try and avoid initiation.[74] These boys are usually found and made to undergo initiation, which they come to accept and to impose on their own sons. So how is it that this fear is transformed into acceptance? And not just acceptance, but active participation? The answer is that the process changes them.

I will begin by returning to the example offered by Read of the Gahuku Gama. In his ethnography he relates the initiation of one of the boys who helped him in his house: Asemo. Before his initiation, the older men had come to ask Read's permission for him to undergo the initiation, and as such, as he watched, he felt particularly responsible for the boy (1965:149-177). And, as he watched, often shocked at what was happening, he was reminded of what Asemo's older brothers had told him about their own initiations: "I recalled his elder brothers' descriptions of their feelings at this precise moment, their minds numb with the apprehension of pain, the urge to struggle and escape constrained only by the greater fear of shame." (1965:167). The fear of shame is key here. The emotional, the affectual landscape, is key in shaping the actions that individuals do and do not take. It is key in shaping how they understand the world. This is true for all of us in all contexts. Secrecy, secret societies, are often designed to create certain affectual landscapes, thus motivating individuals to act in certain ways.

The information on initiation into the *Tubuan* is generally not as easy to access, but, from what can be gleaned, it is not all that different from the stereotypical model. For example, initiation into the *Tubuan* is also said to be very painful. Not only is it painful, but in order to be initiated young men, or their families, must provide a payment to the society. The exact events that occur during initiation are only known to those who have undergone initiation themselves. It would seem that, at minimum, it involves the beating of the new initiate, indeed the local language in the area where I worked even has a specific word for the beating that occurs at an initiation, *burbur,* and rubbing them with nettles. And that is just what is known, the impression given (whether that pans out to be a secret with no secret or not) is that there will be unpleasant surprises awaiting initiates.

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[74] (ex: Albert, 1987, 23-4; Herdt, 2003: 40; Herdt, 2017:57, 70; Tuzin, 2017:337)

Not all initiations will be as violent, these instances simply make for memorable examples. However, many initiations into Papua New Guinea secret societies do involve at least some degree of pain for the initiates[75]. Though difficult and painful initiations would seem off-putting there are actually a few studies that have been carried out showing that people who have undergone this kind of initiation value their group membership more strongly. In her work Bok cites an experiment carried out in 1959 carried by Aronson and Mills, which showed that people valued membership in a group more when the initiation was more difficult (1984:52). This experiment was later replicated and the results were again supported (Aronson & Mills, 1959; Gerard & Matthewson, 1966). Further, these experiments support something that we all know on an intuitive level, it is a phenomenon lies behind exclusive clubs, the people we like but who do not like us back, the things we want to get but cannot: the difficulty of gaining access to these things makes them all the more desirable.

Additionally the initiation process and subsequent activities are done in such a way that the individual learns both gradually and in a way that is embodied, the whole process changes the individual and how they understand their worlds. It makes them increasingly willing to accept things which they would not have been open to previously. To return to my initial question, about how individuals come to accept and be actively involved in secret societies, the answer is through a process of interpretive drift (Luhrmann, 1989b:312). As they learn to interpret the world in particular ways they no longer fear the secret society as they once did, they now understand it, are a part of it. With this, any desire to revolt or to leave it all behind are long lost. They may retain a memory of how they used to feel, but know what the whole process of initiation was for and so will want to help the next generation achieve the same understanding that they have come to.

Finally, all of the practices undergirding secret societies: their secret practices, their methods of veiled revelation, are ritual behaviour. Initiation itself is a ritual full of ritual elements. And the continued practice, concealment and revelation of the society are rituals. According to Fons and Ventura, ritual is: “ (1) [….] a temporary structure that integrates a high symbolic content, (2) subdivided into several phases that make up the same sequence with a logic that needs to be discovered, (3) with the ability to act on experience and (4) seducing through the senses and emotions.” (2021 - *my translation*). Further, according to Xygalatas: "ritual behaviour is a special kind of behaviour; it does not originate from the intentional states of the performers and is irreducible to any set of technical motivations, as there is no causal connection between a ritual

[75]For example many anthropologists have written about both penile and nose bleeding, as well as practices that induce vomiting: Gillison & Gillison, 2020:2; Herdt, 2017:57,59; Hogbin, 1970:120; Langness, 1974:94; Keesing, 2017:10-12; Read, 1965:160-167; Tuzin, 2017:338-340.

action and its presumed outcome." (2014:163). For example, *burbur* beating is not done because those beating the initiand dislike him and wish him harm. And though membership in the *Tubuan* is more or less needed in order to become village chief, there is no one individual who created the whole institution in order to become the chief. Though, there may be people who dislike the initiand and happen to also get to beat him and there are people who want to become chiefs who put more effort into climbing the rungs of membership so that they may be chief.

This is why it is also difficult to argue that male secret societies in Papua New Guinea are for the domination of men over women. They have frequently been used in this way. But data on exactly how they arose is not available. Though it is possible that practices were built on or emphasized because they served that very purpose. These institutions are the product of years, decades, and centuries of gradual accumulation and rejection. The groups and boundaries that secret societies create do not intrinsically need to be made up of particular people or utilized in any particular way.

In the case of ritual secrecy, like most social institutions or phenomenons, there is an intermingling of individuals and groups. Here I once again build on McNaughton, who argues for a view of the individual and the social as intertwined (2008). Institutions are built by individuals, many of them, and institutions, many of them, are what form individuals. So we are never free of these larger structures - they have formed us, our ideas, our emotions, and our senses even. But the larger structures are also subject to what a multitude of individuals do with them.

Indeed, it is this feedback circle (or perhaps a circularly entangled network) that leaves room for potential change. In his research McNaughton has placed an emphasis on how individuals act within institutions but will do so in their own ways, as individuals and though they are a product of these institutions, they are each a product of a slightly different configuration or mixture, if you will, of these institutions (2008). "From birth to death, our lives are so inscribed and intertwined with the lives of numerous others that it is simply not feasible to conceive of ourselves as autonomous actors in our worlds." (McNaughton, 2008:109) Further, neither the individual, nor the institutions are autonomous, but neither of these facts means that individuals are not capable of altering the institutions. Indeed, he identifies a long line of anthropologists having made similar cases, such as: Malinowski, Firth, Benedict, Gluckman and Bateson (2008:111). That individuals are the wild cards that can make changes to the social structure (2008:117). However, that ability is limited by terms established by the institutions and by the desires of the individuals involved. For instance, Onwuzolum writes that after Igbo have undergone initiation

they feel that they are a part of a community in continuity with the past and present and that they feel no need to revolt (1977:103-4).

So, secret societies are very strong institutions. A great deal of this strength comes from a combination of strict rules with embodied learning. Processes of embodied learning create strongly felt experiences that result in strong bonds between individuals and a sense of the great importance of their activities and ideas. Embodied learning roots the ideology of the secret society into felt experience, making it stronger as it is a part of the individuals themselves as well as of the institution.

This sort of embodied learning experience is also a feature of certain types of ritual practices. First, it should be clarified that a discussion of ritual is relevant here. Initiation into secret societies can be considered a rite of passage. Rites of passage are characterized by three stages: separation, liminal, and aggregation (V Turner, 1987:239) - as has already been explained in chapter 5. A common trope is that a group of young boys are taken away from their villages to a hut or a delimited area in the bush in order to undergo initiation. This separates them from their previous lives, worlds, and roles. They then spend anywhere from a few weeks to a few months undergoing initiation. During this time they are not members of the community as they used to be, but have not become different members of the society either. They remain in a liminal, undetermined stage as they undergo their transformation. Finally, at the end of their trials they return to their villages and are accepted as members of the secret society. In the case of many male secret societies they are also now considered to be men and, through this, adult members of local social hierarchies. As we saw previously, the process of initiation acts to transform them into new individuals. Not only does initiation fit the rite of passage paradigm, but it also features ritual elements which could be classified as imagistic rites (as defined by: Whitehouse, 2004:9) or/and as featuring high degrees of sensory pageantry (Whitehouse, 2020). Types of rituals which rely heavily on embodied learning, which in the context of secrecy, where certain kinds of feedback are blocked, will lead to their impact being felt even more strongly.

Indeed, the kind of learning that goes on during the liminal phase seems emblematic of what Whitehouse calls imagistic rituals (2004). Indeed, initiation happens only once in each individual's lifetime, though they may help to initiate a few cohorts of young boys later in their lives. And there is a very high degree of emotional arousal: new initiates generally do not know exactly what will happen to them, but do know that they should expect some degree of pain. There is fear, anxiety but also curiosity and excitement as they enter this unknown. They

undergo various beatings, rubbing with prickly and/or itchy plants, undergo ritual bleedings, are deprived of food, are made to consume psychotropic substances (this is usually not made explicit to researchers, but I take this to be the meaning of eating special plants), made to drink salt water in order to induce purging, etc... And though all of these practices are ritual, are practices that each initiate has to go through, they are not heavily prescribed. It is not like attending church on a Sunday where each action has been repeated many times over and you may consult a myriad of books and experts who will be able to tell you in exact words the meaning of each individual action. These are rituals where meaning is derived from "exegetical reflection" (Whitehouse *in* Xygalatas, 2014:148). Individuals need to experience and interpret events in order to determine their meaning and this is something that is generally understood over time.

Xygalatas has conducted extensive work on the question of ritual. He carried out work with Greek firewalkers. He found that new firewalkers were less capable of providing an exegetical reflection, ie the meaning and reason for what they were doing, than older and more experienced performers (2014:152-4). Many younger firewalkers explained that they participated because they felt an unexplainable urge, while older performers would give more detailed and specific reasons for why they had joined (2014:157). This goes to show how imagistic rituals, like initiations do not have prescribed meanings. Meaning must be reached over time, through personal interpretive work. This is what embodied learning and interpretive drift are about: they allow individuals to rework the ways in which they understand their experiences.

This is exemplified by Wolffram's description of the practice of *Buai* in southern New Ireland and the process of initiation. Initiation into this practice consists in a male initiate fasting and consuming substances given to him by knowledgeable elders over a period of approximately four days. The fasting and the substances that he is given will induce dreams, which follow a certain narrative and are meant to transfer the knowledge of *Buai* to him. However, many initiates revealed that they had not initially understood the meaning of these dreams, or what knowledge exactly had been imparted on them. They had come to learn this later on, through reflection and at key moments (Wolffram, 2017). Here, individuals had to engage in extended periods of "exegetical reflection", sometimes triggered by events in their lives, in order to understand their experience and the knowledge that it has given them. Though the *Buai* is not a secret society, this process is typical of entry into secret societies, since learning usually occurs through observation and practice.

This kind of high arousal ritual is not limited to initiation. Continued processes of revelation and concealment also use this type of ritual. These rituals, which elicit strong emotional reactions, use a lot of what McCauley and Lawson refer to as "sensory pageantry" (*in* Xygalatas, 2014:67. Indeed, there has been a long association between stressful activities and altered states of consciousness (Xygalatas, 2014:167) things like stress, physical exhaustion, sensory overload, repetitive music, dancing, fasting, use of psychoactive drugs, are common in high arousal rituals and are known to contribute to altered states of consciousness (Xygalatas, 2014:167). Altered states of consciousness often make us think of states such as trance or possession. And while these are included in the category, other forms of altered consciousness are probably more frequent and are incredibly important to keep in consideration. These states alter how events are perceived, how they are remembered and, as a result, how they are later interpreted and included in ideas and even ideologies. For instance, endorphins can produce feelings of euphoria and tranquility (Xygalatas, 2014:172) and dopamine can create feelings of heightened awareness and tremendous importance (Xygalatas, 2014:176). Both of these substances are emitted by the brain when we perform activities such as exercise (this would include dance and physical exertion in general). And, the way that they colour the perception of events will affect how they figure in individuals' personal exegeses later on. Just as the context within which these experiences occur will shape individual interpretations. Finally, the shapes of the personal exegeses will then affect ideas surrounding the institution as a whole and how it is practiced, and interpreted, going forward.

The sensory pageantry of these rituals works both on the performers and on spectators. Performers, will experience the pageantry much in the same way as the firewalkers mentioned above do. They will fast, consume special plants, dance, sing and wear costumes. This will put them in a state of altered consciousness. they will then be able to interpret their experience in light of all of the secret knowledge that they have. The spectators, will also experience altered states of consciousness: as they share in feelings of anticipation, hear the music, see the dances and make their own interpretations based on what they know about the secret and what may be kept secret. Both sides will feel the euphoria of endorphins, the sense of tremendous importance, and many other things. These will figure into their experiences and interpretations.

As such, sensory pageantry is an important part of effectively broadcasting secrecy. The resulting altered states of consciousness make the entire experience, the fact that it is happening and the messages that it is broadcasting, seem even more important. At these events secret societies are reminding both members and spectators of their roles and relative

positions. The embodied, sensory, and emotional salience of the events are yet another example of the kind of embodied learning that is typical of secrecy.

An important part of the sensory pageantry that is a part of these rituals is how it enforces group cohesion. These rituals are what can be called imagistic rituals - they are high in sensory pageantry, so high in emotional arousal and lower in prescribed meanings. One of the important effects of this kind of ritual is the sense of group cohesion that is achieved. This sense has been described by various names, some of the more well-known being collective effervescence (Durkheim, 1912) and communitas (V Turner, 1987; E Turner, 2012). Communitas is something that occurs when a large group of people are acting and feeling together, it is a feeling where the individual is lost in the group and it engenders a sense of pure possibility (E. Turner, 2012:3,72). There is a synchrony that occurs, and which acts as a kid of social glue allowing individuals to feel as if they are a part of something larger (Whitehouse, 2022:6-7). Rituals of broadcasting secrecy trigger these effects, among performers who are all engaging together in choreographed movements, but also between them and local spectators.

In fact, a couple of experiments cited and carried out by Xygalatas go to demonstrate this on a more scientific level. First, Emma Cohen *et al* conducted experiments with rowers where they tested their dopamine levels. They found that rowing in general elevated the dopamine level of participants, but that their levels were even higher when they rowed together. The physical effort that the individuals put in was the same as when they were rowing alone, but, when they rowed together their dopamine levels were higher (Cohen *et al*, 2010; Xygalatas, 2014:182). Indicating that performing an activity - such as singing, dancing, even fasting - in a group amplifies the individual's experience. Xygalatas also carried out experiments with firewalkers in Spain, measuring their heart rates while they were walking over the fire, as well as the heart rates of local villagers who watched them. They found that both groups had elevated heart rates and that there was a synchrony to these heart rates. Even those who didn't perform the activity experienced an elevated heart rate to the same rhythm as those actually doing the firewalking. This only applied to local residents, not to tourists from outside the community (2014:182-3).

This is relevant to the process of broadcasting secrecy as it indicates that a sense of community is created not just among members of the secret society who are performing, but between both the performers and the audience. This should not be a surprise given the work that has been done showing that the role of the audience is often just as important as the role of performers, and which was discussed in more detail in chapter 4. When secret societies are broadcasting secrecy they are not just telling people that they have secrets and creating a separation

between those who know and those who don't, they are also creating a common community, a common reality which includes both those who are and are not ‘in the know’. Societies where the process of broadcasting secrecy occurs are often ones in which secret societies play important roles in the maintenance of social order[76] as well as where membership in secret societies is essentially a pre-requisite to becoming a person of high status within a community. The sense of communitas that these performances create are therefore critical in creating and maintaining a social order that revolves around the institution of secrecy.

Finally, this kind of event, that involves experience rather than intellectual learning is critical. To put it succinctly, it is because you cannot undo an experience: ”what is done cannot be undone […] unlike the attitudes towards the event, which can be modified." (Xygalatas, 2014:161). As people experience all of the effects that come with high arousal emotions: the synchrony, the togetherness, the sense of euphoria, the sense of importance, the roles of secret holders and the roles of others, they cannot undo this experience. What they can do, is to change their views on the questions - generally in a way that is informed by that experience as well as the contextual knowledge around them. Then, this interpreted experience fits into individuals' and groups' lives, into their beliefs and ideologies. Therefore shaping their future actions, and thus the shapes of the worlds that they live in. As such, the regular exercise of broadcasting secrecy through the use of these kinds of imagistic rituals acts to solidify boundaries and social roles of the groups created through the process of secrecy.

Where is the Female Homosociality? What About Female Secret Societies?

When Herdt wrote about secret societies, in both the Victorian era and in Melanesia, he argued that they were so common and drew members because the climates of those times and places led men to feel insecure in their masculinity, insecure in terms of their place in society. He argued that these secret societies resulted from unstable social conditions. I do not necessarily wish to contradict his arguments. It really does seem to be the case that these environments presented a multitude of uncertainties and that participation in secret societies allowed members to feel that the world was structured, that they had clear roles in society and some degree of control over the course of their lives. However, how can we know that women in these times periods did not face the same kinds of uncertainties? How is it that they assumed a sense of meaning and control in their lives?

[76] Ex: Onwuzolum, 1977:101; Sack, 1972; Tateyama, 2006:33; Tateyama, 2016:25.

In Melanesia, particularly in the Highlands region, prior to Australian pacification tribes were constantly at war with one another. In this context men's role was to become warriors. Groups such as secret societies taught them the skills that they needed to become good warriors and gave them a sense of camaraderie. It made men into men as it set them onto this life path. While the Highlands are known as a region high in conflict, the various groups inhabiting New Ireland also fought amongst themselves a lot. It is commonly understood that the Tolai in neighbouring East New Britain originally came from New Ireland, but relocated as fighting pushed them out. Further, informant after informant spoke to me about how things had been in past times: speaking about how it was impossible to go to a neighbouring village without being killed and eaten, or telling of how local groups had killed and eaten some of the first white colonizers. It is likely that these stories are exaggerated and coloured with modern moral views that have been formed through contact with missionaries. Still, it remains clear that in New Ireland as well, war was a common and important activity (see chapter 2). And, indeed, even today informants speak of joining the *Tubuan*, the local male secret society, as becoming a man. As such, arguments such as Herdt's continue to be applicable in the region.

The absence of a study of a female equivalent to male secret societies is in part a product of the ethnographers who have been in the field (Lutkehaus&Roscoe, 1995:xiii-xviii). It is mostly male ethnographers who have conducted research in these areas. As the gender division in Melanesia is quite sharp, this means that most of their information was collected from male informants, and therefore represents their opinions. It may not always be the case that similar female secret practices did not exist. But, much as how my informants spoke to me very little about the male Tubuan practice and even in their daily lives did not take much note of it, the male informants of these ethnographers would have spoken to them only minimally about the equivalent female practices.

Even when ethnographers did learn of secret female practices and inquire about them, they were often limited to second hand information provided by their male informants, who, as always, would have provided them with only their own perspectives on the situation. Ethnographers were (and are) often limited to this information as they are not allowed to witness the events for themselves, or do not happen to coincide with them. For instance, Bell who worked in the region in the 1930s wrote on the ritual seclusion of certain girls in the *dafal,* based on information provided to him by his informants as he missed the event itself by a few months (1936:86). The influence of informants is also evident in Hogbin's work with the Wogeo (1970). Though located in Sepik and not New Ireland, they also have a male secret society and female initiation practices which Hogbin was able to witness. He goes into great detail when describing

a female initiation which he witnessed while in the field, even providing accounts of the emotional state of the girl and her parents at the onset of her menses. However, at many stages of the ritual he must remain with the men, as the women head off up into the mountain or down to the beach to perform their rituals (1970:131-5). At these points he conveys what the men told him of what occurred. This is of course the best information at his disposal. However, it is also evident that the men are both playing stereotyped roles whereby they are meant to be antagonized by the women and that at times they are legitimately frustrated by the women's behaviour.

Currently, it is also more difficult to learn about secret female practices, or female practices of homosociality, because female centred ritual practices seem to have largely disappeared, while many of the male ones remain important (though many more have disappeared and/or transformed). As already mentioned, this likely is somewhat related to the greater participation of women in the *lotu*. Indeed, the *lotu* has become an area for female sociality. As I will note later (chapter 8) women's groups formed under the banner of the *lotu* are generally the most accepted and successful women's groups. However, while more women are present in the *lotu,* it is usually men who occupy positions of authority within the *lotu* (Dickson-Waiko, 2003:105; Eves, 2012:6; Robbins, 2012:117), as such it offers a limited context for female homosociality.

Another explanation may be that it is related to how these rituals and the spaces they offered were not considered to be as important. This is a dangerous claim to make, of course they were important. Rather, it points to these practices having been deemed less central to the functioning of society by both the patriarchal societies in which they were practiced and the incoming patriarchally-based mindsets of missionaries and colonial advisors.

It is also because of what these rituals were about and how they met with a conservative christian mentality. Though, to be precise *a* christian mentality is not accurate, it should be said that it has depended on how they met with a *great variety of* christian mentalities. For instance, early on some female initiation practices were banned by missionaries after they found out that the girls remained naked and unwashed inside (Hemer, 2013:152). This did not fit with their conceptions of proper conduct for women. Many of the rituals surrounding first menses were about emphasizing the sexual attractiveness of the girls (as they had reached fertile maturity) and included songs which, according to the standards of the missionaries, could be seen as obscene. None of this was in keeping with many church norms that emphasized modesty for women.

These aspects of the practices would not have been favoured by any of the patriarchal super-structures: as such it is hard to imagine local men, themselves members of patriarchal societies, protesting too hardly when those from outside decided that the tradition was no good. On the other hand, it was usually a girl's father or other male relative who sponsored these rites. So, perhaps they had never disagreed with them in the first place?

I would suggest that it is likely due to all of the same factors that have led to an erosion of *kastom* in the area in general. Most likely these traditions have disappeared to a greater extent because they never made women into the types of political leaders that many of the male traditions built. Not only do male secret societies such as the *Tubuan* make men *men* but they are also institutions around which the political centres of communities are built. In the case of the *Tubuan*, each *hausboi* (traditionally the decision-making center of a particular clan) owns a *tubuan*, and the man who becomes chief is generally the owner of this *tubuan*. *Tubuan*s then perform at various occasions such as funerals, house openings, etc… and in so doing establish and put on show the relationships between different clans, of powerful individuals to these clans, etc… Participation in male secret societies is deeply and intricately tied into political leadership and social organization in any given community. If one of these secret societies were to disappear, there would be ramifications felt long and wide: the social and political organization of the community would have to undergo a radical and sudden change. Especially as the *hausboi* system remains active within the contemporary political world (Tararia, 2022:122, 164-5). This is not the case when female rituals disappear, these were never as intricately tied into the political and social systems or at the very least not into the institutions representing these. Making it such that they may be deeply altered or even disappear quite quietly.

Women may have had rituals, initiation rituals and have passed down knowledge through the generation, but they never really had secrecy (as far as the ethnographic record will let us see at least[77]). Here I have been looking at secrecy: a process of concealment of information while also sharing that one has this information, in a way that tends to build hierarchies and to place those who know the secret in positions of power. This seems to have never truly occurred for women in New Ireland. They had initiation rituals (or puberty rituals, or menstrual rituals, or seclusion rituals, however one may choose to categorize them) and these included ritual elements that explicitly excluded men, and many categories of women. However, there does not appear to have been any effort to broadcast this secrecy. They did not work to translate these secrets into sociopolitical power. *They had secrets, but not secrecy.*

[77] and cases such as the *Sande* society in Western Africa clearly demonstrate the possibility.

