

UNDER THE SHADE TREE

Mortuary Rituals and Aesthetic Expression on the
Anir Islands, New Ireland, Papua New Guinea

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*In loving memory of my mother, Erika Denner,
and my friend Christine Melsa*

ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the elaborate cycle of mortuary rituals practised by the people of the Anir islands in southern New Ireland, Papua New Guinea, as well as the forms of art that are produced within the processes of their actualisation. Focusing on the relationship between ritual and art, the thesis engages in a critical dialogue with recent theories about ritual and art which form current approaches developed in anthropology, performance studies and aesthetics in art history. Within this framework, it examines the socio-political, the conceptual and aesthetic significance and power of Anir rituals.

The contents of the ritual cycle and the various elements it comprises, are explored on the basis of a practice-oriented approach that shows that the durability and resilience of Anir ritual rest on the flexibility of its structure, which brings to light the creativity of a people within the practice of ritual. The efficacy and persuasiveness of Anir commemorative rituals hinge substantially on the ceremonial exchanges they comprise, and on the presentation of special men's house songs, mask performances and dances. Functioning as media of multi-layered communication and aesthetic expression, these components of ritual set a complex process in motion which is determined by an intricate interplay of intellectual, affective and sensual aspects. Thus these elements not only imbue Anir rituals with power and meaning, but also enable and facilitate social reproduction.

Anthropological approaches that foreground practice and agency are combined with a performance-oriented focus and an examination of aesthetic experience that is grounded in art history and aesthetics. Seemingly opposing perspectives – subject-focused and object-focused – are linked in an analysis of form and content in order to provide greater insight into the complexities of ritual and artistic practice.

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PREFACE

I still vividly remember the clear day in March 2000 when I flew to Anir for the first time. The islands appeared like emeralds in the ultramarine and turquoise waters of the Pacific Ocean, and their undeniable beauty had me instantly enchanted. After a month of travelling around southern New Ireland searching for a suitable field site, I knew I wanted to stay, even before touching down. I never regretted my decision, not least because of the warmth and cordiality with which the people of Anir welcomed and accepted me in their midst and the genuine interest they took in my project. I spent a total of twenty-two months there, spread over three periods of fieldwork in 2000, 2001–02 and 2004.

A short notice on terminology is necessary: Anir is the name under which the islands are known to the majority of people in the province of New Ireland and in Papua New Guinea in general. On some maps one finds the term Feni, which is actually the island group's proper name and the one used by its inhabitants in the vernacular. It is on the advice of the people themselves that I use the name Anir; their reasoning was that (within Papua New Guinea) only they themselves and their immediate neighbours would know whom I was referring to if I were to use the term Feni.

The roots of my Ph.D. project go back to my time as an undergraduate and graduate student at the Institute of Social Anthropology in Basel, Switzerland, and the ten years spent working as a research assistant in the Oceania Department at the Museum der Kulturen Basel. Both institutions have a long, historically grown focus on research in the Pacific, particularly Melanesia/Papua New Guinea, and it is here that my interest in ritual studies and art was roused and the plans for a Ph.D. began to develop. My first trip to Papua New Guinea was in 1996 and it was during this journey that I decided that, if I was going to continue with a Ph.D. degree, I would like to do fieldwork in southern New Ireland.

Located in the south of New Ireland Province, the Anir islands are very remote, and my fieldwork corresponded to the almost classical image of anthropological research in a far-away, small-scale society. After I arrived on Anir, and after visiting and introducing myself to all the communities on the two islands, the members of the men's house community of Matof/Natong in the south of Ambitlei under the leadership of Peter Fafen (who became my 'father') and Leo Fesris built a house for me; this became my 'homebase'. For one thing because I had met them on my initial tour of Anir, for another because they invited me to their ceremonies, I soon established a close network of connections to families in villages on both islands. Looking back, I estimate that I spent about 40 percent of my time in villages other than Natong, particularly on Babase

Island. This was facilitated by the fact that Christine Melsa, Fafen's eldest daughter, my 'sister' and my best friend, was a teacher who was transferred in 2001 from the Community School at Natong to the school on Babase. I also regularly spent longer periods of time in Bisimporot/Warambana and Feni/Warantaban.

Rituals are pretty much 'men's business', although women carry a large part of the work burden that is associated with mortuary feasting. Knowledge about the deeper meanings and implications of ritual are said to be restricted to a limited number of leaders and senior men, but many aspects are not *per se* forbidden or taboo to women. On the whole, many men readily – with much patience, some even with great enthusiasm – discussed the intricacies of the Anir ritual system with me. All of them were obviously moved by a feeling of pride for their traditions and culture and wanted me not only to understand them, but also to communicate their complexity and value to the outside world. The one realm of ritual to which I only had limited access was that of the male secret societies. As a woman I was not able to visit the secret places of assemblage or participate in initiations. However, members of several of these associations decided to impart some of the esoteric knowledge, and when the members of the *tubuan* society of the villages of Natong and Warambana carried out an initiation, one of them documented this with my camera, after which the leader of the society explained the photos to me.

I carried out all my conversations in Neo-Melanesian Tok Pisin, the *lingua franca* spoken in the northeastern part of New Guinea. Although I gained sufficient knowledge of the local Anir language to be able to understand what a discourse was about, I unfortunately never became proficient enough to actually conduct a whole dialogue in Tok Ples Anir. Words and phrases in the local idiom throughout this thesis are in italics, while Tok Pisin expressions are underlined.

The time after my longest period of fieldwork (in 2001–02) was somewhat prolonged, but also greatly enriched and shaped by the experiences I gathered as a lecturer at the Institutes of Social Anthropology of the universities in Basel and Heidelberg (until 2005) and as co-curator of the exhibitions *Welt der Schatten – Kunst der Südsee* on the arts of New Ireland at the Ethnologisches Museum Berlin (2007) and *Bildwelten – Afrika, Ozeanien und die Moderne / Visual Encounters – Africa, Oceania and Modern Art* at the Fondation Beyeler, Riehen/Basel (2008–09).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Writing up a Ph.D. is, in the end, a rather solitary experience, at the same time it is a project in which one receives support in many different ways from many different people without whom the work would probably not have progressed to the end.

I would like to start by expressing my gratitude to those who introduced me to anthropology and roused my interest in Oceania in general, and Melanesia in specific. These include, first and foremost, Prof. emeritus Meinhard Schuster who opened the door for me to do research and still continues to show great interest in my work, and Dr. Christian Kaufmann – former curator for Oceania at the Museum der Kulturen Basel – who decisively shaped my view on Pacific art and still is a source of intellectual stimulation. From being my boss at the museum he has become a cherished colleague and an ever-reliable wellspring of support.

After working for several years at the Institute of Social Anthropology, University of Basel, where I am grateful to Prof. Dr. Brigit Obrist, I was able to spend ten months at the Centre for Cross-Cultural Research of the Australian National University in Canberra. In terms of writing up my thesis this was one of the most productive periods. I am deeply grateful to Prof. Dr. Howard Morphy for inviting me to come to Canberra and wish to thank him and the entire academic and administrative staff for the time I spent there in a truly inspiring atmosphere. Prof. em. Michael Young provided me with wonderful accommodation in Australia by letting me stay in his house, and Regina Knapp was a great flat mate during this time.

Unfortunately I saw no chance of finishing my Ph.D. at the University of Basel. Thanks to Prof. Dr. Steven Hooper I found a new academic home at the Sainsbury Research Unit at the University of East Anglia. Since my arrival in Norwich in 2007 I have come to highly appreciate this institution – it had been on my ‘hit list’ already for a long time – for its lively cross-disciplinary and intellectually stimulating ambience and collegiality, its facilities and the wonderfully helpful staff. I would like to thank Dr. Joshua Bell who was an enthusiastic and positively critical supervisor until he moved on to the Smithsonian in Washington. A great deal of gratitude I owe to Steven Hooper. He not only supported my ‘venture’ back into the museum field to curate the *Visual Encounters* exhibition at the Fondation Beyeler, he also did much to get me back on track and provided the best supervision one could wish for when I had to intercalate again, this time for compassionate reasons.

In the ‘museum world’ I am grateful to Dr. Michael Gunn, National Gallery of Australia, Dr. Philippe Peltier, Musée du quai Branly, and Dr. Markus Schindlbeck,

Ethnologisches Museum Berlin for asking me to participate in their large, multi-venue exhibition project on the arts of New Ireland and for all the inspiring discussions about New Ireland arts and culture we had in this context.

In Papua New Guinea I am indebted for the support I received with regard to acquiring the research visas and for providing me with assistance and affiliation. I particularly would like to thank the following persons and institutions in Port Moresby: Jim Robins and the National Research Institute; Linus Digim 'Rina, Head of Anthropology, and the University of Papua New Guinea; Don Niles and Julie To'Liman-Turalir of the Institute of Papua New Guinea Studies; at the Papua New Guinea National Museum and Art Gallery I am grateful to Soroi M. Eoe (then director), Sebastian Haraha and John Dop. My thanks also go to the New Ireland Provincial Administration, then under Moses Makis, for supporting my research in their province. In Kavieng I am grateful to Noah Lurang and the staff of the New Ireland Tourism Bureau as well as all the people at the Peter Torot Centre who filled my stays there with pleasure. In Namatanai Fr. Leon Weisenberger and the sisters of the Catholic Mission Namatanai welcomed me and provided me with accommodation and an almost always working telephone and fax.

No dissertation could be completed without a 'nourishing', patient and reassuring network of family and friends; the ones I owe most to are, of course, my parents, Erika and Jürgen, who never lost faith in my work, and my partner Nigel. He has been a pillar of strength and a haven of encouragement, support and advice; he not only put up with all my moods, but also visited me in the field twice, regularly commented on the work in progress and did the proof-reading – I thank him with deeply felt love. My sister Heike, her husband Gregory and their sons Cameron and Karl were always around when I needed them for a bit of change and distraction. Over the years, in many different ways and through all ups and downs, Joanne Lai, Martina Siegwolf, Dieter Neuschäfer, Nicole Peduzzi, Aoife O'Brien, Sarah Mould and Harry Crawford have proven to be invaluable friends and companions. Joanne produced the beautiful maps and provided invaluable last-minute support in a number of hectic night shifts. Without my family and all these friends the writing-up would have been infinitely more difficult.

My biggest thanks go to Anir and all the people there who, with their unfailing hospitality and willingness to share their time and knowledge with me, made this project possible. The fact that so many supported me makes the task of naming only some of them very difficult; the following list is by no means exhaustive.

In the village of Natong on Ambitlei Island I am deeply grateful to my host Peter Fafen, his daughters, the late Christine Melsa and Stefanie Matuktele as well as their husbands Steven Sinang and Rafael Tonagol and all their children. I also am thankful

to Leo Fesris, Patrik Kameta and Patrik Liting for their information and advice. In the village of Warambana special thanks go to Joachim Tokas, his wife Barbara Dinarwakan and their large hospitable family, but also to Alois Katkat, Rose Sianot and her husband Henry Robin. In Pikan the family of John Bingsal provided a lot of help, and in Farangot and Warantaban I am grateful to Rita Funmatmil, her husband Paul Tisok, to John Komgoi, Louis Tomar and to Joseph Simail and his family.

On Babase Island I am much obliged to a cluster of families in Balngit, namely those of James Tengnaof, Paul Nepuar and Damian Neanawi, Joe Lugutele and Bernard Komgoi, Jacob Ngurngurus and Monica Tinlima, for their hospitality and advice. In Kamgot (and Kavieng) I received valuable support from Conny Nekor, Gerard Pentecos and their families, and from Jacob Kiapbubuk. In Bulam I wish to thank Francis Neantele and his family, Moses Kiapkuli and John Gurgurlik for their help. And whenever I visited Banakin the families of Augustin Lugunau and Peter Pimpik were always wonderful hosts.

Without financial support this project could never have been carried out and I thank the following institutions for their funding: the *Swiss National Foundation of Science* in Berne for the grant that allowed me to carry out fieldwork; the *Werenfels-Fonds*, Basel, for funding the acquisition of collections of Anir art and material culture for the Museum der Kulturen Basel and the Papua New Guinea National Museum and Art Gallery; the *Freiwillige Akademische Gemeinschaft*, Basel, and the *Tomcik Stiftung*, Basel, for enabling my stay as a Visiting Fellow at the Centre for Cross-Cultural Research at the Australian National University; and, finally, the Sainsbury Research Unit for supplying me with a grant towards the university fees when I moved to the University of East Anglia.

INTRODUCTION

This thesis is about the people of the Anir islands, the way they carry out mortuary rituals in a commemorative cycle, and the forms of art they produce in its context. The basic question I try to answer is how these rituals acquire meaning for contemporary Anirians. Of course, at the background stand many other, related questions that need to be addressed on the way. What concrete contents and actions do mortuary rituals involve and what themes do they address? What are the effects, significance and power Anirians attribute to these events? What values do they associate with them? How do they experience ritual acts such as pig exchanges, men's house performances, dances and the appearances of masks? And how do they creatively employ ritual and art to achieve their aims? The Anir islands have so far been a blank spot on the anthropological map of New Guinea, and because this study is the first to comprehensively discuss Anir social life and cultural practices, a wide range of ethnographic data had to be covered. The questions raised above not only determined the topics I address, they also affected the methodological roads I took and the theoretical concepts and approaches I applied.

Ritual can be dealt with from various angles. Although a principal aim lies in the presentation of information on what Anir mortuary rituals involve and what they are about, I deem it important to impart a lively picture of the fascinating complexity and of the power and compelling force of Anir contemporary ritual life. Thus I put particular emphasis on the way concrete events developed, on the question which roles particular agents played and what motivated them to act as they did. One of the issues I follow up is the relationship between structure and process and the flexibility of the ritual system. Here I build on anthropological works that emphasize practice and the agency and creativity of actors, and on studies that approach ritual as performative action, in and through which meaning not only is communicated but also constituted, knowledge and values not only are transmitted and confirmed but also reflected upon, transformed or newly created.

Another complex I am interested in is the relationship between ritual and art. I pursue this question by exploring how Anirians employ, experience and evaluate men's house performances that involve the presentation of special songs, and the many masked and unmasked dances they own in order to render their rituals powerful and effective. The persuasiveness of Anir rituals hinges on an intricate interplay of intellectual, affective and sensual aspects. Together they are responsible for the high value Anirians attach to their rituals and for their efficacy as media of aesthetic expression, multi-layered communication and social reproduction. Such a view emerges when one approaches rituals, and the aesthetic forms of expression they comprise, as performative acts which in their multi-sensual, process-oriented nature synthesize representational as well as presentational elements. Here I was inspired by, and combine approaches, concepts and insights from, anthropology, performance studies and art history/aesthetics in order to understand the actions, views and experiences of the members of a contemporary New Guinea island community in an attempt to contribute to the development of innovative approaches towards a cross-cultural understanding of ritual, art and aesthetics.

In terms of methodology I relied heavily on the standard anthropological technique of participant observation; but with regard to gathering the ethnographic data in the field, three points deserve special mention. As the Anir mortuary ritual cycle extends over many years it was not possible to document the rituals of one complete cycle. However, thanks to the interest in my project and the generous support I received from Anir men and women in practically every village, I was able to observe and/or participate in almost all steps the ritual cycle consists of. Although I did not conduct multi-sited fieldwork in George E. Marcus' (1995) global sense of the term, I was on the move very often to attend to, and later to discuss, rituals I had been invited to. I not only spent extensive periods of time in Natong, my 'homebase', but also in several other villages on Ambitlei and Babase. The material presented here thus comes from many different places on Anir and does not reflect the knowledge and view of a few selected 'primary informants'.

All ritual leaders allowed me to take photos of the events they were putting on and to make video and tape recordings. This audio-visual material formed the basis of intensive meetings during which the respective leaders as well as various participants invested long hours instructing me on the numerous individual acts and details which the ritual cycle involves, and on the reasoning and motivations behind them. The audio-visual recordings proved to be an exceptionally productive resource, as the discussions they triggered not only involved some of the most revealing conversations, but also some of the most satisfactory and rewarding moments in fieldwork.

Equally important was the decision to join a women's dance group in order to experience and participate in the preparations and rehearsals of a so called singsing tumbuna, and the circumstance that during my second and third stay I was commissioned to assemble collections of artefacts that provide insight into the material culture and artistic traditions of the Anir islands. The activities, negotiations and conversations surrounding this collecting job proved very useful with regard to an understanding of the processes of production and, more importantly, ideas and values associated with them.

This thesis is divided into four parts. Part I is introductory insofar as it provides the context and basis for Parts II to IV. Chapter One contains information on the historical and ethnographic background of the Anir islands, and a review of the history of research and the relevant literature on New Ireland and East New Britain. In Chapter Two the theoretical framework and the basic assumptions from which I proceed are presented. Here I introduce key concepts, review recent approaches to ritual, practice and performance, and discuss how ideas and methods that have developed within anthropology, performance studies and art history/aesthetics not only overlap, but can be productively combined to account for the complex ways in which performative ritual acts gain significance and become powerful and efficacious.

The Anir mortuary cycle and the various steps and rituals it comprises are the topic of Part II. Chapter Three is primarily ethnographic; it contains an overview of the contents and structure of the cycle from the beginning to its climactic end, and descriptions of various rituals as they took place between 2000 and 2004. In Chapter Four I concentrate on the analysis and interpretation of this material which is complemented by comparative historical data collected on the neighbouring Tanga islands in the early 1930s and 1980s, and linked with a treatment of theoretical issues, namely the relationship between structure and process, and the agency and creativity of the ritual participants.

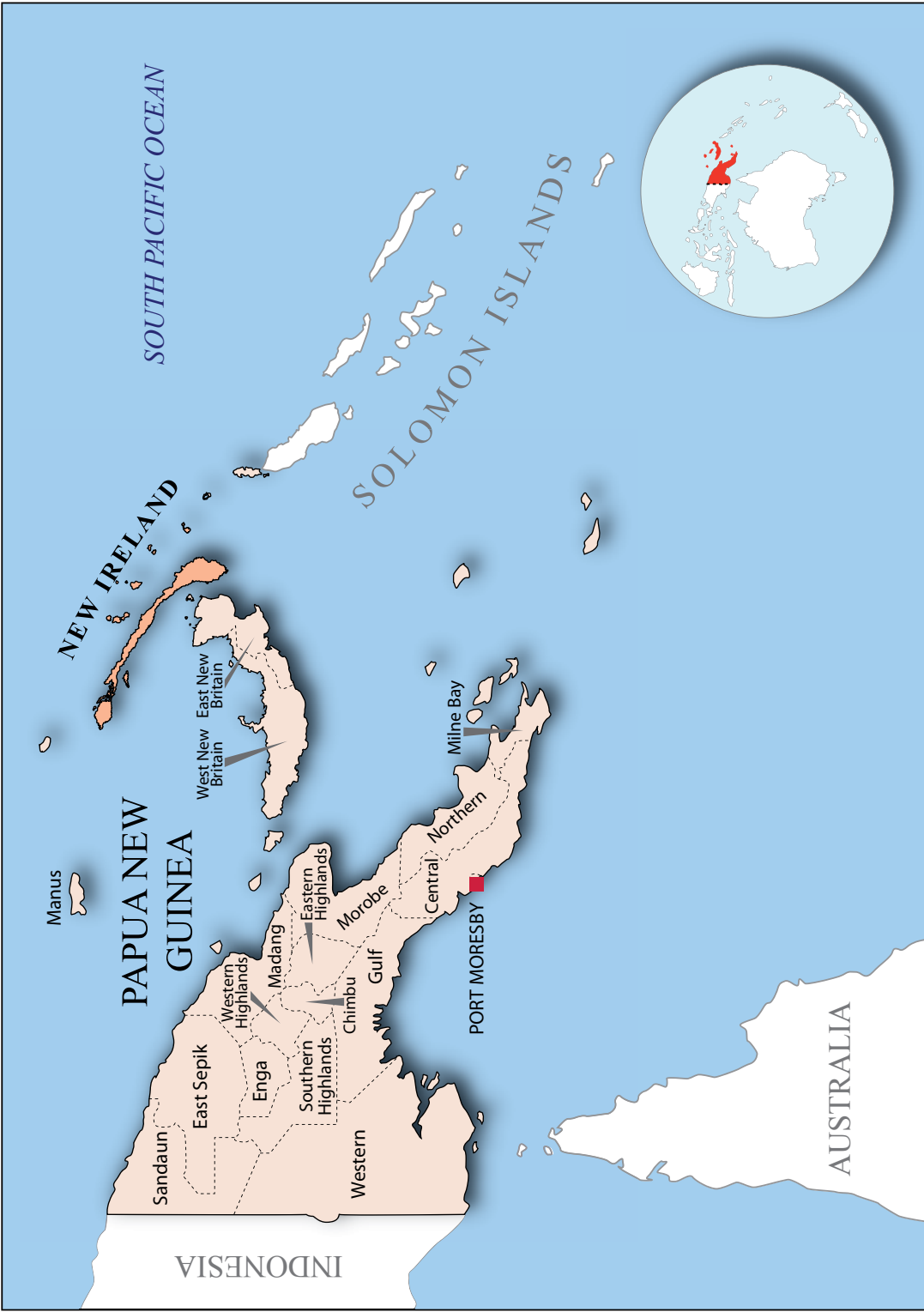
Part III is devoted to special performances called *am furis* which are constitutive elements of all major rituals of the mortuary cycle. *Am furis* were portrayed by several Anir men as the 'key' to understanding their ritual system and culture. These men's house performances hold a core position because they play a vital role with regard to safeguarding rights to land and leadership and thus to maintaining a lineage's position in the wider community. *Am furis* are multi-media, multi-sensual performances that involve numerous actors and include the presentation of multi-layered lineage-songs, speech acts and meaningful actions. In Chapter Five I explain what *am furis* consist of and how meaning is generated in the songs and the actions they comprise. In Chapter Six I focus on how *am furis* as performative acts become effective, and on the relationship between memory and creativity.

Dances are the topic of Part IV and integral and important components of the rituals celebrated at the end of the Anir mortuary cycle. They turn these rituals into joyous, climactic feasts, completing and complementing the cycle by imbuing it with additional aesthetic and spiritual power, and by physically illustrating, reflecting and celebrating some of its central themes: the overcoming of grief, the continuity of the men's house community that carried out the cycle, and its connectivity to and relationships with other kin groups, its ancestors and other spiritual beings. While Chapter Seven investigates the significance of 'entertaining' dances and dancing for the participants, on the one hand (paying particular attention to their experiences), and for the ritual system, on the other, Chapter Eight follows up the same question with respect to 'powerful' performances that are organized and staged by secret societies.

The conclusion at the end of the thesis revisits and summarizes the main points made in the course of the preceding chapters. It connects arguments about the efficacy of ritual and the relationship between structure and practice, symbolic action and aesthetic experience, agency and creativity with an assessment of artistic and ritual performative action as a process that involves the transformation of values.

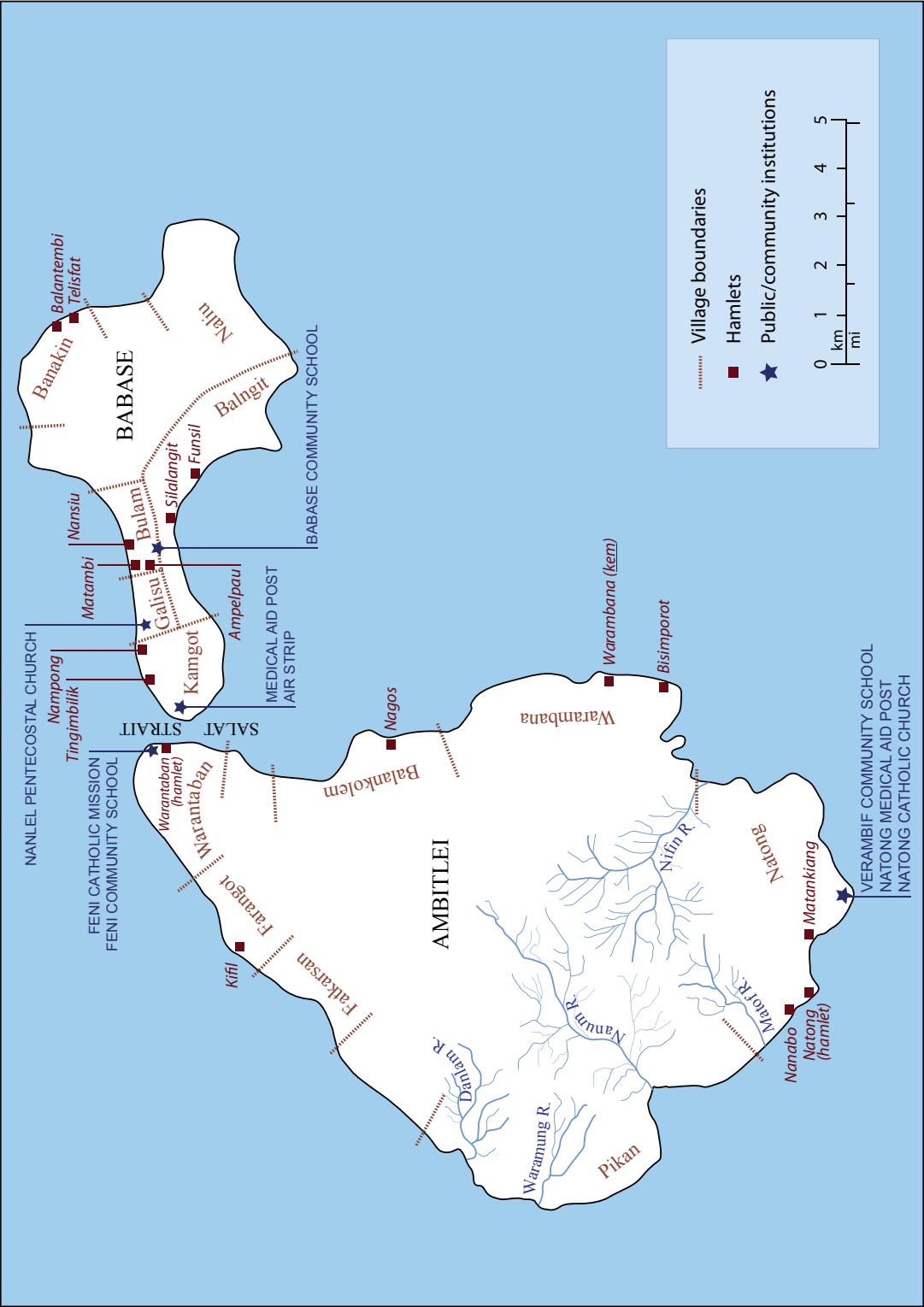
PART I

ETHNOGRAPHIC BACKGROUND AND THEORETICAL PARAMETERS



Map 1 Papua New Guinea, with New Ireland

produced by Joanne Lai



Map 2 The Anir islands

produced by Joanne Lai



Fig. 1 Aerial view of the Anir islands, approaching them from a northerly direction; Babase is on the left, Ambitlei on the right. A regular, weekly flight service from Rabaul via Namatanai only existed in 2000. 14 August 2000

CHAPTER 1

ANIR IN TIME AND SPACE

Anir, located 4.08° S and 153.7° E, is part of an island chain in the Bismarck Archipelago that runs parallel to the east coast of New Ireland (maps 1 and 2). The Tanga, Lihir and Tabar islands lie to the northwest, southeast are the Green Islands (Nissan). Anir is made up of Ambitlei (87 km²) and Babase (23 km²), separated from each other by the 100-metre-wide Salat Strait. Like the other islands in the chain they are part of an active volcanic system, and although the last major eruption took place about 2,300 years ago, Ambitlei not only contains the eroded remnants of a caldera but also several geysers, hot springs, boiling mud pools and offshore hydrothermal vents. Both islands are hilly, densely forested and surrounded by coral reefs (figs. 1, 2). Ambitlei is characterized by a more rugged terrain, with some of its hills reaching almost 500 metres in height;¹ Babase is flatter and consists of raised limestone at its eastern end.

In the present chapter I will provide the historical and ethnographic information that forms the necessary background to the descriptions and analyses that follow later. I start with an outline of the history of the islands, then move on to an overview of the history of research and conclude with the parameters that distinguish the social, ritual, economic and political life of Anir people.

1 Neas, the highest mountain, is 479 m high.

History of the islands

Due to the geographical remoteness of the Anir islands, we know comparatively little about the history of its people. However, the comparatively sparse information we have from published historical and archaeological sources shows that Anirians never were isolated in cultural terms. Instead, they look back on a long history of engagement and negotiation with the outside world in which they participated not as ‘passive’ receivers of foreign goods and ideas, but as active agents on an equal standing.

First settlement of New Britain and New Ireland occurred in the Pleistocene, at least 35,000 years ago (Kirch 2000: 68). The earliest evidence for the colonization of the Bismarck Archipelago comes in fact from two sites located in central and southern New Ireland, indicating that humans may have reached this area as early as 39,500 B. P. (Leavesley 2006). Evidence from Buka in the northern Solomons suggests first occupation around 28,000 years ago (Wickler and Spriggs 1988). So far no evidence of settlement in the Pleistocene or Holocene has been found on the islands lying east of New Ireland, but data from Nissan, the island group southeast of Anir provides evidence that humans have dwelt there for at least 5,000 years (Kirch 2000: 131). As far as Anir itself is concerned, archaeological investigations showed that these islands were inhabited at least 3,000 to 3,300 years ago by people belonging to the Lapita cultural complex (White and Specht 1971, Summerhayes 2000).

The bearers of the Lapita culture² spread from the Bismarck Archipelago (the ‘homeland’, cf. Allan and Gosden 1991) as far as Tonga and Samoa over a time period that approximately lasted from 3,500 to 2,000 B. P. Lapita is well known for its distinctive pottery that is typically decorated with a dentate stamp. Material analyses suggest that the vessels were traded and carried on journeys across the sea. Next to pottery, Lapita is associated with a distinctive stone adze kit, a particular range of shell ornaments and a major extension of New Britain and Admiralties obsidian. The settlement pattern consisted of coastal villages, often with stilt houses, which represent a new development. So does the horticultural economy that was based on crops such as taro and yam, coconuts, bananas and breadfruit. The Lapita people also practised animal husbandry,

2 Lapita ‘culture’ should be distinguished from Lapita ‘people’: as Spriggs (1995) points out, “there may have been a moment in the Bismarcks when there was a single people using Lapita pottery, genetically, linguistically and culturally distinct from their neighbours. But this unity and distinctiveness would have been shortlived. (...) In Island Melanesia rapid transformations in material and other aspects of culture occurred, previous An [Austronesian] languages in parts of the Bismarcks and Northern Solomons were replaced by languages of Western Oceanic An-type, and there was perhaps another phase of migration through Island Melanesia of Bismarcks area populations which further swamped the ‘pre-Polynesian’ genotypes.”



Fig. 2 View from Matof in the village of Natong towards Pikan village and Kofon, the highest mountain in the south of Ambitlei. 25 April 2000

keeping dogs, pigs and chickens.³ The archaeological evidence from the sites on Anir and Nissan – islands connecting the Bismarck Archipelago with the Solomon Chain – is particularly noteworthy because Lapita is assumed to be the common ancestor of many cultures in Melanesia, Micronesia and Polynesia, and Anir and Nissan obviously were used as stepping stones for the settlement of Island Melanesia (Kaplan 1976, Terrell 1986, Spriggs 1991, Summerhayes 2000). Whether the current inhabitants of Anir (they are Austronesian speakers) are descendants of the Lapita people remains unclear as we lack information on the period between around 3,000 B.P. and A.D. 1600.

Explorers, whalers, early traders and labour recruiters

The first Europeans to verifiably have set eyes on Anir were the Dutch voyagers Jacob le Maire and Willem Cornelisz Schouten who, arriving from the Hoorn Islands (Futuna), passed Nissan before they sailed past an island on 25 June 1616 which they named St Jans Eylandt (St John's Island) because it was St John the Baptist's day – it was Ambitlei, the larger of the two Anir islands. However, they did not stop but continued their journey north-westward, sailing between the east coast of New Ireland (which they thought

3 For the features of Lapita culture see for example Spriggs 1995, 1997 and Kirch 1997, 2000.

was part of New Guinea) and the islands of Tanga, Lihir and Tabar. Other voyagers followed: Abel Janszoon Tasman in 1643, William Dampier in 1700, Philip Carteret in 1767 and Louis Antoine de Bougainville who, passing the Anir islands in 1768, gave them the name 'Bournand' in honour of one of his principal officers. None of these explorers seems to have anchored at Anir.

More regular contact with Western visitors began in the first half of the 19th century when the routes of trade ships sailing from Australia to Asia passed through Melanesian waters. The most easterly of them led to Canton and ran parallel to the east coast of New Ireland; another, inner route passed through St George's Channel. Around this time, northern Melanesia, including the seas around New Ireland, also became the hunting grounds for British and American whalers. Trading vessels and whaling ships used to stop in the region to take on fresh water and to exchange European goods with the coastal villagers for fresh foods such as taro, yam, bananas and coconuts or for local trade products such as copra, bêche-de-mer, mother-of-pearl and tortoise shell; by the 1840s, Grower's Harbour near Cape St George had become a popular refreshment point.⁴

Thomas Beale, physician on a London whaling ship called *Kent*, not only left us with a testimony that such ships visited Anir, he was also the first European to provide a detailed description of the appearance of, and the ornaments and artefacts worn and used by, Anir islanders. In 1832 the crew of the *Kent* spent two days on Anir during which they traded hoop iron for baskets of yam tubers (Beale 1839: 319-329).

By the early 1880s (perhaps even earlier), New Irelanders, including the inhabitants of Anir, came into contact with labour recruiters who sailed through the region in search of local men to work on plantations in Samoa, Fiji, and Queensland. Because of the ruthless methods of the so-called 'blackbirders' – kidnapping and forced labour recruitment – the indenture system soon became equated with slavery. With the passing of the Pacific Island Labourers Act in 1884 blackbirding was outlawed, although not completely eradicated. Douglas Rannie, a Scot employed by the Queensland government to accompany recruiting vessels in order to ensure that the provisions of the newly established act were met, reported numerous breaches. His first journey in 1884 took him to Anir. Here recruitment ran counter to all expectations. Rannie's account not only gives an impression of the types of Western goods traded to Pacific islanders during this time, it also shows that Anir islanders had learnt from previous experiences with labour recruiters, and that they were able to retain at least some control over these contacts.

4 Reynolds 1972: 849, Waiko 1993: 22, Barneclutt 2006.

Being impressed with the kindly manner and intelligence of the natives, we went ashore next morning expecting to get a number of recruits for Queensland. They crowded round our boats at the first landing-place, and eagerly scanned the goods offered as a present to any one who would recruit. These consisted of about a fathom of fancy print stuff, on which was placed a looking-glass, a tomahawk, a large knife with eighteen-inch blade, a small knife, three or four pounds of tobacco, half a dozen clay pipes, and a few glass beads. These articles having been duly commented on and examined by all, a fine, strapping young fellow stepped into the boat, took the bundle and handed it to his friends ashore. Then as soon as the mate could make up the bundle of trade, an islander would accept it, signify his intention of going to Queensland, and step into the boat. We soon got twenty men in the boats, and started for the ship to get a second supply of trade. The recruits were all as happy as sand-boys, laughing heartily and joking among themselves. But we had hardly gone half a mile or so from the beach, when they all stood up, and with cries of "Cricky!" "Cricky!" one and all dived overboard and made for the shore, swimming and diving like so many water-fowl. Of course, the boats' crews' first thoughts were their rifles, and the cry at once rose, "Shoot 'em! Shoot 'em!" But it was only momentary, and the boatmen relapsed into silent disgust; they were completely "flabbergasted" when I would not even allow them to attempt to capture the fugitives.

I believe the deserters fully expected to be fired upon. They dived deeply and swam a long way under water before coming up for breath, and then they were almost immediately down again. When they reached shore they did not waste any time on the water's edge, but made a zig-zag line, as if to dodge bullets, to the nearest scrub. I am sure the whole incident was a preconcerted plan to obtain the trade given as presents, and that other vessels had similarly been victimised. (Rannie 1912: 47-48)⁵

Towards the end of the 19th century large trading companies that had already been active in other areas of the Pacific region started operating in the Bismarck Archipelago. J. C. Godeffroy & Son set up a trading station on Mioko in the Duke of York Islands in 1873, and Hensheim & Co. followed two years later.⁶ In 1880 they positioned the first trader in New Ireland on Nusa Island in the north. At the end of 1878 Thomas Farrell and Emma Forsayth ("Queen Emma") arrived at Port Hunter as agents for Godeffroy, and by 1881 they were operating independently as Farrell & Co. (Barnecutt 2006). The

5 According to Price and Baker (1976), from 1883-84 only 37 Anir islanders entered Queensland while 368 came from Tanga and 649 from Lihir.

6 After the bankruptcy of Goddefroy & Son in 1879, most of its Pacific branches were regrouped under its successor, the 'Deutsche Handels- und Plantagenesellschaft' (DHPG); in 1887 Eduard Hensheim arranged a merger of his interests with the DHPG from which the 'Jaluit Gesellschaft' emerged (Gründer 2001).

New Guinea Company (Neuguinea-Kompagnie) was founded in 1884 with the aim of acquiring land and exploiting resources in New Guinea, the Bismarck Archipelago and the Solomon Islands.

German mercantile houses such as Godeffroy & Son or Henssler & Co. came to the Pacific as traders and often as operators of shipping lines, but quickly broadened their activities by buying land, establishing plantations and engaging in the labour trade. They also did much to promote the colonial idea and were active proponents of German imperial politics (Gründer 2001).

The colonial period

During the 1870s and early 1880s Australian politicians urged the British government to annex New Guinea in order to safeguard Australia's security. In 1883 the Premier of Queensland ordered the police magistrate on Thursday Island to hoist the British flag in Port Moresby and to annex New Guinea in the name of the British government. Although the latter repudiated this action, the consequence was that colonialists in Berlin managed to convince Bismarck that German commercial interests in the South Seas had to be protected, to the effect that Bismarck in August 1884 granted the New Guinea Company permission to raise the German flag in New Britain, New Ireland and north-eastern New Guinea. London answered by declaring south-eastern New Guinea a British protectorate in November 1884 (after Australia had promised its financial support). In April 1885 Bismarck officially announced that the acquisitions of the New Guinea Company stood under the protection of the Germany government, and in 1886 Germany and Britain officially acknowledged each other's claims. North-eastern New Guinea ('Kaiser-Wilhelms-Land'), the islands of the Bismarck Archipelago and parts of the Solomons now constituted German New Guinea. From 1884 to 1899 the territory was administered by the New Guinea Company and from 1899 to 1914 by the imperial authorities after which Germany, as a consequence of WWI, lost its colonies (Firth 1982: 7-20, Keck 1987: 112-117).

In 1900, Governor Albert Hahl commissioned Franz Boluminski to establish a government station in Kavieng, and in 1904 the latter sent Wilhelm Wostrack to Namatanai to build up a station there and extend government control in the south. Wostrack's tasks included patrolling, taking a census of the population, imposing road-building duties, collecting head-tax and suppressing warfare among local groups. The islands of Lihir, Tanga and Anir were administered from Namatanai. According to the Annual Report of 1911-12 they were "entirely peaceful" and "for a long time [had] been more or less in contact with the Namatanai Station" (Sack and Clark 1979: 337-338).

It is not clear to what degree incorporation into the German colonial empire affected the people of Anir. In 1897, Hahl, then working as an imperial judge, had started to appoint so-called luluai, government appointed chiefs who, together with an assistant and interpreter, the tutul, performed judicial and administrative functions for the government. According to the Annual Reports, New Ireland in 1903-04 had 93 luluai; in 1909 even 250 are said to have been under the authority of the government station at Namatanai (Rowley 1958: 211-219; see also Firth 1982: 64 and Hiery 2001: 301-303). This surprisingly high number reflects the need to appoint luluai to rather small units in an area that had a reputation for inter-village raids, and where people were unwilling to recognize the authority of a luluai from a traditionally hostile group. The probability that several luluai had also been appointed on Anir is therefore quite high.

During this period labour recruiting not only continued, it was intensified due to the expansion of the plantation system in German New Guinea. Until the turn of the century it was concentrated on the Bismarck Archipelago. Between 1887 and 1903, a total of 1,716 contract labourers from the islands east of New Ireland were registered at Kokopo, 402 of whom died during employment (Firth 1982: 177-178). How many Anirians were among them we do not know, but Otto Schlaginhaufen (1959: 109-110), a member of the Deutsche Marine-Expedition who spent a month on Anir in 1908, mentions that he met several islanders who had worked on plantations or in the native police force established by Hahl.⁷ According to the same source, Anir islanders were then already well accustomed with the monetary system and the value of money which they needed to pay the newly introduced head tax and to purchase trade goods that were sold by Chinese itinerant traders on the islands.⁸ The first foreign settler on Anir appears to have been a Chinese, Ah Sui, who, in 1908, was living on Babase where he had set up the Bulam (also Nansau) Coconut Plantation (Schlaginhaufen 1959: 105).

In 1914, New Ireland – like the rest of German New Guinea – came under Australian military occupation, and in 1919, after the treaty of Versailles, it was handed over to Australia as a mandated territory under the surveillance of the League of Nations. In 1921 a civil administration was introduced which remained in place until 1942 when the Japanese invaded and occupied Rabaul. The Japanese occupation and the WWII fights between the Japanese and allied forces, which affected some areas of New Ireland quite heavily, did not severely impinge upon the people of Anir. The Australian administration took over from the Germans and retained the luluai system and the indentured labour system without major changes. After WWII two more

7 Most probably men, although women also were recruited, cf. Panoff 1990: 124.

8 According to the *Report on New Guinea* 1907-08, 50 Chinese traders were operating in the Bismarck Archipelago (Rowley 1958: 75).



Fig. 3 Catholic church service on Good Friday in the village of Warantaban; on the right, the catechists and Father Paul Mohe. After the service the large wooden cross was carried by the congregation in a procession to Feni Mission Church (cf. fig. 6) during which the 14 Stations of the Cross were prayed. Warantaban *kem*, 21 April 2000

plantations were established on Ambitlei, one at Malekolon in the Warantaban area, the other at Waramung in the Pikan area. Although the available literature gives no specific information on Anir, we may assume that the islanders continued to leave their home to work elsewhere in the territory, and that the community as a whole became increasingly drawn into the cash economy system. Most probably the three plantation owners and itinerant traders bought coconuts, thus animating islanders to plant extra coconut groves. The production of copra for commodity exchange certainly took off in the post-war period with the advent of cooperatives (in the 1970s) and a more regular transport to Rabaul and Namatanai, leading eventually to the foundation of smallholder production.⁹

The Christian missions

Another major harbinger of change came in the form of Catholic missionaries of the Sacred Heart (MSC). In 1905, a year after the establishment of the government post in Namatanai, the MSC founded a station there, which was under the supervision of Father Karl Neuhaus from 1911 to 1929. He pushed ahead with the expansion of the Catholic Church in central and southern New Ireland, setting up subsidiary stations and

⁹ See R. Foster (1995: 50-66) for a detailed description of these developments on Tanga.

outposts which he staffed with local teachers and catechists and which he visited from time to time.

The Lihir, Tanga and Anir islands were all missionized out of Namatanai (fig.3). In 1919 Neuhaus sent a first group of teachers and catechists to Lihir, and in 1924 to Tanga; most likely he also sent a group to Anir (cf. Laufer and Schmitz 1962). In 1929, when the bishop undertook a round trip through New Ireland during which he visited 89 stations, four catechists from Namatanai were based on Anir; three on stations located on Ambitlei (at Verambif, Waranguspik and Warantaban) and one on Babase (at Matamfadon), (Lakaff 1930: 233, 240). At the beginning of the 1930s, Lihir and Tanga became independent mission stations. Neuhaus became Lihir's parish priest and his younger assistant, Father Maurer, took care of Tanga. Anir was part of the Tanga parish and therefore in Maurer's area of responsibility. He was followed by Father Joseph Krutzenbichler who served Tanga and Anir before and during WWII until he was taken from the islands by Japanese soldiers and executed in Kavieng in 1944. Father Joseph Reischl spent the years from 1946–49 on Tanga and also took care of Anir (cf. Hesse 1994: 103 and Reischl 1973: 12). Only after WWII, more precisely in the second half of 1948 or at the beginning of 1949, Anir received its own priest in the person of Father Stephan Dargas and became an independent parish named St Steven.¹⁰

Unlike other regions in Papua New Guinea where missionaries of different denominations competed with each other in the colonial era, no other religious group tried to establish itself on Anir until the late 1980s. Around this time islanders who had been living and working in other parts of the country (mostly in Madang and Lae) where they had converted to the Pentecostal Church, returned home, bringing with them their new faith which they subsequently tried to establish on Anir. This was not an easy process: proselytization was often the cause of complaints, conflicts and even physical fights, and the first three churches built by Pentecostals were burnt or torn down by Catholics who were not willing to accept any other denomination on Anir. I estimate that presently 20-25% of the population belong to the Pentecostal Church. In 2001–02 it looked as if their number was growing, but although the so-called 4 Square Church had also won some new converts by 2004, a fair number of Pentecostals had returned to the Catholic Church. On the western side of Babase there is a small group that belongs to the Emanuel Church, and a few families in the village of Warantaban on Ambitlei are Seventh Day Adventists. The relationship between Christianity and customary beliefs will be addressed below.

10 I wish to kindly thank Norbert Wenger, archivist of the Hiltrup Mission Archives in Münster, Germany, for researching this in the archival documents.

The postcolonial period and mining operations

One indicator that the independence of Papua New Guinea in 1975 and the years since then have not brought the amount of development many Anirians had hoped for, is that they often refer to themselves as the people of the 'last island' (las ailan), similar to inhabitants of other remote regions of Papua New Guinea – among them those in the southernmost region of New Ireland – who call their areas las kona or 'last corner'. Anir is the southernmost (and thus 'last') island group of New Ireland Province, and Kavieng, the provincial capital, is at least a two-day journey away. But the use of the term las ailan does not so much refer to Anir's distance from urban centres as to the disadvantages this remoteness entails with respect to infrastructure, education, health care and economic growth. Due to logistical problems, cash crops at the present time are of minor significance and people rely heavily on subsistence gardening for their livelihood (this will be discussed in more detail below). There is a noticeable feeling that in comparison to most other regions in the province, Anirians receive fewer government services and, indeed, often suffer from neglect. Not surprisingly, this is sometimes paired with nostalgia for the colonial past.

Since independence, the islands of Anir and Tanga together form the Tanir electorate and Local Level Government (LLG). While Anir only has five wards (see table 1 for their names and the villages that constitute them), the densely populated Tanga islands make up nine wards. Each of the 14 wards is represented by an elected LLG member, and together they form the LLG council. This constellation is part and parcel of Anir's difficulties, and repeatedly my informants complained that in the intra-LLG competition for government funding or international aid they often lost against, or were overruled by their Tangan neighbours. As government-induced change has not yet occurred to a degree Anirians would wish for and because support formerly given by the Catholic Church (primarily in terms of transport and education) has declined, many islanders in recent years built their hopes on mining companies. In the context of the large gold mine operations on Lihir, a whole row of companies, starting with Esso in 1980, to Vangold most recently, have explored Ambitlei's bedrock in search of gold. But although drilling has not gone past the exploratory stage yet, it has been the cause of a lot of local unrest and discussions.

Because drilling stopped from 2000 to 2002, mining was not a big issue during my first two field trips. Various people told me that during the initial years of exploratory drilling enthusiasm had been quite high, but that this changed because of the damage drilling had done to the environment and because they had neither been properly paid for their work support nor for the damage caused. They had decided that when the

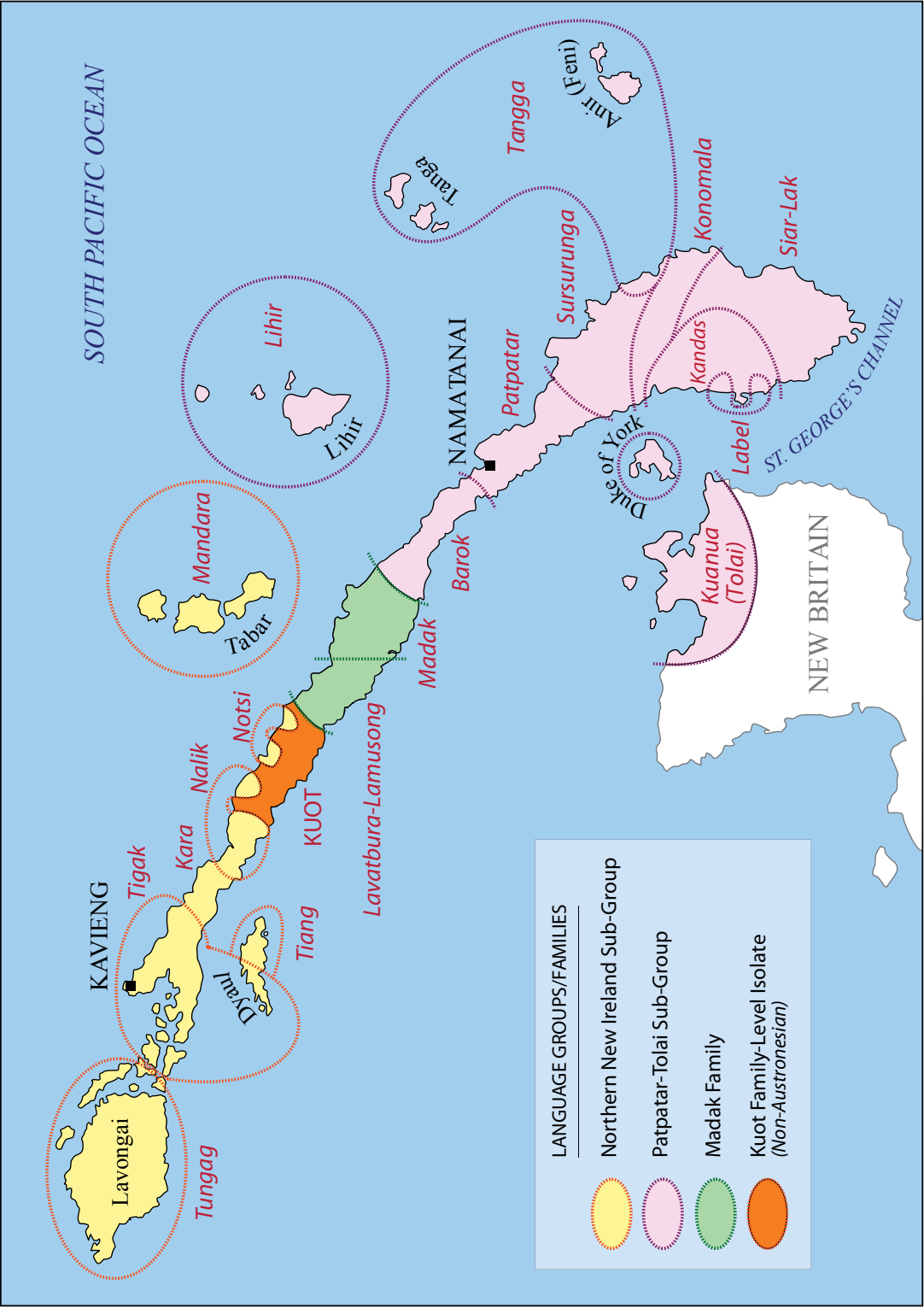
exploration licence expired they would not renew drilling permission. Towards the end of my stay in 2002 I heard that efforts were being made by Vangold to obtain a new licence and restart drilling as soon as possible. When I left, discussions about the virtues and dangers of mining had begun (again), but no decision as whether or not to grant permission had been reached. Eventually it was given and exploration work continued in 2003. When I came back in 2004, the owners of the land where the drilling had taken place had launched a compensation claim against the company but because they again received only very little money, the renewal of the licence was vigorously debated once more.

The longer the mine on Lihir is in operation, the more the people of Anir register not only the environmental, but also the social impacts of mining. The concerns raised range from the pollution of the rivers and the sea and the destruction of heritage land for gardening, but also of former burial sites, to social disturbances caused by an increase in land disputes, the presence of outside workers from other parts of New Guinea and the danger of an unfair distribution of financial revenues. In 2004 the proponents and opponents of mining seemed to be more or less on par. And while one group founded and officially registered the 'Anir Island Resources Owners Association' to be in a better position to defend their interests, many men started privately digging for gold in the bush. Since then the struggle seems to have continued. According to a newspaper article in the PNG Courier from 24 February 2007:¹¹

The Anir Island Resources Owners Association in a statement said they did not want to renew EL1021 [an exploration licence] but instead they wanted to start small-scale operations such as alluvial mining.

The 400 people that attended the meeting thus “refused renewal of EL1021 and disputed EL1331 to the mining warden.” The idea to pursue small-scale operations “without the interference of foreign companies” was already put forward in 2004, but how realistic the development of such an enterprise is – particularly when multinational corporations and large revenues for the PNG state are involved – remains an open question. Certainly the development of alternative, sustainable small-scale operations would require the support of government and/or international aid funding.

11 Available at: <http://archives.pireport.org/archive/2007/february/02%2D26%2D14.htm>



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Map 3 New Ireland languages

History of research in New Ireland

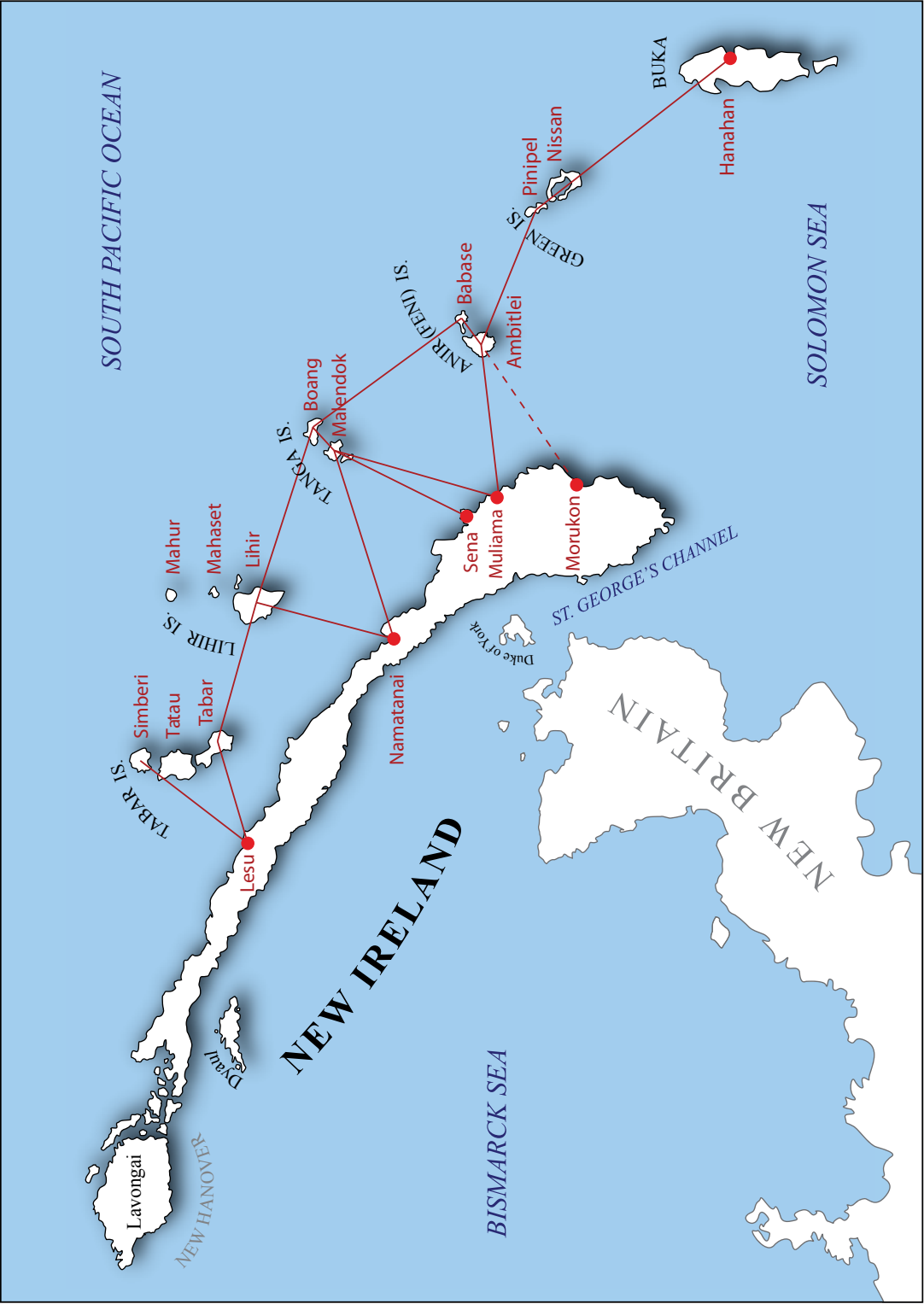
In comparison to some other areas in New Guinea, the New Ireland region is characterized by a relatively long history of research which I intend to review here quite extensively, including work done in northern New Ireland. For a long time academic interest focused heavily on the northern part of the province and its impressive *malagan* art. This thesis is not only the first extensive anthropological study of the Anir islands, but also one of the few that address the art traditions of southern New Ireland. The research done in northern New Ireland thus not only inspired me and provided a point of departure, it also served me as a background for understanding the larger context my thesis is situated in.

The earliest sources we have are ship's journals and travelogues. These were followed by accounts written by traders, missionaries, colonial administrators and other people active in the area, among them Richard Parkinson's famous *Thirty Years in the South Seas* (1999 [1907]). Systematic anthropological research began in the last quarter of the 19th century after the first collections of artefacts and art works had reached European museums. At the beginning of the 20th century several German expeditions were undertaken in the area. One of the motivations that stirred them was a keen interest among some of the leading German anthropologists in works of art from New Ireland. Adolf Bastian, the director of the Berlin museum, for instance, had been impressed by the delicate and elaborate *malagan* carvings when he saw pieces for the first time in 1883 or 1885. To him they were evidence that the creativity of Melanesian peoples had until then been seriously misjudged and underestimated. Richard Parkinson, on whose collections Bastian had based his observations,¹ contradicted him insofar as he claimed that artistic and aesthetic considerations did not flow into the creation of *malagan* masks in any way. Felix von Luschan, curator of the museum's African and Oceanic collections, believed that the richness of form and motifs found in Melanesian sculptures such as New Ireland carvings pointed to Indian, or Hindu, influences, but not without adding that extensive field research would be needed to substantiate such a hypothesis (cf. Buschmann 1996: 188–189).

The venture of the SMV *Möwe* in 1904 and the famous Deutsche Marine-Expedition (DME) of 1907–1909 rendered the most comprehensive results on New Ireland cultures.² Both enterprises were linked to Emil Stephan. He acted as the ship's surgeon on the SMV *Möwe*'s survey trip along the coast of southern New Ireland which provided an opportunity to investigate the Siar-Lak and Kandas areas. Stephan was

1 Cf. Meyer and Parkinson 1895 and Foy 1900.

2 The DME was carried out in collaboration with the Berlin Museum für Völkerkunde.



produced by Joanne Lai

Map 4 Historical inter-island trade network; after Kaplan 1976, fig. 18

subsequently chosen as the leader of the DME. His fellow expedition members were Edgar Walden, Emil Schlaginhaufen and Otto Schilling, the photographer. They established their base camp at Muliama on the southeast coast; only Walden was sent to northern New Ireland to study the cultures there (cf. Walden 1940). In May 1908 Stephan died of malaria. Augustin Krämer, who had been chosen to replace him, arrived with his wife Elisabeth in November 1908. Krämer soon decided to move his base to Lamasong in order to explore the central region known for its *uli* figures, as well as adjacent *malagan* producing areas (cf. Krämer 1925 and Krämer-Bannow 1916). Schlaginhaufen, a staff member of the Dresden museum, was responsible for the acquisition of ethnographic objects and for gathering physical anthropological data. He made several trips to the island groups east of New Ireland, and from August to September 1908 (together with Schilling) he stayed on Anir where he not only purchased artefacts, including house posts and dance ornaments (but no masks), but also human remains (cf. Schlaginhaufen 1959: 109-110 and 1964-66).¹²

The DME's division of New Ireland into three cultural regions, and consequently three areas of study, is typical of the German tradition which associated the northern region with *malagan*, the central region with *uli* figures and uprooted tree platforms called *kaba(i)*, and the south with limestone figures called *kulap* and the *tubuan* as well as other masks and works of art of a more ephemeral character, many of which were made by members of different secret societies. Scholars from the Anglophone tradition usually only distinguish between the north and the south (that is *malagan*-producing areas and regions where these art works do not occur). This dual division is reflected in the political division of New Ireland into two districts as established by the colonial administration, and into two electorates in post-colonial times.

The problem with a dual division is a zone in central New Ireland which, on the basis of artefacts and cultural traits, can neither be classified as 'clearly northern' nor 'distinctly southern'. The *uli* ceremonies once practised by the Madak were replaced in the first half of the century by *malagan* ceremonies which probably had been practised parallel to the *uli* cult for some time already (Heermann 2009). The culture of the Barok – well known for its uprooted trees – seems to be related to that of the Patpatar (usually associated with the south) as well as of Lihir (usually associated with the north). And

12 The collection that was acquired by Stephan in the Siar-Lak and Kandas areas in 1904 is now in the Ethnologisches Museum Berlin (cf. Stephan 1907, Stephan and Graebner 1907). Most of the objects collected by Schlaginhaufen during the DME are also in Berlin, some are in the Museum für Völkerkunde zu Dresden and the Museum der Kulturen Basel. Other people who collected in southern New Ireland during the German colonial period include the planter Richard Parkinson, the missionaries George Brown and Gerhard Peekel, Namatanai's station master Wilhelm Wostrack and governor Albert Hahl. F.L.S. Bell put together a collection from Tanga which now is in the Australian Museum in Sydney.

while on Lihir some mask traditions are known – these seem to have been introduced from Tabar – the knowledge we have about initiation secrets called *pindik* among the Barok and Patpatar points to connections that these two groups have with groups living further south (cf. Denner 2006c). All these clues provide evidence for the networks of trade and ceremonial communication that linked New Irelanders of different linguistic and cultural groups (cf. maps 3 and 4). They already existed in pre-colonial times and were intensified after pacification and colonization.

Anthropological research after WWI was concentrated in the north and usually focused on the cultural and ritual context of *malagan* art. An almost continuous stream of research led to numerous publications produced by anthropologists such as Alfred Bühler (1933), William C. Groves (1934, 1936a, b), Phillip H. Lewis (1969), Elizabeth Brouwer (1980), Dorothy Billings (1972, 1992), Susanne Küchler (1985, 2002), Brigitte Derlon (1988, 2002), Michael Gunn (1992, 1997 and 2006, together with Philippe Peltier),¹³ Graham Were (2003) as well as by the missionary Gerhard Peekel (1926–27, 1929, 1935). Although these studies all focus on *malagan* art and ritual, they of course often differ as far as theoretical background and approach go.

Not all research was triggered by a primary interest in art. Hortense Powdermaker, a student of Malinowski, stayed in New Ireland in 1929–30. Her book *Life in Lesu* (1933) is an almost perfect example of functionalist ethnography. Two other female anthropologists – Brenda Clay and Karen Sykes – later conducted fieldwork further south among the Madak. Clay stayed on the east coast and worked on social structure (1975) and power relations (1986) following a symbolic approach. Sykes (1995, 1996, 1999) conducted fieldwork on the Lelet Plateau and focused on youth, education and gender relationships.¹⁴ Richard Eves (1998) was also based on the Lelet Plateau; he worked on concepts of power and took a special interest in magical practices and forms of embodiment.

The Barok, the next group to the south, were studied in the 1970s and 1980s by Owen Jessep and Roy Wagner. Jessep, a jurist, investigated the local legal system – particularly the system of land rights – and the impact of Western influences on it (Jessep 1977, 1987). Roy Wagner's book *Asiwinarong* (1986a) focuses on Barok social and ritual life and is based on an interpretative approach. Wagner's work is relevant to my own because of his argument that Barok culture is generated through the creation of visual, verbal or spatial images that elicit multiple meanings and therefore can be interpreted in numerous and different ways.

13 Not based on fieldwork but on research on collections and an evaluation of the existing literature are Heintze 1969 and Helfrich 1973 and 1985.

14 Gender relations on Tabar were researched by Deane Fergie (1985, 1995).

Equally important, although in a number of differing ways, are the publications of scholars who worked in the southern half of New Ireland. Apart from Stephan, only the German missionary Karl Neuhaus and the Australian anthropologist Francis Lancelot Sutherland Bell were in the area before WWII. Neuhaus' study on the Patpatar people living around Namatanai is based on material assembled between 1910 and 1928. His posthumously published ethnography (1962) contains information about secret societies and ephemeral forms of art that is of great comparative value with regard to the data collected on Anir.

Bell conducted field research on the Tanga islands in 1933. His numerous articles with titles such as 'The place of food in the social life of the Tanga' (1947-48), 'The industrial arts' (1949), 'Death in Tanga' (1937), 'The divination of sorcery' (1935b), 'Dafal' (the female initiation, 1936) and 'Sokapana' (a secret society, 1935a) are primary sources for traditional aspects not only of Tangan, but also of Anir culture. A (re-)study of Tangan ritual life in the 1980s was carried out by Robert Foster (1995). I review his and Bell's research results on mortuary feasting in Chapter Four and compare them with my own data collected on Anir between 2000 and 2004.¹⁵

Scholars working in southern New Ireland more recently have focused heavily on the sequence of mortuary rituals practised there, but apply differing approaches and ask different questions. Thus, Stephen Jackson (1995) addressed the issue of self-similarity and social responsibility among the Susurunga, while Alexander Bolyanatz (2000) put the dynamics of matrilineal descent at the centre of his study of the same group. The region often called 'Laskona' ('last corner') by New Irelanders, that is, the Siar-Lak area, was the field site of Steven Albert and Sean Kingston. Albert (1987a, 1988) focused on political processes, bigmanship and competitive feasting; Kingston's thesis (1998) centres on imagery and memory. Paul Wolffram, an ethnomusicologist, conducted research on the music and dance performances of the Lak in the late 1990s but has unfortunately only published one article (2006) so far.

Although not directly relevant for my own thesis, but noteworthy and important in the context of a review of the history of research, are a number of studies that deal with the establishment of the gold mine on Lihir. An initial investigation on the possible social and economic impacts of the planned mine was carried out by Colin Filer and Richard Jackson (1986). Since the mine started operations, further research has been conducted by Sigrid Awart (1993 and 1999, together with Andreas Obrecht), Martha Macintyre (2004, together with Simon Foale) and, most recently, by Nicholas Bainton

15 In 1996 Andrew Holding undertook fieldwork on Tanga. However, as his focus was on medical anthropology, his thesis (2000) is less relevant for my own study.

(2006). More important with regard to my own work are publications on the art and culture of the Tolai, for example, some of the early sources on the *tubuan* masks and the system of secret societies,¹⁶ or Frederick Errington's work on the *tubuan* and power relationships on the Duke of York Islands (1974).

Table 1 **Population of the Anir islands in 2000¹⁷**

Island	Ward	Village	Households	Persons	Male	Female
Anir/Feni	5	14	426	2079	1069	1010
Ambitle	3	8	247	1173	595	578
	Balankolen	2	85	331	165	166
		Balankolen	41	156	79	77
		Warantaban	44	175	86	89
	Basakala	3	64	321	164	157
		Basakala	15	79	43	36
		Farangot	34	173	90	83
		Fatkasang	15	69	31	38
	Natong	3	98	521	266	255
		Natong	36	194	96	98
		Pikan	33	180	101	79
		Warambana	29	147	69	78
Babase	2	6	179	906	474	432
	Kamgot	3	102	482	267	215
		Kamgot	50	222	120	102
		Galisu	37	157	84	73
		Bulam	15	103	63	40
	Balangat	3	77	424	207	217
		Balngit	34	189	90	99
		Banakin	22	111	54	63
		Naliu	21	124	63	61

¹⁶ Parkinson 1999[1907]: 249-265 and Peekel 1937 and works that include overviews of old sources such as Fenner 1990, Aijmer 1997 or Heermann 2001.

¹⁷ Taken from Papua New Guinea National Statistical Office. *Census 2000 – Census Unit Register, New Ireland Province*, p. 14. As the average household size of 4.88 persons indicates, these units are not to be equated with hamlets. The village of Natong, for example, consisted of 22 inhabited hamlets in 2000 and of 24 in 2004.

Ethnographic background

At present, a little more than 2,000 people live on Anir (cf. table 1). They are of Austronesian descent and – together with the inhabitants of Tanga and those living in the area around Muliama on the east coast of New Ireland – speak a Melanesian language that linguists have termed ‘Tangga’ (Wurm & Hattori 1981). The people themselves, however, say that these are three similar but distinct languages subdivided into several dialects. Anir islanders distinguish between three local idioms. One is spoken in the southern half of Ambitlei and is said to be the one that most closely resembles the ‘true Anir language’ as it developed after the islands were settled by people from southern New Ireland. The second dialect is common to the northern half of Ambitlei and to the eastern side of Babase and contains many Tanga words and phrases. The third dialect is spoken on the western side of Babase and is shaped by Nissan influences. The division into three geographically located dialects reflects historically grown trade networks and economic, social and ritual relationships between Anir and the neighbouring regions (cf. map 4).

Settlement pattern, subsistence farming and cash crops

A so-called ring road, often shaded by trees, runs along the shore of both islands. It connects villages, or more precisely, the hamlets and compounds they consist of, gardens, palm groves and unused stretches of land. Most of the settlements are located on the beach, strung like beads on a string (fig. 4). Only on the western side of Babase and in the Nifin River area of Ambitlei some of the compounds are located further inland. On a walk along the ring road one becomes aware of the remoteness of Anir and the transport problems the islanders face: most houses are built from bush materials, and only occasionally one comes across a Western-style building constructed of timber and corrugated iron. Most of these are official buildings such as the three schools, the two medical aid posts and some of the churches, most prominently the one at Feni mission station (figs. 5, 6, cf. map 2).

The contemporary settlement pattern reflects colonial developments as well as pre-colonial structures. Originally Anirians used to live in dispersed hamlets, but under Australian administration they were ordered to move to the beach and build consolidated villages. These ‘camps’ or *kem*, as they are called in Tok Pisin, still exist in the form of compact settlements, but as more and more family heads (particularly those who have access to land adjacent to the beach) decided to move back to their customary land, the settlement pattern has loosened, leading to the re-emergence of earlier structures.



Fig. 4 Hamlet on the beach on the northern side of Babase. Waramintin, village of Naliu, 14 August 2000

Swidden horticulture for subsistence and for ritual purposes continues to play a vital role in daily life (figs. 7 to 16, 21). New gardens are set out each year, usually not far from the family's compound, on lineage land and, if possible, adjacent to the previous garden which still delivers some crops. The agricultural cycle follows the annual seasons and determines the ritual calendar; large amounts of tubers are a prerequisite for carrying out the ceremonies of the mortuary cycle. Harvesting starts towards the end of the rainy season, usually in September. During the dry season in December and January ritual activities reach their peak. New gardens are cleared from November onwards and planted around February.¹⁸ Pig husbandry and the use of marine resources are also of importance. While fish and molluscs form part of the daily diet, pigs are raised almost exclusively for ceremonial exchanges; most households also raise chickens (figs. 17 to 20).¹⁹

Due to the comparatively low population density, Anir has not suffered from land shortage so far. This not only means that land disputes have not (yet) become a problem, but also that fallow periods of 10 to 15 years are still observed. When a new garden is laid out, the vegetation is cut, dried and burnt. The area is fenced in with bamboo and divided into plots before a large variety of major and supplementary crops

¹⁸ Anir shows a pattern of reversed seasonality, with the driest period from November to March, cf. Abeyasekera 1987.

¹⁹ On Ambitlei wild pigs are a problem because they break into the gardens and destroy the crops. Some men are passionate hunters, and in their families wild pigs provide a regular source of protein.