Concluding Remarks

The *Tubuan* is one of many similar secret societies in the region. These societies are important parts of the social fabric, and their importance lies in their secrecy. It lies in the powers that secrecy has to create structure: to create a sense of community between some and hierarchy and division between others. Masked performance, here the *tubuan*s, are an integral part of the process of secrecy. They correspond to a dialectic which has been observed by many, and which Nooter has termed “broadcasting secrecy”, as it is necessary not only for members of a secret society to share secret information which remains unknown to those who are not members, but also to make non-members aware of their lack of access to this information. Through this dialectic of keeping secret and broadcasting, secrecy works to create groupings of people: it builds community, membership, camaraderie amongst those who know and marks a separation between those who do and do not know. While also creating divisions based on knowledge held. Thus creating inequalities and echelons within society as well.

Here, an emphasis has been placed on how secrecy creates divisions and may impede those who do not have access to the knowledge and associated power from achieving certain positions within the community. This was particularly striking in New Ireland as the *Tubuan* is a part of the local system of social and political organization which revolves around the *hausboi*. Traditionally decisions were made in the *hausboi*. Though there are now governments and associated entities making these sorts of decisions the *hausboi* remains an important institution and if someone wants to make a difference within the public sphere they will not be able to do so without holding a position of authority within the *hausboi*. As such, it is significant that the Tubuan’s structures of secrecy exclude women, as this makes their involvement in arenas such as politics, law, policy, etc.. very difficult. Particularly given that there is no female equivalent as, while women did have (and do have) secrets, they do not appear to have developed these into any form of institutionalized secrecy.

Chapter 8

Heritage and Gender: *Kastom* and the building of narratives

What the practices that I've discussed in this thesis have in common is that they pertain to a domain that gets referred to, within Papua New Guinea, as *kastom* (sometimes also spelt *kastam*). This could also be referred to as heritage practices. As such, I begin this chapter by discussing heritage. A focus is placed on how heritage while taking from the past is actually about the present and the future. That it is about building narratives and that these narratives are built by people and groups in positions of power. I begin by looking at heritage studies, then I examine how these apply to contemporary uses of traditional dance performances, particularly of the *Tubuan*.

I then look at the relationship between gender and heritage. The narratives surrounding heritage in Papua New Guinea have emerged from a highly patriarchal context: one built on a mixing of patriarchal cultures as they existed before colonization and the effects of concomitant colonization and christianization. This is exemplified by the discourse of The Melanesian Way, which emerged around the time of Independence in the 1970s. In order to understand how gender dynamics are currently at play in and shaped by heritage and its narratives, I begin by providing a brief overview of women's place in Papua New Guinean society throughout what is known of history and in contemporary society. Examining this history and how gender is (and isn't) currently present in heritage practices shows how these narratives have shaped the paths available to women throughout the country.

Heritage in the Present

The study of heritage uses a variety of terminology to refer to the various ways that the past is materialized and constructed in the present and the repercussions that it has. These terms include heritage, heritagization, folklore, folklorism, folklorization, festivalization (in English alone). I follow Harrison's definition of heritage, he states that: "Heritage is not a passive process of simply preserving things from the past that remain, but an active process of assembling a series of objects, places and practices that we choose to uphold as a mirror to the present, associated to a particular set of values that we wish to take with us into the future." (Harrison, 2012:4). Because I follow this definition, forward I will refer to the processes and

practices involved as heritage, unless I wish to make direct reference to another one of the processes. I do this despite the fact that the *kastom* that I am working with is in no way officially heritage. These masking practices, singsings, and other *kastoms* do not feature on UNESCO's lists of tangible or intangible heritage nor that of another international organization.

Before delving into a discussion of heritage in the region, I begin by providing some brief definitions of the vocabulary used in academic studies on the topic and the theory behind them.

Heritage, or rather it's creation and presence as a category and as visible objects, appears to be both something that has always existed and a creation of the past few hundred years in the "West". Heritage, as we know it today in our day to day lives is a European creation (Marti, 1996:14; Smith, 2006:17) of the 19th century (Smith, 2006:17). It is a particular way of relating to the past and giving it great importance in current day self-definition. Heritage has always existed to some extent, in the sense that individuals and groups passed down stories through the generations about their ancestors and these stories came to have meaning for those hearing them as they lived their lives. The past has always, through human nature, come to occupy some position in the creation of presents and of futures. Heritage studies make the argument that the nature of this has changed since the 19th century in Europe. There has been an increased importance given to elements of what we call heritage, these have multiplied and institutions creating and maintaining these have been created. In short, we are living in an era where everywhere we go we see objects that have been preserved.

Not only is the physical presence of heritage filling our landscapes, but institutions are created to maintain these sites. The best known of these is the UNESCO, with its tangible and intangible heritage lists. However, there are innumerable similar organizations in charge of determining which sites may be officially called heritage and then involved in their maintenance. Some of these, such as the UNESCO, are institutional organizations, that create lists and norms to categorize heritage places and practices. Others create occasions during which individuals may interact with these: through festivals, museums, culture days, cultural centres, etc… The places and practices today considered heritage exist and they existed in the past, but they are created in their present (and future leaning) sense, as heritage, through the work of these institutions. Before heritage arose in the European 19th century, these institutions did not exist. These institutions and heritage have arisen together and are dependent on one another. The institutions shape practices in order to give them value and validity in the here and now, and with a leaning towards building a future that is seen as desirable by those in charge of and with influence on these institutions.

Much as Harrison's definition of heritage emphasizes, these 'pieces of heritage' (if you may) are all things that are created in the present. There are innumerable 'pieces of the past' that can and do make their way into the present, which ones are conserved and how they are framed is entirely dependent on who is doing the conservation in the here and now as well as what their aims are and which aims are most likely to be well perceived by the population at large. As such, in studying heritage it is important to examine who is doing the conservation, what narratives they are building, what their motives may be in doing so and what the consequences are. As well as to understand the broader population that these objects of heritage are meant to belong to, to represent.

Heritage is often used in identity construction, at both the group and individual levels. Perhaps it is no coincidence that the concept emerged in 19th century Europe, just as nationalism was gathering strength. Indeed, Meskell notes that heritage can be endlessly reinterpreted at both the individual and group levels (Meskell, 2015:2). While Graham and Penny note that indigenous groups around the globe fashion themselves as indigenous through various performative acts in intercultural spaces (2014:1), in ways that can be both liberating and oppressive. Gilbert, Kaeppler and Tateyama also note that heritage has been used in the South Pacific as a means of nation building (Gilbert, 2020:55; Kaeppler, 2002:5; Tateyama, 2016; Toyoda, 2006).

Both Kaeppler and Gilbert have written about cultural festivals organized to bring together performers from various countries in the South Pacific. Both explicitly note that festivals in the region are designed to be spaces where these new nations can forge identities for themselves as nations (Gilbert, 2020:14; Kaeppler, 2002:8,17). In burgeoning countries such as those of the south Pacific, these festivals featuring cultural displays are occasions to forge both cultural and political identities (Gilbert, 2020:45). It is not any performance that may occur in the context of these festivals, there are selection committees, artistic directors, exhibit organizers, etc… (Kaeppler 2002:6; Toyoda, 2006:38-45). Performers are carefully chosen to embody the nation and what it stands for. "Festival performances project societal values and indicate how values change and are exhibited in public presentation." (Kaeppler, 2002:8).

Returning to Harrison's definition, heritage is about creating identity in the here and how, about displaying the values that one wishes to be associated with going forward. Kaeppler gives an interesting example of this, she recounts that at a festival held in 1996 in Samoa a group of performers from Papua New Guinea performed bare-breasted (2002:8). This is of course

historically accurate, before the arrival of missionaries and colonial forces and their introduction of the *meri* blouse to the south Pacific, it was perfectly normal for women to go about their lives bare-breasted and to dance this way as well. Post-colonization and in what is now an extremely Christian part of the world, this is incredibly unacceptable behaviour in most contexts and places. As a result, the performance was not accepted by viewers. At the event itself, Kaeppler recounts that a Samoan onlooker struck one of the performers with a branch and that the next day preachers commented on the performance (2002:8). This emphasizes the ways in which heritage is less about the past itself, and more about picking elements from it in order to build one's values and orientation going forward. It also emphasizes that this work is happening in the festival context. Further, the strength of the response in this example indicates that local populations and local leaders understand that cultural festivals are important sites in which this work is accomplished.

Of course, which depiction is used depends greatly on who is in charge of making decisions about what is represented, of what behaviour is acceptable. And these are decisions that both organizing bodies and audience are involved in. The involvement of these parties is a process of negotiation and dependent on the power and authority of various members in the organizing bodies and in the audiences. Who makes it into the organizing bodies will have direct repercussions on which practices are emphasized and in what way they are framed. The same is true of the audience. In the aforementioned example it is noteworthy that it was not only individuals, such as the one who hit the performer with a branch, who were angered, but also preachers. The South Pacific is a deeply Christian part of the world (according to the Australian Government's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade in 2016 the region is overall 95% Christian), as such preachers have a high standing in their communities and heritage practices must fit with the value system that these people stand for. Following Harrison, heritage practices are used to both set and represent narratives and values that are desirable going forward. These practices and the ways in which they are understood are shaped by the dominant values and narratives of the societies in which they occur and to which they are oriented. These are often set by people and groups in positions of power in the here and now.

The powerful role that heritage practices can play in setting present and future directions in a society is why, globally, many indigenous groups continue to fight for the right to control their own heritage objects. Precisely out of a desire to control their own narratives. As Smith puts it, the fight that has been ongoing is one to control "the cultural tools to define who they are and how the rest of the world sees them." (2006:277). For indigenous groups to have these objects returned to their people and to then do with them according to their own ideologies, both

indicates and sets an acceptance of their values in the here and now as well as in shaping the future. It gives them a power of agency, over their own practices. It is also indicative of a standing and respect in broader society.

Smith argues that archaeologists in particular have been at the forefront of a heritage discourse which separated indigenous peoples from their sacred objects. She argues that archaeology made (and continues to make in many cases) claims of stewardship over the past, one which is seen as either dead or near-extinction and therefore in need of preservation. As such, they have been the ones setting the narrative on the use and value of sacred objects (Smith, 2006:279) a narrative which she refers to as the Authoritative Heritage Discourse (AHD) (Smith, 2006:29). Indeed, this is reminiscent of the situation in Papua New Guinea. Though there is far less archaeology happening here than in other parts of the world, in the earlier days of anthropology in the region there was a strong discourse of rescue anthropology: an idea that people living in the region were the last remaining “stone-age” people (a term which Groves uses - see Groves, 1934:221) or/and that their cultures were on the verge of dying and therefore needed to be recorded before they did.

In addition to narratives set by academics, throughout the colonial era, many narratives were set by colonial administrations and various missionaries. Even before the arrival of anthropologists (and archaeologists), *kastom* practices had been deeply altered throughout the region by European and Australian authority and influence. Missionaries often stigmatized *kastom* practices while lawmakers, both missionary and colonial, set norms as to how and when certain practices could take place. Taking control as such, meant establishing who was in a position of authority, of agency. And this position was used in order to shape individuals’ understandings of their contexts.

Even the festivals and culture shows which remain frequent, were originally organized by the colonial administrations. It is said that the first two shows to be organized in the Highlands were done with the intention of reducing tribal violence in the region, by re-routing rivalries into these competitive shows (Toyoda, 2006). I mention this to make clear the ways in which the utilization of heritage is generally done with the best of intentions, in ways that truly do have positive effects, but that at the very same time those who set heritage are those who have a sufficient social authority to do so in a particular time and place.

The Mask Festival, which I attended in Kokopo in the summer of 2023, is organized by the NCC (National Cultural Commission). The NCC is known for being led by Tolai men (Toyoda,

2006:37). As such, the Tolai *tubuan*s are always prominent features of this festival. In fact, the festival was originally held in the capital, Port Moresby, and was later moved to East New Britan so that the *tubuan*s would be able to perform (Tateyama, 2016:26). Further, in East New Britain there are broadly two main cultural groups: the Tolai and the Baining. The Baining have a history of being discriminated against by the socio-economically prominent Tolai. This also played out through the Mask Festival. The Baining usually perform their famous fire dance at the festival, however in past years there were many problems during these performances, with people not respecting the performers and even modifying the fires they were using to perform, such that some of the performers ended up burning their feet. The result is that, in 2023, festival goers paid an additional fee and were bused up into Baining territory in order to see this performance. I summarize these disagreements here in order to emphasize the ways in which control over a heritage practice is sought after as it is an indication of broader status and respect within society. These examples also briefly illustrate how It can be used by states or any powerful institution to create a consensus on history, just as it can be used by groups aiming to question this consensus. As Smith states, “The issue of control over heritage is political because it is a struggle over power” (2006:281).

Smith also points out that heritage is a “resource that is used to challenge and redefine received values and identities by a range of subaltern groups.” (2006:4). It is a tool which may be used equally by those in power and those seeking to counteract power. This trait is highly reminiscent of the ways in which secrecy works as a tool. As I discussed in chapter 7, secrecy can be used as a tool by both groups in power and those aiming to subvert power. Further, secrecy tends to rest on a combined process of hiding and making visible. This is also the case when it comes to heritage. There are innumerable ‘traditional customs’ and ‘historical sites’ or ‘historical objects’, yet it is certain ones that are chosen and brought to public prominence through processes such as heritagization. The ‘pieces of heritage’ that are brought to the fore highlight certain aspects which are thought to be desirable and obscure others (which may previously have pertained to the very same ‘pieces’ or to other ‘pieces’ which were not chosen).

I point out these similarities for two primary reasons. First, to emphasize the ways in which heritage, much like secrecy, is involved in the creation of groups and identities, as well as in the creation of power and power differentials. Secondly, in order to emphasize the extent to which secrecy is embedded in daily life, across societies. In reading about ‘secret societies in Melanesia’ or ‘secret societies in Africa’, etc… it is easy to think of these as phenomena that are radically different from those which occur in the ‘Western world’. However, studying the principals in these contexts, permits us to begin to notice how they are embedded everywhere

in our own worlds as well. It permits us to realize the extent to which secrecy is something inherently human and therefore present across many domains of human life.

In the case of secrecy, it was noted that both the group of people holding a secret and announcing to the population that they hold a secret as well as the audience to which this secret is announced but who remain unknowing, are both essential to the process of secrecy. In the case of the *Tubuan*, power differentials were enacted between those who were in the know, those who were not and those who might one day be in the know, as well as between those with different levels of knowledge. Something similar happens in the case of heritage, as those who are in control of defining and presenting it are those who could be said to be “in the know”, while those consuming it could be said to be the unknowing audience (some of which may have an interest in one day joining those who know and others not). This is why so many indigenous groups have and continue to fight for control over their “heritage” as it places them in positions of power from which they will hopefully be able to gain a place of respect and agency in wider society. Indeed, the agency that this provides goes even further, providing the means for self-definition of identity.

In both cases, that of secrecy and that of heritage, while those presenting information and those observing are construed as two groups, they are also deeply intertwined. If we return to the example described earlier, where a *singsing* group performed bare-breasted at a Pacific-wide festival and the unhappy reactions that it generated. In this case, the performance had been approved by those involved in selecting performers for the festival. Those in charge of heritage had likely agreed that this was an adequate representation of what local people valued and stood for. Yet, audience reactions suggested the contrary and affect how those decisions are made in the first place (bare-breasted performances are quite rare in the region). Further, those in the audience who displayed their discontent and were listened to were not just anyone. One individual hit the performers. But likely the most influential disagreement, was the one voiced from pulpits the next day. Had a village horticulturalist disliked the performance and told their friends, or an office worker disliked it and shared about it at work or with their friends, the effects would not have been the same. It would not have been noted and then referenced in an academic article. From all sides, it is those in positions of power, and recognized as such, who are able to shape narratives through the use of heritage.

This is because heritage practices set the stage, they set a narrative, which serves to define what kind of behaviour is acceptable and expected from various groups, groups which may also be defined at the same time. As, Martí Perez states: “En la fiesta se crean micromodelos de

interacción entre los agentes sociales que participan en ella." ("During celebrations micromodels of interaction are created between participating social agents"). And these may serve "como referente para la consolidación de modelos similares en la vida cotidiana." ("as references for the consolidation of similar models in daily life') (Martí Perez, 2008:174 - *my translation*).

Heritage: Frozen in time

An official declaration of heritage involves an institutional and bureaucratic backing, which renders the practices static and denies their multi-cultural or cross-cultural realities and potentials. It has the effect of freezing a practice at one moment in time. This is a common critique (Amselle, 2004:87; Martí Pérez, 1996:44). It is also very true. It can also serve the purposes of those seeking to have a practice declared heritage, as it allows them to set the narrative. This may be used by indigenous groups, and may help with claims over land-rights for example. Just as it may be used by politicians to further their interests.

Official declarations freeze practices in ways that are unnatural - making something that is dynamic into something static. In a way a practice that is made into heritage can never be a true or an 'authentic' practice (despite being officially considered as such), since it cannot change in the subtle ways that all practices do as they are repeated over time by people who are in constant flux.

Freezing practices also freezes the options that practitioners have, as it comes to be institutions and bureaucratic entities who set the narratives regarding these practices (Mancinelli, 2021:3). Delimiting what is considered to be a proper, real or true version of the custom limits the creativity of those involved in them. For instance, Jean-Loup Amselle discusses a consequence of this sort of freezing in relation to African art and how notions of heritage and authenticity ultimately limit modern artists (2004:87). He refers to the ways in which African artists have their expression limited, arguing that they are stuck within certain motifs and themes and those who are in tune with global art are seen to have lost their soul (2004:89). He is critical of heritage not only because of it's creation of false static states, but because of it's denial of cross-cultural influence (2004:87) and because it forces people to remain in that state. First, the creation of these static traditions may overlook the wide range of influences, from different places, belief systems, individuals out of which these practices dynamically arose. Further, it stops the people that these practices are associated with from changing.

Indeed, this has also occurred in Papua New Guinea. From the 1960s onwards, many movements arose calling for a way forward which looked to village life and the knowledge of village dwellers as a foundation for building the new nation. Bernard Narokobi is perhaps the most well-known of these, he spoke of a regional philosophy called *The Melanesian Way.* It emphasized the ways in which local populations needed to separate themselves from colonial oppression through a return to traditional ways. Stating that: “By blindly following the West we have become estranged and alienated from each other.” (1983:13). Though it was emphasized that this return to tradition was not to be an outdated frozen one, but to be one that would carry populations forward, it still had the effect of painting negatively various engagements with “modernity” as represented by western influence (ex: 1983:4,7,13). Indeed, his philosophy is representative of the ideas dominating the region at the time, as throughout independence and into the 1980s, there was a strong post-colonial movement which asserted the new nation’s identity as a nation by criticizing institutions which had been introduced by colonial authorities and presenting an idealized image of the village (Goddard, 2017:122). As Goddard states: the imagined village was increasingly resonating with the rhetorics of post-colonialism through most of now-independent Melanesia.” (2017:121-2)

This has also had an effect on women’s rights and gender issues as it has often impeded women who desired to incorporate western elements into their own lives (things such as various modes of dress, behaviour, education, and the fight for women’s rights are all sometimes labelled as western imports). It has also served to hide how many patriarchal phenomena now occurring have been deeply shaped by colonialism and have actually taken away many customary means for women to earn status and respect (further discussed later in this chapter).

The Sensorial, Affective and Atmospheric in Heritage

Though heritage often revolves around physical objects, objects don’t inherently contain any of this meaning, meaning comes from the use of discourse as well as from the emotive or atmospheric situations that arise. Smith relates an anecdote as an illustrative example (2006:2). While she was in Australia conducting heritage fieldwork, over her and her informants’ breaks, she would hear the older women telling the younger women stories. This reminded her of her own life as well, of the stories she was told in her childhood and the ones she would tell her children. It made her reflect on the meanings that she had derived from these stories and that even though she would tell her children the same stories, they would derive their own, different, meanings from them. These stories were tied to objects, to heirlooms, yet she reflected on how ultimately these objects were not essential, as the stories would still be transmitted if the objects

were to accidentally disappear. The objects remained “useful for making these stories tangible” (2006:2), however they were not essential to the intergenerational sharing of knowledge.

This is reminiscent of Ahmed’s discussion of affect, of how it is something which circulates, and as it circulates certain objects may become sticky from these affects, they come to have an association with certain affects, to draw more affect or/and more of certain kinds of affect (2010; 2013). But, affect does not reside in any of these objects, it remains in circulation. (see chapter 6 for more details). This occurs in relation to heritage as well. Heritage, particularly the institutions and discourse surrounding it, as well as populations engaging with these, are responsible for choosing and making sticky certain objects - the physical, or tangible, aspects of heritage. The objects themselves do not hold these affects: they do not hold the stories, the narratives, the realities that the objects reference. Much as Smith indicates they are simply “useful for making these stories tangible.” (2006:2).

Pink and Sumartojo, in their discussion on atmospheres, discuss the ways in which individuals and groups may turn to the past to legitimize practices in the now and for the future (2018:124). These and other political projects of heritagization, are also inherently atmospheric projects. They are both atmospheric and affective projects as they rely on making people feel in certain ways, they rely on felt experience.

Heritage is created with specific intentions, it is created and articulated intentionally in order to charge these atmospheres. Of course, the charging of atmospheres, though done with intention can be received both predictably and unpredictably (2018:122). This is also something which Pink and Sumartoko discuss: the difficulty of creating these spaces. Someone (an artist, a politician, etc..) may start with an intention but they cannot guarantee that the space they create will be received in the way that they intend, or that it will solely be received in this way. Heritage may be created with a certain set narrative in mind, but in order for it to be received in the way intended, one must have a very accurate understanding of one’s audience. An affective or atmospheric project is most likely to work out as intended when both those setting the narrative and those engaging with it are in line. Further, even if it is received as intended, it is impossible to tell what other consequences it may have.

Pink and Sumartojo argue that how the possibility for non-conformity and resistance is inherent in atmospheres (2018:128). Atmospheres open possibilities since one cannot exactly predict how each individual will interact with it. As I discussed previously, in chapter 6 with reference to McNaughton, individuals are the “wild cards of society” (2008:117). Here, Pink and Sumartojo

argue, that it is through the potentially unexpected ways in which they may react (or set off a chain of reactions) that the possibility of resistance is opened up (2018:122). It is often how change comes to occur in society. However, these very same individuals are products of their lived environment, and heritage is a part of that lived environment. As such, the narratives put forth by heritage, the affective economy set in place, the ways in which it atmospherically charges that environment, come to shape how identities are built, how ideas and beliefs play out. While individuals react to the tangible and intangible experiences they are presented, these come to be a part of who they are: making the spaces for conformity greater and the spaces for non-conformity difficult to map out.

Though individuals do remain the wild cards of society, institutions may limit their ability to act in ways that do not conform to set narratives. This is particularly relevant in the case of heritage, since, as has already been mentioned, it usually goes hand in hand with institutions representing and defining it. This makes it very hard for individual 'wild cards' to act in ways that do not follow the set narrative.

This is particularly evident in the case of the *Tubuan*. Though not strictly speaking a heritage practice as defined by any western institution, it is a heritage practice in the local sense of being a *kastom* practice. Further it is one (or rather a whole series of practices) which is backed by a secret society, whose most powerful members are generally also powerful members of their communities. As such, narratives are set by high ranking members of the *Tubuan* society, and then followed (in a very affectively charged atmosphere) by other community members. As it is an institution, going against the narrative that it sets involves punishment, making it such that non-conformity is generally too costly to occur. There have been many instances (recorded, likely more un-recorded) of individuals sharing some of the secrets of the *tubuan* or getting angry at the actions of the *tubuan*, incidents where individuals have experienced the narrative put forth and wanted to contest it. Yet, they failed. Not only did their way of seeing things not change the dominant narrative, but they were punished (often with fines or in older times with the burning of their houses) for their actions, thus using fear to affectively reinforce conformity.

For instance, as I have already mentioned, while I was in the field I was told of an incident where a Tolai man in East New Britain had sold a *tubuan* mask to someone for exhibition in a Chinese (or perhaps Hong Kong) museum. Though I have searched, I have not been able to find any museum in these countries with a *Tubuan* on display, this however does not mean that it does not exist. Not, does the actual factual reality of the example truly matter. As I already explained, I was sitting in a *hausboi* in Likas village one day, having been invited by local

children and then men to sit and talk. I was then introduced to a chief from further south in the Siar/Lak region, who was not happy with my presence. He went on to tell, with great disapproval, of these men who had bought and sold a mask. He then added that he and a group of like minded people had been working both on having the mask returned and on having the man who had sold it punished. Indeed, the focus was not purely on locating the mask and bringing it back to the place where it belonged. A great deal of emphasis was placed on how this Tolai man had been highly wrong and needed to be punished for his actions. The enforcement of rules surrounding the *Tubuan* have been and remain incredibly important.

As such, though the close relationship of heritage with felt experience, with emotions, affects and atmospheres and their closeness to individual experiences and variability, means that it is something which always leaves open a space for contestation and non-conformity. This course of action is not the most likely. This is in part because the narratives represented through heritage are the dominant narratives, created and backed both by the powerful and by institutions. Making the narratives of heritage difficult to overtly contest and alter.

Heritage in the Field

Heritage practices, to be counted as such, are often dependent on an official classification. In Papua New Guinea, there are few of these. For instance, there is only one sight on UNESCO's World Heritage List, the Kuk Early Agricultural Site, which was placed on the list in 2008.

Local classification as heritage practice has to do with the NCC, which in its actions and organizations looks to definitions provided by the UNESCO for guidance (National Cultural Commission, 2022:2). The work of the NCC is tied into nation-building. The Commission is within the government structure of the community, as it sits under the Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture. In 2022 they set out a policy outline for the coming decade. This outline refers back to the principles on which the Papua New Guinean government was founded and acts in order to "provide the policy direction for the nation's development of the cultural sector" (National Cultural Commission, 2022:xiii). Indeed, in outlining their principals the first on the list concerns identity: "The identity of a nation and its people are rooted in their history, belief systems, cultural traditions and customs, national symbols, monuments, and structures." (National Cultural Commission, 2022:8). As Smith has argued, control over heritage is critical to self-identity and to holding agency (2006:279-280).

This is particularly relevant as the NCC is, in many ways, an outward, global facing commission. First, as it is located within the Ministry for tourism and in how it seeks to safeguard practices so that they may be practiced in festivals and on other occasions when they may be shared. Indeed, in their social media pages the NCC describes itself as an organization that looks to culture as a source of identity and that is focused on safeguarding this. The NCC describes itself on LinkedIn as: “primary objective to assist, facilitate, preserve, protect, develop, promote and safeguard the traditional cultures of the indigenous people of Papua New Guinea” (retrieved 10/08/2024) and on Facebook they introduce themselves by stating that: “We value culture as the source of our identity, strength, guidance and prosperity” (retrieved 10/08/2024). The location and content of these statements indicate an outward, world-facing, orientation, while the content points to an alignment with the AHD (Authoritative Heritage Discourse) described by Smith (2006:29).

Further it is organizations such as the NCC which draw up yearly calendars of the cultural festivals to be held in the country. As such, the organization and the individuals who have achieved high positions within it are those who define the national identity, as they choose which performances will come to prominence in this work of self-definition.

This is particularly interesting within the context of a young country made up of over 800 languages and cultural groups. Further, within a context where there are large differences between city dwellers, many of which have becomes members of a small portion of the population that makes up a kind of educated elite, and large numbers of rural populations. Inevitably it is not all of the 800+ cultures which will be represented and come to be associated with the new nation. Rather, it is those who are somehow connected to individuals in positions of power, which can help these individuals, etc… which will are most likely to be selected. Looking forward these same practices, are more likely to become well-known and to empower those who are associated with them. More likely to emphasize narratives associated with these practices, with the ways of practising them and with those associated with the practices. All the while obscuring (intentionally or not) a multitude of other practices and the narratives, beliefs and groups associated with them.

I would like to return to the presence of fear in relation to the *Tubuan*, discussed both in chapters 4 and 6. Though the presence of fear is an important part of the practice, in this context it is both absent and present in different ways. This is because the audience for which it is performing is different, though there may be some local and national individuals, the *kastom* performances of the festival are particularly oriented towards an international audience. These

audiences, coming from further afield do not have the knowledge needed to develop a fear of the *tubuan*. Further, as they are not community members and will not become community members there is no need for them to be placed into the kinds of relational social structure that the fear related to the *Tubuan* and *tubuan* performances contributes.

The event was mostly oriented towards an international audience. All international audience members were given special passes and access to a special stage, chairs, and shaded area from which to view the performances. Further, the scheduling of the event clearly indicated its orientation. As the 'traditional' dances were performed during the day, during weekdays. Meaning that most local people, especially those with sufficient resources to pay the entrance fee, would have been at work at that time. Yet, other events such as concerts of local artists, a fashion show and christian ceremonies were organized on the weekend and in the evenings. During daytime *kastom* performances the international crowd was always present with only a few local attendees. Yet, on the evenings where concerts featuring local bands were organized, none of the international attendees remained and incredibly long queues formed outside the gates as local residents entered to attend.

Though the performances put on at the festival were *kastom*, they were *kastom* in a different context and in a certain sense with a different purpose: one of proclaiming power and authority to the world on the basis of custom, of local identities. As such, though the practices were altered, they also remained the same in many ways given how many of the practices were already considered entertainment practices or/and were involved in the creation and perpetuation of social structures. The big difference was that in this context they were acting on a national and international level, not a local community or inter-community level.

Further, in this context, the relationship of all audience members, local and international, is different. For instance, when I attended the *kinavai* in Kokopo accompanied by a local Tolai woman, she was at first hesitant to approach the *tubuan*s and *dukduk*s on the beach, as a woman is supposed to be. Yet, she was visibly curious, and the context seemed to permit her curiosity to gradually win over her fear. Indeed, as we waited, she gradually joined me at my position in the crowd, and even rushed ahead of me as the *tubuan*s reached the beach. Similarly, international tourists (myself and those I observed) were also curious, yet afraid in our own ways. While we did not have the required knowledge to be afraid of the figures themselves, and of what they represent in indigenous cosmologies. We did have the knowledge needed to be fearful of acting disrespectfully, in a way that was not considered proper. Though we knew little about the norms and beliefs surrounding the practices, we were fearful of inadvertently

acting incorrectly and offending. Though this fear is very different from that described in chapters 4 and 6, it remains a fear. And one which compels us to act in certain ways, giving authority and control over the narrative to the *Tubuan* and those associated with it.

There is an incredible lack of information given to international audience members attending the festival. Beyond knowing the name and provenance of a dance (and sometimes not even that), no background information is provided to contextualize the performances, no information is given regarding the meaning of various actions. International audience members were eager for this information, commenting on the lack of it, and sharing tidbits with one another when they could find them. Had such information been provided, those in attendance would have listened riveted and it would have altered their perceptions of the performances. Yet, it would not have allowed them to feel and experience the performances in the same way as local New Irelanders or East New Britainers do. Of course, as has already been mentioned more than once, there is always individual variation in this. Some of this variation is orchestrated (perhaps intentionally, perhaps not, this is difficult to determine and is likely wholly neither), while some variation is a result of individual variations in experience, temperament, etc… However, this division goes further, setting apart different groups of people.

In this case, the lack of information may not have been intentional, it may have been an oversight or simply something that was not thought of. It does bear a remarkable resemblance with how Lindstrom describes the relationship with knowledge in Melanesia: arguing that knowledge is something which can be possessed and is valuable in so far as one possesses it and others do not (1984). At the festival, not providing information, in the case of the *tubuan* at least, meant that this possession of knowledge was maintained. It reinforced a division between those who are local and hold knowledge and those who are foreigners and do not know. Initiation into the various grades of the *Tubuan* society is built on principles according to which one gains knowledge as one gains power and standing, all the while making it clear to those outside of the system that they do not possess the knowledge to have power and status. The same could be said to be happening here. The *Tubuan* is performing in front of a crowd, proclaiming that it hold special knowledge and emphasizing that those in the crowd watching do not have this knowledge. Making these people highly aware of their lack of knowledge. As such, for the *tubuan* to perform in front of such an internationally diverse crowd, whilst proclaiming that it possesses such knowledge is an act of power extending far beyond the local.

Indeed, this type of dynamic plays out in other contexts as well, not just in the case of the Mask Festival or of Culture Shows. The *tubuan* (and many other *kastom* performances) also perform

in situations where foreign officials are present, such as diplomatic events or business meetings.

Just previous to my arrival in the field the *tubuan* performed on two such occasions: one was for the opening of a hospital in nearby Tinkoris and another was organized by Harold near Kavieng in order to greet some NGO representatives that he was working with. The performance at the hospital opening was far more local in scope, however, it indicates the ways in which *kastom* practices are utilized in modern contexts, such that they will remain relevant. In a way, the *kastom* practice and modern developments, supporting one another. While the performance that occurred near Kavieng was a far more blatant use of the *tubuan* as a power performance. As I have already discussed, by putting on this *tubuan* performance Harold was demonstrating to his guests his high status and power within the region. Further, he was following the principals of the Melanesian Way, by building a future that was based on international cooperation being brought into dialogue with traditional ways. By putting on a performance for his guests he was not only welcoming them and giving them the opportunity to witness something unknown to them, but also announcing his terms of the engagement. In heritage terms, he was setting the narrative by placing *kastom* practices into modern business interactions. Utilizing his power and standing in one domain in order to provide power and status in another. He was assuming active agency in the situation, such that he would be able to set the narrative.

The same sorts of processes occur in relation to anthropologists. As was related in chapter 2, many have arrived in the region for over a hundred years now, as such their presence is nothing new. They are generally welcomed and treated with friendliness and respect. Indeed, they are usually included into the community: given a family, a home, a garden to tend to, etc…
For instance, on arrival I was informally placed in the *piknat* clan and as I went about meeting villagers I would always be told that so and so was my mother, my sister, my *tambu*, etc.… before eventually being slightly more formally entered into this position through a small ceremony making me an ‘honorary’ member of the *piknat* clan. However, my position was that of a female and, as such, I was not given access to male secret practices. I am even fairly sure (and in some cases certain) that my interest in them was sometimes poorly viewed. This stands in contrast to, or perhaps even in line with, other, male, anthropologists who have worked in the region, whose interest in these practices was referred to with pride.

While I had always expected that there would be some lines of secrecy that would be drawn based on my gender and limiting me, my previous reading on the region had led me to think that I would still be allowed a bit more access than a local woman. However, I found that I was only

given slightly more access than a local woman and that this stemmed from a continued contact with a global world and a desire for this contact to be done on one's own terms (I use the word "one" here as the people or groups can be various: at times it is the country, at times it is a country or a village, at times it is a group of men, a group of women, or just one or a few individuals). As such, anthropologists are included into communities and taken care of. But, this is done on the terms of the welcoming party. Adherence to *kastom* allows individuals and groups to set a narrative and interact with a broader world on their own terms.

Of course, *kastom* is not the only force at play within communities - it is not the only force with the power and authority to set or break narratives. Returning to the Mask Festival in Kokopo, one incident demonstrates the strength of economic-based status and power. At the *kinavai* in Kokopo, as I waited among the crowd on the beach, a woman appeared, accompanied by a woman holding an umbrella over her head, and the two walked through the crowd and out onto the beach where there was an unobstructed view of the event. It was soon whispered to me that this woman was the owner of the Tropicana trade store in town, one of the largest. In terms of *kastom*, her status as a woman would have prohibited her from approaching in this way and given the right to the many older men around to have told her that she was misbehaving. But, her economic strength allowed her passage.

Christianity is also a strong force throughout the country. As I have already explained it permeated all aspects of life in Samo and the relationship between *kastom* and Christianity is one that is always being negotiated. Yet, both remain incredibly important, and are the underlying principals which both the constitution and the Melanesian Way cite as the founding principals on which the country's future must be built. This plays out in the village in a myriad of ways, where the two may at times co-exist, and at other times one may score above the other.

For instance, shortly before I left the VPC and some of the villagers decided that they would organize a culture day so that I would be able to see more of the *singsing* practices which I seemed to be so interested in. At one point, after much discussion concerning the event had already been had, I was made aware of the fact that they would have to run the plan by the reverend of the local United Church for approval before going forward with it. I had met and spoken with the reverend on a few occasions and he did not strike me as someone who would have opposed such an event. Still, this slip of information underlined both the important standing and power of the UC in the community and that the leaders of the VPC wanted me to be aware of this fact.

Further, in preparations for the same event, there was much discussion throughout the village (in my presence at the very least) concerning which performances there would be and who would be putting them on. Likely due to the interest that I had shown in the practice of the *karuka* house, there was talk that some of the women would organize a dance representing *kámgu* (likely at the time of her exit from isolation). However, the issue with this, was that the girl playing the role of the *kámgu* would have to perform bare-breasted. and they were having trouble finding a girl of the right age to do this, as most were too embarrassed. Though at various points I was told that a couple of different girls had agreed to perform the *kámgu*, the performance never happened. I do not know exactly when or why the performance was dropped. But, the issue of women dancing bare-breasted is far from being a new one not only in Papua New Guinea but throughout the South Pacific. The high rate of christianity throughout the region, makes these performances highly immoral and stigmatizes those who might attempt to do so anyway (this is in most contexts, exceptions may exist). Though these performances are historically accurate, they do not follow heritage's narrative for what the future should resemble. Indeed, much as the nation's constitution sets out: the future is meant to be built on the principals of *kastom* as well as those of Christianity.

Heritage in New Ireland and farther afield in Papua New Guinea is an important part of the nation-building project. Local *kastom* practices are based on historically accurate practices, but these must also fit with other influences from more recent history. Together, these form a local heritage, which is actively utilized in order to ensure that the country, that local communities or individuals remain those who are in control of their own narratives as they make their presence increasingly known to the international world. However, this work remains dependent on those who are in positions of power within traditional society, or/and who were placed within situations of power throughout the colonial era and into the current era of independence. As such, narratives set will tend to benefit those coming from these positions of power, while often constraining others.

Women in Papua New Guinea, Present and Past

An enormous problem in the country is that of GBV (gender based violence) and IPV (intimate partner violence). For instance, a 2015 report cited that 41% of men admit to having raped someone (SDGFund, 2015). In the same year, it was reported that 67% of women in the country have experienced domestic abuse, and in some areas of the Highlands 100% of women have experienced violence (Lytton, 2015). According to surveys taken in 2016-2018 by the National

Statistics Office “70% of women and 72% of men believe that a husband is justified in beating his wife in at least one of five specified situations”. These are only a sampling of many such statistics and surveys. In addition to the high prevalence of violence, cases that are reported are very unlikely to be tried and even less likely to lead to convictions. According to Human Rights Watch, “In 2020, 15,444 cases of domestic violence were reported but only 250 people were prosecuted, and fewer than 100 people were convicted.” (McLennon, 2021). This is partly because of cultures that consider this sort of violence to be “ok” or “a private matter” (Masta, 2021:22,34). These beliefs are also tied to a lack of female representation. They also mean that when women do seek justice services may not be present or accessible; police, medical staff and judges may not believe them; etc…

Though Papua New Guinea is an incredibly diverse country and prevalence varies between regions, problems related to gender inequality are present throughout the country. Yet, women’s issues are barely represented in government policies (MacIntyre, 2000:149). And even on the occasions when women may be granted their rights on paper, in practice they are often denied them (Spark, 2010:18). Fewer women receive high school and college educations (Zimmer-Tamakoshi, 1993:77), and if they do they are likely to struggle to be accepted in suitable roles and in their communities (Spark, 2010:24-5). In global rankings of gender equality the country is ranked very low. On the UNDP’s Gender Inequality Index it ranks 160th out of 161 countries and in the 2021 Global Gender Gap Index it ranked 135 out of 156 countries (UN Women, n/a). Further, the situation is not improving, two interviewees working in the gender sector in Papua New Guinea affirmed that the situation was not only not improving, but that it was actually becoming worse. In the same line, Dame Meg Taylor[78], a well-known politician and diplomat in Papua New Guinea, stated recently that: “at the bottom of it all is culture, where what happens in our culture, in my country, patriarchy is bigger than ever. A woman’s voice is rarely, rarely heard.” (RNZ, 2024).

This reality is due to a complex intermingling of factors, including the effects of a national discourse meant to unify a culturally varied geographic area that was built by a male cultural elite with the backing of an also largely patriarchal colonial force. It is a result of a combination of patriarchal traditional cultures and patriarchal colonial influences. Current cultures have been built on very real patriarchal values and practices of both of these parties. But this also obscures the fact that not all of the cultures of Papua New Guinea are so deeply patriarchal and, in the past, even highly patriarchal societies did not necessarily stop women from holding status and

[78] Dame Meg Taylor is a Papua New Guinean woman, and among many of her roles, she is a former Secretary General of the Pacific Island Forum Secretariat.

authority in their own ways. The ways in which these past realities have been obscured often impede actions which could improve the quality of life of large swathes of the population.

It is difficult to understand what the situation was like for women in pre-colonial times, simply due to the lack of a written record from this period. The best glimpse can be gleaned from the writings of a few traders or missionaries from the 1800s and from anthropologists who wrote ethnographies just in the 'contact period' (the turn of 1900s in islands regions, in the 30s-60s in the Highlands). Of course, these texts offer highly biased glimpses into societies at moments of large change. What is clear is that men and women lead largely separate lives at this time (Dr. Mercy Masta, personal communication, 2024).

In part because of the large bias of these early arrivers to the region, it has been argued that women actually remained fairly peripheral to the colonial project that was ongoing up until the independence era (Dickson-Waiko, 2013:177-180). This is in part because earlier colonization and missionisation was carried out only in certain regions (mostly coastal ones that were easier to access) and was an extremely masculine affair in terms of who the colonizers were, their ideology and the people that they were looking to engage in various roles. Europeans involved at that time were coming with their own preconceptions and beliefs, generally at least roughly aligning with those of Victorian European society. Their actions came from this ideological framework. They sought out men to engage in labour positions and men to place in positions of authority (for instance in positions such as those of *luluai* or *tultul*). As such, Dickson-Waiko argues that most Papua New Guinean women did not interact with colonizing forces or only did so very indirectly (2013:177-180). Exceptions are those who worked for missionaries (though women only did so in limited ways) and other colonial forces, lived close to their settlements, and those who attend mission schools. In these interactions, Victorian value schemes for gender roles were imparted. For women, this meant that Victorian notions of domesticity were imparted (2013:178). Mission and colonial forces often created schools and saw education as an important portion of their work. From the arrival of some of the earliest missionaries in the 1800s, mission schools were set up. However, the first high school for girls was opened in 1963 (Dickson-Waiko, 2013:180). And, even when there was access to education, women were encouraged to head towards 'typical' career paths such as nursing or teaching (2013:180).

The Independence period began around the late 60s and early 70s, leading up to independence in 1975. According to many authors this seems to have been a time of hope as it was generally understood that women expected to be included in the benefits of independence (Zimmer-Tamakoshi, 1993:64). This hope was not without foundation either, as women were involved in

the political movements occurring at the time. In 1972, Josephine Abaijah was the first woman to be elected to the House of Assembly; a minister of women's affairs was appointed in 1974; and in 1975 WAG (Women's Action Group) was created. Though this period of the early 70s saw the active presence of women in politics and public affairs, only 12% of UPNG's first graduating class in 1970 were women, climbing to 17% in 1978 (Zimmer-Tamakoshi, 1993:65). Clearly women were present and increasingly so. However, these low numbers underline the situation of male dominance in which these women found themselves.

It is also important to note that though many women were politically involved at the time, their involvement and goals were not necessarily the same as those of women in the West at around the same time. For instance, the WAG was a group of women from UPNG and the YMCA who met in order to discuss issues concerning them and in order to try to better these: issues such as the difficulties of life in the settlements[79] and regarding the fact that most jobs seemed to be going to male graduates. But, Dickson-Waiko states that: "by their own accounts, no WAG member was a feminist." (2013:85). Similarly, Lady Kiki, who remains a well known female figure in Papua New Guinea politics to this day, was also active around this period. She was the wife of a prominent and founding member of the Pangu Pati[80]. Many of the party meetings were held in their house, yet she did not become a member of the party, her involvement was serving tea (Dickson-Waiko, 2013:182). Early on in the run to independence she had stated that women would come to prominence in politics, yet Dickson-Waiko argues that: "Kiki saw the role of women such as herself in the traditional mode as the wife of a politician and supporter of her husband's career, not as a female politician." (2013:188). Though women were involved and fighting for their rights, their vision of what these rights would be was not that of western feminists of the same period. Indeed, it was not a feminist movement.

This continues to be true today. There was and continues to be a rejection of Western models of things such as womanhood, women's rights, feminism, gender and gender equality. This was emphasized in interviews. Though there clearly are movements to empower women, decrease violence, etc… The sort of vocabulary that tends to surround these actions in the 'West' simply does not exist in Papua New Guinea - if and when it does it is a new introduction very unlikely to be widely accepted and/or likely to be modified as it is incorporated into local worldviews. Indeed, this reflects criticisms of western feminism which have long emerged from the global

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[79] In Port Moresby, a large portion live in what are called settlements due to a lack of housing and a high cost of living in the city. These settlements often do not have access to running water, electricity, or sewage disposal. They are also infamous for their violence.

[80] The Pangu Pati is a national political party in Papua New Guinea, it was founded in 1967, in the years leading up to Independence.

south. Many of these criticisms focusing on the ways in which feminism is associated with the particular fights of middle-class white women and does not reflect the needs of women outside of these limited contexts. With critiques often focusing on the ways in which western feminism is focused on the individual as opposed to the community and for not leaving space for local traditions and contexts, many of which did empower women but disappeared with colonialism (ex: Akob, 2021; Mohanty, 2003, 1998, 2020)

This seems to come, at least in part, from the discourse of *The Melanesian Way*. As described previously *The Melanesian Way* was a book, underlining a philosophy and approach to the future of the new nation, written by Bernard Nairokobi. Nairokobi was an educated man, and therefore a part of the cultural elite. His philosophy for the nation, fore-fronted and promoted a discourse which likened women to the guardians of culture. As such, it placed great value on women who stayed in the village and were submissive, while it painted 'modern women' who were educated, lived in the city and desired rights, as betrayers of the Melanesian Way (Dickson-Waiko, 2013:186; MacIntyre, 2000:152-3; Zimmer-Tamakoshi, 1993:70-85). These 'modern women' were essentially sympathizers of the colonial powers: they were considered colonized and not authentic Papua New Guineans (Dickson-Waiko, 2013:186-7).

As I mentioned previously (chapter 5), Knauft worked in the Gebusi area in both 1981 and 1998, and between his two trips noticed a large change in beliefs regarding men's and women's roles. The people he met in 1981 would have been of the independence generation, while those he met in 1998 of the following generation. He noticed, that by 1998 men had become associated with economical agency and that women had become associated with the church, which made them "markers of morality and propriety" (2004:198). This limited women's behaviour, most notably in relation to the *kastom* dances that he had observed during his previous visit. Due to their new association with the church, morality and propriety, the custom of dancing bare-breasted had been altered. He noted that it was only a few older women who dared to do this (2004:198). This example shows how responsibility for being properly Melanesian and not Western is placed on women. But also, once again, that the ways in which this plays out don't necessarily have to do with an accurate representation of pre-Independence ways. Further, it affects men and women differently. Demonstrating quite blatantly how heritage is not about the past, but about a future-oriented present.