Fig. 5 Opening ceremony of a new building of the Feni Community School. The extension was a prerequisite for the introduction of grades 7 and 8. The two other Anir schools are Verambif Community School (in the south of Ambitlei) and Babase Community School where pupils are taught up to grade 6. Students who want to enrol in grade 9 to 12 have to go to one of the boarding schools on mainland New Ireland. Warantaban village, 22 November 2001

are planted. The most important and highly valued staple is yam of the variety called *angkaukau* in the vernacular and *mami* in Tok Pisin (*Dioscorea esculenta*), but other types of yam (*sinam*; *Dioscorea alata*) are also cultivated. Other root crops include sweet potatoes, cassava and, to a limited degree, taro. Bananas of many different types are important and so are a large variety of greens, vegetables, and tobacco. Various trees deliver nuts and fruits.

Coconuts are not only a major component of the daily diet, for decades they have also been planted as a cash crop. The difficulties Anirians face in this respect are not only due to the fluctuating and now generally low price on the world market, but, more significantly, to the lack of transport opportunities to market the dried copra in Namatanai or Rabaul at reasonable cost. In 2000, the Catholic Mission acted as an agent for the Copra Marketing Board and production was accordingly high. But unfortunately the Anir branch of the CMB only survived for little more than a year. Thus, during my field trips in 2001–02 and 2004 very little copra was cut. Because larger ships only came to Anir irregularly, and usually not more than twice a year during this time, nearly all the transport had to be done using fibreglass speedboats (fig. 22), which was far too expensive for moving heavy copra bags.²⁰

²⁰ The *MV Feni*, a community vessel that ran between the islands of Tanga, Lihir, Anir and Namatanai and Rabaul capsized in a storm in January 2000. Since 2005 the situation has apparently improved, Anir now seems to be serviced several times a year.

Some families harvest *bêche-de-mer* as an alternative or supplementary cash crop which they sell to Chinese traders in Kavieng, or betel nuts for the local market in Namatanai. In 2001–02 two Australians who were in the crayfish business paid the islands several visits. While concerns on Anir grew that this marine resource could become overexploited – a couple of senior men banned catching crayfish and placed taboo markers on the reef – the Kavieng branch of the National Fisheries Authority stopped their operations. A relatively new cash crop is vanilla. In 2003 the first families started planting and it is to be expected that vanilla will grow in importance in the future. A large part of the money earned from cash crops goes into school fees and taxes. Money is also spent on ceremonial exchanges such as the bride wealth – and on trade store items which are purchased on trips to New Ireland or at the local stores. Tinned meat and fish, noodles, biscuits and especially rice are regularly consumed by most households and supplement the food grown in the gardens.

Gardens as well as cash crops are usually planted on land to which the respective household head has rights through his (or her) membership in a matrilineage. Customarily land is collectively owned and allocated to individuals or families by the community leaders (or used with their consent). This system of temporary rather than permanent rights of possession has come under strain in recent decades due to the introduction of perennial cash crops. Today, land on which cash crops are grown and which has been in constant use by the same person or family is associated with a specific individual. In addition, many stretches of land appear to have now been officially registered (and are therefore individually owned) – a process that undoubtedly was triggered by the activities of the Land Titles Commission in the 1960s and which has intensified since the early 1980s when mining companies took up exploration work on Anir.

The acquisition of land rights through patrilineal ties and by means of performing certain rituals that involve ceremonial payments of shell money and pigs was possible already in pre-colonial times (cf. also Bell 1953: 44–45 for Tanga) but since the colonial period it has increased markedly and will no doubt continue to do so. Many of my informants commented on this, pointing out that patrilineal inheritance is liable to endanger the matrilineal system and that this might become a problem in the future, particularly if people ‘marry wrongly’ (*marit paul*), with the result that the land changes hands permanently instead of coming back to the original owners in the second generation (see below).



Fig. 6 Feni Mission Church on the northern tip of Ambitlei Island. The photo was taken at the end the Good Friday Procession, just before the large cross was taken into the church. 21 April 2000



Fig. 7 Aerial view of two adjacent gardens (one at the centre, one at the lower edge of the photo); in between three garden and storage houses. Babase Island. 14 August 2000



Fig. 8 A garden plot just after being cleared and fenced in; the banana plants of the old garden can be seen in the background. Near Bisimporot, village of Warambana, 29 March 2002



Fig. 9 Mami vines growing in Joachim Tokas' garden. Near Bisimporot, village of Warambana, 29 March 2002



Fig. 10 Monica Tinlima in her garden. Mami is grown at the back, in the front part there is a mixture of banana plants, taro, sweet potato, sugar cane, various greens and tobacco. Near Matluen, village of Balngit, 16 September 2004



Fig. 11 Antoinette Ragos cleaning mami tubers with the aid of a palm rib in the storage house of her parent's garden. Matof, Natong village, 5 September 2000



Fig. 12 Women peeling tubers for a feast meal. Nagos, village of Balankolem, 11 April 2002



Figs. 13 to 16 Preparation of a dish in an earth oven, mumu, Matluen, Balngit village, 16 September 2004

Fig. 13 Monica Tinlima grating cassava tubers from her garden for the *kiskis* tapiok dish she intends to make



Fig. 14 The cassava paste is mixed with grated coconut and tinned tuna and carefully wrapped in banana leaves



Fig. 15 Monica places the food parcels on the heated stones of the earth oven, after which Petronilla Warkus puts some of the stones on the packets to make sure the food cooks well



Fig. 16 The earth oven is covered with many layers of leaves and then left for several hours



Fig. 17 Joachim Tokas with some of his pigs. He is a much acclaimed, highly successful pig breeder who at times had more than two dozens of animals in his compound. Bisimporot, village of Warambana, 6 November 2001



Fig. 18 Opening an earth oven in which chunks of meat from a wild pig and bananas have been cooking. From right to left: Stefanie Matuktele, Christa Basak, Franziska Bastele, Clematia Lamaris. Konat, village of Natong, 3 June 2000



Fig. 19 and 20 Ceremonial fishing in the lagoon of Banakin for a ritual feast. This type of communal fishing is called *walwal*. A several hundred metre long rope made from a liana is laid out in the lagoon. When low tide starts, the rope is drawn in bit by bit, preventing the fish from escaping while dozens of men spear them; young boys collect the fish and bring them to the beach where the women clean and prepare them for the earth ovens. Village of Banakin, 20 August 2004





Fig. 21 From left to right, Peter Fafen, Christine Melsa (with her baby, Daniel), Patrik Liting, James Murang and Kevin Sapsap (Christine's brother in law) enjoying a dinner of bananas and pork from a wild pig. They are sitting in Fafen's hamlet, Konat, where he lives with the family of his daughter Stefanie and the family of his wife's brother's daughter, Franziska Bastele. Fafen's eldest daughter, Christine, in 2000 had moved from Napas, the hamlet next to Konat, to Verambif, where she was teaching at the Community School. The family kept spending the weekends in Konat and Napas. Village of Natong, 2 June 2000

Fig. 22 Fibreglass speed boat on the way from Namatanai to Anir; in the background the mountains of southern New Ireland. 25 September 2004





Fig. 23 Martina Sumbin with her youngest son, Chris Siptoi. Sumbin is the wife of Peter Fafen's eldest son, Philip Malal and the younger sister of Steven Sinang (cf. fig. 25), the husband of Fafen's eldest daughter, Christine. Beach at Verambif, village of Natong, 11 September 2000

Social groups and kin-relations

As in other parts of New Ireland, every person belongs to and identifies with an exogamous matrilineal clan, sub-clan, lineage and line, or family. These social units are called *funmat* (clan, sub-clan), *matambia* (lineage) and *fumberat* (family). Clan membership is not negotiable, but immutably fixed and inherited from one's mother at birth (fig. 23).²¹ Even today the rule of clan exogamy is strictly followed, and although there are stories about incestuous, adulterous relationships and liaisons, I did not record a single marriage between two members of the same clan. Incest (*an mumu*) is said to lead to an odour emanating from the transgressors' bodies, which a bush spirit (*tara* or *masalai*) by the name of Tingkudur will inevitably smell. This spirit being – either in the shape of a wallaby or a beautiful young woman – will then appear and punish the transgressors with a serious illness that only can be healed by a few men in possession of the right medicine, and only if the incestuous relationship is terminated at once. Tingkudur as the guardian of the incest taboo is not only known on Anir but also on Tanga and in southern New Ireland (cf. Foster 1995: 68).

21 In the case of adoptions, which of course take place, the person in question retains his/her clan membership. Outsiders (including myself) are assigned to a clan, so that this 'matches' the relationship to the members of the family they come to stay with.

The Tolai as well as the societies of central and southern New Ireland distinguish between moieties. They are named after, and associated with, two totemic birds which in Kuanua, and also in contemporary Tok Pisin, are called maningulai, or bik pisin (big bird), the sea eagle (*Haliaetus leucogaster*), and tarangau or liklik pisin (small bird), the fish hawk (*Pandion leucocephalus*).²² Societies at the northeastern end of New Ireland do not have this type of dual social division.²³ Foster (1995: 71) notes that Tangans also denied that clans belonged to separate moieties. Much to my initial confusion, the situation on Anir seems to be a mixture of northern and southern New Ireland patterns of social structure, with influences from both systems. The Anir situation suggests a previous or a presently suppressed system of dual organization.

Anirians say that their islands were originally settled by members of two clans, Tasik and Korofi, who came from the southern part of mainland New Ireland. To date, Tasik and Korofi are by far the two largest clans, with members spread over both islands. Each clan is divided into localized sub-clans; all Tasik are associated with *manlam*, the ‘big bird’, and all Korofi are associated with *tagau*, the ‘small bird’. On Tanga, where Tasik and Korofi also feature as clans, Tasik is associated with the sea eagle (called *kosor* on Tanga), while Korofi is associated with *porot*, the chicken (Foster 1995: 70). Tasik and Korofi on Anir are each divided into several sub-clans, which are designated by composite names. Tasik consists of the sub-clans Tasik (or Tasik stret²⁴), Tasik Tui, Tasik Piu, Tasik Firfir, Tasik Tulefalen, Tasik Pen, Tasik Funmanu, Tasik Bo and Tasik Felumat. Korofi comprises the sub-clans Korofi (or Korofi stret), Korofi Tuleman, Korofi Pen and Korofi Felumat. What is striking about these composite terms is the fact that on the neighbouring Tanga islands the second part of the name often refers to a clan in its own right and with its own totem. Thus Firfir, Tulefalen, Pen, Fasambo (or Bo), Waf and Tunaman (Tuleman) all are clan names that Bell (1953: 31, fig. 1) and Foster (1995: 70) recorded on Tanga.

The third Anir clan that is said to have a very long history there is Ku. It consists of the sub-clans Ku (or Ku stret) and Ku Waf; both sub-groups are associated with *ambal*, the pigeon. The fourth ‘old’ clan is Pen, but I was told that all ‘real Pen of Anir’ (olgeta Pen bilong Anir stret) have passed away and that those who belong to Pen today only recently immigrated from elsewhere. The same seems to be the case with regard to members of the clans Felumat and Fasambo. Not counting the clans Ku and Pen, and considering that there are about as many marriages between Ku and Tasik as there

22 See for example Krämer 1925: 32, Wagner 1986a: 50, Albert 1987a: 101.

23 According to Chinnery (1929) the multi-clan system starts in the village of Fatmilak, that is, in the Nalik area.

24 Stret is the Tok Pisin word for ‘straight’; in composition with Tasik it indicates that this sub-clan is the original one.

are between Ku and Korofi, it would appear that Tasik and Korofi represent what in southern New Ireland are two moieties, while the various sub-clans could be seen as clans. The existence of so many sub-clans is the result of historical developments and can often be traced back to relationships and marriage alliances with other regions. The history of the members of Tasik Firfir in the Bulam/Balngit area of Babase may serve as an example.

Firfir has two meanings: on the one hand it designates a light sea breeze, on the other, small leaves or trees with small leaves. According to Vincent Ngamfu and Moses Kiapkuli, Firfir (the sub-clan) was brought to Anir and Tanga like small leaves that are blown from one place to a next by the wind. Upon arrival Firfir merged (em i kam na go pas wantaim) with the Tasik clan. This happened when a man called Wakin from Nelei (probably Rei?) in the Siar region came to Anir and married a woman called Tinmatrem. The marriage must have been in the late 18th century.²⁵ Tinmatrem belonged to the Tasik men's house of Nambaba on the upper reaches of the Nifin River on Ambitlei Island. She is regarded as the founding ancestress of the Tasik Firfir sub-clan and gave birth to three daughters: Tingkeker, Tintaen and Tinmaf. While Tinmaf married locally and stayed at Nambaba, Tingkeker married a man living on Babase in the village of Balngit, to where she moved. Tintaen had no children. In the following generations the kin group grew and split up into several lineages, to the effect that the descendants of Tingkeker in the Balngit/Bulam area today belong to at least four different men's house communities. By providing mutual support in mortuary ceremonies, these groups still acknowledge and honour the ties they have with Tasik Firfir lineages residing on Ambitlei Island.

The next smaller social unit is the *matambia*. This term consists of the components *matam*, 'eye' and *bia*, 'men's house', and thus draws on the image of a kin group at the centre of a ceremonial building. Strictly speaking, *matambia* designates the members of a matrilineage. They are responsible for the organization of the mortuary cycle when one of their members passes away, and it is in the course of their ritual undertakings that they build the men's house, which is the focus of these ceremonial events. *Matambia* in a second, broader, sense can be translated as men's house community; as such it includes members through patrilineal reckoning and on the basis of factual residence. Thus, the matrilineage in the narrower sense of the term only constitutes the core of the *matambia*, and others are incorporated, particularly the children of male lineage members who are

25 The genealogy this information is based on, is the most extensive I recorded and includes the named members of nine generations.

considered as *dadak* or *blut*, 'blood', of the group (fig. 24).²⁶

The use of the term *matambia* in its broader sense is closely linked with practices of ceremonial co-operation, marriage strategies, and rules and patterns of residence. Although by no means all couples follow this rule, residence after marriage should be taken up virilocally, which means that children do not grow up amongst their (mother's) men's house community on their lineage's land, but amongst the members of their father's *matambia* on his land. As will become evident in the chapters on ritual practice, wives, children and other affinal, patrilineal or patrilineal relatives strongly support the members of a matrilineage when carrying out the rituals of a mortuary cycle. Thus, by using the term *matambia* in a broader sense, relationships of mutual support are induced as well as acknowledged.

While opinions regarding the definition of the *matambia* differed, people generally agreed that the *fumbarat* always encompasses members of various clans, and the term generally was translated as family (*famili*). Occasionally it was used to refer to a man and wife, their children and the other relatives living with them in a compound, but usually it was applied more in a comprehensive sense to designate a cluster of core families related by affinal, matri- and patrilineal ties, who habitually – but not always, or not necessarily all of them – lived in the same area and were bound by feelings of loyalty and mutual support.



Fig. 24 Steven Sinang with two of his sons, Anthony Firingkorofi and Sylvester Fafen in the men's house of Matambi during a customary feast in the village of Banakin. As Sinang's grandmother originated from Banakin, his 'real' men's house lies there; between 2000 and 2004 he participated in all the rituals that were carried out by his Babase kinsmen. 18 October 2001

26 The more time I spent on Anir, the more often I heard people claiming that X was their mother's and thus their 'first men's house' while Y was their father's and therefore 'second men's house', adding that they had rights in both *matambia*, although those in the second were more restricted. Members of related lineages and cross-cousins (*kinaf*) also may be granted some rights in a given men's house community and thus are incorporated as well, given the term *matambia* is used in its broad sense.

The members of a *fumbarat* and beyond refer to each other using (some descriptive, but mostly) classificatory kinship terms (cf. table 2). These may vary in parts, depending on whether the speaker is male or female, and, with regard to some relationships, the term of reference differs from the term of address, or is substituted by a teknonym. Accordingly, different kin-relations are associated with different roles, rules of behaviour, ethical codes, rights and obligations. The relationship between elder sister and younger brother and between a number of male-female affinal relations are typical avoidance relationships; a joking relationship exists between grandparents and their grandchildren (fig. 25), as well as between cross-cousins. As indicated above, the distinction between mother's and father's kin, that is, between enates (persons related on one's mother's side) and affines, is critical, and the corresponding distinction between parallel and cross-cousins is equally significant.

Table 2 **Anir kinship terms**

Local term	Genealogical position/description	
<i>tidung</i>	M, MZ, MMD, MMBD	mother
<i>tubung fefin</i>	FZ, MBW, MM, FM	aunt, grandmother
<i>koktamat (koko*)</i>	MMB, ZDS	
<i>tabung</i>	F	father
<i>tubung tamat</i>	MF, FF,	uncle, grandfather
<i>kawaklik (kang*)</i>	MB, ZS	
<i>fefneklik**</i>	Z (male speaking), MZD, FBD	sister, parallel cousin
<i>kisiklik**</i>	Z (female speaking), MZD, FBD	sister, parallel cousin
<i>tuaklik**</i>	B (male speaking), MZS, FBS	brother, parallel cousin
<i>fefneklik**</i>	B (female speaking), MZS, FBS	brother, parallel cousin
<i>kinaf</i>	MBD, MBS, FZS, FZD,	cross cousin
<i>kek wok</i>	W	wife
<i>kek matuk</i>	H	husband
<i>ifang</i>	ZH (and WB)	sister's husband
<i>ianang</i>	WZ (and HZ)	brother's wife
<i>kek fefin</i>	D	daughter
<i>kek tamat</i>	S	son

* term of address

** teknonym used when older sister refers to or addresses the younger brother that directly follows her and vice versa



Fig. 25 Peter Fafen and his grandson Dominik Salmatuk – they were a virtually inseparable pair until Christine was asked to teach at Babase Community School and the family moved there. Matof, Natong village, 14 September 2000

Parallel cousins are classified as siblings and are accordingly referred to as sisters and brothers. Cross-cousins are called (*ang*) *kinaf* and classificatory cross-cousins are regarded as the ideal marriage partners.²⁷ A preferred marriage is one where a person marries back into his or her father's kin-group. From this follows a pattern of intermarriage between pairs of lineages that consolidates lines within a lineage and leads to the formation of social networks; these are not only associated with paternal care and mutual support, they are also marked by reciprocal exchange and thus are significant in terms of ritual co-operation and the transfer of land rights. As Foster (1995: 79) noted for Tanga, the mobilization of support in mortuary feasting through the formation and maintenance of *kinaf* marriage alliances (with a number of different lineages) is a major concern for the leaders of men's house communities (fig. 26).

²⁷ The marriage between real cross-cousins and those in the second generation is considered incestuous and thus taboo (*mumu*, 'incestuous', or *mapak*, 'bitter').



Fig. 26 Barbara Dinawarkan (right), Monica Tinlima (centre right, she is Barbara's classificatory mother), and Patricia Markel (centre left), Barbara's daughter, preparing the money and shell wealth to be handed over in a bride wealth ceremony hosted by Barbara's husband, Joachim Tokas, later that day. Bisimporot, village of Warambana, 12 September 2004

Leadership and political organization

Leadership on Anir, as elsewhere in New Guinea, is linked with bigmanship and every *matambia* is headed by a senior member of the lineage.²⁸ He ranks as the acknowledged leader or bigman (*taufi*) of the men's house (*bia*) and as the guardian of the lineage's shell valuables (*tubaibia*). He is recognized for his knowledge on the history of his group and customary law and for his achievements as a successful feast sponsor. The organization of the rituals of the mortuary cycle and the ceremonial exchanges that go with them used to be – and in many ways still is – the primary road to bigmanship.

The men's houses, which are always built when a ritual cycle is completed, epitomize the unity and strength of the lineage and its leader. In the past, and in addition to the rectangular men's houses (*biakis*) that one usually sees today, at least five other

28 The Melanesian-type of bigmen leadership and system was first outlined by Sahlins in his much cited article "Poor Man, Rich Man, Big Man, Chief: Political Types in Melanesia and Polynesia" (1963). Godelier and Strathern in 1991 published their volume *Big Men and Great Men* according to which big men appear as entrepreneurs of exchange while great men are associated with restricted exchange and ritual complexity; seen in these terms Anir leaders would seem to fit the category of great men more closely than that of big men (cf. also Wagner 1991). The ways in which historical leadership differs from contemporary bigmanship will be addressed below.

types of ceremonial buildings were known, all of them of a more temporary nature.²⁹ Each had its own design or was associated with specific ritual acts and exchanges (cf. Appendix I). In order to establish himself as a leader, a man had to build several, and if possible all, of the different types. A bigman who achieved this, was referred to as *taufi lo e la sim*, as a 'leader who bears flowers/fruits/children'. As a sign of his status he acquired the right to furnish his *biakis* with a centre post that protruded from the roof.

Although every lineage has a recognized representative, some bigmen are more active in sponsoring ritual events than others and, accordingly, gain more influence. Their reputation and power extends beyond their own social unit and village. During my fieldwork the two most eminent bigmen were Francis Neantele (fig. 27) and Paul Munbal (fig. 28). They were often depicted as the leaders of all Tasik and all Korofi respectively. Not only had they staged numerous ceremonial events themselves, they were regularly consulted by the heads of other lineages about the execution of rituals in which they then often also played a public role. Gaining support from others is crucial when organizing a commemorative cycle; each *matambia* within and beyond the clan is connected with a couple of other men's houses through a network of kin relations and historically-grown alliances that spans both islands and may also extend to neighbouring regions. While affiliations within the clan are based on common origin, alliances beyond often reflect *kinaf* (cross-cousin) marriage relationships. In the context of mortuary rituals these relationships become manifest in the composition of the meetings that are held to plan the event and – as will be illustrated in detail in Chapter Four – through the acts of ceremonial exchange during the actual feast.

Traditionally leadership should pass from the mother's brother (MB) to a real or classificatory sister's son (ZS) or sister's daughter's son (ZDS). This means that succession is basically predetermined by the genealogical position in the kinship system. But merely holding the right position is not enough; the potential aspirant also has to prove himself as capable and worthy. The *matambia* of Matof, for example, was headed by Peter Fafen (cf. fig. 21), an old big man born around 1925. Due to his advanced age, Fafen, by his own account, officially transferred leadership to a classificatory ZDS, Leo Fesris. During the rituals performed by the Matof *matambia* in 2001, Fesris acted indeed as feast organizer while Fafen kept to the background as a consultant and patron. Fafen's real ZDS, Francis, it was said, was to follow Fesris as the lineage's head when he stepped down. However, as Fafen himself and other (male and female) commentators pointed out, Francis showed none of the required attributes of a future bigman. Not

29 That is, they were built for the occasion, but not for permanent use; the roof and/or walls were dismantled after the ceremonies while the carved house posts were left to rot as a reminder of the splendour of the feast.



Fig. 27 Ephraim Apelis (left), then Member for the Namatanai Electorate, conferring the Independence Medal on Francis Neantele (at centre with tie and jacket). Nanlel, village of Galisu, 20 November 2001

surprisingly, in the 2001 ceremonies Philip Sumbin, Fesris' own favourite, performed the acts that typically are performed by a designated future leader, and some noted that he should follow Fesris. By 2004 the situation had changed: Patrik Nekos, still a very young man, closely related to Fesris, and also in a position to claim leadership, not only strongly supported Fesris in his ritual undertakings, but had gained respect within the community in general and seemed to be considered a viable aspirant.

Bigmen depend on the manpower and support of followers, on the one hand, and require experience in ritual entrepreneurship on the other. Potential future leaders are therefore given the opportunity to participate in the organization and work of ritual. By the time an old bigman passes away, his successor can take over his position by launching and successfully staging the rituals of the mortuary cycle for him. But in cases where there is no clear aspirant (or no eligible candidate is available), a competitive situation arises in which even ambitious men from other lineages or clans may perform the required rituals, claiming rights to the lineage's land and leadership, or at least enhancing their sphere of influence in it. It also appeared to me that bigmen increasingly transfer not only stretches of land, but also men's houses to their sons in attempt to secure leadership positions for them. The usual explanation was that this was possible because appropriate marriage arrangements had been made, and that the men's house in question would return again to the legitimate clan in the following generation. However,

this does not necessarily mean that it will go back to the same lineage; be this as it may, such moves can lead to either the split-up of an existing lineage or the foundation of a new one.

The reputation of bigmen rests not alone on their abilities to act as ritual entrepreneurs, it is also intimately connected with a broad knowledge of customary law and special intellectual and spiritual capacities. The former is necessary for performing the rituals correctly but also for holding arbitrations (*fapare* or *fafaris*) before or during a ritual, because peaceful and amiable relationships are considered imperative for the execution of ceremonial activities. Many

bigmen in the course of their lives also acquire considerable knowledge on magical procedures and the spiritual realm and its beings. Most of them are members of one or several of the secret societies engaged in the communication with, and manipulation of, powers of the beyond. Knowledge of the lineage's land, and the rights to it, is connected to knowledge about spirits residing there. Magical procedures secure the goodwill of potential supporters and the assistance of ancestral spirits. Garden, weather and pig magic are important for securing a good harvest and for the growth of pigs and thus for the success of ceremonial exchanges.

For many regions in the Pacific it has been argued that traditional leadership has lost significance under the influence of modernization, commodification and globalization, and through the introduction of new leadership roles and models. Of course, a range of different positions in the spheres of government, church and business are open today to individuals aspiring for prestige, influence and authority in the community. However, it is important to note that the role of customary leader does not necessarily exclude holding other positions. For example, as a young man the deceased leader Paul Munbal, whose



Fig. 28 Paul Munbal (front, with glasses) during a ritual performance, *am furis*, on the occasion of a commemorative feast organized by members of an affiliated men's house community whom Munbal had supported with advice. Silalangit, village of Balngit, 2 November 2001

burial features prominently in Chapter Three, first worked for Anir's wetpus,³⁰ Lukas Sungoi, before becoming the clerk of the first councillor, Tomonmon. Later Munbal worked at the medical aid post and acted as chairman of the school board. Finally he became magistrate of the local village court, a position he held for many years. Aspirants to leadership often take on institutionalized government or church positions parallel to active engagement in customary ceremonies, before they eventually fully concentrate on the latter and establish themselves as bigmen in senior years. This also is illustrated by the careers of other bigmen: Francis Neantele, the Tasik leader mentioned above, worked for years as school teacher; Peter Pimpik, another Tasik leader from the village of Banakin, used to be Anir's head catechist. A couple of younger, upcoming lineage leaders on both islands are also catechists. Other bigmen, among them Leo Fesris of Natong and Ambrose Pusla of Banakin were, or still are, members of the Tanir Local Level Government.

Bigman, or *taufi*, as a term of reference or address, is clearly associated with organizing rituals and with knowledge about the history and customary practices of the islands. At the same time, there is an understanding that in their role as responsible community leaders, bigmen should have knowledge about, and some experience in, the wider spheres of state politics, school and religious education and issues of economic and social development. This reference to national politics, change and modernity automatically raises the question of the relationship between past and present, traditional and modern, and local versus national/global; this in turn sets the stage for introducing the term kastam, more specifically its conceptualization and significance on Anir.³¹

The concept and significance of kastam

Kastam, derived from the English word 'custom', became part of Melanesian Pidgin discourses as a term and a concept in the 1960s and 1970s. Since the early 1980s it has figured prominently in Pacific scholars' discussions and has been subject of much debate and revaluation. Initially translated as 'custom', 'tradition', 'culture' and perceived as a relatively stable body of "traditional cultural elements" (Tonkinson 1981: 237) that play an important role in identity formation and are subject to political exploitation, it soon became evident that kastam is a locus of highly creative processes. Parallel to the development of interpretative anthropology and a revised concept of culture, kastam

30 The wetpus in some areas of New Guinea was a government appointed head man during colonial times. His position was higher than that of the luluai, and Mihalic (1971) translates the term to 'paramount chief'.

31 In most of the works on this issue the term is written as kastom; kastam is the way it is pronounced in New Ireland, therefore I use this spelling.

came to be seen as a contested and dynamic body of indigenous ideas and practices, as one that is consciously constructed and often manipulated. This involves processes of the objectification and reification of selected cultural traits in view of empowering native traditions and strengthening indigenous identities on the local, regional or national level.³²

Earlier studies focused heavily on the political uses of kastam and on the problems and processes of change, nation-building and cultural politics. In this context the discussion of kastam as (re-)invented tradition was met with vigorous critique because of this term's implications of in-authenticity and mystification.³³ Nowadays kastam is understood as a dynamic model that is the outcome of entwined practices. The various groups that use it constantly renegotiate and redevelop the concept of kastam according to their prevailing needs and the circumstances of Melanesia's ongoing incorporation into global political and economic structures.

In the context of debates about the preconditions of the objectification of culture and the emergence of kastam, Foster (1992, 1995: 25-66) pointed to the intra-cultural dimensions.³⁴ He argued that, on Tanga, kastam evolved in the process of delineating distinct practical domains through which the spheres of lo and gavman (law and government), lotu (church) and bisnis (cash cropping and wage labour) came to be regarded as "separate and ideally non-overlapping" (1995: 61) with the realm of mortuary feast giving, which then came to be called kastam. According to Foster, the growth of the copra industry and the increasing commodification of social relations on Tanga by the 1960s had led to a household atomism and greater loyalty to, and significance of, the family unit. This resulted in a reduction of the influence of customary leaders and a redefinition of the bigman status. Bigmen now became almost exclusively associated with the ritual realm, and the *matambia* (lineage), the men's house and mortuary feasting became reified as kastam.

Anir islanders, like the people on Tanga, first and foremost identify kastam with the activities that occur in the context of the commemorative cycle and thus with ritual practice. My inquiries about how to translate the term kastam into the local language (on various occasions and with various interview partners) were initially met by the

32 The literature on kastom/kastam is vast; important contributions are Keesing and Tonkinson 1982, Keesing 1989, Linnekin and Poyer 1990b, Jolly and Thomas 1992b, Lindstrom and White 1994, Maas 1994, Babadzan 1999, Akin 2004, Jebens 2007, Lindstrom 2008.

33 Compare for example Keesing 1982 and 1989 with Trask 1991, Jolly and Thomas 1992a, Jolly 1992 and Thomas 1992.

34 While some authors regard colonial encounters and Westernization as a necessary prerequisite (cf. Keesing 1982: 300, Linnekin and Poyer 1990a: 14), others argue that indigenous notions of cultural difference already existed in pre-colonial times and that the emergence of kastam is merely the result of a heightened awareness of these differences (Jolly and Thomas 1992a: 241-241).



Fig. 29 Wooden board in Paul Munbal's men's house. The board had been painted by Conny Nekor, Munbal's adopted son. It reads "pasin kastam i bun tru blg (bilang) ples", that is, "the way of kastam is the (back)bone of the village". It shows insignia representative of kastam: a men's house at the centre of a breast ornament flanked by a ceremonial axe and a spear; at the base are a pig's head and two large shell rings and above it are a slit gong and a *tubuan* figure. Tingimbilik, village of Kamgot, 30 July 2000

answer that there was no indigenous term that covered the range of acts and meanings associated with the Tok Pisin word kastam. However, over the time *kep male* emerged as the most inclusive and appropriate local expression. It not only reflects the broad approach Anirians take in defining kastam, but also how creatively they deal with it in their attempts to make it a useful, future oriented and incorporating concept.

Kep male is a composite that consists of the words *kep*, literally to 'fetch' or 'hold' and *male*, 'place', 'ground' or, more generally, 'land'. *Kep male* means holding on to, respecting and caring for the land from which one originates and which one settles and depends on. The fact that the local expression for kastam centres on *male* not only points to the significance of land for the self-understanding and identity of Anir people, but also indicates that the concept of land and the execution of mortuary rituals are closely connected. A lineage's land in the true sense of the term is its base of existence. It is the place where spirits linked to the group dwell, where the forefathers once lived and where they are buried.³⁵ These ancestral connections are fundamental for the constitution of

³⁵ Carrying out a ritual is referred to as wokim kastam, an expression that not only implies the physical work involved, but also responsibility and concern; one 'works' or does things in a manner that is fitting to the land and the ancestors – to protect it, but also to follow its laws which were established by the forbears.

land rights, which in turn means that graves and burial sites as well as men's houses and the rituals staged in and around them are considered as evidence of these connections and therefore of a group's rights to the sites and the land surrounding them.

But kastam, or *kep male* respectively, not only refers to mortuary rituals and land rights. It involves a much broader field of ideas and activities that includes customary law, moral, ethical values and rules of behaviour, and matrilineality as a founding principle of social formation, succession and cooperation (fig. 29). These connotations of kastam clearly came to the fore in a project initiated by the catechist Judge Tomainda from Pikan village. It is representative of a larger discourse on Anir that reflects a generally positive evaluation of kastam as complementary and the attempt to reconcile it with other realms of practice. According to Judge, kastam was not designed to celebrate feasts, stage performances or to eat pork, but to create a basis for the wellbeing of the community and to make sure that they lead good lives – morally, spiritually and economically. Kastam from this perspective is a frame of mind and an instrument to regulate social relations in the attempt to foster harmonious coexistence and cooperation. Furthermore, as Judge emphasized, it may be interpreted as “part of God's plan” that is not opposed to Christian values.

The declared aim of the project is the alleviation of current problems through strengthening the matrilineal system and boosting the capacity of *matambia* leaders to influence the development of the islands positively. It involves research on the membership, leaders and history of, and the alliances between, the various men's house communities on Anir. Patrilineal succession is identified as the cause of many uncertainties and conflicts; to counter this, the project's supporters propose a stricter adherence to matrilineality and the authority of the mother's brother. The plan is to constitute a council of men's house leaders with the power to coordinate and assist in the planning and staging of rituals, to carry out conflict mediations,³⁶ to monitor succession to leadership and *matambia* membership and to identify elements of kastam that should be advanced, or inversely, abandoned.³⁷

36 Between 2000 and 2004 practically all conflicts were resolved in informal mediations that were led by groups of bigmen and in which the opposing parties were represented by their respective lineage leaders. The village court was practically defunct as neither the magistrate nor the clerks received their salaries.

37 It often was pointed out to me that equal opportunities for women should be promoted and that customary rules contradicting this claim should be abandoned. Although some time ago a communal decision was taken that allowed women to carry heavy loads on their heads when passing a men's house (instead of taking them down or having to make a detour), many women commented that with regard to women's rights not much progress had been made. A second aspect of kastam that is vigorously discussed is the issue of bride price; here a majority agrees that it should be retained but that a standard rate should be fixed. Although this had been done in the past under the auspices of the Catholic Church, the bride price has risen again recently, leading to problems of competition. Critics of this development demand a new communal decision to stabilize the bride price again. Clearly this would also be one of the issues for the proposed council of bigmen.

Independent of the question whether such a council ever will eventuate, the fact that Judge repeatedly managed to organize meetings on both islands where these ideas were discussed (and, in many respects, quite favourably) shows how significant the kastam discourse on Anir is and that it involves on-going negotiations about the advantages and possible failures of traditional behaviour patterns. The advocates of kastam not only see it as identity-establishing, but as essential for the continuity of the community as such. Consequently, they take an interest in bringing kastam into line with domains such as lotu, bisnis and gavman.

With regard to the relationship between kastam and gavman this involves the creation of an ideal image of leaders as strong, responsible and caring representatives, reflecting traditional local as well as Western democratic values. Corruption and selfish behaviour on the part of politicians are said not only to be incompatible with kastam, but actually believed to be the result of abandoning kastam. The relationship between bisnis and kastam does not seem to be as disparate and antithetical as observed by Foster on Tanga. Even today on Anir, cash crop production is often organized through cooperation within and between matrilineages, and although the proceeds go to individual families there are still many instances where the generated money is invested communally in ceremonial exchanges.

The relation between kastam and lotu is more difficult to assess because here views differ. The followers of the three evangelical churches tend to be at odds with kastam as their doctrines quite radically contradict its contents. In their view, many customary beliefs and practices are directly associated with Satan, and certain practices such as the use of magic, traditional dances or the consumption of betel nuts are strictly prohibited. On the basis of the tenet that, for true believers in God, the staging of mortuary rituals is neither appropriate nor necessary, many decide not to participate in these ceremonies any longer and try to avoid getting involved in rituals staged by their Catholic relatives who expect their support. Nevertheless, a number of Pentecostals maintained that they were not principally opposed to kastam, indicating that it was something worthy of protection. The staging of a large number of customary dances including a *tubuan* mask performance – which came as rather a surprise – during the inauguration of the Nanlel Pentecostal Church on Babase in 2001 revealed that even the Pentecostals are involved in a process of tentative finding and negotiation as to which aspects of kastam they wish to hold on to, and how they could adapt the selected elements to make them compatible with their religious ideas and values (figs. 31 to 33).

For the Catholics, and thus the majority of Anir islanders, Christian beliefs and morality do not necessarily contradict kastam. In this respect Anir is characterized by a

constellation that has been described as “Christianity-within-kastom as much as kastom-within-Christianity” in other regions in Melanesia (Lindstrom 2008: 169, cf. Barker 1990). It is the Catholics who primarily hold on to the system of commemorative rituals while, at the same time, adapting them to their Christian ideals. Prayers and sermons constitute a part of many kastam events; in turn, church services and liturgy often contain traditional elements, for example, local imagery, dances and communal feast meals (figs. 30, 34 to 36). The belief in ancestral and bush spirits is not considered as antithetical to Christianity but magical practices are evaluated according to intention and effect – as long as they are positively connoted and well meant, they are acceptable; sorcery and black magic are not.

In summary, many Anir islanders regard kastam as a positive, dynamic and embracing concept. The practices of kastam, in other words, the way rituals are planned and carried out is the topic of the remaining parts of this thesis. In the course of the following chapters I hope to show that the agency, flexibility and creativity with which Anirians deal with kastam in this increasingly globalized world, is actually typical of, if not an outcome of, the traditional approaches and strategies established and trained in ritual feasting.



Fig. 30 Members of the Pentecostal Church performing an action song during the flag raising ceremony at the opening of their new church building. Four flags were raised: the Papua New Guinea flag (red and black), the New Ireland flag (not visible), the US flag – to acknowledge and honour the Pentecostal Church of God's origin in America – and the flag of the Pentecostal Church (yellow/purple). Nanlel, village of Galisu, 20 November 2001



Fig. 31 Hermann Lenai with a leaf collar that is typical of *limbung* dances; it is adorned with two small painted boards with *tubuan* designs. Opening of the Pentecostal Church at Nanlel.



Fig. 32 Committal service at the funeral of Paul Munbal. The service was held after the ritual performance of a men's house song, *am furis*, and the customary distribution of pigs and food, and led by three catechists: Peter Pimpik (centre with cross), Judge Tomainda (to Pimpik's left, with blue T-Shirt) and Steven Tofi (to Pimpik's right, with patterned shirt). Nangingi, Kamgot village, 10 March 2002



Fig. 33 Two *tabaran* dancers belonging to a male dance group from the village of Naliu during their performance at Nanlel, at the so-called 4 Square Church.



Fig. 34 Cross in the church at Feni Mission; for the Easter Sunday service it was ornamented with customary insignia of authority and power: a spear and a ceremonial axe; the figure of Jesus Christ – who, so the local explanations, “should be honoured just like a customary bigman” – was adorned with a *kapkap* breast ornament made from clam and tortoise shell. 23 April 2000



Fig. 35 Three prospective young leaders during a ritual performance equipped with spears and ceremonial axes. Tomian, Pangkamda and Tulemanil (a younger brother, a classificatory brother, and a sister’s son of the organizer of the ritual, Patrik Saklo; cf. fig. 105). Kifil/Funmantui, village of Farangot, 24 January 2002



Figs. 36 Customary elements in Catholic church services. On high feast days the service is regularly organized and prepared by alternating communities; they often incorporate traditional elements. Members of the Natong community presenting a dance with customary features during which the bible is brought to the pulpit. Easter Sunday Service, Feni Mission, 31 March 2002

CHAPTER 2

RITUAL, PERFORMATIVITY AND AESTHETIC EXPERIENCE

Having provided an historical and ethnographic background, I now want to address the theoretical concepts and approaches that underlie my presentation and analysis of the Anir mortuary cycle and the various forms of aesthetic expression produced within its context. Ritual and art are both extensive fields that can be discussed with a focus on different thematic topics, applying and developing diverse theoretical concepts. Accordingly, both fields have triggered a large and expanding body of literature. Although I focus ‘only’ on the zones where art and ritual meet, it is beyond the scope of this thesis to comprehensively treat all the theoretical developments that underpin the analysis, let alone do justice to all the nuances and details they involve. What I am aiming at is the explication of some of the ideas that proved fruitful and influenced my interpretation of the Anir data, to point out interconnections between concepts and approaches I apply, and to show how they might be combined so that they mutually inform and enrich each other and help to better understand the case material. Here I concentrate on basic concepts that are relevant for the entire study and on an explanation how they relate to the ethnographic material discussed in the subsequent chapters. In these later chapters I will revisit some theoretical issues as this gives me the opportunity to discuss them together with the corresponding field data.

In their language Anirians neither have a term that corresponds to our word ‘ritual’ nor one that directly would translate as ‘art’. In this they do not differ from many other non-European peoples who also have no indigenous terms for either art or ritual (which, however, does not mean they do not have equivalent concepts¹). The terms art and ritual both represent Western concepts that – despite their pervasiveness and illusory ‘clear’ meaning – have been, and continue to be, debated at length. The recent decades

1 See for example Van Damme 1997 and Dutton 2001.

have seen a continuous broadening of both concepts, and it seems increasingly difficult to give a comprehensive analytical definition of either art or ritual that embraces all their possible dimensions.² Ritual, for example, has lost its close association with religion; instead, and for some time already, numerous systematic analyses have focussed on the ritual aspects of social actions in such diverse fields as law, politics, science, sports, art, theatre and the media. The scholars working in these fields often speak of ritualized acts rather than referring to them as ritual, and Catherine Bell (1992) even suggests that we should dispense with the term ritual and replace it with the concept of ritualization.³ When we turn to art, or rather, to the issues people who study art, aesthetics and art history deal with, we not only find that classical genres such as painting, sculpture and architecture have undergone tremendous changes, but also that new fields of study have emerged such as performance and techniques of the body, media, fashion and design, landscape art and – as far as aesthetics is concerned – even nature itself.

The broadening of the concepts regarding art and ritual went hand in hand with the dissolution, or at least the rapprochement, of ontological dichotomies such as sacred/profane, symbolic/real, theory/practice, mind/body and art/artefact. The attempt to overcome such long-established dichotomies is characteristic of postmodern approaches and unites scholars from various disciplines across the humanities and social sciences. It is based on developments that have become influential since the 1980s – often in reaction to structuralist and symbolic approaches which were believed to have lost touch with human practice, creativity, (inter)action, perception and experience as well as with human beings as persons, actors and agents. Particularly important with regard to anthropology were the shift to history/diachrony and the corresponding turn to practice, power and agency, on the one hand, and an increasing interest in phenomenology, sensual experience and embodiment, on the other.

These developments also underpin the approach to my Anir material. My primary concern is with the way Anir rituals, and the arts produced within their context, achieve power and efficacy. In order to follow this up, several questions need to be answered: what is their meaning and significance – in the eyes of contemporary Anir islanders and from an analyst's point of view? What effects do ritual and art have on the lives of Anirians? How do Anir islanders employ various forms of aesthetic expression to

2 See for example Goody 1977, de Coppet 1992, Platvoet 1995, and Michaels 2003 for ritual; Carroll 2000, Freeland 2001, and Raschke 2005 for art.

3 Bell (1992: 197) defines ritualization as “first and foremost a strategy for the construction of certain types of power relationships effective within particular social organizations.” Plavot (1995: 46) points out that ritualization, according to Bell, is “that privileged form of interaction of a social body within a symbolically constituted spatial and temporal context in which value-laden distinctions are used in strategic ways and means, which are specific to each culture, from other more quotidian forms of interaction as a more important, or more powerful, event.”

realize their aims, and which repercussions do their actions have with respect to both preservation and transformation of the ritual cycle? And, finally, what are the means by which ritual actions and artistic presentations develop impact and ‘enchantment’?

Speaking about the impact and ‘enchantment’ of art inevitably calls to mind Alfred Gell’s work *Art and Agency* (1998). Since its posthumous publication it has received as much praise as criticism and continues to be of considerable influence.⁴ As will become clear in the following, the broader implications and applicability of Gell’s theory of the art nexus, particularly the idea that works of art in certain contexts act or function like persons and thus mediate social agency, is of relevance to my own work on Anir art. Gell approaches art in performative terms as agentive and this accommodates to the study of the power of art, its sensual presence and the aesthetic experience of the viewer. However, Gell, by almost entirely foregrounding the function of art as an active participant in social interaction, dismisses semiotic approaches as well as such that investigate the appreciation and value of works of art. Thus he neither really engages with the actual experience of the recipients nor does he acknowledge how culturally specific codes, values, viewing practices, etc. influence the production or the perception of art. In this sense Howard Morphy’s analyses of Yolngu art, ritual and aesthetics, which combine an interest in social practice and agency with a concern for the form and meaning of art, correspond much better with the ways I came to see and understand Anir ceremonial and artistic practices.⁵

I proceed from the assumption that people stage rituals in order to bring about certain effects and to achieve something for themselves (which of course does not exclude the possibility that rituals may generate results or carry meanings that the actors are not aware of or do not intend). The various forms of aesthetic expression Anirians employ, among them the presentation of men’s house songs (see Part III), dances and masked performances (see Part IV), belong to the most prominent media to render a ritual efficacious. In the course of planning and carrying out the event, the people involved show considerable degrees of creativity; they do not simply reproduce established, stereotypic patterns. Rather, they act discerningly and strategically and, in doing so, go through a selection and decision-making process. The ritual cycle is characterized by rules that encompass templates and instructions for ways of acting, but because these rules often are more general than restrictive, they allow for freedom of choice. It is this flexibility that enables agents to act creatively and allows rituals to be carried out with a concern for topicality, which in turn contributes to the stability and permanency of the ritual system as a whole.

4 See Layton 2003, Bowden 2004, Rampley 2005 and Morphy 2008 for critiques of Gell’s *Art and Agency*.

5 See for example Morphy 1984, 1991, 2007.

This last point touches upon the first of three theoretical issues which I will discuss in the remainder of this chapter. This first concern deals with the relationship between structure and process, particularly the dynamics of ritual systems. This pertains as much to questions about historical changes and developments as to practice and the significance of rituals as events that are shaped by the agency of the people involved, and by the circumstances they find themselves in. This issue relates primarily to Part II of the thesis in which I focus on the content and execution of Anir mortuary rituals and the way the ritual cycle has changed over time. From there I move on to theoretical questions that relate more directly to the significance and efficacy of ritual and art, and the relationship between them. At centre stand questions such as: what do ritual and art mean to Anirians, or rather, how do they become meaningful to them? What do mortuary ceremonies and the arts produced in their context communicate and bring about? And by which mode do they achieve this? Here the way theories about ritual and theories about performance influence each other becomes relevant. The second theoretical point I discuss thus centres on the interrelationship between ritual and performance, and the question how performative approaches contribute to our understanding and interpretation of ritual. The third theoretical issue then deals with what I have come to call the ‘problem of meaning’.

Ritual and art often are regarded as media that primarily communicate messages and thus transport meaning; they appear to be paramount fields of symbolic action. This view, and the corresponding predilection for symbolic approaches, lost currency in the course of the crisis of representation and with the rise of studies that focused on practice and the question of how power constellations are constituted, shaped and maintained. Despite the justified criticism symbolic studies received, I do not think that it is necessary, or particularly fruitful, to give up semiotic analyses in favour of agency altogether; rather, the two approaches should be combined, as they highlight different, but interrelated aspects of social and ritual action. Here again, I find performance theory useful.

I start from the assumption that performances in part constitute ritual practice (rather than that ritual is a subgenre of performance) and that the performative sequences a ritual entails have a communicative/symbolic as well as an expressive/constitutive dimension. The theoretical section on the ‘problem of meaning’ addresses the question of how rituals become meaningful for the participants, and deals with the dialectic relationship between representation, on the one hand, and presentation, expression and embodiment, on the other. Important in this context is the notion that the sensual, that is, the aesthetic experience of rituals and the arts they involve should be understood as a cognitive, epistemological process.

My remarks on the second and third theoretical complex – performance and performativity, and the ‘problem of meaning’ – form the basis for understanding the way I approach the ritual and artistic activities discussed in Parts III and IV, namely Anirian’s presentations of men’s house songs and the numerous dances they stage. Performative approaches have become central with regard to the study of ritual as well as of the arts, with theories on ritual often overlapping those on art and aesthetics. In Part III on the *am furis* performances, I concentrate on the relationship between symbolic and constitutive aspects of action (and their connectedness to memory and creativity). In Part IV, in which I deal with masked and other ritual dances, the focus lies more on the aesthetic dimension, that is on sensual experience and evaluation.

The dynamics of ritual

As indicated above, ritual is itself a dynamic category, and definitions have changed over time. I want to start this section with one of the most comprehensive definitions of ritual I know. It contains classical as well more recently developed criteria and therefore also reflects the theoretical debates on the concept of ritual. The definition stems from Jan Platvoet (1995: 41-42); according to him ritual is:

that ordered sequence of stylized social behaviour that may be distinguished from ordinary interaction by its alerting qualities which enable it to focus the attention of its audiences – its congregation as well as a wider public – onto itself and cause them to perceive it as a special event, performed at a special place and/or time, for a special occasion and/or with a special message. It effects this by the use of the appropriate, culturally specific, consonant complexes of polysemous core symbols, of which it enacts several redundant transformations by multi-media performance, thereby achieving not only the smooth transmission of a multitude of messages – some overt, most of them covert – and stimuli, but also the strategic purposes – most often latent, sometimes manifest – of those who perform it *ad intra*, within unified congregations or *ad extra* in situations of plurality.

Classically, ritual has been regarded as something that is separate, and thus needs to be distinguished, from non-ritual behaviour. According to Humphrey and Laidlaw (1994), it is a ‘special mode of action’, which – as Platvoet points out – takes the form of “stylized social behaviour” and is perceived as a “special event”. Today ritual is considered to be a phenomenon *sui generis*, the function and meaning of which cannot be localized outside the actions it encompasses. This distinguishes contemporary approaches from those of scholars such as Durkheim, Malinowski or Freud, and is equivalent to the

dismissal of the idea that rituals are carried out in order to satisfy needs which ultimately have non-ritual (for example social or psychological) backdrops (cf. Krieger and Belliger 2003[1998]: 7, Handelman 2005).

The signs and mechanisms through which ritual becomes ritual have been discussed under the term ‘framing’⁶ Rituals have a signalled beginning and an end, and they use markers, for example, objects or patterns of behaviour through which the ritual is distinguished from non-ritual actions. Moreover, framing encompasses what Gilbert Lewis (1980: 19-22) described as “ruling” and the “alerting quality of ritual”: people know how to perform their rituals, that is, they know and agree upon the rules of how to conduct it (although these rules might be negotiated). Ritual rules usually are public and explicit. This contrasts with the meaning of ritual – what it communicates or symbolizes – which may be implicit or esoteric and various, that is, open to interpretation on several levels. The execution of a ritual first of all requires the decision to carry it out – rituals are stipulated (cf. Humphrey and Laidlaw 1994: 143). Lewis further explains that the rules that determine the ritual delimit and mark the elements they regulate (actions, objects, sounds, smells, colours etc.) as significant. They lift them above the ordinary, which has an alerting effect. This, in turn, equals the message ‘this is a ritual’. It raises the participant’s awareness and focuses their attention (cf. Tambiah 1985[1979]: 126-127). The cognitive mindset that emerges puts actions, statements and symbols the ritual comprises into a broader context or frame. It assigns a purpose to the ritual and structures its elements around broader cultural categories and values, thereby influencing the expectations towards the ritual as well as the interpretations of it.

Two other features of ritual mentioned by Plavot and often listed in definitions or circumscriptions, are symbolization and performativity. Unlike framing, which is an aspect of ritual that is generally agreed upon, they have been debated extensively. As I deal with these aspects in the second and third theoretical section, I continue here with another characteristic, namely formalization. By this I mean that rituals involve prescribed, stylized, stereotypic, repetitive, and sometimes redundant, acts. Because of this, ritual was usually conceived of in earlier definitions as the unvarying repetition of passed-down actions and patterns of behaviour; what was emphasized was the traditionalism and stable, apparently changeless structure of ritual. It was regarded as one of the primary means by which cultural norms, values and conceptual schemes are transmitted, and continuity and permanence guaranteed. A comparative diachronic and cross-cultural view, however, shows that many rituals, which superficially look similar, are in fact characterized by considerable differences (cf. Jennings 1982).

6 This term originally goes back to Bateson (1956), was later taken up by Goffman (1974) and from there entered ritual theory (cf. Gerholm 1988).

This brings me to the relationship between approaches that take an interest in history and approaches that emphasize practice and agency. The critique of structural/semiotic approaches was primarily aimed at the neglect, or even the denial, of the impact of historical events and processes upon cultural systems, and on the relevance of the acting agent, person and self involved in these events. Following from this, scholars started to analyze the interrelationship between structure and process in order to explain the genesis, reproduction and transformation of socio-cultural systems: how does structure/the system shape practice, and what is the impact of practice upon structure/the system? Part and parcel of these discussions were questions of power and agency, the latter understood as the “socio-culturally mediated capacity to act” (Ahearn 2001: 109) and, with regard to human beings, their ability to affect the formation of the social realities they live in. The studies published in this field are far too numerous to be reviewed here, which is why I single out only some of the earlier and most influential representatives. I start with the works of the sociologists Pierre Bourdieu and Anthony Giddens.

Bourdieu in his *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (1977, French original published in 1972) set forth a theory of action that tries to take the impact of external social structures as well as the experiences of subjective individuals into account. Crucial to this was his concept of “habitus”, which describes dispositions, or schemes of thought, perception and action that often are embodied and/or work on a subconscious or pre-reflexive level. The individual acquires these dispositions in socialization, but is able to further develop or alter them in response to the actual conditions he/she encounters. Anthony Giddens in *The Constitution of Society* (1984) published his theory of structuration. He defined structure as a set of rules and resources agents apply in social action. What characterizes structure is its “duality”: structure constitutes and shapes human agency as much as it is the medium of this constitution. This means that people are constrained by and reproduce structure because they draw upon rules they have learned through socialization and experience; at the same time they ‘create’ structure by reflexively and strategically using their resources. This process of simultaneous reproduction and production of structure in social interaction Giddens called “structuration”.

In anthropology, early voices that called for more consideration of practice include Frederick Barth (1966) and Bruce Kapferer (1976), who became associated with transactional analysis. In 1975 Roy Wagner published his book *The Invention of Culture* (revised and expanded edition 1981). In search of a theory of signification befitting the time he investigated symbolization processes and the creation of meaning in view of the dialectic between acting subjects and the cultural system they live in. He argued that people continuously manipulate the conventional symbols of their culture. Although

conventions have a regulating and constraining effect, innovation and invention allow the social agents to shape their culture rather than being determined by it.

With the focus shift to practice, the analysis of everyday action became foregrounded, but rituals remained important too. They were now analyzed as events, as a special form of practice. Clifford Geertz in his article “Religion as a Cultural System” (1966) argued that religious ideas and beliefs only find expression in concrete acts. Rituals, according to Geertz, constitute such acts; they are “cultural performances” in which the emotional and conceptual aspects of religious life converge, clothing them in an aura of factuality (1966: 4, 24-35). The notion of factuality – the idea that meaning not only is represented and reproduced in social action but also constituted – and the emergence of cultural performance as a category are points that link practice oriented approaches to performative ones. This, however, is a topic I will return to later. For now I wish to continue with the works by Marshall Sahlins and Victor Turner: Sahlins, because he set out explicitly to overcome the “notional opposition, found everywhere in the human sciences, between ‘structure’ and ‘history’” (1985: vii-viii); and Turner because he combined his interest in symbolic anthropology with an interest in psychoanalytic aspects and a phenomenological/existential perspective, thus illuminating the dialectic between tradition and the creativity of acting subjects.

Sahlins defined structure as “the symbolic relations of cultural order”, but not without pointing out that although individuals are guided by structure they never mechanically reproduce it: “culture is historically altered in action” (1985: vii). It is through action that people bring their cultural categories into play; thereby they may be subjecting them to risk because in the concrete event the categories might not be congruent with reality. Actors tend to creatively reflect on their conventional schemes. If this reconsideration involves a change of meanings, the positional relations between the cultural categories might change as well and a “system-change” or “structural transformation” is induced. Sahlins illustrated his theory of cultural change mainly with examples taken from the history of Hawai‘i, and although ritual theory was not his focus, many of the examples involve ceremonies and ritual events (cf. Sahlins 1981, 1985, 1995, 2000). In his works Sahlins emphasized continuity in change. He concentrated on showing how indigenous orders of meaning were applied in inter-cultural encounters to make sense of and shape even cataclysmic historical changes in ways that allowed for their own survival. Such continuity should not be taken for granted (see below), but Sahlin’s model of cultural change also contains the possibility to theorize on discontinuous change in so far as several consecutive transformations in which the positional relations of cultural categories were altered might lead to constellations and interpretations that represent something new or radically different. What remains open though, is the question what kinds of development need to happen to induce such structural changes.

Turner is well known for having coined the concepts of liminality and *communitas* (Turner 1967, 1969). He showed that in transitional phases of many rites of passage the participants (particularly the initiates) exist in a “betwixt-and-between” state of “no longer – not yet”, that they experience a different status than in everyday life and that in these phases cultural symbols are often disassembled, mixed and recombined in surprising or even contradictory ways. The order of everyday life, in other words, tends to be turned upside down. This not only means that participants in a liminal state are forced to reflect on their culture and its conventions, but also that the liminal state opens up space for reorientation. Liminality is therefore indispensably linked to creativity and carries the potential of innovation. In his later work, Turner (1982) extended the concept of liminality to investigate historical cases of upheaval as well as modern industrial societies. In the course of this he developed the term “liminoid” to refer to interstitial zones, activities and times set apart from work in modern societies.

With regard to the creative processes inherent in rituals, Turner (1982) distinguished between conservative, or “tribal”, and modern societies. In the former, liminal phases in rituals allow for glimpses into alternative life worlds and modes of existence, which, however, always leads back to the established structures of everyday life. In this sense, rituals are a means of confirming the existing order, although they do so by providing room for the experience of alterity and creativity. Turner believed that the liminoid phases that characterize modern societies involve a moment of social criticism which in turn leads to transformation or to the emergence of the socially new and innovative. He thereby created a dichotomy that typifies societies along an axis from “traditional-conservative-static” to “modern-progressive-dynamic” – a dichotomy that parallels Lévi-Strauss’ (1966: 234-35) “cold” and “hot” societies (cf. Förster 2003).

Despite this criticism Turner must undoubtedly be credited with having brought to our attention the creative and innovative potential inherent in rituals and ritual-like activities. Influenced by Turner’s work – including his concepts of the “social drama” and “ritual play” – as well as by Bakhtin’s emphasis on the power of laughter, the grotesque and the carnivalesque to “free human consciousness, thought and imagination for new potentialities” and induce “great changes, even in the social field” (Bakhtin 1968: 49) a number of studies on carnivals in various parts of the world were conducted. Some of these, particularly earlier ones, stressed that during carnival the common and accepted norms and constellations of power are temporarily repealed, but that, in the long run, the carnival helps to confirm the established social and normative order. Others showed that the social criticism and the alternative scenarios that come into play in some carnivals do not – or at least not always – merely involve fantasies that become temporarily real, only to lead the participants back to the hardships of everyday life once the time of feasting

is over, but that actions during the carnival are actually intended to bring about change, and that the latter possesses a revolutionary potential.⁷

After the attention shifted to the way individual rituals are carried out, and to their variability and flexibility, former opposites such as tradition and change, convention and invention/innovation, meaning and context turned into dialectic pairs. In the course of an event, structure does not congeal, rather it is in social action and discourse that it emerges, can be negotiated and altered (see for example Ortner 1984, Baumann 1986, Gerholm 1988). The transformative power that ritual may gain in this process now is seen by many as one of its pivotal features, while the structures, functions and meanings of ritual acts are perceived as contextually situated and discursively embedded orientations for practice (Rao and Köpping 2000: 3). It is generally accepted today that revaluation, the adaptation to modified circumstances and dynamic change are the norm rather than the exception. Rituals may serve as media of preservation or as media of change, and it takes as much energy to uphold their stability as to modify them (Michaels 2003: 4).

My account of the Anir mortuary cycle relies on the studies cited insofar as it is based on the assumption that continuity and change are not mutually exclusive, but part of a larger and integral process of continuous transformation. I use the term transformation to denote gradual change that involves innovation but not radical breaks with the past. The Anir ritual system provides a frame and regulating order that allows individuals and groups to find hold and regenerate in times of insecurity. The sets of rules and relations that regulate the ritual system is what I understand by structure. My notion of structure implies flexibility and takes into account the significance of agents pursuing their own ends through cultural strategies. Rules and relations are not supra-organic entities that reproduce themselves outside human action, rather, they are employed by acting subjects in concrete events in order to bring about intended results. Moreover, rules and relations serve as guidelines and they are general because they allow for a variety of performances to achieve the wanted effect.

My primary aim in Part II, which focuses on the content, historical development and execution of Anir mortuary rituals (analysing concrete examples, including motivations, aims and agendas of participants involved), is to highlight the dynamics of the ritual cycle and to illustrate how it not only allows for, but enables, change: the flexibility of its structure gives room for intentionality and agency, variation and creativity. In the process of practice, structure is applied and reproduced, but also reflected upon and imaginatively altered. It is precisely this capacity to ensure continuity while incorporating

7 See Kelly and Kaplan 1990 for an overview of works that discuss ritual as subverting/altering, or, alternatively, reproducing structure.

change at the same time that explains the resilience of the ritual system, and it is exactly in this sense that the Anir mortuary cycle endows life with meaning and the people with identity.

Creativity is a topic that runs through the whole study, and in its course I provide numerous examples of how Anirians, through improvisation, innovation and adaptation, creatively shape the ritual system and the elements it comprises. In Part III, which deals with the *am furis* men's house performances, I will address the concept of creativity in more detail and discuss the relation between creativity and memory. This also touches upon aspects of embodiment and performativity. The 'discovery' of performance, in turn, as a category and analytical concept in anthropology and ritual studies went hand in hand with focussing on the issue of practice and the event. It is these developments I turn to now.

Performance and performativity

Due to its complexity, ambiguity and broad applicability, performance has become an "umbrella term" (Wirth 2002: 10) that is used across the disciplines for a large variety of phenomena and ideas. Marvin Carlson aptly calls performance "an essentially contested concept".⁸ This has to do with the wide range of activities and practices that have been analyzed as performances and the different aspects they bear. Because the performance idea has significantly influenced the manner in which art and ritual are viewed and interpreted today, I want to address the ideas performance and performativity are associated with before I return to the topic of ritual to review how anthropologists contributed to the development of the performance model.

According to Catherine Bell (1997: 73) performance theory "can appear to be a welter of confusing emphases and agendas." In order to avoid such confusion, I distinguish between three different (but nevertheless interlinked) fields of performance and dimensions of performativity. The first is associated with John Austin's theory of speech acts, that is, with the realization and efficacy of linguistic utterances. The second refers to theatricality and staging and deals with performance as artistic practice in theatre, dance, music and performance art. The third concerns the performative aspects of cultural actions such as ritual and ceremony, healing, play, sports, popular entertainment, politics and everyday behaviour.

8 Carlson 1996: 1, quoting Strine et al. 1990: 183.

Performativity in a first sense thus refers to the capacity of performances to constitute meaning and shape reality. The use of the term in this sense goes back to Austin's speech act theory. In *How to Do Things with Words* (1962) Austin called linguistic utterances through which an action is performed and executed "performative speech acts". Characteristic of them is that, in the act of speaking, what is being expressed is immediately put into effect: saying is doing. Performative speech acts generate social facts and identities, rather than representing or describing them. They cannot be true or false, they only can fail or be successful. Since the transfer of Austin's concept of performativity from linguistic expressions to social acts and everyday behaviour (for example by Goffman 1956 and Tambiah 1985[1979]), it designates their capacity to be executive, self-referential and by, and in, themselves constitute meaning; it thus endorses theories of practice and the active shaping of reality in the social process.

Performativity in its second sense refers to the 'staging' of an act or action, that is, to the fact that it is done for and/or to address someone. What becomes important in analyses of performativity in this sense is the investigation of the context and conditions of the enactment of the event in question, of the role and interrelationship of the persons that actively or passively participate in it and of their perception and experience of it. This approach to performance and performativity developed from the study of theatre and dramatics. It found its way into other fields through the application of the drama analogy to social action and through studies that examine similarities and differences between theatrical and other events. What proved to be problematic here is the relation between illusion and reality. In the Western history of ideas there is a prevailing notion that theatre stands in opposition to real life. From this point of view theatre with its staging and role-playing becomes associated with acting in the sense of pretending, or simulating, and thus runs the danger of being identified as inauthentic. The transfer of theatrical metaphors to non-Western cultures and their practices may therefore be fraught with risk. But while some have warned against its dangers (for example Schieffelin 1998), others point to Western traditions that involve a concept of 'theatre as life' (for example Hastrup 1998, Prager 2000 discussing Artaud) or they emphasize that many social practices (in the West as well as beyond) entail, and to a certain degree even depend on, staging, and that theatricality always is an integral element of the performative constitution of reality (Fabian 1999, Rao and Köpping 2000).

The third sense of performativity is connected to the second insofar as performing, that is, carrying out an action, always is a process. A closer look at the composition of the verb 'to perform' reveals that it consists of a static element – 'form', and in extension, *Gestalt*, figure, image – and the active, process-indicating prefix 'per': the focus becomes the process and dynamics of creating form. Performativity in this

sense points to processuality in which the dynamic is stressed vis-à-vis the static. This notion of performativity was largely developed in view of cultural performances.⁹ It emphasizes that culture and society not simply 'are', but 'happen' and that they only exist in so far as social agents create them. Here we also find a connection to performativity in the first constitutive sense as it is through performative acts that culture/society is enacted and reality is fashioned.

In summary, studies that draw on a performance model¹⁰ are characterized by the following features: firstly, like theories that emphasize practice, they accentuate the event and the active and creative roles that the participants play (for example Parker 2003, Fischer-Lichte et. al 2003). The difference is that they underline the uniqueness and ephemeral nature of the event, that is, the fact that it only exists in the moment of being carried out and, strictly speaking, cannot be repeated. Where the investigation of the conditions of the staging and execution of the performance is central, the concept of 'framing', which I already discussed above in the context of ritual, also becomes an issue. A second feature of studies with a performance focus, closely connected to the active imagery of performative events, is the emphasis on physical aspects, that is questions of mediality and embodiment, and sensory experience (for example Fischer-Lichte et al. 2001, Krämer 2004 and below). The third characteristic is the emphasis on efficacy. Many performance-oriented studies not only stress the dynamic character of the event – for example in showing that performative action in rituals or theatrical productions involve transformation – they also ask how this is achieved. The corresponding analyses stress that it is exactly because of their active and process-oriented nature that performances do what they do, and show that, and how, the power of performative events is intricately linked to their physical and sensual qualities (e.g. Schechner 2003[1981], Parkin 1991, cf. Bell 1997: 74-75).

On the basis of this outline I now return to the topic of ritual, that is to the question how anthropological studies of ritual contributed to the development of performance models. The first person to mention here is Victor Turner. His collaboration with the performance director Richard Schechner is famous but occurred relatively late in his life. One of his most important contributions to a performance-oriented approach to ritual long predates his acquaintance with Schechner. It rests on his analysis of rituals as 'social dramas' where he used the theatrical metaphor to describe ritual as a cultural agent and

9 Turner (1982), for example, stressed that performativity should be understood in a process-oriented sense as carrying out, that is, executing and completing an action.

10 The readers edited by Auslander (2003) and Bial (2004) provide a good overview on important classical and recent texts by performance scholars. Hughes-Freeland (1998), and Rao and Köpping (2000) edited publications that examine the relationship between ritual and performance. For review articles see Beeman 1993, C. Bell 1998, Grimes 2004, Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 2004.

means of transformation. Important to note is that Turner encountered the ‘social drama’ in the field. He considered social practices as carrying their own theoretical potential and felt that the analogy almost ‘imposed’ itself upon him during his observations of Ndembu practices (Turner 1974: 23, cf. Grimes 2004: 113, Kapferer 2004: 38).

Turner developed the idea of the social drama already in his first ethnography (1957). Although this early work is functionalist in orientation, the social drama with its four stages of breach, crisis, redress, and reintegration or schism took a process-oriented form.¹¹ When Turner shifted his focus to ritual, he adapted the concept of the social drama to Van Gennep’s three-fold rites of passage scheme. He developed a theory in which rituals appear as important points of transition and transformation and as media through which social groups and/or single persons establish and regenerate themselves (Turner 1967, 1969 as explained above). Emphasizing experience, Turner concentrated on the process of ritual as a generative source of symbols, values and cultural categories, in which constructs of persons and their relations might be created (cf. also Turner 1986). He only later turned to theatre and its relationship to ritual, and quite clearly associated the term performance with role-playing and staging (Turner and Turner 1982, Turner 1987). According to Grimes (2004: 113), Turner “showed little interest in dramatism, the extended application of the drama analogy, the systematic exposition of either ritual or of non-theatrical life *as if* they were theatrical.” Showing that much of the power of performative actions rests on their process-oriented form and lies in their generative, transformative and creative force probably was Turner’s most important and lasting contribution to theories of performance.

Stanley Tambiah was the first anthropologist to explicitly call for “A Performative Approach to Ritual” (1985[1979]). His article was a reaction to the opposition of thought versus action in which Tambiah underlined the social rather than the conceptual dimensions of ritual in order to explain their efficacy. Accordingly, he did not describe rituals as performances that resemble drama or theatre, but conceived of them as activities that as such generate effective action. Tambiah (1985[1979]: 185) defined ritual as a culturally constructed system of symbolic communication and added that ritual actions were performative in three ways:

in the Austinian sense (...), wherein saying something is also doing something as a conventional act; in the quite different sense of a staged performance that uses multiple media by which the participants experience the event intensively; and in the sense of indexical values – I derive this concept from Peirce – being attached to and inferred by actors during the performance.

11 It clearly reflects the influence of Max Gluckman and the Manchester School’s emphasis on the analysis of social processes on the basis on situational and extended case studies.

Taking recourse to Austin and Searle, Tambiah explains how ritual actions, beyond their semantic meaning, may become effective as constitutive and regulative acts. Then he moves on to illustrate that the efficacy of rituals rests on the use of multiple media (verbal formulae, songs, dances, music, paraphernalia and other objects, etc.) and on the formality and redundancy of ritual acts. He also points out that rituals only seemingly consist of unvarying recurrences and that redundancy in many rituals serves “interesting and complex” functions (1985[1979]: 140), for example, stimulating a sense of creative variation or ensuring that important messages are transmitted more than once and over several channels. It is because of their specific (that is, performative) form and organization that rituals function as spheres of institutionalized, heightened social communication and as agents of transformation.

Tambiah’s third observation about ritual’s performativity looks at the way rituals reflect and influence the social hierarchy and power of the actors: rituals involve features and symbols that have an indexical, duplex structure because they simultaneously point in a semantic and a pragmatic direction. The grade of elaborateness and grandiosity, the choice of site and the duration of the ritual, for example, point to meanings that relate to their cosmological content. At the same time, they are indexically related to the participants because in, the course of the ritual, the values attached to grandiosity, site, etc. are existentially linked to the participants, “creating, affirming, or legitimating their social positions and powers” (1985[1979]: 156). Although Tambiah’s article is dated insofar as he assumed that rituals involve unitary sets of messages and therefore help to transcend and overcome situations of distress or social conflict rather than being fraught with risk and transporting polyvalent messages, his “Performative Approach to Ritual” represented a major contribution to the opening up of the field in which the interplay between anthropological/sociological, dramaturgical and linguistic concepts of performance could be explored and developed.