The Melanesian Way claims to be about the past, about a return to the customs of Melanesian people's from before colonialism. It claims to be about a return to the richness and knowledge that these ways of life provide. Yet, the actual text equally includes the importance of adherence

to Christianity as a foundation on which to build a contemporary Melanesian nation. Narokobi states that: “I see a new vision and a new hope for Melanesians. I see ourselves holding fast to the worthy customs of our people. I see Melanesians accepting principles of Christianity.” (1983:5).

Indeed, this is an example of something akin to Smith’s authoritative heritage discourse. As particular powerful parties claiming to have special insight create institutions which promote certain versions of history for the purpose of creating a uniting discourse with which to move forward. The Melanesian Way is a heritage discourse: as it picks pieces of the past that stand for a value system which it wishes to see in the present and on which it desires the future to be built. Much like authoritative heritage discourse’s foundation from scholarly, archaeological discourse, the Melanesian Way’s discourse is put forth by an educated man. Given the incredibly low rates of schooling in Papua New Guinea (and even more so at the time), this placed Narokobi and those surrounding him in a position of incredible privilege and power, allowing them to set the narrative for the future of the new nation.

What this means in terms of women’s rights in Papua New Guinea, is that the narrative on which the nation was built came out of the convergence of two patriarchal powers. Though some societies in Papua New Guinea are matrilineal, most are patriarchal. Further, those who colonized the country and placed certain individuals in power over others, were also from patriarchal societies. And, finally, the missionaries arriving to the country and preaching regarding christianity were also patriarchal. When these patriarchal powers met, they built off of one another, resulting in the strengthening of patriarchy in the country. Here, the Melanesian Way becomes the ideological basis of a new nation as it roots itself in heritage. Exactly the kind of heritage which has been addressed in this chapter: one which is based on very real ‘pieces of information’ from the past, that are picked and chosen and framed, in order to create and strengthen values and narratives that parties in power find desirable in the present and for the future. In this case, the ones who have been able to set and control the narrative. As a gender specialist in the region told me: “I feel like here, in Papua New Guinea, a lot of times we use *kastom* as an excuse to justify bad masculine behaviour.” (Mirriam Dogimab, personal communication, 2024).

The result of this narrative is that women face many difficulties when trying to obtain rights, representation or simply safety. Indeed, there is a lack of female presence and representation higher up the echelons. Between independence and 2022, there were a total of nine women in Parliament (Meki, 2022). Meaning that women’s interests are not represented in national

government. Further a lack of male allies makes it incredibly difficult for women to achieve representation. For instance, in 1987, a reform on domestic violence was presented to an all male Parliament and was booed from the floor (Zimmer-Tamakoshi, 1993:67). And, in 2010, a submission that 22 seats be reserved for women was rejected (Dickson-Waiko, 2013:186).

Another force impeding women's rights and women's efforts to gain autonomy is a lack of money or of access to it. This is an issue across genders in Papua New Guinea. But, for women, a lack of access to money may place them in positions of dependence that make them vulnerable to violence. MacIntyre notes that while many women in the West feel stifled and limited by the demands of wage labour, the same cannot be said in Papua New Guinea where wage labour offers the freedoms of financial freedom or self-determination (2000:164-5).

However, achieving this is difficult. Access to money is an issue for both men and women in the country. Even highly motivated women are likely to meet additional challenges. Spark discusses the situation of women who have studied in Australia with one of the many scholarships provided and returned to Papua New Guinea (2010). The idea behind these scholarships had been that educating these women would mean that when they returned, they would then be able to lead changes in areas such as legislation, leading to equality (2010:19). Spark shows that this has not been the case, and that though education is important, alone, it will not lead to any real changes (2010:20,26). She outlines how women returning from abroad face discrimination and challenges on return, that they are perceived as inauthentic and that "they are perceived as threats by both women and men" (2010:19).

Not only do these women face challenges in achieving as they would like to in their professional lives, but they are also at increased risk of GBV. Sparks argues that education may, as opposed to protecting women from violence, actually increase their risks (2010:19). Miriam Dogimab who has conducted work on women in the private sector in the country, affirmed that educated women report higher rates of GBV, and that women in positions of leadership face more violence than those in lower level positions. This is in part due to the wide acceptance of the idea that these women have crossed a line and are not behaving as they should. Violence is seen as being a justified means of keeping them in line (Miriam Dogimab, personal communication, 2024; Sparks, 2010:19; Wardlow, 2006:26). Still, education remains an important means of empowerment, as it gives women access to employment and salaries without which they might be forced to remain in violent relationship. However, what this data demonstrates is that providing more women with more education, alone, will not end GBV. Rather it is a part of what needs to be a multi-part solution.

Gender Relations in the Field

Though I had read a lot on the low level of gender equality in the country before conducting my fieldwork I had no particular intention of focusing on the issue. It is my time in the country, in the field, which made it clear to me that I could not complete my work without devoting at least some attention to the issue. This was in part because as a woman interested in male practices I was ceaselessly presented with a challenge caused by my own gender. An experience which was rather new to me (of course that is part of the point of anthropological fieldwork no? to be jarred into realizations through experiencing different ways of life). It was day to day life which really made the importance of the issue clear to me. I had chosen New Ireland in part because it was one of the safer parts of Papua New Guinea: it does not have the tribal warfare that some regions of the Highlands experience, further the statistics citing that the Highlands have a 100% rate of gender based violence made it a place which for me, as a woman, did not seem appealing. Having chosen New Ireland, I believed that the issue, while still present, would mostly not come up. This was not true. On two occasions I saw women having to go to the hospital because their husbands had gotten angry and hit them, one with a piece of wood the other with a bush knife, wounding them. On many other occasions men would get drunk and then they would fight with their wives, often resulting in the wife being hit. On yet another occasion one of my primary informants got into a fight with her drunk husband, this resulted in her fleeing their house to spend some time living in Tabun and later with another of her mothers. At one point she returned to her husband's house after having stolen some money and the general consensus in the village was that he would beat some sense into her.

These violent incidents were jarring. But they were far from the only thing that made it evident that women and men were not expected to give and receive the same kind of respect. It is visible in how the tasks of daily life are divided. Women deal with almost all of the childcare, and housekeeping. From a young age girls have far less free time than young boys. Young boys up until their twenties, when they marry or move away to work, spend most of their time hanging out together. Occasionally they might help their family to fetch water and they do help out with garden work. Young girls work just as hard as their mothers on top of attending school. For instance, one of the teenage girls in Tabun would get up early every day to go to school, then, on her way back, she would often carry firewood, and after getting home she would: go to fetch water, cook dinner and care for the younger children, do homework and go to bed. On two occasions I overheard her mother beating her: once because she had not done the laundry as she had been asked to and another time because she had played volleyball on the way home

from school and thus started her other tasks too late. Young boys were also beaten for disobedience, but this disobedience did not have to do with shirking domestic responsibilities.

During my time in the field there was a meeting where the police came to speak to the community and inform them of changes that had been made to the law (see chapter 5 for further details). At this meeting they outlined what was a new law in relation to wife beating, the penalties for doing so (for the various degrees of violence involved in doing so) and emphasized that it was wrong. The fact that it had been placed into law seemed promising. However, as noted previously, though things may be placed into writing this does not mean that they are then put into practice. Questions remain regarding what happens if someone tries to use this law: who will the authorities take seriously and what kind of repercussions will the individual face when they return to their community? Further, the punishment for these crimes was far lesser than that for others. They announced that beating one's wife carried either two years of jail time or 5,000 kina; while public order crimes such as graffiti, smoking in public or chewing *buai* in public were punishable with up to three years of jail time or a 10,000 kina fine.

Girls are also far more likely to leave school despite not necessarily wanting to, in order to start families. Teenage pregnancies are highly common[81], when they occur the girl will usually leave school, however the boy will not. For instance, Gelanu, one of my main informants during my second stay was 21 years old and gave birth to her second child. She had left school after the seventh grade after getting pregnant with her first child. While I eventually found out that the father of both of her children, was still studying. Pregnancy and marriage often (though not necessarily) mark the end of girls' schooling, particularly in a village setting.

For instance, one day a young woman came to Tabun to ask for my help translating a *lotu* text into English and shared her story with me. She came with her first daughter, who was about four years old and shared with me that she was now pregnant with her second child. She very deliberately told me her story, I had not sought her ought, I did no more than ask questions that flowed from what she told me. She visibly wanted me to know her story. She was a quiet and kind woman. She had come back to the village after grade 10, she wanted to continue school but her family disagreed, and she found herself getting married. Then her husband did not want her to continue her education, he preferred for her to stay in the village, so she did. But, clearly her drive to learn and make something of herself hadn't died, as she participated in the United Church's women's association, and got my help to translate some documents that she had

[81] According to the UNFPA the adolescent birth rate is of 13% and 22% of 19 year old women have at least one child (UNFPA, n/a).

received at a meeting that she had attended in Kavieng a few months earlier. It was meant to teach women how to become spokeswomen in their communities.

I had another informant who lived near Tabun, likely in her late twenties or perhaps early thirties. She had three children and her second husband had a job at the mine on Lihir island. Due to his position, her family was in a position of relative wealth in the community: they lived in a semi-permanent house (houses which are not made of bush materials), everyone had new clothing and even wore some jewelry. On my first stay she confided in me that she wanted to continue the studies that she had been working on in Kavieng when she had first married and become pregnant with her first son. On my arrival to the field for my second stay, I found that she had done exactly this. Every week she would travel to nearby Namatanai to take classes, leaving her children under the care of her parents and siblings during those days. By the time I left she was wrapping up her degree and had already been offered a position in Namatanai town, which meant that both she and her children would be moving to town.

I include both of these cases in order to show how marriage and childbearing (and rearing) limits women's educational and professional opportunities. Particularly as women often begin having children at a young age. As already mentioned, this is critical, because women's ability to financially provide for themselves gives them the independence needed to remove themselves from certain situations of dependency and potential violence. However, this is extremely difficult, especially without the support of their families and either the support or absence of their husbands. My first informant was not able to continue her schooling because her family did not support her in this decision and arranged for her marriage instead. While my second informant would not have been able to travel to town in order to study if she hadn't had the support of her family, who cared for her children while she was away. Further, in both cases marriage and childbearing affected the women's' ability to move forward in their educational endeavours. For my first informant it was because her husband did not agree that she should be educated and did not permit her to attend further schooling. In my second informant's case, when she first became pregnant in Kavieng she married the child's father, later when he left her she returned to her family in Samo village, as the resources necessary for childrearing and school fees were no longer available to her in Kavieng. However, her second husband's income allowed her to pay for her school fees and, likely, his own absence, gave her the freedom needed to do so.

I mention both of these cases as they provide a glimpse into the multiplicity of ways in which women's roles in society: as daughters, mothers and wives, constrain their possibilities for action. There are no clear rules defining how each of these relationships constrains them: it

depends on the individuals involved, their beliefs and their socio-economic situations. However, what is clear in both of these cases is that the women are highly motivated. They have a desire to better their situations and that of their children, and they work hard to achieve this, finding and utilizing the options available to them. The options available are strongly influenced by factors such as income, the proximity to larger towns and cities, and the level of access to information from abroad.

Within Samo and surrounding areas the most successful women's groups were the church based ones. This is likely the case in towns and cities as well, as in Papua New Guinea in general church groups are often involved in the push for women's rights (MacIntyre, 2000:149,162). Indeed, I interviewed one woman who had worked in the women's development sector in the country. Over the course of carrying out workshops, she noticed that womanhood was often associated with being a christian woman (Dr. Mercy Masta, personal communication, 2024). As Papua New Guinea is a christian country and citizens understand the religion to be an important part of their identity. Christianity becomes a path that is considered legitimate and thus gives validity to the work of women's groups acting within its framework.

Indeed, within Samo the women's groups organized in the context of the church were the most successful ones. Female members of the UC would meet every Wednesday. Each week they would discuss matters and often someone would teach them something (for instance a sewing method). Many women attended these meetings and I never noticed anyone being critical of them. Further, it seemed to be an environment within which women could advocate for certain issues regarding the improvement of the community (for instance regarding education, manners, infrastructure).

On the other hand, there was a also a women's council associated with the government. This council was the most local-level result of the National Council of Women Act which was passed in 2013, regarding the inclusion and promotion of women's role in the country and in national development (2013:3). As such, every four years each LLG (Local Level Government) would elect women to be on this council. Local women could then pay ten kina[82] to become members and would be able to voice their concerns to the local council, and these concerns would eventually be passed up the hierarchy until they resulted in impact at the level of government, policy, etc… This women's council was not successful and received much criticism from members of the community. Most women were upset because they had spent ten kina but had not seen any changes. As such, most meeting involved much complaint regarding the spending

[82] roughly 2.40euros.

of ten kina on the one side and those in the council assuring them that it had indeed been money well spent on the other. Indeed, there were many comments regarding the misspending of this money, how it had been used by those in power for their own personal benefits, etc… As there is a good deal of corruption in Papua New Guinea[83] it is hard to say to what extent these funds truly were misspent and to what extent it was simply a case of policy and government having a difficult time fulfilling their promises. All in all, at the village level, this council did not appear to have been able to bring about any changes and it did not seem likely that it would.

Similarly, in one corner of the village near the beach there was the 'skeleton' of a house. It featured a concrete foundation and the frame pieces for walls and roof. On occasion it was used for night time choir practices, at times some *mangis* would hang out within the skeletal structure. I was eventually told what this structure was. Apparently it had originally been built as a sort of community center for the women, as a space where they could go to learn how to sew *meri* blouses and other such skills (skills such as sewing are helpful as it is cheaper to make ones' own clothes and because these garments can be made and then sold at markets, in short these skills give women the means to earn some income or/and to spend less of the small amounts that they have available). It had been active in this capacity perhaps twenty years before my time in the village. However, I was told that because the men did not respect them and their building, they had gone about destroying it. From the sound of it, pieces had been gradually removed and used for the construction of other structures throughout the village. Until it stood as it did when I arrived in the village: an abandoned frame.

As such, church based groups remain the only form of women's group which are truly socially accepted. Women such as my first aforementioned informant see the opportunities that it may offer and get involved. Not only is it in line with their personal faiths. But, it also offers opportunities for advancement, as well as opportunities to gain status and respect within the community. Indeed, she had recently attended a meeting in Kavieng where women had met in order to learn how to become leaders within their communities. Given that for many the cost of travelling to Kavieng is prohibitive, this alone is an opportunity, an opportunity of which she could take advantage because her husband had access to money through his own involvement in the *lotu*. Further, the meeting had been on the topic of becoming leaders in one's community: showing how christianity opens up spaces that are seen as legitimate for women to obtain status and power within their communities. It offers the possibility of empowerment. On the other hand, government and aid based initiatives do not carry the same legitimacy, and as such do not generally end up empowering women despite their intentions to do so.

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[83] In 2023 it ranked 133 out of 180 countries in the Corruption Perceptions Index (Transparency International).

Through all of this, it was generally understood that a better education meant better opportunities: it meant access to jobs, access to towns and cities, and all of the comforts of a middle class life. Women in the community who had received educations abroad, or post-secondary education within the country, were treated with respect within the village. Marlol made it into the VPC and held a position of respected leader within the community because she has studied in Australia and worked as a teacher. Salita, who came through once during my stay, was also respected as she had also studied in Australia and worked various jobs in cities, further she had used her skills to fill out aid applications that had had tangible results in the village (such as the installation of street lights). Even Kathleen, who had not studied abroad, but had studied nursing in Papua New Guinea and worked in many places including Kavieng, was respected as she was understood to be both an intelligent and a caring person. Clearly, education offered opportunities for all, but particularly for women. As such, many women that I spoke with emphasized their desire for their children to attend and to finish school. Tinsuken's daughter Manuela went to attend nursing school between my stays and her mother was visibly incredibly proud, though also concerned by the grades of her other teenage daughter. However, despite the best of intentions, many did not complete school, often due to a lack of money to pay for the school fees.

Heritage and Gender

Women's positions in society are highly tied to current national narratives, as well as to local ones. These narratives combine current local understandings of christianity and *kastom*, in ways that are constitutive of what it means, in the here and now, to be Papua New Guinean, a New Irelander, a Sursurunga speaker, etc…. Previously in this chapter, I discussed the similarities of the work of heritage with that of secrecy: whereby both pick and choose information in order to create certain narratives and relations. I also discussed the ways in which the heritage 'pieces' that are chosen have no inherent meanings, but become associated with certain affectual charges through what Ahmed refers to as 'stickiness'.

Graham and Penny discuss the construction and performance of indigenous identities. They argue that indigenous groups "fashion themselves as Indigenous through performance and performative acts in intercultural spaces" (2014:11). They discuss how this can empower groups, by giving them a place and voice in international forums, while it can also come to be something that is limiting and that groups may even choose to discard (2014). In Papua New

Guinea there does not seem to be much discussion of indigeneity, I most certainly never heard a Papua New Guinean use this term. However, notions of national identity based on the Melanesian Way, and notions of local identities tying individuals to a province or a cultural group, function in ways akin to indigeneity. The ideology of the Melanesian Way developed as the country was reaching Independence and needed to define itself such that it would have its own place and standing on an international stage. It was an act of self-definition, such that the nation would hold agency, a position and a say, on the international stage. The same is true within the country. When individuals move to cities for school and work, they will maintain connections to the provinces that they are from, even if they have never lived in those places. As such, when one reads interviews in magazines, people will specify that though they live in Port Moresby they are from Morobe and Manus for instance, as these are the provinces in which their parents or grandparents were born and which they may visit on holidays. As such, identification with place, with an indigenous group if you may, remains important in the country. It remains a source of power and authority for those who may claim it and present it on national or/and international stages. Just as a broader indigenous identity built by the nation also exists and comes into play on the national and international stages.

For instance, I attend a *singsing* event in Lasigi village. Lasigi is on the eastern coast of New Ireland, north of Namatanai. The *singsings* which I discussed previously are not practiced in this area, here there are others. However, social organization remains strikingly similar throughout the province, including the use of *hausboi*s. This meeting had been organized because, in Port Moresby, a multi-day meeting of diplomats from throughout the Pacific was being held. As such, the diplomats were flown to New Ireland and bused to Lasigi village (and then back to Port Moresby) in order to attend this *singsing*. After the *singsings* had occurred, the diplomats were invited to visit the local *hausboi.* There was a presenter with a microphone narrating the event. He explained that the attendees should head towards the *hausboi,* that this was a very important building in local culture. He explained that in their culture only men could enter this building and, in order to show respect to the local culture, the women should abstain from entering the building, though they were free to observe it from the outside. These instructions were followed, the men present went to sit inside the house and sat as the presenter spoke further over the microphone. At the same time, the women involved walked around the lawn in front of the *hausboi,* exchanging the occasional word with one another, sipping on their water.

While *hausboi*s are indeed the province's version of the men's house, and as such almost always an exclusively male meeting place, they are not strictly speaking 100% of the time forbidden to women. There do not appear to be any clearly distinguishable rules on when

women may enter them, but on occasions they do. There was one funeral in Samo village which I attended, where I joined many girls and boys, who gathered to eat a meal in and around one of the *piknat hausboi*s. I regularly saw women carry meals to men staying in the *hausboi*s. Further, on three occasions, at three different *hausboi*s, in three different villages, I was given special permission to enter a *hausboi*. This permission was always granted by an elder male with the authority to do so and likely was related to my status as an anthropologist with a special interest in these sorts of *kastom* related things. Clearly exceptions can be made to the rule forbidding women from entering *hausboi*s, the exclusion of women is not quite as complete as it is sometimes made out to be. So, why wasn't a comparable exception found or created on this occasion?

This occurrence stood out to me as, normally, within the realm of international politics such a blatant exclusion of women would simply not be considered acceptable. Yet, the presenter had fore-fronted the cultural norms of the place and made it necessary to follow these. By emphasizing *kastom*, local diplomats (or other figures of authority) had clearly established that when people came on their territory they would have to play by their rules. *Kastom* was a resource which had empowered them to have their own say, their own place, on an international stage. This is why no exception to the rule was made on this occasion, as following the rule allowed local leaders to establish their authority and status within the international diplomatic field.

Of course, this sort of claim to authority made via *kastom* does not have to be based on patriarchal institutions and the exclusion of women. In one interview, a woman with heritage from Manus province spoke to me about her experiences dancing the '*kastom*' dances of the island. She iterated that when she dances she feels a deep sense of responsibility, that by doing so she is representing her culture. She understands this responsibility, one which is placed on women in her culture, as one that is significant and that is a promotion of women (Dr. Mercy Masta, personal communication, 2024). As such, the utilization of *kastom* in a performative way, as a means of establishing authority on an international playing field can work in ways that empower or disempower women. It is less a result of the strategy itself and more a result of the *kastom*s that are utilized. And, of course, this choice will often depend on those who are in positions of sufficient power to make the choice.

Within Sursurunga, the *kastom*s that are emphasized do not give responsibility and authority to women. Though the society is matrilineal, it is also deeply patriarchal, and the most widespread *kastom*s emphasize this patriarchal aspect. These are the *hausboi*, as already mentioned, as

well as the *Tubuan*. Both of which are foundational sources of socio-political power and, though they do depend on women's collaboration, they are wholly within the male domain.

I argue that the socio-political context surrounding women's position in society is both causal of and visible in the decline in practices of female puberty rites. (I have already discussed this to a certain extent in chapter 5.). The fact that female based customs seem to be dying at a larger rate than male ones, and that the practices being given the most prominence are male centred ones is critical.

The death of female-centred *kastom* practices is negatively affecting the status of women in society. Indeed, many *kastom* practices created spaces where women could carve out authority, economic means, and status. For instance, the woman who spoke of dancing *kastom* dances from Manus, spoke of how it empowered women to be given the responsibility of representing their culture in this way. She also spoke of how women had once had the power to curse in her culture, something which had endowed them with power and respect in their communities. As she stated: "when that kind of belief is there, and there is a certain respect." (Dr. Mercy Masta, personal communication, 2024). There needs to be a belief present in order for the power and respect to also be present. In many cases, this belief is no longer present.

Further, many of these *kastom*s gave women tangible rights as well. For instance, it could give them access to shell money which was theirs alone (Hemer, 2013:169). As I have just mentioned, today's women's activists are calling for programs that will provide women with incomes allowing them to achieve financial independence, as this will also allow them to make the decisions necessary to remove themselves from situations of submission and violence.

As mentioned in chapter 5, Hemer has written on a puberty rite which used to be practiced on Lihir island (2013). Her analysis shows how the idea of patriarchal religion disagreed with the means of empowerment of women through this ritual (namely the emphasis on her sexuality) and on how the patriarchal belief system underlying christianity brought to the island was welcomed by the men in an already patriarchal society (Hemer, 2013:167-8). Indeed, the negative view that early missionaries took towards these female initiation practices is reflected in some of the earliest ethnographic texts. For instance, Brown and Bell who witnessed various similar puberty rites, such as the *dafal* in Tanga and the *kihal* on the west coast of New Ireland, spoke of them as "cages" (Brown, 1877:142-3; Bell:1936:84,84,88). He even recounts how he wanted to see a girl, but couldn't, so he lured them out with shell money held too far to be reached without exiting the houses, so that the girls ended up having to come out of the houses

in order to get their money (Brown, 1877:142-3). These early writers did not seem to view the practice sympathetically.

It is also important that early missionaries and anthropologists understood the girls inside of these houses to be naked. This is important as the earliest arrivers to the Pacific were shocked by how locals walked around in a type of dress which, to European eyes, appeared as nakedness. Dressing pacific islanders was thought to be an important part of the “civilizing” process. Indeed, I mention the transition to western clothing (around the year 1900) when recounting briefly the history of the area in chapter 2, as it acts as an indicator of the effects of the colonial project. Considering the focus on ‘dressing’ local populations, it is only natural that efforts would have extended inside of puberty houses too.

The men (and the women) who were in charge of the colonial process, whether through the state or the church, embraced the ideals of their own patriarchal societies. As such, the changes that they instituted reflected and built on this.

Indeed, the ways in which patriarchal institutions build off of one another continues to be visible today. It is what happened when only male diplomats were allowed into the hausboi in Lasigi. I also witnessed it at various points in the field when I wanted to speak to individuals with particular knowledge of *kastom*s. I was always directed to men, and when I asked if it would be possible to speak to women I was frequently given an excuse as to why this would not be possible.

For instance, when I was in Kokopo to attend the National Mask Festival and Warwigara, I not only wanted to attend the festival performances but also sought to make my stay as productive as possible by trying to find people to interview. One of the performances at the festival was put on by local Baining women. Festival goers were bused up into the hills near Kokopo one night in order to witness the famous Baining fire dance. This dance was the highlight of the evening’s performance. Before it began, the Baining women danced around the fire. As with all of the performances at the festival, very little information was given to the festival goers (indeed, it was only the following day that another festival goer informed me that what had appeared to be a long rope that the women had been carrying was in fact a snake, which they had ritually eaten the following day). I was surprised to see the women dancing that evening, first because it had not been included in the performance outline, and secondly as they did so wearing masks. I was intrigued and wanted to try to get into contact with some of these women, to interview them. I was helped by my hosts, who placed me in contact with a man who was a prominent Baining

leader and had given interviews before. When I met with him, I asked him for help contacting Baining women, as I later did my hosts. Though all agreed to help me contact them, neither did. The man skirted my questions on the topic, and spoke a lot about his dislike for modern Australian and European women who were free and did not have respect. While my hosts' promise for help ended up falling through due to poor scheduling. In my experience, people would rarely tell me no when they did not want to help, they would instead agree to something and then simply let the plans fall through. I believe that this is what happened here.

Indeed, I would argue that this demonstrates some of the subtle ways in which women are both put in charge of representing their cultures and *traditionality*, while at the same time not being able to utilize this positionally in order to become spokespeople for their cultures and thus empower themselves.The ideology of the Melanesian Way limited women's ability to gain power and freedom through the adoption of practices that are associated with the West and therefore with colonialism. But, they have also largely lost the ability to turn to *kastom* as a source of power. This is in part a result of *kastom* always having existed within a patriarchal framework and the death of customs which included aspects that did empower women. This leaves women with very little spaces within which to negotiate for themselves.

Generally, women can assert themselves through roles in institutions which are culturally valued - such as the church or motherhood. Or, by simply ignoring or refusing to engage. Wardlow, who has written on *wayward women* in the Highlands, has referred to this refusal to engage as *negative agency* which she defines as: "a refusal to cooperate with other' projects, the refusal to be encompassed." (2006:19). She argues that in the region where she worked (in the Highlands, dominantly with the Huli) agency is gendered and though personhood is relational for all, men tend to encompass others while women tend to be encompassed by others (2006:14,17-8). Of course, the Highlands and New Ireland are quite different regions, but as I have noted previously despite its incredible diversity there is also much work that has been done in Papua New Guinea that is applicable across many regions. I believe that this sort of negative agency is something akin to the sort of agency that often is practiced in the south of New Ireland.

Indeed, in New Ireland, Tararia has written on women's means of influence (2002). She found that though very few women were in official position of influence or authority, women still found ways to make themselves heard, to have impacts on their communities. And that, following a pan-pacific model this was largely in behind the scenes roles (2022:18). Though she does not refer to Wardlow she also makes a similar point, arguing that often women remain silent as a

means to an end, as a means of agency: “Silence is not about a lack of authority, knowledge or opinion. It goes beyond observing social and cultural taboos regarding the things one can talk openly about and with whom. I showed that when some women are silent, it is because they are choosing to act strategically to protect their (and their family’s) interests.” (2022:157). It would appear that female agency in New Ireland is not only negative but also silent.

This can be seen in how the women I met reacted to the *Tubuan*. I met no woman who directly went against the *Tubuan*. The closest thing that I saw was the teenagers who walked across the beach after the *tubuan* had crossed the area. However, their actions appeared to have little to do with taking a stand in relation to the *Tubuan* and much more with the disobedience and disregard of adolescence. No woman spoke to me in a disapproving way regarding the *Tubuan*. In fact, as I have already noted, very few spoke of it, and when they did it was generally due to my probing questions or to remind me of how, as a woman, I should keep my distance if I ever saw one. Though many appeared bored with or annoyed by the practice and others kept their distance because of personal or family religious beliefs, none explicitly iterated these things. No one ever directly went against the *Tubuan*. Plainly put, this would have been stupid. The institution is far too powerful and would have used its authority to make these individuals pay for their opinions and forthrightness (as previously cited examples of individuals who shared secrets and were punished demonstrate). As such, many simply ignored the practice: they did not attend performances, they did not pay much attention to it in their lives, turning instead to what they deemed important (whether this be church, school, tending to the garden and their children, etc…).

It is also seen in how women negotiated their positions in order to obtain the results that they wished for. Marlol was much the politician in the village and had carved herself a space in the until then all-male VPC. On one occasion, she spoke to me regarding how there were forces in the village impeding change, keeping people where they were. As she was very much the politician she never made any direct references, but it could be understood that her reference was to *kastom*, to practices such as the *tubuan* and to the organization of the *hausboi*. She referred to the fact that many decisions were still made in the *hausboi*, which she had no access to. However, she did not protest this directly. Instead, she found ways to work around this hurdle. She explained that it was important for to turn the minds of one or two of the men, so that once in the *hausboi* they could advance her agenda. Indeed, I attended one meeting during which there was a discussion and decisions being made regarding how some aid money that the village had received would be spent. Marlol began by speaking and writing out the main domains in need of improvement. She was a big spokesperson for education, and while

describing each of the points to those in attendance she erased one of the words that she had written and replaced it with “education”. Shortly after, she left the meeting in order to prepare food for those in attendance, while the men on the council stayed and continued the discussion, sorting out the details. Though she had left, she had found a way to advance her agenda.

Finally, this lead me to the question: what are we to make of the female *kipong* performers? When I first heard of them I had been incredibly excited and hopeful that I would be able to conduct research on deeply feminist and future-leaning acts. Yet, in my analyses, the *kipong* as a whole and these particular instances barely come up. The *kipong* as it is today appears to have emerged from an all-male secret practice somewhat akin to the *Tubuan* and many other masked dances found (or previously found) throughout New Ireland. That women are able to perform such a mask and dance seems highly meaningful, yet I still don’t think that it can be read as a feminist move. Not only because the term and concept as it is understood within the West is often rejected by local women, but also because of the variable nature of the practice and the discourses currently surrounding it. The women who performed the *kipong* either did not make the masks, or only made very informal ones. They had knowledge of how to perform, but didn’t appear to have knowledge of the secret creative processes behind the mask making. In this sense, the practice does not appear to play a role in female empowerment, as women do not come to hold the key knowledge which would allow them to also possess power. As Lindstrom has argued, in Melanesia, the possession of knowledge is a source of power (1984). Here, as women do not come to hold this knowledge, they also do not come to hold the associated power.

The lack of emphasis on the practice is also the result of men having always using a rhetoric to make the practice seem unimportant. As I made clear when presenting this type of mask, it is usually presented in contrast to the *Tubuan* and other non-masked make dances, as something that it ‘just for fun’, a trivial form of entertainment. In this sense, it would appear that the practice is not a means of empowerment for any of its current day performers. This is, first, because the practice has been devalued. It has been categorized as something that is purely for entertainment. And, in this categorization not only has it lost its place and purpose within local customary contexts, it has also not been developed in order to represent local *kastom* and identity on larger national and international stages. In this sense, it may be because of this devaluation that women have become able to perform it. Or, in cases where it has always been a practice open to women, because the practice itself has not been empowered it does not, in turn, serve as a source of empowerment for the women performing it.

Concluding Remarks

I have spoken about two rather disparate topics: heritage and women's rights. I bring them together as they are both related to how *kastom* practices are changing. I have emphasized the ways in which heritage is a practice which is about using the past to build narratives in the now, with the goal of building particular kinds of futures. In so doing, individuals and groups who find themselves in positions of power may chose particular practices and frame them in particular ways. As such, heritage practices - such as the practices referred to as *kastom* in Papua New Guinea - reflect current values and desires of these groups.

Heritage has had an impact on women's rights in the country. Due to a discourse which rose to prominence around the time when the country achieved independence. This discourse is exemplified by The Melanesian Way, a book which was influential and also built off of ideas that were being felt and expressed at the time. It represents an ideology which arose around the period of national independence and which continues to be felt. This ideology idealized village life and placed women as representatives of this idealized traditional village life. This discourse was a work of heritage which took pieces of the past and gave them meaning in the present. It built meaning with particular values and goals in mind, in order to create a united national identity which would allow the new country to build itself up in its own particular way. This has had lasting impact on women's rights and their positions within society. It has resulted in phenomena such as women's rights, feminism, etc… becoming 'bad words' of sorts as those who espouse them are marked as having been influenced by external factors, as adopting the ways of the colonizer and rejecting their own people and customs.

This discussion is not directly tied to masking practices, or to female initiation rites. However, it remains extremely important to mention. This is because it is impossible to spend time in the country without noticing the inequalities between genders. It is also relevant to the discussion, especially considering that I have spoken both of masking practices and of the now largely defunct female initiation rites, as the ways in which certain practices persist are related to this discourse (or narrative, as you may). Here, I have analyzed the ways in which male centred practices have been fore-fronted in contexts beyond the local, particularly when engaging with people from abroad, and that in so doing patriarchal ideologies are building and strengthening their narratives. While, practices which are devalued, such as female initiation rites or the *kipong* masking practice, are de-emphasized and as such may die out or become grounds that

are less strictly structured, in short, such that they lose potential to build identities and to empower.

Final Remarks

This research, as it has been presented here, emerged both from an interest in masks and from my time spent in the field.

The theory on masking practices out of which it emerged are outlined in chapter 3. This chapter emphasized that masks, masking practices, have been analyzed in a myriad of ways, often as a window onto other aspects of sociocultural life. This emphasizes that masking practices are complex phenomena, routed in and emerging from many aspects of the lived lives of the communities and community members which practice them. This, in turn, means that their study will be complex, as it is impossible to reduce their meaning, their effect, their power, to any one (or even two) singular thing(s). Chapter 3 also sought to emphasize that masks have both very lived and felt realities. What is particular about the mask is that the way in which this experience is felt is not purely dependent on narratives, discourses, myths, etc… The mask is also a physical object which obstructs and alters the ways in which individuals identify, self-identify, and relate with one another. Further, the physical object of the mask is surrounded by music, body-coverings, crowds, mind altering substances or practices. These all play important roles in altering the felt experience of the masked performance. When combined with the narratives, beliefs, myths, etc… of a community this leads to performances which are deeply embedded in and representative of sociocultural realities. This perspective on the study of masks, has led into a discussion of the sensory, affective and atmospheric, which I addressed primarily in chapter 6. But also addressed briefly in my ethnographic descriptions of masking practices in chapter 4 and in relation to heritage in chapter 8.

Though felt experience is highly relevant to a study of mask and revealing, it is also something which is incredibly difficult to analyse. Here, this was partially due to the region's reputation as a place where people are hesitant to speak of what is going on in their or others' minds. This means that the kinds of in depth personal narratives which would be a great basis for this kind of analysis are difficult, if not impossible, to obtain. As such, things must be inferred, from comments made and actions taken. Further, it is also difficult to obtain information from those who have performed, who have been "inside" the masks. This is for all of the same aforementioned reasons but also because far fewer people perform the masks than come to see the performances. There are also very few ethnographers who come to have the opportunity to be performers themselves. Here, it is additionally difficult, as the practice of the *tubuan,* one of if not the primary masking practice in the region, is surrounded by secrecy. This means that for a woman these kinds of questions are often judged to be unacceptable (though,

interestingly, not always) and, if one did obtain the information, sharing it would come to be an ethical dilemma. As such, the analyses which I have presented in this thesis are limited. Further research regarding the felt experience of those performing, addressing both how they feel while wearing the mask, as well as while not masked but reflecting on the practices is needed. I hope to be able to conduct further research on the topic, though this will likely to need to be conducted on practices not surrounded by institutionalized secrecy.

This thesis also emerged from a rooting in a particular place. It emerged from the field, from Samo. It also emerged from my particular interactions with the village, as both an anthropologist and an individual. Though I headed into the field with the aim of focusing on masking practices, on the felt experience of these and on how they related to various conceptions of identity, I quickly faced issues and had my attention drawn to various other aspects of the community.

My first challenge was that I would not be able to acquire much information about the *Tubuan*. Given both that there is already extensive information on it in the ethnographic record and that most other local masking practices are rarely practiced and generally given less importance, this was an issue which brought into question whether I would be able to conduct fieldwork sufficiently productive to lead to the writing of a thesis. Being fairly stubborn, I persisted. Instead, my focus turned to secrecy and to an analysis from the outside. This lead to chapter 7 on secrecy as well as to a focus on comparing the *Tubuan* and the *kipong* in chapter 4. It also partially informed chapter 8 regarding the ways in which heritage practices empower in the present. While I was in the field, it also lead me to focus more on collecting information on other practices. This is how I came to include an entire chapter (4) to the practice of *karuka* houses and to focus on gender, in chapter 8 in particular, but also throughout my analyses.

I include chapter 4, concerning *karuka* houses, despite them not being a masking practice, for many reasons. First and foremost I include it as I was able to collect information on the practice but found that the *karuka* house itself and other similar practices were not emphasized in the ethnographic literature. Further, due to my own interest in gender, I felt that it was important to emphasize the presence of female *kastom* practices. In addition, analysis of the practice and of how it has been left behind also contributed to an analysis of gender in the region. Drawing out how greater female participation in christian movements is affecting different *kastom* practices differently and how this is not only tied to christianity and the ideals which it promotes but also to underlying systems of inequality present both within *kastom* and these christian movements.

From my challenge in obtaining information on the *tubuan* also emerged a greater lean into the topic of secrecy and a different perspective from which to address it. Secrecy is after all an integral part of the *tubuan* masked practice, as it is a part of a male secret society. Due to my positionality the analysis focuses on the effects of secrecy to those who are outside of it, emphasizing the ways in which it builds inequalities and power structures over the ways it may build bonds, a sense of community, between those who participate. Yet, even though I was never allowed to participate in the *tubuan*, I also wonder how my own work may fit into this. It makes me wonder how the fairly large body of literature on the practice may in fact fit into the processes of secrecy which ultimately act to empower the practice. As mentioned in chapter 7, many have argued that secrecy is not entirely about keeping information to oneself but also very importantly about publicly announcing that one holds this information. Further, Albert argued that the *Tubuan* is dependent on women, on their presence through exclusion (1987). Here, my work, as a part of the body of literature concerning the *tubuan*, contributes to this public announcement. Further, it does so through my involvement, via exclusion, as a woman. I wonder to what extent the individuals participating are aware of the ways in which this works and to what extent it is simply built into the phenomena.

This leads me to a final aspect of this thesis which emerged from my time in the field, which is the focus that I have placed on gender, on women in particular. During my time in Papua New Guinea I found that it was impossible to ignore my own gender. While this was not something that I had been entirely unaware of in my day to day life previously, in the field it immediately shaped what information I had and didn't have access to, the people I spent most of time with, who would or would not speak with me openly, the sorts of tasks and actions which I was expected to undertake (or not) and how I was expected to behave. And despite my status as an outsider, and the leeway that this often gives, there was very little wiggle room. This was often a frustrating experience, as my interests and those locally expected of a woman often did not match, even more often it was something which influenced my life and experience in ways which it took me a long time to realize. There is no doubt that my own sensibilities as a white liberal feminist with a good deal of privilege shaped the ways in which I reacted to this. It shaped what I noticed and how, as well as how I have presented this information here. There is no doubt that had an anthropologist with a slightly different background spent time in Samo they would now be presenting their findings differently. This is of course the nature of ethnographically-based work. Here, my personal interest in gender lead me to collect data on the practice of the karuka house, as well as to focus on conceptions of womanhood as well as on what struck me as incredible inequality between men and women.

Though Samo, as most societies in New Ireland, is matrilineal, it is also very much patriarchal. Women may be able to hold power and authority through their roles in lineages (ex: Tararia, 2022). They are also in charge of raising children and involved in many money-making efforts from cash-crops to selling tobacco and *buai* in their communities. They are also highly involved in with their churches: attending not only Sunday services, but organizing into women's groups and contributing to their communities through the church. I should add that christianity is an integral part of life throughout Papua New Guinea and particularly in relation to gender, since more women participate and it has become a legitimate avenue for women to empower themselves. But, that my lack of expertise on the topic has kept me from talking much about christianity in this thesis. There are many who have written on the topic (ex: Dickson-Waiko, 2003; Douglas, 2003; MacIntyre & Spark, 2017). All of the women that I met worked very hard, and unendingly so. This did not however seem to translate to greater authority within and beyond the community. It also did not seem to shelter them from violence inflicted by men. Indeed, even when they did gain respect and standing in the community, they were often reliant on convincing men in charge who would then voice their opinions. Many were very good at navigating these realities. Still, I did not witness their standing in terms of lineage affairs and knowledge or as mothers come to take shape as a source of empowerment. This of course does not mean that it is not the case elsewhere, or perhaps it is a subtlety which I missed. Generally it was education and having spent time beyond the village, combined with a personal life which reflected local values of motherhood, which did empower some women. And these women usually sought to empower younger girls in the community through similar means, primarily by focusing on their education. This led me, in chapter 8, to focus on the inequalities which women in the region experience. It is important that this reality be documented, stated forthrightly as it is encountered, so that its origins and persistence may be understood. As, no matter how hard the women I met are working, it is important to understand that the sociocultural realities in which they live make this incredibly challenging.

Ultimately, this thesis is about masking practices and some elements of *kastom* today. It is about the ways in which they sometimes do and sometimes do not empower those performing them. But also how, as society changes, as all societies inevitably do, these practices are both intentionally and unintended results of circumstances modified, emphasized or deemphasized to be relevant in the present.

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Annex A -
Sursurunga alphabet and pronunciation

a - /ä/

á - /ə/

b - /b/

d - /d/

e - /ɛ/

g - /g/

h - /h/

i - /i:/

k - k/

l - /l/

m - /m/

n - /n/

ng - /ŋ/

o - /o/

p - /p/

r - /r/

s - /s/

t - /t/

u - /u:/

w - /w/

* Essentially, letters are pronounced as they would be in Tok Pisin (similarly to English). Two letters have been added "á" and “ng".

Annex B - Vocabulary

arapela kain - (Tok Pisin) another kind.

arso - (NA) a play battle that occurs during the dal rites, where the women of two opposing moieties engage in a mock battle.

artabar- (Sursurunga) the giving of small gifts such as soap and coins. (some texts use the spelling: *wartabar*)

aur - (Tolai) small strips of bamboo used in the making of the conical head of the *dukduk*.

ásásla - (Sursurunga) emotions/feelings.

ásla-i - (Sursurunga) emotions/feelings.

bál - (Sursurunga) stomach, belly.
there are many expressions involving *bál: bál mos; bál sak; laklak i bál; mat i bál; bop i bál; mat i bál; gas i bál; gáwár i bál* (and many more).

bel - (Tok Pisin) stomach, belly.

bel i hat - (Tok Pisin) a common expression, "hot stomached", refers to someone who is angry.

beo - (Tolai) bird.

bilas - (Tok Pisin) decoration. It is used to refer to dresses worn during dance performances.

bilolo - (Sursurunga) a type of song. Usually sung at house openings. Men and women each have their own.

bisnis - (Tok Pisin) business.

bobo - (NA) a breast covering worn by girls inside the *dafal* house on Boang island.

bom - (NA) a popular card game.

bosman - (Tok Pisin) a boss. I.e. a person (a man) who is of high status.

biar - (Sursurunga) a body decoration.

buai - (Tok Pisin) the areca nut, which is commonly chewed throughout Papua New Guinea. It is usually chewed with lime powder and mustard stems, which turn the mixture red.

bubu - (NA) refers to grandparents or grandchildren.

buk - (NA) a house similar to the *karuka* house, found in the area near Namatanai town.

bukur - (Sursurunga) a practice whereby members of the opposite moiety of someone performing a dance will attempt to distract them as they dance by throwing ashes, lime powder or water on them during a performance.

burbur - (Sursurunga) the ritual beating which boys receive during initiation into the *Tubuan*.

bush - (English/Tok Pisin) the forest.

dafal - (NA) the house in which a female initiate, a *dal*, stays. Previously practiced in the Tanga islands.

dal - (NA) a female initiate, akin to the *kámgu*, in the Tanga islands.

davan - (NA) term used to refer to a girl going through the *eandavan* process, akin to the term *kámgu* in Sursurunga.

dewel/tewel - (Tok Pisin) a character frequently presented in stories. It is a non-human character with evil traits. It may refer to a Christian devil or many other evil non-human characters.

diwai - (Sursurunga) wood, branch, stem.

dukduk - (NA) the *dukduk* is said to be the child of the *Tubuan*. It is a mask akin to the *Tubuan* but without eyes.

eandavan - (NA) refers to a practice akin to the *karuka* house, which used to be practiced in the Mandak region of New Ireland.

folfol - (NA) songs sung while a girl is in a *dafal* house.

garamut - (Tok Pisin) a large slit wood drum.

goh - (NA) like the *moh*, in the Siar/Lak region.

gorgor - (Sursurunge) a plant type. It's leaves can be found in the bush and their water is used to bathe the *kámgu*.

gutpela pasin - (Tok Pisin) literally "good fashion", i.e. to behave in a proper way.

hamamas - (Tok Pisin) happy.

harim - (Tok Pisin) to hear or listen.

harim tok - (Tok Pisin) to obey, to do as one is told.

hausboi - (tok pisin) men's houses in New Ireland.

hauscri/hauskri - (Tok Pisin) houses which are put in place during mourning periods, for people to cry and mourn in.

hauskuk - (Tok Pisin) house for cooking.

iwuna - (Tolai) the feather-like leaves of the *tubuan bilas*.