The efficacy of rituals/performances was also of interest to Geertz and Lewis. Geertz, as mentioned earlier, perceived rituals as ‘cultural performances’ and like Tambiah he defined them as spheres of condensed symbolic communication. From this point of view the Balinese cockfight becomes ‘deep play’ in which the community offers a commentary on itself that can, or rather should, be read like a text (Geertz 1972). Although Geertz frequently used expressions like performance, drama, theatre and play to describe and analyze ritual and ceremonial behaviour, he preferred the text analogy to the drama analogy, because he thought that the latter was too closely associated with the danger of downplaying cultural and historical specificities (Geertz 1983: 19-35). The critique that has been raised against Geertz’ notion that culture can be read like a text by the anthropologist ‘over the shoulders’ of his informants is sufficiently known and does

not need to be repeated here (e.g. Capranzano 1986, Rudolph 1992). What is noteworthy with regard to performative approaches to ritual, however, is the fact that Geertz, in a similar way as Turner (and although Geertz criticized Turner for privileging experience over of communication), located the power of ritual in its capacity to simultaneously affect intellect and emotion. This anticipated an insight that became very important in later studies: in the course of performative action, rituals not only discursively unfold agency through the mediation of messages and meaning, but because they express things in directly sensual form, thereby allowing the participants to ‘grasp’, feel and experience them emotionally and aesthetically (e.g. Handelman and Lindquist 2005, Hobart and Kapferer 2005).

The relationship between symbolic meaning, aesthetic experience and anthropological interpretation was the theme of Lewis’ book *Day of Shining Red* (1980). He noted that, among the Gnao of the East Sepik Province, the people who were involved in a ritual often did not offer an interpretation of the symbolic meaning of their actions, that they sometimes were unaware, or ignorant or simply not interested in them, or that they had differing opinions on them. Rather than locating significance in the cognitive content, what was important to most Gnao was the knowledge of how to perform the ritual. This led Lewis to ask what the grounds for the interpretation of ritual are and to the conclusion that the communication of symbolic meaning often is neither the aim of nor at the forefront of a ritual. Lewis suggests that rituals evoke rather than represent meaning and explains that they are performances that, in important ways, work like art. He thus does not deny that rituals involve meanings, but emphasizes that they may be multiple and variant, and that they depend on the contexts and persons involved. Ritual, according to Lewis, is an arena of interpretation, the meaning and significance of which should be approached by foregrounding the emotional and aesthetic experiences of participants, not by merely concentrating on cognitive contents. This, in turn, is an appeal to which I will return in the next section.

Approaches to ritual based on performance models were strongly criticized by Bell (1992: 37-46, 1997: 72-76, 1998). One of her main points was that they devalue ritual action because they assume latent meanings and thus make ritual “a second-stage representation of prior values” (1992: 45). The problem with Bell’s critique – especially the 1992 version – is that she portrayed performance-oriented studies of ritual as merely applying a drama analogy which in the end leads to little else than interpreting rituals like texts. Bell herself argued for practice theory because it focuses on “the irreducible act itself” (1997: 81) and thus allows explaining the strategic dimensions of ritual action and the way rituals construct power relationships.

Although performance approaches appeared in a more positive light in Bell's 1997 and 1998 accounts (she for example credited them with emphasizing human agents as active creators), she overlooked some important aspects. With regard to her concern about power, I would like to make two comments: firstly, as performance-oriented studies emphasize human agency, they are well suited to account for strategic action and able to explain how hierarchical structures and constellations of power are maintained or created. Works like those of Davis (1986), Connerton (1989), Conquergood (1989), Fabian (1990) and Butler (1993) – all except one published before the appearance of Bell's *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice* (1992) – illustrate that performance and practice oriented approaches complement rather than stand in opposition to each other.

Secondly, focusing on the need to account for the construction of social power, Bell seems to have lost sight of the power that rituals embody and exert. This seems to be related to her view that performance-based studies of ritual merely replace the text metaphor by the drama metaphor. Although in 1997 Bell credited performance studies of construing rituals as sensual events, thus bringing their emotional, physical and aesthetic aspects to attention, she upheld her implicit censure that they basically remained rooted in old concepts of symbolic representation. That this is not necessarily the case, and that performance approaches are by all means suitable to illuminate the complexity of ritual beyond simple representation is one of the topics of the next section.

The 'problem of meaning'

In his article on performativity in ritual Tambiah noted that the various ways 'meaning' is conceived are a "deadly source of confusion" (1985[1979]: 138). His assessment still holds today, and the 'problem of meaning' is twofold. On the one hand, it refers to the critique of approaches that are based on a narrow concept of meaning and the risk of misunderstandings that go with a championing of semiotic approaches; on the other, it points to the complexity of meaning when it is approached in an encompassing way, and the difficulties one faces in dealing with its multilayeredness and different facets.

Classically, the study of meaning is viewed as the theme of semantics and semiotics which have their roots in linguistics and treat language as a system of signs in communication. Transferred to social praxis, cultural acts and art, meaning, quite clearly, is also associated with signification, representation and symbolization. A ritual act or an aesthetic object means something because it refers to, and thus represents, stands for, or symbolizes something else (which may be hidden or implicit and may need decoding).

The difficulty with this straightforward view, however, lies in its one-dimensionality. Numerous studies published in recent decades have shown that one needs to be careful with essentialist assumptions about meaning that propose that actions or objects have fixed or ‘true’ meanings as if they existed outside the contexts in which they emerge.

Thus, when I explore the meaning of an action, performance or aesthetic object, I am not expecting one-directional correlations in the form of *A* signifies *B* or hyper-coherent, exhaustive symbolic systems. What I have in mind is a complex network that encompasses multilayeredness and multivalency. Meaning entails the possibility of different simultaneous connotations, implications, allusions or interpretations that one or several agents associate with the respective unit. Since meaning in this sense only emerges in its socio-cultural context, it also alludes to the values people attach to the action, concept or artefact in question. Furthermore, and because someone who understands a thing usually has an idea of the way it comes into being and works in the world, meaning inheres an awareness of impacts and effects.

The study of meaning in anthropology has for a long time been perceived – and unfortunately still is by some – merely as the study of culture as a system of representational signs or symbols that do little more than communicate cognitive contents. Contrary to this view, I argue that contemporary approaches to meaning go well beyond explaining representation or the emblematic character of actions or artefacts. Rather than asking *what* something means, they ask *how* it means. This includes, first of all, a sensitivity to the complexities of the processes through which meaning is generated, in other words, to polyvalency, as well as to questions about materiality, embodiment and sensual perception, and thus to non-representable elements and non-discursive aspects. Secondly, contemporary approaches are based on the assumption that the constitutive force and effects of an event or object are an integral part of its meaning; thus, the question of agency and power is also incorporated. From this vantage point semiotic or symbolic analyses are not an end in itself, but an integral component of basic research, a fundamental analytic strategy or grounding methodology that carries over into the investigation of further aspects such as the relationship and interaction between the agents and their ‘work’, its engendering quality and the way it is aesthetically experienced.

I agree with the sociologist and historian of science Andrew Pickering who noted a shift from a “representational idiom” to a “performative idiom” and pointed out that the latter includes the concerns of the former: the performative idiom “is a *rebalancing* of our understanding of science away from pure obsession with knowledge and toward a recognition of science’s material powers” (Pickering 1995: 7, emphasis in the original). The so-called ‘performative turn’ therefore does not lead to a radical renunciation of the

paradigms of the text, but involves more the chance and challenge to combine semiotic analyses with a focus on practice, process, staging and mediality (cf. Benthien 2006). In the remainder of this chapter I will discuss works – mainly from performance studies and anthropology, but including references to art history and aesthetics – that illustrate the shift from primarily representative approaches to meaning, to encompassing ones that meet the above-mentioned challenge.

I start with approaches developed with regard to meaning in theatre and drama because they deal most thoroughly with the complex interrelationship between the various elements that a performance consists of, and thus create a more in-depth awareness of the multitude of factors that have to be taken into account. Analyses of meaning in theatrical productions grew from semiotics. Performances were treated as complex phenomena involving a large number of units that belong to different sign systems: one is not merely confronted with verbal expression and the representation of a dramatic text, but with a *mise-en-scène*, a synthesis of the arts. Accordingly, theatre semioticians distinguish a multitude of signs: linguistic (words, sentences), para-linguistic (intonation, sound volume etc.) and other acoustic signs (e.g. music); kinetic signs (mimics, gesture, proxemics); signs pertaining to the actor (mask, make-up, costume, hairstyle); and signs that refer to space and composition (stage design, lighting, props used, auditorium etc.).¹²

The difficulty that arises when studying these signs emerges from the fact that many of them do not ‘work’ like linguistic signs where a signifier can be clearly allocated to a signified, and from the circumstance that signs in performance cannot be understood in isolation but have to be interpreted in their interdependency in a network of sign systems. Performance semioticians therefore emphasize the “multiplicity and simultaneity of signs” (Pavis 1998: 254), the fact that they are “presented *en masse*, and it is *en masse* that we interpret them” (Counsell 1996: 10), and the circumstance that they are “in constant flux, both in relationship to each other and in shifting of function” (Carlson 2003b:1219).

A special feature of signs in performance is what has been called their mobility, dynamism or transformability: the fact that they are mobile with respect to both signifier and signified. Several signifiers, for example certain elements of the text, scenery, soundscape or gesticulation, may all denote a single signified (for example a ‘tree’). At the same time a single signifier (a word or gesture) may have more than one signified. The consequence are multiple meanings, ambiguity and polyvalence, which can emerge within a single signifying system, or through the interplay between two or more signifying systems (see, for example, Elam 1980: 12, Pavis 1998: 335). Theatre analysts use slightly

12 Fischer-Lichte 1983, 1990; cf. Elam 1980, Helbo 1987, Counsell 1996, Emigh 1996.

different but comparable concepts to account for the interrelationship of the different sign systems. What links their theories is the assumption that the performance as a whole forms a semiotic unit which is interpreted according to a superordinate principle that establishes coherence and regulates the relations within each system, and those between the different sign systems, in a way so that, even when a performance harbours schism and fragmentation, participants are invited to weave disparate elements together into a single, overall meaning.¹³

Another important factor with regard to the generation and communication of meaning has to do with the materiality of signs and the way we experience them. As theories of performance overlap here, or at least adjoin, with theories of the body, of sensual perception and aesthetic effects, I wish to turn away from theatre semiotics for a moment and introduce the work of the literary scholar Host Ruthrof who, in his book *Semantics of the Body* (1997), argues that natural language is merely a symbolic grid that does not signify unless it is brought to life by non-linguistic signs. Ruthrof takes an approach that is informed by Peircean semiotics and Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology and therefore incorporates the body and our senses as the epistemic apparatus that we use to experience, make sense of and constitute the world. According to Ruthrof, the meaning of linguistic expressions is based on our embodied experience of reality, of the world *in toto*. The latter is signifiatory rather than physicalistically given, and its experience is a constitutive process. Meaning arises because the structure of a linguistic expression is "a specific link between sign systems, rather than a relation between two incompatible domains: the signs of language and a non-semiotic external world" (1997:24). Meaning therefore is intricately linked to the body: "linguistic expressions mean anything or nothing at all unless they are activated by haptic, visual, tactile, gustatory, olfactory, and other non-verbal signs. Their interaction is marked by the term 'intersemiotic,' and the fact that they are not homogeneous by the term 'heterosemiotic'" (1997:7).

With regard to the interaction of different signifiatory systems Ruthrof develops the "semiotic corroboration thesis": reality results from the endorsement of one sign system by one or several others (1997:33) in such a way "that the more sign systems corroborate one another the more real the world appears" (1997:39). Semiosis, or the production of meaning, results from an interpretive, negotiatory process in which variations that different signs produce about the 'same' portion of the 'world'

13 While Elam (1980:32) speaks of a "*system of systems*", Pavis (1998: 59-60) applies the concept of coherence. It concerns the harmonious and consistent organization of various signs and signifying systems so that the signifiers produce similar or even redundant signifieds. Counsell (1996: 13-16) calls the logic that defines the terms and parameters of interpretation the "*Law of the Text*". For the dependency of performance on the cultural context and social discourse it is embedded in see Elam 1980: 52-69, Counsell 1996: 6, 15 and Pavis 1998: 58-59.

are reconciled (1997:50), which is why one should not assume an inherent stability of meanings. This ‘insecurity’, or what Ruthroff calls the “wobbliness of meaning production” (1997: 41), rather than to be seen as a disadvantage or stigma, actually allows for creative processes and guarantees historical change. Within the context of actual social practice and in ordinary social intercourse “sufficient semiosis” (1997: 44) is not only ‘good enough’ for agents to understand and co-operate with each other, but also a requirement for creativity and innovation.

On the side of theatre semiotics, the difficulties and complexities associated with the sensual perception of multi-media events and the many factors that contribute to the emergence of meaning in performance led to an increasing awareness of elements that are nonrepresentable or cannot be semiotized. As Bert States (1985: 7) pointed out, one has not exhausted a thing’s interest when one has explained how it works like a sign. Patrice Pavis uses what he calls “the rather unscientific and unsemiological term of *energy*” to grasp the elusive, nonrepresentable elements of performance, noting that the performer “through his or her presence, movements and phrasing, gives off an energy that strikes the spectator forcefully. One ‘feels’ that it is this quality that makes all the difference and contributes to the whole aesthetic experience and the elaboration of meaning” (1998: 258, cf. 2003: 24). Accordingly, Pavis, in his book *Analyzing Performance* (2003), calls for a more “vertical and synthetic” instead of the currently still too “linear and fragmentary” understanding of performances (2003: 306).

Erika Fischer-Lichte, perhaps the internationally best-known German representative of theatre and performance studies, moves beyond merely symbolic approaches and explores the relationship between semioticity and performativity. She makes two important points. Firstly, she explains that the actors are situated in a tension field between the conflicting poles of ‘being a body’ and ‘having a body’: Every actor (and by extension, dancer or agent in a performative action) *has* a body which he/she uses and manipulates as a medium to represent a figure and to mediate meaning. At the same time, the actor *is* a body that is insolvably and existentially tied up with the performance in its quality as a multimedia act, which, for its part, is dependent on the performer, his/her individual corporality, and his/her physical body, voice and movements and the way he/she uses props and interacts with other performers (Fischer-Lichte 2004). This is related to her second point, namely that performances always have two dimensions: the ‘performative’ on the one hand, and the ‘referential’ on the other. While the ‘performative’ dimension addresses the staging and its immediate impacts, and thus refers to the realization and execution of actions and their direct effects, the referential dimension refers to the representation of characters, actions, relationships, situations, etc. (Fischer-Lichte 2001, 2003). Performances therefore always involve presentation as

well as representation (cf. Stiles 2003: 75, 90). The referential dimension is more closely associated with symbolic aspects, while the performative dimension relates more to the corporality and materiality of the performance. The cognitive and emotional effects it develops, the meanings that are constituted and the messages that are conveyed emerge from the interaction of the performative with the referential elements.

Fischer-Lichte's observations not only make clear how closely the generation of meaning is connected to performing bodies and issues of mediality and materiality, but also that symbolic action and performativity are interdependent and inextricably linked. The performance only comes into being through its enactment (this is what constitutes its performative quality), and the perception, experience and interpretation of the event – by the actors and the spectators, although in different ways – hinges upon its multi-sensual qualities. Here we move into a field where theories of performance converge with anthropological theories of the body and the senses. They too treat the human body as a lived reality and subject that is embedded in specific social, cultural and historical contexts rather than as a biological given which is merely defined as a medium of expression. As in performance approaches, the body appears as fluctuating between representation and being-in-the-world, as simultaneously being a symbol and an agent that plays an important role in the constitution of meaning, identity and power.¹⁴

I also want to draw attention to the work of Roy Wagner here. It not only complements performance theories, but notably also aims at elaborating a concept that pertains to, and arises from, New Guinean ways of thinking and acting in the world. But let me start with Marilyn Strathern: in an attempt to explain indigenous views of historical encounters between Melanesians and Europeans, she suggested appreciating artefacts, events and cultural performances as images because Melanesians (unlike Westerners, whose practices of knowledge mostly deploy lineal, verbal concepts in a referential, coding manner), when constructing knowledge about themselves and their relationship to others, are more likely to “draw on perceptions that have the status of an image” (1990: 36-37). The implications of her observation become clear when one looks at Strathern's concept of the image. It is based on Wagner (1986 a,b) which is why I directly refer to him in the following discussion.

Although often classed as a representative of symbolic anthropology, Wagner clearly repudiates simple concepts of symbolic representation, and thus should, more correctly, be called a post-structuralist with an explicit interest in “meaning as the

14 See e.g. M. Jackson 1983, Csordas 1990, 1994 and the review articles by Lock 1993, Csordas 1999, Reischer and Koo 2004, and van Wolputte 2004 for publications with particular emphasis on the body and embodiment, and Stoller 1989, 1997 as well as Howes 2003, 2005 for works that foreground aesthetic experience and the senses.

constitutive and organizing power in cultural life” (Wagner 1986b: ix). He argues that the basic frames of culture take the form of tropes (1986b) or – as in the case the Barok of central New Ireland (1986a, 1987) – of images. Tropes and images are ‘symbols that stand for themselves’. They are profoundly different from verbal explanations because they are performative and epitomize a reality that cannot directly be described or glossed (except in lengthy and elaborate lineal exegeses that do not have the same cognitive and emotional impact and effects) (1986a: 146, 1986b: 5).

The images Wagner has in mind with regard to the Barok can take on various forms; they include the men’s house, performances such as mortuary feasting as well as visual, musical and verbal metaphors people use to construe ideas about power. Their decisive characteristic is the concurrence of several conceptions that only can be experienced and understood through the image itself. The latter “has the power of synthesis: it condenses whole realms of possible ideas and interpretations to be perceived and grasped in one instant” (1987: 56). A crucial factor here is that the image is both a medium of containment and of elicitation (1986a: xv, 1987: 56-57). Through the experience of the image the recipient becomes aware of interrelations between the components of, and ideas contained in, the image and thus discovers the complexity and wider implications of what is presented in it. The experience of this effect is at once the meaning and the power of the image (1986a: 216).

Connected to the idea of containment and elicitation – the fact that only the image itself is certain and equal to all the ideas and interpretations it inheres and may trigger – is Wagner’s notion of the image as holographic: its various components all replicate its structure, but only together in their entirety do they constitute the whole. In this sense neither the image nor its meaning are divisible, and decoding deprives the image of its power to elicit meaning (1987: 61, cf. 1991: 166-170). What is possible though, is that through a series of analogies the presentation and experience of the image, or of several images in combination or succession, lead to (sometimes temporary) obviation and to the transformation or even the inversion of meanings (1986a: 210-213, 1987: 61-62). This in turn implies that “cultural meanings are in a constant flux of continual re-creation” (1986b: 129) and evidences the agency and capacity of actors for improvisation and innovation.

Wagner’s concept of the image correlates with that of art historians and iconologists who likewise point out that the polyvalence and power of images lies in their ability to unite and evoke multiple meanings, and that the simultaneousness of various associations and possible meanings not only often is more important than a specific interpretation or message they might carry, but that it also characterizes their

creative potential.¹⁵ Moreover, what many of the scholars whose work I have reviewed here – from performance theory, to anthropology and to art history – have in common, is their interest in, and emphasis on, aesthetic experience. Aesthetic experience not in the sense of the contemplation and evaluation of qualitative criteria, but in the sense of perception of the materiality and sensual presence of the event, performance or image as playing an integral role in the generation and constitution of meaning. Correspondingly, aesthetic experience needs to be understood as a way of orienting oneself in the world and as an epistemological process through which the agent is able to gain knowledge and understanding of the materiality, content and structure of what is presented, of its inherent meanings, values and significance and of the processes that led to its creation.¹⁶

The concepts and approaches discussed in the last two sections on performance and performativity and on the interpretation of meaning significantly shaped my view, and accordingly, my presentation, analysis and interpretations of the *am furis* performances and the ritual dances which I deal with in Parts III and IV. Following Tambiah, I understand ritual as involving performance and performative actions, not as a subcategory of performance. Examining Anir islanders' *am furis* men's house songs and performances, masks and dances I employ the "essentially contested" (Carlson 1996: 1) concept of performativity in its full, broad sense to explore the different dimensions and facets that characterize these events as artistic and social actions and in order to illuminate how they take effect as constitutive, aesthetic, emotional and intellectual acts.

Thus, I approach Anir ritual performances as cultural-cum-social events which are presented or staged in a certain place and at a certain time by a group of performers for an audience. Embodiment and multi-mediality, and a semiotic as well as a performative (non-semiotic) 'handling' of time, space, materials/objects and bodies in their sensual presence and aesthetic experience play an important role. The presence of the actors/agents and the recipients is a basic condition as they interact with each other in the course of the performance in a process of synchronic production and reception. In the latter, meanings are elicited, communicated, negotiated – sometimes confirmed and sometimes contested – and constituted. This in turn means that performative ritual events such as an *am furis* can be fraught with risk and a certain degree of randomness but, at the same time, turn out to be spheres of creativity that engender transformation, innovation and change.

15 See for example Mitchell 1986, 1992, Boehm 1994a, 2007, Wiesing 2000, Sachs-Hombach 2003, Janecke 2004.

16 See Raters 2006 and the various contributions in Küpper and Menke 2003.

In Chapter Five I introduce the *am furis* performances. It includes a description of the elements they comprise and how they are performed; further I analyze how meaning is generated and elicited in both songs and speech acts. This is complemented by an excursus on the uses and virtues of metaphors and by the presentation of an emic classification of *am furis* which illustrates Anirians' expectations towards, and their experiences and evaluations of, them. Chapter Six is more hermeneutical as I focus on the effects created by the interplay of referential/semiotic and performative elements of *am furis*, and combine this with a discussion of the relationship between memory and creativity.

The various dances Anirians stage in the context of their mortuary rituals are discussed in the last part of this thesis. As this involves covering a huge amount of ethnographic data, the theoretical ideas outlined here, rather than being explicitly revisited, build the foundation of the contents, that is, the topics I chose to present, and structure of Chapters Seven and Eight. Apart from references to the anthropology of dance (which of course cross-cuts performance studies) and to publications on secret societies, the focus in these chapters lies on providing the reader with an idea of the multitude, variability and aesthetic power of dances, the flexibility and creativity they are handled with, the ideas and values they express and the way Anirians experience, evaluate and put them to use.

PART II

THE CYCLE OF MORTUARY RITUALS – COMMEMORATION AND RENEWAL

CHAPTER 3

ANIR RITUAL PRACTICES

Despite external influences and internal developments that have led to changes in the religious, political, social and economic realms, the cycle of mortuary rituals, the topic of this and the following chapter, continues to play an important role in the life of Anir islanders. Early studies that treated rituals primarily as part of the religious field often took notice of their effect on other domains. I follow such studies in so far as I pursue a holistic approach that it is based on the assumption that rituals involve a number of interrelated aspects and have manifold implications. The Anir cycle of mortuary rituals consists of three phases and many individual steps.¹ While in one step one aspect might be prominent, in the next event a different aspect might be foregrounded. The cycle represents a coherent whole, but various ceremonies serve different purposes and accordingly their individual structure, content, themes and possible meanings vary.

The mortuary cycle commences with the death of a member of the community. It encompasses the rituals surrounding the burial in the first phase, and commemorative ceremonies in the second and third phases. In the course of the cycle, mourning taboos are set up and later lifted again, and a multitude of exchanges take place between the various individuals and groups involved. In the third phase the cycle leads to the construction and inauguration of a new men's house (*bia*)² and to the emergence of a

1 The division of the ritual cycle into three phases is an etic assessment insofar as it is an outcome of my analysis of the ethnographic data. However, it also is an 'emic' assessment, since Conny Nekor, the adopted son of the Korofi leader Paul Munbal suggested this categorization to me shortly after Munbal had passed away, when he was making a list for me of all the different rituals that would have to be carried out after his father's death.

2 The Tok Pisin term for men's house is *haus boi*; they are the buildings in and around which all ritual activities take place. In quotidian life the men's houses serve as meeting places where men also rest or spend their nights. In the past Anirians had men's houses which were strictly forbidden to women at all times, and other *haus boi*, which they could enter on certain occasions or upon invitation. Nowadays the Anir *bia* are generally open to women although they usually only enter them when they have a good reason to do so. At times when the men are involved in ritual activities that require them to avoid contact with women, the *bia* may be declared completely taboo for all female members of the community.

new leader who succeeds the deceased bigman for whom the commemorative cycle is being staged. Unanimously, islanders portrayed the cycle as being associated with deep-seated grief and mourning on the occasion of death (phase I), followed by the gradual overcoming of the emotion of loss (phase II) until finally – when the new men’s house is built – it turns to ‘the side of joy’ (phase III).³

A death thrusts a kin group and the broader community into a temporary state of uncertainty. A member of a family has been lost, leaving behind a gap. This gap is as much linked to the emotion of loss and sorrow as it represents a rupture in the net of social relationships. Grief has to be lived out but it also needs to be managed and overcome, and the social network needs to be re-knotted. People in New Ireland say that mortuary rituals allow them to ‘finish the dead’ and eventually ‘forget’ them.⁴ Forgetting is the opposite of remembering, but only correct remembering makes possible legitimate forgetting. Being able to legitimately forget does not mean that the deceased will not be thought of any more, but that relatives and friends are able to remember the deceased without being overcome by grief or remorse. An important factor in achieving this aim is the duty to honour the dead person by conducting the necessary rituals correctly and thereby fulfilling the expected obligations towards him/her (cf. Küchler 2002: 5-7). Just as the cycle itself, this process lasts for years and includes moral as well as economic duties. Significant elements include the observance of mourning taboos and the participation in ritual exchanges.

This brings us to the economic aspects of the mortuary rituals. Feasting involves numerous exchanges of food, pigs, valuables and performances – items in which the contributors invest time and energy. These resources therefore ‘contain’ the participants, they represent them, their devotion to the deceased and the solidarity among each other. Exchanges also give participants the opportunity to fulfil duties that follow from death. The relatives of the deceased, for example, inherit debts he/she had towards others and they usually repay them in the course of the ceremonial cycle.

It is the lineage members of the deceased who are responsible for organizing the mortuary rituals, but in order to carry them out successfully, they are dependent on the support of others: people belonging to related lineages of the same clan as well as children and cross-cousins who are members of another clan. An action group is formed centred on the heir of the deceased and his lineage. Grouped around this core are other maternally related lineages as well as lineages related to the deceased

3 Anirians use the following words: the cycle is said to move from the side of *sori* or *kis na lung* to the side of *amamas* or *gas*.

4 The usual Tok Pisin expressions – used on Anir as elsewhere in New Ireland – are *pinisim dai(man)* and *lus tingting long daiman*; cf. also Foster 1995 and Kingston 1998.

and his heir through either paternal or affinal links. In the course of the cycle, various resources are contributed by members of this action group, enabling the successful enactment of the rituals. The items, particularly pigs, are given to the organizer who then redistributes them within and beyond the action group. Through participating in exchanges the deceased not only is honoured, ties of kinship also are expressed and strengthened. Younger members follow in the footsteps of their seniors, and the social network is recreated. The social reproduction that takes place in the context of the ritual cycle becomes particularly apparent when the ceremonies are carried out after the death of a community leader. In this case the lineage member – usually a sister's son – who acts as the main organizer of the cycle performs the task in order to establish himself as the successor of the deceased. This, in turn, addresses the political and legal side of mortuary rituals.

As in many other Melanesian societies, ritual feasting on Anir is inextricably linked to power, agency, bigmanship and fame.⁵ Ritual always presents a platform for tactical moves, for negotiating and legitimizing political power and for achieving political aims. This has to do with two interlinked, but discrete, characteristics of rituals. The first is clearly embedded in the political sphere and incorporates the aspect of fame: the successful organization of ritual events is prestigious, and mandatory for achieving the status of a bigman. An important factor in this process is the ability to activate potential participants and allies; some people always need to be 'lured' into supporting the event or to be persuaded to play along. The second feature addresses legal aspects: only by carrying out a ritual event, or contributing to it by giving a pig, performing a dance or by staging a mask, the organizers and participants can publicly display, legitimize and underpin rights which they claim to land, leadership positions or various forms of artistic expression. The interrelatedness of Anir rituals, rights and politics explains a number of phenomena: firstly, that individuals or groups compete for the privilege of carrying out a ritual or parts thereof. Secondly, that some ceremonies take place on the initiative, and under the leadership, of a person whom one would not (or at least not immediately) deem responsible for. And thirdly, that actual instantiations of nominally the same ceremony vary in size and elaboration, depending on when, where and by whom they are carried out.

These issues bring us back to the relationship between structure and practice, variation and agency discussed in Chapter Two. Although the ritual cycle consists of three clearly defined phases and subordinate steps – and in this sense shows a clear structure – it does not mean that organizers and participants slavishly follow customary forms.

5 Cf. Sahlins 1963, Clay 1986, 1992, Albert 1988, Godelier and Strathern & 1991, White and Lindstrom 1997.

Rather, the cycle should be conceived of as a framework that allows for variation. With regard to the mortuary cycle, structure consists of a set of relations that encompasses general rules and expectations as to what the various rituals should address, involve and 'look like' to be recognized as such and to be accepted as having been carried out correctly. Each and every ritual relies on a number of specific acts to guarantee its effect but there are various ways and means to shape and achieve this. This, in turn, means that innovation and re-interpretation may occur over time and that the cycle of rituals is continually adapted – today as in the past – to suit the needs and circumstances of a particular moment in time. Openness and flexibility are pre-eminent features of the ritual system. They find expression when people compete for the right to conduct a certain ritual, or in the size and elaboration of a ceremony. Whether the latter involves just the minimal features or is more ornate depends on the status of the deceased and/or on the amount of prestige the people involved hope to gain.

The approach I am pursuing here is similar to the one suggested by Morphy (1997) in an article on mortuary rituals of the Yolngu in eastern Arnhem Land. Morphy, too, was concerned with the relationship between structure and process, but in his analysis he concentrated on burial rites, not on a whole cycle of rituals (see also Morphy 1984). He proposed a "triadic relationship between event structure, ritual episode (the performative content of the ceremony: songs, paintings etc. and their significance) and themes current in a ceremony" (1997: 126). According to Morphy, each individual ritual is characterized by a structure of events (the treatment and moving of the body, its burial etc.) as well as subsidiary events and acts (participants arrive, the grave is dug, food is consumed, etc.): "Each of these events can be performed in a ritual way through the use of songs, dances and paintings that are appropriate for the particular event or are conventionally associated with it" (1997: 127). Morphy goes on to explain that often "there are a number of alternative forms available that could 'perform' the event equally well" (1997: 127). Although he uses a slightly different terminology (event structure, ritual episode, theme), it is clear that Morphy also applies a model that treats the structure of Yolngu rituals as consisting of flexible relations and as a regulating force that allows for variation, individuality and agency.

But what is meant by ritual themes and what role do they play? Some of the examples Morphy (1997: 127) lists as themes in Yolngu ceremonies are to be found in Anir rituals as well, and several of them were already mentioned above. They include pollution and cleansing (that is, the observance of taboos), the management of grief, the expression of kinship and solidarity, the transfer of power from one generation to the next and the journey of the deceased person's spirit. I agree with Morphy that it is the interaction between the themes of a ritual and its content – the actual performance

that was chosen (among other scenarios possible according to the structural guidelines) and enacted by definite individuals and groups – which endows the ritual with meaning.⁶

The remainder of this chapter follows two objectives. First, to provide an overview of the ritual cycle and its main features, secondly, to render an account of actual ritual practice. It contains descriptions of various ceremonies as they were performed between 2000 and 2004. Chapter Four is devoted to the analysis and interpretation of this ethnographic material. Apart from an account of historical changes, it examines ceremonial exchange practices and concludes with a discussion of some of the issues raised here, namely the interconnectedness of the ritual, political and social realm, the dialectical relationship between structure and process, innovation and creativity and, finally, the issue of multivalency and meaning.

The mortuary cycle: an overview

“Death is the source of all our kastam.”⁷ This judgement was usually offered at the beginning of discussions I had with different groups of Anir islanders about their mortuary ceremonies. The statement clearly expresses the significance that death has with regard to Anir ceremonies. The majority of them not only belong to the mortuary cycle, other rituals that are not immediately directed towards death and the management of the circumstances it entails – for example the payment of the bride price or land transactions – also are integrated into it. At first sight it may seem contradictory that Anirians associate the rituals of the last phase with joy, but a more careful consideration yields that this is the logical consequence of the process of social reproduction which constitutes an important element of the commemorative cycle.

As indicated above, the ritual cycle is divided into three discrete phases. The first phase includes the funeral, the ceremonial events immediately following it and the mourning period which relatives of the deceased spend together in the men’s house to which he/she belonged. Taboos are a significant feature of the mortuary cycle. On Anir they concern people as well as places and they are all set up during the first phase. At the moment a person dies, close family members, particularly the wife or husband of the deceased, become subject to strict taboos. After the funeral, taboos relating to the land

6 What I call ‘actual performance’ or ‘content’ Morphy calls ‘ritual episode’.

7 This was expressed in Tok Pisin using the following words: “Dai em i as bilong olgeta kastam bilong mipela.” The statement is surprisingly similar to an assessment made by Bell (1934: 291) who wrote: „Death is the *leit-motif* of their [i.e. Tangan’s] culture” – a quote that repeatedly has been cited in the anthropological literature on New Ireland.

of the deceased are set up and relatives as well as friends publicly announce that they will obey certain taboos relating to the consumption of certain foodstuffs, personal hygiene or visits to the hamlet of the deceased. The second phase is marked by a gradual lifting of all the taboos that were established in the first phase. Taboos on Anir, as elsewhere, deal with the management of pollution (cf. Douglas 1966), but such that relate to places also serve economic purposes. The personal taboos that are observed by relatives of the deceased have a very direct impact on their daily lives. The taboos themselves are closely linked with the emotional side of death and the danger of pollution. They allow people to honour the deceased, to act out their pain and to protect themselves and others from potentially dangerous effects of death. On the one hand, they are markers of the liminal state the mourners are in, on the other, they are one of the means by which this liminal state is eventually overcome.

Other significant acts during the second phase include the destruction of the house where the deceased used to live and the burning of his/her personal belongings. These items carry the power and/or essence of the dead person and are therefore also a source of potential pollution. At the same time they are painful reminders of the deceased and his/her presence, which now has passed. For this reason, too, they have to be eliminated. With passing time, from the first to the second phase, intense grieving gives way to commemoration. The latter – although still associated with mourning – is in a very literal sense more removed and, accordingly, less painful.

Finally, in the third phase of the cycle (that takes place years later), the whole atmosphere changes. In the meantime, young people have assumed the roles of old or deceased members of the community and have taken over their responsibilities and obligations. A new leader is about to establish himself, and a new men's house is erected. This phase is referred to as *pok bif*, or alternatively, *pok fel*.⁸ The climactic ceremonial event that concludes the cycle is called *alal fajasu*. It is a large feast with an abundance of food and a multitude of vibrant and colourful performances. In addition, it may involve ceremonies and rites that are not directly related to death and commemoration. The most common are:

- *Pikuf baling and fafen paket*: a compensatory payment offered to the father (*pikuf baling*) or to a person who adopted or supported one (*fafen paket*) to thank him/her for the care and nurture provided.
- *Tutun paket*: the purchase of land or usufructuary rights according to

8 The two terms have the same meaning: 'to build a house' (that is, a men's house), but one uses an ancient word – *bif* – instead of the more commonly used word for house – *fel*. *Pok* stems from the word *popok*, 'to cut' or 'to carve' and directly refers to carved house posts that used to be an outstanding feature of semi-elliptical men's houses which are only very rarely built these days.



Fig. 37 Bride wealth ceremony in the village of Warambana. Michael Sale, the father of the bride is seated on a small stool facing the men's house and the food piled in front of it waiting to receive the payment; this normally is made to the bride's mother (who in this case was sick and thus could not come). Joachim Tokas as the bigman and mother's mother brother of the groom, Tadeus Kiapon, made the payment of shell wealth. Twelve white *amfat* shell rings are already lying in front of Sale, while Tokas is 'measuring' the bride's body with the first of three strings of red *kemetas* shell money. Afterwards, Alois Sereng, the groom's mother's brother and the leader of the men's house of Warambana *kem*, made an additional payment of 757 Kina. The shell wealth and money needed for the bride wealth usually come from different sources: from the groom himself and his family, on the one hand, and from the groom's lineage members, particularly its leaders, and sometimes from bigmen of related or affiliated men's house communities. Warambana *kem*, 24 June 2000

customary procedures. This is kind of payment is necessary when children reside on their father's (rather than their mother's or mother's brother's) land and has become increasingly common in recent decades.⁹

- *Fele wok*: the payment of the bride wealth (fig. 37).

It is the social position of the person who has died that largely determines what rituals are carried out after his or her death and how they are performed. Only in commemoration of a person who ranked as an outstanding member of the community will the full cycle be carried out, but other motivations might also lead to the decision to perform a *pok bif*: if the deceased used to be the leader of a men's house community, his status alone would demand such an event. As mentioned above, his successor needs to build a new men's house in order to establish himself legitimately as the new leader of the kin group. Moreover, individuals who are striving for unequivocal bigman status, in the course of

⁹ In spite of the strict adherence to the rule of matrilineality in regard to clan and lineage membership, land rights are more and more often transferred patrilineally.

their career, have to prove themselves as successful feast makers and construct a whole series of men's houses to achieve this aim. This is one of the reasons why some *pok bif* are carried out to honour certain individuals – mostly senior men who played important roles in the community but were not leaders of a men's house.¹⁰ Emotions, of course, also play a role. The organizer(s) may feel deeply sorrowful about a death and may want to honour the deceased accordingly. Finally, the fact that the old men's house is in a dilapidated condition or has collapsed, may also help bring about the decision to build a new one (and hence conduct a *pok bif*).

For most members of the community, the majority of men, women and children, only the ceremonies of the first and – when the person in question had at least some repute – the second phase are performed. This does not mean, however, that they are not commemorated in a *pok bif*. At intervals of ten to twenty years the current leader of a lineage organizes the construction of a new men's house through which all members of the kin group who have died in the foregoing years are honoured communally. The climactic feast (*alal fafasu*) of such a *pok bif* is probably the most spectacular ritual event celebrated on Anir. According to Bell (1937: 335-36) such feasts were also common in the 1930s on Tanga. The following table gives an overview of the ritual cycle as it is carried out on contemporary Anir. Historical changes and comparisons with the practice of the neighbouring Tanga islanders will be addressed in Chapter Four.

Table 3 Anir mortuary rituals

Phase I	Death and funeral
<i>so parpar</i>	'To (already) see/know the funeral': a meal shared by close family members of a seriously sick person who has been brought to the men's house and is expected to die.
Death of the person	
<i>poem</i> or <i>poram</i>	A member of the deceased's men's house community (A) travels to other men's houses (B, C etc.), informs their leaders about the death and gives them a small sum of money. The members of these men's house communities contribute food for the funeral meal; if they bring a pig, this too is called <i>poem/poram</i> .
<i>tut ngin</i>	'To make the bed/coffin': Meal shared by the member's of the deceased's men's house community shortly after the occurrence of death.
<i>so</i>	Funeral of the deceased, it is accompanied by a large meal and usually takes place one day after death.
<i>an du, an tamen, tamen male</i>	Relatives and friends of the deceased announce that they will obey certain taboos in order to honour and commemorate the deceased; this usually takes place during <i>so</i> or <i>en mapua</i> .

10 I am not aware of a *pok bif* carried out in recent years in commemoration of a woman, but it seems that at least two old Anir bigmen performed a *pok bif* in commemoration of their wives (cf. also Bell 1937: 319-20 for the neighbouring Tanga Islands).

<i>en mapua(n kenit)</i> alternatively: <i>bing etul</i>	‘To eat the decomposition fluids of the (spirit of the) deceased’: communal meal that takes place three days after the death, when the body of the deceased is said to fall apart in its grave.
<i>felumbintam</i>	‘The fenced house’: Mourning period with comparatively strict taboos and regulations; people assemble in the men’s house of the deceased each afternoon and spend the night there.
<i>ngo falek</i>	‘To sleep and (then) go apart’: communal (compensatory) meal to end the period of <i>felumbintam</i> .
Phase II	Mourning and commemoration
<i>funil e ti puek</i>	‘New moon’: Monthly gatherings to mourn and commemorate the deceased; usually held at new moon; these meetings are accompanied by a vegetable meal and can be repeated as often as is decided by the relatives of the deceased.
<i>mor na tineng</i>	‘Compensatory meal for crying’: a meal that only takes place when a person died and was buried somewhere else (e.g. on Tanga or New Ireland); women are compensated for gathering and mourning the deceased on Anir.
<i>kepufu an du ma an tamen</i>	Lifting of dietary taboos and taboos concerning personal hygiene and demeanour that were observed by individual mourners
<i>taif lo pan atof</i> or <i>taif lo fel</i>	‘Burning the sago leaf/house’: Symbolic destruction of the house in which the deceased had lived, later it will be fully dismantled; this is accompanied by a large feast meal.
<i>taif lo tang</i>	‘Burning the basket’: personal items of the deceased, particularly his/her basket, are committed to the flames; this ceremony is accompanied by a feast meal and may take place either towards the end of phase II or after the conclusion of phase III of the cycle.
<u>simen</u> (Tok Pisin)	‘To cement (the grave)’: tombstone is erected; this is accompanied by a feast meal.
<i>am fimfil</i>	‘Buying bigmen’: a meal during which betel nuts are distributed in order to secure support, particularly a constant flow of pigs, for the events and undertakings of phase III.
Phase III	‘Finishing the dead’ and social reproduction
<i>kiskis una fagati e pok fel</i>	First meeting to announce the erection of a new men’s house; the various steps of <i>pok bif</i> are planned.
<i>fainim baba tiki</i> and <i>fainim baba e-u</i>	Meetings to organize the cultivation of the first series and later the second series of feast gardens.
<i>fapang mor</i>	Compensatory meal to thank those who have cultivated the gardens.
<i>pok bif</i> or <i>pok fel</i>	‘To cut/carve a house’: construction of the new men’s house; each step of the building process is accompanied by compensatory meals (cf. table 4).
<i>en balam fel</i>	‘To eat inside the house’: official opening and inauguration of the new men’s house; <i>am furis</i> with chorus, for the first time someone climbs on top of the new men’s house.
<i>alal fajasu</i>	Climactic final feast of the cycle of commemorative rituals, <i>am furis</i> with chorus and someone climbing on the top of the new men’s house, performance of masks and dances. May include other ceremonial acts such as the payment of a bride price (<i>fele wok</i>), a compensatory payment to a father to thank him for his care (<i>pikuf baling</i>) or land transactions (<i>tutun paket</i>).
<i>saif (saef) balam fel</i>	‘To sweep the house’: ritual cleansing of the men’s house after the feast and removal of the ladder used in the <i>am furis</i> performance to climb on to the roof of the men’s house.

Table 3 Anir mortuary rituals

Death

One morning in March 2002, I was woken by Christine: “Get up, we just got the message that Nepalal has died. We have to go to there!” Nepalal, or Paul Munbal Tontarkus Tuatere, was one of the most respected and knowledgeable leaders on Anir. When I came back in September 2001 for my second period of fieldwork I had hoped to work with him more extensively on various aspects of *kastam* but he had been ill and, in the following months, he lost strength continuously. Several weeks before his death Munbal had told his sons to carry his bed into his men’s house and from then on he had spent his days and nights there. When an older man becomes seriously ill and feels that he might die soon, he usually asks to be transferred to the men’s house he belongs to. There he is cared for by his immediate family and lineage members and by other persons close to him. Women, who otherwise hardly enter the *bia* (men’s house), take turns in looking after the sick man. They fan, massage and stroke him, and try everything to make him as comfortable as possible. A constant stream of visitors comes to check on the state of the patient and to pray with, and for, him. In a case like Munbal, who was an unchallenged bigman, the leaders of related or affiliated men’s house communities are informed. Usually they send some representatives. Several men and women from Tanga had come to stay with Munbal during his last weeks and to pay him their respect.

A few days before Munbal’s death, a special meal called *so parpar* had been prepared. Only his closest relatives, members of his lineage as well as his children, attended this event.¹¹ *So parpar* means ‘to see/know one’s burial [is close]’. As the term implies, this ceremony is only carried out when people are convinced that death is imminent. Sometimes the *so parpar* is arranged by relatives, occasionally it is demanded by the sick man himself. From the relatives’ viewpoint it is a meal to pay homage to the stricken person. The primary motivation of a dying bigman to ask for it is to tell his heirs and children where he wants to be buried, to instruct them on inheritance matters and to disclose the whereabouts of his shell valuables.¹² For the meal accompanying the *so parpar* one of the close family or lineage members provides a pig, or one of the pigs of the sick man is killed. In the case of Munbal’s *so parpar*, one of his own pigs was killed and given to his sister’s son Sebastian Pandur. He was designated to become the future leader of one of the men’s houses of this lineage. The act was a visual and public acknowledgement of this entitlement and strengthened his claim to leadership.

11 Munbal had one son of his own and several adopted children. Two of the adopted sons took a prominent role in the events that followed his death.

12 Cf. also Bell 1937: 318-19 and below.

As described above, the first phase of the Anir mortuary cycle consists of the ceremonies accompanying death and the actual burial. It may start when a person falls critically ill with the ceremony of *so parpar*. As the scale and elaboration of the rituals depend on the social status of the deceased person, the procedures following Munbal's death provide a comprehensive example to describe the form and content of the first phase. The following account therefore focuses on them, but the reader should keep in mind that only on rare occasions are burial rites conducted in such an elaborated manner. The relationships of people involved in the burial rites, and mentioned in the following descriptions, are shown in figure 38.

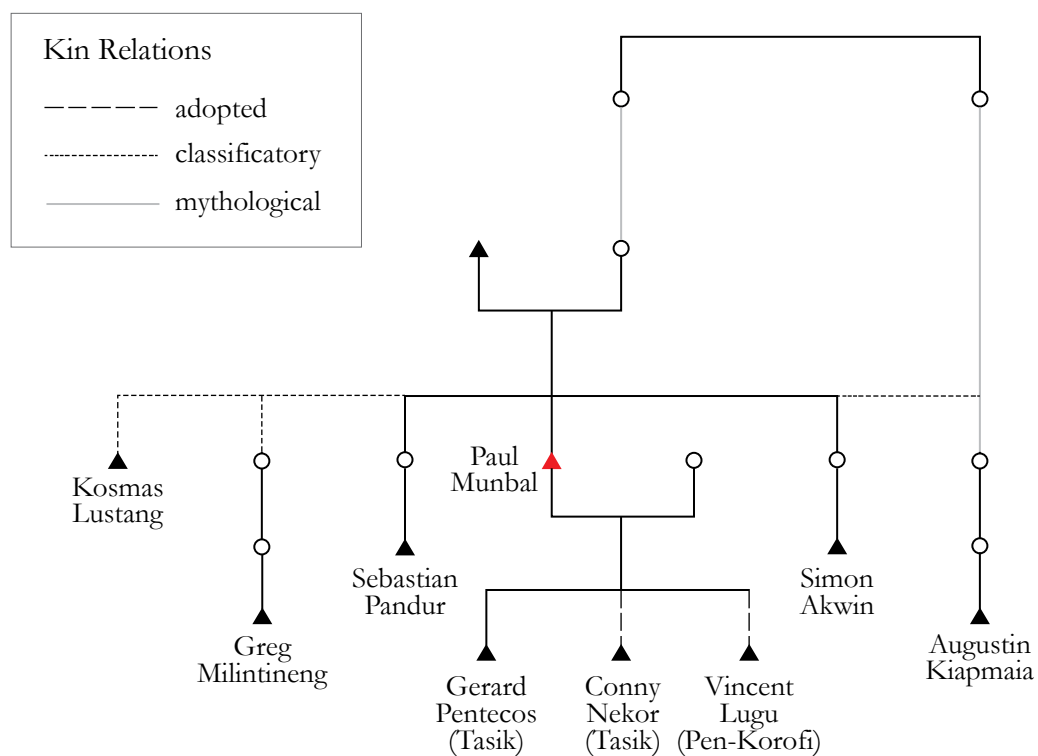


Fig. 38 Kinship diagram of Paul Munbal, Nantingi; unless indicated otherwise persons in the diagram belong to the Korofi clan

Rituals of the first phase

Shortly after Munbal's death, two young men of his lineage were sent out to go around Babase and Ambitlei. Each time one of them arrived in the hamlet of a leader of another *matambia* (men's house community), he presented the leader with a one Kina coin saying the following words: "X [name of the person addressed], your Y [term for the kinship relation between the addressed and Munbal] has passed away."¹³ The money given on such occasions is called *poem* or *poram*, and formerly shell money (*kemetas*) was used. The handing over of *poem* is a standard procedure and has to be done in order to officially inform the leaders of other men's houses about the death that has occurred in a related or affiliated *matambia*.

While the two men toured across Anir, Munbal's immediate family members were busy preparing a meal called *tut ngin*, or 'to make the bed'. As the term indicates, the meal is associated with the digging of the grave and the making of the coffin. This took place in Nantingi, the hamlet where Munbal had lived and died. He had been a member of the Korofi clan and one of its most respected bigmen. He had presided over the *matambia* of Paifaf whose main men's house stood in a hamlet called Muli. But in addition to that,



Fig. 39 Paul Munbal's close relatives mourning his death shortly after he passed away in his men's house. Nantingi, village of Kamgot, 09 March 2002

13 'He has died' in the everyday language of Anir is *e sau met*, but in this ritualized statement the words *e sam ngosok* – 'he sleeps and never will get up again' – are used. The everyday term is considered to be too harsh and it is taboo to use it in this context.

Munbal had also built a men's house at Nantingi. He had inherited this piece of land from his father which meant that, although rightfully belonging to a member of the Korofi clan (that is, Munbal), it still was associated with land of his father's clan, Tasik. While still alive, Munbal had arranged for the transmission of this land, according to customary procedure, to his real son, Gerard. The latter was a member of the Tasik clan and was expected to become the leader of the men's house located in Nantingi.

Customary law requires that a bigman is buried in his *waran male* or *as ples*, that is, his place of origin and certainly on land traditionally belonging to his own lineage or clan. In Munbal's case this was Paifaf, or Muli respectively. Prior to his death, Munbal had publicly announced that he wanted to be buried in front of the men's house he had built in Nantingi and where he had buried his wife a few years earlier. The fact that Munbal had died on land other than his place of origin and in the arms of his sons meant that the latter had to officially return the deceased's body to his lineage members. They had the right and duty to place the corpse in the coffin and bury it. Gerard, Conny and Vincent (two of Munbal's adopted sons) officially handed over Munbal's body at the ceremony of *tut ngin*. Munbal's lineage members in turn agreed to perform the funeral rites at Nantingi and bury the deceased bigman there.¹⁴

The *tut ngin* is a relatively private affair and Conny afterwards explained that it should be held within a few hours after the death, before people from further away arrived. He added that in cases where the relatives of the deceased suspected that he had been killed by sorcery, this was of particular concern. To give the sorcerer the chance to participate in the *tut ngin* would mean a double victory for the aggressor. To prevent this, preparations for the *tut ngin* have to be done in haste and the organizers must ensure that it is attended only by the closest relatives. Accordingly, only one pig is slaughtered for this meal. When it is cooked it has to be consumed completely and on the spot. Such meals are called *en tiki* or 'to eat [at] once'.

Once other men's house communities received the message of Munbal's death, they formed groups and prepared various foodstuffs: baskets of *mami* and yam tubers, bananas and coconuts and/or rice bought at one of the local stores. Loaded with these goods they came to the site of the funeral. In addition, some of the leaders who had

14 This case is a good example of Anir practices of patrilineal transmission of land rights. Munbal (a member of Korofi clan) inherited the land at Nantingi from his father (a member of Tasik clan), so that land ownership switched from Tasik to Korofi. Then Munbal decided to transfer that land to his son and by that the ownership moved back to Tasik again. Should Gerard decide to arrange for a transfer of this land to one of his own sons, Nantingi will again be in the hands of a Korofi member. This is likely to happen because Munbal built a men's house at Nantingi and carried out numerous rituals there. Thus, Nantingi now is now considered as the site of an offspring of the Korofi men's house at Muli, but with a Tasik leader (Gerard). If Gerard bequeaths the rights to the Nantingi land to one of his sons, the men's house will again be under Korofi leadership.



Fig. 40 Constructing the coffin for Munbal; Conny Nekor, the adopted son who lived with Munbal in his compound is on the right. Nantingi, village of Kamgot, 09 March 2002

received a *poram* decided to contribute a pig to support the funeral. Together with the other foodstuffs, the animals were formally offered by a group representing the donating *matambia* to Munbal's lineage mates who were headed by his very old and fragile (classificatory) brother Kosmas. The pigs that are given for a funeral feast are also called *poem* or *poram* respectively. They are cooked in earth ovens and the pork is distributed after the performance of the *am furis* that goes with the burial.

In the hours after Munbal's death the hamlet filled with people as more and more mourners arrived. After handing over the food and perhaps a loincloth to cover the corpse, they entered the men's house where the body was laid out (fig. 39). They joined the women who were already sitting on the benches that run along the walls of the men's house, or seated themselves on the ground around the bier. The freshly arrived women started bewailing the deceased and were soon joined by the others. Men paid their respect silently. The keen lasts ten or fifteen minutes before it gradually ceases. Today it is combined with the singing of church songs and the speaking of prayers. Most of the men who entered Munbal's men's house afterwards left to join the other men outside who were either quietly talking or busy making the coffin and digging the grave (figs. 40, 41). Some of the women left the men's house as well. They made room for the next group of mourners and started to help the deceased's close female relatives who were responsible for preparing food for the constant flow of mourners.



Fig. 41 Measuring the grave. Munbal wanted to be buried in front of his men's house, next to his wife's grave; Gerard Pentecos, Munbal's only 'real' son, is on the far left (wearing a yellow T-shirt); next to him stand Munbal's two sister's sons Sebastian Pandur (wearing a blue and white T-Shirt) and Simon Akwin (wearing a red T-Shirt); Munbal's young classificatory sister's daughter's son, Greg Milintineng (bright loin cloth) is holding the shovel and is just about to start digging the grave. Nantengi, village of Kamgot, 09 March 2002



Fig. 42 a and b *Poram* for Paul Munbal. Charles Kirok (wearing a petrol shirt and a white bag) and members of his kin group bringing a pig, rice, bananas etc. in the name of the *matambia* of Nampong, Galisu (cf. fig. 49); the *poram* is received by Sebastian Pandur, Augustin Kiapmaia, Vincent Lugu and Gerard Pentecos (line of four men on the right, from left to right) Nantengi, village of Kamgot, 09 March 2002



More and more groups arrived. The signal *ambis na punut* was beaten on the slit gong (*gamti*) regularly.¹⁵ Each time new people arrived, the sound of dozens of women lamenting filled the air.

In the meantime darkness had fallen, and groups coming from distant villages on Ambitlei kept arriving throughout the night (fig. 42 a,b). The burial followed in the afternoon of the next day. It is generically called *so* and is usually accompanied by an *am furis*, the distribution of pigs and a large communal feast. Two mounds of food (*aninat*) are arranged in front of the men's house. Both consist of green coconuts, bananas and cassava. The bananas are cooked in earth ovens without further preparation and without previously wrapping them in leaves, which is why they all come out black. As black is the colour of mourning they are deemed appropriate of the sad occasion. One of the two *aninat* is always much smaller than the other. Usually only one pig is placed on it while all the remaining pigs – there were twelve at Munbal's funeral – are laid out on top of, or next to, the large food mound which is said to represent the body of the deceased. The small *aninat* is reserved for a certain category of relatives who are called *mamat*. In life they all stood in a special avoidance relationship to the deceased and are not supposed to “eat pork from the *so* of the dead person”.¹⁶ Once the two food mounds for Munbal's *so* were prepared, the men got ready for the *am furis* performance (fig. 43).



Fig. 43 *Am furis* performance at Paul Munbal's funeral. The members of the choir are on the left side, Munbal's men's house is on the right; Augustin Kiapmaia is also standing on the right, between the open grave and the two *aninat* with the pigs that were brought as *poram*. Nantingi, village of Kamgot, 10 March 2002

15 (*Am*)*bis* is the name of the liana the drum stick is made of. *Ambis na punut* translates as ‘beat of/for the spirit of the deceased’. The first time this signal is beaten, it is called *tut manangiang kenit* or ‘beat (signalling) the (last) breath of the deceased’.

16 In Tok Pisin this was expressed as “*ol i no inap kaikai pik/so long daiman*”.

It was an exceptionally large group – most of the men were dressed in black loincloths – that gathered at the edge of the hamlet. The group consisted of representatives of Munbal's *matambia* and of the various men's house communities related or affiliated with it. To the beat of the slit gong the participants entered the men's house in single file and walked counter-clockwise around the corpse which now lay in its coffin. Then the men left the *bia* again to go round the larger *aninat* (again counter-clockwise) and assemble on the side of the men's house, facing the two food mounds. One man – Augustin Kiapmaia, the leader of the group that had come from Tanga – positioned himself next to the two *aninat*, facing the members of the *am furis* group. The latter now started to sing a chorus while Augustin circled the two food mounds in a running step, waving his arms like wings. He was imitating a bird to indicate that he had come from far away and had no knowledge of the recent events on Anir.

In the exchange of questions and answers that is a constituent element of every *am furis*, Augustin took over the role of the inquirer, while Munbal's adopted son Conny gave the answers. This allocation of roles was somewhat unusual, but reflected the history of the situation and of the people involved. Normally, either members who hold leading positions in the men's house community carrying out the ritual, or members who are expected to do so in the future, perform the exchange of questions and answers in an *am furis*. But Augustin was a member of a *matambia* on Tanga, and Conny a member of a men's house community of the Tasik clan. Augustin had been asked to perform in the *am furis* because, according to oral tradition and myth, his *matambia* (Sukeobom in the village of Taunsip on Boang, Tanga) and that of Munbal originated from the same source and because Munbal had been Augustin's (classificatory) MMB. Conny was chosen because he had been adopted by Munbal, had lived right next to him and had supported the old leader until he died. Munbal's two sister's sons – who, according to customary law, should have carried primary responsibility to support and care for him, but also would have had the prerogative to perform in the *am furis* and succeed him as a leader – had moved away to work and live in other places. One of them, Simon, was standing on one leg behind Conny during the *am furis*, placing his hand on the latter's shoulder. He thereby publicly signalled the consent of Munbal's lineage to the role played by the adopted son.

Vincent Lugu delivered the final speech act of the *am furis*. As a member of Pen-Korofi (and, at the same time, one of Munbal's adopted sons) he belonged to the group responsible for carrying out the mortuary rituals. During Vincent's short speech the responsibility for the burial and all the accompanying ceremonial tasks passed from Munbal's children to the members of his own lineage. This included the right to distribute the pigs after the *am furis* performance. The distribution was executed by Greg Milintineng (a classificatory ZDS of Munbal). For each pig, Greg picked up a coconut,



Fig. 44 Greg Milintineng distributing the pigs at Paul Munbal's funeral. Nantingi, village of Kamgot, 10 March 2000

touched the animal with it and called out the relationship between the recipient and Munbal, adding that the relationship had now ended, and gave him/her the coconut (fig. 44).

Then it was time to bury the corpse. The coffin-bearers – men from the *am furis* chorus – sung a *leke*¹⁷ before picking up the coffin and carrying it counter-clockwise around the men's house. Peter Pimpik, one of Anir's leading catechists went ahead carrying a large wooden cross. Today all funerals take place within a Christian context and a Catholic service was held at the open grave, before lowering the coffin into the ground. Because Munbal had been a

highly respected leader, one of his close friends – Neantele, a bigman of the Tasik clan – spoke a eulogy. Finally the grave was filled and closed while the congregation sang more hymns. As usual, cordylines were planted on the grave and the women – many of them lying prostrate – started a last round of mourning and wailing.

Next I come to the taboos in connection with death. The widow or widower (*makos*) is the person who is subject to the strictest mourning taboos. From the moment of death on, he/she is confined to the men's house, is not allowed to sleep, may neither work nor wash himself/herself and is forbidden any kinds of savoury food. As Munbal's wife had died a couple of years before, his only real son, Gerard Pentecos, assumed her role. He was actually in no way obliged to do so but his decision clearly communicated the distress he felt following his father's death. After the burial a large number of close and more distant relatives and friends queued up to inform representatives of Munbal's lineage which taboos they from now on intended to observe (fig. 45).¹⁸ Three types are known: the first is called *an tamen* and refers to dietary restrictions. Someone who decides to *tamen* in commemoration of a dead person will abstain from a particular foodstuff.

17 A *leke* only consists of sounds (no words). It is only performed for bigmen and is considered to be a tribute to the deceased. It may also be performed when lowering the coffin into the grave.

18 The person who announces to observe a particular taboo also pays a small amount of money. Today written records are kept of this and the money is reciprocated when the taboos are lifted.



Fig. 45 Female relatives of Munbal lining up to take over mourning taboos. Vincent Lugu and Greg Milintineng receive the small donations of money, while Ferdinand Kirip is making a list of the mourners and the taboos they are going to follow. Nantangi, village of Kamgot, 10 March 2002



Fig. 46 Jacob Kiapbubuk, the leader of the men's house of Matambet, Kamgot, that stands in a *kinaf* (cross-cousin) alliance relationship to Munbal's *matambia*, handing two *an ulau* taboo markers together with some money to Munbal's relatives (lineage mates), John Kurang and Simon Akwin; the taboos set by these markers are called *sum na me kenit*, 'taboo/dirt/shame relating to the spirit of the deceased'. Nantangi, village of Kamgot, 10 March 2002

Usually people choose a type of food they associate with the deceased, either because he/she liked it or because he/she frequently used to give it to the person in question. Grandchildren, for example, often forego biscuits. According to the Anir viewpoint, the closer the taboo-observer stood to the deceased, the more the taboo should ‘hurt’ him/her. This means that a close relative may *tamen* several, and highly valued, foodstuffs such as pork, rice, yam or mami. The second type of personal taboo is called *an du*. A person observing it will neither cut his/her hair, nor dress up, nor participate in dance performances or other activities that are associated with fun and entertainment or involve adorning oneself. The last type of taboo is *tamen male* and involves the promise not to visit the hamlet where the deceased used to live. Depending on the hamlet’s location, this may involve considerable inconveniences since the person observing the taboo is not allowed to set foot on land belonging to the hamlet and might have to make a long detour to avoid this.

An ulau are taboo markers consisting of a bamboo stick to which the jawbone of a pig, a piece of coconut husk and various leaves are fastened. They usually are erected on the day of the funeral or a few days later. By installing the *an ulau*, taboos called *sum na me kenit* – ‘taboos concerning the spirit of the deceased’ – are established. At Munbal’s funeral two such markers were given with money and strings of *kemetas* to two lineage members who were responsible for putting them up (fig. 46). One marker was to be planted on the beach. As soon as it was in place, people were not allowed to fish or collect molluscs in the area covered by the *an ulau*. The other marker covered the bush area. Betel nuts, betel pepper, coconuts and all other trees bearing edible fruits or nuts in a certain area were declared taboo through its installation next to the entrance of the men’s house. The exact boundaries of the areas covered by the taboos were announced publicly and marked by certain signs. *An ulau* also render taboo any kind of noise, particularly arguments and fights. Should one of the taboos set by an *an ulau* be violated, the marker symbolizing it is removed. It is followed by a litigation and the offender has to pay compensation that may consist of a pig, shell valuables and money. Only then the *an ulau* is put in place again.

Three days after the death, a ceremony called *en mapuan kenit* (or simply *en mapua*) is celebrated. The term can be translated as ‘meal in connection with the decomposition of the corpse’ or as ‘to eat the stench of the corpse’.¹⁹ According to customary belief, three days after the occurrence of death and due to the process of decomposition, the

19 See also Foster 1995: 105. *En* means ‘meal’ but also ‘to eat’. *Mapua* denotes decomposition or putrefaction but also the fluids and substances produced in this process. *Kenit* is the spirit of the deceased but in this context just denotes his/her corpse.



Fig. 47 Greg Milintingeng (holding a green coconut) removing the *makos* taboos that Gerard Pentecos had been observing

body of the deceased bursts open and the putrefaction fluids start to flow.²⁰ For the *en mapua* only one pig is killed. The food mound (*aninat*), with a layer of green coconuts at its base, is heaped inside the men's house. The coconuts are said to represent the corpse. Just before the food is

distributed, one of the organizers takes a coconut from the *aninat*. He touches the pig with it, then smashes the coconut against one of the posts of the men's house and pours the juice over the pig and the tubers of the food mound. While doing this he addresses the recipient of the pig in a short speech, telling him that the body of his deceased relative now has broken inside the grave.

After Paul Munbal's death, the *en mapua* was combined with several other ceremonial acts. First Gerard was freed from his *makos* (widower) status. For this occasion again a pig was killed and given to Gerard. He was seated in front of the men's house and was washed with coconut juice while being told that he should take a shower and that he then would be free again to leave the men's house (fig. 47). Following this, Gerard and Vincent (one of Munbal's adopted sons) made a small payment to three of Munbal's lineage members and told them which taboos (*an du* and several *an tamen*) they would observe. Munbal's older brother Kosmas Lustang, who was over 90, had announced earlier on that he would abstain from pork, rice and sweet potatoes and also observe a *tamen male* (that is, no longer come to the hamlet where his brother had lived). His lineage members were very concerned about this. They feared that this was Kosmas' way of expressing his wish to die or even to commit suicide. Therefore they decided to lift the *tamen male* and the taboo of eating rice and did so after Gerard and Vincent had announced their taboos. Then Francis Neantele, the Tasik bigman who had given the

20 The ritual meal held on this occasion is therefore sometimes also called *bing etul* or 'third day'. A Western observer might ask whether the three-day interval is connected to Christian beliefs about resurrection, but Anirians claim that this period had been observed already before missionaries arrived. Bell (1937: 323) writes that the *en mapuan kenit* takes place 24 hours after the body has been interred. As the burial in most cases seems to take place on the second day after death, this would confirm the claims of my Anir informants.

eulogy, delivered a speech. In it he expressed his concern that some people might feel jealous because Munbal used to be a well-off man who owned a permanent house and possessed many things. Neantele then asked Munbal's sons to distribute all the mobile goods belonging to the deceased in order to avoid disputes later on. This speech had obviously been pre-arranged with the sons and was based on an ulterior motive.

As leader of his men's house community, Munbal had watched over the estate and shell valuables of his *matambia*. Bigmen usually conceal their *amfat* (large shell rings made from *Tridacna gigas*) and *kemetas* (strings of orange-red shell money). If everything runs smoothly they tell one of their confidants – a son or sister's son – where the valuables are hidden and often also give instructions on how to distribute the shell wealth after their death. But Munbal had not done so. Conny explained this shortcoming along the following lines: months before he himself (Conny) had replaced the iron bar from which the pig's jawbones (*ansengel*) in Munbal's men's house had been suspended with a bamboo rod. Unfortunately the rod broke soon afterwards and the *ansengel* fell to the ground. Munbal, who was already sick at the time, interpreted the incident as a sign that he was being poisoned. Although he did not suspect Conny of sorcery, he was very angry with him. Shortly afterwards, Munbal told Conny that he had buried the shell wealth and would not reveal the place where it was hidden – neither to his children, whom he accused of being inconsiderate, nor to members of his lineage because, so he said, they had not taken proper care of him whilst he was sick. Munbal firmly stuck to his decision even after his real son, Gerard, and Sebastian (the elder of his two ZS) arrived from Kavieng and Rabaul respectively. The shell money had vanished without trace and could not be found.

This was a major concern to Gerard and Conny because they feared accusations from members of their father's lineage about hiding valuables that actually belonged to Munbal's *matambia*. To pre-empt such accusations the decision was made to empty Munbal's quite fancy house of all detachable items and distribute them to his relatives. Every single possession – from his bicycle and stove to cups, cutlery and clothes – was distributed before the communal meal of *en mapua* (fig. 48). After the distribution Conny delivered a speech in which he explained that he knew that Munbal had kept fourteen *amfat* shell rings and seven strings of *kemetas* shell money in his wooden box but that these now had disappeared. They (the sons of Munbal) had no idea where he (Munbal) had hidden them. Conny then publicly announced that in order to show their clear conscience they had decided to give away everything in the house. In addition, Gerard and Conny promised to 'cement' their father's grave, that is, to erect a tombstone.

The final announcement made at the *en mapua* referred to Munbal's permanent



Fig. 48 Conny Nekor distributing Munbal's belongings. First five palm leaf baskets (*per na pinpin kang kenit*, 'basket with leftovers from the deceased'), each containing a small sum of money and some former possessions of Munbal, were given to closely related men's house communities of the same clan, Korofi, and to *kinaf* cross-cousins of the clan Tasik, then single items were handed to persons who, in one or the other way, had stood in a special relationship to Munbal. Nantingi, village of Kamgot, 12 March 2002

house. It was standing on land that Gerard had inherited, and Gerard himself had built the house for his father. But because he had given it to his father as a present, it had become one of Munbal's assets which, according to customary law, now belonged to his lineage mates. Sebastian (the son of Munbal's elder sister) had decided to leave the house to Gerard's son, thereby leaving it in the hands of the family, but assigning it to a closely related lineage of the Korofi clan at the same time. This in turn led Gerard, whose son was still a teenager, to announce that the house was to be used by members of both clans – Tasik and Korofi – in the future for meetings and for accommodating visitors.

I did not witness another distribution of the goods and possessions of a deceased person during my fieldwork. This does not mean, however, that the events after Munbal's death were singular or exceptional in any way. Bell mentions that, prior to his death, a man asks his heirs and close patrilineal, matrilineal and affinal relatives to assemble around him.

He makes known the secret hiding places of his most valuable shell-discs and disposes of his canoes and garden lands in strict accordance with Tangan laws of inheritance. These favour his own clansmen but do not prevent him from giving some property to his son and daughter. (Bell 1937: 318-19)

From the time of death until the meal is taken at *en mapua*, the community of mourners, particularly close relatives, spend most of the day and the nights together in the deceased's men's house. On the day of *en mapua*, an official mourning period, *felumbintam*, may be announced. The *felumbintam* affects lineage and other closely related clan members as well as children and cross-cousins of the deceased. These days, this formal mourning period is considered as harsh and costly and is therefore not always observed.²¹ This was explained by the strict and manifold taboos the *felumbintam* involves and because often many pigs are needed to compensate breaches of the taboos. Pigs are also needed for the feast marking the end of *felumbintam* in order to compensate the mourners.²²

After Munbal's death it was announced that there would be no *felumbintam*. The reason given in the public speech was that, due to Munbal's long illness, relatives living near by and far away had assembled already months ago. They had spent many weeks together caring for their sick bigman and had been confined to the hamlet, just like during a *felumbintam*. Nevertheless, a number of relatives decided to continue to sleep in Munbal's men's house. This was referred to as 'acting' or 'pretending' *felumbintam*. They did so until the rising of the next new moon, almost a month after the burial. During the first nights, activities took place that are typical of *felumbintam* including the singing of mourning songs, story-telling and playing games called *taililim* and *pir* which involve riddles.²³ The mourners do this in order to honour the deceased but also to alleviate their sorrow and to strengthen the bonds between them.

The feast marking the end of *felumbintam* is called *ngo falek*.²⁴ With the conclusion of the official mourning period and the celebration of *ngo falek*, the first phase of the ritual cycle ends. Even close relatives are now able to move about freely, and the hamlet returns to its normal course of life. But the personal taboos observed by relatives and friends and those concerning the land of the deceased remain in place, and the 'time of being sorry' has not yet ended.

21 But it seems to have been obligatory in the past, cf. also Bell 1937: 324, 331-32.

22 The pigs that are killed and distributed at this feast come from lineage or clan members of the deceased. If members of other clans participated in the *felumbintam*, then they most likely will be among the recipients.

23 The songs are called *tengteng ting lo bala felumbintam*, *goigoi* and *rangan*. The one or the other is composed to commemorate the deceased, the majority are old songs but may be adapted or changed so as to refer to him and/or his death.

24 *Ngo* means 'to slip', *falek* means 'to separate'. Alternatively the term *ngo pot* may be used; *pot* means 'to go back [home]'.

Rituals of the second phase

The ceremonies of the second phase of the mortuary cycle centre on the lifting of the various taboos that were established during the first phase and on the destruction of the deceased's personal belongings. Visual reminders of him/her are removed and, step by step, the mourners detach themselves emotionally from the deceased. The beginning of this phase is marked by the performance of a special type of ceremony. At the appearance of every new moon, women gather at the men's house of the deceased to mourn and commemorate him/her. These meetings may be repeated for several months and up to a year. They are named after the new moon and called *funil e ti puek*. The women usually are served a vegetable meal. Naturally, some close male relatives of the deceased also participate.²⁵ Interestingly, the men's house during these gatherings is referred to in Tok Pisin as haus krai or 'house of weeping'.