Kamri/Kamrai - (NA) a clan in the Kongkong moiety.

kartung - (NA) plant oil that is used to wash the dal.

karuka - (Tok Pisin) a type of plant and its leaves, which are used to build the *karuka* house, within which a *kámgu* stays during a period of isolation.

kastom - (Tok Pisin) custom.

kaukau - (Tok Pisin) sweet potatoes.

kawawar - (Tok Pisin) a variety of wild ginger.

kámgoi - (NA) a man who holds status and directs events in a ritual context.

kámgu - (Sursurunga) a female initiate.

kiaps - (Tok Pisin) a type of indigenous leader or chief appointed during the colonial period, mostly on the main island of Papua New Guinea.

kina - (Tok Pisin) the Papua New Guinean currency. It is also a type of shell.

kinavai - (NA) in the Tolai *Tubuan* custom, this is an event where the *Tubuan*s appear at sunrise over the water and head toward the beach. Dancing over the water as they do so.

kiok - (Tolai) the eyes of the *dukduk.*

kipong - (Sursurunga) a type of mask and masked dance.

kongkong - (Sursurunga) a clan name.

koris - (Sursunga) a clan name, a small bird clan.

ku - (Sursurunga) a coconut cream made by placing hot stones into coconut milk.

kubak - (Sursurunga) or kumbak, kamkombak - (Lak/Siar) songs that are sung while a girl is going through a process of ritual initiation. The name varies slightly across regions.

kulau - (Sursurunga) a young coconut.

kumu - (Tok Pisin) a generic term referring to greens, this may at time refer to different varieties of greens, it is a typical food throughout the region.

kunai - (Tok Pisin) a type of grass which is dried and used as roofing.

kuduh - (Sursurunga) a type of drum. Made of wood and the skin of a lizard (the *kuduh* lizard).

Kurleu - (Sursurunga) a *masalai* of the Sawon clan, which took the form of a snake.

kurmakmak - (NA) a term used to tease girls who have not been initiated.

ladaven - (NA) akin to the *kámgu*, in the Lelet area this is the term referring to a female initiate.

lain - (Tok Pisin) literally "line". This word can refer to many things, it refers to groups of people who are related in some way. It can be used to refer to groups related through familial or ancestral line, to groups of the same clan, etc... It is also used to refer to the Monday village meetings, which are common throughout Papua New Guinea.

langar/langoron - (Sursurunga - also found in Tangalament and Siar/Lak) a substance applied before dancing the *Tubuan*, the feeling of dancing.

laplap - (Tok Pisin) a wrap-around skirt (made of cloth, leaves or grass).

laram - (NA) a force which women possess which makes them heavy. They may pass it to others through contact.

larim - (Tok Pisin) leave it, let it go.

les - (Tok Pisin) a feeling, usually used to indicate that one is tired and not in the mood for doing something. It can also be used to indicate that one is 'tired of' something.

lewa - (tok pisin) liver.

libung - (Sursurunga) a type of dance. can also refer to the evening/night hours after dark.

linnendaven - (NA) in the Lelet region this is the term referring to a female puberty ritual akin to that of the *karuka* house.

lok - (Tolai) name referring to the circular piece of cane which forms the bottom of the cone of the *tubuan*'s *bilas*.

lor - (NA) a type of mask performed by men in the Siar/Lak region.

lotu - (Tok Pisin) church, to worship.

longlong - (Sursurunga) someone who is 'crazy'.

luluai - (Tok Pisin) local leaders or chiefs that were appointed first by the German administration and kept in the early years of Australian administration.

maana - (Tolai) derogatory word that may be used to refer to unintiated boys in the Tolai region.

Malangan - (NA) a cultural complex found in the northern half of New Ireland, which includes funerary rites which involve the making of elaborate carvings. The practice has largely disappeared since the arrival of European colonisation.

maleu - (Tok Pisin) shark

mangalim - (NA) to admire.

mangi - (tok pisin) boys: adolescents and young adults (approx 15-25ys old).

masalai - (tok pisin) place spirits.

matamamtam - (Tolai) phase of initiation into the *Tubuan* in the Tolai area.

meh - (NA) a fragrant plant used in the karuka house.

meri - (Tok Pisin) woman.

meri blouse - (Tok Pisin) the mother hubbard style shirt which is commonly worn by women in the region.

moh - (Sursurunga) a smaller house in a conical shape, built inside the *karuka* house, within which the *kámgu* stays.

mumu - (Tok Pisin) a way of cooking whereby food is wrapped in leaves, placed on hot stones and buried.

nidok - (N/A) the second and third stages of *Tubuan* initiation.

Ngosngos - (Sursurunga) a hamlet in Samo, between the beach and Tabun.

orait - (Tok Pisin) alright, ok.

pakara - (Tolai) a type of fibrous plant which may be used to make the cone of the *tubuan*'s *bilas*.

paia - (Tok Pisin) fire.

papakat warwolo - (Tolai) term referring to the first stage of initiation into the *Tubuan* in the Tolai area.

pidik - (Sursurunga) secret.

piknat - (Sursurunga) a small bird moiety clan.

pinpidik - (Sursurunga) a type of dance. It is traditionally sung by men at a sacred place.

ples masalai - (Tok Pisin) places that are associated with particular *masalai*.

puerparik - (Sursurunga) a type of dance.

pukpuksa soi/pukpuksa tora - (Sursurunga) to tell stories, to tell myths.

rang dawai - (NA) first stage initiation into the *Tubuan*, may also refer to a feast held on this occasion.

rongol - (Sursurunga) a moeity clan name.

saliu - (Sursurunga) to go around, to walk about.

sawon - (Sursurunga) a big bird moiety clan.

sigil - (Sursurunga) an odorous flower, it is used in the *karuka* house.

singsing - (Tok Pisin) a performance that combines song and dance as well as the events at which many of these are performed.

stori - (Tok Pisin) story, to talk to pass the time.

stori tumbuna - (Tok Pisin) stories belonging to the ancestors or to mythical times.

susu - (Sursurunga) to breastfeed.

Tabun - (Sursurunga) a hamlet in Samo, between the Boluminski Highway and the beach.

takaun - (NA) the call of the *tubuan*.

takup - (Sursurunga) a traditionally carved canoe.

taltal - (Tolai) the straps that are used to hold up the *tubuan*'s *bilas*.

talung - (NA) a spirit which produces songs and an exclusive practice of the men in southern New Ireland.

tambaran (also spelt tabaran) (Sursurunga) - a type of *singsing*, it is also a secret society said to have originated from the Sursurunga area (near Nokon and Huris).

tangara - (Sursurunga) a male dance, which can be masked.

tamiok - (NA) a battle axe.

tanget - (Tok Pisin) a type of croton plant. It is used in many traditional and ritual practices.

tapiok - (Sursurunga) cassava

tar - (Sursurunga) a plant which is used for its red colour.

taraiu - (Sursurunga) the secret meeting place of the men in the bush.

tatanua - (NA) a type of *Malangan* mask.

taukane - (Tolai) word referring to the long decorative tip of the ‘head’ cone of the *dukduk*.

támsakio - (Sursurunga) a practice whereby men will hide in the bush and imitate the calls of a particular bird.

tepang - (Tangalamet, Siar) another way of referring to the *kipong*.

tiko - (Sursurunga) a type of dance.

tipang - (Tangalamet, Siar) another way of referring to the *kipong*.

tok pilai - (Tok Pisin) to speak playfully, to kid around.

tok pisin - the pidgin language spoken throughout Papua New Guinea (literally "talk pidgin").

tolup - (NA) a house akin to the *karuka* house which used to be practiced on Lihir island.

tultul - (Tok Pisin) the assistant of the *luluai* within the system of leaders created by the German administration.

tumbuna - (Tok Pisin) ancestors (these may be individuals from many generations ago or/and spirit ancestors).

tuturai natnat - (NA) a type of dance

urtarang - (Sursurunga) a type of performance. Men perform and women must run and hide as the men play instruments which create the sounds of spirits. It may also refer to evil spirits or to the spirits of dead people which can enter the living and cause them to behave in odd ways.

utun - (Sursurunga) a type of dance, performed by men.

warwolo - (NA) term referring to the first stage of initiation into the *Tubuan*.

wágin - (Sursurunga) a type of song and dance, it can be performed by both women and men.

yain pidik - (NA) an elder man who is a leader in ritual matters. Often used to refer to a man who is a leader in the Tubuan.

yu lewa blo/blong mi - (Tok Pisin) "you are my liver", a very common *lotu* song throughout the country expressing the devotion of the singer to God.

Annex C - Songs

(scan the QR code to access audio recordings of the songs)

Bilolo

1) Ribon (sung by Kwamin):
ribon talalak (x2)
i ribon teurgeungeun
i ribon talari
i ribon teurkeukeun
iii-i-a-i-a-i
i tutu a ru a ri….
bilongs keur,

meaning: this song refers to a bird in the bush may be of different colours, it eats corn.

Gár:
These songs are sung at *hausboi* openings.

2) (sung by Isaiah): [recording 1]

Goygoy songs:
These songs are sung in the *hausboi* before *mumu*ing a pig. I was also told that *goygoy* songs are for all, meaning that they can be sung by both men and women.

3) (sung by John Kara): [recording 2]
taman kak i bung onin tu saliu di olon di kuluk sang ài rung er di lu opau keri nat di.
keskam bilbiling giurliu àslai i keungur tinen kis.

meaning: that women say that with kids they face suffering, because the children's fathers spend their time away and leave their wife and children behind.

4) (sung by John Kara): [recording 3]
Iau galas hanan i kon
Me iak matai maumau
Mek somrat buli mansing
Iak makài kalamlam
A tata ngo na suriñi kaka gàngàn hisu

meaning: you go fish on a beach and you are afraid of a small black and white shark called *maumau*. You see it and your stomach is afraid. There is a large bird, you see this big bird and it catches a fish.

5) (sung by John Kara): [recording 4]
o é koko tilandi
uktu ut i màngmàngal mà
uk tulu kis maski sine naràr pasiau ia tung i mung mung el mà.
Iak ngongo tàlite iak ngongo tàlite

Iau pokon rongrong
Til anang i last kona
x repeat

meaning: an uncle from another place comes here (màngmàngal refers to a time or place with no people). It is an empty time and everyone thinks that he is someone else. This man came from the last corner (this refers to the Siar/Lak region at the southern tip of New Ireland) and he travelled by sea.

6) (sung by Kwamin): [recording 5 + recording 6]
gom salé ran goygoy gom salé ram goygoy, lukman go ré, gom salé ram goygoy, ñoi gom salé ram goygoy, lukman go ré.
x repeat

Káká:

7) (sung by Kwamin): [recording 7]
darumbun kunan merukutugim
gim tinigua gim gim kapun piknut
meru tirwai em batñin iau meruktir
wa kiel sinekelon ololo.

8) (sung by Kwamin): [recording 8]
santarapilak el go daun long aislan bilong Moria. Warambasis i hop tasol, long aislan bilong Moria.

meaning: it is about big and deep water holes for washing.

Kápán liu:
This is an older kind of song, related to the *tumbuna*. These recordings were sung and performed by Tomimi (the chief of Samo).
kápán liu refers to "the skin of life"

[recording 9 pt1, pt2, pt3]

Kipong songs:
Further south, the *tepang*, is danced to Mong songs, in Samo this style of songs seems to be different.

9) (sung by Bale):
meaning:
A long time ago an important male elder killed and ate a man.
There are two kids and their parents are away in the garden. While their parents are away, an old man appear and shows them this song and dance. Except that the old man is not an old man, it is the Tabaran. When their parents come back, they tell them about what happened.

10) (sung by Bale): [recording 10 pt1, pt2]
Wa se kau le
Kipong e la o
Kipong e la o a e
Kipong es la tama

Kipong e la o
Kipong es la tama

11) (sung by Nora and Nelinda in Ruka village):
silok silok silok
Maris
Mairiwan eta silok é
silok silok Maréé
Mairiwan eta silok Maré
x repeat.

meaning: *silok* refers to a person dancing naked; *mariwan* refers to becoming jealous while watching the naked person dance.

12) (sung by many in Sena village)
usa sa ing usa so ing
x repeat

meaning: this is a *masalai* story in a different language and came from a dream.

13) Tepang [Recording 11]
(performed in Muliama village)

Kubak:

14) n/a [Recording 12]
(sung by Levi's mother)
kak pup sang a' idi a bop i balang on kak pup sang idi a saksak idi sál tur.
Kak pup sang er a bop i balang on.

language: Sursurunga
meaning: This song refers to a woman laying with her husband and becoming pregnant.

15) n/a [Recording 13]
(sung by Rodi)

16) Jalaria [Recording 14]
(a karuka house song)
ko ke raimae
ko kel nie pie, ko ke raima e (x2)
silo silo
a palas ie palo na e e
silo silo
a palas ie palo na e e
ko ke nie pie, ko ke raima e (x3)

17) rotok mane [Recording 15]
a - o - o
rotok mane la e e
rotok mane la e e, rotok

rotok mane la e e
rotok mane la e e, rotok
sangar rangita, rangita e e
sangar analo
sangar rangita e e
sangar analo
x repeat

Libung songs:
This song type (and corresponding dance) must be learned before progressing to the tubuan.

18) Tomimi dances: [recording 16]
sañsi kàlo. Tarwa palai pala sosi i yesu urmai i anul bim.
eun gam
é a lu u e
x repeat

O u a lue lue
I was lué rau konabili
Mato alik malamo
to alik malamo
torngewe ialo walis
namur é turnbeur (x repeat)
u al màm màm pupu i iau wir wir wàli (x repeat)
io a mà

information: This is a *lotu* song. It is about a very dark night.

Mong:
These songs are danced similarly to *puerparik*.
They are sad songs.

19) Loiriri (sung by Daisy) [recording 17]
loiriri
tangnis marmaris
abon silur namalera

meaning: You come, you come, let's go. Crying sadly. Born prematurely and they take him.

Pinpidik songs:

20) (sung by Kwamin): [recording 18]
rauray pinpindik:
rengeurt natarai mamatul nadindir
upuram biaubi randelaié rengeurt
natérau mamatul nadindir, randelaié
x repeat

meaning: the pig is already *mumu*ed and so getting into bed.

21) (sung by Isaiah):

This song is in a mixture of Kuana (Tolai) and Sursurunga languages.

iwalwalir a pinpidik, pinpidik i walwalir a libung, i walwalir a malagen, matanai iniet. ivalongor tenera hui, ma apepe na hui, dara malagen, i marmaruwe ragap aron nata i rangu, radelaee ta e-a-o.

Meaning: *Malagen* refers to a type of mask from East New Britain. We dance to the eye of a special kind of spirit that you dance, swim and fly with. And "*nata i rangu radelaee ta e-a-o*" is an expression used for finishing songs.

Puerparik songs:

22) (sung by Tomimi): [recording 19 pt1, pt2]
Onin git mamamàs git matan birmai i-é
kastam siñim me u-u-u-ia-a kabin

23) (sung by Darushila and Nora): [recording 20]
e-e-e ai Yesua airu amuni naul pispun
e-e-e ai iesu era iru sur git i muni
naul páspang - - - tár tár mák unuk
lláng unák mákái - - - ai tatun ai kalau airu imuninaul páspáng

chorus:
e-e-e aigita ruruna on gitaruruna on - oh oh - natunekulo airusur git e matananu til main i naulbim, ngo-o gita kipi liwaklis ñbidi gita gita piragua si piragnoi suri, suri natunklemule erabilbiling surgit.

oning git alaes git amamas et ma ta berma e e e e ikuskam singim meu yu i ye akabin sangsi keulu. Atarwa palas sosi yesu urmainmain naulubim.
Ungam e-a-o.

Sasalé songs:

24) (sung by John Kara): [Recording 21]
I lu lur matam sali li ro. Male na i ru
I lu lur matam na e male na i ru
Lu lur matam, matam na e male na i ru
(repeat with an alternation of *male* and *kale* in the second line)

meaning: His mother comes and holds onto him because he died, he died from a coconut falling on him.

Soysoy songs:

25) (sung by Kwamin):
tai iti pipure wad liplip wrad lamar a la wir i tuntun ia waila wiri tuntun i santara laplap los sangani.

meaning: already killed a man and came out from the stone and sang. Now men and women dance.

Tangara:

26) tangara (recorded in Nokon village) [Recording 22]

Tiko:
This type of singsing is danced according to the moon. It is usually danced during the night before a *kastom* happens. *Big pisin* are on one side and *liklik pisin* is on the other. A person hides behind a *kubin* (a woven mat) and people have to guess who it is. It was most recently performed at the kapsel *hausboi* opening.

27) (sung by Elta, Ana, Evelyn, and Tinarong) [recording 23]
tiko tiko
kalilik gam han urái
gim han uramudi
gim han suri tiko
tom tom i han gisip
i-i-i sangar má e takup
nang kali gi ur tinán
nán kodong i kang kalik

28) [recording 24]
A tiko
Kalilik gam anurái, gim anurái muni, gim an suri
Tiko atom tom i an gisip
Tiko, Tiko, kalilik gam anurái
Gim anurái muni, gim an suro
Tiko atom tom i an gisip
[...]
na kodong i kan kalik

meaning: The first line of the song goes: "Children where are you going? They are going to the coast, they are near". Though it is in Sursurunga the meaning of the rest of the song is unclear.

Tubuan songs:

29) n/a
Yumande wé uwa linguria nalé au uñal
yumande wé urakon utié lumba lumba
maewandé urakon
Mantiwai luriau

information: It is from the west coast, in the Sursurunga speaking area.

Tuturai natnat:

30) (sung by Agatha in Muliama village) [Recording 25 pt1, pt2]

(written by Agatha's mother)

language: Tangalamet

meaning: a woman has a child, the father is not there, the child cries, she picks it up, the father comes to take the child and the mother does not like this ("papa i raun" - implies that he wanders the town, likely drunk).

Utun songs:

31) (sung by Bale): [Recording 26 pt1, pt2]
Awut takado (you are straitpela)
tadat (long mi) mawa tawa lili (kam back long tinktink bilong yu) kanna tabaran (come out long tabaran) mawa tawa lili (follow man close to God).

language: Kuana (Tolai)

Wágin songs:

32) (sung by Kwamin):
ruwang alé muridan siru ruwang alé
ñoimuridan siru ruwang alé ui a ui

Meaning: Men and women are in their houses, and the girl is still in the *karuka*, are ready to marry and push through the house.

33) (sung by Elta): [Recording 27]
pit pit rami deul
maram galisé rongbil
ngai-a-o x2
a-i-i-ia-ña-i-a
x repeat

language: a *tumbuna* language

information: Accompanied by a *kuduh* drum at *hausboi* openings. It is the chief who decides when this will happen. The night before a *kastom*, the following morning the women will dance and put out the fire before the *kastom* is worked at eight am.

Non-categorized songs:

33) Wallabies and Turtles: [Recoding 28]
(sung by Samson)
ka ka i rungrung
yeumlang keumlang
kotpasi get rokoi [wild tanget]
suklai kammungum
wuk lu wakwakwak

language: of the ancestors

meaning: when you see wallabies dancing they will become like tame animals.

34) Kamkam bird: [Recording 29]
(sung by Samson)

Note: The kamkam is a black and white bird

tut mumi i kam kam
rum sangali
kol pang, sinih na tàu
gamno gamno

language: Sursurunga

35) n/a:
(sung by multiple men in Samo)
Iau rumrum kunàn
À iau er uk utung gim ño gim tin-i wah à gim màkakun gim à kakun piknat.
Huk tirwiai botñin ˜in-i iau er huk màmas-i buñ onin
Huk tirwai iau sinih à keun ololoh.

language: Sursurunga
meaning: someone has to blame someone because somebody has died.

36) Meri blouse [Recording 31]
(sung by Tasen)
I tinang iakan mák pasi dres tili mundi alu tàptàptàp.
Iak ngoyngo pilak til New Guinea.
x repeat
chorus:
Iak ngoyngo pilak til New Guinea.
war e kokup á er x2
a lu tiultiul tili mundi

meaning: he looks at some clothing and thinks it is a flag of nation, but it's a dress. Looks at the dress and thinks of the Papua New Guinean flag, but it's not, it's a dress.

37) Go raun [Recording 32]
(sung by Tasen)
Yu kisim pinis pay, yu go raun long em long 2 wik long BP (Burns Philip)x2
Two wik long BP, breakfast long sausage, nau watitim bus long road, tri tausen i go pinis long 1 wik.

language: Tok Pisin
meaning: you got the money from your paycheck, and over the next two weeks spent it all at the store. You spent two weeks in the store: eating sausages for breakfast. Now you are waiting for the bus along the side of the road. Three thousand spent in one week.

38) n/a [Recording 33]
(sung by Tasen)
I iau rumrum à iau à in. Suri kam worwor, eru pàrai. Uk geudna suri kak maul. x2
Uk geudna suri kak maul iau piklum (a clan(à iau iau piklum tilami Asas (name of a place antap) à iau.

39) Kalilik imi kon [Recording 34]
(Sursurunga language)

Kalilik imi kon

kalilik imi
kon tamba niun tikdi ngoro niun lamburei
i-i-i
siwalwalus gup gup gup

language: Sursurunga
meaning: Children are at the beach, they stand on a stone and jump into river.

40) Kir [Recording 35]
rimbon talalak rimbon tarkakan irimbon
talalak rimbon tarkakan rimban talalak
rimbon tarkakan ñai uai ñaléau

meaning: The *kir* is a bird. The song is about getting a canoe and going to the beach, catching fish, turning the canoe around and returning to the beach.

41) Al Selen Kabumbum: [recording 36]
(sung by Kwamin)
Al selen kabumbum:
sel selen ambo kabumbum matundol
yalumakyo ian pokonro pokonroten
matenteni utulum balé kaleng kaleng
suri nukmakme ura mundak nuk makái
olkongsingel erambal kong sinerai embal.
saumi kabumbum matudoleal makeyo ian pokon ropten

meaning: Always go to the beach and follow the beach all morning.

42) n/a - [Recording 37]
(sung by Daisy)
kakai rumrum
kaka ir rumrum kumlañ kumlañ
kotpasi getrokoi buksoklai i kambrukut.
meklu wak wak wak

meaning: An old woman gets *tanget* leaves and puts them on her anus and dances.

43) Piuriupak tabun tabun: [Recording 38]
Piuriupak tabun tabun
riuriupak tabun tabun
i riuriupak, riuriupak
dahuhut ti kalilik
tu kayameh bushek
xrepeat

language: a mixture of Tangalamet and Kuana (Tolai) languages
meaning: Children will come together and when they do, they belong to the bird (a particular type of bird).

44) Tangara le [recording: Boslik sings Tangara le] [Recording 39]
(sung by Boslik)

[...]
ilk i lik i pisin, tangara le
tangara i lukim mi,
tangara i palai antap
tangara i lukim mi, tangara i palai antap
wanpela taim […..]
i stap namel long ples
lik i lik i pisin, tangara le
tangara i lukim mi, tangara i palai antap

meaning: "a little, little bird, tangara le/ the tangara sees me/ the tangara moves away from me heading over the hill/ the tangara sees me, the tanagara moves away from me heading over the hill/ One time [...]/ it stopped in the middle of the village/ the little, little tangara bird/ the tangara sees me, it moves away from me heading over the hill".

45) Tin gu le [Recording 40]
(sung by Tomimi)

46) Tamana lukai:
Tamana lukai, tamana pongolo
mai lokalo, mai lokalo, tamara pongolo
x repeat

language: a mixture of Tangalamet and Tolai
meaning: refers to an old man jumping to and fro.

47) Robon
(sung by Nora and Nelinda in village)
Note: This song is a part of a basket dance which is performed at the cementing of a grave (at secondary funeral rites). The *okit* is a type of flower found in trees.

oh oh oh, yau, iau i wul wul mer mer
Maditur tan tangier tai malera we tai maléra tai mawe,
mago ra tai maruwe ragogon,
ma tai laru randela, eh iau.

Annex D - Stories

(scan the QR code to access audio recordings of the stories.)