Usually the *an ulau*, the markers that rendered taboo the garden and fruit-bearing trees on the deceased's property and the adjacent beach, are lifted first. These taboos are generically called *sum na me kenit*. Their removal is referred to as *kepufu e sum*. As with the lifting of all other taboos, the event is accompanied by a communal feast and the consumption of pork. The *kepufu e sum* after Munbal's death was coupled with the ceremony of *taif lo pan atof*. In the context of this ritual, a piece taken from the sago-leaf-thatched roof of the deceased's house is burnt, and, at some later date, the entire house will be demolished (fig. 49).²⁶ This in turn is a prerequisite for the cleansing of the site and resettlement of this particular piece of land in the future. Prior to his death, Munbal, who owned one of the very few *bia* (men's houses) with a corrugated iron roof, had told his sons to build an extension to the men's house from bush materials. Shortly before he had died he had ordered them to carry him and place him there. Thanks to this move, Munbal's heirs only had to ritually destroy the extension rather than his permanent living house or the *bia*.

To couple or merge rituals that customarily were conducted in two separate steps is a quite common practice on Anir today. On two other occasions, the ritual cleansing of the deceased's former place of settlement was co-ordinated with the lifting of the personal taboos being observed by some mourners.²⁷ In 2001, in the hamlet of

25 Bell (1937: 323, 331) observed these gatherings on Tanga as well.

26 *Taif* means 'to burn', *pan atof* literally means 'leaf of the sago palm' but in this context denotes the sago-leaf thatch of the house. Alternatively this rite is called *taif lo fel*, 'burning the house', or *taif lo bia*, 'burning the men's house' if the deceased happened to be an old man who lived and died in his men's house.

27 This was the case in rituals conducted at Matankiang hamlet in the village of Natong (September 2001) and at Nagos hamlet in the village of Balankolem (April 2002).



Fig. 49 Joe Manol burning a piece of the sago leaf tile taken from the house of his father, Joe Deswin, who had passed away in 1998. Shortly afterwards, the house itself was demolished. Nampong, village of Galisu, 29 July 2000

Balantembi, Banakin, a ceremony was held to commemorate two deceased female elders. It also involved such a combining of separate ritual acts. In its course a piece of the sago thatch of Marselin's house – who had died in 1998 – and Marbukai's basket – who had passed away in 1995 – were burnt. The private items of a deceased person, for example, the basket in which he/she carried personal belongings and 'from which he/she ate betel nuts' may be buried with the body. But often some of the deceased's personal belongings are kept in order to be consigned to the flames at a later ceremony. When this is carried out depends on the relatives who are taking care of the possessions. The ritual burning of the basket may take place on the occasion of the symbolic destruction of the house, or

in an individual ceremony some time during the second phase of the cycle, or after the completion of the final phase.²⁸

The lifting of the taboos concerning personal hygiene, the consumption of certain foodstuffs and visits to the hamlet of the deceased is called *kepufu an du, an tamen ma tamen male*. It takes place approximately (sometimes even exactly) one year after the

28 Bell (1937: 329, 335) reported that personal effects of distinguished men, for example, spears, clubs, baskets or lime gourds, used to be kept until long after the completion of the cycle (sometimes up to twenty years) and only then were ritually reduced to ashes by the heir of the deceased. The accompanying feast on Tanga used to be called *en tura'n iu n'kinit* or "feast/concerning/the spear of/the dead man" (Bell 1937: 329). Foster who does not seem to have witnessed such a feast, observed that in many men's houses remnants of deceased lineage members were kept. He reports that Tangans in 1984 claimed to still conduct the *en tura'n iu* (Foster 1995: 138). On Anir, the personal belongings of a dead person are generically called *tangwang kenit* or 'image of the deceased'. Today, these may also include things like a person's reading glasses or hat. Anir informants pointed out that in the past, when inter-village warfare was still common, spears and clubs were individual possessions that would have been treated the same way as Bell and Foster described. But these days, *asok ma sombo* ('club and spear') are considered as heirlooms of the *matambia* and are kept in remembrance of the deceased leader who owned them. Unlike spears, the basket has either to be buried with the corpse or be kept. If it is kept, it becomes 'duty and burden' (*hevi*) of the person who has been entrusted with it, and it has to be ceremonially destroyed. But there is no strict rule when this has to happen and – contrary to Bell's information – the caretaker does not have to wait until the final feast of *alal fajasu* has been conducted.

death and may give rise to a large feast – especially when many people had decided to observe one or more of these taboos. In April 2002, such a ritual took place in the hamlet of Nagos in the village of Balankolem. It was carried out following the death of an old woman, Agasta Tuaple. In its course, the taboos of 45 mourners were lifted, some of which had come from Tanga (figs. 50 to 53). Many of the people who had been observing *an du* painted their faces black for the occasion; in the past they would have done so continuously, from the time of death up to the removal of the *an du*. In addition, they would have worn dark brown plaited mourning bands which would have been cut off in the course of lifting the taboos.²⁹

The taboos in Nagos were revoked between the performance of the *am furis* and the communal meal. The mourners were seated on long bamboo poles that had been laid out in front of the men's house, forming a large U that faced the *bia*. A sister's son of the deceased went from one mourner to the next and presented each with a piece of pork and the sum of money the mourner in question had given them when he/she had adopted the taboo. Depending on what kind of taboo a person had observed, the procedure differed slightly. If the mourner had observed *an du*, Chris Fofois, who was lifting the taboo, cut a few curls from the person's hair, took some lime powder from the container under his arm, applied it to his/her forehead and informed him/her that now it was time for a hair cut, that he/she could wear nice cloths and ornaments again and participate in dances. When mourners had abstained from various kinds of food, they were presented with the foodstuff in question and told that they now were free to eat it again.

With the removal of all taboos, the mortuary cycle turns from the 'side of sorry' to the 'side



Fig. 50 A classificatory sister of Agasta Tuaple with black soot on her forehead that showed her status as a mourner closely related to the deceased. Nagos, village of Balankolem, 11 April 2002

²⁹ According to Bell (1937: 324, 332), on Tanga barkcloth bands were used which were stained red and had been used to decorate the corpse before the burial.

of joy' and nothing more stands in the way of commencing the third and final phase. The turning point of the cycle is marked by a ceremony called *am fimfil*. This expression is based on the term *fil* or *fil taufi*, which means 'to buy a bigman'. It alludes to the distribution of betel nuts of various sizes to previously selected individuals. In this way they are asked to raise pigs for the *alal fufasu*, the climactic feast at the end of the cycle. Some informants claimed that the *am fimfil* now has been replaced by *simen*. This is a Tok Pisin word – *simen* means 'cement' – and refers to the erection of a tombstone on the grave. They said that while some rituals that had traditionally been part of the cycle had been discarded, *simen* was one that had been added in recent years. Actual practice, however, reveals that the *am fimfil* has not been given up. Sometimes the distribution of betel nuts is indeed performed on the occasion of the erection of the tombstone. But this is not always the case. In August 2004 I witnessed an *am fimfil* ceremony in the hamlet of Funsil in the village of Balngit, which was conducted immediately next to a tombstone that had been emplaced some time ago (cf. fig. 101). Most kin groups appear to first erect a tombstone and carry out the *am fimfil* later, when they are ready to proceed with the cycle.



Fig. 51 Chris Fofois, Agasta Tuaple's sister's son, removing an *an du* taboo by stroking lime powder on the mourner's forehead. Nagos, village of Balankolem, 12 April 2002

Fig. 52 Alois Nesal and Chris Fofois preparing the removal of *an du* and *an tamen* taboos after Agasta Tuaple's death. Each person who had obeyed an *an du* taboo received 50 Toea, for each *an tamen* food taboo 30 Toea were given. Nagos, village of Balankolem, 12 April 2002



NUMBERS	ITEMS	NUMBERS	ITEMS
1	LHAIL DU, BO, KAUKAU	36	NGHINKHED SINAM, KUEN
2	KHAKHAKEL DU	37	LISFICH BO, KAUKAU
3	MAHEFU DU, KAUKAU	38	POLINE SINAM
4	NEFEL DU, BO, SINAM, KAUKAU	39	PUEKHAUT SINAM, RICE
5	MAKCHINGE DU	40	FINAFINANG SINAM
6	KUPANIM DU	41	GOLOK BO
7	MAKCHINGE DU, RICE	42	MAHNU SINAM, KUEN
8	KORROOT KAUKAU	43	FINES KAUKAU, SINAM, KUEN
9	FINOLE KAUKAU	44	FINFES KAUKAU
10	FINHUE SINAM	45	MAHFAK KAUKAU, SINAM
11	CLEUS SINAM	46	MARROH KAUKAU
12	KHAKHAKEL KAUKAU		
13	SHAFUE SINAM		
14	MAHUEHT KAUKAU		
15	PANOLI SINAM, KAUKAU		
16	MAHUEHT KAUKAU		
17	MAHUEHT BISCUIT		
18	MAHUEHT BISCUIT		
19	LINOT KAUKAU, BO		
20	MELINE SINAM		
21	LINOT BISCUIT		
22	TUAPLE KAUKAU		
23	MAHAKEL KUEN		
24	KIEST KAUKAU, KUEN, ANGKO		
25	NECHL KAUKAU		
26	TEODOR KAUKAU		
27	NEKET KAUKAU		
28	NEUHAN SINAM		
29	MAKCHINGE BO, SINAM		
30	NEBOS SINAM, KUEN		
31	NETEL KAUKAU		
32	TULENI KAUKAU		
33	KIHO SINAM, KUEN		
34	PUEKHAUT KAUKAU, KUEN		
35	MELI BO, KAUKAU		

Fig. 53 List of the *an du* and *an tamen* taboos that relatives and friends of Agasta Tuaple († August 2001) had observed. *Du* in the list stands for the taboo not to cut one's hair, dress nicely etc. The different types of food, which had been tabooed by various mourners, were *bo* (pork), *kaukau* (*mami*, *Dioscorea esculenta*), *sinam* (yams, *Dioscorea alata*), *kuen* (coconuts), *angko* (bananas), rice and biscuits. Nagos, village of Balankolem, 12 April 2002

Rituals of the third phase

I now come to *pok bif*, the third and final phase of the mortuary cycle.³⁰ It involves a large number of subsidiary steps, and I therefore will limit myself to a more general description of the common procedures without adding examples of actual practice. Only when I come to the last two rituals – the inauguration of the new men’s house and the climactic feast of the cycle, *alal fajasu* – episodes of actual ritual events will be woven into my account.

During the phase of *pok bif*, many meetings are held to organize the work involved and to plan and discuss the consecutive events and their individual features. The majority of meetings are private gatherings restricted to the main organizer and his close circle of confidants. In the initial stage, however, there are also a couple of public meetings. The purpose of the first of these is to inform all members of the *matambia* about the decision to carry out the *pok bif*. The next two are concerned with the organization of the food gardens which have to be cultivated in preparation of the various festivities to come. These are grown in two series. The produce of the first series of feast gardens is used in the rituals that accompany the construction of the new men’s house. The harvest of the second series is primarily used for the climactic feast of the cycle, the *alal fajasu*.

The first mandatory ceremonial feast of the third phase is called *fapang mor*. It marks the completion of the preparatory garden work and in its course the first mami tubers from the first series of feast gardens are consumed. This feast is organized to compensate the helpers for their work. After the *fapang mor*, the construction of the new men’s house commences. Practically every step of construction is celebrated communally. Many of the feasts are said to “just concern the line [kin group] that builds the *bid*”, nevertheless they may attract a large number of guests.³¹ The organizers never openly discuss matters of importance such as the details of coming events, the type and size of the men’s house to be built or who will be given one of the highly valued pigs distributed at the *alal fajasu* final feast. Curiosity about these issues is one of the main reasons that attracts ‘outsiders’ to these early ceremonies. And, because in the course of every ritual, hints and allusions about the further development of the cycle are made, those who are able to read these signs gather important information. This is a significant feature of Anir ritual action to which I will return at several points in the following chapters. Table 4 gives an overview of the various steps in the process of constructing a new men’s house.

30 Strictly speaking, the term *pok bif* only refers to the construction of the new men’s house, not to the events and preparations preceding it.

31 To none of the rituals of the entire mortuary cycle formal invitations are sent out. People who are not directly involved hear about an upcoming ceremony or feast, and just go.

Table 4 The rituals steps of *pok bif*

<i>ki male, kape male ma tule wilau</i>	Symbolic cleansing of the (previously cleared) piece of land where the new men's house will be built (<i>ki male</i>); the area is marked by two bamboo poles that render it taboo (<i>kape male</i>); other taboo signs are put on the feast gardens, fruit trees, betel nuts etc. (<i>tule wilau</i>).
<i>kinou e fel</i>	Under the screen of night, the feast organizer secretly buries small wooden pegs where later the support posts of the men's house will be erected.
<i>fasu fel</i>	Erection of the support posts of the new men's house.
<i>kep kalut</i>	The ridge-beam is brought from the bush to the building site and lifted onto the support poles.
<i>(ang)kat balo</i>	Building of the walls.
<i>asu</i>	Hoisting of the rafters.
<i>fan atof</i>	Cutting sago palm leaves for thatching.
<i>kimi ataf</i>	Extracting the ribs from the sago palm leaves.
<i>sok atof</i>	Manufacture of the sago leaf thatches.
<i>sikte fel: fainim pan atof</i>	Thatching of the roof.
<i>en balam fel</i>	Inauguration of the new men's house.
<i>alal fafasu</i>	Final, climactic feast.
<i>saif balam fel</i>	Concluding meal to mark the completion of the third phase of the mortuary cycle.

The construction phase starts with *ki male*, the 'cleaning of the place'. A man appointed before weeds a bit of grass on the piece of land that has been chosen as the site of the new men's house. He thereby reveals to the public where the new *bia* is to be built and symbolically starts the actual building process. While the women weed the place, the men go into the bush to cut bamboo which they bring back to the building site. Once the work is finished, *an ulau* taboo markers are distributed to the men who received betel nuts earlier on. They will put these markers in place in order to render taboo coconut palms and other nut or fruit-bearing trees, and to reserve the harvest for the *alal fafasu*.

On one of the following nights the 'father of the men's house' – the main organizer of the mortuary cycle and 'owner' of the *bia* under construction – may conduct a ritual act, *gingino e bia*, to infuse the ground and the building that will be erected on it with power. A short time later the *kape male* takes place. This is the public ceremony that celebrates the levelling and smoothing of the building site (*kape* means 'to level', *male* translates as 'place'). After the ground has been levelled, two long bamboo poles (*angkat balo*) are laid out parallel to each other. On the one hand, this marks the exact spot where the house will come to stand and outlines its ground plan; on the other, it renders the site taboo. It is now offloaded with power and demands respect: only distinguished, senior

men are supposed to go inside the enclosed area, and even they may only enter from the two open sides, since stepping over the bamboo poles is strictly forbidden. People passing the site may not carry anything on their head or shoulders, holding their baskets or other goods in their hands instead. This is particularly cumbersome for women who have to pass the site carrying heavy baskets full of garden products on their heads. The significance of *kape male* in the building process shows itself when the food mound for the accompanying feast is being prepared. The *animat* is laid out between the two bamboo poles, thus ‘inside’ the house. This will only be done again much later, when the building is completed.

An important decision the ‘father of the *bia*’ has to make concerns the central line of posts (*tu*) that support the ridge-beam. Their number depends on the type and size of men’s house under construction and can range from three to more than ten posts. Each of them symbolizes a pig that will be given away at the *alal fafasu*. Rather than providing the posts himself, the organizer commissions other men to cut suitable trees and carve and paint them. The posts are prepared secretly in the bush. Once he is given notice that they are ready, the ‘father of the men’s house’, under the cover of darkness, buries small wooden pegs in the ground where later the posts will be erected. This act is called *kinou e fel* or ‘stealing the house’ – an expression that directly refers to the secrecy of the act.

A day or two later, *fasu fel*, the next public ceremony and feast, takes place. On this day the posts are put in place. The carvers themselves are among the people gathered at the building site while a group of young men remain hidden in the bush with the posts. The feast organizer, and future ‘owner’ of the house, approaches one carver after the next, gives him a little sum of money and tells him to go and find one of the wooden pegs he has buried. Under the eye of the public, the carvers start searching. Once one of them has found a peg, he digs a hole. When all foundation holes are dug, the carvers shout into the bush and the posts are brought forth and erected. In the course of the following feast meal, or sometimes in the context of a later ceremony, the posts are paid for. The payment customarily consists of shell valuables but if the carver is closely related to the organizer of the *kastam* the amount tends to be merely symbolic.

Very soon afterwards the ridge-beam (*angkalut*) is fetched from the bush and placed on top of the posts. This event is called *kep kalut* and literally means ‘to fetch a piece of wood/a tree log’. It gives rise to yet another feast and a form of highly popular ritual play called *telfangfang*. Often the *kep kalut* starts in the form of a race. The finished ridge-beam is hidden somewhere in the vicinity of the hamlet and the participants who are gathered at the building site are told to go and find it – usually being given false hints

about its whereabouts. They split up in groups and start their search. Once a group has found the beam, they *mai'i*, that is, they emit a cry consisting of a series of 'u-a' sounds. Then two groups form and carry out a mock fight over the pole. It is dragged back and forth and up and down, with one group trying to gain advantage over the other. During the fight the participants have to be careful not to fall because this would be interpreted as a bad omen. After a while the feast organizer ends the ritual play by waving some leaves and shouting "*siaro, siaro, siaro*", "peace, peace, peace".³²

Most people now sit down to watch a few men place the beam on a scaffold (*rosan*) that runs parallel to the support posts. Then a man ascends the scaffolding and walks along the ridge-beam. This part of the event is always awaited eagerly because it reveals who at the end of the cycle will climb on to the finished men's house to perform in the *am furis*. On the day of the *kep kalut*, no *am furis* is performed but the men again emit *mai'i* cries. It is only after this performance that the beam is placed on top of the posts and the people turn to the communal meal.

The work steps that now follow are mostly carried out by a circle of close relatives but still involve compensatory feasts to thank the helpers for their support. The walls of the *bia* are erected (*kat balo*) before the roof is constructed. The latter is a labour-intensive process. It starts with building the roof truss (*asu*). Next, sago palm fronds are cut in the bush and transported to the construction site (*fan atof*). Each single leaf has to be removed and each rib extracted (*kimi atof*) before the leaf-tiles can be sewn (*sok atof*). The thatching of the roof (*sikte fel*) takes place on a single day and involves a large number of people. The accompanying feast that marks the end of the principal building process is called *fainim pan atof* or 'to give the sago leaves something to drink'.

Only one or two pigs are killed because the meal is of the *en tiki* type, which means the food has to be consumed on the spot. When the pork is ready to be shared out, the 'father of the men's house' officially invites a couple of selected men to come and take a seat inside his *bia*. He does this by giving each of them a small sum of money and leading them inside. These invitations equal signs that communicate to the larger audience that the men in question will play an important role at the *alal fajasu*. Afterwards other guests may enter. Then the men's house is closed by hanging strings of shell money horizontally across the front and back entrances. Women are neither allowed to enter nor to partake in this meal, but with the house 'having a head' the taboo to carry baskets or goods on one's head or shoulder is lifted. The new men's house is now finished, and once it is clear that the second feast gardens will soon be ready for harvesting, the actual house-opening can be carried out.

32 The leaves are called *panau na siaro*, 'leaves of peace/quietness'. The large leaves of the medicinal plant *an dadarmit* or those of the plant *nokon kalukalu* are used.

The inauguration is called *en balam fel* or *en balam bia*³³ and is the penultimate feast of the mortuary cycle. It is celebrated approximately one month before the *alal fafasu*, and colloquially Anirians sometimes refer to it as ‘first *alal*’. After this official opening, people are free to enter the new men’s house. Although the feast at *en balam fel* is not the first meal consumed inside the building, it is considered to be the one that inaugurates the men’s house as a site of ritual events and celebrations. In addition, a number of other important acts and activities take place; on the whole, the *en balam fel* shares many features with the *alal fafasu*. For example, it includes an *am furis* during which a chorus is performed, and for the first time a lineage representative climbs on to the roof of the *bia* to walk along its ridge-beam. This is called *fen baba tiki lo bia* (‘to climb [for the] first time on top of the men’s house’). It is performed by the same man who already walked across the beam before it was put in place. He will ascend the men’s house again at the *alal fafasu*.

Once night has closed in, a rite called *fese fam fu fi* takes place. During all rituals of the mortuary cycle up to then, dancing had been taboo. With the *fese fam fu fi* this taboo is lifted. The feast organizer (or a person he has asked to represent him) beats the ground with a stinging nettle shouting “X [name of the deceased person who is being commemorated in this cycle], I will now dance and sing cheerful songs again!”³⁴ Afterwards the night dances commence. The first one is staged by the person who will receive the first pig during the *alal fafasu*. He (or more rarely she) is a member of the host lineage or a closely related lineage of the same clan. The song that accompanies the dance is either newly composed to honour the deceased or is one of the deceased’s own compositions.

In October 2001, the mortuary cycle carried out to commemorate Theodor Nandaou of Silalangit in the village of Balngit reached its climax. At the *fese fam fu fi* not only his name but also that of two other leading seniors of this lineage who had died after Nandaou were called out. This opened a dance called *teko* (figs. 54 to 56). *Teko* is unusual in so far as the dance is not performed by a group, but by individual dancers who perform, one after the other, to a series of *teko* songs. The first song had specially been composed for the occasion and described the life of the lineage after it had lost its three seniors. Next, three *teko* that had been composed by these men were sung. Only after that, other *teko* were performed.

33 This translates as ‘meal inside the house/men’s house’. Another, alternative expression for this feast is *makrum fel*.

34 In the Anir language the following expression is used: “X ti fasap iau, maia ku bingian!” In Tok Pisin, the word *bingian* means *singsing amamas*, that is ‘song/dance of joy/happyness’. The plant used is a stinging nettle called *salat* in Tok Pisin and *kolkol* in Tok Ples Anir; cf. Appendix III for an example of a *fese fam fu fi*.



Fig. 54 a and b Opening of the *teko* dance. The members of the *matambia* hosting the event sit in front of the men's house, while relatives from further away – in this case from the villages of Banakin and Naliu – approach the square, hidden behind three large plaited *teko* dance shields. After the *fese fam fu fi*, and before the dances were started, the two groups exchanged baskets of food. *Teko* is said to be a dance that originally comes from Siar-Lak in the south of New Ireland but which has been known on Anir for many decades. Silalangit, Balngit village, 28 October 2001

Teko is very popular because it involves much fun and creates a special atmosphere. Two groups are formed. One consists of the hosts and people who are closely related to them or live nearby. They sit in front of the new men's house. The second group consists of people from further away. They place themselves on the opposite side of the square. Then the first group brings out the *pan teko*. This is a large mat of plaited coconut fronds with a strong central rib. It is about 1.8-2.2 m x 1.2 m in size and big enough to cover a grown man. One of the members of the first group takes the *pan teko* and starts to dance with it. Because the two groups are sitting on opposite sides of the dance square and because it is dark, the members of the second group cannot see who is holding the *pan teko*. To the beat of percussion instruments and accompanied by the voices of the singers, the dancer starts to move towards the other group shielding himself with the mat. Some dancers move quite slowly. They wave the mat elegantly and deliver a gentle performance that involves only a few turns. Others – particularly men – move faster. They shake the *pan teko* vigorously, thumping the ground with the central rib. Their dance may include wild jumps, quick turns and runs that make use of the whole dance ground. Again other dancers might even kneel or lie on the ground, moving the mat to the rhythm of the song over their body. One man who used the *pan teko* in this way crawled closer and closer to the members of the opposite group. With his movements in the dark he gave the plaited dance shield the appearance of a strange creature approaching the singers, threatening to bite or even swallow one of them.

Once the dance is finished, the members of the opposite group have to guess which person has performed it. Names are shouted across the square and if the right person is named the dancer hands the *pan teko* over to the other group. Then it is their turn to perform the next dance. If only wrong guesses are made the mat stays with

the first group. Some dancers make every effort to conceal their identity. At the *teko* performance in Balngit one man completely covered his back with dry banana leaves. Others borrowed clothes from friends to mislead the audience. Men dressed up as women and women as men. *Teko* is great entertainment and on the first night is sure to go on until dawn. In Silalangit, a simple wooden pole had been planted in the ground in front of the entrance of the men's house. This *kuku*, as it is called, not only signalled the intention of the hosts to dance until daybreak but also represented a challenge to the other group to emulate them on the following night.

Another popular dance performed on the night of the *en balam fel* is *bot*. For this dance the participants position themselves in lines radiating from the slit gong with their arms linked. While one man beats the slit gong they sing *bot* songs and move in circle around the instrument. Often a nocturnal line dance such as *am baba* or *tambaran* is performed before the *bot* starts. The latter then will go on until morning. Such nights of dancing may continue until the final feast of the ritual cycle is staged. Some old people remember *kastam* where the dancing period lasted up to four weeks. The *teko* dances in Silalangit went on for about a week and by the end of it I was not the only one who felt exhausted.



Fig. 55 A crouching *teko* dancer: the more the night advanced, the more tattered the *pan teko* became



Fig. 56 *Teko* dancer wearing an additional costume made from dried banana leaves over his back to make sure that his identity is hidden

Finally it is time for the *alal fafasu* – the climax of the cycle. Like all other events it is preceded by days of preparation but due to its size this feast is more elaborate and involves more work, people and time. Dances and other ritual performances have to be organized and rehearsed. If the deceased used to be a member of a secret society, its members might stage a performance that usually also involves an initiation of boys and young men. This was the case when *alal fafasu* were prepared in the villages of Balngit and Warantaban. At the *alal* in Balngit, two *sangsangmat* masks appeared, and in Warantaban the *tubuan* danced.

The other work steps primarily concern the preparation of the feast meal. First of all, the gardens reserved for the *alal* have to be harvested and all the mami tubers have to be brought to the men's house (*sele fan toan*). They are heaped in the centre and counted.³⁵ The number of tubers gives the organizers an idea how many guests they will be able to feed without running short of food. It is also the basis for estimating how many green coconuts and cooking leaves will be needed. While it is the job of young men to climb the palms and fetch the coconuts (*fen kuen*), young women go into the bush to collect the leaves needed for the earth ovens (*mangat pospos ma tapak*).

The last days before a feast are named after the kind of food preparation they involve. More and more participants arrive to lend a hand. Often women come earlier than the men because the labour intensive preparation of staple foods rests on their shoulders (figs. 57 to 61). On each day, meals for the following day are prepared. This always involves peeling heaps of tubers – primarily mami – which then are prepared in different ways. *Paket fam fatitnge* are large parcels of sewn-up pandanus leaves that are filled with a mixture of half-mashed mami tubers and grated coconut (fig. 59). These parcels are made three days before the actual feast. They are consumed on the following day when workers are busy preparing a dish called *kiskis*. Single tubers are scraped out, the flesh is mixed with grated coconut and filled back into the hollow tuber before being wrapped in leaves (fig. 61). On that and the following day, all the tubers are wrapped individually in leaves, with about one fourth of them prepared as *kiskis*. According to the number of tubers that have to be wrapped, these two days are called *kiskis balik* and *kiskis bakir* – ‘small’ and ‘large *kiskis*’.

35 This is called *wese ang kankau* and done according to a certain procedure: four mami tubers constitute one unit. It represents the (minimal) amount of tubers that should be given to a guest. For every ten units, a leaf is removed from a fern frond (*pang kaka*) so that only the base remains. When all the tubers have been counted, the leaves broken from the fern frond are counted. For every ten of them, one leaf is removed from a palm frond (*pang kuen*). This then will be kept as a mnemonic device.



Fig. 57 Women in the men's house at Matankiang peeling mami tubers for a commemorative feast. Village of Natong, 19 September 2001



Fig. 58 Women at the side of the men's house of Matankiang stitching together leaves to make covers for the earth ovens in which the tubers are cooked. Village of Natong, 19 September 2000



Fig. 59 Alex Funmatlik and Stanis Tarewok wrapping *paket fam fatinge*. Matankiang, village of Natong, 19 September 2001



Fig. 60 Rosemary Fasuen in the men's house of Balantembi during the preparation of a mortuary feast meal. Rose is the widow of Theodor Nandaou, the leader who was commemorated in the *alal fafasu* feast that took place in Balngit (cf. figs. 20 to 23). Village of Banakin, 17 October 2001

Women normally only go into a men's house when they have a good reason and even then they hardly ever stay for long. At certain times, it is completely taboo for them to step inside the *bia*. But during the days of food preparation prior to a feast, women virtually take over the men's house and the surrounding area. They sit everywhere and carry out their work while exchanging the latest news, chatting, telling stories and plenty of jokes (fig. 62). Sometimes the whole place roars with laughter. Of course some men also help with the peeling and wrapping of the tubers but most of those who are already present are either busy fetching coconuts or catching the pigs that will be distributed at the ceremony of *fese bo* (see below). The feast organizer and other senior men watch and



Fig. 61 Women sitting in front of the men's house of Balantembi preparing *kiskis*. Village of Banakin, 17 October 2001



Figs. 62 and 63 *Telfangfang* at the *kastam* of Balantembi: Rose Fasuen is imitating men's boasting behaviour, while her brother, Francis Neantele, is being 'soaped' with the pulp of ripe bananas. Village of Banakin, 17 October 2001

supervise or discuss – close by, but in privacy – the details of the important episodes of the feast, especially the *am furis* performance.

When the women have nearly finished their work and start cleaning the men's house and the square, they start throwing the rubbish at each other. All hell breaks loose. Within seconds everybody is on the run. The women chase each other with their hands full of tuber peels which they try to stick into each other's blouses or underneath their loincloths because this causes itchy skin. Other women, without hesitation, reach for the bundles of ripe bananas that are hanging in the men's house and rub the pulp into their companions' hair, face and clothes. Women might be grabbed and thrown into the sea. It does not take long before they pounce on the men as well, particularly the feast giver and the men who advise and support him. No matter how senior they are, they have to patiently endure this treatment without defending themselves or showing anger (fig. 63). Younger men, however, soon join in this ritual play (*telfangfang*), which is started by women belonging to a clan other than that of the organizers and which develops into a jocular mock fight between the guests and their hosts. Once things have calmed down again, all the baskets containing wrapped tubers are collected on the square in front of the men's house in groups of three or four baskets. Each one is assigned to a group of women who carry them to a cookhouse in the feast hamlet or in another nearby settlement where they resume their work and get the earth ovens going.

Pigs play a vital role in the rituals of the commemorative cycle. They have to be cared for and raised by the feast organizers and the people who have entered into a commitment to support them.³⁶ In the days before the feast, all pigs are brought to the ritual site, still alive. Those that were raised by the organizers themselves or by their immediate relatives are simply caught and taken to a nearby shelter.



Fig. 64 A pig fresh from the earth oven

But the pigs that come from men or women who received betel nuts before the *pok bif* commenced are handed over ceremonially. The same might happen in the case of so-called *wilingus*. These are pigs that are given to the organizers shortly before the feast takes place. For them they come as a welcome surprise because they are given freely and the donors were never asked to support the hosts. *Wilingus* are often portrayed as being given on the basis of the compassionate understanding (*luksave* in Tok Pisin) of friends or relatives who want to help make the event a success. But in most cases there is also a hidden agenda at play. Although there is no straightforward obligation to reciprocate, they create a moral debt. The donor, for example, might be planning to carry out a *pok bif* himself and very likely he will be given a pig as a return gift when he builds his own new men's house.

Ceremonially handing over a pig is called *so puek* and the days before the *alal* in Balngit saw several of these prestations (fig. 65). An animal is always presented together with baskets of coconuts and tubers, bunches of betel nuts and additional foodstuffs such as ripe bananas or sugar cane. All these goods together with the pig are carried by members of the donor's kin group to the entrance of the new men's house where the feast organizer and his associates are waiting. The donor then performs a kind of skit or song. In Balngit it included questions addressed to the organizer which he then answered.³⁷ One of these small performances consisted of a song that contained parts of an old mythical story. Another was based on a children's game of hide and seek. It is called *tut lamu* and includes a short chant. For the pig presentation the donor slightly changed the chant. Singing the adapted version, he walked around pretending to call out and look for the deceased until he was told by the organizer that his search was in vain

36 Many of my informants stressed that, unlike in other areas, pigs for *kastam* on Anir may not be bought from outsiders.

37 This performance is called *am furis lo so puek*, cf. Appendix II.



Fig. 65 *So puek*: two pigs and baskets of vegetable food are ceremonially handed over to the hosts of the ritual celebrated to commemorate Theodor Nandaou. The pigs were given by Rose Sianot (wearing a turquoise women's blouse) and Maria Timpuek (wearing a patterned brown women's blouse). Edgar, Rose's son, is standing between her and Timpuek; he sung a short song which Paul Munbal, who is standing next to Timpuek, had composed for the occasion. Silanlangit, village of Balngit, 31 October 2001

because Nandaou had passed away a long time ago. Every *so puek* finishes with the donor stepping on the pig and delivering a short speech explaining the gift.

Once the pigs have been handed over, they are in the control of the organizers who will distribute them on the next to last day of the *kastam* being carried out. This happens in a ceremony called *fese bo* that always attracts many spectators.³⁸ Invariably *fese bo* are part of the two feasts concluding the ritual cycle (*en balam fel* and *alal fafasu*) but they are also carried out in the context of celebrations belonging to the second phase, when more than five or six pigs are distributed. *Fese bo* always take place in the afternoon. A line of wooden poles is erected in front of the men's house. To each pole a pig is fastened, the largest of them nearest to the entrance of the *bia*. The rest of the line is roughly ordered by size, with the smallest pigs lying farthest away from the men's house.

A slit gong is placed near the *bia*'s entrance, and the event starts with a senior man beating it. One or two of the feast organizers (middle-aged or senior men) and the

38 Alternatively this ceremony is called *fese kaut*. *Fese* means 'to jump [over something]', *bo* and *kaut* both mean 'pig', *bo* is the word usually used today, *kaut* is an old term that now only is used in ritual contexts. Another term for this ceremony is *alif ana kam bo*. On Tanga it is called *fasuig* or *fasuigke* (Bell 1937: 327, 334; Foster 1995: 125-28).

person selected to climb on top of the men's house on the following day (usually a young man) position themselves at the head of the row of pigs. They are equipped with spears (*sombo*) and perhaps a ceremonial club (*asok*) or a rattle (*kalukalu*) and adorned with shell valuables belonging to their *matambia*. A group of other men (or very rarely women) assemble near the slit gong and start to sing a chorus.³⁹ When they have finished, the three men standing at the head of the line of pigs run counter-clockwise around them to the beat of the slit gong. One of the two elder men stops at the far end of the row while the other two complete the circle. The two senior men are now flanking the row of pigs at both ends. They raise their spears, pointing towards the pigs, and stand still while the younger man again starts running around them. This time he stops in front of the largest pig, jumps over it, drops a rib of a sago palm leaf and then returns to his starting point (fig. 66).⁴⁰ The whole procedure is repeated until all pigs have been marked this way.



Fig. 66 Norbert Neguam jumping over a pig during *fese bo*. Warantaban (hamlet and village), 10 January 2002

39 This performance is called *am furis lo fese bo*, cf. Appendix II.

40 Alternatively ginger leaves, leaved twigs of a tree or some other plant material may be used. The selection often refers to particular circumstances of the ritual being celebrated and/or the deceased who is commemorated. For example, in Balngit twigs of a tree that was standing next to the deceased's men's house were used. The former bigman used to sit in the shade of this tree and after the *alal fajasu* it was to be felled.



Fig. 67 Philip Sumbin handing some ginger leaves that symbolize a pig to Peter Fafen. Matankiang, village of Natong, 20 September 2001

After that the actual distribution takes place. The three actors reassemble at the entrance of the men's house. Then the person who hopped over the pigs walks to one of the animals, takes up the sago rib lying on its back, looks around to find the designated recipient in the crowd to whom he then hands over the rib, which, of course, represents the pig that in this moment passes into the hands of a new owner (fig. 67). This procedure is repeated for each pig. After the completion of *fese bo* the pigs are carried back to the shelter. The recipients, although they have been given a live pig, cannot just dispose of the animals as they think best. Shortly before dawn on the following morning, the animals are killed by their new owners and cooked in large earth ovens (figs. 68 to 70). The meat is distributed together with the tubers and other vegetable foodstuffs after the *am furis* performance (figs. 73, 74).

Later at night the hosts and their guests reassemble. At the *kastam* in Balngit, three special night dances were performed before the *teko* dances commenced. On this final night they again lasted until dawn after which the men started slaughtering the pigs. After the intensive work of the previous days and the nightly dancing, the hamlet was unusually quiet during the rest of the morning. Only after midday things slowly gained momentum again. Baskets of green coconuts and cooked tubers were brought in. The former were laid out on a layer of banana leaves and the latter were heaped on top of them. This *aninat* was arranged in the men's house underneath bunches of ripe banana that were hanging from the central beam. Then the earth ovens containing the pigs were

opened. The cooked pigs were laid out in a long row in front of the *bia*. The odour of roasted pork and sweet tubers filled the air and now the feast hamlet was crowded with people. Several hundred men, women and children had come to witness the event. Everyone eagerly awaited the performances that were about to start. Two *sangsangmat* masks which were performed by members of a secret society appeared first. They were followed by a number of other groups – one after the next – presenting several very colourful, but more secular dances.

An *alal fajasu* is always a bright and joyous spectacle (figs. 71, 72), and the atmosphere during these climactic feasts is truly special. The dancers wear colourful body ornaments or masks, and the fragrance of perfumed leaves and oils emanates from their bodies. The beat of hourglass drums and small bamboo slit gongs accompanies lively singing. Some performances are associated with powerful spiritual forces. Others are brilliant demonstrations of the pure magic of dance. Yet others are deliberately funny. The number of dances and ritual performances depends on the size of the feast as such. Sometimes only a few are presented, but a large event might involve dozens, and when time runs short different groups start performing next to each other and simultaneously, competing for the audience's attention. The *am furis* is yet to come. Although more serious in nature it is undeniably a next highlight. Moreover, it contains one of the most powerful and meaningful images of Anir culture: a lineage representative (and designated future leader) walking across the ridge-beam of the newly constructed men's house. The words sung and spoken in the *am furis* refer to the *matambia's* history. They thus demonstrate the group's continuity over time and legitimize its rights to the surrounding land (cf. Part III).

The masks and dances, and the *am furis* with the lineage representative on top of the *bia* are the most prominent markers to show that the 'period of being sorry' has come to an end. The deceased who is being honoured died many years ago. The pain of loss is overcome, the mourning taboos were lifted long ago. The last obligations towards the deceased are fulfilled in the course of the *alal fajasu*. The hosts and their leader demonstrate their ability to act as a unified group that is able to secure the support of others. In this process, existing bonds within and beyond the kin group are strengthened and new ties are created. The feast giver establishes himself as the new leader, as a bigman who is head of a powerful, healthy and enduring *matambia*. These are some of the main aspects of the Anir mortuary cycle; in the next chapter I will take a closer look at how the actions, performances and exchanges that take place in its course are to be interpreted.



Fig. 68 The pigs are killed at dawn on the final feast day. The smells and sound of ritual preparations are said lure ancestral spirits to the place of feasting; the cries of the pigs being killed and the odours when they are singed and cooked distinguish them as sacrifices to the spirits of the beyond. Balantembi, village of Banakin, 18 October 2001



Fig. 69 Pigs are singed on scaffolds with burning, dried coconut leaves; in the foreground the stones of the earth oven for the pigs are being heated. Balantembi, village of Banakin, 18 October 2001



Fig. 70a Preparing the 'belly of the pig': the intestines are cut into small pieces, mixed with leaves, wrapped in leaf parcels and cooked by the women in separate earth ovens. Balantembi, village of Banakin, 18 October 2001



Fig. 70b Pigs being prepared for the earth oven. Matankiang, village of Natong, 21 September 2001



Fig. 71 *Am furis* performance at Silalangit. James Tengnaof, the main host of the feast is on the roof of the men's house, while the members of the choir present the *am furis* song; the twelve cooked pigs distributed at this *kastam* are underneath the palm leaves next to the slit gong, the vegetable food is inside the men's house. Village of Balngit, 2 November 2001



Fig. 72 Performance of a *tambaran* dance in commemoration of Thodor Nandaou. Silalangit, village of Bangit, 2 November 2001



Fig. 73 Male guests inside the men's house of Nampong during the food distribution. Village of Galisu, 29 July 2000



Fig. 74 Women and children with their shares of food after a bride price ceremony in Warambana. While important male guests are always invited to take seat in the men's house, 'ordinary' guests as well as women and children sit outside, usually at the edge of the square in front of the men's house. Warambana kem, 24 June 2000

CHAPTER 4

STRUCTURE AND PROCESS

The previous chapter focused on an ethnographic account of the mortuary cycle with the aim of providing the reader with information on its content and the course of events. As far as possible, this was done on the basis of observed practice, giving the reader an impression of the variation within the system and the flexibility with which Anirians handle their rituals. The present chapter deals with the analysis and interpretation of the ethnographic data. Because this part of the thesis discusses the relationship between structure and process I will start with an assessment of historical changes. It is complemented with references to mortuary ceremonies on Tanga because Anir and Tanga are closely related linguistically and culturally, and their ritual systems are very similar. For this the publications of F. L. S. Bell and Robert Foster are invaluable sources. In the second section I will turn to the aspect of ceremonial exchange because it is therewith that rituals achieve many of their effects, social reproduction in particular. Both historical change and ritual exchanges are intimately linked with agency and the creativity of the actors involved, and in this sense relate back to theoretical issues explored in Chapter Two. The third section of this chapter explores the question where agency and creativity come into play and how they are related to the variability and multivalency of ceremonial acts. This discussion leads to the conclusion and back to the dialectical relationship between structure and practice.

Historical change

Apart from oral testimonies by Anir informants, the most important source for assessing historical changes in the ritual system is Bell's article "Death in Tanga" (1937) in which he gave an account of the rituals of the mortuary cycle and provided the reader with a lengthy chart, listing every step he recorded during fieldwork in 1933. Bell divided the cycle into three stages which altogether contain 42 different steps, or "rites". According

to Bell's chart the cycle begins with the "stage of burial rites". This is then followed by the "stage of funeral-house building rites". "Final disposal rites" conclude the cycle and make up the third stage. Bell's division, although he also speaks of three phases, is different from what I documented on Anir.

To a large extent this is due to changes that have taken place since the early 1930s when Bell conducted his fieldwork. Some of the rites and practices he recorded are no longer performed, neither on Tanga nor on Anir. For example, formerly islanders used to dispose of the remains of their deceased relatives in a number of different ways depending on the social position of the dead person. Bell (1937: 320) reports that the bodies of children and adults who were of "no account" used to be disposed at sea.¹ Sea burial was known on Anir as well, but here it was described as having been practised only by certain kin groups whose place of origin was located on the beach and who used certain tabooed areas on the reef as ossuaries. In addition, sea burials were said to have been practised in cases where the person had met his death at sea.

The corpse of a distinguished member of a kin group – particularly a leader – used to be placed in a canoe in his men's house. Bell's description is almost identical to accounts given by old Anirians at the beginning of the 21st century who had witnessed this mode of burial:

The canoe and its contents remained in the men's house and the relatives of the dead slept beside the vessel until the body rotted away sufficiently for the head, upper arm and leg bones to be removed. The stench was overpowering, but my informants emphasized the fact that, despite the inconvenience of the situation, the mourners continued their vigil beside the body. (Bell 1937: 320-21)

The bodies of other prominent lineage members – for example, well-known warriors or important women – used to be laid out in full decoration for one day and then buried in the men's house. Several weeks later, the grave was opened and the skull and bones were exhumed and cleaned. The head and lower jaw (and occasionally the upper arm and leg bones) were put in a special basket which was then hung up in the *bia*. The remaining bones and bodily remains were buried at the base of a coconut tree. The following year, the skull and bones in the basket were displayed in the context of various rituals of the mortuary cycle. Finally, after the climactic feast, they were "buried in a special part of the bush set aside for the burial of clan members" (Bell 1937: 322). In contemporary New Ireland the exhumation of skulls and bones and their employment in ritual contexts is no longer practised. But they are still vividly remembered and talked about by old

¹ In certain villages on Anir the bodies of children used to be wrapped in barkcloth and put in a funnel-shaped bamboo container and placed in a coconut tree.

people. The knowledge of these former rites is not forgotten and relevant if one wants to understand the implications and meaning of the ceremonies of the contemporary cycle.

Foster – who conducted fieldwork on Tanga in the 1980s – stresses that the “political economic context of these rituals has changed significantly” (1995: 58). Nevertheless, with regard to the overall structure of the ritual cycle he says that “in many ways mortuary rites have remained remarkably resistant to change – much of what Bell observed in 1933 could be observed in 1984” (Foster 1995: 58). I agree with Foster that the context mortuary rituals are conducted in has changed considerably, and that despite this fact many contemporary ceremonies look surprisingly similar to the ones described by Bell. However, there also are significant differences between Bell’s descriptions of the mortuary cycle as it was performed in the early 1930s, the observations made by Foster in the 1980s and my own from the early years of the new millennium.

Bell informs us that the ceremonial house that was built was called either *fulung kinit* or simply *fel* (Bell 1937: 332). He translates *fulung kinit* as “house of the ghost” (Bell 1977: 23). *Fel* on Tanga and Anir is the generic term for ‘house’. Consequently, according to Bell not a new men’s house but a “special funeral house” (Bell 1937: 332) was constructed in the course of the cycle. The ceremonies and festive meals that accompanied the building of this funeral house correspond closely to the rituals conducted by contemporary islanders with respect to general content and designation. Table 5 gives a comparative overview over the ritual events of the cycle as documented by myself on Anir and by Bell and Foster on Tanga.

Table 5 Comparative overview of mortuary rituals on Tanga and Anir²

	Tanga 1933 (Bell)	Tanga 1984 (Foster)	Anir 2000-2004 (Denner)
	<u>Rituals of the first phase</u>		<u>Rituals of the first phase</u>
1.	mentioned by Bell 1937: 318, but without providing an indigenous term	<i>en turan kalu i filis</i> : “eating together with the sick man” (Foster 1995: 100-1)	<i>so parpar</i> : ‘seeing/knowing the funeral’
2.	<i>if un kinit</i> : “the fire/in connection with/the corpse” “Choice meats and a variety of vegetable foods are thrown upon a fire and presented as a burnt offering to the ghost of the dead person.” (Bell 1937: 323)		
3.			<i>poem / poram</i> : small amount of money given by a lineage member of the deceased when he informs leaders of other men’s houses of the death
4.	<i>en ma:ra k’un kinit</i> : “feast/which concerns/the dancing wand/of/the ghost”; feast made from favourite pig of the deceased; the spirit of the animal will accompany the spirit of the deceased to the afterworld (Bell 1937: 323)		
5.	<i>pata:k n’aile kinit</i> : “small feast/ in connection with/the digging of the grave” (Bell 1937: 323).	<i>kis jakut</i> : “sit and be silent” (Foster 1937: 101-2)	<i>tut ngin</i> : ‘making the bed/ coffin’
6.		<i>morapup</i> : “compensatory meal for the grave” or <i>mor na minet</i> : “compensatory meal for the corpse” (Foster 1995: 102-3).	<i>so</i> ; meal on the occasion of the funeral
7.	See line no. 12	Setting of mourning taboos on diet, dress and demanour; takes place on the occasion of the funeral, <i>morapup</i> (Foster 1995: 102-03).	<i>an du ma an tamen</i> ; setting of mourning taboos; takes place on the occasion of the funeral, <i>so</i> or the <i>en mapuan kinit</i>
8.	<i>en ma:puan kinit</i> (Bell 1937:323)	<i>en mapu’ng kinit</i> : “eat the stink of the corpse” (Foster 1995:105-6).	<i>en mapua(n kinit)</i> : ‘meal in connection with the decomposition of the corpse’ or <i>bing etuk</i> : ‘third day’
9.	“quiescent mourning rites” (Bell 1937: 324).		<i>felumbintam</i> mourning period
10.	<i>pam bi na poktan kinit</i> : “a vegetarian meal eaten beside the corpse” (Bell 1937:323)		See line no. 14

² The column covering Anir correlates with tables 3 and 4 (Chapter Three) although not all steps of the house-building are listed here.

11.	<i>Teluf pakalun kinit</i> : “the exhumation/of the head/of the corpse” (Bell 1937:324)		
12.	<i>en tura’n mak</i> : “feast/in connection with/the mourning band”	See line no. 7.	See line no. 7.
13.	<i>en na ta:fu an kinit</i> : “feast marking the end of the quiescent mourning rites” (Bell 1937: 324)		<i>ngo falek</i> : ‘to sleep [together in the men’s house] and go apart’; feast to end the mourning period <i>felumbintam</i>
			Rituals of the second phase
14.			<i>funil e ti puek</i> : ‘new moon’; regular gatherings to mourn the deceased, consumption of a vegetable meal
15.		<i>moratineng</i> : “meal for the crying”; women are compensated for grieving; and “removal of mourning restrictions on diet, dress and demanour (Foster 1995:106-7); cf. line no. 17 for Anir and line no. 30 for Tanga in the 1930s	<i>mor na tineng</i> : ‘compensatory feast for crying’; communal meal to compensate women for mourning a person who died and was buried on another island (e.g. Tanga or New Ireland)
16.	<i>en gom na kinit</i> : “feast/off food which is taboo/because of/the dead (Bell 1937:324)		<i>kepu fu an ulau</i> : lifting of taboo markers concerning the land of the deceased
17.	See line no. 30	See line no. 15	<i>kepu fu an du ma an tamen</i> : lifting of dietary taboos and taboos concerning personal hygiene that were observed by individual mourners
18.			<i>taif lo panatof</i> : ‘to burn the sago thatch’; symbolic destruction of the house of the deceased
19.	According to Bell (1937: 329) and Foster (1995: 138) personal belongings are destroyed years after the climactic feast in a ritual called <i>en tura’n iu</i> , see line no. 33.		<i>taif lo tang</i> : ‘to burn the basket’
20.			<i>simen</i> (Tok Pisin): ‘cement’; erection of a tomb stone
21.		<i>am fimfil</i> : “promissory men’s house” (Foster 1995:112-3)	<i>am fimfil</i> ; from <i>fil tau fi</i> : ‘to buy a bigman’; distribution of betel nuts that symbolize pigs
			Rituals of the second phase
22.	<i>en fa:fas, en pan telfa:lek, an fin fik</i> : various ‘conference’ feasts held to plan and organize the work (Bell 1937: 325)	<i>en pao-et palang</i> : “first fruits of the garden feast” (Foster 1995:113-5)	<i>kiskis una fagati e pok fel, fainim baba tiki, fainim baba e u</i> ; various ‘conference’ feasts held to plan and organize the work
23.		<i>fapang mor</i> – “compensatory meal for making open”; distribution of betel nuts that symbolize pigs (Foster 1995:115-23)	<i>fapang mor</i> ; compensatory feast to thank helpers for making gardens

Table 5 Comparative overview of mortuary rituals on Tanga and Anir

		<i>pok bif</i> , construction of a new men's house (Foster 1995:122); hypernym that is superordinate to terms referring to the steps of the building process	<i>pok bif</i> or <i>pok fel</i> : 'to cut/carve a house'; construction of a new men's house; hypernym
24.	<i>Mobr na pok sua:k</i> : "small feast/in connection with the/cutting/of the bamboo" (Bell 1937: 325)	<i>warambof</i> , laying the foundation (Foster 1995:122)	<i>kei male</i> and <i>kape male</i> : 'to clean and level the ground/place'; bamboo is cut and brought to building site which is marked and rendered taboo by two bamboo poles
25.	<i>are fel</i> : "the oven of/the funeral house" or <i>fapang mor</i> ; feast when "the position and number of the posts for the funeral-house are marked out" (Bell 1937: 326).		<i>fasu fel</i> : 'mock fight for the house'; erection of the support posts of the new men's house
26.	<i>mobr n'feng n'fel</i> – "feast/in connection with/the placing of the beam/of/the house" (Bell 1937:326)	<i>an singluf</i> ; feast associated with transporting the ridge beam to the building site and hoisting it (Foster 1995:122)	<i>kep kalut</i> : 'fetching the tree log'; feast to celebrate the hoisting of the ridge beam.
27.	<i>mobr na fos fel</i> – "feast/in connection with/the roof slats of/the house" (Bell 1937:326)	<i>mor na papte bia</i> – "compensatory meal for roofing the men's house" (Foster 1995:123-5)	<i>fainim pan atof</i> : 'to give the sago leaves something to drink'; feast to celebrate the thatching of the men's house
28.		<i>en bala'm bia</i> : "feast inside of the men's house" (Foster 1995:131-4).	<i>en balam fel</i> : 'to eat inside the house', official opening of the new men's house
29.	<i>ere suf bal'n fel</i> : "all/sweep out/the inside of/the house" (Bell 1937:327)	<i>saf bala'm bia</i> : "to sweep the inside of the men's house" (Foster 1995: 134-5)	on Anir this ritual (<i>saif balam fel</i>) is performed after the climactic feast
30.	<i>arel sigit</i> : "festival which finishes"; on this occasion most mourning taboos were lifted (Bell 1937:328, 334-5)	<i>arer sigit</i> : "final inspection" or "last look" (Foster 1995:135-7)	<i>alal fajasu</i> , climactic feast of the cycle
31.			<i>saif balam fel</i> : 'to sweep the inside of the house'; meal to finish the <i>alal fajasu</i> and complete the cycle
Rituals of the third phase			
32.	Reduplication of the house-building rites and celebration of a second <i>arel sigit</i> (Bell 1937: 329, 335).		
33.	<i>en tura'n in n'kinit</i> : "the feast concerning the spear of/the dead man"; ritual destruction of personal belongings of the deceased, particularly his spear (Bell 1937:329)	<i>en tura'n in</i> , burning of personal possessions of the deceased, e.g. basket, lime gourd, club etc. (Foster 1995: 138)	See line no. 19 above, <i>taif lo tang</i>

Table 5 Comparative overview of mortuary rituals on Tanga and Anir

As table 5 shows, the climactic feast called *alal fufasu* on Anir is known as *arel sigit* (Bell 1937: 334-35) or *arer sigit* (Foster 1995: 135-37) on Tanga (cf. line 30). But while, today, this feast always marks the completion of the cycle, in earlier times it did not, or at least not always. According to Bell, formerly a duplication of all house-building rites was practised, in other words, a second funeral house was built which gave rise to the performance of a second *arel sigit* (cf. line 32). Thus, in Bell's structure of the cycle (1937: 323-29), the first stage of the "burial rites" consists of all the ceremonies that take place before the funeral house is built. The second stage encompasses "funeral-house building rites". They revolve around the construction of the first ceremonial house. The third stage then contains the erection of the second funeral house. At the end of both the second and the third phase an *arel sigit*, a "festival which finishes" or "final feast" (Bell 1937: 328), was celebrated.³ The obvious question following from this, is, what the difference between the first and the second *arel sigit* was. Bell describes the first *arel sigit* as follows:

Arel sigit is the focal point of all the funeral rites, representing as it does a final passing of the mourning clansfolk out of the marginal period of mourning. The main feature of the rite is a series of acts symbolic of the final departure of the ghost of the dead person. (...) An essential part of the final funeral ceremony is the mounting of the roof of the funeral house by the nephew of the dead person, carrying with him the skull, bones and spear of the deceased. He is formally asked by a chorus of the deceased's friends what he is carrying and replies that they are the bones of his recently dead mother's brother. He then descends, and after he has been presented with many fine armlets he finally places the bones and spear in the rafters of the men's house. (Bell 1937: 334)

From the first sentence of this quote we can infer that in the 1930s the lifting of the various taboos regarding diet, haircut and clothing took place in the context of the climactic feast for the first ceremonial house. This is confirmed by the fact that Bell does not mention any other, earlier ritual equivalent to the *kepufu an du ma an tamen* carried out by contemporary Anir islanders. As I explained in the previous chapter, this ceremony is usually carried out about one year after death. This is in line with Bell's (1937: 328) information that the *first arel sigit* took place 13 to 14 months after the death. According to Foster (1995: 107) on Tanga, in the 1980s, the "final removal of mourning restrictions on diet, dress, and demeanor" took place in the context of *moratineng*, the "meal for the crying". This is a "large-scale women's feast, at which (...) all the local women who wailed over the body" are compensated (Foster 1995: 107). Bell does not list this ritual.

3 Foster (1990: 436-37, 1995: 97-98, 108-09) follows Bell's division of the ceremonial cycle, but because the duplication of the *arel sigit* did not take place any more on Tanga in the 1980ies, Foster only lists two phases.

It is known on Anir, but only carried out when a relative dies far away, for example somewhere else in the province or in a different part of the country.

The second part of the above quote shows the similarities but also the differences between contemporary and former practice. The walk on the ridge-beam and the *am furis* performance with its chorus and the exchange of questions and answers still take place as Bell described them (cf. Chapter Five). But today no one would hold the skull of a deceased relative while standing on top of the men's house. These days the body is buried and the exhumation and display of the skull and bones would be inconceivable for the Christian islanders. In former times, the safe and final journey of the spirit of the deceased to the afterworld was a major focus of the mortuary cycle. Bell explains:

The period following [the first] *arer sigit* is, for all but the closest relatives of the dead, a period characterized by a gradual return to a normal way of life. Complete social reintegration is not attained however until the skull and bones are finally buried. The ceremonies in connection with the burial are not conducted in the lavish manner of the earlier rites, but a special funeral house is built and a garden prepared in order that the spirit if not the substance of the first *arel sigit* may be duplicated. The heir of the dead man once again walks along the roof of the [second] funeral house carrying the skull, which is then taken to the clan cemetery and buried at the base of a coconut palm, the fruit of which will be forever taboo. (Bell 1937: 335)

From this statement we can conclude that the deceased's closest relatives were totally freed from their mourning taboos only in the context of the rites accompanying the construction of the second funeral house. Bell's description also tells us that the skull – which used to play such a prominent role in the mortuary ceremonies – was buried once and for all only after the second *arel sigit*. The spirit of the deceased reached its final destination only after these final mortuary rites had been performed.

Various factors may have led to the abandonment of the duplication of the series of rites leading up to the *arel sigit*. Practices like laying out the corpse in the men's house until it decomposed or the burial of deceased people in dwelling houses were discouraged, if not altogether forbidden, by the colonial administration for hygienic reasons, and indigenous communities were ordered to bury their dead in communal graveyards.⁴ Missionaries in their attempt to convert New Guineans to Christianity not only condemned local beliefs, but also made great efforts to suppress and eliminate many ritual activities. From their viewpoint, practices focusing on the skull and bones of the dead were a manifestation of heathen ancestor cults that had to be abandoned. The

4 Cf. also Bell 1937: 319 and Foster 1995: 100.

adoption of the Christian faith by a growing number of islanders meant that these rituals (and with it the duplication of the *arel sigit*) not only started to appear inappropriate, but also unnecessary. Beliefs in the fate of the spirit of the deceased changed, and safeguarding the soul's journey to the afterworld is now less pronounced than it was in the past.

Another factor leading to the curtailment of the ritual cycle was the establishment of plantations and the growth of the copra industry. The growing of cash crops did not lead to the abandonment of mortuary rituals, as Foster (1995: 25-66) showed in his detailed study of commoditization processes on Tanga. Nevertheless, cash cropping calls for land and a considerable amount of labour input. According to many Anirians, cash-cropping led to a decline in the scale of feasting – not least, so they say, because the time and energy formerly spent on raising pigs for ritual purposes was increasingly allocated to producing copra. Other spheres associated with modern life – for example government, church and education – also involve activities and duties that keep islanders busy and cut short time for raising pigs and making feast gardens. Modernization has also led to a number of other changes in the ritual system. The official mourning period *felumbintam*, for example, which used to last several weeks and limited the mobility of the relatives of the deceased considerably, is now only imposed occasionally, and is often short. Taboos in general have been moderated. The practice of combining two rituals that in the past would have been carried out separately stands in connection with the more flexible handling of the order of ritual steps within the cycle (cf. Chapter Three).

Apart from safeguarding the journey of the deceased the duplication of the *arel sigit* and the ceremonies it involved also served other functions that feed directly into the spheres of politics and bigmanship. In order to explain, I will briefly discuss the various types of men's houses known on Anir. Foster interpreted the duplication in the following manner:

The procedure reported by Bell of repeating the house-building segment of *pok bif* corresponds to the practice in 1984 of first building a “temporary” men's house and then constructing a “true” *bia* or *bif*. (Foster 1995: 138)

The temporary men's house Foster mentions is called *farfarur* on Anir. The generic term for men's house is *bia* and at least seven different types of *bia* are distinguished. The *farfarur* is the most ‘inferior’ of them – not so much because it is temporary, but more importantly, because it can be built outside the ritual context.⁵ All other, ‘real’, men's houses have to be built in the context of a *pok bif*. Many of them are also temporary:

5 Several men on Anir built a *farfarur* without having immediate plans to conduct a *pok bif* but because they (or their *matambia*) at the time did not have a men's house that could serve as a venue for meetings and as a general place of leisure for the men.



Fig. 75 Joachim Tokas (wearing a yellow T-Shirt) with senior men of the village of Warantaban in the front of his men's house. Rectangular men's houses like this, which are built 'to stay' (*bilong stap*), are called *biakis*; this example was approximately ten years old. Bisimporot, village of Warambana, 2 September 2000

they are erected solely for the *alal fafasu* and are either ritually dismantled or left to deteriorate afterwards. Not only is the construction of such a special men's house highly prestigious, it demands the investment of extensive resources, and rarely occurs today. The permanent type of men's house is called *biakis*. It is rectangular in shape with a gable roof and is usually to be found in a hamlet where a bigman resides (fig. 75). In case the men's house community that is organizing the *pok bif* does not already possess a permanent men's house, a *farfarur* is built as a venue for the numerous meetings that take place when planning the next work steps, the general progress of the *pok bif* or the details of a ritual. In case the organizer is a bigman who already possesses a permanent men's house, he will use it for the planning sessions and erect the new men's house on a suitable piece of land, preferably where a men's house once stood.

The images Bell published of funeral houses that were constructed while he was doing fieldwork show long buildings that resemble a hangar in shape. They are semi-elliptical in cross-section, or – as Anirians say – 'round'. Bell's images of funeral houses⁶ exactly match the descriptions Anir elders gave of their prestigious temporary men's houses (cf. figs. 76 to 79). When these men were shown Bell's (and Schlaginhaufen's) photos, they identified the Tanga buildings as *batkonim* (the most common of the 'round' men's houses) and *panawin* (an exceptionally long version). They also pointed out that these



Fig. 76 Comparatively short version of a temporary men's house of the type *batkonim*. The house was built before the opening of the Pentecoastal Church at Nanlei with the intention of catering for the honorary guests during the festive meal. However, the Pentcostals discarded this idea, and the building was not used. During the feast food was stored in it until it was distributed at a different location; most of the time kids played in it. After the opening, the Pentcostals were reluctant to talk about the *batkonim* and seemed almost embarrassed about it.

Fig. 77 Men's house in Mormor on Lif Island, Tanga published by Schlaginhaufen (1959, fig. 31). He commented that the half-cylindrical shape was characteristic of all the men's houses he and Richard Schilling, the Deutsche Marine-Expedition's photographer, had come across on the Tanga islands (Schlaginhaufen 1959: 79). Anirians identified the ceremonial house shown in this picture as a men's house of the type *batkonim*. The photo most likely was taken by Richard Schilling on 26 March 1908



Fig. 78 A Tanga "funeral house more than 120 feet long". Anirians identified this ceremonial building as a men's house of the type *panawin*. Published in Bell 1937, plate A



Fig. 79 Remains of a *fel* 'funeral house' on Tanga showing its carved posts (*tu*). The photo was taken by Bell in 1933; it illustrates what Anirians reported with respect to the temporary men's houses, that is, that they are left to deteriorate. Published in Bell 1949, plate II.D

special *bia* had been far more common in the past than they are today.⁷ It clearly follows that Bell's 'funeral houses' are identical with what contemporary Anirians described and termed as special types of temporary men's houses. When Anir men discussed these men's houses with me, they explained that a man who is aiming for bigman status and fame has to organize a whole series of *pok bif*. In former times he would have built a permanent *biakis* first, followed by a variety of special temporary houses.⁸ Once he had constructed all types, he obtained the right to build another *biakis*, this time with a centre-post that pierced the roof like a finger pointing to the sky, reminding visitors and passers-by of the paramount status of its owner. Although today no such men's house is to be found on Anir, people know which of the old bigmen would have the right to build one.⁹

From Bell's account we can conclude that in the 1930s the mortuary ceremonies held in honour of most men and women went as far as the first *arel sigit*, after which their bones were buried (Bell 1937: 322). This is in accordance with reports from Schlaginhaufen (1959, 1964-66) according to which numerous skulls of men as well as women were kept in the rafters of the various men's houses he visited on Anir in 1908. Only the body of a leader was placed in a canoe and watched over in the men's house until the skull and bones could be removed. It seems that only in such a case the process of building a ceremonial house was repeated and a second *arel sigit* celebrated.

On the one hand, bigmen had (and still have) the responsibility of carrying out the mortuary rites for members of their kin group. On the other hand, they repeatedly had, and have, to organize a *pok bif* in order to consolidate their status. This pressure obviously is one of the reasons why funeral/men's houses used to be built for the majority of men as well as women in the past and why the *pok bif* used to be duplicated. The need to organize the construction of several men's houses in order to achieve unchallenged bigmanship also explains why nowadays occasionally a *pok bif* is carried out in commemoration of a person who was not an actual lineage leader. Some of the major changes that have occurred since the 1930s refer to the elimination of this duplication, to the fact that today the full cycle is usually carried out only in commemoration of deceased bigmen and that then in most cases a permanent men's house (*biakis*) rather

7 A more detailed description of the various types of men's house known on Anir can be found in Appendix I.

8 Bell – in his article “The Industrial Arts in Tanga”, the second part of which is “The Building of Houses” (1949: 347) – noted that “the socially recognized method of acquiring high rank in Tanga” was “to erect an elaborate house known as a *bungbung*”. This building was particularly long, containing up to 25 carved ridge posts. Probably it was identical to the house known on Anir as *panawin*.

9 Some of these bigmen seem to have constructed several of the temporary special types, but cultural change also meant that conducting several *pok bif* during which ‘only’ a house of the permanent type *biakis* was built is considered sufficient today.

than a prestigious semi-elliptical one is erected. On contemporary Anir, the latter are normally built when a 'communal' *pok bif* is organized through which a larger group of deceased *matambia* members are commemorated together. In summary, the following transformations or shifts occurred between the beginning and the end of the 20th century:

(a) The majority of men and women in the past were commemorated by having a funeral house built before their skull and bones were buried.¹⁰ In the context of the accompanying *alal fajasu / arel sigit* the mourning taboos pertaining to their relatives were lifted. Today, this happens in the course of rituals called *kepufu an du ma an tamen* on Anir and *moratineng* on Tanga. That is, 'new' rituals have been created to make up for the obligation of building a funeral house in order to lift the mourning taboos.

(b) In the 1930s, leaders and very prominent senior members of a lineage were honoured by duplicating the house-building process. Today, it is the death of such persons that gives rise to the erection of a new men's house at all.

(c) From Bell's article on the construction of houses (1949) it appears that the rectangular, permanent men's house, known as *biakis* on Anir, formerly was built independently of the mortuary cycle. Bell also reported that the inauguration of such a men's house was celebrated with dances (1949: 346). In his article on death rites and funeral houses, Bell (1937) did not mention dancing as a feature of either the first or the second *arel sigit*. Today, the rectangular permanent men's houses are built in the context of commemorative rituals rather than independently, and the climactic feasts provide the stage for the presentation of many different mask and dance performances. These days, the 'round', prestigious men's houses that correspond to the 'funeral houses' documented by Bell are only erected on very special occasions.

10 Today, as in the past, children and people 'of no account' are buried without further ceremonies.

Ceremonial exchange – pigs, politics and social reproduction

Anirians not only say “death is the foundation of all our *kastam*”, but also that “*kastam* runs on pigs only”.¹¹ Without pigs, no ceremonies could be carried out, no feasts could be held. As in many other Melanesian societies, on Anir too, pigs are an integral and vital part of ritual life and feasting.¹² They are tangible manifestations of social relationships, and, accordingly, pigs were mentioned repeatedly throughout the previous chapter. In the following analysis, I examine why they are pivotal components of the ritual system, and explain their significance with respect to processes of social reproduction and the production of political power. Essentially, the argument is that by contributing live pigs to the enactment of the various rituals of the mortuary cycle, people show their solidarity towards the kin group in the name of which the rituals in question are carried out. By redistributing these pigs, the hosts in turn strengthen social ties within their own group as well as beyond. In addition, they prove their ability to act as a unified entity and are given the forum to display their ritual knowledge and entrepreneurial skills. The immediate beneficiary in this ‘game’ is the (big)man who acts as the main organizer of the events because the success of having accomplished a full cycle is, to a large degree, credited to him.

The funeral of a member of the community is the first occasion in the cycle during which substantial numbers of pigs are killed. As we have seen, some of them are provided by members of the deceased’s *matambia*, while others are contributed by groups whose leaders received a so-called *poram*. Death is the occasion on which a wide range of relatives and friends may express their sorrow and respect for the deceased by offering a pig for the funeral (*so*). Unlike other occasions, the funeral is an event where pigs may come from rather diverse sources. Foster (1995: 101) reports that on Tanga the lineage carrying out the funeral may refuse pigs offered for the *so* because the animals would have to be reciprocated sometime in the future. He continues to explain that in such cases taboo markers signalling that pigs are not welcome are erected at the entrance of the hamlet where the funeral is to take place. On Anir I never observed such markers and my informants explained that pigs that were brought as *poram* could not be refused. Also contrary to Foster’s account, Anirians claimed that pigs contributed to a burial do not create direct debts and that donors who are not closely related to the deceased give because they too feel deeply sorry and want to show their empathy.

This brings us to the fine line that is drawn between pigs that, according to local explanations, do not necessarily have to be reciprocated (*fau les*) and pigs that create

11 “*Kastam i ron long pik tasol*” in Tok Pisin.

12 Cf. Rappaport 1968, A. Strathern 1971, Rubel and Rosman 1978, and M. Allen 1981 for analyses of pig exchanges in other parts of Melanesia.

accountable debts (*an sue*). *Fau les* are much more common than I first expected. They often are described as being based on *luksave* or ‘understanding’. However, despite the fact that they are said to be voluntary gifts, and therefore do not give rise to demandable repayment, they do create a moral debt. That is, the recipients feel obliged to help the donors should an occasion arise where these need help. In fact, many of the pigs given as *fau les* are, sooner or later, reciprocated. The *poram* pigs that are given on the occasion of funerals (and the *wilingus* pigs that might be contributed to a final feast, cf. Chapter Three) are classic examples of this type of gift.¹³ An analysis of Munbal’s funeral shows that all the persons/*matambia* that contributed a *poram* pig in the course of the event were given back a pig on the same occasion. In other words, when X, Y and Z brought pigs as *poram*, the hosts of the funeral redistributed these pigs so that X received the pig brought by Y, Y got the pig that Z brought, and so on. Following this procedure the organizers made sure that reciprocation took place immediately.

The men’s house community that hosts the ritual cycle is responsible for providing, or, more accurately, organizing the pigs that are needed for feasting. They realize this by using pigs they have raised themselves and by securing support from others. These ‘others’ either belong to the same clan or, more rarely, to a different clan than the hosts. Supporters belonging to the same clan are members of matrilineages that are closely related to or affiliated with the hosts on the basis of a common history. Supporters who belong to a different clan are either *kinaf* (cross cousins, that is, affines¹⁴) or *dadake* (*blut* or ‘blood’, that is, offspring of male members) of the hosts.¹⁵ In practice this means that no ritual feast is held without some kind of active involvement of people belonging to other lineages and clans. At the same time it is important to note that the support from others is always based on close affinal and/or patrilineal ties. In the course of conducting the mortuary cycle, particularly during its last phase, *pok bif*, the actors form a corporate entity.