1)Tumbuna Kurleu
(told by Elta)
[Recording 1 - tumbuna Kurleu]

A long time ago, before any of us were born, lived our *masalai*, its name was Kurleu. Kurleu was a moran snake and it had a daughter. This girl's name is Marlilis. Marlilis, she married a man called Támangas (of the Koris clan). Once they were married, the two had a child, Teumñin, and then another son called Támangas - his father's namesake. Their third child was a son called Luu, and then they had a daughter called Maksen. Maksen married a man from the Koris clan in Tekedan called Kiap (of kakun Koris Kiapár). So, Maksen married a man from the Hidan Koris clan, Kapkár. The two had a son, called Kirat.

After all of this, Kirat stayed with his father and the two went to kill some men for eating. One day, they both set out in order to kill their enemies, the people who had killed Kapkár's father, Kiapkár. Alone, Kirat came down to the area with the hole in the stone at Káptuntun and told his mother and father: my daddy, my father, all the enemies are dead. And they all stayed at their uncles' place, the place of their uncles Támangas, Támñin and Luu, at the place with the hole in the stone at Káptuntun.

Figure 47. The hole in the stone at Káptuntun in Kabirara village. (Boiteau, Isabelle. 2023).

Time passed. Then, one afternoon, someone from the Koris clan in Kambang. This person was walking along the beach and now went to see Tirak's mother at Káptuntun. This person was called Toaguil. He now went to admire their *tumbuna* (Sawon's). He admired them and then went and said: *iii a ro, a ro, kak lain wák*, meaning: wow I think you have a very beautiful woman. Now, a fight broke out with Kirat's uncle. Maksin and everyone came with weapons in order to kill them. The man said: Sorry, you can't kill me, I am a man just like you, and I like this woman here, I would like to marry her.

And the sister spoke: where are you from?
He replied that he was from Kabinpisal. She asked what clan he was. He replied clan Koris from Tekedan. He was told that he was now in Káptuntun and that he could not go back, he would stay there and marry these people's sister.

Later, Maksen and Toaguil where married. He is the number two man of their *tumbuna*. The two were married and had children. They had children, two boys, Guyamon and Guimyngtupun, and two girls Tintur and Natinagua.

Later, at one point, the moran snake left to find its daughter, Marlilis. It came down from the bush and went to the reef, which it followed until it went inside Káptuntun. Now, it set out to find all of its children. The woman, the *kámgu* inside Káptuntun, he saw this woman and asked: where are your two sons? While they talked, they were cooking *kumu*. But they didn't go get saltwater and put it into the *kumu*. They took som of their urine and put it inside. Her pee went into the *kumu* which the two brothers then ate. One time, the two asked one another why it was that their food did not taste good. So, they decided to spy on the old woman. When they saw what she was doing they thought, oh, our sister is behaving poorly towards us and the two left.

Ok, so now the mother of these two children, who had just come down from the bush, two people found her and asked her if these two children were hers. And they said, you all should go inside the sea, go far. And she turned and wanted to talk and look and go into the sea with this big shell from the sea and her son. When she went to go and wash she turned into a statue. That is, Marlilis, turned into a statue. And now, Marlilis is still at Káptuntun.

Ok, and this mother of the two sons followed, she smelled, she followed the place where the to of them had walked, she followed the saltwater, and kept going….

She went along and went along, and went into Huris, the governor's area. The *masalai* of that place said: what did you come here to find? I came to find my children here. And the *masalai* replied: yes, I smelled them yesterday in the afternoon, a relative was walking about on top and passed near me. Let us both sleep and tomorrow you can set out. So, she slept with the *masalai* of that place, called Kokap. Then got up with the big morning, before the sun had risen, and followed the coast.

She followed the coast and continued and continued and continued and then went inland near Uyam, near Muu, at Poronbus. As she was heading inland, a *masalai* from the Bokring clan woke up and said: where do you want to go? do you not know that this is a *ples masalai*? So, our *tumbuna* went back, and continued and continued on its way. It wanted to go inland at Huyam, but didn't. Then Tikekut passed by in the water. As it passed it put saltwater inside of the *tumbuna*'s mouth and spat and said: you get away from here! This is my area!

So, our *tumbuna* continues forward. It walks and walks and walks. It passes by Himao 2, continues and continues and continues over Rabuluk, an area near Namatanai. Here, it goes to sit down on a stone, near Gargar. It is sitting there when a *masalai* from a river a short distance away, in Serwai, smells her. If all the *masalai*s can smell everything, then they are from the same clan and they will welcome them. But, if the visitors are from another clan then they will oust them! Ok, so when the *masalai* went to sit on top, this *masalai* belonged to Insel, the Insel *maleu* smelled it now and said: you….. She replied that she was looking for her children. And the *masalai* looked at her: tomorrow we will go on top together. We will go together to look for them at Lihir island. Ok, when the big morning arrived, the two of them got up. Insel said that she should go first and that he would follow behind. Ok, so the *tumbuna* Kurleu continued forth and continued through the saltwater, the big sea. It went inside at Samo, at Lihir, it went inside and now followed a river and continued and continued and now went to the base of a bamboo at the head of the water.

Now, this story is my *tumbuna*'s story, of Kirat. It went on top to the base of the bamboo. Now, its children, it could smell them. When it began being able to smell them, the base of the bamboo stood up and followed the water. It went down, went down, went down, and the two followed the sea. The place was not good and the two went round and wanted to go inland at Pukpuk/Putput. The moran stopped, the moran is of the Kinantal clan, so it goes to the place of this clan. Kinantal goes to Lihir island. He roused him: you go! what are you looking for here? this is our place! go, go, go! Now, they both continued, they went on and went on and went on,

the two of them with their child, the base of the bamboo. The two arrive now and go inland at Kapit. They go inland at Kapit and to Lakai Bobo, a place *masalai* on Lihir. The two go inland and they stop. The *masalai* is carrying the *maleu* that belongs in the water. Ok, and this *maleu* that belongs in the water carried true humans now, it spread these and now everyone calls it Palarau, yes, and now this clan is mine, it belongs to Kurleu. But on the islands everyone calls it Palarau. But, when it first arose here it was called Kurleu. And it went to the island and now everyone calls it Palarau. And this is really true. It is the real story, she went to the island and when the relations over there heard the story they all cried. She told them the story and they all cried. It is the real story. It stops and looks out to Kabirara.

[In English in original:] And that's the end of our ancestor's story with our *tumbuna* Kurleu.

2) The maleu and the rain:
(told by Tomimi)
[Recording 2 - the maleu and the rain]

Once upon a time, everyone was working to make food in the place on top. They were all *mumuing* pig. There was also a river near this place. Everyone was working at removing the pig's belly, the men all went down to the river to do this. The *mangi* removed the pigs' bellies and began to follow the river. They all went. Then one of them saw a big *maleu*. All of the *mangi* returned to the village on top. They went to speak to an old man while the others *mumued* one pig. The old man grabbed a spear and took his *tamiok*, and they all went down. They all wanted to see this enormous *maleu*, so they grabbed the pig's belly. The *mangi* said: it's here, it went inside this hole here. So they all started beating at the hole. Then they started to dig and dig, the *maleu* was really far inside the hole. Finally, they found a *maleu* that was a little large. The old man cut it with his *tamiok* and asked the *mangi* if this was the *maleu* that they had seen? They replied that that one was a little small, the other had had a larger head. So they kept digging until they found another one that was in the middle of a tree. They cut it and asked the *mangi* if this was it, and he replied that it was a little small. They dug some more and saw an enormous head belonging to something that was sleeping inside its hole. They all got up on the *tamiok* and put it into the creature's neck. They cut up the creature and carried it to the place for mumuing. Here, all of the men cut it up. They removed the pig from the *mumu* and put in the pieces of the *maleu*.

And two grandparents, with their grandchild, they went about, they went on top to their garden. And the villagers gave them some *maleu* to take with them. And they carried this and went on top to the garden. On arriving the first thing that the two of them did was to sit and *malolo* (rest) for a bit in the garden. And, the woman's child, it began to cry. It ate some *maleu* and stopped crying. And the child's grandparent said: oh, it isn't done yet, it is still bloody. And now, the child started to cry again. And the brother of this *maleu*, it was a *masalai*. And its brother was working on finding him and how it found the grandparents and child sitting here. It asked the two: why is the child crying? The old women said: it is crying because the *maleu* here it is not done cooking. The *masalai* asked if it was only one man who had killed his brother. And the two elders they said that it was all of the *lain* from the village.

Ok, now the two grandparents hurried up, they collected their taro, as well as sugar cane and bananas. And the two emerged from the garden and surrounding bush. Alright, and now they walked about a bit. And the *masalai* took his brother. The two elders cleaned the sugar cane and taro. The two took some taro and placed them on a fire. They then ate some taro and some sugar cane.

Now a woman came to get their brother. She saw the old couple and asked if they wanted to take it, cook it and eat it. She told them to go and climb a tree nearby and to cut down a specific

piece. So, the two climbed the tree, they sat down on it and worked at cutting this piece. And the man went to fill a basket. And, when he was done, the two women climbed to the top of this tree. And now, it started to rain, and rain. It rained and rained, and the rain reached the village now.

Everyone called this village Kipkip (or QQ). In this village, the rain fell all because of this *maleu*. The water it ravaged the village, it went in all of the houses and it carried away all of the food. Everything was carried away at this time.

3) Wir wir wir ruben dalo:
(told by Tomimi)
[Recording 3 - wir wir wir ruben dalo]
[Note 1: this story strongly resembles that told by Aminio Bale regarding the kipong, which is placed next.
Note 2: the lyrics to the songs are a transcription, I do not know their meaning or if they are in the Sursurunga language (they do not appear to be), as such there may be slight mistakes.]

Two sisters were born from a branch. This branch was called Aireme. The two sisters stayed on top, with the branch. The two stayed at home, and their sister, her husband usually went to catch fish in the sea. And his sister usually stayed at home, on top, with Aireme. And, when he came back with his catch, the two would boil them in the sand, below Aireme's hands. Then, they would both eat.

And one morning, he went down to the reef to catch fish and they both stopped to eat fish.

A young woman from the place located just behind the beach was placed in a *karuka* house. The young woman was staying inside the house. She would watch the man catching fish and took a liking to him. She watched him as he returned and worked at hauling the fish, shooting them and puling them in from the saltwater on a rope. The young girl watched. She left the house and watched. The man usually cut some of the leafs that belonged to this area, that belonged to the girl, in order to cover the fish and carry it back on top. The young girl returned to the *karuka* house and hid inside it.

One day, when the man went to go and cut a leaf as he usually did, the young girl caught him. She said to him: you are my man, you belong to me. And the man replied: No, I am not, let me go. My sister and I, we were not born from a woman, we were born from a tree. But the girl's eyes were strong, she was strong, and she continued to hold him.

On top, his sister was waiting for him, looking for him, but he did not return. So she spoke to their mother, the tree Aireme: a shark must have caught him while he was fishing, we need to get up now, leave our homestead.
And she began to sing: *wir wir wir ruben aloo, x3*
One of their mother's roots broke. And she worked at breaking loose so that the two of them could leave.
wir wir wir ruben aloo, x3
"Put!", another one broke
wir wir wir ruben aloo, x3
"Put!", another one broke
It is working, only from the singing. There are now four of them, and four now appear from the wood and come out of it. Two of them start walking about. They continue walking and go down to the beach. They are along the seashore, on the beach now, and their mother stands up. And the woman sings so that her brother will hear her. And her brother, the girl is still holding him.

wir wir wir ruben aloo, x3
Her brother hears her singing now. And he says: Ah! leave her! Leave her and my mother is in the saltwater!

The man, the young girl who is holding him. He is trying to cry and to shake her off of him now so that he can run and follow his sister and his mother. But he can't, the young girl is holding onto him.
And the two women are still walking, they are entering the sea now. They reach the deep sea and all of their leafs fall away into the deep sea. And the sister sits down on the head of their mother. She puts chicken feathers on her head and sings: *wir wir wir ruben aloo, x3*

The brother, the young girl is still holding him. He hears what is happening and makes a big noise. He breaks free from the young girl and runs away. He follows his mother. He runs and runs, and goes into the deep sea, he dives in and continues forward. He dives still deeper so that there are fish all around him and he goes to sit down next to his mother. She has sunk to the bottom, the only thing left to see are the chicken feathers. The man tries to hurry up, he wants to hold his mother. But it isn't enough, she has already sunk to the bottom. By the time he reaches her the only thing left for him to hold onto are the chicken feathers. Ohh! He cries. Mama! Put your handout and I will go down with you! But there is nothing, his mother has already sunk to the bottom. Oh, both his sister and his mother have already sunk to the bottom. And now, he can only wander in circles on top as he cries and cries.
And a shark comes and cuts him. [last word said with some suddenness]

End of the story.

4) The story of kipong:
(told by Aminio Bale)
A being called Aireme had two children: a son and a daughter. The two would stay in the area behind their home and would watch all of the people going about as they stayed inside. Their mother knew how to hide them.

Time passed and the son turned into a man. He now thought as men do. The mother was still looking after her two children.

More time passed.

The man was a fisherman. He would go fishing in the sea in order to catch food for him and his family to eat. Each time he went, there was a woman, a young girl who would watch him. The place belonging to the girl and her people was similar to Hipakat (where there are various houses and people, as well as space between the houses). And the place where Aireme stayed was only large enough for two people. The man caught fish in the sea and brought all of the fish back to remove the guts, this is how he and his family spent all of their days. And this young girl, she would watch the man. One day, this young girl, she got up and said: I am going to marry this man, I like/want him.

Now, one day, he went to walk along the beach and the young girl arrived at that moment. And she caught him and wold not let go and brought him to the house. The man cried and fought as hard as he could. But the young girl was strong.

The man's sister, alerted to this, got up and sang the following song, so that the Kipong would arise and walkabout. The name of this is [unclear]. So, she stood up and sang:
Wa san to e
Wa sen to lara, kipong e la o ra, kipong e la o ia e.

The man, heard this and said to the girl: oh, sorry, you need to let me go. That is my mother and my sister calling me.

His sister thought that she was sorry about this, and worried about this. She was very worried, and now she called out:
Wa sé kau lé x2
Kipong e la o la kipong e la o la e.
Kipong é la tama, kipong e la o, kipong e la tam.
she sang like this now.

And the man now fought hard against the young girl. He continued, and continued and continued and was able to escape the girl's grasp.

All the while, Aireme was walking about: she had left the bush and was reaching the beach and the saltwater now. The man ran after her: as he ran he fell and got up again, until he reached the water. He wanted to rach out and climb out onto Aireme's head, but couldn't. The two women were now in the saltwater.

End of story.

5) Tingule Tingule:
(told by Tomimi)
[Recording 4 - tingule tingule]
[Note: the lyrics to the songs are a transcription, I do not know their meaning or if they are in the Sursurunga language (they do not appear to be), as such there may be slight mistakes.]

There is a woman who isn't married. She gives birth to two children: one is an older girl and one is a little boy. The two children stay near their house while the mother goes to the garden. When the mother goes to the garden she stays there for a long time, until darkness comes, and then she comes back down to the house. And when the children come up to her, they ask her: mama it is too dark, what were you doing? She responds in anger that they cannot ask this because they do not work. But, she is lying, and she now goes to meet a man, the children's father, in the bush. She goes, and goes.

One time, the two siblings were waiting at home as they always did. The older one became angry, she became angry with their mother because she spent all of her time in the bush. She washed the younger boy, washed herself, and waited at home for their mother. But, she was angry with her mother, so she picked up her small brother, washed him and placed him on her back. The two set off and ran away, away from their mother. While their mother was in the bush, in the garden, the two children ran away.

The mother was up in the garden and heard that the two children had run away. The children sang:
makaio makaio tingule tingule, tingule tingule i tangale tangale.
Their mother came back from the garden and found out that her children had run away.
The singing continued:
makaio makaio tingule tingule tingule tingule i tangale tangale.
Now, the mother heard the song of her two children, who were singing as they walked along the road. The mother thought: ohh, my children are singing!
tingule tingule tingule tingule i tangale tangale.
hache naturmol, mala susmol
Now, the mother sang back the daughter's song: *hache naturmol, mala susmol*

As the two children were walking they heard that their mother was singing. The daughter was not convinced, and continued walking.
Tingule tingule tingule tingule, tingule tingule i tangale tangale.
Hache, naturmol, mala susmol.
The daughter continued walking along, carrying her brother. As their mother continued to sing:
Hache, naturmol, mala susmol.
The two children continued on their way, they saw something standing away from the road. They left the road in this direction and continued singing:
tingule tingule tingule tingule i tangale tangale.
As they continued on their way, the mother was working on getting down from the bush, she was making her way down the long road from the bush.
Haché naturmol, mala susmol.
She came down, she went on her way: running now. She would have liked to hold the two siblings. But one of them was *les* (upset) and does not like their mother.
Now, they are both running in circles around the base of the cassava plant. The mother runs behind the two siblings she is getting closer to them, as they continue to run around the base of the cassava plant.
Tingule tingule i tangale tangale. Tashé, naturmol, mala susmol
They continue around the base of the cassava plant. The mother sees them and she wants to reach and hold them. She nears.
And the daughter sings: *tingule tingule tingule tingule i tangale tangale*.
The mother is running and she is coming close to her two children now, when the daughter starts to talk to the cassava plant, she says: *gi kalom paskiur*. And the cassava opens its mouth and the two children go inside. The mother wants to grab onto them but she only grabs onto the chicken feathers as the cassava plant swallows the two children.

6) The old lady and salty food:
(told by Daisy)
[Recording 5 - the old lady and salty food]
One day a long time ago, there was an old woman with two grandchildren. There was a cave, in that cave there was salt water. There was no other salt water nearby other than inside the cave. Each time the old woman cooked food, she would go and urinate into a coconut shell and put it into her grandchildren's food. And she would go to the cave and fetch saltwater for the food. She did this everyday. One day. the older brother hid beside that cave and watched his grandmother. When his grandmother cooked, she set the food on top of the table, got some urine and poured it into the two plates of food for the two brothers and then she ran into the cave to get saltwater to pour on top of her food. Now, when the older brother saw that, he went back and sat next to the table. When his grandmother arrived he asked his grandmother: you poured your urine into our food and then you went and got saltwater and poured it into your food, that's not good! He took the two plates of food and threw them away and killed his grandmother. The brothers then went and removed the door to that cave and the salt water ran out and spread and that is now the saltwater that is around us.

It is a *tumbuna* story, we don't know it's true or…
It's the end of the story.

7) Kangaroo and Lizard:
(told by Daisy)
[Recording 6 - kangaroo and lizard pt1 + pt2]
One day they went to the forest to hunt for pig. They went to the forest and they searched for pigs, they killed a pig and they brought it back to their home. After they arriving home, they *mumu*ed the pig beside the river. Then after preparing the *mumu*, they went to the river and washed, they had a swim in the river, they played hide and seek. So, the lizard, the lizard went

and checked for *mumu*, he didn't tell kangaroo that he was going to go and check for pig. So, he lied to kangaroo, saying: kangaroo I will go to the bush, I want to go to the loo. Then kangaroo said ok you can go!. When lizard dove into the water, he dove until he reached the *mumu*. He went close to the *mumu*, and removed the stones and started eating the pig. And kangaroo didn't know that the lizard was eating the pig. After eating, he went back to the river and had a bath. Then, kangaroo said: lizard, let's go and eat our pig. Ok let's go. Then, they went to the house and lizard said ok kangaroo you go and remove the *mumu*. When kangaroo removed the *mumu*, there was no more pig. Kangaroo turned around, got his bow and arrow and chased the lizard. Now, when the lizard see things like kangaroos or dogs, it will climb up the tree. And the kangaroo runs on the ground.

That's the end of the story.

8) The little girl and the taro:
(told by Daisy)
[Recording 7 - the little girl and the taro]
This little girl, when the sun reaches twelve o'clock, then she will be allowed eat the taro. So, her grandmother started weeding in the garden. Weeding, and weeding, then the little girl saw the sun and asked: grandma, can I eat my taro now? Where is the sun? the grandma asked, it's still up there, not yet. Then, the grandmother weeded, weeded, weeded. That small girl asked the grandmother: grandmother can I eat my taro now? Where is the sun? It is there, no, you cannot eat the taro. They go back to gardening. Then, the sun goes down, and the little girl asks: grandma can I eat my taro now? where is the sun? the sun is still up there. No, then they went back to the garden and worked in the garden. They worked until the sun went down. After that the small girl asked, grandma, can i eat my taro now? where is the sun? the sun is already down. Then, the tall woman says, yes you can eat your taro now.

Just a small story, that's the end of the story.

9) The boy and the man eating giant:
(told by Louisa)
[Recording 8 - the boy and the man eating giant]
Once upon a time, there lived a little boy in a bush. One day, the little boy woke up in the morning, got his slingshot and went up to the bush to hunt birds. He went up to the bush and then started shooting at birds, the sun went down, it was getting dark, so the boy couldn't get back home. So he walked, walked along the bush. Then, he decided to walk on a track, and he came to a giant house. This giant had a wife and only one child, a little girl. The boy reached the home and the giant was not in the house, the giant was in the bush looking for men, hunting something to eat. So the boy came to the house and asked the little girl, where is your dad? My dad is in the bush, looking for men to eat. But the little girl told him, he could stay to sleep and the next day he could go home. But the boy didn't want to sleep, he wanted to get home. And then the mother came and told him he could stay and sleep. Early in the morning, you can go home. But the little boy wanted to go, because he was frightened that the giant would eat him. And then, the little girl told him, I'll get you and hide you inside my room, so the little girl took him and locked him up in her room. Later in the afternoon, there was a big rain with thunder and lightening. Then, the girl told the boy, these are the signs that my dad is coming home with a dead body to eat. So they slept that whole night and the boy didn't sleep, he was frightened. So the giant came and smelled the fresh blood and he told his wife, hum I can smell the blood of an Englishman. No, there is no fresh blood in the house, it's only the man that you killed yesterday who is in the house. We are ready to cook. The giant told her: you are liar, I can smell the fresh blood. So, the woman told him, no, there is no fresh blood in the house. No, you are a liar, there is a fresh blood in the house. The giant called the lady, ok bring my food here, I'll eat and go to

bed. Then the little girl ran to the room and told the boy, my mum gets ready to cook for my dad. Then the boy asked: what will happen next? And the girl told him, if my dad eats and then goes to bed, you will hear him snore, that's when my dad goes to sleep. Then the boy heard that her dad was snoring. The girl took the boy outside and the mother gave him food. They ate and then the mother told him: go back to the room with my little girl and you go to bed and sleep.

The next day, they woke up in the morning, the giant had gone back to the bush, hunting for men. He returned in the afternoon. He could smell the fresh blood and told the lady: hey, I can still smell the fresh blood in the house. No, there is no fresh blood in the house, you are a liar. I can still smell the fresh blood. No, the man that you killed yesterday is in the house, no you are a liar. Then, the giant went to the room, and checked the little girl's room and he found the boy. He came outside of the room and told his wife that she was a liar. There is a boy in the house. Then he told the boy: early in the morning the next day, early in the morning you will wake up and get the paint and we will paint my house, if not I will eat you. The giant told the boy. The night came and the boy didn't sleep, he was thinking about the giant. If I do not finish painting the house, he will eat me. The next day the little girl took the paint and helped the boy to paint the house. They finished painting the house and then they went and have a bath. They came back and the little girl didn't wash her hands, there was paint on her finger. And then, the giant came home and asked: did you finish painting my house? Yes. They sat at the table, ready for dinner. And the giant told the family, huh, I can smell paint in the house, can I check you both? He checked and saw that there was still paint on the finger of the little girl. And said, oh wait, you are a liar, my little girl painted the house, not you, tomorrow morning, I will have you for my breakfast tomorrow morning. And then the little boy didn't sleep that night, again, he was thinking about the giant, that he will cook him. Early in the morning the giant woke up and told the boy, you will go to the river and dive and get my daughter's ring, it was lost in there. So, the giant went up back to the bush, hunting for men to eat. The boy and the girl took one small knife and they went down to the river. That river was so deep, and the boy told the girl: I can't swim into the deep. And the girl told him, you have to cut off my leg, my two legs, my two hands and leave my head, my body, and then you put inside the dish and you will pour it into the river. And the boy, started at the girl and thinking: if I cut your legs and your hands, would you die or no? And the girl said, no, I wouldn't die. So the boy just followed the instructions that the girl had told him, cut her two legs, her hands, her body and put it inside the dish. And she told the boy: pour that dish with my body into the deep river. So, the boy took the dish with the girl's body into the river and the girl started to join the parts of her body in the river and got the ring. But one of her fingernails was not joined. Then they went back to the house, they stayed at the house, the giant came home (with something he found in the bush). He came down and smelled them, now. And told this one: uhm, I can smell the blood in the house. And the lady said: no, there is no fresh blood, you are a liar, there is no fresh blood in the house. The giant told the boy and the girl, can I check you again? So he started to check them both and then he said, oh, now I know that you didn't paint my house, you didn't dive and get the ring, it was of my daughter. I'll kill you tomorrow morning for dinner. Then the boy started crying and told the girl, I am leaving now, in the big night. And the girl told him, we will sleep until midnight, Then they sleep until 12 o'clock night. The girl told the boy, wait, we must go to my father's *smollhaus* (outhouse). And get my father's fireash, one bottle of lemon and one bottle of water. They took it and went to where the horses waited, they untied one and went away. Then, the giant woke up in the morning and found that the boy and the girl weren't in the house, he went and checked the little house, he saw that these three things wasn't there, one of the horses was gone. He came back to the house and found his wife: those two have gone, they have run away, run them. So he went and tried the house, untied one of the horse and followed.

So, the kids ran and ran and ran and the boy said: if your dad ran after us, he will catch me and kill me and eat me. And the girl said: no, he won't kill you. So they ran as far as here, at Samo, and the dad caught up. And he shouted: I will kill and eat you! The girl told the boy, we will just run that way and then you will pour the bottle of water. So they ran, the boy got the bottle of

water, and poured it to the road and now there was a river flowing. So the giant came and started to cross over the big river. They went on their way. The giant followed them. They ran ran, they were here at Kambang and the giant was at Kapsel. He saw them and shouted at them: I will eat you! The girl said, we will just run and then we will pour the bottle of lemon. Then the boy got the bottle of lemon, poured it to the road and plantations of lemon grew up. So the giant came and ran in that farm. And they continued. So they ran, ran, ran again to another village, the boy looked back and saw the giant coming and told the girl: oh, we've got only one bottle left. And he said, your dad is going to kill me and eat me. The girl said that no, we will escape. So they ran, ran and then when the giant came near to them, the girl told the boy to pour out the last bottle, and the boy poured the essence of fire on the road and a big flame came up. Then the giant came and stood, he couldn't pass because there was a big fire. So he turned back and went back to the house. And the girl and the boy ran and reached the king and the queen's house safely. So, the two children, they came and stayed with the king and the queen. And the king told the boy, you will get married and have a daughter and the girl will get married to my son. So they get married, and they became the prince and princess.

So that's the end of the story.

10) The little brother and the shark
(told by Louisa)
[Recording 9 - the little brother and the shark]
[Note: the lyrics to the song are a transcription, I do not know their meaning or if they are in the Sursurunga language, as such there may be slight mistakes. The word tuang means brother.]

Once upon a time there lived two brothers in a village. They lived by themselves. One day, they were in the house and they were taking care of their pig. The elder brother got up in the morning and told the younger brother to feed the pig. But the younger brother didn't want to feed the pig. So the elder brother started to get angry with him. After this, the younger brother went to the beach and started to walk along the beach, he walked and came to a big tree and climbed the tree and sat up by the top of the tree. He knew the shark songs and he didn't want to stay alone there, so he walked along the beach until he found a branch hanging out over the water. He climbed up onto this branch, and he began to sing the shark songs. He was looking over the ocean, looking for the shark. So, he climbed on up to the end of the tree. Now he looked and saw the shark's fins swim up. Then, he started singing:
tuang man, tuang man, surang bereman, wuy wuy wuy, beu kukuria (or *pupuria*)

Then, the older brother heard that his younger brother was singing and he said: ay, my brother is singing this shark song I have to run and tell him that he cannot jump into the shark's mouth, he has to come down off of the tree. So he ran down the beach and started to follow this younger brother. All the while, the younger brother saw the shark, the shark was coming. And he started singing again.
tuang man, tuang man, surang bereman, wuy wuy wuy, beu kukuria (or *pupuria*)

Then the elder brother ran and ran and ran to the tree and started to call out to the boy: Ay, come down! the boy didn't listen to his elder brother. Ay, come down! We will go back home. The younger brother didn't want to come down, and the shark was coming near, and near, and near, until it was under the big tree. Then the little brother sand the shark song for the last time, the shark opened its mouth and the younger brother jumped into the shark's mouth. The shark took him and went to the deep ocean and swallowed the boy. The boy was gone. Then, the elder brother ran back home, cooked everything in the house, cooked the house, killed all the pigs and all the animals, the dog, the elder brother killed them all. And after all had been killed, the elder brother took a knife and he cut off his neck and he died.

So both of the brothers died.

So, that's the end of the story, it's just a small story to tell you.
[note: in Tok Pisin 'to cook' can also mean 'to set fire to']

11) The Handless Woman:
(told by Gelanu)
[Recording 10 - the handless woman]

There was a girl, she was an only child. She and her family lived in the village. Her mother and her father were tired of looking after her. The two took her on top to the bush. They slept overnight and got up the next day. The mother prepared their food, they ate it, and the father walked with the daughter, they headed out towards the big bush. They walked and went up and up and up straight to the big bush.

Now, they were in the big bush. And the father lied to the daughter. He told her to stay where she was and that he would go looking for a bird in another area. And he left. It began to get dark as he follows the road back down into the village. He reached the village and the little girl was still in the bush. And now it had become truly dark, night had fallen. The girl was afraid now, she walked about inside the bush. She walked and walked and eventually founds a place to sleep. In the morning, she woke up and continued to walk. She eventually reached a house. This house belonged to the Tewel. This Tewel, there were two married Tewels who lived in this house. The man in this devil couple knew how to eat humans, he was a cannibal. The man left the house, in search of humans to eat and the woman stayed in the house, she spotted the little girl. The couple didn't have children, so she holds the girl inside the house. The woman asked her what had happened and the girl told her that her mother and father had tired of her and left her in the bush. The woman took her in and cared for her.

Some time passed. and the Tewel woman's husband returned home. At this time, there was rain falling hard with thunder and lightening. And the woman's husband returned. The woman knew that he was coming. The devil man arrived and he had not been able to kill any people while he was out, he had looked but to no avail. But, as soon as he returned to the house and sat down he could smell this little girl. He got up and spoke about the good meal that was awaiting him, that he could smell it. So, he went to get his meal. He found this human and cut off one of its hands and ate it. And another. Then, the wife then intervened and got the little girl out of the house, but she no longer had hands (and arms it is presumed). Now, the little girl only has legs, no arms and hands.

The little girl left and went on her way. At times when it rained she knew how to build a shelter for herself using leafs and was able to drink the water, but she had no food. She eventually reached a village. There was a man who was going to go kill some fish. While he was setting out the rain had started to fall and he had hidden in a hole inside of a tree. He was making his way through the bush when he caught sight of this girl. And the girl told him that he should not be afraid of her, that she was just like him and nothing more. And the man went to take her. And the girl told him the story of how the devil had taken and eaten both of her arms and hands.

This man went to kill his fish and then took the girl and brought her back to his mother and father. They went down to his village and his mother and father cleaned her and dressed her well.

Time passed. And the girl married this boy. And the boy did his work while the girl stayed with his parents. Everyone said that the mother and the father would raise the baby now. But the girl didn't have her hands, so the boy's mother and father looked after the baby. The girl could only work with her legs. And the girl left. This was a long time ago, in those days there were no

phones, there was no way to write, and she just left. When she left she put the baby in a carrier on her back. She carried it in this way as she walked. She walked and walked and walked. The baby was sitting in its pee and poop. And the woman didn't have any hands, so she could not take out the baby. She continued to walk and reached a very large river. And the two crossed the river, they went straight through the middle of it. And, just as she was in the middle of the river, the *laplap* that had been used to fasten the baby came loose and the baby fell out and into the water. Behind, the girl heard a man who told her to put her hands into the water. The girl didn't have any hands, but she listened to the voice and as she put her hand down into the water she found that she had a hand. And she put her other hand down, and found that she had another hand too. She now carried the baby and the two of them crossed the river and went to sit down next to the river. Now, she was able remove the baby's mess and and the two sat down, drank, washed and got up to continue walking.

They walked and now there was a *tanget*. There were two: one was red and one was green. They walked and found two *tanget* standing up and one road going as such and another road going as such. So, she thought about which one to take: red or green? She followed the road marked with green and they walked for a while before reaching a large house. They went inside and stayed there.

Later on, the boy came back from his work. He asked after the two girls. And the mother and father answered that they have been fighting and that the two left.

They all got up and went to look for her. And, at the crossroads, he took the same road that the girl and the baby had. They walked for a while, crossed a large river, and drank and washed. They continued on their way and found that the baby was now big enough to know how to walk. It went to play and he went to find his wife, but he was thrown by her hands. He said that his wife didn't have her two hands, but this woman did. He got up, and the girl told him her story: that the baby had fallen into the water and that she had heard a man's voice telling her to put her hands into the water and that her hands had appeared.

He goes Ohh.
And that's the story.

12) An encounter with mister Tambaran:
(told by Gelanu)
[Recording 11 - an encounter with mister Tambaran]
Lamé, Lamé
Paté
[This is a way of beginning a story, the story teller calls out *lamé* and the listeners *paté*]

A grandson and grandmother were *mumu*ing taro. Then, they went and caught shrimp in the river. They caught the shrimp and followed the water. They went and went and went. The small child asked his grandmother: can I eat mi taro now? the child's grandmother asked him: where is the sun now? It is still overhead. Wait first. They went on their way, and went, and went, and went. And the little boy asked his grandmother: can I eat mi taro now? and the grandmother asked him: where is the sun? It is still overhead. You can't eat it yet, wait first. And the two continued to follow the river, as they went and went and went on their way.

Now, the little boy saw the shadow of a banana, the tree was standing behind the water. He saw the shadow of the banana below, in the water. He told his grandmother: grandma, there's a ripe banana below the water. No, this banana is a shadow, nothing more. The grandmother knew how to swim, so she went ahead, hit a stone and came back to the surface. The banana remained on the other side of the water.

As time went on, nightfall arrived. The two got up and continued on their way as they called out to the Devil man. The name of this Devil man was Mister Tambaran. And the old woman called out: Mister Tambaran. She was sure that he would find them. The two continued to walk and the two continued to call out: Mister Tambaran! They went and went and went until they came upon the house of this Devil man. They had been travelling with their bag of shrimp, and now they cooked them. Then, the grandchild and grandmother, with this Devil man, ate the shrimp. When the two had still been cooking the shrimp, the Devil man had heard talk that there were some shrimp and that there was a fire nearby, and found them. After a while, they had finished eating all of the shrimp and they went to sleep. They slept and slept and slept, the grandchild and grandmother together inside the room of this Devil man, Tambaran, while he was on the other side. The little boy went to sleep, but then he felt that the Devil man was killing and eating him. He told his grandmother and she told him that it was just mosquitos eating him, that the Devil man would not kill and eat him. The little boy waited until the morning. The two got up before the arrival of the morning, when the place was empty and the two of them left. The two went back to the house, did their toilet inside the house and came back out. They then followed the road, a long road.

This Devil man woke up and found that the two had left. He got up and shouted: where are the two of them!? He found the shit belonging to the both of them and shouted out after them.

Meanwhile the grandchild and grandmother were following the road. As they went on their way they met with all of the birds. They told this bird: if the Devil man asks, none of you can tell him that we are walking along the road. and they told this to all of the birds, until the very last one.

After a while, the two went to stay at this bird's house. And, the Devil man came to this area after following the same road that the grandchild and grandmother had followed. He went and went and went and arrived at the bird's house where he asked the large bird where the two had gone. The bird said: they are staying here now and it got up and went to get the two of them. Many things happen. The house was in one of these areas for making copra. The Devil man went to sit on a bed. But the bed was not strong, and he was a big man, so it broke under his wait. He fell through and fell into one of these machines for making copra and died.

The bird had a large pig and it sold it to the grandchild and the grandmother. The two killed the pig, *mumu*ed it, and there was a large feast. They ate to the death of this Devil.

The End.

13) Wives from Coconuts:
(told by Gelanu)
[Recording 12 - wives from coconuts]
Lamé
There were two brothers, they stayed in their village. They were the first and second born. One time, one of them went on top to the bush and another to the sea to fish. The little brother went to the sea and the older one to the bush. This little brother went out into the sea to catch fish. In the sea there was a little island, the boys' grandmother stayed on this island. So, the little brother went to find the boys' grandmother. He went to find her, and found her working at cutting firewood. The grandmother spotted him, took him, and they went to her house. At her house, his grandmother told him to climb a coconut tree. He climbed the coconut tree and cut off all of the green coconuts. And the old woman tried all of these coconuts. She got up, and cut the coconut, and, the water inside of it, her cough (phlegm) went inside of it. The young brother came down from the coconut tree and drank this coconut water.

After drinking the coconut water. The old woman got up and told the young boy to put many coconuts in the back of his boat. The first one would break and make a loud noise, but he could not turn around and look. The second one would break but he could not turn around and look, and the third one would break and now he could turn around and look. The young boy got up now and put the large coconuts into the back of his boat. The first one made a noise and he did not look, the second one made a noise, and the third one. After the third one made a noise, he turned around to look behind him and saw a woman sitting. The green coconut that had broken, a woman had come out of it. Some time passed, and the two arrived at his house. The two arrived and the other brother hadn't returned from the bush yet. So the two went and waited in the house. And the big brother came down from the bush and saw the woman. This boy, he married her.

After a while, the *mangi* asked his brother: where is this woman from? She came from our grandmother. They all slept, and the next day the big brother went to find the grandmother along the beach. The grandmother asked him to carry some firewood and bring it to her house, which the *mangi* did. He then climbed the coconut tree and cut down the green coconuts. The woman blew inside the coconut, so it went into the water inside the coconut. When the *mangi* came down he did not drink the coconut's water, he looked inside and saw the old woman's phlegm, so he didn't drink it and poured the water out instead. Then, the old woman told him: these big ones here are for you to carry, put them in the back of your canoe. When the first one sounds out don't look, the second time the same and then the third time turn to look. The *mangi* replied that he understood, and he left. The first one sounded out and he didn't look, the second came and at the third one he turned around to look. He saw a woman sitting in the back of the canoe. This woman, she was an old woman. She had drool falling from the side of her mouth [laughter from the whole group]. Now, this was this brother's wife. He got up, he took this woman, and went and went until he reached the house. He was angry with his brother. He asked his brother: why did you get the good woman and I got the old one?

After some time, this woman, the man here, he killed her, and she died.

The End.

14) How Namatanai got its name:
(told by Gabmansul)
[Recording 13 - how Namatanai got its name]
A long time ago people here didn't live on the beach, they lived in the bush. They were all cannibals. There was one man from Kapsel who came here and everyone *mumu*ed and ate him. People stayed with their communities at that time. These people stayed in their communities in this way the first time that government men came, these men were like the police or the missionaries. They went on top and told everyone that they had to move down to the beach. So that on top there was nobody left, everyone had killed and eaten everyone who remained up there. At that time they new how to eat the whole get up: shirt and all. But, this kind of skin colour, white skin, they did not know how to eat it. They saw all of their clothes and their shoes and thought that it was their skin.

Time passed and everyone got along and moved down to the beach. But there was one man, who did not listen to this order, and he stayed on top in the bush and fought with the police. Two of his brothers came and told him that he couldn't fight, that he needed to stop, to come down to the beach so that the police could hold him. He listened to his two brothers and came down from the bush. There, the police caught and held him, they tied his hands together, and they brought him to Namatanai following the road. They arrived, they dug a hole and the police told him: go stand up over there. Now, two brothers they came up behind and said: "*Giapat una mat inái*" (Giapat you will die today) and a shot was shot from a gun which hit and killed him. Before

this five bullets, nine bullets had been shot, but they had all missed and gone flying to the side. It was only after they came up and said "Giapat una mat iné" that he was killed. Then he was buried.

He was shot in Namatanai.
That is a true story
The real name of the town isn't Namatanai, it's *Namatinái*, but it is hard for the white men to pronounce so it became Namatanai.

15) The *mangi* and the moon:
(told by Ismael)
[Recording 14 - the mangi and the moon]
Once upon a time, in a village, a grandmother went down to the water to look at the moon. There was something here that looked like the moon, and she covered it up well and put it into a saucepan. She finished cooking it and hid this thing. She spoke to the wives of the young boys: you can't hide this thing here, this thing it is our light during the night. You cannot hold it. The *mangi* was thinking too much about this thing. The grandmother had hidden it. But, the *mangi* went and opened the pot. He saw something that was so bright, like the moon. He held it, and his hands broke. Something took his hands and they rose and rose and rose out into space and into the sky. The moon came up now, up in the sky.
The End.

16) The origin of the reef:
(told by James)
[Recording 15 - the origin of the reef]
There didn't used to be stones. There was one stone on top, it stood up like a man. One elder came and saw this stone that stood up like a man. At this time, the sea, it was always rough [emphasis in voice]. This elder man talked to everyone and told them that he would return to his village and return with his lime powder. He would be able to hit the stone and the stone, it would break into many pieces. So, he went to get his lime in his village, and he returned. This elder man was from Siar, and he returned now. He took the lime powder and hit the stone and collected all of the stones. And now, we have stones and the sea is no longer so rough because there is the reef.

17) Langbau, wak and kangaroo:
(told by Kulu)
[Recording 16 - Langbau, wak and kangaroo]
There were three animals in the bush: *langbau* (the *langbau* is a fly - see dictionary, n/a:367, though I was also told that it is akin to a flying dog), *wak* (wallaby) and kangaroo. They sent they time going around in the bush.. The *langbau*, the *wak* and the kangaroo. One time, when they were all going around the bush they were angry with one another. The *langbau* had angered the other two. He had angered them and told them they they could not go around together. The kangaroo, it felt sorry for the *langbau*, so it told him that he could not anger their friend in this way. He said that he could not fight with him. And they went around the bush, looking for pigs, birds and snakes.

One time now, the *langbau* was sitting down and tricked the other two. It thought, alright, I will go now to a house in the tree, in this tree that has seeds that everyone eats, this tree is called *lapu* [this is a tree which produces a large yellow fruit similar to the breadfruit (see Dictionary, n/a:369)].. All of the seeds on this tree were round like this [hand gesture], they were ripe. The *langbau* went and stopped at the foot of this tree and he worked at eating these small branches here. When he was done eating he went to shit, like a dog. All this while the *wak* had been heading towards the area. And he asked: what did you eat? And the *langbau* tricked, him, with

his shit. The *wak* thought that this food was very good. Ah, he ate the *langbau'*s shit. The *langbau* laughed so hard. *Kámlang* (father) you just ate my shit, he called out.

The *wak* turned around and started to chase the *langbau*. The two ran over a long distance. They ran and ran, until they met a large river. But, you know, *wak* doesn't know how to swim, he is a kangaroo. His two hands, they are short. The dog jumped into this river, swam, and reached the other side. The *wak* couldn't do anything now, he just stood there. On the other side of the river, the dog stood up and laughed again, calling out to the *wak* that he had no way to fight him now. Now, the kangaroo arrived and helped the *wak*. The *wak* was crying and told the kangaroo that he was going to kill this man. The *wak* told him the story and the kangaroo replied: ohh sorry this man has done something that is really wrong. What are you thinking now? The *wak* replied that he wanted to kill him, that he had to fight him, he had done wrong. The kangaroo said: you wait, you sit down and wait. And kangaroo started to dig in behind *wak*. He dug and dug and dug, he dug deep, he dug underneath the water and dug a tunnel. And the *langbau*, he was sitting, his ass was on the ground. The wak watched the dog, knowing that the kangaroo was digging. The kangaroo kept digging and he came out of the ground in the exact spot where the *langbau*'s two *kiau* (testicles) were, and he bit into them, he put his teeth into them. The *langbau* leaped up howling Wawawawa! and calling out about his *kiau*. All the while the kangaroo ate the *langbau's kiau*, he ate them and killed the *langbau*. The *langbau* died.

Then, they returned home. The *wak* prepared a big feast for a big *kastom* in honour of the *langbau*. He collected all of the food, *mumue*d the taro and the *kaukau*. The two ate and the story ends in this way.

18) The monkey and the shark:
(told by Levi)
There was a monkey that sat on a coconut tree that was growing leaning over a river. A shark came up to talk to this monkey and the two made a deal that the shark would take the monkey out to sea. The shark thinks that it has tricked the monkey and is looking forward to its meal. It swims out into the deep sea, dives into a cave and tells the monkey that it had tricked it and was going to eat the monkey's heart. The monkey is cunning and tells the shark that it left its heart in a suitcase near the coconut tree, so the shark brings it back to the tree and, when they get there, the monkey tells the shark that it tricked it.

19) The man eating pig:
(a story from Konos, on the north eastern shore of New Ireland)
A long time ago there were some man eating pigs in New Ireland so the people fled to Tabar island. A woman and two children were left behind. They were left behind because they were too poor and because the children were fatherless. The boys grew up to be strong men and one of them killed this pig. After killing the pig, he cut it up and mounted the head and stomach on a raft. When it reached Tabar the people there knew that they could come back. Some did, and some stayed behind.

20) The Lavongai man with two wives:
(told by many, this story was introduced to the village by the local UC Reverend who is from Lavongai)
There was a man who had a wife, they lived together and had children. Then, the man started to like another woman. But he already had a wife and children. One day, the man and his wife went up into the bush to do some garden work, to collect food. When they were done collecting food, the man took his knife. He took it in the way that he did for cutting bananas, but instead he cut his wife's neck. He cut and cut, cut her into small pieces. The bags that had been filled with

food, he removed the food, and put her inside the bags and hung them up on a tree. He then went back to the village.

When he returned to the village his two small children asked him what had happened to their mother. He lied to them and told them that she was still on top in the bush. And he went to get the other woman that he liked and brought her to his house. She now lived in the house.

One day, a light came and stopped close to the man's son, and the son followed this light. He walked and walked as the light showed him the way: they went up on top into the bush and led him to his mother. He took down the bags that held her body and started to join the pieces: taking her head, her body, her legs, her hands and joining them. All with the help of the light. This light it was an angel. The two now went back down to the village, they moved at night. They went into the village, where the man and his new wife were sleeping inside the house. The son came in and woke them and told his father: your wife is here. The newly married couple did not believe him. And the children's mother came into the house and yelled at the couple. Now, the light appeared again, this light it was an old man and it was an angel, it came up like a big light and then ran away. The two people, the man and his new wife, they turned into stone and these stones still stand in Lavongai.