13 The distinction between gift and commodity, and between gift societies and modern (commodity) societies, has been an important issue in anthropological theories on exchange. Gifts, as Thomas (1991: 15) points out are often associated with inalienability, reciprocity, dependence, rank and subjects, while commodities are alienable and are associated with independence, price and objects (see for example Malinowski 1922, Mauss 1990[1925], Sahlins 1974, Gregory 1982, A. Strathern 1988, A. Weiner 1992, and Carrier 2006 for an overview of theories on exchange). I agree with Thomas (and other authors such as Miller 1987, 1993) that the distinction between gifts and commodities is important, but that it needs to be disconnected from an opposition between indigenous and Western societies.

14 Cross cousins are the preferred marriage partners.

15 This is closely linked with the fact that Anirians define the men’s house community or *matambia* not as a pure matrilineage but as a kin group which also encompasses other close relatives (cf. Chapter One).

This action-group, as I will call it in the following, may be represented as in fig. 80. The centre consists of the lineage of the deceased (red), followed by other, closely related lineages of the same clan (orange). In the following I shall refer to these two segments as the core. On the periphery we have lineages belonging to other clans, represented by cross cousins (that is, affines; blue) and paternal offspring of the hosts (turquoise).

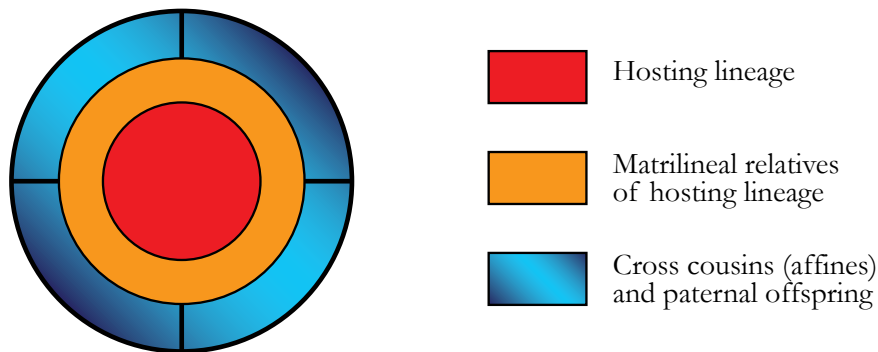


Fig. 80 The ceremonial action group; original in colour

Brenda Clay who worked among the Madak of central New Ireland argued in her book *Pinikindu: Maternal Nurture, Paternal Substance* (1975) that, among the Madak, maternal nurture is associated with sharing and that this strengthens the identity of the people within the same social unit (lineage and/or clan). Paternal substance is linked to indebtedness and associated with exchange and is important with regard to strengthening the identity of people across social units. Affinal nurture contrasts with, but at the same time, complements paternal substance; like paternal substance, it entails exchange and an emphasis of ties between social units. The same, I would say, is true for Anir. An analysis of ceremonial transactions of pigs throughout the ritual cycle reveals that a considerable percentage of the animals contributed to supporting the hosting lineage (by matrilineal, affinal and paternal relatives) are redistributed by their leader back to exactly this group of supporters, that is the members of the action-group. Only a smaller percentage is given to outsiders, that is, to members of distant lineages and clans. This happens mainly towards the end of the mortuary cycle, and it is these pigs that usually create demandable debts. Anir exchange practice is geared to confirming and reproducing as well as extending and newly creating social networks. The members of the action-group act in concert, in the process of which their mutual commitment and dependence is elicited.¹⁶

¹⁶ This is in line with Marilyn Strathern's (1988) argument that Melanesian persons are constituted through the multitude of social relationships they entertain.

Actual exchange practices also reveal that neither a model that focuses on the matrilineage as the crucial acting group nor a model that emphasizes flexible organization based on proximity and kindred is entirely satisfactory. Rather, the deceased is the pivot around which the action-group develops. At the core of it stands the hosting lineage, but it would be incomplete, and incapable of performing the cycle without the help of affines and patrilineal relatives. Accordingly, in the context of the mortuary rituals the deceased is not only reflected on as a member of an enduring, self-renewing lineage, but also as a unique individual on whom the actual composition of the action-group (and the intricacies of the ritual events) depend. In order to fully comprehend the mechanisms of Anir social reproduction it is worth taking a closer look at some actual exchanges.

With regard to several ceremonies of the first phase there are clear rules as to who should receive the pig (or pigs) killed on the specific occasion. If a *so parpar* takes place prior to death, the animal is likely to be given to a possible successor of the dying bigman, preferably to a ZS or ZDS.¹⁷ Through this act his rights to succession are acknowledged. At the same time, the expectation is communicated that he will take over a leading role in organizing the mortuary rituals that follow death. For two other early rituals, *tut ngin* (the first communal meal after the death) and *en mapua* ('eating the fluids of the corpse' three days after the death), also only one pig each is killed. In both cases either a lineage member, a child, a matri- or patrilineal grandchild, or a close affine of the deceased will provide the pig and, without fail, the animal will be given to one of the lineage members of the dead person. As it is taboo (*mapak*) to give the pig to a Z or ZS, the ideal recipient is a ZDS.

The events following Munbal's death clearly disclose the reasoning behind these acts: The *tut ngin* pig was to be given to Augustin Kiapmaia, a classificatory ZDS who had come from Tanga. Accordingly, he was seated in front of the pig in order to receive the 'first bite' and thus accept it as a gift, but suddenly Augustin stood up, explained that he was from too far away and that someone living close by should be offered the pig. With these words he took the arm of Greg Milintineng, another (classificatory) ZDS who lived in the neighbouring village. Augustin presented Greg with a shell ring whereupon the pig was given to him. The next day, when the pigs of the *so* (the meal accompanying the funeral) were distributed, Kosmas, Munbal's brother was seated in front of the first and most important pig, the *warou e mus* (fig. 81).¹⁸ He, too, refused to accept it and, maintaining he was too old, suggested Augustin to replace him. Augustin once more

17 Here and in the following I am working on the assumption that the deceased is male and, more precisely, a bigman.

18 *Warou e mus* translates as 'base of the ritual work'. It is usually the largest and first pig in the line. In the first phase of the cycle (when there are no *fese bo* rites) the person to receive the *warou e mus* will distribute the remaining pigs.



Fig. 81 Kosmas Lustang seated on a chair being offered the 'first bite' of the largest and most important pig distributed at Munbal's funeral. This rite is considered to be a 'kastam of Tanga', not often seen on Anir. The designated recipient is seated in front of the cooked pig. Several men take the whole cooked animal and hold it shortly to the recipient's mouth who pretends to bite into it, thereby signalling that he accepts it. Nantingi, village of Kamgot, 10 March 2002



Fig. 82 Augustin Kiapmaia (wearing a black and yellow loin cloth) presenting an *amfat* shell ring to Greg Milintineng (in bright loin cloth) and asking him to accept the *warou e mus* pig. Nantingi, village of Kamgot, 10 March 2002

stressed that he was not the right man. Again he called for Greg, handed him another shell ring, so this pig, too, was given to Greg (fig. 82). Two days later, when the *en mapua* was held, Augustin finally accepted the pig offered to him.

It is quite clear that the acceptance of a pig amounts to an agreement to actively support any ritual that might be carried out in the future in commemoration of the deceased. By adding a shell ring, which makes the pig ‘heavy’, the obligation is further strengthened, making it hard for the recipient to later evade the duty he once accepted. Months later, when the *an du* and *an tamen* taboos were lifted, Greg started fulfilling his obligation by providing the largest pig for the accompanying feast. The reasoning that lies behind giving pigs to young relatives of a deceased person is to encourage them to become actively involved in ritual feasting. For an ambitious young man such a prestation represents a chance as well as a challenge; after all, the activities it involves might be his first steps in the pursuit of a bigman career.

As mentioned above, the deceased’s Z and ZS are not given any pigs during the two rituals that frame the funeral. They are considered too close to the dead person to “eat from his *tut ngin* or *en mapua*”. At the same time they belong to the category of closest lineage members and would in any case feel a strong obligation to commit themselves to the rituals emerging in later stages. Rather than giving pigs to a Z or ZS, the common rule says that the pigs killed in the course of these early rituals should go to *ol pupu bisnis*, that is, to lineage or clan members belonging to the generation of grandchildren. Here a ZDS is the favoured person.

A corresponding pattern applies to many other pigs distributed throughout the cycle. Its significance lies in the fact that by means of the gifts, young relatives are acknowledged as vital members of their kin groups and feel obliged to become involved in future ritual activities. This pattern also explains why members of the matrilineage, or a closely related one, are the recipients of the majority of pigs during the first two phases of the cycle. It is during this period that the core of the action-group that safeguards the smooth and successful staging of the third phase is formed. But apart from them – and as explained above – members belonging to other clans – patrilineal relatives and affines, that is people belonging to the outer cycle of the action-group – are also given pigs. Here too the motive of knotting a reliable network of social relations that will form the basis of the successful organisation and implementation of the vital third phase applies. Besides, existing relationships with particular individuals and kin groups belonging to other clans and often living further away are hereby acknowledged and confirmed. For example, at the distribution of pigs on the occasion of the lifting of taboos observed by people mourning Munbal, two pigs were given to members of a Tasik men’s house with

close marriage ties to Munbal's *matambia* (which belongs to the Korofi clan). One was given to their leader, the other to a female cousin, or *kinaf*, of Munbal.

A closer analysis of the selection of individual pig recipients shows the significance of the relationship between the recipient and the deceased. A couple of examples will illustrate this more clearly. When the *an du*, *an tamen* and/or *tamen male* taboos are lifted, the majority of mourners are given a piece of pork and reciprocated the small amount of money they paid when they took on the taboo in question. Often, one or several of these mourners, specifically those who either obeyed several taboos simultaneously or special taboos that are regarded as particularly 'hard work', are compensated with a pig. Rose Sianot, for example, had completely avoided the hamlet her (classificatory) brother Alfred Kiapsula used to live in before he suffered a fatal accident. When this *tamen male* was lifted after more than two years, Rose was given a whole pig as well as a shell ring. Francis Neantele, the Tasik bigman who gave the eulogy at Munbal's funeral, presented Munbal's lineage members with a large pig two days after the *so* and announced that apart from abstaining from mami and pork he from now on would not talk about kastam any more. When this rather unusual taboo was lifted, the pig was reciprocated. On the same day, Emma, the wife of Munbal's adopted son Conny, received a pig because she had taken care of her father-in-law's grave.

In the context of *taif lo fel* (symbolically burning the house of the deceased) and *taif lo tang* (the destruction of his/her basket) one of the pigs distributed is always given to a person who thereby is commissioned to carry out the task in question. In the case of Munbal's house, a grandson upon whom the bigman had bestowed one of his names was chosen. This is quite common practice. If a deceased person named, took particular care of, or adopted, one or several children, the latter are normally – and independently of their clan or lineage affiliation – given pigs in the course of the mortuary ceremonies. Taken together, the entire group of pig recipients in the first two phases represents an image of the deceased's active social universe: matrilineal relatives, those he/she supported or nurtured, offspring and patrilineal relatives, affines and affiliates. From the viewpoint of the individual recipients the pigs confirm their identity and role in a kin group that is part of a larger social setting. From the viewpoint of the organizers the pigs are signs of the appreciation of existing ties and an investment in the future.

I now come to exchanges in the third phase of the ritual cycle, *pok bif*. At the ceremony of *am fimfil*, prior to the start of the third phase, flowers or betel nuts (of various size and ripeness) are distributed to various individuals. They symbolize piglets and pigs of various sizes, and the further the betel nut has matured, the larger the pig it stands for. Hereby the recipient is figuratively being asked to take care of a pig of

the indicated size and, later, contribute the grown animal to the *alal fafasu*, the feast that marks the climax of the ritual cycle.¹⁹ About half of the nuts distributed are given to members of the lineage of the organizers, or to closely related lineages within the same clan, that is, to members of the core of the action-group. The other half is presented to individuals belonging to *matambia* that stand in a *kinaf*, or cross-cousin relationship, and to the children of the deceased, that is, to people who belong to the periphery of the action-group.

It is in the course of rituals of the third phase that pigs are given to outsiders. From the start of the *pok bif*, a question of particular interest to everyone in the surrounding communities is, who at the final feast will receive one of the highly valued ‘*alal* pigs’. This question stands in direct relationship to the size and features of the *alal fafasu* because pig recipients should contribute a dance which enhances the splendour of the feast as well as the prestige of its organizer. In the context of the various ceremonies that accompany the building process of the new men’s house some pigs are usually given to people who do not belong to the action-group. This always gives rise to speculations about whether the targeted person later might be presented with one of the large pigs of the final feast. Step by step the organizers reveal the recipients of *alal* pigs. But neither they nor other observers can ever be entirely sure because these matters are not confirmed verbally. Besides, at the *alal fafasu* pigs are always ‘mixed’, that is to say, some are always given to people belonging to the action-group while others ‘go outside’. It is the latter animals that are either given to repay outstanding debts – some of which the organizers may have inherited from the deceased – or to create new dependencies.

But the picture is even more complex. Firstly, because some pigs are always given to individuals that live in distant villages but still belong to a lineage that historically stands in a close relationship with the hosts. The recipients of these pigs are explicitly chosen in order to strengthen the extended network that links clusters of related matrilineages across Anir and beyond. Secondly, many men’s house communities entertain an alliance relationship with one or several (physically) distant men’s houses of other clans. When one of these *matambia* builds a new men’s house, a representative of the other – usually its leader – is asked to come and perform certain ritual tasks. Usually his work is acknowledged by presenting him with a pig. This means that some pigs which, at first

19 Ideally, the pig for the *alal* is not the only animal the recipient of the betel nut (or one of his/her relatives) raises. The third phase consists of numerous steps and for all of them the hosts need live pigs. The betel nuts are handed out to secure a continuous flow of pigs, and the recipients of the betel nuts know that, apart from the pig for the final feast, they should also raise others for earlier feasts. The organizers, on the other hand, know that unexpected events might prevent their supporters from raising pigs and that pigs originally intended for their *alal* might be used because of a sudden death or some other unforeseen but committing ceremony. Therefore they usually distribute more betel nuts than pigs needed for the *alal fafasu*.

sight, appear to be being given to 'outsiders' are in fact being given to people who are 'insiders', even if they belong to the periphery of the action-group.

Robert Foster analyzed the Tanga mortuary rituals with respect to their symbolism. His analysis rests on a structural model in which the matrilineage is strongly emphasized as the focus of group formation in ritual activities. Foster's basic argument is that the lineage hosting the mortuary cycle, in its course, constitutes itself as a "collective individual" which displays its autonomy, is "impervious" to death and decay and capable of "a kind of asexual regeneration" (1990: 432).²⁰ Vital to Foster's argument is the opposition between pigs and shell valuables, or consumption and nonconsumption respectively. Consumption and eating on Tanga according to Foster are associated with mortality and death; non-consumption is linked with autonomy, perdurance and relative superiority. Pigs are soft and consumable; shell valuables are hard and durable. Pigs are only given to lineage members at the beginning of the mortuary cycle, and therefore the "lineage of the deceased assumes the status of consumer/consumed relative to other lineages" (1990:442). According to Foster, this is in accord with the institution of mourning taboos which, on Tanga, are primarily observed by affinal and paternal relatives of the deceased. The mourners give small gifts when they announce their taboos and, because the taboos involve dietary restrictions, they "define themselves ... as non-consumers relative to the lineage of the deceased" (1990:442). Once the stage of building a new men's house is reached, the roles are reversed. The lineage of the deceased now starts to give pigs to members of other lineages (instead of distributing them among themselves). The hosts thereby are "causing others to eat"; they are, so Foster, "force-feeding" them while they themselves show a "public abstention from eating" (1990: 431, 440).

At the feast at the end of the cycle, the hosts exchange cooked pigs and food for their guests' shell valuables. The latter are "iconic signs of permanence and durability" and "feast givers directly appropriate the quality of these objects as definite aspects of their collective individuality" (1990: 432). Thus the hosting lineage "construct[s] itself as durable relative to other lineages", as a "transcendent social entity" and as an "enduring, unconsumable matrilineage" (1990: 442, 444). But the transcendence of the lineage is only temporary: The guests "acquiesce in the host lineage's project of self-constitution (...) with the legitimate expectation that the hosts will acquiesce, in turn, in future similar projects" that is, when other lineages build a men's house (1990: 444). In other words, the system only works because various matrilineages alternately allow each other to constitute themselves as autonomous and enduring.

20 In the following account quotes are taken from Foster 1990 where he presented the same argument, but in a more condensed form, as in 1995 (pp. 140-224). I often quote him directly to give the reader an idea of the way Foster expressed his argument.

Foster provides us with a conclusive and elegant interpretation of Tanga social reproduction in mortuary rites and the underlying symbolism. In general I agree with his interpretation that in the course of the mortuary cycle the hosts are given the opportunity to demonstrate their productive capacity and constitute themselves as a perduring kin group. Nevertheless, when Foster's material is compared with the data from Anir a number of differences attract one's attention. They also seem to be relevant to the interpretation of meanings involved in the cycle. Partly the discrepancies may be explained through the cultural and historical differences between Anir and Tanga, but they may also have something to do with the difference between the approach taken by Foster who focuses on a lineage-based model of social formation and my own approach that puts more emphasis on process, practice and the action-group. I will first deal with the differences in the ethnographic data.

(a) Foster reports that the pigs distributed during two ceremonies at the beginning of the cycle are not given to representatives of other lineages.²¹ With regard to the first he adds that "only members of the lineage of the deceased officially receive pigs" (1990: 442). Anir practice shows how important the word 'official' in Foster's quote is. As explained above, on Anir these two rituals involve just one pig²² and my informants confirmed Foster's view when they stated that it should be given to someone belonging to the *lain* (literally 'line', kin group) of the deceased. But because of the taboo to give the pig to a ZS, the animal usually is given to a ZDS and in the cases I recorded that person happened to be a classificatory ZDS and was the member of a different, but of course, related matrilineage.

(b) Affinal and paternal relatives of the dead person, according to Foster (1990: 442) "make up the bulk of the mourners" who assume taboos on diet, dress and demeanour. On Anir, a wide range of people obey such *an tamen* and *an du* taboos: members of the lineage of the deceased and of related lineages of the same clan as well as affines and patrilineal relatives, or friends who belong to different clans. In general, everyone who wants to honour the dead person by observing one or several taboos is welcome to do so. In one particular case, only two relatives observed taboos (but they did so for more than two years). One was the deceased's real brother, the other a classificatory sister. Foster's claim that paternal and affinal relatives assume the mourning taboos (but not lineage members) and his interpretation that they thereby define themselves as non-consumers relative to the lineage of the deceased obviously does not apply to Anir.

21 These are the ceremonies of *tut ngin* (Anir) or *kis fakut* (Tanga) and *en mapuan kenit* (Anir) or *en mapu'ng kinit* (Tanga), cf. Foster 1990: 442.

22 Foster (1990: 436) reports that both ceremonies are *en tiki* or „eat everything“ affairs, therefore it is likely that on Tanga, too, they involve only one pig or two at the most. On Anir only the first of the two rituals – *tut ngin* – is *en tiki*.

(c) As indicated above, the payment of shell rings for the pigs distributed by the hosts plays a vital role in Foster's analysis of Tanga mortuary feasting. This rite is called *lulu am bo* on Tanga (Foster 1995: 133) and *lulu* or *ninlu e bo* on Anir.²³ However, on contemporary Anir it is not executed very often. In other words, the discs that, according to Foster, iconically symbolize lineage continuity hardly ever flow into the hands of the hosting lineage, and the transformation of consumables into non-consumables does not eventuate.

Only two of six *fese bo* ceremonies I observed on Anir were followed by a *ninlu*. Both rituals involved more than 10 pigs. In the course of the first, only one, in the course of the second, five pigs were paid for. Explanations of the *ninlu* by different informants shed some light on the meaning these payments have on Anir. Several men reported that, in the past, *ninlu* were more common than today, and some added that it would be good to revive these payments.²⁴ Their reasoning was closely related to the customary handling of *ninlu*. When such a payment is made, it is presented to the man who walked across the ridge beam of the new men's house. After the performance of the *am furis* he takes a seat on the slit gong in front of the *bia*. Then those who want to *lu e bo*, make their payments. Each donor consecutively holds each valuable he/she is about to pay high up in the air – so that it can be seen by everybody – and then carefully places it in front of the recipient. Not a word is spoken. When all payments have been made the recipient collects the valuables and puts them away.

A few days later the members of the *matambia* (and others who raised pigs for the *alal* because they had been given betel nuts earlier on) gather for a closing meal. On this occasion, the 'father' of the men's house (who in the meantime has received all the *ninlu*) redistributes the payments. Some of the shell rings are added to the *tubaibia*, the stock of valuables that belongs to the men's house community as a whole. In the future they will be used to support a lineage member who has to pay a bride price or to make some other form of payment, for example settle a compensation claim.²⁵ The rest of the valuables (and money) will be handed out to those who raised pigs for the *alal fajasu*. This means that a considerable percentage of the shell rings the hosts received do not remain

23 *Ninlu* is a noun, that is, the expression used for the payment, *(lu)lu* is the verbal form; *bo* means 'pig'.

24 My informants often attributed this change to an increasing shortage of shell rings. Strings of shell money (*kemeta*s) are still made today on Lihir and in New Ireland as well, and Anirians purchase them when they travel to other places in the province. But the *Tridacna gigas* shell discs, the valuables typical for Anir and Tanga, are not made any more.

25 Formerly payments that concerned individual members of the *matambia* (for example a bride price or a compensation) were largely paid for by the leader of the men's house who used the valuables of the *tubaibia*. In turn young men were obliged to work for their bigmen. Although this system still holds – leaders still contribute to the payments in question – individuals and their immediate families now carry a far greater responsibility for raising the money and valuables they need than in the past.

in their hands but flow back to supporters who are members of different lineages and/or clans. So, even if *ninlu* are paid, on Anir only a limited number of shell discs end up in the hands of the hosting lineage.²⁶

As indicated above, the full meaning of Anir ceremonial exchanges only comes to light when a detailed analysis of actual events is carried out which simultaneously takes into account the lineage affiliation of the participants **and** the motives for the various, individual transactions. I will present an exemplary exchange before formulating my critique of Foster's interpretation and presenting my own conclusions regarding pig exchanges.

The final feast that took place in Balngit village in 2001 was held to commemorate Theodor Nandaou, the former leader of the men's house at Silalangit (clan Korofi). Nominally, James Tengnaof, Nandaou's brother, was his successor and although he was acknowledged as the main organizer of the *alal fafasu*, Arnold Pinambo and Robin Kiapngos – two ZS of Nandaou – played as important a role as Tengnaof. One of the aims of the event was to make possible the felling of a large shade tree under which Nandaou used to sit.²⁷ Some time earlier, two seniors, Ansen and Gasman, had distributed branches from this particular tree instead of betel nuts to oblige relatives to raise pigs.²⁸ Two days before the actual feast, four people ceremonially delivered a pig together with various foodstuffs and handed back the branches in a ceremonial act called *so puek*. The pigs were brought by the following individuals:

- Rose Sianot, a classificatory sister of Nandaou
- Maria Timpuek, a woman belonging to the Tasik clan and a *kinaf* (cross cousin) of the deceased (Timpuek also was an adopted child of Nandaou's MB) (cf. fig. 65)
- Charles Kirok, a member of a related Korofi lineage; originally his father, a member of the Tasik clan and another *kinaf* of Nandaou, had been given the tree branch. Charles was fulfilling an obligation he had inherited from his father

26 Anir informants also pointed out that there are two types of *ninlu*. The first is a large payment that "kills the pig completely so you won't have to give another pig back sometime later." The second type is a smaller payment: If X gives Y a pig at a *kastam* and Y reciprocates just a small *ninlu*, then Y at a later ceremony gives X a pig who then reciprocates exactly the same *ninlu* to Y. Small *ninlu* therefore guarantee that exchange relationships continue, while large *ninlu* terminate them. Significantly, all the payments I observed were small *ninlu*.

27 On the importance of the metaphor of the shade tree see Part III.

28 Ansen as well as Gasman were old men. Tengnaof had expected that they would carry out the *pok bif* for Nandaou, but both died before the *pok bif* actually started. The event was then portrayed as being held primarily for Nandaou, but also to commemorate Ansen and Gasman.

- Tengstinut, a member of the Tasik clan and the son of Ansen; originally Ansen had given a branch to his own ZS Tois, but because Tois did not have a pig, he asked his *kinaf* Tengstinut to step in for him

Two of the four branches had been given to members of lineages that were closely related to the lineage of the deceased. The two other branches had been handed out to cross cousins belonging to the Tasik clan.²⁹ The bulk of pigs for the *alal* the organizers themselves provided: four had been raised by Robin, one by James and one by Arnold. The largest pig of this *kastam* was regarded as one of Arnold's pigs but actually had been raised by Tokas, a bigman from Ambitlei, well known for his skill in pig husbandry, who was married to a classificatory sister of Nandaou. In the course of the *kastam*, Arnold presented Tokas with a shell disc and some money to thank him for raising the pig. A further pig was contributed by Kasi, a classificatory ZS belonging to a men's house community in the village of Naliu.

All the pigs to be distributed at a feast are brought to the feast hamlet and either formally (*so puek*) or informally given to the feast organizer(s) who then redistribute(s) them at the ceremony of *fese bo*. Table 4 shows the contributors and recipients of the 12 pigs of the Balngit ritual; however, one should keep in mind that the pigs are not individual gifts from person A to person B, but are considered as gifts given by the feast organizers – in this case James, Arnold and Robin. This act of 'pooling' and transferring pigs to the organizer(s) is one of the means by which the action-group, and the focal matrilineage responsible for the feast, is constituted and reinforced.

²⁹ Actually, more branches had been handed out but the recipients had not been able to provide a sufficiently large pig at the time of the *kastam*. The distribution in these cases followed the same pattern, that is, approximately half of them were given to members of the Tasik clan. If Nandaou had had children, a branch, or most likely two, would have gone to one of them and/or a grandchild.

Table 6 Pig exchange, Balngit 2001

Pig contributed by:		Pig given to:	
Arnold (ZS of Nandaou) (pig raised by Tokas)	Korofi	→ Glenn (S of Tengstinut, ZDS of Nandaou and James, ZS of Arnold and Robin)	Korofi
Tengstinut (ZDH of Nandaou)	Tasik	→ Tokas (husband of Z of Nandaou)	Tasik
Timpuek (<i>kinaf</i> of Nandaou)	Tasik	→ Rose (Z of Nandaou)	Korofi
Rose (Z of Nandaou)	Korofi	→ Langgar	Ku
Charles (S of <i>kinaf</i> of Nandaou) (son of Tasik)	Korofi	→ Kasi (ZS of Nandaou)	Korofi
Kasi (ZS of Nandaou)	Korofi	→ Charles (S of <i>kinaf</i> of Nandaou) (son of Tasik)	Korofi
James (B of Nandaou)	Korofi	→ Monti (Z of Nandaou, M of Robin)	Korofi
Robin (ZS of Nandaou)	Korofi	→ Timpuek (<i>kinaf</i> of Nandaou)	Tasik
Robin (ZS of Nandaou)	Korofi	→ Tineng (Z of Nandaou, MZ of Robin and Arnold)	Korofi
Robin (ZS of Nandaou)	Korofi	→ Tabelsiat ('adopted' son of Nandaou)	Tanga clan
Robin (ZS of Nandaou)	Korofi	→ Kiapngos	Tasik
Arnold (ZS of Nandaou)	Korofi	→ Tinkiarkenal	Tasik firfir

As can be seen from the above table all those who contributed a pig in a *so puek* (Tengstinut, Timpuek, Rose and Charles) were also given one.³⁰ Tokas who had raised the *marou e mus* (fig. 83) for Arnold received one as well; so did Kasi, the classificatory ZS who lived further away. Of the remaining six pigs two were presented to sisters of the deceased. One pig was given to Tabelsiat, a young man from Tanga who had lived with Nandaou; he had been 'like a son' and had 'worked for' him. On the following day Tabelsiat also received a payment of a shell ring, a string of shell money and 200 Kina to compensate him for the support he had devoted to Nandaou. The pig that was given to Langgar was explained as a form of recompense: after Nandaou died, the young man who travelled around Anir to inform other *matambia* about the death failed to pay Langgar a visit. Thus the pig was offered as an apology for the mistake made at the beginning of the cycle. Finally, the last two pigs were given to reciprocate outstanding debts. Kiapngos and Tinkiarkenal at earlier ritual events had presented Timpoko (Nandaou's sister, Arnold's real and Robin's classificatory mother) with a pig. Timpoko was an elderly and well-respected woman, and her sons took over the responsibility of reciprocating these pigs.

30 Tengstinut himself did not receive a pig, but his son Glenn (a toddler) did, a ZDS/ZS of the organizers.



Fig. 83 Joachim Tokas leading the group of young men carrying the large *warou e mus* pig he had raised in the name of Arnold Pinambo. Silalangit, village of Balngit, 1 November 2001

An analysis of other exchanges would confirm the picture that emerges from this pattern. Three of the twelve pigs were given to members belonging to the lineage of the deceased. Three other pigs were given to people belonging to closely related lineages of the same clan. In other words, half the pigs were presented to members belonging to the core of the action-group. The remaining six pigs were given to members of other clans. One of them went to a cross cousin, two were used to repay outstanding debts and three were given as compensation payments. Of these six pigs three were presented to people belonging to the periphery of the action-group and three to ‘real outsiders’.

A similar picture emerges with respect to physical distance, that is, the recipients’ place of residence. Six pigs were given to people who lived close by, two were given to people living in more distant villages of the same island, four pigs went to people who lived in three different villages on the other island. The two categories – closeness in terms of the kinship and physical proximity – partly crosscut each other. All the recipients who belonged to the same lineage also lived close by; of those who belonged to related lineages, one lived on Ambitlei (the other island), two in other villages of Babase. Of the recipients who belonged to other clans, the cross-cousin lived on Ambitlei while the two persons who were paid back a pig lived close by. Two of the pigs representing compensatory payments were given to men living on Ambitlei, while the third recipient lived in the hamlet of the hosts.

This analysis clearly shows that two types of motives underlie ceremonial exchanges. The bulk (usually 60% to 80%) of the pigs are contributed by, and

redistributed within, the action-group that consists of lineage and clan members as well as cross cousins and often children of the deceased. A main strategy here is to incorporate men and women of matrilineally and patrilineally related lineages who live in more distant villages (or even on Tanga, Nissan or New Ireland) in order to strengthen the relationships between them and the hosting lineage. As pointed out earlier, the pigs distributed within this action-group, from the vantage point of the participants, often do not represent *an sue* (pigs creating demandable debts) but rather a moral duty to continue mutual support. A smaller percentage of the pigs distributed at an *alal fafasu* are either given away to repay actual debts or to settle a variety of compensatory payments, for example, for the use of land, for care received by the father or another parental relative, or for former failings the hosts feel ashamed of. Typically, these payments are made to representatives of other clans.

My analysis of Anir ceremonial exchanges leads to a somewhat different emphasis of the meanings, motivations and social units involved compared to Foster's analysis. I agree with Foster in so far as I see in ceremonial feasting a platform that is used by the organizing lineage to demonstrate its strength, viability and continuity. But I do not agree that this involves showing one's autonomy and superiority relative to other matrilineages. Foster, throughout his analysis, speaks of different lineages without distinguishing whether they belong to the same or a different clan as the organizers, and without differentiating clearly between those members of other clans who are connected to the hosts through close, personal, paternal/affinal ties, and those who are not. Thereby the impression is conveyed that the hosting matrilineage rather independently starts and organizes the cycle and that the "dominant and operative logic of mortuary feasting (...) construes food giving not as reciprocal nurturing but rather as unilateral force-feeding" (Foster 1990: 444).

My Anir material does not support such an argument. Here, throughout the cycle men and women belonging to the same and related matrilineages as the deceased, as well as relatives from affinal and patrilineal lineages (that is, from different clans) support the hosts with pigs and receive pigs. As far as Anir goes, there neither is an indication that other lineages (belonging to other clans) construe themselves as non-consumable in the early stages of the mortuary cycle nor that this role is reversed in the last phase. At the final feast, at least as many 'insiders' are presented with pigs as are 'outsiders', and the hosts – when they receive shell valuables and money as payments – redistribute this wealth at a concluding meal. Furthermore, they use the *alal fafasu* to make compensatory payments to representatives of other clans; often these payments even outweigh the *ninlu* they elicited with their pigs.

The emphasis on Anir, obviously, lies to a far greater degree on the unity of maternally related lineages and on their interdependence with patrilineally related lines of offspring and affines than on Tanga where, according to Foster, the autonomy of the hosting lineage is stressed. Foster points out that a single Tangan mortuary cycle taken by itself is characterized by asymmetrical exchange, one lineage “force-feeds” another, pigs are exchanged for shell discs and the hosts appropriate for themselves the symbolic qualities of these valuables. But because the roles change when it is the guest’s turn to host a cycle of rituals, asymmetry in the long run is abolished and equivalence prevails. He continues to explain: “[W]hen reciprocity can be taken for granted, its periodic denial is then made possible.” Seen from this vantage point it is the “continual circulation [of shell valuables that] is the condition of matrilineal continuity” (Foster 1990: 444, both quotes).

In comparison to what Foster reports for Tanga, the degree of asymmetry within each individual ritual cycle is decidedly less pronounced on Anir. Accordingly, the emphasis lies on equality and mutual interdependence – not only when one looks at whole series of ritual cycles but actually even within each cycle. Matrilineal continuity is stressed as well, but in my opinion not because the hosting lineage constitutes itself as unconsumable (exchanging pigs for shell wealth) but in so far as, up to the final feast, members of the hosting lineage – the inner centre of the action-group – make up a considerable percentage of pig providers **and** recipients. During the whole cycle the co-operation of members of the hosting lineage and their related matriline is accentuated, and their dependency on paternal support and nurture is never obviated as cross cousins and children – the periphery of the action-group – always receive pigs too. This interpretation is in line with statements of Anir islanders who repeatedly stressed that good relationships, mutual support and the establishment of reliable social networks are of central concern when planning and carrying out mortuary rituals. I would argue that, seen in their eyes, it is the ongoing circulation of consumable pigs (not durable shell valuables, as Foster suggests) between related matriline and their affines and children that is the condition of matrilineal continuity on Anir. This also would explain why Anirians, most of the time, only pay small *ninlu*; they guarantee the continuation of exchange rather than ‘killing the pig’.³¹

31 Another interpretation – although never offered by Anirians in explicit terms – would be to interpret the gifts that are presented in exchange ceremonies as sacrifices or offerings to the ancestors. From this perspective, the exchange not only takes place between living people, but between persons that also embody the ancestors of their respective kin groups.

Competitiveness, ambiguity and innovation

Having said that interrelatedness and mutual support are crucial themes of the ceremonial cycle, some remarks about competitiveness are necessary to complete the picture. Although not all lineage heads categorically aim for fame, those who do target bigmanship will try to organize notable mortuary rituals to gain or enhance their reputation and power; as a consequence, they and their kin groups find themselves in a competitive situation with other leaders and their supporters. Evidently not only organizational talent and knowledge are needed, but also cleverness and ingenuity. The organizer has to develop considerable entrepreneurial skills in order to make sure that all the pigs that are necessary at a particular moment in the cycle arrive on time. He has to be versed in the history of exchanges between his *matambia* and other lineages and be able to assess which people will make reliable partners. On the one hand, knowledge about past exchanges and relations allows him to recall debts and/or activate support from close as well as distant potential supporters. On the other hand, debts and obligations have to be reciprocated and compensatory payments have to be made.

The activation of social ties makes use of existing relationships and builds on past exchanges, but always takes place in view of future plans, with new links usually being created at the same time. The mobilization of more distant supporters is regarded as a particular challenge because these persons have to be convinced or even 'lured' into the enterprise. Winning the support of a distant paternal relative or affine bears characteristics of a 'game'. Foster (1990: 443, 1995: 113, 115, 119) reports that on Tanga baskets of cooked food known as *warangus* are presented to men from other lineages. The acceptance of such a gift obligates the recipient and/or his lineage to provide a large pig for the final feast. Distributing baskets of cooked food to commit other lineages to contribute pigs is not a standard Anir practice, but Anirians know a similar ruse. A feast organizer who wants to secure the help of a distant relative fills a basket with special foods (for example the first fruits of a *pau* tree³²). The basket is then sent to the potential supporter – usually obscuring the identity of the donor and without explaining the gift. Presents like this are only given to persons that in the past stood in an exchange relationship with the deceased for whom the cycle is being carried out. The recipient is expected to figure out for himself who has sent the basket and what kind of support the donor expects. As on Tanga, the acceptance of the basket binds the recipient to the donor. Discussing the ritual cycle with people on Anir, anecdotes about gifts of this type were always recounted with enthusiasm, and it was clear that a person who has mastered the art of mobilizing close and distant kin is held in high esteem.

32 Island lychee, *Pometia pinnata*, called *ton* in Tok Pisin and Kuanua.

A further aspect worth noting here is the fact that the intention that motivates the gift is not verbalized. This can have a number of meanings. It reveals an aspect of Anir ethics, according to which one should not directly ask a person for help who does not belong to one's circle of lineage/clan members or cross cousins and children. The basket of selected food is sent without the donor specifying his request, while the recipient has the option of refusing it. But refusing a politely made request is considered impolite. Therefore, by maintaining silence about the implications of the gift, both sides avoid losing face. Secondly, the food basket may be interpreted as a kind of revelatory sign. As pointed out earlier on, the hosts gradually reveal who will receive one of the *alal* pigs by presenting these persons with a smaller pig at an earlier ceremony of the cycle. Such revelatory acts are part of a more encompassing process during which the hosts communicate without words information on how the cycle might develop: what the men's house under construction will look like, what the features of the final feast might be (how many and what types of performance will be presented, the number of pigs to be distributed etc.) and which groups and individuals might play important roles at the *alal fafasu*.

But the signs that are provided are never unmistakably clear and the hosts never publicly confirm their possible meanings. Rather, they make others guess and wonder. The ability to do this sagaciously, and – on the other hand – to know how to interpret ambiguous signs, is a value in itself. One indicator of this value – although taken from the linguistic realm of Anir culture – is the wide range of riddles the islanders are versed in. These games are based on providing hints and allusions or inventing metaphors and allegories. Participants have to interpret the allusions in order to solve the puzzle (fig. 84). The ability to interpret and create complex and multivocal expressions and images is trained in games from an early age as well as in everyday contexts. Not surprisingly, interpretative abilities belong to the prerequisites of a person aiming for bigmanship. Metaphorical language and ambiguous action are also important aspects of *am furis* performances and will be discussed in more depth in Part III.

What I want to emphasize at this early stage is that the communication of ambiguous or multivalent signs is inevitably linked with innovation. The process of finding and correctly using an appropriate symbol is in itself creative. In the process, existing signs are employed imaginatively and often also reshaped. Moreover, new signs are created constantly. Although the ritual realm is marked by general rules that have to be observed, one-to-one repetitions of previous performances are anything but appreciated. Within a given framework, Anirians show a pronounced predilection for surprise and innovation. The dances that are presented at the final feast provide a good example for this.



Fig. 84 *Taililim* riddle played after the death of Paul Munbal; when this game is played someone wraps an item he or she associates with the deceased in a leaf and the others have to guess what the packet contains. Another game that was played was *pir*: here stories that contain allegories or chains of metaphors were told and the community of mourners had to guess what the metaphors stood for. A kind of hide and seek game that is played on nights with a full moon is *marunggas*: something is hidden in the bush, and while one group tries to find it, the other group sings songs that contain allusions to the hidden parcel's contents and whereabouts. Nantingi, village of Kamgot, 12 March 2002

The majority of them are presented by, or in the name of, people who are given a pig at the *alal fafasu*. Approximately one month before the final feast, the organizer sends bundles of scented leaves (*bubual*) to the designated recipients. The *bubual* are the first definite signs that the persons in question actually will be presented with *alal* pigs. Scented leaves are used for making dance ornaments and perfumed oils. The *bubual* not only are iconic symbols of dances, they also create an obligation to contribute a so-called *singsing* at the final feast. If the recipient of the *bubual* happens to be well versed in the art of dancing, he himself will choose an appropriate dance, compose a song and form a dance group. Otherwise, or in case the recipient is a woman, a lineage or close clan member will take over this task.

Anirians know many different types of dances, each of which has dozens of different instantiations, and they apply a whole range of aesthetic criteria to evaluate the performances. The latter will be addressed in Part IV; what is of interest here is the fact that during my fieldwork, whenever a dance was performed that had been presented already on an earlier occasion, some people would make comments (although off record) indicating disapproval or boredom. With regard to individual dances, a complex structure that includes various formations rather than repetitions of the same sequences is highly valued. Similar principles are at work with regard to ornaments and paraphernalia. *Kulau*, for example, is a performance in which each dancer holds two carved and painted boards. The boards of each pair should match, but not be identical; the various pairs should all differ from each other but the ensemble as a whole should be recognizable as a coherent

group. The Anir audience wishes to be surprised. They want to be shown performances they have not seen in that way before. The dances themselves are practised and rehearsed in the bush. In some cases seclusion is necessary because of their secret-sacred nature but often this is done in view of preventing others from finding out what the dance group will come up with at the *alal fafasu*.³³

The various performances are not just entertaining, they also carry meaning because by choosing an appropriate dance type and selecting or composing a song that 'fits' (that is, in some way or other reflects) the deceased being commemorated in the *alal fafasu*, the members of the dance group and their leader express their respect for, and attachment to, the hosts and their dead relative. At the same time the members of the dance group, by giving the performance, publicly acknowledge historical links between themselves and the hosts and display their rights to particular dances, songs and ornaments. As I have argued elsewhere (Denner 2003), dances grant prestige to the organizer of the *alal fafasu*. A splendid feast with many performances boosts his reputation. On the other hand, dances constitute an independent platform for the participating dance groups to compete with each other. Their leaders, in particular, gain reputation and prestige from them.³⁴ Dances and other public performances are as much items of exchange as are the pigs discussed in the previous section. Both are linked to power as well as to creativity, and accordingly, both are utilized by individuals and groups to express connectivity and solidarity, but also to compete with each other. Power is based on agency, and agency involves the imaginative, successful employment and development of resources and action strategies.

I started this chapter with an account of the changes that have taken place in the ritual realm in the course of the past century and then moved on to ritual exchanges, social reproduction, competitiveness and agency. The changes that took place in the ritual sphere over the last century were markedly shaped by outside influences (missionary work, colonization and then de-colonization, the introduction of cash-crops etc.). But from the viewpoint of Anir islanders, the changes were not simple reactions to a confrontation with unknown forces which they could not control. As scholars like Sahlins (1981, 1985) and Giddens (1984) have pointed out, change is always the result of active engagement. Foster (1995: 45-50) has shown how Tangan bigmen between World War I and II utilized the up-coming plantation industry and labour trade to increase the

33 Here I am referring to dances of a comparatively secular and entertaining character. The above remark does not apply to performances of secret societies, which are always prepared in seclusion because of the spiritual power and danger involved, cf. Chapter Eight.

34 See Nachman 1981 for similar phenomena on Nissan, the island group south of Anir.

scale of mortuary feasting, and with it their fame. In the process they activated traditional mechanisms of obligation and support to make young men sign labour contracts, the profit of which they invested in the ritual sphere and to extend their influence.

This is just one example that shows that historical change entails variation and that variation involves creativity. Creativity in turn is closely linked with the agency of individuals and with a flexible handling of the rules that govern the ritual cycle. If the rules did not allow for some variation, the ritual system itself would not have survived the way it has on Anir and Tanga. The ethnographic description of the mortuary cycle in chapter three showed that with respect to every single ritual step and ceremony room is given to individuality and innovation. The overall structure of the cycle is like a general frame that provides guidelines as to how and when to conduct various ritual events. But then this frame has to be filled with life imaginatively in order to bring about the desired effects and to be transformed into meaningful social action.

This happens through choosing and performing the most appropriate from a range of possible instantiations. Moreover, elements may be added or changed in order to account for the needs and circumstances of the moment. Through this process the ritual system and its structure constantly are being reshaped, transformed and adopted to reflect the current situation and to guarantee that social reproduction (as well as competition) are possible. Bigmen – either as organizers or legitimizers of ceremonial events – take a leading role because the ritual sphere until today is the most important realm for gaining, consolidating and/or increasing local political power and an excellent platform to exert influence and shape agency. An important realm of creativity and agency are *am furis* songs. They belong to men's house communities and are performed in the course of different rituals of the mortuary cycle. It is to this art form that I now turn in the next two chapters.

PART III

AM FURIS

MEN'S HOUSE

PERFORMANCES

CHAPTER 5

METAPHORS AND THE GENERATION OF MEANING

“Most people go [to kastam ceremonies] just because they want to eat pork, but the big men, they go because they want to listen to and judge the *am furis*”¹

According to this statement – several men made it in the context of commenting on, or discussing, the rituals of the commemorative cycle with me – bigmen attend kastam ceremonies primarily to witness and appraise the *am furis*, and less for other reasons such as the enjoyment of food or the opportunity to meet other bigmen and perhaps watch some dances. Some men also compared the *am furis* to a key, more precisely, to a key to the ritual system and Anir culture. Obviously *am furis* are accredited a pivotal role and are highly valued. Why is this so? And what grants them such significance?

Am furis performances are presented during many rituals of the commemorative cycle. They are staged in and around the men’s house and involve various previously selected actors who perform a song and/or certain speech acts as well as dramatic actions. They contain, so the men explained, information on how the men’s house community staging the event plans to proceed with the rituals of the mortuary cycle, on the *matambia*’s history and present situation, on its leadership, its rights to land and other resources and on its relationship to other kin groups. All these aspects are important with regard to safeguarding and maintaining a lineage’s position in the larger community. When observing *am furis* performances, however, it is not immediately obvious that they have such effects. The information they contain is not explicitly stated, but instead encoded, and not every *am furis* refers to every of the above-mentioned aspects. *Am furis* are said to be difficult to understand: they are never straightforward, but consist of allusions, esoteric language, and ambiguous metaphors and actions. The performers never offer an

1 This usually was stated in Tok Pisin as follows: “Planti ol i go [long kastam] bilong kaikai pik tasol; tasol ol bigman, ol i go bilong harim na skelim am furis.”

exegesis, which is why only knowledgeable seniors are said to fully comprehend them.²

My informant's assessments, thus, were analytical and reflected their experience and knowledge of a larger corpus, of the way *am furis* operate and how they become socially and politically relevant. In the following two chapters I want to bring out why and how Anir men estimate *am furis* performances as key features to understanding their ritual system and culture. In this chapter I concentrate on their form and content, that is, on the question of what is communicated and how this is done. Here I move between a phenomenological and an interpretive approach. Chapter Six is more hermeneutical as I focus on the question of what *am furis* effect in the Anir cultural and ritual system and how they develop impact.

The expression *am furis* is actually a generic term that covers a spectrum of differing forms or types. Depending on context and the specific ritual the *am furis* is embedded in, it will vary and be more or less complex. Accordingly, Anirians distinguish between *am furis* that are staged in the context of funerals (*am furis lo kenit*) as well as later on in the ceremonial cycle (*am furis lo bia*), and on the occasion of paying bride price (*am furis lo fele wok*).³ As there is no generally valid definition, I will start with a description of what an observer might see when he/she witnesses such a performance. This description outlines an ideal type that reflects formal characteristics Anirians primarily associate with *am furis*.

Then I move on to the presentation and analysis of concrete examples. Following the emphasis of Anir seniors on the significance of implicit meanings and processes of interpretation and decoding, I focus on the question of how meaning is generated. *Am furis* are complex phenomena – they are multimedia and multi-sensual performances that consist of components such as song, music and speech acts as well as movements, actions and artefacts, and the analysis has to take this into account. One has to examine all the possible ideas the various elements may elicit and convey, and then their interrelationship needs to be addressed. I will pay particular attention to the question of how the verbal and the visual components influence and interconnect with each other, but have to leave aside the level of music, as this would go beyond the scope of the thesis. What is at issue is not the investigation of simple relations, but a more integral analysis that takes into account the complexities of multiple meanings and interrelationships.

2 The songs and speech acts of *am furis* are examples of 'hidden' speech as it is used throughout Melanesia. Applying poetic and figurative language they are, in some ways, comparable to totemic songs of the Iatmul (Wassmann 1988, 1991), 'veiled speech' in Mount Hagen (A. Strathern 1975), *rupale* songs of the Kewa (Leroy 1978), 'tree leaf talk' of the Foi (J. Weiner 1988: 125-126, 2001), and *gisalo* songs of the Kaluli (Feld 1982).

3 For more information on these types and their formal characteristics see Appendix II.

As explained in Chapter Two, performances are characterized by two dimensions, a referential and a performative one (cf. Fischer-Lichte 2001, 2003 and Pavis 1998, 2003 on non-representational elements and energy). Within the context of *am furis*, the verbal elements, the songs and speech acts, are those that show the closest affinity to the referential/representational dimension. The bodily presence of the performers and their positions, movements and gestures, on the other hand, are corporeal components that are more closely associated with the performative/presentational dimension. Visual, material components such as the setting the performance takes place in, and the elements it consists of, or decorations and artefacts used by the actors cannot easily be assigned to either one or the other sphere. In fact, although some elements of a performance at first sight show more affinity to either the representational or the presentational dimension, they all serve referential as well as performative functions, and the overall meaning and significance of the event emerges from the interplay between both. The way this interplay unfolds becomes clear when one examines the metaphors that *am furis* songs contain and places this in relation to the performance's imagery. In the context of the analysis I will draw on theories of metaphors as conceptual entities that forge bridges between the verbal and the visual.

I conclude this chapter with an emic classification of *am furis* based on the type of message they convey and the effects they are said to trigger. As this includes further examples of actual practice, the classification gives the reader an impression of the variability of *am furis*; it also illustrates the importance of the contexts they are staged in with respect to interpreting their meaning. I present this classification at the end of the chapter because some knowledge about the contents of *am furis* and the way they work is necessary for appreciating the way Anirians classify them. In addition, the account gives me the opportunity to introduce examples of the way Anir islanders perceive and evaluate these performances. This then leads over to the following chapter in which further performative aspects, aesthetic experience, the dialectic relationship between memory and creativity and the way *am furis* become effective are at the centre of my inquiry.



Fig. 85 Patrik Saklo singing the preliminary *sunmai* song during an *am furis* performance that took place at the men's house of Kifil/Funmantui in the village of Farangot (cf. fig.105). 24 January 2002

*The ideal type of am furis*⁴

The leading figures in *am furis* performances are one or several male representatives of the *matambia* hosting the ritual feast and a group of men acting as a chorus. They first assemble in the men's house (*bia*) where one individual sings a song called *sunmai*. After this song all those present – one after the other and each to a beat on the slit gong – leave the men's house through the rear exit and walk around the *bia* once, counter-clockwise, until they reach the back door again. Here they stop in front of a bamboo ladder (*an soup*) that is leaning against the roof of the men's house. A previously chosen representative of the organizing *matambia* now climbs onto the roof of the house.⁵ Once he has done so, the remaining men walk to the front of the ceremonial building where they line up, facing the front entrance and the man standing on top of the *bia*.

This group forms the chorus which now begins to perform the first stanza of another song – the *am furis* proper. While they do, the man standing on the ridge beam at the far end of the men's house begins to slowly walk along the beam, moving a few metres towards the front. Once the choir has finished the first stanza of the *am furis*

4 Cf. figs. 85 to 90.

5 It is not unusual to see two or even three men and boys performing this task.



Fig. 86 Members of the *am furis* group walk round the men's house at the beginning of the performance. Balantembi, village of Banakin, 18 October 2001

song, another, again previously chosen, representative, who as been standing at the back of the choir comes to the front, and asks the man standing on the roof a question. The latter answers, the inquirer retires to the back of the chorus, and the second verse of the *am furis* is sung. While being performed the man on the roof again walks a couple of metres along the ridge beam. At the end of the second stanza the inquirer again comes to the front, poses a second question that again is answered by the person on top of the men's house.

This procedure is repeated until all stanzas of the *am furis* are completed. Ideally, it should consist of as many stanzas as pigs were distributed during the ceremony of *fese bo* that took place on the previous day, but often the feast organizers feel that this would take too long, especially if the distribution had involved many pigs. Thus the *am furis* is often limited to three or four stanzas. Upon completion, and after the last sequence of question and answer, a senior bigman holds a somewhat longer speech, ending with the order “*o pu!*”,⁶ thereby telling the man on top of the men's house, who by now has reached the front end of the ridge beam, to come down (fig. 91).

6 *O* means ‘you’, *pu* means ‘to descend’; *o pu* therefore amounts to ‘you come down!’

Fig. 87 Arnold Nesepe after climbing the ladder to the top of the men's house. The *am furis* was performed in commemoration of two deceased female members of his *matambia*: Marselin whose house was symbolically destroyed, and Marbukai whose basket was burned. Balantembi, village of Banakin, 18 October 2001



Fig. 88 Men of the choir singing an *am furis* song that was performed to commemorate Simon Neantele, the father of Francis Neantele. Francis (wearing a baseball cap and purple loincloth; also see figs. 27, 97) took over the leadership of this men's house from his father, which thus changed hands from the Korofi to the Tasik clan. Should the designated future leader Arnold Pinambo, Francis' son, succeed him, the men's house will return back to the Korofi clan. Matambi, village of Bulam, 28 December 2001



Fig. 89 Philip Sumbin standing half way along the ridge beam of the men's house at Matankiang. This *am furis* was held in commemoration of his deceased mother and brother. Village of Natong, 21 September 2001



Fig. 90 Steven Sinang asking the questions during the *am furis* held at Balantembi (cf. figs. 86, 87). Sitting in front of him is the leader of the *matambia*, Augustin Lugu (fig. 107), a classificatory brother of Sinang. Village of Banakin, 18 October 2001

As this brief description shows, *am furis* are events during which a group of men performs, or stages, actions that are witnessed by an audience. The *am furis* as a whole consists of verbal, speech-based components on the one hand: songs are sung, two of the participants exchange questions and answers, and a third person delivers a longer statement at the end of the *am furis* (it is these elements I call speech acts). On the other hand, it includes dramatic components: a person climbs onto the roof of the men's house while the other participants walk around it and then stand in formation. The participants execute certain gestures. Sometimes the men of the choir perform a dance with spears while singing the chorus (fig. 92), and occasionally the *am furis* contains small pantomimes. This visual dimension not only comprises the performers and the scene they move in, but also elements like body-paint and ornaments as well as artefacts (for example heirlooms of the men's house community). All these elements together constitute the performance and are critical with regard to the overall meaning and effect of the performance.

The analyses presented in this and the next chapter are based on eighteen *am furis* I was able to document during my three periods of fieldwork; five of them corresponded

to the ideal type described above, three others only differed in so far as the lineage representative who answered the questions did not mount the men's house; instead he stood in front of the entrance. Six of the eighteen *am furis* took place in the context of a burial. These always differ from the ideal type in so far as they do not contain a preliminary song (*sunmai*) and that the lineage representative does not climb on top of the *bia*. Four *am furis* only featured speech acts, but no songs. Audio-visual recordings, transcripts and translations were made of all *am furis* performances (fig. 93). These I always discussed with the organizers/performers and often also with members of the audience.⁷



Fig. 91 Norbert Neguam with heirlooms of his *matambia* just after descending from the roof of the men's house. Around his neck he is wearing an *anmamak* ornament, in his right hand he is holding a spear and the *kalukalu* rattle, and in his left hand he is holding a ceremonial axe. The *am furis* he performed in was carried out in commemoration of the former leader Guamanwok, the brother of Neguam's grandmother. Warantaban (hamlet and village), 10 January 2002

⁷ I have been asked how many *am furis* are performed each month or year respectively. This is somewhat difficult to estimate; not only because during the ritual season more of them are performed than at other times of the year, but also because their number depends on the number of deaths, and on the time and resources the people are able and willing to invest. A fair estimate, I think, would be about 20 to 25 *am furis* per year on Ambitlei and Babase together.



Fig. 92 During the *am furis* held in commemoration of Theodor Nadaou, the members of the choir performed a spear dance. This is called *gar* and, according to local accounts, makes the performance 'heavy'; it thus marks it as particularly important. At the centre of the photo, dressed in a colourful loincloth, the leader Paul Munbal is making his last public appearance before his death. Silalangit, village of Balngit, 2 November 2001



Fig. 93 Christine Melsa transcribed all *am furis* recordings and translated them for me. Initially Christine had had doubts that the leaders of other kin groups would accept her performing this task. As a teacher, mother of ten children and the eldest daughter of the old bigman Peter Fafen (fig. 98), Christine was a highly respected member of the Anir community and no one objected to her analysing the *am furis* texts with me. She not only did an excellent job, but enjoyed this work commenting several times on how surprised she was about the depth and multi-layeredness of *am furis*. In her opinion, most women were not really aware of the complexity and implications of these performances. Very sadly, Christine passed away in 2005. Timpanmida, village of Balngit, July 2002

The production of meaning in am furis songs and speech acts

According to Anir commentators, the verbal elements of *am furis* are primarily designed to express grief. They are executed in poetic and figurative language and accompanied by meaningful gestures. Let us first take a look at the style and type of language used. Parts of an *am furis* that took place in the village of Natong on Ambitlei Island in September 2001 will serve as an example. The song performed by the choir consisted of seven stanzas. The text of the first stanza was repeated without changes. The inquiry-response exchange between the various stanzas was preceded each time by a short statement made by Philip Sumbin who was standing on the roof of the men's house. The spoken elements were reiterated five times without alteration. Only after the sixth and seventh stanza was the answer slightly changed.

This kind of pattern is also common in other *am furis*. Usually the main body of the song and the speech acts hardly vary. But that does not mean that the few alterations that are made are irrelevant. They may occur in the song text itself, but without fail in the cycle of inquiry and response. Usually the changes refer to names of persons or places mentioned and reflect the circumstances of the ritual in question. In this particular case, the ritual was organized by Leo Fesris with the support of Peter Fafen and took place in the hamlet of Matankiang. During the course of the event, mourning taboos of two participants – one of them Philip Sumbin – were lifted and the dwelling site of the deceased was ritually cleaned in order to enable future re-settlement there (fig. 94). The ritual was staged in commemoration of Philip's brother Alfred Kiapsula, who had died after an accident that happened while he was working for a company conducting exploration work for a possible future gold mine.



Fig. 94 Leo Fesris lifting the *an du* taboo that Philip Sumbin had obeyed in commemoration and honour of his brother Alfred. Fesris first symbolically cut and combed Sumbin's hair before applying white lime powder to his forehead, thus liberating Sumbin from the taboo's constraints. Matankiang, village of Natong. 20 September 2001

***Am furis* performed at Natong village, 29 September 2001**

***Am furis* song (1-7)**

Ia lunglugu nami ru dung ma tuaklik.

After [the death of] my mother and my brother
only I remain [as] an orphan.

Ru kabuk la kosing iau gi.

The two have left me for good.

Ru la su gilo solsol kam fiu.

They are following the path of the *fiu* [of those
who were killed by an enemy].

Ia lunglugu nami ru dung ma tuaklik.

Ru kabuk la kosing iau gi.

[repeated]

Ru la su gilo solsol kam fiu.

Gilo solsol kam fiu ru tengteng,

lala gilo urngiu e Danlam ma wilo hausik.

On the path of the *fiu* the two are weeping,
starting from the source of the river Danlam
down to the hospital [i.e. the medical aid post].

Gilo solsol kam fiu ia tengteng

lala wina Warambana leii mau Natong gi.

On the path of the *fiu* they are weeping,
starting at Warambana village and on to here,
to the village of Natong.

Gilo solsol kam fiu ru tengteng

lala gilo urngiu e Danlam ma wilo hausik.

[repeated]

Gilo solsol kam fiu ia tengteng

lala wina Warambana leii mau Natong gi.

Statement (Philip Sumbin, on men's house)

(1-7) *Tuaklik ari gam giva gi na kiar male,
maia sam la kosing gam.*

My brothers, you are still living at our place;
but I have definitely left you already.

Question (Leo Fesris, of the choir)

(1-7) *U, fiu gi e tengteng ia?*

Hey, where does this *fiu* here cry?

Answer (Philip Sumbin)

(1-5) *Fiu gi e tengteng ilo bif ina
Salat, maie sam of.*

This *fiu* had been weeping on the reef at Salat,
but it already flew away.

(6) *Fiu gi e tengteng ilo sabaf ina
Warambana, maie sam of.*

This *fiu* had been weeping in a *sabaf*-tree in the
village of Warambana, but it already flew away.

(7) *Fiu gi e tengteng ilo bif ina Nabo,*

This *fiu* had been weeping on the reef off
Nanabo,

sakle e sam kau lo mon ke Suilik.

but it mounted Suilik's *mon*.*

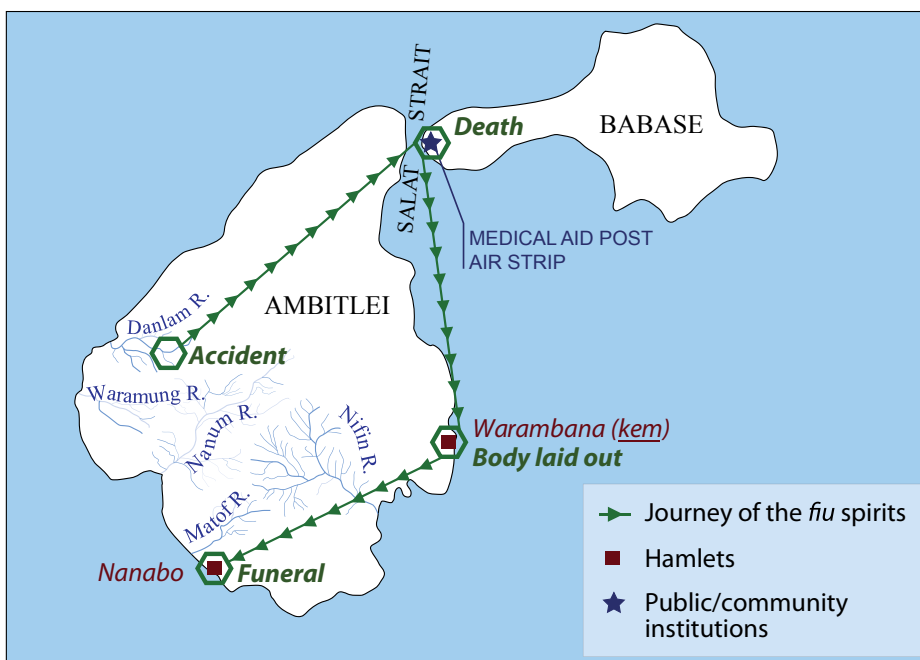
Kiar a muti pari.

We can't see it any more.

* *Mon*: large ocean-going canoe, formerly used for travels to Tanga, Nissan and New Ireland.
Sulik: name of a mythical hero; the name was used by Catholic missionaries as a substitute for 'God' in their translations of the catechism, songs and prayers and today is considered as the indigenous term for 'Lord' and 'God Almighty'.

The first stanza of the *am furis* song is written from the vantage point of a person whose mother and brother have passed away. He feels like an orphan while they are ‘following the path of the *fiu*’. *Fiu* is a term that formerly was used for the spirit of a person who had died in a fight or been killed by an enemy. The ‘brother’ in this stanza denotes Alfred, the deceased person. His mother passed away not long before he himself had the fatal accident. By saying that Alfred (together with his mother) is following the ‘path of the *fiu*’, it is suggested that he has turned into a restless and potentially malevolent *fiu* spirit. At the same time, the foreign company for which he worked is implicitly compared to an enemy.

In the second verse of the stanza the mother and brother, on ‘the path of the *fiu*’, are depicted as weeping in a number of different places. The first of these is the source of a river called Danlam. This is the location where Alfred’s accident had happened. Then the two *fiu* move on to the medical aid post (located on Babase, on the Salat Strait facing Ambitlei). This is the place where Alfred was taken to after the accident and where he died. His body was then brought to Warambana village and laid out in a men’s house there. This is the third place the *fiu* cry at. Finally, they come to Natong, the village where Alfred’s body was brought to for burial in the cemetery of Nanabo. The second verse thus repeats the references to Alfred’s accident, his death and his fate (turning into a *fiu*), but most notably describes the journey of, first, the injured person and then the corpse (map 5). This journey is also evoked and the places mentioned are once more revisited in the exchange of questions and answers. Through the inclusion of place names as in this example, an *am furis* song can be emplaced and personalized so that it refers to the man or woman being commemorated in the ceremony.



Map 5
The journey of the weeping *fiu* spirits
produced by Joanne Lai

This process is typical of *am furis*. Moreover, it is mandatory as *am furis* should reflect and make reference to the deceased. In addition, *am furis* are said to contain information about the past and present condition of the men's house community that is organizing the ritual, about the group's relationships to other *matambia* and their rights to land and other resources. In this example the history and relationship to other groups were alluded to by including Alfred's mother and by mentioning the village of Warambana. Alfred's body had been laid out in a men's house there because the Warambana men's house community and the one in Natong, whose members buried Alfred, are closely related, historically and socially.

I now want to take a closer look at a second *am furis* song in order to explore in more detail how specification and emplacement are achieved and how histories, relationships to other groups and rights to land may be expressed. This *am furis* was sung on the occasion of Paul Munbal's burial. The chorus here was exceptionally large, as representatives from a great number of men's house communities from all over Anir and from Tanga had been invited to participate (cf. fig. 43). In the inquiry-response cycle Augustin Kiapmaia, the classificatory MZS of Munbal from Tanga, posed the questions, while Munbal's adopted son Conny Nekor gave the answers (fig. 95). The concluding statement was delivered by Vincent Lugukalu, another adopted son of Munbal.⁸



Fig. 95 Augustin Kiapmaia (in the foreground) and Conny Nekor (at centre in front of the men of the choir) during the *am furis*' exchange of question and answer. Nantingi, 10 March 2002

The *am furis* sung by the choir comprised three stanzas, the first of which consisted of the following lines:

***Am furis* choir, 1st stanza**

*Kiskam singkiar namfumberat,
kiar tengteng sing lingas i mun kiar.
Kiskam singkiar namfumberat,
kiar tengteng sing lingas i mun kiar.
An malmaluf kiar gina
Kamgot kabuk tanim paklu.*

[repeated twice]

Woe betides us, our whole line (matrilineage)!
We cry because the sun is burning us.
Woe betides us, our whole line!
We cry because the sun is burning us.
Our shade [i.e. shade tree, see below] here
in the village of Kamgot has toppled.

[repeated twice]

It was followed by the following exchange of inquiry and response:

Question (Augustin Kiapmaia)

Oi, sa gi ka tengteng?

Eh, what is it that's crying here?

Answer (Conny Nekor)

*Yau, ya tengteng, ya tengteng kulu yau
singe amvaranlis na malmaluf singkiar
wagi na Kamgot,
lawir e matet
kaker pakpakati e katkatu.*

Me, it's me who is crying, I am weeping for our fate
(literally: I am crying, being sorry for us)
at the base of our shade-giving galip tree
here in the village of Kamgot;
the wind called lawir rose and
broke off all its branches.

The song of the choir is composed from the vantage point of Munbal's lineage members who are depicted as weeping and as exposed to a scorching sun that is burning them because the shade tree under which they used to seek shelter has fallen down. From the additional information provided in the answer of the inquiry-response cycle we learn that the shade tree was a galip tree⁹ that grew in the village of Kamgot and that was attacked by a wind called *lawir*.

The wording of the second stanza of the chorus was identical to that of the first, except that the tree now was said to be standing in a hamlet called Paifaf. The second answer of the inquiry-response cycle also mentioned this location, and instead of *lawir*, a wind called *tanbe* was said to have caused the tree's branches to break off. In the third stanza that the choir sung, the place name changed to Nantingi. The exchange of question and answer and the concluding statement were as follows:

⁹ A *Canarium* species, a huge tree bearing fruit with fairly large, hard-shelled seeds inside, the galip or pill nuts. These nuts are very nutritious and can be eaten raw, roasted or baked in the earth oven. They are considered a delicacy and also used to be an ingredient of ritual dishes (cf. Bell 1948: 65, Neuhaus 1962: 65, 345).

Question (Augustin Kiapmaia)

*Oi, kaltu yaugi uaya gatgatom
ma o kakatifik petengten tifiaw
o tengteng singe sa
ma o tengteng u se sa?*

Hey man, me here, I keep asking,
and you, tell me now,
what it is that makes you cry,
why are you weeping?

Answer (Conny Nekor)

Oi, yaugi a tengteng kuluiau

*tura anwaranlis
na malmaluf singkerfet
wagi u Nantingi.
Famang e matet kasuf ufu
ma o gatgatom
yau area ku peteng tifo
ma kaltu una mu peteng kausi tif kara igi.*

Oh, I am crying because I am sorry for
myself
here at the base of this galip tree
that used to give shade to the four of us
here in the hamlet of Nantingi.
The famang wind arose, uprooting it,
and you keep asking,
but how can I tell you?
This man, he will explain and tell us both,
he (this man) here.

Concluding statement (Vincent Lugukalu)

Ung kaltu kamu nil na lomba

*kamu ti parfat
manwaranlis na malmaluf*

*singkerfet igi
kabuk la marut gi gifaf.*

You two men, you're still confused and
haven't realized,
and you do not understand
that the roots of the galip tree that used
to give shade
to the four of us here,
have rotted and (that the tree) has fallen.

So now we learn that the shade tree – which was relocated to Nantingi – in this hamlet was exposed to a wind called *famang*, and that it not only lost its leaves and branches, but dried up altogether; the roots rotted away and the tree fell down. As in the first *am furis* example, this song too employs figurative language and tropes, particularly metaphors. The important information it is said to contain is not explicitly stated, but encoded in allusions and poetical images. Figurative language, by definition, involves play on words, that is, the use of words in ways other than what is considered their literal or normal form. The use of tropes such as metaphors, similes, metonyms, etc. therefore always involves polysemy because the words and terms applied have both a literal and a figurative meaning (see for example Knowles and Moon 2006). Accordingly, both *am furis* comprise at least two levels of meaning: an overt, or outright, level that refers to their 'literal' meaning and a second, covert level which refers to the figurative sense and their implicit or 'real' meanings.

On the overt level of both cases a sensible, but rather harmless story is told: in the first *am furis* example, someone feels like an orphan while weeping *fin* spirits are flying from one place to the next. The overt story is told in a lively spirit, stimulating the

imagination of the singers and audience. In the second example, a mighty, fruit-bearing tree (in three different locations) is exposed to various winds. One virtually sees how it is being attacked by the three winds which become increasingly violent, tearing on the leaves and branches until they break and fall off. One 'sees' how the tree bends and shakes. Soon it is bare and the winds dry out its roots. Finally the once mighty tree dies, is uprooted and collapses altogether. The people who used to sit in its shade remain without a shelter, exposed to the blazing sun.

In this second *am furis*, the shade tree is the central image and, as a metaphor, stands for the deceased, Paul Munbal. He had been highly regarded by all islanders and was one of the most prominent leaders of the Korofi clan. During his lifetime he had staged a large number of kastam ceremonies and had also been respected for his willingness to act as a consultant for others when they were planning a ritual. In general, he had been appreciated for his knowledge and experience in customary law and had regularly been called to mediate in disputes. Last but not least, Munbal had also been one of the most respected 'traditional' healers who had often been asked to treat people when they were sick. The selection of the mighty galip tree was considered a particularly suitable metaphor for Munbal. The tree's size and erectness were seen to reflect Munbal's personality and greatness as a leader. And with its nourishing nuts and sprawling, shade-giving branches, the galip tree suitably alluded to him as a main support of the community. Thus, on the metaphorical level, the *am furis* told a story about Munbal.

In the first stanza and answer, he is depicted as the shade tree of Kamgot, stating that he had been a support – not only to his next of kin but also to the community as such. Kamgot is not just the name of the village, but also of a former hamlet in the interior and considered to be the place of origin of Munbal's father's *matambia*; thus patrilineal relations are acknowledged. In the second stanza and answer the tree is located at Paifaf, and in the third in the hamlet of Nantingi. Here a synecdoche is being used because these two place names, *pars pro toto*, retell the history of Munbal's *matambia* and the role he played in it. In pre-colonial times the men's house of this community had been situated inland on a piece of land called Paifaf. After the Australian administration had ordered the building of compact villages on the shore (rather than dispersed hamlets, many of which were in the interior), most of the men's houses, which had been located inland, were transferred to the beach. The tracts of land where they were built today are considered as namba tu as ples (second place of origin) of these *matambia*. The men's house of Paifaf was relocated to Muli and, later, Munbal became its leader. However, when he had firmly established himself as a bigman he built a second

permanent men's house, an offspring of the one at Muli, at Nantingi.¹⁰ By recounting or alluding to (and thereby calling to mind) the names of former places of settlement where previously ceremonial houses had stood, where ancestors were buried and where ritual feasts had been celebrated, the organizers of the *am furis* show that they are the legitimate successors of these forebears and the rightful owners of the stretches of land that are associated with present and former sites of men's houses and burial places.

According to the speech acts of this *am furis*, three different winds assail the *galip* tree; first *lawir*, then *taube* and finally *famang*. *Lawir* is the northwest monsoon and the prevailing wind from about November through February. It is associated with dry weather, sun and the harvesting season. *Taube* is a southerly wind that can bring some rain but is usually neither long-lasting and nor is it associated with particularly bad weather or storms. *Famang* is the southeast monsoon that – like in southern New Ireland and on the south coast of New Britain – brings heavy rains from July to September or October. The three winds are mentioned in this succession because each is considered to be more dangerous and harmful than the preceding one. *Famang*, the most aggressive of the three, defeats the tree with its overwhelming force and causes its death.

The fact that the tree – alias Munbal – falls victim to the vicious *famang* wind carries in itself a deeper meaning. As explained earlier, Munbal thought that he had become the target of sorcery attacks, which started several months before his death. He also claimed that he had seen the aggressor(s) in his dreams. By evoking the image of a tree that is defeated by devastating winds, the creators of the *am furis* found a way to allude to Munbal's (and possibly their own) suspicion that he had been poisoned. The *am furis* did not explicitly say that Munbal had been killed by sorcery, and no accusations were raised, but, nevertheless, what was considered a clear enough a message (and perhaps even a warning) had been sent.

The fact that *am furis* make extensive use of figurative language – especially of metaphors – is striking and also important with respect to the question raised earlier on about the way different components of the performance interconnect, in particular, about the relationship between the verbal and visual levels. Metaphors, because of the figurative language they employ, are suited as bridge builders: they evoke images in our mind's eye; they are 'speaking images'; moreover, they may assume a verbal as well as a non-verbal form. In the following I first turn to the nature and characteristics of

10 Munbal's sister's son, Sebastian Pandur was generally considered as the designated and future leader of the men's house at Muli (sadly he died in 2005, so most likely Simon Akwin, Munbal's second ZS or one of his classificatory ZS will replace him). Gerard Pentecos, Munbal's son, inherited the land of Nantingi and – although working in Kavieng – was expected to become the leader of the men's house there. This is one of the examples that show how bigmen try to secure land and leadership rights for their sons without neglecting the obligations towards their own *matambia* and matrikin.

metaphors in general and then come back to the way metaphors are employed in *am furis* and to their mode of action in these performances.

The uses and virtues of metaphors

Metaphors were initially approached as linguistic phenomena; and while in linguistics and philosophy some theorists treated them as an anomaly due to their elusive polysemy, in rhetoric the various forms of figurative speech offered a way to examine the affective effects of speech (Boehm 1994a: 27 and Gibbs 1994: 222-225). More recently, as the focus shifted to the ubiquity of metaphor in language, thought and action, the concept itself was broadened. Metaphors came to be understood as conceptual, and it was shown how significant they are with regard to cognitive and epistemological processes. Half a century ago the German philosopher Hans Blumenberg (1960) drew attention to the metaphoric character of language and the contingency of thought upon metaphor, and in 1980 George Lakoff and Mark Johnson argued in their seminal study *Metaphors we Live by* (2003[1980]) that metaphors not only facilitate understanding, but that they actually mediate it. Many of them are conceptual and a way of thinking (and thus also not limited to language). Lakoff and Johnson as well as academics following them (for example Gibbs 1994 and Kövecses 2000) unveiled that metaphors and other tropes constitute basic schemes through which we conceptualize our experience and the external world. How do they do this?

The distinguishing feature of metaphors in language is that they involve a term, or a combination of terms, which have a literal as well as a non-literal, figurative meaning in order to suggest some resemblance, or make a connection between two spheres or domains (Lakoff and Johnson 2003[1980], Knowles and Moon 2006: 3-10). Consequently, they are ambiguous or polysemantic and carry several connotations. Taken literally, words used metaphorically appear either nonsensical, impossible or untrue, and the figurative meaning is implicit. Employing figurative language or ‘imagery’, metaphors creatively combine two seemingly unrelated fields. The result is a (metaphorical) meaning of an “oscillating, sweeping and slightly undetermined” nature that is grounded in an attempt to understand a proposition that “is true, but is not true, and yet is supposed to be true” (Kurz 1982: 23).¹¹ Thus figurative language in metaphors, as Boehm (1994a: 16) points out, neither declares what ‘is’ nor does it ascertain a stable reality. Metaphors do not depict or reproduce, rather they are means to generate multiple meanings and

11 Original quote in German, translation by the author.

new understandings – just as the literal sense in metaphor is accompanied by a figurative sense, a sense of ‘reality’ is joined by a sense of ‘new possibilities’. The crucial feature, but also the fertility, creative potential and power of metaphor is based on a combination of contrasts. It is a result of the juxtaposition of unrelated domains, and may consist of a surprising series of words, inversions or ruptures that open intellectual gaps which, on the one hand, entail inchoateness, openness and ambiguity, but, on the other, occupy the recipients who are prompted to take mental leaps or draw unexpected conclusions or syntheses which then lead to a comprehensible, simultaneous entity.¹²

The power metaphors gain by involving the recipient was examined by Arthur Danto (1981: 169-174). He discussed metaphor as an enthymemic conclusion, that is, as an abridged conclusion that is not made explicit in all its parts because one premise is missing which the recipient has to complete mentally. As a rhetorical figure the enthymeme involves a complex interrelationship between the creator of the metaphor and the recipient, who has to fill the gap that was deliberately opened and thus, rather than being addressed as a passive reader or listener, becomes involved as an active participant. Due to their inherent gaps and contrasts, metaphors confront the recipient with obstacles he/she needs to overcome by actively engaging with the material. Danto continues by leading over to the visual domain: he suggests that the structure of metaphors and that of artworks closely resemble each other and that metaphor may be understood as a paradigm for the aesthetic in general. The power of (linguistic) metaphors, just like that of (visual) artworks, rests on their capacity to engage the participatory mind in a single moment on multiple levels. This induces genuine perception, and a complex process of understanding, which cannot be activated by the description, interpretation or connotative equivalent of the metaphor or artwork, which, importantly, also means that “there is and can be no substitute for direct experience” (Danto 1981: 174).

Danto’s ideas closely correlate with the concept of the image as proposed by Wagner with respect to the Barok of central New Ireland (cf. Chapter Two). Wagner’s encompassing concept of the image and Danto’s almost synonymous treatment of visual images and verbal metaphors compare with studies that advocate a broader concept of metaphor and which discuss non-verbal metaphors with regard to such varying fields as film, music, art (pictures, architecture, monuments etc.), advertising, public signs and notices and colour symbolism.¹³ These studies show that only some non-linguistic metaphors are entirely expressed through non-verbal means while others concur

12 See Boehm 1994a: 28-29 in relation to linguistic metaphors and Carroll 2001: 348-351 with regard to visual metaphors.

13 See Knowles and Moon 2006: 139-154, Kövecses and Csabi 2002, Kövecses 2000, Carroll 2001, Forceville 1998.

with language, or contain verbal elements. I now return to the *am furis* to look at the concurrence and interplay of verbal and non-verbal metaphors.

The *am furis* songs discussed above exemplified the use of figurative language and their ambiguity and polysemy. This is not only a feature of the song texts, but also applies to actions of the participants. This became particularly clear in cases where the feast organizers decided to diverge from the ideal type of *am furis* performance. It is important to note that *am furis* may vary considerably and that the ideal type I described above is typical only of ceremonies that take place in the later stages of the mortuary cycle (but even then there is no rigid scheme). For example, the

lineage representative chosen to mount the men's house and traverse the ridge beam does not always do so. He might remain on the ground in front of the entrance of the *bia* (fig. 96). Alternatively, he might climb onto the roof, but instead of walking along the ridge beam he might merely stand in one particular spot and, at the end of the *am furis*, descend from the back end of the roof rather than the front. Senior bigmen who play a major role in planning the event (although they may act in the background) generally have good reasons for deviating from the ideal type. Usually they want to make a particular statement about a specific issue, but not in explicit terms. The following concrete examples will illustrate this more clearly.

During the *am furis* performance at Natong, the ladder that Philip Sumbin – the representative chosen to mount the roof of the men's house – climbed up was placed inside the *bia*. Philip broke through the roof from the inside, remained for the entire duration of the *am furis* midway on the ridge beam (cf. fig. 89) and finally descended from the back end of the roof. This was later explained as being appropriate for, and alluding

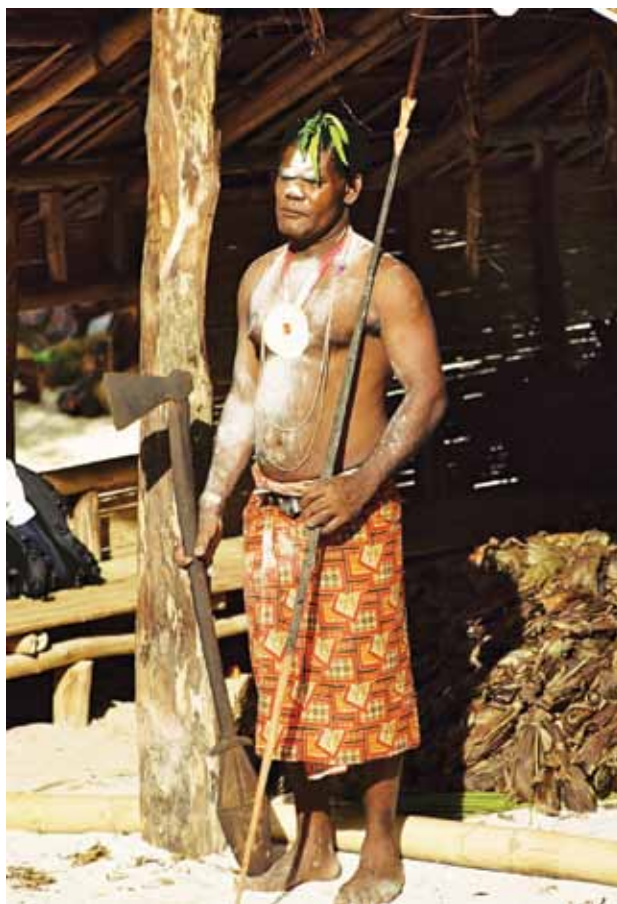


Fig. 96 Bernard Sinang (Francis Neantele's brother) during the *am furis* performance at Matambi (cf. Fig. 88). He is fitted out with the heirlooms of this group, but is standing in front of, rather than on top of the men's house.

to, Alfred's death and the fact that he had met a fatal accident. Traversing the whole length of the ridge beam, it was said, indicates that the person being commemorated had enjoyed a long and fulfilled life. But in this case, life had been severed before even reaching its peak, and in a particularly tragic way, which explains why the usual procedure had been changed.¹⁴

Reference to the particular circumstances of the death leads to a further question, namely, whether other features of the ceremony also alluded to Alfred's death or to him as a person. This brings us to the decoration of the performers, to the items used during the performance and, finally, back to the text of the songs. Philip was decorated with a V-shaped painting on his chest executed in red ochre rather than in the more commonly used white lime (cf. fig. 89). The red ochre was said to represent the blood that had been shed in the course of the fatal accident, and it was explained that in former times, instead of using red ochre, cuts would have been made on both shoulders and real blood would have flown down the man's chest. The spirit of the deceased was referred to as *fiu*. These spirits are believed to live in the bush on certain large trees called *sabaf* (*Alstonia scholaris*). In order to allude to the kind of spirit the deceased had turned into, the members of the *am furis* chorus held up small *sabaf*-branches while singing the various stanzas of the song, and each of them had a *sabaf*-branch stuck in his hair. The bamboo ladder that was used at the beginning and end of the performance was decorated with plants associated with the deep bush and abodes of spiritual beings, and not with branches and scented leaves from shrubs grown in and around the hamlets, as usually is the case.

In the *am furis* performed on the occasion of Paul Munbal's burial, Augustin Kiapmaia, the classificatory MZS, who posed the questions, ran around the heaps of food on the hamlet square, moving his outstretched arms up and down. He was interpreted by Conny Nekor as being "like a bird who has flown here from far away and thus doesn't know anything about the recent events on Anir." As Kiapmaia actually came from Tanga, he was particularly suitable to represent an 'outsider bird' and also the right person to ask questions about the deceased. Portraying him as coming from far away and as ignorant of recent developments on Anir was also relevant in another respect: as explained earlier, Munbal had buried the shell wealth of his *matambia*, but no-one knew where he had hidden it (cf. Chapter Three). According to the organizers of Munbal's burial, Kiapmaia, in his function as the representative of the 'sister men's house' on Tanga, would have had the right to receive a part of that shell wealth. By

14 The explanation cited above was given by two senior men, Peter Fafen and Patrik Kameta. A younger observer, Charles Oldrin, during the *am furis* performance said that the ladder in the centre correlated with the fact that this type of ritual was situated in the middle of the ceremonial cycle. His reasoning shows quite well that words and actions can be interpreted in various ways and that they may take on different meanings depending on the viewer and his level of knowledge.

assigning Kiapmaia a prominent role in the *am furis*, the organizers honoured him and acknowledged the historical relationship between the two men's house communities and shared rights to some of the shell valuables. By asking Kiapmaia to perform as an 'ignorant bird' they signalled to him their hope that he would accept their explanation about how the shell wealth got lost, and would return to Tanga without resentments.

Rather than imitating a bird, the man who poses the question in most *am furis* shades his eyes with one hand and looks around as if searching the horizon, or he pretends to look through an imagined pair of binoculars. In these cases the information communicated visually (pretending to look for someone) and verbally (asking where a person is) contains equivalent messages. The verbal and the visual underline and reinforce each other. Similarly, the V-shaped red body paint and the use of *sabaf*-branches complemented the verbal metaphor of Alfred as a weeping *fu*-spirit. Kiapmaia, swinging his arms like a bird its wings, on the other hand, is an example of a visual metaphor in the form of gestures that gave expression to meanings which were neither literally nor metaphorically addressed in words.

Am furis comprise ambiguous messages at the verbal level of song and oratory, and on the visual level of performative action. These two levels complement each other as metaphorical expressions in the songs and speech acts run parallel to, and correlate with, metaphorical visual acts in such a way that the two levels inform each other and, taken together, facilitate the interpretation of the performance as a whole. The processes in the generation of meaning in *am furis* thus parallel observations of performance scholars like Pavis and Fischer-Lichte made in relation to theatre and confirm Ruthrof's semiotic corroboration thesis (cf. Chapter Two).¹⁵

The examples given show how the deceased person, the circumstances of the event and the history of the group are alluded to. Foster (1995: 210-12), in the few remarks he makes on *am furis*, stresses another feature. According to him, *am furis* are particularly salient modules in the much broader process of gradual and partial revelation of plans made by the organizing kin group about how they intend to proceed with the rituals of the current mortuary cycle. The *am furis* performed to commemorate Alfred Kiapsula may serve as an illustration of what Foster means. That particular *am furis* was performed as part of a ceremony, approximately in the middle of the commemorative cycle. At the

15 One may ask how the frequent use of metaphors in *am furis* relates to other spheres of Anir life. Without doubt it stands in a larger context that also comprises ritual practices described in Chapter Four, namely the gradual revelation of the way the organizers intend the ceremonial cycle to develop or the games and riddles Anirians play during the *felumbintam* mourning period. Another example is *pong*; this expression means 'cover' and may be used to refer to a mask and costume, but also means 'hidden' speech, that is, words and expressions of everyday language that are used in the context of secret societies to denote things considered secret.

end of the performance, Henry Siku, the bigman who delivered the concluding speech, lifted up a large shell which had been placed previously on the square in front of the men's house. He then started to dig in the ground and excavated three large shell rings. These rings he gave to Leo Fesris with the words

Go and bring this necklace of yours back to our place in Natong and keep it there;
sometime in the future the two of us will eat the string of betel nut you gave me
earlier.

The three shell rings were part of the *tubaibia*, the shell wealth of Fesris' men's house. The name Natong in this case did not refer to the village as a whole but to a particular piece of land within the area after which the village is named and which is considered as the *waran male* or place of origin of this men's house community. At the time this *am furis* took place, there was no men's house in Natong hamlet. The first part of the statement therefore signified a request to build a new one there. As new men's houses are only built in the context of the last phase of the commemorative cycle, the fact that Fesris and Fafen (in their role as organizers of the ritual event) had arranged for Siku to demand the construction of a men's house at Natong equalled a public announcement of the intention to start the phase of *pok bif* in the near future.

The second part of Siku's statement where he talks about eating betel nut together with Fesris refers to the act of publicly handing out betel nuts during a ceremony in an earlier stage of the cycle in order to secure support for the ceremonies to come. By agreeing to hold the concluding speech (which explicitly mentioned the betel nuts), Siku was expressing his commitment to support Fesris with pigs, which, in turn, is to be interpreted as an indicator that he himself will be given pigs by the host of these rituals (Fesris) in the future. This tallies with a statement made by Foster (1995: 110) who described the last phase of the ritual cycle as follows:

The master trope of *pok bif* is foreshadowing. Each feast contains within it "signs" (*finailim*) both of the progress of the preparations of the "final feast" (*arer sigit*) and of the size and scale of the final feast.

Men on Anir, however, when talking about the characteristics, cultural status, significance and meaning of *am furis* more often emphasized the references to the history of the men's house community, to former bigmen, to places where they had lived, had erected men's houses and conducted rituals or where they were buried. As we have seen, through these references claims to the continuity of the men's house community and to the legitimacy of its land rights are made. Hints at the history and rights of the group correlate with hints to the condition of a *matambia* at the time a ritual is carried out and/or to its relations to other men's house communities. This is reflected in a comment

made by Judge Tomainda:

An *am furis* always shows what state a *matambia* is in and its relationship to others. When there are arguments or problems, or when there is a lack of knowledgeable bigmen, but also when things are fine, all this will be said.

This statement brings us to the emic classification of *am furis* I announced earlier on. It was suggested by various Anir elders and distinguishes three sub-types. They rest on distinctions that refer to the content and character of *am furis* and on the contexts they are performed in. The explanation of the various types will throw additional light on the multilayeredness of *am furis* and on the processes of the production of meaning in performative practice.

An emic classification of am furis

The first sub-type of this classification is called *am furis parpar*. *Par* means ‘to see’. The reduplication *parpar* implies an intensification in the sense of ‘to see well’ but also carries the connotation of gaining knowledge and insight of something and understanding it.¹⁶ It was explained that this sub-type of *am furis* was composed and performed in order to show (or, rather, cryptically state) that the men’s house community hosting the event had been offended by another *matambia* or that it was having an ongoing argument with another lineage or clan. As Anir men pointed out, the conflict would be addressed in the *am furis* in the hope that the other party would change its behaviour. However, because of the metaphorical and ambiguous nature of *am furis*, neither the argument itself nor the identity of the antagonists are explicitly stated. Instead it is assumed that senior leaders, on the basis of their understanding of how *am furis* are structured and composed (which metaphors and esoteric terms they use) and because of their profound knowledge of the history of relationships and developments within the community, will understand what and who is being alluded to.

None of the *am furis* I recorded during my three stays on Anir was positively identified as an *am furis parpar*. This type of performance – sometimes also characterized as ‘*am furis* for fighting’ – was always depicted as something of the past, when traditional warfare still was common. According to these accounts *am furis parpar* vanished with the advent of modernity and are not deemed appropriate for peace-loving Christians. However, discussions on an *am furis* performed on the island of Babase in December 2001

¹⁶ The indigenous term used for ‘to know’ or ‘to understand’ is *parfat* which literally translates as ‘to see firmly, accurately’; cf. also Bell 1977: 18, 73.



Fig. 97 Francis Neantele, one of the most distinguished leaders on Anir. His large men's house is situated in Ampelpau, the hamlet where he lives. For the commemorative feast that Neantele organized to honour his father (figs. 88, 96), he built a second, smaller men's house at Matambi which is located on the beach very close to Ampelpau. Matamfadon, village of Galisu, 8 August 2004

shed some light on the type of allusions that are used in *am furis parpar*, how these work and how *am furis* are interpreted in general.¹⁷

The performance took place in the context of an *alal fajasu* final feast. The texts of the song and the speech acts had been composed by Francis Neantele (fig. 97). He was the leader who organized and hosted the ritual event to commemorate and honour his father. When I talked to him about the contents of his *am furis*, Neantele pointed out that part of the wording was “addressing a problem inside the family”, and he added that “those who know the way of *am furis* will understand that there is

a grievance in this [our] kinship group.” Here Neantele was pointing to the final speech of the *am furis* where Neantele's brother (who had been chosen to stand in front of the men's house and give the answers to the questions in the *am furis*, cf. fig. 96) was told to “wait a bit and count the waves until the sea calms down and it is safe to come ashore.” Thus, instead of clearly addressing the argument, the image of a person coming to visit the island by boat was drawn upon. (Neantele's brother was actually working in Port Moresby and had come to Anir in order to participate in this ritual.) He was then told to be patient and wait a while before coming ashore, thereby implying that things have to calm down, that is, that the argument has to be settled before he can come.

Later I discussed the video recordings of Neantele's *kastam* with Peter Fafen, an old bigman from Ambitlei (fig. 98). Fafen watched the video closely and listened

¹⁷ This *am furis* was actually identified as an example of *am furis na lugu*, that is, belonging to the third sub-type.

very attentively to the *am furis*. Although he had not been to Babase for several years, he instantly understood that the *am furis* was alluding to an argument. However, unlike Neantele, he pointed to the wording of the *am furis* song itself. There a group of men was described who were said to have hosted feasts where they “had eaten until dusk”. This was then followed by a challenge to try and surpass these feasts.¹⁸ According to Fafen, these lines referred to Neantele himself and his supporters who were boasting about their ability to organize feasts and challenge others. Fafen continued to explain that *am furis* that contain metaphors in which the feast organizers either



Fig. 98 Peter Fafen, the old leader of the men's house community of Natong/Matof. Since his successor Leo Fesris (fig. 94), by way of a ritually regulated act took over the 'official' leadership of the *matambia* in the mid-1990s, Fafen acted more in the background but was still the custodian of the majority of the shell-wealth of his group. Natong (hamlet and village), 9 September 2004

praise themselves or denigrate others usually reflect tensions, either within the hosting *matambia* or between it and another men's house community.

Which branches of the kin group were involved in this specific argument, Fafen was not able to elicit from the song texts, but only by observing and evaluating who actively took part in the event and how these people behaved. He, for example, drew conclusions from the composition of the choir and the fact that Neantele's brother, who had been chosen to give the answers in the oratory of the *am furis*, did not mount the roof of the men's house. Also, Fafen paid particular attention to who supported Neantele with pigs and to whom these were then redistributed. On the basis of observation he concluded that Neantele was having an argument with his father's brother Netar who had not participated in the whole event although he, as the remaining brother of the deceased being honoured in this ritual, would have been obliged to organize it or at

18 See Appendix III for a transcription and translation of this *am furis*.

least to make a considerable contribution. Presumably the refusal of Netar (an old man) to support Neantele (one of the most powerful bigman on present Anir) led to the challenge in the *am furis* directed at Netar.

Am furis na balamaris, the second sub-type of this category, can be characterized as just the opposite of *am furis parpar*. *Balamaris* apparently is a word that has its origin in one of the southern New Ireland languages. Probably it was introduced to Anir a long time ago because it is also used in other contexts. For example, certain types of magic claimed to promote empathy, friendliness and joy are called (*laili na*) *balamaris*. A certain type of reconciliatory ceremony is also called *balamaris*. Such a ceremony was held in August 2000 in the village of Warantaban after a boat accident in which a man was killed. In the course of the event the kinship group of the young man who had caused the fatal accident made a compensatory payment of a pig, shell valuables and money to the victim's family. *Balamaris* in this context was described as a process by which two groups "shake hands and are on friendly terms with each other again." The examples show that the term *balamaris* either implies raising compassion and sympathy or expresses a state of happiness and good relationships. This is corroborated by the fact that the *am furis na balamaris* usually was referred to as '*am furis bilong amamas*' that is, as an '*am furis* of joy and delight' and as a type of performance that was staged to make people happy.

Accordingly, the *am furis na balamaris* was defined as circumscribing an event that expresses and confirms a satisfactory situation. It is only performed in a ceremony when there are no grievances or arguments between the various kin groups, when there is no shortage of food or other necessities, where the men's house community has not lately lost any of its prominent elders and is in male-female balance with sufficient young members. It is perhaps not surprising that *am furis* that carry such positive connotations are not performed very often, neither today nor – according to local accounts – in the past.¹⁹

The final sub-type is represented by *am furis na lugu*. It is associated with deploring the desolate state of a *matambia* that has lost its prominent and knowledgeable senior bigmen and leaders. *Lugu* is a term people usually translated into Tok Pisin as wanpis (literally 'one fish'), an expression that describes a state of being: an orphan, someone who is alone, without relatives, or without a mate may be called wanpis. *Am furis na lugu* seek empathy and often involve images of depopulated places or hamlets – sites where formerly a men's house had stood – overgrown with creepers and returned to bush. Besides lamenting the loss of deceased leaders, they also portray the present generation

¹⁹ However, some people maintained that *am furis na balamaris* had been more common in earlier times.

as young, inexperienced and as being left without sufficient knowledge about customary ways.²⁰

One such *am furis* that contained expressions and metaphors that are typical of many *am furis na lugu* was performed in the village Banakin (cf. figs. 86, 87, 90, 108). The preliminary song, *sunmaii*, started with a plea for compassion and ran “be sorry for us [the organizing kin group] in the last village [Banakin that lies at the far end of Babase].” It continued with the statement “they [knowledgeable bigmen and leaders] are dying out, soon the village will be deserted and the present generation will be left without knowledge [knowledge to conduct the rituals of the commemorative cycle correctly]”. The verses of the *am furis* song performed by the choir consisted of an ancient magic chant for catching fish. Although it did not explicitly mention or bemoan loss, being an old magical song it was representative of the kind of knowledge that, according to the *sunmaii*, had been lost. Also, it correlated with the exchange of questions and answers and the final speech where the image of a lagoon was evoked. A magically roused hot and strong *famang* wind almost completely dried up the lagoon, to the effect that all the large and medium-sized fish were killed, leaving only the small ones. Here, like in other *am furis*, the large fish symbolize bigmen while the medium-sized ones stand for other people (men as well as women) well versed in *kastam*. The fact that a wind caused by magic had dried up the lagoon indicated that the composer and the organizers of the *am furis* suspected that at least some of the bigmen referred to had been killed by sorcery.

The *am furis na lugu* is by far the most common type of *am furis* today. Almost without fail the organizers of a ritual and/or the composer of the *am furis* performed in its course would explain that theirs was an example of an *am furis na lugu*. To a certain degree this corresponds to a more general feeling among Anirians that knowledge about the mortuary cycle as well as other aspects of *kastam* are in jeopardy. In many conversations my Anir counterparts deplored the gradual loss of traditional knowledge and ascribed this to the large number of senior bigmen or leaders who had died before passing on their knowledge to the younger generation. It is hard to establish how much knowledge has actually been lost and to what degree these statements more likely reflect nostalgia for the past when *kastam* was said to have been more splendid. Although various elder people pointed out that rituals had been more frequent in the past and that many of the special men’s houses which used to be erected during the phase of *pok bif* had not been built for many years, Anirians had never stopped carrying out the rituals of the mortuary cycle.

20 Bell, who does not elaborate on *am furis* in his publications and not even mentions the name of these performances, with respect to the final ritual of the commemorative cycle observed that it is “accompanied by songs and speeches in which the weakness of the clan of the dead person is emphasized, in contrast to the strength of other clans. At the same time, some of the singers take the opportunity of affirming the complete inner solidarity of the bereaved clan.” (Bell 1937: 334)



Fig. 99 John Simail and his son Joseph Maul (the elder brother of Neguam, fig. 91) during the ceremony of *pikuf bal-ing*, a compensatory payment presented by the children to their father to thank him for his care and nurture. Such transactions usually are held after the *am furis* of a large commemorative ritual, in this case the final feast for Guamanwok. Warantaban (hamlet and village), 10 January 2010

This distinguishes them from groups in other areas of Papua New Guinea where *kastam* in contemporary times is discussed as being linked with the ‘(re-)invention of tradition’.²¹ As pointed out earlier, the ritual cycle has remained surprisingly stable although it has been reduced in scale, is now embedded in a different political and economic context and has been changed in some respects in order to accommodate Christian beliefs. Considering these changes it might well be that some elders felt or feel that the younger generation is no longer interested in ‘traditional’ knowledge and therefore decided not to pass on their knowledge. However this might be, the frequency of comments (made in other contexts) lamenting the decline of *kastam*, makes it appear likely that the concern about the loss of customary knowledge also finds its expression in the *am furis* and has led to an increase of *am furis na lugu*.²²

Another reason why *am furis na lugu* are so common is linked to ideas about good and proper behaviour, decency and humility. This is reflected more often in comments on the first two sub-types than in statements about *am furis na lugu* themselves. Various remarks about *am furis parpar* (the first sub-type) not only stressed that they are liable

21 See for example Babadzan 1999, Maas 1994, Jolly and Thomas 1992b, Keesing and Tonkinson 1982.

22 Whether or not that led to changes in the *am furis na lugu* itself, only a comparative study of old and more recent examples could show, but unfortunately we lack this material.



Fig. 100 Luis Tomar, a senior member of the *tubuan* lodge of Satulai, standing next to the mask Kanai which performed at the final feast commemorating Guamanwok (cf. fig. 91). Warantaban (hamlet and village), 9 January 2010

to intensify already existing tensions, but also showed that performing an *am furis* of a (however concealed) aggressive nature is not cherished, at least no longer today (although informants also admitted that, occasionally, *am furis parpar* can be useful to point out misbehaviour). *Am furis na balamaris* (the second sub-type), on the other hand, which praise the prosperity of a men's house community and also the amiable relations to other *matambia*, are certainly valued positively. However, explanations like the one made by John Simail and Luis Tomar (figs. 99, 100) infer that this type of *am furis* also bears potential danger.

The *am furis na balamaris* is used to show one's joy, it is performed when the village has been quiet and peaceful, when everything is alright and there are no animosities. They are doing it to praise themselves.

The last sentence of this quote in particular – “ol i wokim bilong apim nem bilong ol” in Tok Pisin – is ambiguous because apim nem means not only ‘to praise’, but also ‘to boast.’ Although typical bigman behaviour often involves some boasting, boasting is not regarded as a positive trait, as Fafen's remark on Neantele's *am furis* cited above goes to show. Therefore it seems that another reason for the popularity of *am furis na lugu* lies in the fact that they are not aggressive and, rather than containing elements which praise the men's house community hosting the event that could give rise to envy, they bemoan loss and so are much more likely to raise empathy.

The focus of this chapter was on the presentation of ethnographic data. *Am furis* are multimedia and thus multi-sensual events that Anir islanders describe as containing important, but cryptically stated information about the deceased being commemorated in the current ritual, about the history and present situation of the group staging it, about their rights to leadership succession, land and other resources, and about the organizer's plans in regard to future rituals. All this information is not presented in a narrative but wrapped up in allusions open to more than one interpretation. The performers never provide an exegesis for their audience, which in turn is challenged to discover the possible meanings and the intentions of the organizers of the *am furis*.

Am furis combine music with verbal and visual elements such as actions, ornaments and objects. Being polysemous events that contain implicit or hidden meanings and multiple images, the examination of *am furis* was based on their semiotic qualities. The analysis of the songs and speech acts revealed that figurative language, and metaphors in particular, are one of their most salient features. Metaphors in turn – as 'speaking images' – are of particular interest because they serve as bridge builders between the verbal and the non-verbal levels of the performance. The relevant device of metaphor is the presentation of a contrast that prompts the recipients to reconcile several unrelated domains, thus actively involving them in the process of interpretation. This correlates with a concept of the image as an entity that contains and elicits several ideas. The role of metaphors and images with regard to the impact of the performance is one of the topics of the next chapter.

The analysis has also shown that in *am furis* performances verbal metaphors and non-verbal elements correlate with and reinforce each other, thus layering the information through various sensorial engagements. Sometimes the information communicated in words is bolstered by visual signs; at times the gestures, actions, ornaments or objects convey additional information that is not addressed in either the songs or the speech acts. If the organizers of the performance want to communicate a certain piece of information more clearly, they will either use well-known or even conventional images and metaphors and/or provide several clues simultaneously by addressing the same issue on the verbal and the non-verbal levels.

The last section was dedicated to an emic classification of *am furis* as suggested by Anir elders. The presentation of this classification went hand in hand with a further examination of actual practice and how meanings are created in *am furis*. It also included remarks on how recipients interpret and evaluate *am furis*. Interpretation and evaluation, of course, are linked to perception, knowledge, experience and memory. The relationship between the performers and the audience and the role of recipients in the production of

meaning, including the relationship between representation and presentation, are other aspects I will turn to in the following chapter. Here the persuasiveness of performances will be foregrounded; after all, they are not about contemplation, but about engagement, about moving people and achieving aims. By examining how *am furis* function, I will show that the memory embedded in them stands in an interesting, dynamic relationship to creativity and that both are important factors in rendering the performance effective.

CHAPTER 6

MEMORY AND CREATIVITY

Am furis are events that are oriented towards the future but are based on the display of knowledge from and of the past. In order to make an *am furis* effective, knowledge about the past has to be enclosed and put into relation to knowledge about the present in meaningful ways. This linking of past and present is a creative process that involves adaptation, improvisation and innovation. The central theme of this chapter is the dynamic relationship between old and new in *am furis*, that is, between memory and the transmission of knowledge, on the one hand, and creativity, on the other. Examining the relevance and the principles of remembering and creativeness throws further light on how *am furis* become efficacious and meaningful for Anirians. Further, it illuminates their position, function and significance in the ritual cycle and with regard to the overall social and cultural system. This chapter is largely analytical but the interpretations of how memory and creativity work and interlink in *am furis*, and make them effective, also apply to other aspects of the ritual setup in which they are embedded and to the dances and masked performances which are the topic of the last part of this thesis. This chapter therefore also forms a theoretical footing for Chapters Seven and Eight.

Canonical structures

Am furis are not always created anew, and the transmission of songs and their association with ownership or copyrights are important.¹ *Am furis* 'belong' to various men's house communities. Anir men repeatedly stressed that the infringement of rights, theft or plagiarism could lead to serious conflict which, in former times, often involved physical fights and/or sorcery. This gives rise to a series of interrelated questions. What is the

¹ For the sake of simplicity the term copyright may be used here (cf. Wilkinson 1978, Gunn 1987, Harrison 1992), but see also footnote 15 in Chapter Seven regarding the difficulties of transferring terms and concepts developed in Western legal systems to indigenous non-Western systems.

relation between old and new *am furis* songs? What do ownership rights refer to and how are they transferred? How are *am furis* composed and what challenges do the composers face?

In *am furis* knowledge about the past is retrieved and brought into meaningful relationship with the present in order to envisage and safeguard the future. In this process the organizers of the ritual may either make use of an old *am furis* that they have rights to because they inherited it and which probably was last performed many years ago, or they compose or commission a new *am furis*. The Anir men with whom I discussed this issue estimated that approximately 50 percent of the *am furis* songs performed nowadays have been handed down, while the other 50 percent are newly composed. With regard to the question of the transfer of rights, the most obvious answer is that *am furis* are handed down from one generation to the next within the same *matambia*. However, several of the *am furis* I recorded did not originate in, or belong to, the men's house where they were performed. Instead, they had been composed by a (sometimes already deceased) member of another men's house community and had already been performed at least once in the course of ceremonies conducted by that specific *matambia*.

According to the assessment of some of my counterparts, the transfer of rights from one men's house community to another has become more frequent in recent years due to the absence of knowledgeable elders. *Am furis* are transmitted through links between different *matambia* based on alliance networks and kinship ties and the fact that every Anir islander is able to claim rights in more than one men's house community (cf. Chapter One). Apart from that, members of a *matambia* planning to organize a ritual may turn to an outside bigman for assistance if they themselves lack the necessary knowledge. This bigman may recall one of their *am furis* or he composes a new one. This new composition can then be claimed and used by members of both men's house communities. It seems that, today, *am furis* rights are less fiercely guarded than in the past, which in turn could be due to the impact of pacification and the influence of the missions.

Some *am furis* are said to be very old, but to be effective even an old *am furis* has to be adapted to the current situation. Names of places and persons will be modified to account for the man or woman being commemorated in the ceremony as well as his or her relationships, and to incorporate issues that are currently relevant for the men's house community conducting the ritual. On the other hand, a newly composed *am furis* may contain old or even ancient parts. This was the case in the *am furis* about the lagoon that dried up which was performed in Banakin (cf. Chapter Five). There the choir's song included a magic chant formerly performed to 'call' the high tide for the purpose

of catching fish. The organizer of this *am furis* still remembered the magic spell and the person who had owned it in the past, but no-one could be found who was able to translate it.² What granted the organizers the ownership rights was the fact that the spell had once been in possession of the predecessors of the *matambia* hosting the present ritual.

In another *am furis*, performed in the village of Natong in 2004 on the occasion of the funeral of Patrik Liting, a magic love song that originally had been composed by the deceased himself formed the basis of the verses sung by the choir. But in this case the author of the *am furis* had used only parts of the original magic chant. These he had broken up, rearranging the order of words and lines in order to conceal the true contents of the spell, thus preventing access to it. These instances explain how difficult it can be at times to establish both the exact age of an *am furis* and pinpoint its composer. The preliminary *sunmaii* could be inherited, while the *am furis* proper might be an entirely new composition (or vice versa). And while the songs, or least parts of them, might be old, the speech acts are created each time anew and according to the particularities of the situation. They always contain names of places and deceased persons and are as informative as the songs when trying to classify and make sense of an *am furis*.

Although *am furis* show great variation, they clearly display regularities and follow canonical structures. The latter find expression in the typology described in Chapter Five, but also in conventionalized metaphors and images. The most salient of these is the orphan. The majority of the *am furis* I recorded contained, either in the speech acts or in the songs, the image of the orphan whose kin has passed away and who therefore is without company and guidance. An alternative image is that of a person who is like a leaf or a piece of wood drifting in the sea, that is, someone who is without anchorage, roots or fixed relations. The image of the orphan is often combined with that of thorny lianas. They either cover the orphan or overgrow a place, gradually taking possession of it. Usually these places have names and designate former sites of men's houses or settlements. The orphan and the thorny lianas are metaphors that carry related messages. They convey that the members of the men's house performing the *am furis* feel bereft of knowledgeable seniors and strong leaders and, sometimes, that they fear that their lineage is dwindling or even on the verge of dying out.

This was the case with regard to an *am furis* performed on the occasion of an *alal fajasu* that took place in the village of Warantaban to commemorate Guamanwok, a former leader who had died in the 1970s. The *am furis* that was selected had already been

2 The people I consulted for the purpose of receiving a translation all understood certain parts of it but also explained that they were unable to make sense of the overall text because it contained archaic, now forgotten words and phrases.

used on earlier occasions and been composed by the brother of the deceased man.³ The wording of the song and the speech acts were typical of an *am furis na lugu* and pivoted entirely on the image of the orphan left helpless and alone, mourning his deceased kin. There he sits crying, covered by lianas, a lonely member of a lineage that has gradually become extinct.⁴ John Folen and Norbert Neguam, two young classificatory brothers who were prominent in the organization and performance of this ritual, later pointed out that the text accurately reflected their situation and that of their men's house community as a whole. For many years the kin group had been dwindling due to a lack of female lineage members and offspring; on top of that they had lost all of the elders who had been versed in customary issues.

A similar explanation was given by the members of the men's house community responsible for the *am furis* that used the image of the dried-up lagoon. This too was chosen to symbolize the decline of the kin group and its bigmen. In this case the metaphor of the dry lagoon was deemed particularly suitable and preferred to that of a place covered by lianas because this *matambia's* place of origin was located directly on the beach overlooking the Banakin lagoon which is well known on Anir for its richness in fish and the practised fishing rites (cf. figs. 19, 20).

A second recurring metaphor is that of the shade tree, which I already discussed in the previous chapter in connection with the *am furis* performed at the funeral of the leader Paul Munbal. Everyone agreed that the shade tree had been a very appropriate metaphor for Munbal because it should only be applied in reference to a deceased man whose bigmanship and status are beyond doubt. The shade tree metaphor was also used in other *am furis*, but never as explicitly and prominently as in the one for Munbal.

Another interesting aspect is the way death itself is referred to. *Am furis* are performed to honour and remember the dead, and without exception they state that the earthly existence of the person being commemorated definitely has come to an end. But rather than saying so explicitly (using words like 'death', 'deceased' or 'grave') various circumscriptions or allusions are used. Usually it is said that something has come to an end, or that someone or a group of people have departed, that they have left for good and will not come back any more. In the *am furis* for Patrik Liting who had been a well-known composer of songs and choreographer of dances, the deceased was likened to a singing bird that had flown away.

Other ways to express that someone has entered the hereafter are to say that

3 This brother, Pulou, had also already been dead for years at the time of the *alal fajasu* for Guamanwok.

4 See Appendix IV for a transcription and translation of this *am furis*.

he/she is “following the road of the *fiu*” or that he/she has boarded the *mon*, the canoe of the mythical creator-ancestor Suilik. The idea of the beyond may also be expressed by simply saying that the person in question has “gone to the other side”. Less readily understandable for a Western observer is the image of an empty or deserted place where *ansisi*, cicadas, sing. They are regarded as the heralds of death, while their chirping or ‘cries’ mark the voices of the deceased. Nowadays, the grave is often described as a black stone that has swallowed a person, or as a cover from which the sound of sobbing can be heard.⁵

The examples show some of the ways in which the outer, and rather rigid, structure of *am furis* is imaginatively filled with meaning and content. Standard metaphors are personalized or specified by the composers in order to accommodate the circumstances of the ritual being performed. *Am furis* have to be appropriate. Appropriateness, in turn, is as much linked to rights and the knowledge of metaphors as to that about local history. An old song – an *am furis* previously performed or a magic spell – can only be used if the feast organizer, or the creator of the new *am furis*, has a right to it because he inherited it or received permission to use it. Alternatively, the deceased who is being commemorated in the ritual may have composed the item. In this case neither the question of copyright nor that of appropriateness arises. An *am furis* is considered appropriate when it corresponds to, or ‘suits’, the person being honoured in the event, and a situation where a composition belonging to the deceased is implemented fulfils this requirement. But with regard to the selection of other songs, or metaphors, and for the creation of the speech acts or a new *am furis*, the composers will carefully consider whether the images chosen are in accordance with, and ‘fit’, the deceased as well as the history, social relationships and present situation of his or her *matambia*.

In this respect *am furis* function analogously to the *malagan* art of northern New Ireland as analysed by Susanne Küchler (1987, 1988, 2002, Melion and Küchler 1991). Although each artwork is unique, *malagan* feature a recurrent and stereotypic imagery that rests upon a structure that dictates a limited number of themes and templates. But *malagan* art is also combinatorial and, as a result of marriage ties and cooperation in mortuary rituals, several social units may claim rights to identical motives and components. This leads to variation and change, and every individual *malagan* reflects

5 The *am furis* that I documented seem to indicate that the use of at least some metaphors might be linked to specific regions and/or kin groups. For example, the image of a place overgrown with lianas seemed to be limited to lineages whose place of origin lies in the interior, while metaphors relating to fish and the sea were used by lineages who already in pre-colonial times lived along the beach. The use of the shade tree metaphor seemed to be restricted to kin groups on Babase, while the image of the *fiu* bush spirit was only used in the south of Ambitlei. Unfortunately, my sample of 18 *am furis* is too small to allow for more than this tentative suggestion.

the social and political relationships of those who hold and transact the rights over its production. In an interpreted and constructed way, the past and present of interrelated social units are thus encapsulated in the pieces, while *malagan* on the whole represents a mnemonic system that reflects the relationship between cognitive and social processes.

Anirians not only think of *am furis* as prominent features of their culture but also consider them as complex entities, difficult to both compose and understand. Initially one might assume that this relates primarily to the understanding of the metaphoric and/or esoteric language used in them, but this is not necessarily the case. The more I discussed about *am furis* with Anir men, the more evident it became that the scope of variation is limited. The composers are bound by rather narrow canonical structures and by a restricted number of conventionalized verbal and visual images. The major challenge they face is of a different nature. It does not so much concern the question of whether the creator knows the esoteric language and standard metaphors, or remembers an old *am furis* or magic spell. Rather, the difficulty lies in the way this kind of knowledge is applied, that is, how it is combined with knowledge about the history of the place and its inhabitants. Powerful poetic images have to be created that mirror the particular history and present situation of a men's house community as well as portraying the deceased who is being commemorated. This has to be done in a subtle and sensitive way: more straightforward expressions or metaphors should mirror widely-accepted views (e.g. X was a rightfully respected bigman), while suspicions, accusations or challenges should be hedged in ambiguous images and plays on words.

It also became increasingly clear that the names of deceased people and places are not simply inserted for the sake of personalizing an *am furis* or specifying it to adapt it to the circumstances of the ritual to be performed. Rather, it is the creation of allusions to the history of a men's house community that transform an *am furis* into a poetic image that is as powerful as it is ambiguous. Covert references to the past of a *matambia* through the use of names and metaphors are only intelligible if one is familiar with the details of its present and former composition, previous rituals and exchanges, names of prominent deceased leaders, previous places of settlement, and alliances and enmities with other men's house communities. It is these references to history that substantiate and legitimize claims to the inheritance of leadership within a particular *matambia* and, perhaps even more importantly, to the land rights it holds. Accordingly, when Anir men applied the metaphor of the *am furis* as a key to their culture, they were referring less to the difficulties one has in trying to make sense of archaic words, esoteric terms and allegories but more to the process of tracing and understanding the interrelationship, history and land rights of various men's house communities.

This clearly shows that *am furis* are situated between memories of the past and direction towards, and a vision of, the future. The performances not only consist of old and new elements, they link the present to the past. Knowledge transmitted from the past must be creatively applied to safeguard the future. Each time the result is something new, yet strangely familiar and ‘traditional’. Memory and creativity in *am furis* stand in a dynamic relationship, and this is the topic of the coming sections. As contemporary theories about creativity work on the assumption that memory (as acquired knowledge and together with experience) is at the source of creativity I will first turn to memory, and then, in a second step, return to creativity.

Memory in am furis

As I have shown, *am furis* contain information on the *matambia* staging them. According to a simplistic, now outdated view, the relationship between history and memory is quite straightforward: memory reflects what actually happened, while history reflects memory as represented in written narratives. Today, neither memory nor the writing of history are thought to be objective, instead they are seen as being subject to processes of selection, interpretation and a panoply of distortions. History as well as memory are constructed and reconstructed and definitely influenced by current social and cultural circumstances (e.g. Burke 1997, Cattell and Climo 2002).

The French philosopher and sociologist Maurice Halbwachs (1992[1950]) is famous for having coined the term and concept of collective memory. He argued that memories – despite their seemingly internal nature – are constructed by social entities: through membership in a group, through kinship, class and religion, individuals acquire, localize, recall and edit their memories. In this process past experiences of others are often incorporated into individual narratives. Through the communication of collectively shaped and held memories, and not through private remembrance, social groups construct images of the world and agreed-upon versions of the past.⁶ Halbwachs rejected the notion of individual memory being absolutely separate from collective memories, and today the two are understood as inextricably intertwined (e.g. Fentress and Wickham 1992, Climo 1995).

The study of collective memories has become a popular subject over the past

⁶ Marc Bloch (1925), although adopting the phrase “*mémoire collective*”, also warned against the dangers of transferring terms from individual psychology by simply adding the adjective ‘collective’ (see also Connerton 1989: 39 and Burke 1997: 44).

decades and was discussed under terms such as ‘social’, ‘cultural’, ‘local’, ‘popular’ and ‘shared memory’ as well as ‘custom’, ‘heritage’ and ‘tradition’.⁷ According to the definition in Cattell and Climo (2002: 4) collective memories are

shaped by social, economic, and political circumstances; by beliefs and values; by opposition and resistance. They involve cultural norms and issues of authenticity, identity and power. They are implicated in ideologies. Social memories are associated with or belong to particular categories or groups so they can be, and often are, the focus of conflict and contestation. They can be discussed and negotiated, accepted or rejected.

Thus, collective memories are provisional, malleable and contingent; they are marked by a dialectic between stability and continuity, on the one hand, and innovation, change and transformation, on the other (cf. Wagner 1981[1975], Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983, Brundage 2000: 5-13). An important aspect of the malleability of memory is the interrelationship between remembering and forgetting, and what has been called ‘social’, ‘collective’ or ‘structural amnesia’ (Burke 1997: 54, Connerton 1989:15). These terms refer to acts of obviation and intentional erasure, discussed by historians mainly in relation to power struggles, that is, as the social organization of forgetting that includes censorship, with the aim of suppression or repression. Contrary to these historians, anthropologists such as Debora Battaglia (1992) and Susanne Küchler (2002: 4-7, 2006) take a more positive approach and consider active, purposeful forgetting as “*a willed transformation of memory*” (Battaglia 1992: 14, emphasis in the original).

Collective memories make experience comprehensible because they create interpretative frameworks. In a biological, direct but rather narrow understanding human memories reside in the brain and its narrative systems. However, they are expressed and transmitted in numerous ways and located nearly everywhere; not only in documents and written records of various sorts, but also in language, oral traditions, myths, stories and songs, in objects, images, monuments and places, in actions, including rituals and ceremonies, and in bodies and bodily practices. I now return to the *am furis* to investigate in what ways memories are located in, and transmitted through, these performances.

Am furis are part of mortuary rituals and are performed by all kin groups. Anirians regularly participate in their own or other groups’ *am furis*, either as performers or as witnesses. With regard to a single *matambia*, the different *am furis* the group performs over time reflect its genealogy, its social relations and alliances with other groups and its rights to resources. From a more holistic point of view the overall corpus of Anir *am furis* reflects the history of the islands as a whole and the way Anirians remember

7 Prominent advocates are Vansina 1985, Nora 1984–1992, Connerton 1989 and Assman 1992.

and interpret it. Personal and collective memories interlink: the transmission and performance of *am furis* depend on individuals who remember old songs, archaic words, esoteric expressions, appropriate metaphors, the names of deceased people and former places of settlement and knowledge about former rituals, exchanges and other social interactions that validate rights to land and leadership succession. On the other hand, personal memories, experiences and narratives are heavily shaped by the socio-cultural conditions because they are closely connected with the narratives, experiences and memories of other members of the community. Moreover, different kinds of knowledge are at play, involving various ways of remembering and mnemonic techniques. What I am

referring to are the aspects of embodiment and performativity which play a particularly important role in the processes of remembering in *am furis*. Often memories are not simply recalled, but triggered by things to which people are emotionally attached and that, to them, carry meaning. These things have the power to evoke memories and represent as well as encapsulate and embody history. On Anir, space – places in the landscape – and objects in the form of heirlooms are among the most prominent ‘receptacles’ of memory and history.

Long after a place has been abandoned, when no trace of earlier habitation is left, coconut palms and decorative shrubs remain to tell stories of former settlement. Palm trees and decorative plants may also indicate former burial sites. Bell (1937: 335) recorded that in the course of the formerly practised secondary burial, the exhumed skull and bones were laid to rest at the base of a coconut palm. Since the more recent past red cordylines and shrubs with scented leaves are planted on and around graves.⁸

⁸ It is quite likely that people already in pre-colonial times decorated burial sites with special plants because this practice seems to be, or have been, associated with the wish to please the spirits of the deceased. In a similar way decorative and sweet-smelling plants sometimes were planted (and still can be seen) in places that are known as abodes of bush spirits (*sun tara* on Anir; *ples masalai* in Tok Pisin).



Fig. 101 Tombstone of Markus Tabungkot who died in September 1999. In August 2004, his son, Joe Lugutele, built a provisional men's house (*farfarur*) and hosted the ritual of *am filfil*, signalling that *pok bif*, the final phase of the ritual cycle, was to start in the following year. Funsil, village of Balngit, 23 August 2004

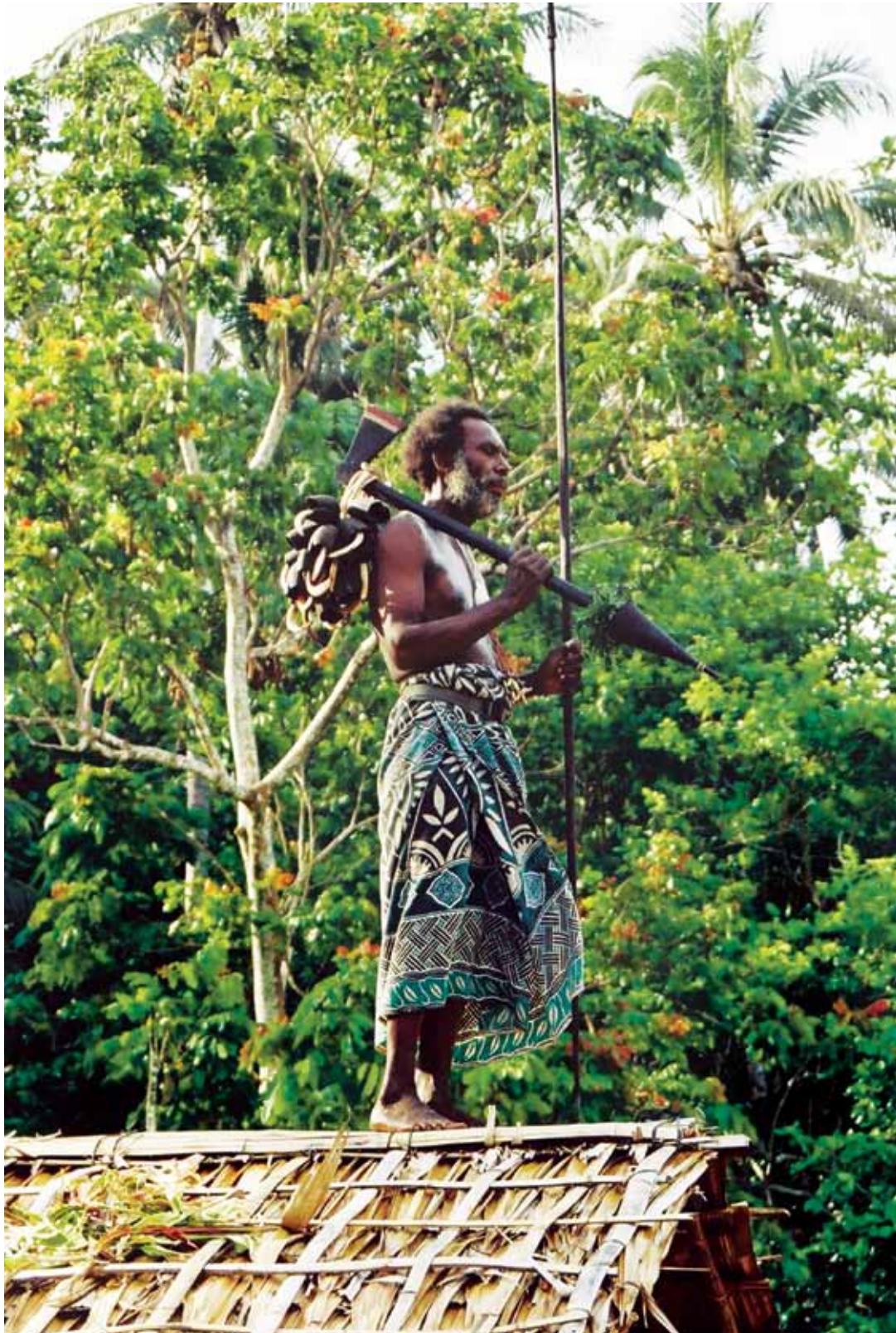


Fig. 102 James Tengnaof on the roof of his *matambia*'s men's house holding a spear, *sombo*, and an axe, *asok*, to which a large rattle called *kalukalu* is fastened. The photo was taken during the ritual that he hosted in commemoration of his deceased brother Nandaou. Silalangit, village of Balngit, 2 November 2001

Christianisation, of course, brought with it the practice of erecting tombstones (fig. 101). In pursuit of their daily tasks people follow paths that go around and across the islands, thereby passing such places, remembering their names as well as the persons and events associated with the locality. When place names are mentioned in *am furis*, the performers and the people in the audience are not just prompted to recall a name, but to mentally revisit the mentioned place and to remember people who lived there and the actions, most notably the rituals, they performed there.

Virtually every time an *am furis* is staged during which a lineage representative mounts the men's house, he carries with him a ceremonial axe (*asok*), a spear (*sombo*) and a rattle (*kalukalu*). He is adorned with shell valuables, usually strings of shell money to which either a polished disc of a clamshell or an *Ovula ovum* shell, seed cases and dog's teeth are fastened (figs. 102, 103, 106). All these items are heirlooms that belong to the men's house community. The person who poses the questions often holds up another type of heirloom: shell rings called *amfat* that are part of the *tubaibia*, the 'treasure box' of the men's house community (fig. 104). Sometimes they are of the type called *amfat mil*: *amfat* is the generic term for rings made from the tridacna shell; *mil* is an addition that indicates that something is old and 'true' or 'authentic' in the sense that it has been made and/or used by an ancestor. *Amfat mil* are said to be the foundation of a men's house community and may not be used in ceremonial exchanges. Just like the heirlooms carried by the man on top of the house they often bear individual names. They have been passed down through several generations and must be kept within the group (fig. 105).

The man who climbs on to the roof is often the brother or sister's son of the deceased bigman being commemorated. The young man is his successor and the person who is about to establish himself as the new leader of the men's house community. When two or even three men and/or boys perform at the head of the ceremonial building, it means that a whole line of succession, that is, a line of possible future leaders, is being presented to the community (fig. 108).



Fig. 103 The *ammamak* breast ornament James Tengnaof wore during the *am furis* performed for his brother Nandaou.



Fig. 104 Leo Fesris (his back turned to the camera) and Henry Siku during the *am furis* performance that took place in commemoration of Alfred Kiapsula who in the song was likened to a flying *fiu* spirit (cf. Chapter Five). Matankiang, village of Natong, 21 September 2001



Fig. 105 Otto Tosi (left), Camilus Tuarkalus (centre) and Michael Sale (right) in front of the men's house at Kifil. The large shell ring Tuarkalus is holding is the largest and most important of the *tubaibia* (shell wealth) of his men's house community. The ring is named 'Funmantui' after the main men's house of this *matambia*. Tosi emphasized that the ring was larger than *amfat mil*, and he classified it as *amfat kes*. This indicates that the ring is at the bottom of the basket (*kes*) that contains the *tubaibia* and therefore is regarded as the foundation and primary deed of leadership and land-rights of this men's house community. The photo was taken on the occasion of a ceremony during which Tosi handed the ring over to Tuarkalus, thus designating him as the future leader of the *matambia* of Funmantui. Kifil, village of Farangot, 24 January 2002



Fig.106 Vincent Lugu (left) and Sylvester Heping (right) with heirlooms heading the group men who carried Paul Munbal's coffin from (and around) the men's house to the grave. Heping, the real brother of Munbal's adopted son Conny Nekor, composed the *am furis* about the mighty shade tree that was sung during the funeral. Tingimbilik, village of Kamgot, 10 March 2002

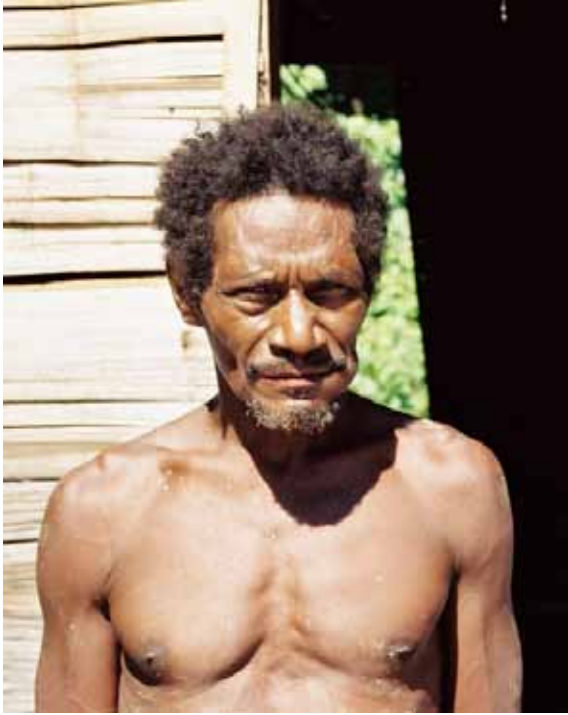


Fig. 107 Augustin Lugu; he is the elder brother of Nesep and the father of Kiapkot (cf. fig. 108). The main men's house of Lugu's *matambia* is located at Telisfat, the hamlet next to Balantembi. Lugu explained that in the past he had made the necessary ceremonial payments so that his son Eddy and his nephew Joe would be able to take over the men's house at Balantembi. The men's house at Telisfat, in turn, had to remain within the lineage. In 2004, when Lugu organized another ritual, this was held at Telisfat and Joe Kios, a classificatory sister's son of Lugu performed in the role that Nesep and Kiapkot had earlier in Balantembi. Telisfat, 18 October 2001

The ceremonial axe Eddy Kiapkot held when he performed on the men's house of Telisfat in the village of Banakin was of the type called *asok mil*. It had been in the possession of the men's house community for several generations and was said to have been used by its original owner to fight and kill. Augustin Lugu (fig. 107), the present leader of the *matambia*, reported that the axe originally had a blade made of clam shell which was replaced by an iron blade only later. The object had originally belonged to Nepaou, a former bigman renowned for his aggressiveness and fighting strength. The name of the axe, 'Tabipilas', referred to the instrument as well as its former owner. *Tabi* is the local term used for a large conch shell⁹ and, although only indirectly, refers to the original blade and the material it was made of. Possibly the component 'tabi' also carries another connotation

because these shells are occasionally also used as containers for certain types of magic lime powder. *Pilas* is a word for something that has been cooked, but not quite long enough, therefore it is not really soft or well done. According to Lugu, the composite name 'Tabipilas' alluded to the characteristics of the club as an effective and strong weapon with "sharp teeth that kill quickly", but also to the ancestor Nepaou, who was anything but squeamish and "never wasted much time reconsidering, but instead went straight to fight."

The three shell rings Henry Siku dug up during the finishing statement of the *am furis* performed at Natong were *amfat mil*. Each of them had an individual name – 'Aneu a Tinaf', 'Ampilak a Sianman' and 'Angkekes ke Main' – linking them each to a prominent ancestral figure of this lineage: to Tinaf, the 'mother' and founder of the group, to

⁹ *Tabi* (or *talbung* in Tok Pisin) is a mollusc of the class Gastropoda, probably *Cassis cornuta* or *Strombus gigas*.

her son Main and to Sianman, the son of Tinaf's younger sister. As heirlooms these three shell rings and the axe 'Tabipilas' are inalienable possessions in the sense that Annette Weiner (1992) described and discussed them. They are objects that belonged to, and were handled by, leaders of the past. They still carry their essence and thus embody these ancestors and their power. As mnemonic props, heirlooms such as these stand for and embody ancestral persons, and through associative chains they represent and encapsulate the events in which they have been used since their making. The heirlooms legitimize the present-day wearer as the rightful successor of these ancestors and of the land they once guarded and were in charge of.



Fig. 108 Arnold Nesep (left), his little son Joe Kepetasik (centre) and Eddy Kiapkot on the ridge beam of the men's house at Balantembi. Village of Banakin, 17 October 2001

The issue of embodiment is of course not restricted to inanimate objects. Most of us associate embodiment first and foremost with human beings and bodily practices. In *am furis* performances, embodiment involves the display, motions and gestures of the adorned bodies of the participants. *Am furis* re-present and communicate meaning. At the same time they present, thereby generating and establishing facts. The person on the roof of the men's house presents himself and is presented as the future leader of the lineage conducting the ritual. He is adorned with heirlooms, formerly even with the skull of his deceased predecessor (cf. Chapter Four). Without these objects he would be lacking the authorizing power of his forbears. Without standing on the roof, a man would not be acknowledged as a customary leader (or possible future leader when young men or boys perform). No words are spoken; rather, it is the physical presence, the performance of the appropriately adorned body of a particular person in a particular place and point in time that transforms this person into a leader (or a potential leader).

The historian Paul Connerton was one of the first to emphasize that the past and our memories thereof are lodged in our hands and bodies. According to him

[m]any forms of habitual skilled remembering illustrate a keeping of the past in mind that, without ever adverting to its historical origin, nevertheless re-enacts the past in our present conduct. In habitual memory the past is, as it were, sedimented in the body. (Connerton 1989: 72)

What is of relevance in *am furis* is the circling of the men's house by the participants and the formation of the members of the choir who, each time a stanza of the song is finished, lift up their hands containing leaves while two other men exchange a series of questions and answers. One of them stands in front of the choir, very often holding up two shell rings from the *tubaibia*. The other stands on the men's house, slowly moving forward along the ridge beam. Although these movements and gestures might appear inconspicuous because they are relatively sparse and restrained, they are characteristic, and thus defining, features of *am furis*. It is through them that the bodies of the participants assume the appropriate poses to go through a prescribed ritual procedure. Each time the participants perform these postures, movements and gestures they not only re-enact a corpus of culture-specific bodily practices established in the past, they also approve of and affirm the contents and meanings that are associated with *am furis*.

The example shows that memories located in, and expressed through, the body depend on being acted out and are therefore intimately connected with performativity. The same holds true for other aspects of *am furis* and for the larger rituals they are embedded in. Commemorative ceremonies were analyzed by Connerton (1989: 41-71) as being crucially important acts of transfer in the social formation of memory. He starts out by explaining that rituals in general give value and meaning to those who perform them and thus permeate non-ritual behaviour. A characteristic feature of all rituals is their formalization and the repetitions they involve. The latter automatically imply continuity with the past, but what distinguishes commemorative ceremonies from other rituals – and at the same time it is their defining feature – is the explicit claim to commemorate this continuity (1989: 44-48).

Connerton stresses that in order to understand why commemorative ceremonies are receptacles of, and vehicles for, social memory and how they function as such, one “must not devalue or ignore the pervasiveness and importance in many cultures of actions which explicitly take place as a *re-enactment* of other actions that are considered prototypical” (1989: 53, emphasis in the original). Consequently, the focus of attention must be on the form of ritual rather than its content or treating it as a symbolic or quasi-textual representation. This line of argument is in fact tantamount to a performative approach to ritual, and Connerton indeed finishes his analysis of commemorative ceremonies with the conclusion that they “prove to be commemorative (only) in so far as they are performative” (Connerton 1989: 71, brackets in the original).

The performatives of commemorative ceremonies lie in the bodily substrate of the ritual actions – they are encoded in sets of postures, gestures and movements as described above – but are also a matter of verbal expression. The commemorative

act takes place through enunciation. Commemorative rituals always contain words that do not describe attitudes that a ceremony presupposes, but actually bring them into existence. Performance theory, more specifically a combination of Austin's speech act theory with the idea of performance as bodily presence and involvement, therefore is a vital ingredient of Connerton's theory of social memory. What Connerton does not examine is the way the referential and the performative dimension of ritual acts blend with each other and how they influence the generation of memories and meanings.

The lineage representative performing on the roof of the men's house, facing the members of the choir, is probably one of most compelling and certainly a focal image of Anir culture. Adorned with heirlooms, and through his bodily presence, he impersonates and re-presents the past, present and future of his men's house community as a stable social unit that is capable of successfully staging the rituals of the commemorative cycle, meeting the obligations of ceremonial exchange, maintaining the network of social relationships and guarding its resources. When one looks at the way images like the lineage representative on top of the men's house operate, it is not enough to approach them simply, or merely, as representational signs. More is involved. This 'more' contributes much to the power of the performance and has to do with the atmosphere. It is created through the physical presence of real people, the way they move and the way they intonate what they say and sing. The 'more' also has to do with the sensual materiality of the space the performers move in – the impressiveness of the new men's house, the smell of 'mumued' pigs, etc. – and of the artefacts they use or are decorated with. Thirdly, this 'more' hinges upon the capacity of the performers, the objects they use and the actions they undertake to evoke emotions, link them to memories and thus to activate knowledge. It is these rather elusive sensual aspects, and the processes they trigger, on which much of the aesthetic force and persuasiveness of the performance rests and that are so important for the performance's capacity to engage the recipients.¹⁰

Although the 'event nature' of performances – the fact that each performance is unique and, strictly speaking, unrepeatable – is often emphasized, a number of performance theorists also have dealt with the questions of iterability and repetition, and with the relation between performance and memory.¹¹ With respect to *am furis*, Marvin Carlson's prize-winning book *The Haunted Stage: The Theatre as Memory Machine* (2003a)

10 See also Wolterstorff (2003) who criticizes continental and analytical philosophies of art for taking contemplative engagement of aesthetic qualities as the intended purpose of memorial art; thus being unable to "handle kissing, touching and crying" and to account for emotional involvement and social practices such as the interaction with works of art.

11 See, for example, Richard Schechner's concept of performance as 'restored behaviour' or 'twice-behaved behaviour' (1985: 36-37), which, if transferred to memory (as selected and performed behaviour), leads to the theatricality/performativity of memory. The latter is the subject of Smith's edited volume *Art and the Performance of Memory* (2002).

is particularly useful.¹² An analysis and comparison of theatrical traditions around the globe and their historical developments leads Carlson to the conclusion that one of the “universals of performance is its ghostliness, its sense of return, the uncanny, but inescapable impression (...) that ‘*we see what we saw before*’” (2003a: 1). In the course of four chapters, titled ‘The Haunted Text’, ‘The Haunted Actor’, ‘The Haunted Production’ and ‘The Haunted House’, he shows that the impression we get to see and hear of what we have seen and heard before is based on the fact that in practically every theatrical production (whether historical, modern or post-modern, East or West) a strikingly large number of elements is being reused. This ‘recycling’ takes place with regard to ephemeral and immaterial as well as physical materials and extends from the narratives and characters presented, to the actors and their bodies, to the places they perform at and to the props they use. Recycling, or “ghosting” as Carlson (2003a: 8) also calls it, presents identical things, although in a somewhat different way and context.¹³ Since recycling in the form of re-presenting stimulates memory, “[e]very play is a memory play” and a “repository of cultural memory” (Carlson 2003a: 2).

The reason why performances are able to take over the role of the caretakers of memory lies in the very nature of dramatic presentation. Carlson points out that it encourages “a simultaneous awareness of something previously experienced and of something being offered in the present that is both the same and different” (2003a: 51). This “doubleness of perception”, which is a basic characteristic of the structure of performance, not only occasions practices of recycling, but also is the base of its close association with processes of personal and cultural memory (2003a: 51). Transferred to *am furis* performances, Carlson’s observations make us aware of how memory is evoked through the reception of songs, actors, artefacts and sounds that the participants have experienced before. Names of ancestors are re-called, songs and heirlooms are re-presented and agents re-appear.

Young men like Norbert Neguam (fig. 91) or Eddy Kiapkot (fig. 108) will perform again on the ridge beam of their *matambia*’s men’s houses if they are able to prove themselves as leaders in the future. The audience will then remember their earlier performances as well as of those of their predecessors whose names will be mentioned in the songs and speech acts. The axe ‘Tabipilas’ and the shell rings ‘Aneu a Tinaf’ and ‘Angkekes ke Main’ will be used again, and songs about mighty shade trees, former places of settlement now overgrown with thorny lianas or the lagoon of Banakin will be heard again. In these moments the audience simultaneously experiences the past and the present. Memories are awakened and emotions triggered. How intimately the

12 See also Rokem 2000.

13 Carlson (2003a: 12) also speaks of “genealogies of performance”.

two are connected one can see when an *am furis* or the appearance of a masked figure causes women to break out in tears as they ‘see’ and intensely remember the deceased (cf. Chapter Eight). This example also underlines that the doubleness of perception, that is, the simultaneous awareness of past and present, which is so important in the process of memory stimulation, is influenced significantly by the interplay between what I call the referential/representative and the performative/presentational dimension of the performance. While the former is closely associated with knowledge and past experiences on the part of the recipient, the latter relates to the sensual and emotional re-experience of something known but in a new constellation and context.

Am furis performances, following Connerton, can be viewed as commemorative ceremonies or, following Carlson, as memory plays. A third possibility, related to both these views, is to look at *am furis* as examples of memorial art. In her recent article “Art and Recollection”, Noël Carroll (2005: 5) argues that memorial art plays a significant role with regard to the reproduction of culture and society. Monuments, paintings, processions, dances or songs, to name just a few of the possible forms, effectively remind their audiences of culturally important persons and events and of the values and beliefs they stand for (2005: 7). Carroll’s main argument is that memorial art fulfils this function particularly well because it merges sense and sentiment and correlates cognition and the transmission of (abstract) information with the engagement of the recipients by way of involving the sensuous:

By simultaneously addressing, often, but not always, pleasurably, the perception, imagination, memory, emotions, and cognition with concrete images – that is, by engaging so many faculties of the whole person at once – it deeply embeds the ethos of a culture (...) art renders the ethos of the culture accessible to its citizens and eminently retrievable for memory insofar it has been encoded across multiple faculties. It makes values perceptible or, in the case of literature, it describes them in powerful, arresting, memorable images. (Carroll 2005: 6)

I quote Carroll’s impressions because they confirm my findings that it is their multi-sensuality, inter-‘textuality’ and intermediality that are the fundamental conditions for associative chains that turn performances such as *am furis* into cognitively and emotionally powerful ‘memory machines’. Furthermore, it is the doubleness of reception that generates a simultaneous process of re-experiencing and remembering something of the past while at the same time perceiving and experiencing it anew – in a fresh context and a novel way – so that it is expressive of the present and meaningful for the future. The doubleness of reception also links theories on memory with theories on creativity because it is an integral ingredient, if not even a prerequisite, of processes of creativity.

Creativity in am furis

In *am furis*, old and new elements are combined into poetic forms of expression that are full of power and meaning. For each commemorative ritual an *am furis* is designed that matches the particular circumstances of the occasion. The creation of an *am furis* – whether it is a completely novel composition or a combination of old and new components – can be compared with playing a game. I use this comparison not because *am furis* are like games in a literal sense, but because mental exercises, particularly with regard to metaphors, are an important feature in the process of creating an *am furis*. The composers of *am furis* work on the basis of an established body of conventions. These do not provide them with a strict code, but with general guidelines. The power of these guidelines lies in their non-specificity, that is, in the fact that they neither dictate what exactly an *am furis* has to contain nor that they claim to be able to anticipate every possible situation. This non-specificity creates room for manoeuvre and improvisation which is necessary for adjusting the *am furis* to the specific conditions that it is performed in and to imaginatively fill in a given frame. Seen from this angle, *am furis* are spheres of creativity. Creativity, in turn, is not a fixed concept but one that has undergone changes and one that has been vividly debated in recent years. In order to assess the ethnographic data it is advisable to review some aspects and definitions of creativity before evaluating how the concept of creativity that emerges from the Anir material relates to them.

Margaret Boden, a psychologist and pioneer in the study of artificial intelligence, is an acknowledged representative of a modern approach to creativity. According to her definition “[c]reativity is the ability to come up with ideas or artefacts that are *new, surprising and valuable*.” She continues that creativity is not a special ability, but a general aspect of human intelligence that is not “confined to a tiny elite: every one of us is creative, to a degree” (2004[1990]: 1; emphasis in the original). Boden’s definition is useful because it reflects ideas about creativity that are widely accepted today. Nevertheless, they have been discussed critically. This criticism pinpoints the words “new” and “valuable” in her definition and the small addition “to a degree”. Here an older, but persistent, idea shines through, namely that creativity is the trait of only a few exceptional and highly inspired individuals.

One of the critics of a narrowly conceived concept of creativity that is linked to the individual genius and the extraordinary mind is the literary scholar Rob Pope who offers one of the most comprehensive accounts of creativity (2005). He considers our present concept a product of the modern West (2005: 19)¹⁴ and explains that the

14 In a similar way Liep (2001: 3-5, 12) has argued that creativity is a “concomitant of modernity.”

overall development ran from religious notions of creation – involving the divine act of creation from nothing and understanding human creative powers as the work of God¹⁵ – to secular notions of creativity. The 18th and 19th centuries saw the birth and rise of the idea of the genius which engendered the close association of creativity with the arts and the view of the artist as an extraordinary, original, inventive and highly inspired individual. Creativity in science and nature began to be discussed at the turn of the 20th century. Later, processes of democratization and social and technological change led to an expansion of the concept. Creativeness is no longer a characteristic of a few isolated, outstanding figures. Today everybody is potentially creative, while creativity itself became generalized to cover numerous spheres and activities, and can be found in all spheres of life – in art as much as in politics, management, technology and recreation, to name but a few (Pope 2005: 3-51).

Critical points in recent discussions about creativity relate to the novelty and extraordinariness of a creation and the question of generality as opposed to individual ingenuity. According to practically all definitions, creativity involves originality and bringing about something new, or at least in a novel way. But while in more conventional definitions newness and novelty carry connotations of something that has not been conceived of before, that is fundamentally new and different from what was thought possible or normal previously, more recent definitions relativize this view. In these approaches creativity is seen as making unfamiliar combinations of familiar things, as generating new associations between existing fields, ideas or concepts and as the capacity to explore and re-combine elements from different domains.¹⁶

The conception of creativity as being exploratory and combinational led to the relaxation of the association of creativeness with ingenuity (the gifted, brilliant individual), but also to a distinction between ‘conventional’ as opposed to ‘true’ creativity. Liep (2001: 12), for example, defines invention in everyday situations and conventional creativity as “the generation of variations in a framework of commonly accepted rules” while ‘true’ creativity for him “involves a major restructuring of the rules and a reorganization of experience.”¹⁷ Views that explicitly or implicitly distinguish between conventional, ordinary or everyday creativity and ‘true’ creativity – thereby also constructing a polarity of novelty, innovation and change versus conventionalism, repetition and tradition – have recently come under criticism.

15 See also Boden 2004[1990]: 11-12, 14.

16 This went hand in hand with psychological and cognitive studies that showed that knowledge, skill and longstanding experience are the basis for what appears to be spontaneous inspiration, intuition or *afflatus* (cf. Boden 2004[1990]: 256-276).

17 Schade-Poulsen 2001: 106 and Boden 2004[1990]: 43-46 make similar distinctions.

Elizabeth Hallam and Tim Ingold in their jointly edited volume *Creativity and Cultural Improvisation* (2007) introduce the notion of improvisational, cultural creativity to offset such oppositions. Fundamental to their concept is the understanding that the world is “crescent rather than created” (Ingold and Hallam 2007: 3) and that culture is constructed: people, as they go along, do not merely reproduce rules, but “continually create themselves and one another, forging their histories and traditions” (2007: 6). Thereby they are forced to improvise. Improvisation is generative and thus, as Bruner (1993: 322) already observed, a cultural imperative. Being generative, improvisation does not depend on judgments of novelty. Moreover, by emphasizing improvisation rather than innovation, creativity is characterized by way of its processes and the movements that give rise to it rather than in terms of its products or results. This implies a concept of creativity that is temporal and relational: temporal in the sense that it does not propose an opposition between a past that has to be overcome and a new present; relational because it does not set the exceptional individual against the collectivity (Ingold and Hallam 2007: 6-12).

I want to end this overview by returning to Pope, who follows a similar, but different path from Ingold and Hallam. Pope also emphasizes that creativity is not about individuals creating ideas or things in splendid isolation, but a matter of co-operation (2005: 65). He goes on to discuss concepts of creativity inherent in non-Western thought and religion that emphasize continuity with the past.¹⁸ As an alternative to a too narrow conception of creativity and against the polarity between novelty and repetition, Pope proposes a concept of “*re ... creation* as an ongoing transformation of past-through-present-to-future and self-through-other-to-otherwise” (2005: 87, cf. 2005: 191-192). The “*re*” stands for “afresh” as well as “again” and denotes repetition with variation and differences rather than the mere imitation or duplication of the known. The suspension introduced by the three dots, “...” indicate an invitation to reflect upon the possible meanings and reciprocal relations of “*re*” and “*creation*”. Important here is the insight that creation/creativity not only encompasses action and change, but also interaction and exchange and thus involves the “configuration of imitation and/or/as performance” (2005: 191). This configuration we already encountered as the interrelationship between the referential and the presentational dimension of performance. Creativity entails the representation, or reflection, of existing, known and remembered ideas, patterns or models and – at the same time – their realization, reconfiguration and experience in a novel way and new light.

The concept of creativity that emerges from Anir *am furis* performances is in

18 For a series of articles on contemporary Asian and African concepts of creativity see also Kaufmann and Sternberg 2006.

line with a revised concept of creativity as cultural improvisation and re-creation. This becomes evident when one recalls the way the songs, speech acts and the performances as a whole are structured. They contain ever-new instantiations, variations and combinations of known elements and images such as the adorned representative on the men's house facing the choir or the presentation of songs and exchanges of questions and answers. In order to be evaluated as efficacious, *am furis* not only allow for, but encourage the contrivance of newly-arranged songs and speech acts, and ways of performing them. In this sense *am furis* not only represent a field – associated with certain styles of thought – that wants to be explored, but one that provides space for visceral and conceptual experiences.

The creation of an *am furis* also is a process that may involve improvisation and innovations, which may reflect the attempt to test or bend the rules and fathom one's strength as a bigman. One such example refers to the participation of women in *am furis*. The only time I saw a group of young women perform was in the context of the commemorative ritual for Alfred Kiapsula organized by Leo Fesris in the hamlet of Matankiang in the village of Natong (fig. 109). Fesris explained that he had adopted this practice from his predecessor Fafen – who had 'invented' it – and that the *matambia* of Matof was the only one that had the right to stage such female performances. Fafen



Fig. 109 Young women belonging to the *matambia* of Matof shortly before performing an *am furis lo fese bo*. In their arms they each hold a leaf packet that they cradled like a baby while they sang their song. The packets contained small *mami* tubers. Leo Fesris, the organizer of this ritual, thereby insinuated his intention of carrying on the cycle up to the final phase of *pok bif*. Matankiang, village of Natong, 20 September 2001



Fig. 110 Rehearsal of the *am furis* that took place when the *andu* and *antamen* taboos that had been established after the death of Agasta Tuaple were lifted (cf. Chapter Two). Beach at Nagos, village of Balankolem, 12 April 2002

himself stated that his reason to integrate women in *am furis* was the fact that they contributed as much as the men to the success of ritual feasting and that he had come to the conclusion that this should be acknowledged. Thus he had decided to ask young women of his lineage to participate. Fafen also indicated that at the time it had not been clear how much criticism he would receive, but that he had succeeded and that the practice now was considered a ‘speciality’ of his *matambia*. The fact that the women may only perform at the *am furis lo fese bo* that takes place when the pigs are distributed, and thus precedes the ‘real’ *am furis* on the final day, shows that innovations can be risky undertakings, but also how carefully Fafen had planned his move.

Designing an *am furis* involves remembering and the activation of acquired and transmitted skills and knowledge as well as analysis, reflection and imaginative exploration. This is a process of active re-generation that also demands sensitivity and responsiveness, not a process of passive retrieval or duplication. As Pope, Ingold and Hallam point out, this process takes place in co-operation with, or in relation to, others. *Am furis* songs are usually composed by individuals. Normally it is the organizer himself but it might also be a young relative of the deceased or a *tena buai* (an initiated composer and choreographer of dances, cf. Chapter Seven) who belongs to the lineage in question, or is closely related to it. In the process of designing the *am furis*, the creator takes into account previous songs and performances by his own and other groups, comparing and critically evaluating them. Seen from this angle, each *am furis* relates to, or even

constitutes an ‘answer’, to the performances of others and may also involve negotiations and/or disputes. This characteristic emerged most clearly in the context of discussions during *am furis parpar* which are addressed to another *matambia*, either for the purpose of challenging its members or of pointing out failures, misbehaviour or the infringement of rights (cf. Chapter Five). The men’s house community that is targeted then might send a reply in the form of another *am furis* when they stage a next ritual in the future.

Am furis also are relational and co-operative in a second sense. In order to select appropriate and fitting metaphors and allusions, the composer might consult others, for example, about the life of the deceased and ceremonial activities and exchanges he/she and his/her group were involved in. More importantly, the speech acts and the figuration and execution of the performance, that is, what is being said in the exchange of questions and answers, who participates in which role, what heirlooms are being used, etc., are discussed intensively in private meetings that the organizer(s) and their close associates hold prior to the rehearsals (fig. 110). These discussions can become highly political, as it is here where the condition of the *matambia* and its social relations are evaluated and where decisions about how the presentation of the group and its history and the demonstration of its claims and rights to resources are made.¹⁹ *Am furis* are means to influence others and to present matters in a way that supports the agenda of the organizers. Creativity in this sense refers to social relationships; kin groups are affected and try to influence others. Creativeness becomes an attribute of collectives that consist of networks of interrelated, dividual (in Marilyn Strathern’s (1988) sense of the term) rather than individual persons who constantly constitute and re-create each other and their life-worlds that, in turn, also shape them.²⁰ Thus, a whole set of *am furis* is really a series of interrelated performances that may be viewed as a concert or conversation that unfolds over time, not only between the composers and organizers and their audience, but also between the different men’s house communities of a larger area.

To sum up the argument, creativity involves repetition but also reflection, and gains its generative power because it takes place as a performance that involves co-operation and represents in novel ways. Creativity understood as an exploratory and combinational process is based on the ability to bridge the gap between two entities that are not logically connected, by way of creating connotations and meaningful relations through associations with the already known, through imagination and what might be described as the playful investigation and reconstruction of rules and/or theories

19 The way performances are assessed and evaluated is addressed in Chapter Seven.

20 See also Leach (2003, 2007) who investigates concepts of the Reite people on the Rai Coast who, with regard to creativity, emphasize social relatedness, multiple ownership, and connectivity with each other, the land, the ancestors and the past. Mpofu et al. (2006) provide an overview and discussion of African concepts of creativity as co-operative and/or collective.

(cf. Boden 2004[1990]: 3-6). This itself is a performative process which is acted out and fostered in cultural performances such as *am furis*. Carlson's proposition about the doubleness of reception is also of relevance here because it contains the notion of simultaneous awareness. In Carlson's context it relates to the re-experience of the past in the present as something new that is both the same and different. Applied in an extended sense, it more generally refers to processes that involve the perception, experience and awareness of multiple elements of a single entity as separate, but synchronous and belonging together, or, of different, unrelated entities as connected aspects of a single entity.

Am furis performances, as multimedia events that contain numerous elements that overlap and corroborate each other, are particularly suitable to stimulate creative processes: they involve all the senses and thus stimulate combination. Moreover, they engage the participants in all respects and powerfully interlink the verbal and the non-verbal levels of the performance. In this process metaphors play a crucial role. They prove to be "similarity-difference machines" (Pope 2005: 191) that transform and translate one experience into another. They talk of or show things in terms of one another, and their implementation involves acts of world-creation. Because of their multi-layeredness and ambiguity, metaphors invoke potential connections and offer new constellations or perspectives. They not only constitute one of the most important spheres of creativity, but also powerful and readily available tools for alternative visions, the negotiation of social relationships and the contestation of power relations. On Anir, the *am furis* performances, with their abundance of metaphoric actions and expressions, are one of the most important fields in which cultural values are remembered, transmitted, expressed and confirmed, but also negotiated, adapted and given new meanings. *Am furis* provide conceptual frameworks for the reproduction and continuation of structural principles, while at the same time they act as media of transformation and change, thus ensuring the durability of the ritual system.

Significance, meaning and value

I end this chapter with some relativizing comments on the significance and possible meanings of Anir rituals. Throughout my accounts of *am furis* I emphasized their ambiguous, at times cryptic, and metaphorical nature. I also pointed out that the performances are composed in ways that facilitate their overall interpretation. This, however, does not mean that everyone present has the same understanding of what is going on. Women, for example, often were portrayed, and also described themselves, as not knowing much about the deeper meanings of *am furis*. Almost without exception the women whom I tried to interview about various aspects of an *am furis* told me to preferably go and see the bigmen. They themselves did not know enough because the *am furis* were 'men's business'. And whenever I recorded a statement claiming that women were not banned from gaining insight into *am furis*, or that there were ways through which they could influence the course of an *am furis*, it was made by a senior man.

Women are very aware of how rituals are conducted and of their own role in them. But they are not encouraged to become engaged in the exegetic interpretations of the symbolism involved in *am furis* performances. This has mainly to do with the fact that *am furis* are planned and discussed during meetings in the men's house to which women have no access. Besides, women do not actively participate in *am furis*. They are merely part of the audience, and as witnesses of the event they serve as a legitimizing body. But they observe and memorize, and in the course of planning future rituals they might be consulted about formerly held ceremonies and exchanges and asked for their view on certain social relationships and other issues that might influence the way an *am furis* is composed. This, however, happens behind the scenes, privately rather than in the public sphere.

In contrast to women, young men are asked to take part in *am furis*. They are not forbidden to join the meetings in which the wordings and actions of the performance are discussed and where the events of the ritual cycle are planned in detail. Young men, sometimes even boys, are actively incorporated into the ritual system, thus gaining insight into its working mechanism already at an early age. They quickly become aware of the symbolism inherent in the system and are therefore more likely to become interested in, or even enthusiastic about, searching for meaning and making sense of metaphors or symbolism in songs, speech acts, actions and ritual practice in general. A considerable number of the men I worked with, repeatedly, and also quite proudly, pointed out how intricate the ritual system actually is. In these conversations it became obvious that many of them placed great value on ambiguity and multi-layeredness. When planning the cycle of rituals they enjoy the idea of making others wonder about the meaning of actions or

phrases, as much as they relish deciphering and speculating about the words and actions of others when witnessing a ceremony.

What Lewis (1980) noted about the Gnau (cf. Chapter Two), also holds true for Anir: by no means do all the members of a men's house community show a predilection for ceremonial activities and the meanings they might involve (particularly not in a time when one can also become involved in modern politics or business). In the end we are left with only a rather small group of experts who are considered by the wider community as specialists in the field of *kastam*, who possess profound knowledge thereof and are able to grasp the more deeply embedded meaning of rituals and the *am furis* that are performed in their context. The remainder of all those present during a ceremonial event, either as performers or spectators, are people whose understanding of the symbolic aspects might lie anywhere on a continuum that stretches from lack of interest and concern to considerable knowledge and insight. Nonetheless, virtually all the men and women who attend a ceremonial event do have some practical experience in the sphere of ritual because, from childhood on, they actively attended many such ceremonies. To call them un-knowledgeable or ignorant with respect to the ritual system would be to miss the point.

Rather, their knowledge is of a different quality. It is practical and embodied and geared to other aspects. What these participants focus on, experience and apprehend when they take part in a ritual is different from what a senior elder concentrates on and perceives. What is meaningful for the 'average' observer is the social set-up of the ritual, that is, who participates in what role and what this has to say about the present state of social relationships and mutual obligations. People will also evaluate the event with regard to its overall correctness and success. Did the hosts follow the established procedures and structure? Was the ceremony splendid and outstanding (in terms of resources invested)? Did many people come? Did the important, or 'right', people come? Did the event convincingly show the ability of the hosts to organize such a ritual and did it demonstrate their strength as a unified kin group? Last but not least – and although Anirinas generally stress that rituals are 'very hard work' – they associate them with solidarity and unity. In the early stages of the ceremonial cycle this is linked to communal grief and mourning. In the last stage it is associated with joy and delight – the inauguration of a new men's house, colourful dances, an abundance of food and the gathering of large crowds. In this sense, rituals also provide the forum for the communal experience and expression of emotions.

The final point I wish to make in this context relates to the fact that the significance an individual attributes to a ceremonial event, and how it acquires meaning

for this person, is linked to his or her position and role in society, and to the implication this has with respect to expectations from others as well as in terms of self-perception and the development of personal interests and ambitions. *Am furis* are complex entities and, accordingly, they are difficult to decipher. Significantly, during the performance the chorus and the speech acts are often rendered in such low key that it is hard for the audience, particularly for those not sitting or standing close by, to understand what exactly is being sung or said. If the *am furis* songs were thought to be entirely unintelligible to those who do not have 'inside knowledge' there would be no reason to proceed in this manner. But *am furis* are revelations, although partial and somewhat cryptic. The various aspects of the performance – the wordings of the songs and the speech acts, the decorations and items used, the patterns of behaviour and particular actions involved – inform each other. In the verbal elements of the *am furis* performance and in the actions they are embedded in, images are created that are open to various ways of interpretation. The experience of these images itself is performative, and the awareness of their polyvalence can be as important as an understanding of a particular aspect they refer to. The more aspects an observer can perceive and assess, the larger the likelihood that he (or she) will comprehend the details, nuances and scope of the symbolic, or 'inside', meanings conveyed. For others it is the experience of feasting, the ceremony's sensuality, the emotions connected with it and the expression and acknowledgement of social relations that stand in the foreground and render the ritual meaningful.

The efficacy and value Anirians attribute to *am furis* are, on the one hand, linked to their association with honouring the dead and with the history and land rights of men's house communities. On the other hand, they rest on their ambiguity and the fact that profound understanding requires knowledge and experience. Access to symbolic understanding is protected in various ways: by applying ancient and esoteric terms, by using metaphoric language and actions and by singing in a low voice, but also by hindering certain groups (particularly women) from actively participating and by discouraging them from developing an interest in the first place. For these people – and they represent the majority of Anir islanders – the value and meaning of *am furis* lie in their performativity, that is in the fact that they are performed as such and in that they enact, express and reinforce the relations which form the Anir social cosmos.

PART IV

THE ART OF DANCE

CHAPTER 7

‘ENTERTAINING’ AND OTHER ‘JOYFUL’ PERFORMANCES

Dancing and singing are not fostered on any island in the [Bismarck] archipelago as much as by the people of New Ireland ... [and] nowhere else in the archipelago do we find such a variety of dances with such varied figures.

Richard Parkinson 1999 [1907]: 124

Am furis are not the only performances that Anir islanders stage. The completion of a mortuary cycle – carrying out the final phase, *pok bif*, and the climactic feast, *alal fafasu* – is a labour-intensive and demanding process, but in the eyes of Anirians also a joyous and happy affair. This was reflected in many comments made by my Anir companions, and very clearly found expression in the presentation of numerous elaborate dances. They are called *singsing* in Tok Pisin or *guigui*¹ in the local idiom. The hosts or their guests carefully prepare them in the weeks leading up to *alal fafasu* in order to turn the feast into a unique and splendid event.

It is on the last day that the majority of the dances are presented.² In the morning, the feast hamlet is unusually quiet because everyone is tired from the hard work of the previous days and nightly dancing. As the sun climbs higher, the air is saturated with the smell of ‘mumued’ tubers and pig, and the people start to assemble. Soon the compound is packed: growing groups of visitors sit together and chat, laughter arises, children play or chase each other around. Then it is time to open the earth ovens – basket after basket of food is brought to the men’s house, the contents are carefully arranged on a huge leaf bed on which, finally, the cooked pigs are piled. The atmosphere is relaxed, but also dense with expectation. The feast giver and most of his close associates and important guests have now gathered in or in front of the men’s house. Some, however, are missing; everyone knows that they are nearby in the bush, preparing for a dance.

1 *Guigui* can be used as a noun or a verb, thus it means ‘dance’ as well as ‘to dance’.

2 In the run-up night, dances such as the competitive *teko* described in Chapter Three take place. The appearance of men wearing barkcloth masks called *tedak* in the run-up to the final feast has now become rare; for more information on these mask performances see Denner 2006a and Appendix VIII.



Fig. 111 Ceremonial entry of a performance group into a feast hamlet; two ritual leaders march in front of the musicians while the creator of the piece (a *limbung* dance) heads the dancers. Silalangit, village of Balngit, 2 November 2001

Eventually singing and drumming can be heard: led by two or three men about a dozen musicians followed by flamboyantly dressed dancers solemnly approach the ceremonial ground (fig. 101). Their number and guise depends on the piece they are about to present; the ornaments and decorations may include face or body paint, delicately worked feathered headdresses, intricately carved and painted dance boards, dyed fibre skirts or large ruffs made of multicoloured leaves and a combination of garlands, necklaces, breast or waist bands and other items made of fragrant leaves. For some performances the dancers also wear large masks with costumes that cover the whole body.

Once the group has reached the centre of the square – the performers now face the men's house and the feast organizer standing in front of it – the music stops. The host steps out and lifts the spear he is carrying. With a jump he shakes it and shouts a few short sentences. This is called *butbut*, the ceremonial greeting of the dance troupe and its leader. The musicians take a seat, and the dancers position themselves. At a sign from their instructor, the singing and drumming resumes, and the dance proper begins. During the next 15 to 20 minutes the audience enjoys a multi-piece performance that includes several songs while the music changes in tone, rhythm and bar, and the dancers present a carefully rehearsed choreography (fig. 102). It ends in a crescendo, after which the performers return to the bush as solemnly as they came. It does not take long until the next party arrives. At a large feast a dozen or more groups might perform and it may take hours until they have all presented their piece. Sometimes several groups dance at the same time – competing for the audience's attention – and sometimes the performances are interrupted to perform the *am furis* and distribute the feast meal; then the dances might continue into the night.

Dances are an eye-catching and integral part of ritual feasting at the end of the mortuary cycle, therefore the last part of this thesis is devoted to them. As Parkinson (cf. quote above) observed more than a hundred years ago, dances are a greatly cherished and very varied art tradition. Moreover, they also are an extremely vivid form of aesthetic expression constantly being creatively explored. Anirians say that they stage the performances in honour and commemoration of the dead, and that the dances are expressive of the joy and gratification that the deceased are now being ‘finished’, that the obligations towards them are being fulfilled and that mourning is finally over. Quite obviously, the performances are meaningful actions, carried out to achieve something and to create certain effects.

The aim of the following two chapters is to trace the significance that dances and dancing have for the participants (the active as well as the passive ones) and for the ritual system as such. What do the performances mean to Anirians? Or, more precisely, how do they acquire meaning for them? What motivates people to create and present dances? What are the goals they have in mind? And what are the indirect, unconscious or unintended effects of their actions? How are dances integrated into the larger ritual system, and what do they ‘do’ for it?

In order to pursue these questions, it is first necessary to provide some basic information about the classification of dances, their general characteristics and individual traits. If one assumes that performances acquire meaning and exert agency, one certainly

Fig. 112 Most New Ireland *singsing* are line dances: the dancers are lined up behind each other in three or four ‘vertical’ columns. Seen from a side angle, the formation consists of several ‘horizontal’ lines. Men from Babase Island performing an *utun* dance in the village of Natong on Ambitlei, 6 December 2001



also needs to consider practice and the way people deal with dances. The performances are either commissioned or presented by the feast organizers, and most of them are held in the name of persons who, in the course of the event, receive pigs. Since a splendid feast is thought to enhance the prestige of the host, every dance augments his reputation. At the same time, the performances constitute a platform for the participating groups, and especially their leaders, to compete with each other for prestige. What is involved here is a process of value transformation: the successful presentation of a performance leads to an increase of the reputation, authority and influence of those involved and responsible for it.

Of course this is not the only way that dance performances develop effectiveness and become meaningful. Dance is a medium through which worldviews, cultural ideas, social values, concepts of the person, gender and identity are expressed, but also generated, negotiated and contested. They may act as instruments of stability and continuity, or of innovation and change. In order to assess the various possible functions and meanings dance performances acquire on Anir, I will analyze several further aspects of dances and dancing: the form and content of performances and the themes of the songs that accompany them, the preparation of the dances and, finally, the way they are staged, perceived and experienced. The significance of the performances hinges on their value and efficacy, and the latter is closely associated with the power they are said to possess. This power finds expression in the excellence and quality of performance; thus evaluation and aesthetic criteria applied also play an important role.

Although the analysis of dance – or, to use a more generalizing term, “structured movement systems” (Kaepler 1985, 2000: 117) – was identified quite early on as a valuable way to understand culture and society,³ dance only became a focus of anthropological inquiry in the 1970s and particularly the 1980s. In the course of time different methodological and theoretical approaches were developed: dances have been assessed within functionalist, structuralist, semiotic, ethnoscientific and psychobiological frameworks and have been treated as systems of knowledge, cognition and communication.⁴ Susan Foster in 1992 summarized that – depending on the background and approach taken – dance

3 Radcliffe-Brown (1922), Malinowski (1922), Evans-Pritchard (1928), Mead (1928) and Boas (1944) all addressed dances in their writings; see Williams 2004[1991] for an overview of early anthropological approaches to dance.

4 Over the years, several synopses of the developments in the anthropology of dance and dance ethnology have been published, for example by Kaepler (1978, 1991, 2000), Spencer (1985b), Giurchescu and Torp (1991), Grau (1993), Reed (1998) and Royce (2004: 1-18). Until the 1980s, apart from problems of definition, the emic/etic division and the question whether (or to what degree) dance is a ‘universal language’ were important issues.

recreates (Sachs 1937[1933]), expresses (Boas 1972[1944]), heightens and subdues (Kurath 1960), reflects (Keali'inohomoku 1974), interprets as well as creates (Kaeppler 1972), symbolizes (Snyder 1974), renders meaningful (Schieffelin 1976), encodes (Hanna 1979), and communicates (Sweet 1985) key values of the culture in which it occurs. (S. Foster 1992: 362)

Despite undeniable differences between the works of the scholars that S. Foster references, what unites studies published after 1970 is their favourable assessment of a structural framework in which dance is perceived as a site of the symbolic representation of an underlying system of cultural meaning and, accordingly, is analyzed as a language-like system. However, the studies also inferred that dances do not work quite like language because they involve the polysemy of several combined sign systems, allow for a multiplicity of interpretations and thus render cultural production negotiable. Studies in the 1980s and 1990s thus turned more to the agentive nature of dance and placed increasing emphasis on performativity, that is, its presentational and constitutive character. They drew from phenomenology and semiology (in the tradition of Peirce) as well as from postcolonial, poststructural and feminist theories.

In a review of this period Susan Reed identified the most significant developments in two fields: firstly, in the politics of dance, where dance is seen as the “expression and practice of relations of power and protest, resistance and complicity” (1998: 505); and secondly, in the relation between movement, culture, the body and embodiment, where the experience of the participants is foregrounded with the aim to transcend the legacies of the Cartesian mind/body dualism. The fact that the two fields cannot always be neatly separated, in fact overlap, is illustrated by an observation made by the ethnomusicologist John Blacking whom Reed (1998: 521) also quotes. He argued that

ideas and feelings can be expressed collectively through dance and music before they are articulated in speech ... ritual may be enacted in the service of conservative and even oppressive institutions ...; but the experience of performing the nonverbal movements and sounds may ultimately liberate the actors ... Performances of dance and music frequently reflect and reinforce existing ideas and institutions, but they can also stimulate the imagination and help to bring coherence to the sensuous life. (Blacking 1985: 65)

This clearly emphasizes the capacity of dance to simultaneously be traditional *and* creative/innovative, representational *and* presentational, expressive *and* constitutional, reproductive *and* productive; dance, just like ritual, may reflect as well as resist cultural values. To play off one interpretation against the other thus cannot be the issue of

an analysis. Rather, it makes more sense to examine the aesthetic experiences⁵ of the performers and the spectators in order to understand when and where symbolization is at play, and when and where (new) meaning is generated. How does each of these processes work in practice, and to what effect? And how do representational and constitutive processes relate to each other?



Fig. 113 Performance of an action song at a school celebration; most action songs are Christian in content which the dancers attempt to underline or symbolize with appropriate gestures. School celebration at Verambif, Natong village, 6 December 2001

In the following two chapters I describe and analyze performances that are deemed appropriate for the ritual context of commemorative feasting. Sometimes these performances are referred to as singsing tumbuna, that is, ‘ancestral dances’, or as kastam dances, that is ‘customary’, ‘traditional’ performances. They may also be staged in the context of school, church and Independence Day celebrations, and at cultural days and festivals. Depending on the context at hand, they may be altered to suit the given situation. In the case of church celebrations, for example, the songs’ lyrics and the style and design of the ornaments or masks are usually changed, while the choreography remains the same. Such ‘non-traditional’ events often also give rise to the presentation of new forms, for instance imported dances, so-called action songs or string band performances (figs. 113, 114) which, however, are not treated here.⁶

The TokPis term singsing, used for dances throughout Papua New Guinea, denotes masked as well as unmasked performances, and, as the term implies, the presentation of songs by the performers and/or the accompanying musicians (who use various percussion instruments) forms an integral part.⁷ Anirians furthermore distinguish between two broad types of singsing. One is primarily associated with joy and entertainment and participation is open to everyone (singsing amamas); the other is linked to knowledge about, and the

5 Aesthetic experience understood as an epistemological process, in which sensual perception leads or may lead to recognitional insights and knowledge is outlined in Chapter Two.

6 See Boyd 1985, Otto and Verloop 1996, Daniel 1996, Feldman 2002, Hermkens 2007 for studies that examine performances staged in the context of cultural shows, festivals and church celebrations and analyze their significance with regard to aspects such as cultural change, identity formation as well as authenticity and commercialization.

7 There are exceptions to this general rule; two silent performances known on Anir are *labar* and *malira*.



Fig. 114 String band performance during the Feast of the Assumption of Mary (note the dancer's headaddresses). Matamfadon Catholic Church, 15 August 2004

(re-)presentation of, various non-human beings or spiritual powers, and restricted to initiated men (singsing nogut or singsing i gat paua). Almost all of the masked performances belong to the latter category, while the vast majority of unmasked dances belong to former. The distinction between 'entertaining' and 'powerful' performances on Anir was so salient that it provides the

basis for the structure of Part IV. I address the unmasked dances in this chapter, and the masked performances in Chapter Eight. However, the boundary between the two types is fluid, therefore the next section is devoted to a more detailed explanation of this broad classification. This is followed by an overview of customary entertaining dances known and practised by Anirians; first by looking at their general features and then at some selected examples. The main elements that constitute a dance – the choreography, song and music, and the ornaments used – are, of course, discussed, but an in-depth analysis of the musical structures or of movements and formations by way of notation are beyond the scope of this thesis.

The great variability of dances leads on to the practice of dance, namely to the issue of ownership rights and the question of how dances are transferred. After that I address the preparation and staging of dances, followed by a section on the participants' aesthetic experiences. As will become clear, the leaders of the dance groups, men referred to as *tena buai*, play a vital role – not only because they instruct the performers, but also because they act as composers and choreographers, and through their knowledge about magic ensure the success of the performance. These men are initiated into *buai*, male societies within which music, dance and the accompanying visual arts are created. These societies add to a deeper understanding of how dances work and function, how Anir people interpret dances and what they mean to them. *Buai* is the topic of the last part of this chapter and builds the bridge to the 'powerful' performances addressed in Chapter Eight. The latter ends with a comparison of entertaining and powerful performances with regard to the aesthetic experience on the part of the participants and in terms of the agency and significance of dances for Anirians as well as the ritual system as such.

The classification of dances

Some of the more than 40 different dances I documented between 2001 and 2004 were performed by mask wearers, some involved the presentation of paraphernalia and the demonstration of special types of power, and the majority were staged by large groups of people who were adorned with intricate headdresses, handheld staffs and ornaments made from multicoloured or scented leaves and fibres. While some of these dances were restricted to men, others were a prerogative of women; several were performed separately by both men and women, and a few by mixed groups. Most performances took place during the day, a smaller number were night dances.

To group customary dances into different categories according to form, content, time of performance and/or the gender of those presenting them is certainly possible, but whether such a classification makes sense is a different matter. Anirians themselves do not categorize dances along these lines, and the local language has no generic terms for such groups or genres of the dances. This of course does not mean that the people do not make distinctions. Each dance is individually named and identified by features that typify it. As mentioned above, there is a classificatory distinction which not only seemed conspicuous to me while I was in the field, but also proved fundamental to Anirians, although they ‘only’ used two Tok Pisin terms – singsing amamas and singsing nogut – to refer to them. Here I want to follow up what these expressions signify and what the classification involves.

Amamas is a noun of Malay origin that denotes joy, gladness, delight or honour,⁸ and singsing amamas are performances that are associated with these emotional states. They are said to be performed ‘for fun’ in order to entertain and make the performers and their audience happy. These dances are meant to be bright, colourful and delightful. In contrast, singsing nogut were described as serious, inherently dark (although they may not be so visually) and dangerous. The Tok Pisin term nogut, literally ‘not good’ in the sense of ‘bad’, may be used to describe the physical state of an object or artefact that is in a bad state or broken, or to designate locations in the physical world that are unsuitable for humans. Moreover, nogut is used to portray and characterize humans, animals and other beings: someone wicked or evil and – by extension – dangerous and unpredictable may be called nogut.⁹ Thus, a singsing nogut is not a performance that has been carried out badly or that is aesthetically unpleasing. Rather, the term is used for public performances that are associated with spirits which are believed to be powerful, but also dangerous because they are often following their own agenda and are likely to

8 Cf. Mihalic 1971: 59 or <http://www.mihalicdictionary.org/Index.htm>.

9 Cf. Mihalic 1971: 142 or <http://www.mihalicdictionary.org/Index.htm>.

cause harm if not treated correctly. The performances all are presented by restricted groups of men who, in the course of an initiation, have gained access to, and knowledge of, the masks and paraphernalia used, and the spirits and powers involved.

The distinction Anirians made between singsing amamas, which they sometimes also called ‘normal dances’ (using the English expression), and singsing nogut – powerful, but dangerous – is equivalent to a differentiation between open, ‘harmless’ and more profane performances, on the one hand, and public events that are staged by secret societies, on the other. The latter are not only associated with spiritual powers and numinous agency, but also with restricted access to knowledge and closely guarded ownership rights.

The classification between these two broad types is not restricted to Anir. The findings of Philip Lamasisi Yayii, a New Irelander from the Kara area, indicate that it is also common in the northern part of the province. In an article on dances staged in the context of *malagan* mortuary rituals, Yayii (1983) only mentions names of different performances, but no generic terms. More importantly, he points out that although all dances should be entertaining, divisions can be made on the grounds that some dances are “serious, particular in the preparation objectives while learning, and others not.” The latter are “regarded as open and public by members of the community” (Yayii 1983: 37). Thus, among the Kara a similar distinction between serious, restricted performances – which, as Yayii shows later in his article, are closely associated with powerful spiritual entities – and open, primarily entertaining dances is made.¹⁰

Although this confirms the significance of the differentiation between singsing amamas and singsing nogut, it is also important to note that the assignment to ‘joyful and entertaining’ versus ‘serious and powerful’ is somewhat problematic: to say that singsing nogut have nothing to do with entertainment or that singsing amamas do not involve aspects of power is wrong. As Yayii points out, among the Kara all dances are granted entertaining qualities, and this also holds true for Anir and its ‘powerful’ performances. The seriousness and potential power of ‘joyful’ dances, on the other hand, becomes evident in terms of the care and amount of time spent on rehearsals to ensure that the performers gain excellence, and to the large number of magical practices involved. The proficiency of the dancers and the radiance of their performance are interpreted as a sign of the performers’ and their leader’s powers. These aspects will be explored in more detail towards the end of this chapter.

10 Cf. also Gunn 2006: 25-26.



Fig. 115 *Mulmul* formation during which the dancers of the last horizontal line dance to the front past the other dancers on the side and take up position in front of the first line. Natong village, 6 December 2001



Fig. 116 Hand and arm movements are deemed very important; accordingly they are more varied than the leg movements. *Limbung* dance, Bulam village, 4 December 2001

General formal characteristics of entertaining dances

Even though Anir is an island group with a small population, there were surprisingly many occasions – commemorative rituals as well as school and church celebrations – during which I had the opportunity to observe, document (and participate in) dances. And despite repeated comments by my Anir friends that their celebrations were less magnificent compared to those of their neighbours with access to more manpower and resources, the number and variability of the performances presented was astonishing. During four commemorative ritual feasts, three school and two church celebrations no less than 65 dances were presented, 57 of which were *kastam* dances; they impressively underlined how significant these performances are in the contemporary sphere.

The majority were *singsing amamas* and presented as line dances (fig. 112)¹¹ by approximately 20 male or female dancers together with a musical ensemble of men who beat the rhythm with hourglass drums or small bamboo slit gongs and who join the dancers in singing the accompanying song. The performance starts with *walan*, the entry of the performers from the bush on to the hamlet square (fig. 111). *Walan* are a discrete category, or sub-genre, insofar as this part of the performance is associated with

¹¹ The exceptions are *bot*, a circular night dance performed around a slit gong; *teko*, a dance performed by single dancers holding a plaited shield (cf. Chapter Three) and *tambaran*, a dance that only involves four to six performers (see below).



Fig. 117 Dancers during *paski*, performing a change of direction in the course of the dance, Warantaban village. 22 November 2001



Fig. 118 A group of men and women at the end of an *am baba* night dance dissolve their formation of five vertical columns to form two horizontal lines in front of the musicians in a formation called *sengi*. Bulam village, 27 December 2001

a walking pace and with specific tunes and rhythms, and because it features songs that often are independent of those that go with the dance proper. According to Toilik, the brother of a well-known composer, *walau* is the part of a dance where sorrow about the death of a person is expressed. This ties in with Bell's remark (1977: 56, 119) that *walau* are related to choral songs (*mai-e*) sung at funeral rites.

Once the *walau* is finished, the musicians take a seat, and after a short break the dance proper starts. Each consists of several parts, usually three, which are called *seksek kale*, *iri e u* and *iri e tul*.¹² They can be subdivided into separate, distinguishable sequences, formations and movements. While some of the latter are characteristic of only certain dances, or parts thereof, others are repeated and occur in practically all dances; a few examples of characteristic movements and formations are listed below in table 7 and illustrated in figs. 115 to 118.

Table 7 Typical dance movements and formations

<i>mar</i>	accentuated hand and arm movements (fig. 116); they are a characteristic feature of all Anir dances, and of New Ireland, Duke of York and Tolai dance performances in general; their importance is also expressed by the fact that there is not a single dance in which the dancers do not hold dance boards, feathered sticks, leaf bundles or some other item; these hand-held ornaments generically are also called <i>mar</i>
<i>keptin mar</i> (or <i>pakte mar</i>)	a highly energetic choreographic and musical feature: before the song is repeated, the drum beats pick up pace, with the dancers' hands keeping in step; then suddenly everything stops, and after only a short break the drums, singing and dancing start again with much vigour; <i>keptin mar</i> is characteristic of <i>seksek kale</i> , the first part of a dance
<i>mulmul</i> (or <i>polpol</i>)	the dancers of the last horizontal line dance to the front alongside the other dancers and take up position in front of the first line. This is repeated until the original formation is reached again (fig. 115)
<i>filau kale</i>	the dancers of the first horizontal line dance to the back while the dancers of the last horizontal line dance to the front; this formation only occurs in the <i>irion</i> , the second and third parts of a dance
<i>paski</i>	a change of direction: the dancers first face the musicians, then they turn to face each other. If the total formation consists of four vertical columns (a, b, c, d), the dancers in line a and b and those of line c and d will turn to face each other; after dancing like this for a short while, the whole group returns to the original formation (fig. 117); <i>paski</i> is typical of dances like <i>liu</i> , <i>pinpindik</i> , <i>am baba</i> and <i>matanman</i> , but does not occur in other dances such as <i>paparip</i> and <i>limbung</i>
<i>kuar</i>	hand (and acoustic) signals common in men's (but usually not women's) dances to start or finish a formation or section
<i>sengi</i>	the dancers dissolve their formation of three to five vertical columns to form one or two horizontal lines in front of the musicians (fig. 118); this is a typical way to end a performance

12 *Iri* (or *irion*) is the short form of *un iring ning gui* (literally 'a part of a dance/singsing'); *e u* and *e tul* mean 'second' and 'third'. Occasionally, a dance is shortened and then only features one *iri(ou)*, or it is extended and then consists of three *iri(ou)*.



Fig. 119 *Am pimpit* images often contain references to other types of dance or performances held recently. The *utun* dance shown here was staged several weeks after the performance of the two *sangsangmat* masks shown in fig. 120. The dancers (during a *paski* formation) imitated a characteristic movement of the *sangsangmat* dancers. Nanlel, village of Galisu, 20 November 2001

In order to enhance the entertaining qualities of a *singsing amamas* and make it more dashing, a choreographer may apply more than one style of dancing (*mamaus*). Another common way to make a performance more interesting is the integration of so-called *am pimpit*. These formations were always explained as being ‘images’ or ‘pictures’ inside a dance. Some *am pimpit* are quite straightforward and recognized easily by the audience because they imitate well-known actions or patterns of behaviour. Others are more abstract referring, for example, to other performances, and therefore are less readily understood (figs. 119, 120).

A women’s *limbung* dance under the leadership of Paul Nepuar (figs. 116, 142), for instance, contained five *am pimpit*: ladling water, paddling a canoe, cutting the skin for blood-letting, combing one’s hair while holding a mirror and dancing a waltz. In other dances *am pimpit* included the imitation of the movements of birds and snakes, the performance of everyday tasks such as carrying something (baskets of food from the garden, etc.), catching fish or going hunting, smoking a pipe or European cigarettes, and drinking alcohol. Much laughter was roused by an *am pimpit* that pictured a man chasing a woman and loosening her loin cloth. Imitating and making fun of typically Western behaviour in *am pimpit* is quite popular. This is interesting insofar as equivalent references do not occur in the song texts. The relationship between the songs and the *am*

pimpit accompanying them appears to be rather loose. While they sometimes go together well, often there is no, or at least not an obvious, connection between them. The choreography – coherence, smooth flow and visual as well as associative effects – is clearly given priority over attempts to illustrate the wording of the song.

The songs that accompany the various parts of the dance all consist of comparatively short verses that are repeated several times. They either belong together and tell a single, continuous story, or are independent of each other. In the latter case, each song contains a discrete, short story. Both possibilities are considered equally good and desirable, but in case three independent songs are joined, they should fit each other. The themes of the songs will be addressed later on; here I wish to continue with differences in style between male and female dancers.

It is generally accepted that dances are gendered, that is, that gender differentiation is reflected in the style and form of movements used by men and women respectively. Commenting on the dances he had watched in northern New Ireland, Alfred Bühler (1933: 258) noted that men's dances "almost without exception are full of fast movements and almost wild" while women's performances were characterized by "a measured and indeed solemn tempo".¹³ Similarly Parkinson (1999[1907]: 126) observed that female dancers

endeavour to give expression to the daintiness and grace of the female body through strongly measured movements. The series of dancers, arranged in pairs, strike up a song in the highest soprano register. Their bodies are tastefully decorated (...). Graceful and often very complicated movements are performed with hands and feet (...) The slender brown figures (...) turn very gracefully in slow movements, take small steps forwards or backwards, treading as carefully and lightly as though they were treading on eggs, bend their hips, raise and lower their hands and arms,



Fig. 120 *Sangsangmat* mask performance at Silalangit. Balngit village, 2 November 2001

13 Original quote in German; translation by the author.



Fig. 121 A group of school boys presenting *solomon*, a dance that originally comes from northern New Ireland. Cultural Day, Babase Community School, 4 December 2001



Fig. 122 Men from Banakin during an *utun* performance. Feni, Warantaban village, 22 November 2001

and now and then cast their gaze on the spectators as if asking: see how attractive I am? All obscenity is strenuously avoided.

On Anir the differences between male and female dancing with respect to tempo do not seem to be as strong as Bühler and Parkinson observed, but here, too, women's dances are more gentle, circumspect and constrained, while men's dances are forceful and vigorous. This has mainly to do with the leg movements: women's dances consist of steps in which one foot always touches the ground while the other is only lifted slightly, with the legs always kept together. In contrast, men's dances often contain leaps and vigorous movements that require the performers to raise their feet higher or to dance with their legs spread (figs. 121, 122). Although there is no room here for a detailed, notational description of male and female dance movements and an analysis of the values attached to them, I might add that they correlate with movements deemed appropriate for each gender in everyday situations. This indicates that the differing dance styles reflect concepts about appropriate ways of behaviour for men and women respectively and that dance is one of the realms where gender conceptualizations become embodied.¹⁴

¹⁴ See A. and M. Strathern 1971, Hanna 1988, H. Thomas 1993 and Hermkens 2007 for analyses of gender issues in dance.

Individual features and variability

Every public performance (including those staged by secret societies) is individually named and represents what I would call a canonical type. By this I mean that each dance consists of a combination of certain elements such as the song, the music, the choreography and particular ornaments, but with the elements varying with every instantiation. Old songs, for example, are remembered and transmitted, at the same time new ones are constantly being created. The same is true of the accompanying music, the choreography and the ornaments worn. In order to give an impression of typical characteristics and the range of variation of some of the dances, I concentrate on visual appearance in the following description. Of course, the same could be done for the musical structures and/or movements. I then discuss the issue of ownership rights (because they are closely linked to variability), before addressing the songs.

Several dances feature ornaments that are peculiar to them only. Large ruffs, *ambiar*, for example, are indispensable attributes of men presenting a *limbung* dance (figs. 123, 124, see also figs. 140, 143). Wooden, fret-worked and multi-coloured dance-boards called *mar popok* are the distinguishing feature of another men's dance called *kulau* (figs. 125, 127), while painted, fan-shaped, wooden and hand-held ornaments are used by women in a dance termed *matanman* (fig. 126). In a dance called *patep* (or *patpatep*) female

performers use ornaments made from bright green, young coconut leaves. The palm fronds are cut into very fine strips creating 30 to 50 cm long, bright and almost silky fringes. The women apply them as dance staffs and elegantly swing them through the air, sometimes moving their arms like bird-wings (fig. 128).



Fig. 123 *Limbung* dancer during a School Celebration at Verambif. Natong village, 6 December 2001



Fig. 124 *Limbung* performance on the occasion of the opening of the Pentecostal Church at Nanlel. Galisu village, 20 November 2001



Fig. 125 Men staging a *kulau* dance at the Independence Day Celebrations in Namatanai, 16 September 2001. The designs shown on the dance boards feature anthropomorphic figures and many floral and zoomorphic designs (very often including snakes) which represent spiritual beings and forces associated with the dance and its origin



Fig. 126 Loraine Tengsa leading a *matanman* dance. Cultural Day, Babase Community School, Bulam village, 4 December 2001



Fig. 127 Three dancers with *kulau* boards showing Christian symbols after a dance they performed during a service in the Catholic church at Feni, Easter 2000. In this case, Christian symbols like the cross, the chalice for Holy Communion, the heart, etc. were used as blueprints for the designs; they replaced the representations of spirits and plants and animals associated with them used otherwise in customary *kulau* dances. Warantaban village, 23 April 2000



Fig. 128 Group of women from the village of Naliu performing a *patpatep* dance. Opening of the Pentecostal Church at Nanlel, Galisu village, 20 November 2001

In many dances the headdress is the most outstanding ornament. An interesting example is *tambaran*: typically the headpiece consists of a helmet or cap-like base with either a single upward-pointing attachment (figs. 129, 130) or one that consists of four combined struts (fig. 132). If the latter is the case, the *tambaran* headdress looks similar to those used in the *lor* dances (fig. 131). An alternative term for *tambaran* is *tangwan lor*, which literally means ‘mirror image’ or ‘shadow of *lor*’. *Lor* is a dance that belongs to the category of powerful performances, and the synonym of *tangwan lor* for *tambaran* seems to indicate a close association between the two types of performance. However, all my enquiries whether *tambaran* in former times was or might have been associated with a cult or secret society were negated. All the men I asked insisted that, as long as they could remember, *tambaran* had been considered a singsing amamas and was neither associated with a certain type of spirit nor with any special kind of spiritual power.¹⁵

There also are ornaments which may be used in a number of different dances. The majority of the headdresses, for example, are rather small and light. They come in many different shapes and always are decorated with feathers. Men as well as women wear them in performances such as *liu*, *paparip*, *pinpindik* and *utun* (figs. 133 to 138). The imagery these headdresses display is sometimes taken from the natural environment but can also refer to other things, for example other types of performance or, more rarely (and only when men and not women are wearing the ornaments), to spiritual beings or powers (figs. 133, 134).

15 In some parts of New Ireland *ta(m)baran* is the name of the secret society that owns and uses bullroarers and which is called *kenit* on Anir. According to Kingston (1998: 182) this society in Lak is referred to as *tamianpoipoi*, and there “[t]ambaran is a singsing whose name, and often its decorations, refers [sic.] to the *tamianpoipoi* bullroarer cult.” An accompanying photo (Kingston 1998: 183, pl. 14) shows a Lak *tambaran* dancer. His headdress features a narrow but long, lancet-shaped board not unlike those used in the headdresses worn by Anir *tambaran* dancers on two occasions. Interestingly, when I showed Patrik Liting a copy of Kingston’s photo of the Lak *tambaran* dancer, he commented that despite an apparent similarity to Anir *tambaran* dances, the Lak performance corresponded to Anir powerful performances such as *lor* and *kenit*. He emphasised that, unlike *lor* and *kenit*, the Anir *tambaran* was “only a singsing amamas”.



Fig. 129 Four *tambaran* dancers during a performance at a mortuary ceremony. Silalangit, Balngit village, 2 November 2001



Fig. 130 *Tambaran* dancers from the village of Banakin during their performance at the opening of the Pentecostal Church at Nanlel. Galisu village, 20 November 2001



Fig. 131 Four young men performing a *lor* dance. School celebration at Verambif, Natong village, 6 December 2001



Fig. 132 *Tambaran* dancer from the village of Naliu performing at Nanlel during the Pentecostal Church Opening. Galisu village, 20 November 2001

Fig. 133
An *utun* dancer
with a headdress
representing
Tovuvur, the spir-
itual source of *buai*
kokondop. Tovuvur
is said to have a
human head, a
body in the form of
a snake and a fish
tail. *Buai kokondop*
originated in Ra-
baul, and Tovuvur
is the name of one
of the volcanoes
there. Cultural
Day, Babase Com-
munity School, 4
December 2001



Fig. 134 The song
that accompanied the
utun dance presented
by this dancer recounted
a journey to Nissan and
the staging of a *malira*
performance there. The
headdresses worn by
many of the dancers
showed miniature *malira*
objects as they would be
presented during such
performances. Natong
village, 6 December
2001



Fig. 135 *Pinpindik* dancers during a school celebration; their headdresses represent the flower of a liana called *walwal*, a plant which is important with regard to certain fishing rites. Verambif, Natong village, 6 December 2001



Fig. 136
Liu dancers at the opening of a new school building; the centre piece of the headdress is inspired by the image of a *pau*, a seasonal and highly appreciated fruit. Feni, Warantaban village, 22 November 2001



Fig. 137 *Utun* dancer with a headdress based on the image of the sea urchin *ansalen*. Galisu village, 20 November 2001

Fig. 138 *Paparip* dancers with headdresses that depict *ansalen*, a certain type of sea urchin. Natong village, 6 December 2001



The fact that only some dances are clearly associated with a specific type of ornament and that there are no strict rules with regard to others, means that it is not always possible to identify a performance alone on the basis of the ornaments used. The same is true with regard to the songs and music: when I occasionally asked experienced dancers to listen to audio recordings of performances they had not attended, they were sometimes merely able to name a number of related dances, but not the specific dance itself. It was only after I showed them a video recording of the performance that they were able to identify the particular dance. It goes to show that it is only the combination of song, music, choreography and ornaments that characterizes a dance and indicates that, aesthetically, dances are embedded in wider sensorial domains which need to be experienced together in order to appreciate and understand the performance. This is an aspect I will return to later on. With regard to the variability of forms, and to dances as a realm of creativity, the combinatorial nature of the dances implies that the composers/choreographers enjoy considerable leeway in the way they put together songs, musical features, ornaments and movements.

This brings us to the question of how variability and ownership rights are related.¹⁶ A composer (Y), for example, may create a song, which he decides to use in a *paparip* dance (although it would also be appropriate for *liu* or *pinpindik*); in the course of the rehearsals he decides to combine it with a headdress he purchased from X and that last was worn by performers presenting an *utun* dance. At a later stage Y might use this song again, but in a *liu* dance where he combines it with a newly created ornament. After the performance of this *liu* Y might decide to bequest the rights to this song to another person, Z. The reuse of songs or ornaments one has created, or of songs or ornaments one has purchased or inherited, is illustrated in fig. 139. This quite common practice not only increases the variation scope of dances, but also leads to their spread over a larger region.

16 Rights concerning songs and dances (and to the *am furis* discussed earlier) as well as to masks and specific ornaments (which are destroyed or disassembled after the performance and thus are ephemeral in a similar way *malagan* art works are; cf. Gunn 1987 and Küchler 1988) represent intellectual property. As Harrison (1992: 233) points out, the significance of “non-material possessions” or “incorporeal property” regarding songs, dances, myths, names, designs, magic etc. already was stressed by early scholars such as Lowie (1921: 224-232) and Malinowski (1922: 185-186) from whom these expressions are taken. In recent years, and with the aim of developing ways to protect the cultural and intellectual property of indigenous peoples in national and international arenas, intangible property became the focus of numerous studies (see for example Coombe 1998, Whimp and Busse 2000, Brown 2003, Leach 2003, M. Strathern 2001, 2006). They not only show how widespread and important intangible property is in Oceania and beyond, but also how problematic the protection proves to be because Western legal terms and relating concepts such as copyright, patent, trademark or authorship only partly overlap with the concepts and practices of non-Western peoples. As this is also the case with respect to the Anir system of maintaining and safeguarding knowledge and intellectual property, I use the comparatively neutral expression ‘ownership right’.

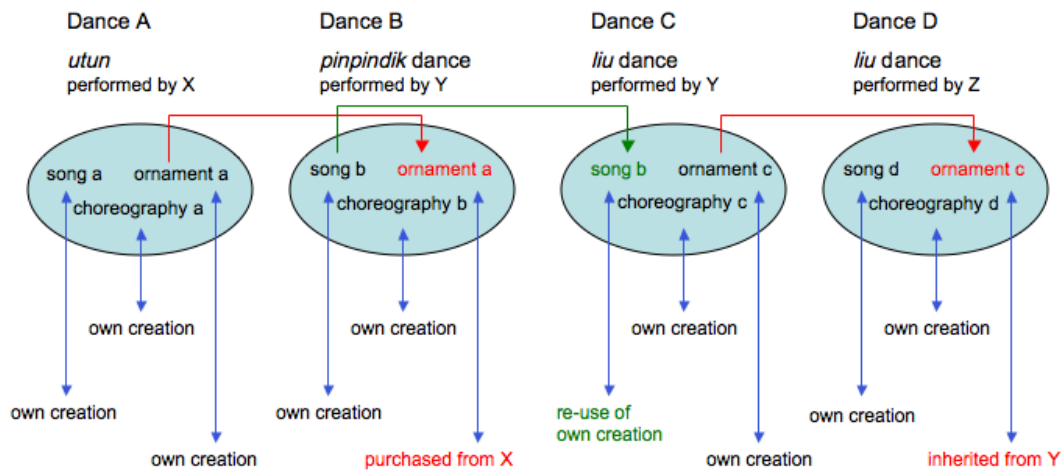


Fig. 139 Variability through reuse and transfer of rights; original in colour

A concrete example of a dance that consisted of a combination of newly created and inherited elements was a men's *limbung* that was staged under the leadership of Jacob Kiapbubuk (fig. 140). It featured an introductory song that belonged to one of the dancers; the first part of the dance proper had been composed by Kiapbubuk himself while the last two parts were compositions of Kiapbubuk's father, Pinles. The ruffs used in this dance had been newly created by Kiapbubuk.

Occasionally it happens that, shortly after the beginning of a dance, a man from the audience steps forward and walks round the dance group or quickly touches the dance staff or headdress of one of the performers, after which he might join the dancers for a while. Such actions are non-verbal statements concerning rights and knowledge. Touching a headdress or a dance staff signals that the person also holds rights to the ornaments. Circling a performing group signals a claim to the song and choreography as a whole. Normally, rights are transferred through kinship ties, but often they are also traded when people travel – either to attend rituals in other parts of New Ireland or when they spend time away from Anir for education, business or other reasons. There they might be invited to participate in a dance, or simply watch a performance, and come to admire it. In such a case they can buy the right to reproduce the ornament and/or to perform the song.

Ownership rights to songs are less strictly guarded than those to dance ornaments. Vincent Kisol, a young *tena buai*, and the son of Kiapbubuk, explained that the songs of the dances one learns in the context of school or church celebrations are considered to be free, and that if one of the performers wants to reuse them he or she can do so.



Fig. 140 *Limbung* dance group during a mortuary ceremony. The *tena buai* Jacob Kiapbubuk on the right (wearing a green loincloth) is directing the group; on the left is another *tena buai*, Peter Pimpik (wearing a yellow loincloth) who is claiming rights to this dance on the basis that they have both been initiated into the same branch of *buai* (*kokondop*). Silalangit, village of Balngit, 2 November 2001

Fees are not demanded, nor are rights to songs defended if a person from the same extended kin group wants to make use of them. But when outsiders (particularly people from other language groups) admire a dance they are requested to buy the song. In this case the seller loses the right to perform the piece. The same is the case with regard to the ornaments. One has to have inherited or bought them, and a sale always means that the seller can no longer use the piece in question. The buyer in turn acquires the right to resell it. It is also possible that a composer creates a song to honour a particular deceased person. If the relatives want to reserve the right to use this song for themselves, they will buy it from the composer (even if he belongs to the same language group), and the composer will no longer use it. If a group wants to use a particular ornament that is owned or was created by a close relative, it is usually sufficient to ask for his permission.

The songs and their contents

When I joined a women's dance group in 2001, I soon realized that they understood as little of the wording of the song as I did. This surprised me at first but as I learned more about dances and songs, I came to understand that a fair number of them are either composed in languages from other regions, consist of a mixture of different languages or contain elements of archaic speech or modified and made-up words. This not only raises the question of what kind of topics are addressed, but also why the composers sometimes prefer to use wordings that are unintelligible to many of the performers and what this means with regard to the experience and appreciation of the performance. Dances are social events. They are prepared and staged by groups for other groups. As actions, they express social networks and not only reflect inter-personal and inter-group relationships, but are explicitly said to enhance social cohesion. So, is it social relationships that are thematized in song texts? Or do they address other issues?

The women I practised with were preparing a *liu* dance which they intended to perform at the opening of a new school building at Feni in the village of Warantaban. They all lived not far away in the next village, Farangot. The leading figures were Rita Funmatmil, a senior woman and experienced dancer, her husband, Paul Tisok, and his sister's husband, John Komgoi. As it turned out the *liu* song had been composed in a mixture of Tolai words and expressions gathered from some southern New Ireland languages by Kiapmalum, a (real) mother's brother of Tisok, who had lived on Tanga where he had recently died. Tisok and his wife Rita had decided to perform this particular dance because Tisok had inherited the rights to the song as well as an accompanying headdress from his deceased mother's brother. The performance was a chance to activate these rights and gave the couple the opportunity to commemorate and honour their Tangan relative.

Except for the initial part, which told the story of a man sitting in the bush preparing a certain type of love magic in order to seduce a woman, Tisok and Rita were unsure about the meaning of the song. Quite often the owners of inherited or purchased songs are unable to explain their content, so this was not unusual. Understanding the wording and associated meanings of a song is not considered to be of vital importance with regard to the exercise of rights, nor is an understanding of the song text a necessary precondition for the dancers and the audience to enjoy a performance. In order to find out more about the contents of the songs I had to turn to the composers, that is, the *tena buai*. They not only were able to explain the songs they had created but were also able and willing to give more general and synoptic information.

One of these *tena buai* was Jacob Kiapbubuk. Just after Christmas 2001, a group



Fig. 141 Jacob Kiapbubuk performing a *pinpindik* dance with a women's group from Kamgot at a mortuary feast. Matambi, village of Bulam, 28 December 2001

of women from Kamgot village had staged a *pinpindik* dance for a mortuary ceremony under his direction (fig. 141). All parts of the song text contained Kuanua words. The *walan* (initial part) described a woman who admired her husband. Recently he had been initiated into *buai* and was now attending a ceremony to direct the performance of his first composition. The first part of the dance proper continued on this theme. It concentrated on the husband, specified the type of *buai* he had been initiated into (*buai kokondop*) and described how he had been given magical substances during initiation. They proved effective, so he started creating his first *pinpindik* dance.

The second and third part of the dance dealt with magic. The second part thematized *warbat*, a type of magic that is used to invoke the powers of *buai* to enchant the audience as a whole or a particular woman whom the performer admires. For the song, Kiapbubuk had made alterations to a *warbat* chant. Because he had changed it, and because it was sung to the tune and rhythm of *pinpindik*, it was no longer easily recognizable as a magical chant. With a typical twinkle in his eye Kiapbubuk added: “You know, these women are clueless, they have no idea what they sing, but men who know something about these things will realize. They’ll start to laugh and have much fun.” The third part of the song addressed the power of a certain type of magic called *ges*, which makes the audience admire the performance.



Fig. 142 Paul Nepuar on the Cultural Day of the Babase Community School; on this day he led a children's as well as a women's dance group and was also involved in the staging of a masked performance. Bulam village, 4 December 2001

In terms of content this song text closely resembled one that was performed in the context of a *limbung* dance by women from Balngit under the leadership of Paul Nepuar (figs. 116, 142).¹⁷ Here the first part described a couple of men who were chatting up some women while another, slightly jealous man eavesdrops on them. The second part dealt with an initiation into *buai*, while the third part related to magic, in this case *mindal*, a popular form of love magic. In more recent years *limbung* has become quite popular as a women's dance but originally it seems to have been restricted to men.¹⁸ Nepuar explained that if a *limbung* dance is to be performed by women it needs adapting. The choreography is adjusted insofar as certain gestures, steps and formations are removed, or replaced by other, more typically female ones. Instead of only using hourglass drums (*fatfatem*) the musicians may also use bamboo percussion instruments (*angkummiti*). The song is changed with regard to its contents. According to Nepuar, male *limbung* often tell stories about fights and arguments, about men challenging each other and about "other

17 The dance was performed during Cultural Day at the Babase Community School on 4 December 2001. The song consisted of a mixture of words from the Lak and Kuanua languages.

18 While on Anir I saw two *limbung* performed by women and five performed by men.

things that go wrong.” Female *limbung*, in turn, should not talk about fights and therefore they often focus on the relationship between men and women, love, attraction and love magic.

Public dances represent an ideal opportunity to attract the opposite sex. Not surprisingly, the events are closely associated with enchantment but also with other forms of magic. The ability to create dances and the acquisition of knowledge on various forms of magic and sorcery are strong incentives to become initiated into *buai*. Thus, recurrent topics in the songs are the initiation into *buai* and the powers, abilities and knowledge acquired therein. Occasionally this is combined with self-ironic episodes from the life of the composer or narratives about earlier dance performances he or his competitors created. This latter aspect leads over to other typical contents.

Am baba, a night dance often staged by women (although men may also take part, cf. fig. 118) was said to often contain stories about accidents and misadventures, for example, storms that devastated the islands or caught people at sea, and the way the people involved reacted to the incident. For instance, a women’s *am baba* presented during an *alal fafasu* ceremony in Warantaban recounted in a mixture of English, Tok Pisin and Anir language the capsizing of the community vessel MV Feni early in 2000 and the manoeuvrings of some of the local politicians in the aftermath. In two men’s dances the theft of the solar panels from the Telikom repeater station located on Ambitlei Island by local youths in 2001 was parodied. In the course of the police investigation, several dozen young men were arrested and temporarily sent to prison in Kavieng.¹⁹ Much to the amusement of the composers, the Pentecostal Pastor Chris, who actually had had nothing to do with the theft but had agreed to accompany the boys to Kavieng to speak for them, was also incarcerated. One of these songs had been composed by Kiapbubuk. He explained that while in earlier times he used to make extensive use of words in Kuanua and other southern New Ireland languages, he now preferred to use the local language so that the audience could follow and enjoy the song’s story.

Events in the life of the islanders, particularly episodes that are of interest to the wider community and are the issues of talk and gossip are also popular themes in dances. This includes the re-narration of disputes that have been resolved. Such songs often make use of irony and appear to be related to songs that talk about events that lie further back in time or even in the ancestral era. As far as I can tell from my data, topics that are considered appropriate for women to sing about are gender relations, affection, attraction and seduction. Themes that are suitable for both men and women include initiation

19 For this incident also see <http://www.pacificmagazine.net/news/2001/01/05/briefing-the-region-news-briefs-from-our-islands>.

into *buai*, various forms of dance magic, historical and contemporary events. Themes that should only be addressed in men's songs are fights, aggressiveness and competition. Furthermore, it appears that delicate issues such as the seduction of women, magic, spiritual power in *buai*, and unresolved conflicts are addressed more often in a mixture of altered or archaic Anir



Fig. 143 Young boy participating in a men's *limbung* dance at a school celebration. Verambif, Natong village, 6 December 2001

words, or expressions taken from other New Ireland languages and Kuanua. In this way the composers make sure that only the insiders 'get it'. More innocuous themes, for example, incidents that recently were the topic of the day and that are suitable for humorous reflection, are likely to be dealt with in the local language and/or in a mixture of Tok Pisin and English.

Preparing a dance

The period leading up to a public performance is scheduled with regular meetings during which first the song and then the choreography of the dance are learned and practised. These rehearsals usually take place in a remote hamlet or somewhere in the bush, where the musicians and dancers gradually gain proficiency; the meetings are held in relative privacy in order to secure a surprise effect at the public performance. Although experience, practice and talent are believed to be important prerequisites, magic plays an equally significant role. Starting from the first rehearsal up to the final public performance, dances are accompanied by magical acts. Forms and methods vary considerably, but certain basic steps and procedures always remain the same. The run-up to the public performance of the Farangot women's dance group was representative of generally followed practices.



Fig. 144 *Fagu*: The women of the Farangot dance group taking a bath in the early morning light to ritually cleanse themselves. Beach at Farangot village, 16 November 2001



Fig. 145 Dance preparations: rubbing the skin with magical substances. Beach at Farangot village, 16 November 2001

When a dance is prepared, the members of the group learn the words and melody of the song during the initial meetings, before the drummers start accompanying them.²⁰ Once everyone knows the song and music, dancing commences. The basic hand and arm movements, steps and formations are learnt first. Good dancers are positioned in the front line, while less experienced ones (usually teenagers) are placed further back; often small kids are also encouraged to take part (fig. 143). Participation is more or less unrestricted, and usually the group consists of relatives and friends from the neighbourhood. When everyone knows the basic steps and movements, special formations such as the *am pimpat* are introduced. Around this time the magical procedures commence; they involve three elements: *fagu*, *kunus* and *kumbak*.

In everyday language *fagu* means to wash or clean oneself or something, clothes for example. In the context of dance preparations, *fagu* denotes a ritual cleansing. After I had been to a couple of rehearsals, the Farangot women told me to come next time before sunrise and neither eat nor drink on that morning. It was still dark when I arrived. Once all the members of the group were assembled, Rita led us to the beach where we all took a bath in the sea. After we had all returned to the shore, Rita fetched a packet with a mixture of finely-cut plant materials and a bowl containing what looked like marinated leaves. She told us to take a handful of the plant mixture, rub our skin with it and then take a second bath (figs. 144, 145). After we had done so, she 'oiled' our skin with the leaves from the bowl. Everyone got dressed (we weren't allowed to dry with a towel) and we went back to the hamlet where Tisok, Komgoi and a few drummers were already waiting.

From here on Komgoi, being a *tena buai*, took over. He had prepared a thin, light yellow paste in a coconut shell with which he painted small signs on various parts of our bodies: on our temples and necks, and on the joints of our arms, legs and feet (fig. 147). Then he gave Lina, Rita's daughter, a ginger root, which she started to chew. When she was finished she spat ginger juice on each woman's throat (fig. 146). Finally Komgoi gave all of us a small portion of some vegetable substances to eat. We chatted and joked a little and then started to practise our dance.

Preparations like this are standard practice. Usually two ritual cleansings take place: the first when the 'serious' rehearsals start, and the second shortly before the public performance. The first cleansing is referred to as *fagu na teluf sak* ('wash away the bad smell'), the second is called *fagu na baof* ('wash to become light'). The first ritual

20 How closely the melody and wording of a song are connected became clear when I asked people to recite a song text for me so that I could write it down. Without fail the person in question sang it and only then started to slowly dictate each line, often singing in between again. Obviously song texts are remembered together with the music that accompanies them.



Fig. 146 Lina spitting magically treated ginger on to the throat of Gertrud Markia. Farangot village, 16 November 2001

cleansing wipes away the dirt and pollution caused by sexual intercourse, garden and domestic work and other everyday activities. It is said to raise the dancers' spirit, so that they enjoy coming to the rehearsals. It is also a prerequisite for the effectiveness of further magical procedures. From now on all members of the group have to comply with sexual and, occasionally, a number of other taboos. The second washing underpins the first. In addition it makes the dancers' bodies light and strengthens the skin. The herbal substances had been collected and prepared by Rita under Komgoi's instructions. She explained that the finely cut mixture had a decontaminating effect: the oily leaves "cleared the thoughts, so that learning is easy", and they "make heavy legs or arms feel light, so that dancing is effortless."²¹

The procedures Komgoi and Lina performed after the cleansing are known as *kumus*. The signs Komgoi painted on each dancer's skin with a mixture of lime powder and magically treated leaves were said to 'open the spirit' and to 'loosen the body' so that the participants quickly learn the song and the dance steps and their body movements become graceful. The application of magically treated ginger root to the throat was said

21 Experienced female dancers like Rita who assist *tena buai* often have a fair knowledge of dance magic. Although not in this case, these women are often married to *tena buai*. So far, no woman has been initiated into *buai*, although some *tena buai* said that women could be initiated; one *tena buai* said that he had plans to make his wife a member. According to Ingrid Heermann (2001: 39) Tolai women "can also assume certain roles in dances that are reserved for men. They may compose songs, guide dancers to the dance ground, or 'address' dancers in special songs. Women are, however, also initiated in the knowledge of designing dance accessories (*bair*)."²¹ This seems to indicate a partial initiation into *buai*.



Fig. 147 John Komgoi applying *kunus* signs to Rita's temples. Farangot village, 16 November 2001

to strengthen the voice. The vegetable substances Komgoi gave us to eat were supposed to act like a cough medicine and to cure sore throats.

About a week before the public performance, we met for a rehearsal during which we received the headdresses for our dance (fig. 134). The latter had been made in secrecy by another relative, John Simail, who was known for his skill in producing all kinds of artefacts. On this occasion the women prepared a special meal for Simail, Tisok (the owner of the dance and headdress), Komgoi (who was in charge of the magical treatments) and the musicians. The meal, together with gifts of tobacco, betel nut and money, was the women's payment for the men's services. One part of the meal consisted of a special dish called *kumbak*. It is prepared from coconut milk which is cooked with hot stones until the oil can be skimmed off. Komgoi mixed the remaining solid substance with some magically treated ingredients. The members of the group shared this mixture during the communal meal. *Kumbak* is made at least once, and often two or three times during the preparation phase. Each time it is mixed with a different sort of magic substance and associated with different purposes and powers.

Patrik Liting, a *tena buai* from Natong, said that he normally prepared three *kumbak*: the first to rouse the performer's interest and enthusiasm for the dance; the second to strengthen them and to protect the dance from magic attacks by enviers; the third to attract many people and make sure that the dance is admired by the audience. While the second *kumbak* is associated with *mambat* (or *bambat*), that is, protective magic, the third is associated with *ges*, a magic to attract sympathy and admiration. Of both types of magic, *mambat* and *ges*, there are many subtypes. The oil, a side-product of *kumbak*, is often perfumed and treated further so that it becomes a special type of *ges*. Yet other forms of magical procedures are applied during the manufacture of the dance ornaments: magic spells and substances are applied to make sure that the items look shiny and bright during the performance and do not break or fall off.

The aesthetics of the public performance: experience and evaluation

What expectations do Anirians have when they view a dance and listen to its song and music? How do people in the audience, and the performers themselves, perceive, experience and evaluate the event? What are the criteria of quality they apply? And what are these criteria associated with? The aim of this section is to provide answers to these questions, in order to understand how people on Anir interpret dances and what they mean to them.

Dances, just like the *am furis* performances discussed in Part III, are multi-media events that live off and thrive on the interplay of the rhythm of the beat, the sound of the voices, the movements of the dancers and the impact of the decorations and perfumed bodies. The performance is a multi-sensual, synaesthetic event that stimulates the actors as much as it does the spectators, which of course does not mean that their perception and experience is the same. The performers with their voices and bodies in motion create the event. What performance theorists like Erika Fischer-Lichte (2004) point out with regard to acting in Western theatre therefore also applies to dancing on Anir: the performers are situated in a tension field between 'being a body' and 'having a body'. Every dancer *has* a body which he uses and manipulates as a medium to represent and mediate something – a figure, thought or emotion, for example. At the same time, the dancer *is* a body that is inextricably and existentially tied up with the performance in its quality as a multimedia act.

The members of the dance group are active participants and thus take an 'inside' view. Their perception and experience differs from those of the spectators who assume

a more passive role for several reasons: firstly, the performers have a different stance; accordingly their senses are stimulated in a different way. Secondly, the physical act of dancing itself may generate emotional changes or altered states of consciousness which affect the perception of the event (see for example Hanna 1996). The third aspect concerns the preparatory phase, that is, the fact that the experiences the performers underwent and the knowledge and understandings they gained when learning the dance are carried over into the public performance and influence its perception. In the realm of singsing amamas this aspect does not have major consequences with regard to the differing ways in which actors and people in the audience interpret and evaluate the performance, but it is critical with respect to the powerful performances discussed in the next chapter.

The entertaining and joyful dances we are looking at here are open, and the majority of the Anir spectators are familiar with them because they themselves have actively participated in one or even many similar dances on previous occasions. Moreover, singsing amamas are neither associated with specific types of spiritual forces or awe-inspiring beings, nor is participation linked to an initiation during which restricted knowledge is passed on that affects the way the performance is perceived and judged. As far as the entertaining dances are concerned, differences in the evaluation by the performers and the audience are not marked, although the former may be more aware of aspects such as the content of the songs and the possible meanings of *am pimpat* images or certain ornaments or musical features.

Another factor with regard to dance perception is the fact that – unlike in a Western theatre setting – spectators on Anir are able to get up and move around the performing group; they might even join in the dancing for a while. This allows them to switch their viewpoint, look at things from a different angle, see matters in a new light, hear the voices of the singers more clearly or smell the fragrances emanating from the dancers more intensely. In this process, the participant observer might, for one moment, take the stance of a critical viewer, evaluating a particular element of the performance, such as a single mask or dance ornament, a sound or movement, before moving on to a next facet. However, he or she will always perceive the single aspect within the resonating pull of the performance as a whole, and in the next moment will be caught up and drawn into the spectacle of the event.

The evaluation of a performance is shaped by two closely linked factors: the expectations people have towards it, on the one hand, and the aura and atmosphere while it is presented, on the other. Singsing amamas are associated with joy and entertainment and one would expect the atmosphere during these dances to be easygoing and cheerful;



Fig. 148 A man joins a women's dance group and strips one of the performers of her loincloth and some of her ornaments. *Pinpindik* performance at Feni Community School, Warantaban village, 22 November 2001



Fig. 149 It is usually during the second part of a dance that friends and relatives of the dancers come to detach some of their ornaments; they shove a few coins into the performer's hand and loosen the piece they admire; taking the headdress is taboo. *Pinpindik* performance at Feni Community School, Warantaban village, 22 November 2001

this indeed is practically always the case. The performances contain a variety of elements that often grant them the quality of an amusing spectacle: the mimicry of everyday behaviour in *am pimpit*, the antics of elderly ladies who make fun of the performance, members of the audience who mix in with the dancers or come to take off some of their ornaments and others who approach the group with a handful of lime powder, which they slap on to the back of a dancer as a sign of appreciation (figs. 148 to 151). People look forward to these dances and, in the weeks before, when rumours start to circulate, they vividly discuss who is going to participate and what exactly the different groups might come up with.

The expressions singsing tumbuna and kastam dance ('ancestral' and 'traditional' performances) seem to imply predictability – the re-enactment of dances that consist of prescribed, well-known elements. Insofar as the dance needs to be recognizable or 'correct' (stret) and thus correspond to the known canon in order to be evaluated as acceptable, this is indeed the case. Correctness as an emic criterion, in turn, is linked with the requirement of appropriateness according to which a staged performance should be related to the deceased person who is being commemorated with the respective feast. On the other hand – and quite contrary to the associations an expression like singsing tumbuna is likely to trigger – the Anir audience expects to be surprised. People wish to see performances they have not seen before. Watching dances on Anir, my companions more than once pointed out that the leader of the group that just performed had already staged this piece on one or even several other occasions, and they regularly did so with a frown. With regard to the requirements of a good choreography the *tena buai* Jacob Kiapbubuk once told me "when a group goes through



Fig. 150 A woman slaps lime powder on a dancer's back, thus showing her admiration. A few weeks later this act should be followed by a small ceremony called *fakau* during which the dancer reciprocates the honour with gifts of food, betel nut and tobacco. Mortuary feast at Boang Island, Tanga, September 1996

the same movements and sequences all the time it gets boring; the eyes of the onlookers get tired and feel heavy, and they will turn away their attention.” Both cases show that novelty and variation are highly valued; this not only applies to the choreography, but also to the songs and the ornaments.

Kiapbubuk’s statement implies a second aesthetic criterion, namely complexity. A multi-variant and thus complex dance that involves many different movements and formations, that includes *am pimpat*, allusions to other dances or a mixture of styles is far more interesting and appealing – particularly if this is not only done in the choreographic realm, but also on the musical and/or ornamental level – than one that consists of simple repetitions. But of course complexity and variation alone are not sufficient. The dance as a whole needs to be coherent and the performers also have to demonstrate their excellence: the dancing should be agile, emanate strength and yet be graceful, and the members of the group should move in complete synchrony; the singing and drumming must come over loud, strong and in harmony, not flawed or off tone. The dancer’s bodies should shine and their ornaments should gleam in bright and brilliant colours.²²

As stated above, many of the magical treatments are applied in order to prevent deficiencies such as clumsy or stumbling feet, weak voices, harsh singing, dull ornaments that break or even fall off, or an audience that is blasé and only shows a polite interest. In a good dance, the group performs as a coherent unit with enthusiasm and joy, to the effect that the ‘magic of the dance’ – in its literal, double sense – captivates and moves the audience. The spectators assemble closely around the performers, watch spellbound and feel an urge to participate.

A Western viewer is likely to spontaneously associate many of the Anir aesthetic criteria with the concept of beauty, and in many ways singsing amamas are comparable to Western stage events. But for New Irelanders most of the qualities that distinguish a good dance – strength, faultlessness, brilliance, colourfulness, luminosity – refer to its power, and this power is associated with the spiritual and numinous. This is not entirely surprising. Several studies conducted in other Pacific societies have shown that ‘beauty’, or more correctly, aesthetic quality, often are linked to criteria such as correctness, admiration, or even rapture, and strength which are interpreted as the expression of spiritual power and support.²³

22 Freshness and brilliance of colours and materials as important qualitative criteria have been reported for a number of other groups as well, for example the Sulka of New Britain (Jeudy-Ballini 1999, 2001) or the groups around Mount Hagen (A. and M. Strathern 1971).

23 See M. Strathern 1979 and O’Hanlon 1989 for Highland New Guinea, Nachman 1981 for Nissan, Stewart 1989 for the Lolo of New Britain and Morphy 1992 for the Yolngu in Arnhem Land, Australia.



Fig. 151 Three elderly ladies join four *tambaran* dancers, imitating their movements in a rather exaggerated manner. Nanlel, Galisu village, 20 November 2001

On Anir this is particularly true of the performances of secret societies, but it is also an aspect of the entertaining dances, which should not be neglected. As far as the achievement of the group as a whole is concerned, the power of the dance is associated with general support and approval of the ancestors (and in the Christian context also with God's benevolence). In addition, it is interpreted as an expression of the strength and wellbeing, moral standing and social capability of the performers, comparable to descriptions by the Stratherne (A. and M. Strathern 1971, M. Strathern 1979) and Michael O'Hanlon (1989) for the Hagen and Wahgi of Highland New Guinea.

The power of a dance is closely linked to, if not dependent on, the group's leader, the *tena buai*. He is first and foremost held responsible for the dance's success. He created the piece, instructed the group and carried out the magical procedures. Weak performances are hardly ever, and never primarily, put down to insufficient practice or to the dancers' lack of talent, but rather to their leaders, and to the question whether they hold and have used enough, or rather, strong enough magic. It is largely due to the actions of the *tena buai* and the role of the associations they belong to that the boundary between entertaining and powerful performances becomes permeable. In the last section of this chapter I therefore address the *buai*, before moving on to the powerful performances of other secret societies in the next chapter.

Buai

The expression *tena buai* is not a local Anir term, but stems from Kuanua, the language of the Tolai people. *Tena* means head or man, *buai* is the word for betelnut (*Areca catechu*). It is widespread because it has also become the standard term in Tok Pisin. Normally, *buai* simply denotes a commodity of high social value, but in eastern New Britain and southern New Ireland the term means more, since it also refers to a ritual association comprising several individually named branches.

A man who is initiated into *buai* gains knowledge of, and access to, spiritual power and support, thus acquiring the potential of becoming a successful composer and choreographer. The term *buai* in this sense refers to creative societies for music, dance and the accompanying visual arts. Although the knowledge managed and transferred by these organizations is *pindik*, that is, restricted, secret and powerful, I deal with them here in this chapter because the members initiated into these societies, the *tena buai*, use their talents and knowledge to bring about and stage public dances which are performed by non-members and classified as singsing amamas.

Initiation and spiritual aspects of buai

Although during his initiation the novice is given many betel nuts to eat, the usage of the term *buai* actually refers to the more hidden aspect that the really important ingredients given to the initiates consist of various powerful substances. Eves (1995: 219) reports that his Madak informants were not sure why a whole series of magical and ritual phenomena are subsumed under the term *buai*, and says that they were only willing to give tentative suggestions, such as the explanation that *buai* includes as many variations or sub-types as the fruit of an *areca* palm, or that betel nuts play an important role in initiation. Men on Anir confirmed especially this second explanation. They further pointed out that the use of the term *buai* is an example of *pong* ('cover', 'esoteric language'), and that they used the exoteric and everyday term *buai* to hide the more important esoteric connotations.

A man who wishes to be initiated calls on a *tena buai* and requests admission into the society. The *tena buai* will fix a fee that the novice has to pay. The initiation itself may last for several weeks. To start with, the *tena buai* takes the initiate(s) to a remote area in the bush. Usually this is a spot enshrouded by taboos and regarded as an abode of spirits (*suntara, tarain*). During the first session the *tena buai* hands the novice(s) a number of magical vegetable substances together with betel nuts, betel pepper and lime powder. The initiate(s) have to eat these without spitting out the betel juice, thus markedly enhancing the effect of the stimulant. In the period that follows, they are taught about herbal

ingredients and chants of *buai*. They also have to follow various rules of behaviour and observe certain taboos relating to various types of animal as well as vegetable food and to various forms of social contact (*alal*). Especially contact to women is to be avoided. The initiation is not necessarily connected with strict seclusion in the bush and usually the novices are allowed to work in their gardens during the day and go to the village. There, however, the appropriate place to stay is the men's house and the nights certainly have to be spent in the bush. Overall, the taboos are meant to render the body into a state of emptiness and lightness so that the previously ingested magical substances are able to grow and become effective. Furthermore, power and strength are thought to become more manifest in a body that has been exposed to a series of ascetic practices. The initiate proves that he is able to control his body, thereby allowing strength to grow within.²⁴

In the course of the taboo and seclusion period, more precisely during the nights the initiate spends on his own in the bush, he starts to dream or to have visions (*ambou*). Various spirits visit or contact him and, more importantly, a specific helper spirit reveals itself to the novice. This figure will become the initiate's spiritual alter ego, his *ingal* which, ultimately, is regarded as the source of his knowledge and creativity. Jacob Simet, a Tolai scholar, similarly emphasizes that *buai* conditions its members "to be more accessible to the supernatural world, which is the main source of all new knowledge" and continues to explain that the agents and mediators of the supernatural world are the spirits that appear to the *tena buai* (Simet 2000: 70).

The *ingal* are spirit beings that are associated with the dead or with bush spirits. They become manifest in various forms. One of these forms is (completely or at least partly) human and it is in this anthropomorphic manifestation that the spirit is called *turangan* and appears in dreams and visions to impart insights on dance and other types of magic, or to reveal a new song, design or ornament. If someone encounters an *ingal* in everyday life, it will appear in the form of one of the animals it is associated with, for example, a lizard, a sea- or bush-snake, a crab, a bird or even a butterfly.²⁵ The anthropomorphic as well as the zoomorphic manifestations of the *turangan* or *ingal* are popular motives when designing dance ornaments like headdresses or dance boards (figs. 125, 138).

Most of the men I talked to connected the appearance of an *ingal* to one of the magical substances – from their point of view the most important one – that a

24 Also see Eves 1995 and Simet 2000. Not all initiations are successful; failures are usually put down to the inability of the novice to respect all the taboos. According to Simet, the acquisition of knowledge to *buai* entails the responsibility to divulge it.

25 Some *ingal* are associated with the sea, others with the land.

novice eats in the early stage of initiation. They maintained that unless the *tena buai* gives this special substance to an initiate the spiritual alter ego will not reveal itself to the candidate. Compared to the most powerful ingredient, all the other substances are said to be of secondary significance. Generically, they are called *soar* and associated with various, subsidiary aspects. With regard to dances they refer to certain elements concerning aspects of song, choreography, rhythm or ornament, but also various types of magic needed to support and protect a dance and make it appealing.

A *tena buai* can pass on his knowledge to a younger man, step by step. In this case the more important aspects of *buai* – particularly those related to the *ingal* – are only transferred after a lengthy period of time, and the transfer of the most powerful parts must be treated as the proper initiation. This helps to explain the flexibility of *buai* which is comparable to a modular system: bits and pieces may be bought or handed over without the buyer necessarily having to go through a full initiation. But only a ‘real’ *tena buai* has a spiritual alter ego that enables him to compose new songs and dances. In addition, a *tena buai* has the ability to create novel forms and new types of *buai*-magic, thereby extending and renewing the system as such.

As indicated above, the expression *buai* is merely a generic term for a whole series of different phenomena and magical practices, and clear definitions and boundaries are sometimes difficult to draw. Eves (1995), who conducted research among the Madak, mentions that there *buai* includes forms that are related to shamanistic practices and to sorcery (namely the *iniat*, which will be discussed in the next chapter). On Anir these types are classified as independent forms. Here *buai* is clearly associated with magic concerning the creation, the efficiency and the protection of dances. This fits in with the information given by Julie To’Liman-Turalir (2001: 45), a Tolai musicologist, who refers to *buai* as “traditional music societies” into which men may be initiated. In another article (2000: 50) she explains that *buai* means “the sacred gift or talent for composing songs and choreographing dances and making musical instruments, dance costumes and dance decorations.” In addition, *buai* includes love magic and also some forms of sorcery and healing magic. As Klaus Neumann points out (also with regard to the Tolai),

Buai is the most common carrier of all kinds of magic; love magic, black magic (*taring*), magic to enhance one’s knowledge and others. *Buai* can become a synonym for the magic itself. Through the *buai na pepe*, men can communicate with spirits who advise them on the choreography of a dance, the text of a *tapialai* [song], or the recipe for *taring*. (Neumann 1992: 90)

Men on Anir distinguished between five forms of *buai*: *kokondop*, *popongon*, *na kealagar*, *pepen aiap* and *na wirua*. What they have in common is that they are attributed to a spirit,

or sometimes a pair of spirits that are considered as being the founders and main *ingal* of the respective type of *buai*. As such (that is, as main *ingal*) they can appear to those *tena buai* who were initiated into that particular type of *buai*. Apart from this, each *tena buai* also has his individual *ingal*. These spiritual alter egos are regarded as the offspring of the main *ingal* or as ancestral spirits of the *tena buai*.

Variability, creativity and dances as regional phenomena

My research on dances and other public performances known to, and practised by, Anirians showed that only some of them are considered to be typical of, or genuine to, the island. Many of them have their origin in other parts of southern New Ireland, or they have spread over a larger area. This is not only due to the fact that dances are popular trade items, but also because the composition and creation of many dances and ornaments are related to *buai*, and *buai* itself is dispersed over a large region. It is considered to be the root, or origin, of a whole series of related performances with local



Fig. 152 The *tena buai* Patrik Liting during a performance he led. Natong village, 6 December 2001

variations, stemming from individual creations where dreams and visions induced by the *ingal* play an important role. This is illustrated by a mythical story explaining the origin of *buai*.

According to this myth, there once was a head drifting in the sea which then came ashore at Lamusmus in the Kara area of northern New Ireland. The man who found it on the reef was shocked by its appearance. The community was so afraid of the head that they decided to throw it back into the sea – together with cooked pigs and other festive foods – to make it swim back to where it came from. The head drifted for a long time towards the south-east until it was finally washed up on a beach in the Kandas area. The man who found it there picked it up and carried it back to his house. Patrik Liting (fig. 153), the *tena buai* who told me this mythical story, continued as follows:

On the way this head suddenly started talking to the man: “You have to bury me and plant *baibai* and *tanget* on the grave, then you have to always take good care of me, you must regularly sweep the place and keep it clean.” The man obeyed the head’s words and after a while a spirit visited him in one of his dreams. It was the spirit of the head he had buried who now appeared as a whole human being and started to instruct the sleeping man. The spirit told him which plants he should use to poison other people and which plants he should take to cure them again. He showed him the plants he had to eat when he wanted to see (i.e. create) new dances and which ones he had to use to make the dances strong. The man followed the spirit’s instructions and became a composer and choreographer creating songs and dances which he, in turn, passed on to others. Some men saw this and wanted to become like him. They approached him and asked him how this could be done, and then they paid him for the (magical) plants; so they also became *buai* men.

And so it went on and on: the men bought and sold *buai*, and *buai* spread to the Duke of York Islands and as far as Rabaul, and from there it came back to the islands of Anir, Tanga and Lihir. Everywhere south of Namatanai *buai* is known, I think even in Karu [a village approximately 40 km north of Namatanai] they have it. Everywhere they became *buai* men and they created the dances that the head of this thing used to give (reveal) to them, for example *limbung*, *utun*, *paparip* and *patanggol*. All over southern New Ireland we perform these dances. But in other villages (in the north) they don’t have them because in Lamusmus they didn’t want the head, they were afraid of it and threw it back into the sea.

This story not only accounts for the origin of *buai*, the significance of supernatural forces in the generation of knowledge, the creativity of *tena buai* and their position in respect to dances, it also represents an indigenous attempt to explain the obvious differences between the art traditions of northern and southern New Ireland. Moreover, it includes information why dances not merely constitute a regional system but also

display a high degree of divergence and flexibility: versatility of knowledge, abilities and their relationship with their *ingal* enables the *tena buai* to contribute to the distribution of specific forms of magic, and of the dances related to them; and within these genres they continually create new forms and local variations.

With this I come to the end of the first of two chapters devoted to the broad variety of performances Anir islanders stage at the end of their mortuary cycle. Here I focused on dances that are classified as joyful and entertaining and first outlined some of their general formal characteristics. A closer look at some examples revealed their broad range of variation. It is based on the concurrence of several interrelated factors: the circumstance that songs and dance ornaments are widely traded; the compositional structure of dances that allows for the joining of old and newly created elements; the fact that novelty is an important criteria of aesthetic evaluation; and, finally, the existence of the *buai* societies that bring forth specialists who act as composers and choreographers, thus constantly expanding their range. Without doubt, dances are a field of high creativity, and the question arises how this relates to their meanings and functions.

This in turn is a question that only can be answered step by step, and a definite answer only can be given in the course of the next chapter. I took a first step by looking at the content of the songs. The themes addressed – current and past affairs, social relationships, *buai* and magic – support the conclusion that songs are one of the resources to call to mind and memorize, but also to review, social behaviour, events and institutions. In this respect the fact that some songs are neither readily understood by the performers nor by the audience seems disconcerting, and this is a point I will revisit in due course. My next step towards assessing the significance of dances and dancing was by way of looking at the rehearsals and public performances. Here it became evident how important magical practices are for the successful preparation and staging of a dance. From the local perspective a ‘good’ performance emanates power that ultimately stems from supernatural sources, and the analysis of the emic criteria of aesthetic evaluation showed that this power is largely dependent on the agency and creativity of the *tena buai*.

In the next chapter, which deals with the performances that are regarded as more serious, I will continue to explore the relationship between the significance of spiritual knowledge, the interpretation of power, and the efficacy and meaning of dancing.

CHAPTER 8

‘POWERFUL’ PERFORMANCES

Not long after my return to Anir in 2001 I received a visitor whom I had not met until then. He introduced himself as James Tengnaof from the village of Balngit and explained that he had just come from Pikan and was on his way to Warambana where he had close relatives whom he wanted to inform about the latest developments in the planning of a kastam that was to take place soon in the hamlet of Silalangit to ‘finish the death’ of his elder brother Nandaou. If I wanted to join him, I was most welcome.

A couple of weeks later I was in Silalangit, the hamlet in which Nandaou used to live and where the men’s house of his lineage stood. The ritual I attended there was not only one of the largest I witnessed during my stay on Anir, it was also the first occasion on which I saw masks dancing (fig. 153):¹

The air is full of suspense as a group of 13 men comes out of the bush. Their faces are painted with a greenish paste; around their necks they wear various green and yellow leaves and herbs. In addition some men have bundles of *karon* [a sweet smelling ornamental plant] stuck in their hair or attached to their baskets. They are all beating small bamboo instruments and to the rhythm they chant a slow song in a low voice as they walk in measured step onto the ceremonial ground. All that I – and probably most of the other people in the audience – can understand of the singing is the word *sangsangmat*, the name of the performance and of the masks that are expected to appear soon.

I am standing on the hamlet square recording the performance with my video camera. As soon as the musicians reach the centre of the ceremonial ground, one of them walks towards me, takes out a small container, and with the words “yu bilas pastaim” (‘decorate yourself first’) he paints two small horizontal strokes on my temples, at the side of each eye. Then he joins his fellow musicians and for the next fifteen minutes they keep singing the *sangsangmat* song.

1 The following description is taken from my field notes and was written on 3 November 2001, just after the final feast day.

I remember the church celebrations at Feni on Good Friday one and a half years earlier: while Father Paul was prostrating himself in front of a large wooden cross and the women were mourning the death of Christ, a strange, humming sound came from the sacristy. Later, people explained that what I had heard had been the sound of bullroarers that were being played by members of the *kenit* society and that the white strokes I had seen on the temples of many churchgoers were a protective measure to make sure that the power of *kenit* would not harm them. The *kenit* had performed in order to show that the community honoured Christ like a highly valued customary leader.

A murmur passes through the crowd: the two masked figures appear. They move slowly around the men's house and circle the musicians. Silently they dance onto the square, with their bodies bent slightly forward and in buoyant steps. One of the figures is male, the other female; both wear black-primed, conical head-masks that are topped with white feathers. Long, red, tube-shaped eyes with white pupils protrude over a wide, gaping mouth made of pig jaws also painted red and white. They strongly contrast with the lucent green leaves that reach over the shoulders of the two figures and with their dark brown costumes. The male dancer is dressed in a kind of suit; the female dancer wears a dress with enormous, sagging breasts that hang down to her loins. Both figures threateningly move around their outstretched arms and hands that – due to white, thin and pointed bamboo tubes stuck on all fingers – look like long sharp claws.

Finally, the two masks take up position in front of the musicians; with a change of the rhythm and song they begin to dance. In distinctive swinging steps interrupted by sudden leaps they move to and fro in front of the musical ensemble. They carry out backward, forward and rotating movements – always moving their arms and in step with the music which grows faster and louder. Everyone is watching with fascination. At times the two *sangsangmat* dance side by side, then they turn to face each other, performing what looks almost like a wrestling bout. The singers and drummers not only provide the musical accompaniment, they actually appear to be conducting the two masks. At the end of each sequence, they stop singing and only the drumbeats continue. This is the signal for the two maskers to stage mock attacks against the audience. They almost run down the spectators, frightening the people with menacing gestures; the women elegantly sidestep them while the children take to their heels.

The appearance of the two *sangsangmat* masks described here is an example of a dance that Anir commentators classified as 'powerful' and potentially dangerous – as a singsing nogut. Performances of this category comprise various forms of artistic expression; very often these include masked dances, but they may also incorporate the display of

ritual objects and special feats. What all these performances have in common is that they pivot on so-called *pindik*. This term means ‘secret’ as well as ‘taboo’. It is used to circumscribe restricted, carefully guarded knowledge that is linked to supernatural forces and spiritual beings. Next to that it refers to the items (masks, paraphernalia, songs etc.) that are associated with them and presented in the public enactments.²

When one attends a powerful performance, one often sees people in the audience – usually women and children, but occasionally also men – who have white

marks painted on their temples; these are meant to protect them from spiritual and potentially harmful influences that emanate from the masks or paraphernalia used. The displays are staged by men who have gone through initiation during which they have acquired the right, the knowledge and the spiritual strength to perform the dance. It is the non-initiates who need protection. The initiates, in turn, present, or rather, partially reveal, their *pindik* in order to show to the audience what extraordinary powers and forms of knowledge they have access to and command over, and to spell out to the onlookers what they should respect and fear. The public displays are said to be eminently power-laden and believed to emit a very special form of potency. The groups that stage them are significant art-producing organizations and institutions of notable social and political impact.

In the course of this chapter, I will first outline some general characteristics of the powerful performances and the groups that create them. Then I go on to describe some



Fig. 153 Two *sangsangmat* dancers during a performance to honour the deceased Nandaou. Silalangit, Balngit village, 2 November 2001

2 In central and southern New Ireland, two terms are generically used to refer to secret knowledge or items: *kulap* and *pi(n)dik*, see Neuhaus 1962: 344, Wagner 1986a: 122-128, Kingston 1998: 246-249, 339, 377.

examples; here I concentrate on the art forms each *pindik* is associated with. The material presented suggests that the different powerful performances known on Anir form part of a single, integral complex. Then I continue with a discussion of the interrelationships between the different art forms, and the ideas they are based on and that connect them. In the last section I return to the issue of aesthetic experience. This not only gives rise to a comparison between the powerful performances and the entertaining dances, it also leads to a concluding analysis of the significance and functions of dances and dancing on Anir.

Secret societies

Performances known and staged on Anir that were classified as powerful carry sonorous names such as *tubuan*, *kenit*, *sangsangmat*, *tomalanggen* or *lor*. These names not only refer to the performances, but also to the masks or objects presented in them and to the social groups that stage the performances. Readers familiar with the literature on Island Melanesia will recognize the term *tubuan* as it is the name of a widely known male secret society among the Tolai and the large conical masks produced therein. Numerous scholars have worked and published on the *tubuan* in New Britain, and the construction and use of the masks as well as the socio-political functions of this New Britain secret society are fairly well researched.³

According to oral tradition, the Tolai people once migrated from southern New Ireland to the Gazelle Peninsular, taking with them the *tubuan*. Its origin is assumed to lie in the Kandas and Siar-Lak areas of New Ireland where this society is still vibrant today (Albert 1987a, b; Kingston 1998). From here it also spread to other areas of New Ireland; presently *tubuan* lodges are to be found on Anir and Tanga and everywhere south of Namatanai. The society continues to spread further north and has now reached at least the Madak area in central New Ireland (Eves 1998: 51-54).

Kenit, as indicated above, is linked to performances during which bullroarers are played which can be heard but not seen by the audience. These performances, too, are widely spread in southern New Ireland, but known under other names – *sokapana*, *tabaran* or *tamianpoipoi* (Bell 1935a, Kingston 1998: 183) – on the mainland. They are staged by a secret society that probably originated in the Konomala area where it seems

3 See Epstein (1969, 1974), Errington (1974), Salisbury (1970) and Simet (1977). Fenner (1990), Raabe (1992), Aijmer (1997) and Heermann (2001, 2003) include overviews of the early German literature.

to be particularly strong and into which, according to information I received from some Konomala men, every adolescent male was initiated, at least until recently.

Tubuan and *sokapana/kenit* are two prominent male associations and types of performance which, in the literature, have generally been described as secret societies that claim rights to authority and political power on the basis of their knowledge and actions. They are characterized by a comparatively high degree of institutionalization and, in the regions where they have their strongholds, they appear to have functioned more like male initiatory associations in the sense that every male in the community had to be initiated.

The term secret society is a Western creation that – alongside other expressions such as male or female association, lodge, fraternity or fraternal order, sodality, club, cult and men's house – has been applied by Western scholars to describe and analyze organizations that claim to possess and guard knowledge that is considered and/or declared secret.⁴ Membership in these groups is restricted and based on initiatory rites; a special relationship links the initiates who carry out specific ritual acts together that outsiders are not permitted to see or participate in. If one takes these characteristics as the basis of a definition, the groups that stage the other powerful performances on Anir can also be called secret societies, although they are smaller – in some cases, affiliation appears to be linked to membership in either a specific local or kin group – and also less institutionalized.⁵

The various groups that stage powerful performances are commonly known to all Anirians. Everyone is aware of them, people know the public dances and usually they also know who the members are.⁶ All these associations are concerned with communication with the spiritual world and claim to possess esoteric knowledge about supernatural

4 The different individual terms listed above depend, to some extent, on the nature, function and aim of the organization described, but also on the perspective, focus and scholarly tradition the persons who use them come from. Therefore these terms are somewhat vague and simulate rather than constitute a scientific or clear systematic order. For definitions and major characteristics of secret societies and discussions of other related terms see MacKenzie 1967, Völger and von Welck 1990a, Axelrod 1997, Barrett 1997.

5 In the literature on central and southern New Ireland more than a dozen secret societies (only some of which still exist) as well as the performances they carry out are mentioned; see Denner 2006c for an overview and the following publications for more detailed information: Albert 1987a, b; Bell 1935a; Denner 2003, 2006a, b, 2008; Eves 1995, 1998: 51-57; Foster 1995: 202-206; Hahl 1907; Kingston 1998; Krämer 1916: 268-270, 1925: 24-29; Nachman 1981; Neuhaus 1962: 344-435; Parkinson 1999[1907]: 283-284; Schlaginhaufen 1959: 65-74; Stephan and Graebner 1907; Wagner 1986a: 121-145.

6 Strictly speaking, it would be more accurate to refer to the Anir associations as 'discreet societies'. According to many classical definitions the ignorance of non-members about the existence of the secret society is considered a fundamental prerequisite. Thus some scholars, among them Binder (2004), introduced the term 'discreet society' to describe organizations that are generally known to exist, but where the contents remain a secret.

beings, and a variety of magical practices such as sorcery and love magic, but also healing rituals. Membership involves the acknowledgement of certain values and spiritual aims. The acquisition of this secret knowledge, spiritual insight and magical power is often a strong personal incentive to join a male association, but men are generally very discreet about these matters. The members meet in secluded areas in the bush where they prepare the public enactments and also carry out initiations. Outsiders are strictly forbidden to approach the secret assembly places and are kept in ignorance about the aims and the activities that take place there. Moreover, on no occasion are non-members given an interpretation of the public performances or an explanation of the tasks and agendas of the men who stage them.

The preparations of a public performance usually provide occasion for accepting new members into the society. The candidates have to go through an initiation that follows the classical threefold structure of rites of passage as first described by van Gennep (1909) and later elaborated by Turner (1967, 1969). The initial gatherings of the society and the preparations for the public performance start weeks before the commemorative ceremony during which the public dance will be presented. In the case of the *tubuan*, the initiated members produce the masks before the novices, the *sisil mikit* (or *meren*), are brought to the *taraiu*, the secret place of assembly of the *tubuan*, for the first time. There they have to pay a fee called *dok* consisting of shell valuables and/or money as well as a pig or some chicken. Then they are shown the secrets of the mask, that is, their mode of construction and the way they are worn. The novices are also told the names of the masks and of their single parts and they are instructed in the powers and the 'law of the *tubuan*', that is, the codes of behaviour and taboos associated with it.

During the following weeks they have to remain in seclusion at the *taraiu*. They learn *tubuan* songs, participate in rehearsals, and only reappear in the village when the masks dance in public for the first time. There they are recognizable by the black paint on their faces. They join the singers and drummers, but are usually not yet allowed to dance in a mask. Although the initiates now are considered full members of the society they still have a long way to go before they are let in on the deeper levels of knowledge or acquire a mask of their own. With regard to some other societies (*kenit* for example), the initiates are taken to the secret meeting place earlier on to witness the preparations in more detail and to participate in the manufacture of the ornaments, ritual paraphernalia or masks. But here, too, knowledge is graded, and important contents are only revealed to a few selected individuals after a sustained period of membership.

At present there is no association on Anir into which all young males are initiated. This might have historical reasons: according to several Anir seniors, at least two of

the secret societies – *kenit* and *tubuan* – were imported from New Ireland in the late 19th or early 20th century. Initiation into both used to be mandatory for all males but by the time these societies were introduced to Anir, both the Catholic Church and the colonial administration opposed them strongly because they regarded secret societies as tokens of animism, as beliefs in powerful spirits and as potential strongholds against colonialism. The opposition against indigenous secret societies and the conversion of many islanders to Catholicism, particularly after World War II, seem to have prevented a through and through proliferation of the *tubuan* and/or the *kenit* on Anir.

Pindik and their forms of art

Among the secret societies that presently are active on Anir, *tubuan*, *sangsangmat* and *tomalanggan* stage masked performances. The masks themselves carry individual names, and in the case of the *tubuan* there are differently named sub-types. The performers of *kenit* present a dance that requires a special set of props and paraphernalia, most notably the already mentioned bullroarers. *Lor* performs dances during which a specific type of headdress is worn.

Sangsangmat

According to Bell (1977: 99) *sangsangmat* is the “name of an evil spirit, the chief characteristic of which is its ability to assume the appearance of a comely girl”.⁷ This corresponds with information I received from Jacob Ngurngurus. He explained that, on the one hand, *sangsangmat* is associated with strong love magic; on the other, it is a means to take revenge in a case of adultery. In the latter case, a knowledgeable member and owner of *sangsangmat* evokes the spirit being which then takes on the appearance of the person committing adultery. This *sangsangmat* woman (or man) finds her (or his) lover and sleeps with him (or her), with fatal consequences: the wrong-doer will die of an incurable sickness in the weeks to follow. According to Ngurngurus this is the true power and significance of *sangsangmat*.

The public performance is presented in memory and honour of a deceased member of the *sangsangmat* owning group and may involve two or four masked figures. The dance is staged to enhance the quality and splendour of the mortuary feast, and to entertain the guests. Love magic may well be part of it but actual retaliation against

7 Bell recorded the term on the neighbouring Tanga islands and spells it *sungsungmat*.



Fig. 154 The male *sangsangmat* approaching the ceremonial square. Silalangit, Balngit village, 2 November 2001

an adulterer is performed outside of the public event. The masks show no resemblance to human beings (fig. 154); rather they are gruesome figures that try to frighten the audience with menacing gestures. Do they represent the “evil spirit” Bell mentioned?

According to the participants, *sangsangmat* is a supernatural being that is evoked in the bush. It is not a representation or manifestation of an autonomous bush spirit, but something created and raised by men through their knowledge of the spirit world and their power to communicate with it. For men who are ‘inside’ *sangsangmat*, the masks are effigies that bear little resemblance to the physical appearance of real *sangsangmat*

spirits (nor, of course, to their beautiful human appearances when they roam to punish adultery). In other words, the spirits are given a presence through the masks without actually being individually represented. This seemingly paradoxical formulation runs contrary to classical European, linear patterns of representation, but it is characteristic of *sangsangmat* and other masks as well. In so doing, the respective spiritual forces are elicited, and their manifold forms of appearance are hinted at. The men’s creative powers are implied, but at the same time the *pindik* (secret) behind it is protected.

The song that was performed when the two *sangsangmat* danced in Balngit consisted of three parts. The introductory part merely announced the appearance of the two masks and was sung while they approached the dance square. The second part addressed a certain type of love magic associated with *sangsangmat*. The third was composed from the perspective of a woman feeling the influence of *sangsangmat* as her thoughts become captivated. This song not only depicted the *sangsangmat* as a powerful and hungry creature, it also referred to the aspect of revenge for adultery and thus involved an implicit warning.⁸ The song contained information about the ‘real’ nature of *sangsangmat* (and thus was illuminating for the onlookers), but only in the form of partial disclosures.

8 See Appendix V for a transcription and translation of the song.

Kenit

It was two women who discovered the secrets and power now guarded by this society. Hence they are considered as the original founders of *kenit*. The origin myth tells of how, once upon a time, two young sisters were sent by their mother to fetch firewood. While they were cutting the wood a splinter flew away, creating an astonishing sound. One of the sisters picked up the piece of wood and hurled it away: again the astonishing sound could be heard. The two girls now took turns in throwing the splinter, admiring the sound it produced. But hidden in the bush sat their elder brother, secretly observing them. He too liked the 'cries' of the newly discovered bullroarer. An irresistible desire took hold of him to possess this wonderful device. Finally he jumped out from his hideout and snatched the piece of wood from his sisters. They tried to get it back and a fight developed during which the brother killed his two sisters in order to make sure that the origin of the bullroarer was kept secret from the women forever.

When a *kenit* performance takes place, bullroarers (and some other taboo instruments) are played in the bush, while three to six men perform a dance on the hamlet square. Two of them personify the mythical sisters (fig. 155). Their bodies and faces are painted with red ochre to indicate that they are not of this world. On top of their heads they carry bundles of firewood. False breasts are attached to their chests and they wear leaf skirts. One of the other dancers, performing with an axe, represents the brother. The remaining dancers are men who rank as 'the enemies' (*ol birua*) of the

Fig. 155 The two mythical sisters of the *kenit* society during a performance that took place on the occasion of a commemorative ritual. Matambi, Bulam village, 28 December 2001





Fig. 156 Kanai, male *tubuan* mask performing during a mortuary ceremony. Characteristic for Kanai is the cross-like design above the eyes; according to Petrus Doli, the *ainpindik* of the *tubuan* lodge of Nanma'i, the shape is representative of the cross-section of the head of a certain stone club called *kepsil*, and the design alludes to this *tubuan*'s weapon. In the 1980s, the *tubuan* Kanai performed in the nearby Catholic church of Feni and was blessed by the former American priest Father Jenduzza; when the blessed version of Kanai, called St. Stephen after the Anir parish, appears in the context of church celebrations the mask's designs are altered and feature the Christian cross in the front and other Catholic symbols on the back (instead of the snake that represents the mask's *ingal*). Warantaban (hamlet and village), 10 January 2002

sisters and help the brother to steal the bullroarer and kill the two girls. The performers are joined by a group of musicians who sing a *kenit* song to the accompaniment of public percussion instruments, while bull roarers are played by a further group of men who are hidden nearby in the bush.

The *kenit* society originated in southern New Ireland where it is still strong and known under the name of *sokapana*, an expression that is used there for the spirits of the dead. Bell (1935: 313-314) reports that it was introduced shortly before World War I to Tanga by two bigmen who had been initiated into *sokapana* in the village of Nokon in the Susurunga region. By whom, and when exactly, it was brought to Anir is no longer known; nor have any stories been passed down concerning the identity of the bigmen who introduced it. *Kenit* is the indigenous term used in the language of Anir and Tanga for spirits of the deceased; hence Anirians call the society by this name. At its core stand communication with the dead, secret sound producing instruments representing their voices, and various forms of magic and sorcery.⁹

⁹ See Appendix VI for further information on contents of songs accompanying the public performance; see Bell (1935a) for a description of a *kenit/sokapana* initiation and public performance on Tanga, what Bell writes about initiatory practices and hierarchical structures of *kenit* largely corresponds with the information I received from Anir men.

Tubuan

Probably already in the 19th century, but certainly in the first half of the 20th century, various leaders of the *tubuan* society from southern New Ireland introduced the tradition to Anir. They did so by founding new centres, *taraiu*, and by appointing local leaders, *ainpindik*, to preside over them and initiate new members. *Taraiu* is the term used for the secluded, tabooed and therefore secret meeting places in the bush. Each one is individually named and functions like a branch, or lodge, of the society, for men consider themselves as members of the *taraiu* where they were initiated. While some of the nine Anir *taraiu* regard themselves as independent, others see themselves as still closely connected to, if not dependent on, their founding *taraiu* in Siar-Lak. This becomes apparent when parts of the initiation fees the respective lodge receives are sent to southern New Ireland to be handed over to the leader of the *taraiu* that once ‘planted’ the branch on Anir.

Masks stand at the centre of the public *tubuan* performances. It is widely known that Tolai performances involve two visually distinct types which are called *tubuan* and *dukduk* and stand in a mother-child relationship. Anirians distinguish between three types. All consist of conically shaped masks that entirely hide the head of the wearer and a leaf costume that covers his body except for the lower part of the legs which are usually painted with red ochre. Prior to their first public appearance, the *tubuan* is ‘raised’ or ‘woken’; the masks are animated through a special ritual act that is usually performed by the *ainpindik*.

The largest masks are called *tinainpai*. They are the mother masks, and ownership is a privilege of the leaders of the society. No such mask was made during my time on Anir but several men described them and their style of performance to me. They have a broad black curved head and a face featuring large eyes consisting of several concentric circles, but no mouth. Their general appearance thus seems to correspond to masks called *nantoi* documented by Kingston in Siar-Lak (1998: 190, pl. 18, 2006a: 95, pl. 16). The movements of these large and heavy masks are rather subdued – they are, as the *ainpindik* Patrik Kameta explained, “not for dancing, but for walking; they slowly circle around the other *tubuan*.”¹⁰ This seems appropriate of their role as mothers and serious senior figures who give birth to male and female offspring. The masks representing the sons and daughters are the ones most frequently made for the public performances. They are individually named and generically referred to as *tubuan*. These masks are

10 Conceptually these mother masks might be equivalent to the *rungrung* (or *vurbracha*) night dance masks of the Baining people of the Gazelle Peninsular. The *rungrung* are the largest and heaviest masks used by the Baining. They have the highest status and during their performance slowly circle around the other masks in walking- rather than dancing-steps (Corbin 1979: 176-177, Hesse and Aerts 1996[1982]: 70-72).



Fig. 157 Tinpai, female *tubuan* mask performing during a school celebration. This masks features two small *tubuan* figures – two of its children – on each side of the large head; the two crescent-shaped designs are said to signify the moon. Verambif, Natong village, 6 December 2001

also painted black with a facial design in white and red. As a rule, it includes eyes that consist of several concentric circles, a mouth, and a variety of other features that are characteristic of each individual mask (figs. 156, 157). The female versions of these *tubuan* are regarded as the genitrices of the masks called *dukduk*.

The *dukduk* masks, too, are individually named. They were portrayed as either featuring a long, narrow, yellow, orange or red cone without a design indicating eyes,¹¹ or else as black-headed masks with eyes and various other facial designs in red and white. While the first type of *dukduk* are said to be male, the black ones are female and are able to give birth to yet another generation. The masks representing these children consist of a small, short black cone with eyes painted in red and white. They are also subsumed under the term *dukduk* and are occasionally given individual names (that is, different from their mother's name). Giving a name to such a *dukduk* child involves adding a special design to the mask.

Julie To'Liman-Turalir (2001: 44) mentions in a short article on dance ornaments used by the Tolai that the *tubuan* society of New Britain has the following masks: “*tubuan*

11 The description of this type corresponds with *dukduk* masks collected among the Tolai of east New Britain (see for example Errington 1974, pl. 9, Heermann 2001: pl. 4) and with *dukduk* recorded by Kingston (2006a: 96, pl. 17) among the Lak.

(mother), *dukduk* (daughter), *matatar* (daughter), *nialir* (daughter) and others, known only to Tolai men.” This is the only reference in the literature on the Tolai I found so far that mentions masks other than just the *tubuan* mothers and *dukduk* children. The relationship between the various *tubuan* masks known on Anir, and the terms used to refer to them, are shown in fig. 158. Further on we will see that genealogical relationships not only exist between the different masks that belong to the *tubuan*, but in fact extend much further.

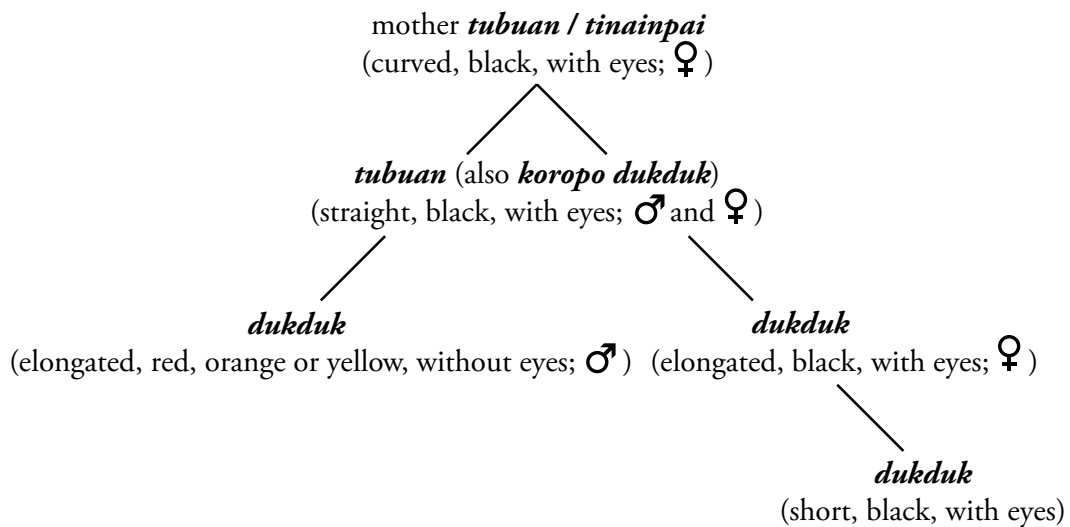


Fig. 158 Taxonomy of masks related to the *tubuan* complex

Tomalanggen

The men who belong to *tomalanggen* claim that it represents the origin of *tubuan* and *dukduk*, and their ‘mother’. The masks of this society consist of a leaf costume and a conically shaped head with a fringe of coloured leaves or fibres. The general build closely resembles that of the *tubuan* and *dukduk* masks. The difference lies in the colours used: the heads of *tomalanggen* masks are either white or bright yellow. All are said to be female although they may be given male names. Like *tubuan* and *dukduk* masks, *tomalanggen* are individually named and each mask has its own characteristic design.

Tomalanggen is not as widespread as the *tubuan*, and on Anir ownership of the masks seems to be restricted to a few related lineages of the Korofi clan. On the occasion of a cultural day organized by the Babase Community School in December 2001, the leaders of one of these groups decided to initiate two adolescent boys and transfer to them the rights of a *tomalanggen* mask. For the performance two nearly identical masks were made in which the two boys danced (fig. 159). The heads showed no eyes but

a decorative element called *mon* (the indigenous term for an ocean-going canoe), that is characteristic of this particular mask. This design consisted of two triangular-shaped horizontal extensions at the base of the head. Fastened to the ends of these extensions were feathered strings that were connected with the tip of the cone to the effect that the ends of the horizontal extensions bent slightly upwards so that the whole structure visually resembled a canoe.

Initiations and the manufacture of *tomalanggen* masks usually take place on the *taraiu* of the *tubuan* society, and all the men who presently have rights to *tomalanggen* also belong to the *tubuan*. In fact, their leaders are either *ainpindik* of

the *tubuan* or are closely related to them. According to the information they gave me, a number of the initiation secrets, particularly the names of the various parts of the mask and costume, are identical in *tomalanggen* and *tumbuan*. *Tomalanggen* is said to be much older than the *tubuan*. People maintain that it is an indigenous tradition and has always been part of Anir culture; should its origin lie somewhere else – namely in the south of New Ireland, where it is also common¹² – it is no longer known who introduced it to the islands, and when.

All centres of the *tubuan* society are located in places that are thought to be power-laden and regarded as abodes of spirits. Therefore it is reasonable to assume that, prior to the introduction of the *tubuan*, these places had served as centres for secret-sacred activities of other, older associations. Statements of members of the *taraiu* at Limigitgit (fig. 160) in the village of Balngit illustrate this well:



Fig. 159 *Tomalanggen* masks performing at the Cultural Day of the Babase Community School. When Bernard Komgoi made this mask for the collection of the Museum der Kulturen Basel, he added a facial design which, according to his explanation, 'makes the mask complete', but hardly ever is shown in public performances. Bulam village, 4 December 2001

12 According to Henry Robin, a man from the village of Hilo in the Konomala language area married to Rose Sianot from Anir; he pointed out that the *tomalanggen* masks made there looked like the Anir ones (that is, figuring bright conical heads). Henry further mentioned that Konomala men had to become members of *sokapana/kenit* (the most widespread and important secret society in this area) before they could be initiated into *tomalanggen*.



Fig. 160 Jacob Ngurngurus, one of the leaders of the *taraiu* of Limigitgit (left), and his friend Damian Neanawi (right). Timpanmida, Balngit village, 15 October 2004

Our *taraiu* Limigitgit is located near the headland at Kifil [Babase]. There's a hole there and all the leftovers of the *tubuan*, *kenit* and *iniat* and of similar things are inside it. In earlier days they used to eat human flesh there. It's a dangerous place and only members who belong to this *taraiu* can go inside without fear. (Damian Neanawi, Balngit, 2 April 2002)

Every lineage has its own (bush) spirits and places where they live. They are important for claiming land rights. The big name for these places [that is, the abodes of spirits] is *suntara*. The *taraiu* of the *tubuan* and the *kamar* of *kenit* are *suntara*, but there are other *suntara* as well [adding examples]. For making a *sangsangmat* or *tomalanggen* mask we can meet at the *taraiu* or at the *kamar* or at another of our *suntara*, but it has to be in one of these taboo places. (Jacob Ngurngurus, Balngit, 30 May 2002)



Fig. 161 Members of the *taraiu* of Satulai making headdresses for a *lor* performance that took place at Verambif in the village of Natong; on the right, dressed in a blue loin cloth, is Patrik Liting, the *tena buai* who instructed the others on how to make the ornaments. Satulai, December 2001, photo taken by Rafael Tonagol

Lor

Not all *taraiu* and *tubuan* leaders on Anir claim to have rights to *tomalanggen*. The *taraiu* of Satulai (located between the village of Warambana and Natong), for example, does not. Instead Patrik Kameta, the leader of this lodge, claims rights to another type of performance called *lor*. And according to him *lor* rather than *tomalanggen* is the source and ‘mother’ of the *tubuan*.

Lor is yet another tradition that did not originate on Anir but is said to have been traded in from southern New Ireland at some time in the past. When exactly this took place is not clear, but *lor* certainly preceded the introduction of the *tubuan* to the islands. The term *lor* or *lorr* has been recorded among the Tolai and in southern New Ireland as an expression for skull and for a number of different masks made from overmodelled skulls or wood.¹³ On Anir, however, *lor* designates a headdress. Its distinguishing feature is a frame made of struts with a human or animal figure at the centre (figs. 161, 162).

This figure is said to be an image of the *ingal* of the headdress and its owner. As explained earlier, the word *ingal* is a generic term that refers to spiritual beings that are

13 See Kingston 2006b and Gunn 1997: 66-69 for overviews.

Fig. 162 *Lor* performance of the 'Hapkas Lihir' dance group, Kavieng, 16 June 2002. This performance was staged during the Catholic celebrations that took place on the occasion of Bishop Ambrose Kiapseni's 25th anniversary. The head ornaments – beautifully made to meet the requirements and expectations of the occasion – show the same features as the Anir examples, particularly the juxtaposition of anthropomorphic and snake figures at the centre of the headdresses



said to be able to appear in the world of humans either in anthropomorphic form or in the shape of animals. In the latter case it is very often a snake, but – depending on the type of *ingal* – it might also be a lizard, crab or some other creature. *Ingals* are sources of power and spiritual *alter egos* of men who have entered a relationship with these beings through magico-religious practices. They reveal themselves to their human counterparts in dreams or visions. A man's *ingal* helps him in various ways, for example, in finding and preparing powerful magical substances, in the creation of songs and dances, and in the manufacture of the ornaments and paraphernalia used in them. Just like the *tena buai*, the leaders of the different secret societies also have such spiritual *alter egos*, and the figures shown at the centre of *lor* headdresses – human figures and often snakes or mixed creatures – are representations of the various forms of appearance their *ingal* may take. Masks such as the *tubuan* and *lor* headdresses are said to also have *ingal*. In this use of the term, *ingal* assumes the meaning of soul, spirit and source of power and refers to the mask or headdress as an animated object.

Lor dances require an even number of dancers, and usually four, six, or up to eight men participate. The preparation of the public performance takes place in secrecy on the *taraiu* of the *tubuan* under the instructions of the owner of *lor* who also is in charge of infusing the headdresses with power. During the preparatory phase, the dancers, the producers of the headdresses and the musicians have to obey a number of taboos. When new members are initiated, they may help to make the ornaments and perform in the dance that takes place at the end of their seclusion. But taking part in the public performance does not mean that they have received all of the esoteric knowledge associated with *lor*. *Lor* is connected with strong forms of magic and sorcery, and it is up to the leader to decide when and to whom he wishes to pass on this knowledge.

Among the societies described so far, *tubuan* and *kenit* are the ones most widely known in New Ireland. The *iniat* (also known as *iniet*, *siniat*, etc.) to which I come now is another widespread male association. It is known among the Tolai of the Gazelle Peninsular and the Duke of York Islands – where it seems to have originated¹⁴ – and all over southern New Ireland as well as on the islands of Lihir, Tanga and Anir. The *iniat* differs from the societies described in so far as it does not stage public enactments that non-members could witness. Rather, all their performances take place on the *marawot* (*morowot* on Anir), the secret meeting place of this society (cf. To'Liman-Turalir 2001: 43). Parkinson (1999[1907]: 260-61) who described a large *iniat* feast that was celebrated on the Gazelle Peninsular at the beginning of the last century and lasted several days, reports that the performances took place within a fenced enclosure. Women and other non-initiated persons were not allowed to enter, but could assemble outside where they also participated in festive meals. The *iniat* is deemed particularly powerful and appears to have a very restricted membership. Moreover – and this is the reason why I address it here – it provides the key to the way Anirians understand how the powerful performances are interrelated.

14 According to statements of contemporary New Irelanders; Koch (1982: 18) assumes that the origin of the *iniat*, like that of the *tubuan*, lies in New Ireland.

Iniat and the interrelationship between different secret societies and their forms of art

Although the *iniat* has been known to Europeans for a long time and is already mentioned in the literature of the 19th century, little is known about the society's structure, aims and functions, contents and activities.¹⁵ The *iniat* undoubtedly was a thorn in the flesh of the German, and later the Australian colonial administration, even more than the *tubuan*. The society is associated with sorcery, and even in the past its members hesitated or even refused to reveal much about it. The few early writers who describe meetings of the *iniat* not only mention magical rites but also lewd songs and dances, and they recount rumours about fornication, pederasty, sodomy, and the drinking of human blood although none of them actually witnessed such practices.¹⁶ In view of the 'immorality' and 'atrocities' that European colonialists in the late 19th and early 20th century associated with the *iniat*, great efforts were undertaken to eradicate it.¹⁷ However, this proved difficult, and in 1907 Parkinson wrote with much foresight that among the Tolai the *iniat* was

so deeply ingrained in the whole spiritual life (...) that no official order by the administration and no persuasive powers of the Christian missionaries would manage to root out the institution. Like so many old heathen customs still flourishing in secret in Christian lands despite centuries of persecution and combat, the *ingiet* institution too would continue in new Britain and only cloak itself in even greater secrecy than is the case today. (Parkinson 1999[1907]: 259)

Stories about *iniat* men and their deeds abound even today, and the society still exists. The fact that none of the anthropologists who worked in the areas where it is known (for example Errington, Epstein, Salisbury or Simet) published any substantial information appears to be proof of the validity of the prohibition to talk about the society and its activities, let alone to reveal any of its esoteric knowledge. In this sense, the *iniat* is perhaps the only 'real' secret (rather than discreet) society in the region. People speculate that this or that man is a member, but often they do not know for sure. On Anir, several men – some of whom had passed away before I arrived – were said to be, or have been, *iniat* members. However, none of the men I talked to claimed to be a 'true' *iniat* man or to possess 'real' inside knowledge.

The *iniat* is associated with the most potent forms of magic and sorcery and regarded as extremely powerful and dangerous. People believe that *iniat* men are able

15 Koch 1982, Aijmer 1997: 125-129 and Hermann 2001, 2003 give overviews and summaries of the information available on the *iniat*.

16 See for example Parkinson 1999[1907]: 264-65 and accounts by German government officials cited in Koch 1982: 15.

17 See Koch 1982: 14-16 and Heermann 2001: 35 for further information.

to take on the shape of animals associated with this specific society (particularly sea eagles, sharks and turtles) and to go on spiritual journeys during which they kill and take vengeance on people, but also help and heal. The members of *iniat* are subject to a series of strict taboos – the most well known of these is the prohibition on pork. They have command over helping spirits, and possess a spiritual *alter ego*.¹⁸ I mention the *iniat* not because I have much to add to the scarce existing information, but because this society, or references to it, often occurred in songs that accompanied the performances of other societies.

The three *tubuan* performances I was able to observe and document, went on for many hours during which numerous individual dances were put on, each of which lasted about six to eight minutes. The songs that accompany them are called *gar*, each *gar* consists of a rather temperate prelude, the *rongrong*, and two faster parts called *kapialai*. There are very many *gar*. Some belong to the category *waranggar*, which means they are common property and widely spread. Most *gar*, however, are in the possession of individual *taraiu*. They may be exchanged with other *taraiu* as a sign of affinity or, on request, be sold to another lodge. The content of the songs is many-faceted: while some describe the performance of individual masks, many others contain allusions and references to the beyond and various spiritual beings, to magical powers and practices and to experiences men make while staying at the *taraiu*.

Such a song was recorded by Errington (1974: 177-178) during a performance that took place in the Duke of York Islands. It told the story of a man who became so small through fasting that he was able to hide inside a vine, together with a tiny bush spirit. Spiritual beings, for example *fiu*, the spirits of deceased who suffered a violent death, or *ingal*, the alter egos of human beings and spirits of masks, also appeared in a number of Anir songs. These songs thematize events in the life of such spirits or ventures they undertook with their human counterparts. A series of Tolai *tubuan* songs that was published by the missionary Gerhard Peekel (1937) not only contained the names of diverse spirits, but also several expressions that designate the spirit world. Secrets of the *tubuan* and various forms of magic associated with it were also addressed or alluded to. Last but not least, the songs contained a series of references to the *iniat*. How such references are made I now want to exemplify using material I collected on Anir.

As I explained above, *tomalanggen* and *lor* are considered by the groups that have rights to them as the mother, or bringer-forth, of the *tubuan* which itself displays a

18 In this sense they are similar to the *tena buai* (see also Eves 1995 and 1998: 30, 172-176). The *iniat* is also interesting because some of its traits and characteristics show close resemblance with shamanistic practices.

genealogical structure. The idea of a larger system in which various masks, spiritual beings and secret societies are interlinked is neither immediately obvious nor is it known to all members of the societies concerned. To me, it only gradually became clear when I was analyzing and comparing the performances and songs presented by the different societies. Particularly illuminating were three short songs that accompanied the *tomalanggen* mask performance at the Babase Community School celebrations mentioned earlier. All three songs consisted of two lines only which the singers kept on repeating. The first song went as follows:

- 1) *Kambang e wunul, ngal e-ao.*
- 2) *Iau wirua rom kambang na morowot.*
- 1) The [magic] lime powder swirls around [to unfurl its impact].
- 2) I succumb to the lime powder of the *morowot*.

Morowot is the name of the secret place of assembly of the *iniat*. Freshly burnt, that is, perfectly clean and untouched lime powder, is applied as an agent in many types of magic. The lime powder is used as such or mixed with other substances, but in order to be activated has to be sung over. The song describes how magically treated lime powder prepared at the *morowot* of the *iniat* casts a spell on someone. The second song consisted of the following lines:

- 1) *Maningulai io na pipi na pipi.*
- 2) *Maningulai io na pipi na titi a ru.*
- 1) The sea eagle treads on him with force, he treads on him with force.
- 2) The sea eagle treads on him with force, he stands up and looks around for them [that is, for two other men].

The sea eagle, *maningulai*, is seen as one of the primary manifestations of the *iniat* and stands here as a synonym for this society or one of its members. In this song, again the effects and power of the *iniat* are depicted, indicating that it is powerful enough to squelch those who have roused its anger. The third song ran as follows:

- 1) *Titi mon i Pai na dukduk.*
- 2) *Pai na lilek kotokoto.*
- 1) The *dukduk* Tinpai is standing in the ocean-going canoe.
- 2) Tinpai is paralysed by the *kotokoto*.

These two lines are particularly interesting because they combine – in a *tomalanggen* song – references to the *dukduk* and *tubuan* with allusions to the *iniat*. *Pai* stands for Tinpai. This is a female name and refers to a *dukduk* mask in the song. Because the word *dukduk* sometimes is used as a synonym for *tubuan*, it is not clear whether the mask in the song

actually is a *tubuan* or a *dukduk*.¹⁹ *Kotokoto* is a special type of lime powder and, more specifically, a form of magic employed by *iniat* men to destroy or harm someone at sea. Thus this song, again, gives an impression of the powers of the *iniat*. In this case the power is aimed at a masked figure in a canoe who is to be punished by *kotokoto* magic. The balance of power and the hierarchy between the *tubuan* and the *iniat* in this song go in favour of the latter. As mentioned above, the *iniat* society is shrouded in almost absolute secrecy and associated with the strongest types of magic, sorcery and spiritual power. In this sense, the *iniat* is the highest ranking of all the secret societies; its members are pictured as sinister figures to be feared, but they are also highly respected.

Upon expressing my surprise that the content of the *tomalanggen* songs was concerned with *iniat* magic and the transformative power of *iniat* men, Ngurngurus' immediate comment was: "of course they are, *iniat* is the creator of *tomalanggen*." *Tomalanggen*, as we have seen, is thought to be the mother of *tubuan* which itself comprises genealogically linked masks as its children, among them the *dukduk*. Alternatively, and depending on the rights and history of the group in question, *lor* is given as the originator of *tubuan*. The fact that two different spiritual sources are credited with having created the *tubuan* points to the cultural diversity within a population group the size of Anir. It shows that Anirians adapted and creatively appropriated the phenomena, forms of art and cultural traits they imported, according to their own needs and circumstances.

The *tubuan*, for instance, is certainly not so dominant on Anir as it is in southern New Ireland where, according to Kingston (1998), it is all-embracing. Instead, it was integrated at an intermediate level into an interrelated genealogical system, in which the *iniat* is the ultimate source of power. According to the logic of the system, the *tubuan* had to have a mother, so a spiritual force with a longstanding tradition in Anir was chosen to fulfil this role. But which one was selected depended on the rights that the importing group already was in possession of. The result is that the present leaders of the *taraiu* of Satulai acknowledge *lor* as the forebear of the *tubuan*, while those of the *taraiu* of Limigitgit and of Nanma'i claim *tomalanggen* as its mother.²⁰ *Lor* and *tomalanggen*, in turn, are off-spring of the *iniat*.

Not surprisingly, *sangsangmat* and *kenit* are also part of this system. Both societies were explicitly and repeatedly mentioned as belonging to the same complex of powerful

19 *Tubuan* and *koropo dukduk*, for example, are alternative terms that are used on Anir to designate the children of the mother masks. Early writers on New Britain and New Ireland often did not precisely distinguish between the *tubuan* and *dukduk* (cf. Denner 2006d: 14 and Aijmer 1997: 17). This seems to point to a more general and longstanding practice among the Tolai and New Ireland people to sometimes use the two terms as synonyms.

20 This kind of adaptation in the process of appropriation on the regional level is also highlighted in a myth about the origin of the *tubuan*; see Appendix VII.

phenomena. In terms of power, *sangsangmat* and *kenit* seem to rank at approximately the same level as the *tubuan*, and both are said to ultimately derive from the *iniat*. Depending on the version given, the *iniat* either is the direct source of both – *kenit* and *sangsangmat* – or *kenit* was created first, and *sangsangmat* derived from *kenit*. The interrelationships between the various societies and their performances and art forms thus can be represented as in the following figure, in which the arrows denote ‘genealogical’ relationships:

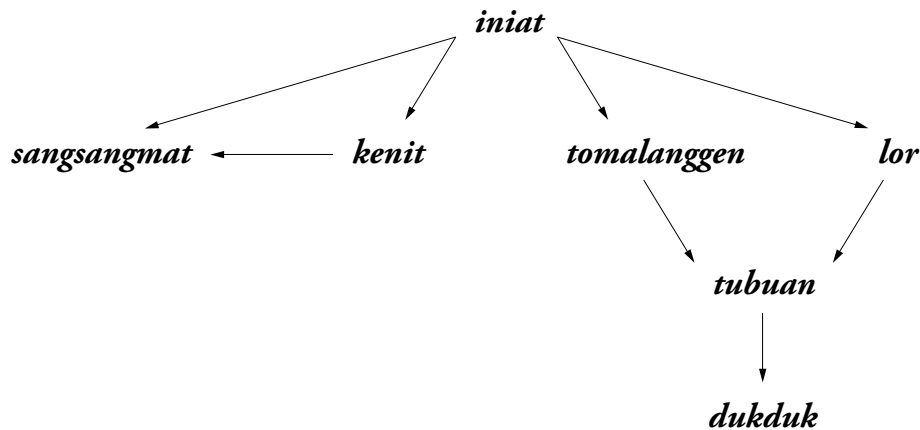


Fig. 163 Interrelationships between secret societies

There are other performances, which are also thought to be powerful and based on contacts with otherworldly power but do not seem to be associated with any particular secret society. Today, the men who have the rights and knowledge to organize these events all seem to be members of the *tubuan* (and often also of *buaŋ*).

Anirians also know and produce two other types of masks: so-called *tedak* masks, which are commonly made of barkcloth and of which numerous individually named subtypes are known (fig. 164); and painted, wooden masks that are referred to as *kipung* (fig. 165). The *tedak* barkcloth masks are said to be an art form indigenous to Anir and Tanga.²¹ *Kipung*, on the other hand, is a term that has been recorded all over New Ireland, from Siar-Lak in the southernmost corner to Lavongai (New Hanover) in the north.²² People on Anir are aware of this, but also stress that *kipung* has a very long tradition on their islands. This is confirmed by two *kipung* songs I recorded in 2002 which were

21 Indeed, the only masks from Anir and Tanga to be found in Western collections are *tedak* masks, for a list see Appendix VIII.

22 Albert (1987b: 25) and Kingston (1998: 248-49) recorded masks called *tipong* or *tipang* in Siar-Lak. Alfred Bühler in 1931 collected a painted wooden mask called *kipong* in Namauroso, Lavongai. It is now in the Museum der Kulturen Basel, Vb 11059, and was published by Kaeppler, Kaufmann, Newton 1994: 567, pl. 835. Most masks called *kepong*, *gipong*, *kipang* etc. were collected or described with respect to northern New Ireland, see Helfrich 1973: 30-32, 92, 100, 108, 112, 114, 120-124, 137 for an overview of the early German literature and descriptions of pieces in the Berlin museum and Gunn and Peltier 2006, plates 4 to 7 for further examples.



Fig. 164 Patrik Liting, performing with a *tedak* mask of the sub-type *tunbes* made by Alois Katkat and Joachim Tokas for the Museum der Kulturen Basel. Matof, Natong village, 18 July 2002



Fig. 165 Bernard Komgoi wearing a wooden *fiu* mask he made for the Museum der Kulturen Basel. The features of the mask are typical for *tedak* barkcloth masks of this sub-type (e.g. the elongated face with its long chin and tubular shaped, white-rimmed eyes), but the performance differs. Timpanmida, Balngit village, 15 October 2004



Fig. 166 Gerard Tofe, Joachim Tokas and Alois Katkat (from left to right) working on a *tedak* mask in the men's house at Warambana kem. Katkat is one of the few men left who knows how to make these masks. He agreed to manufacture two samples – one for the collections of the National Museum of Papua New Guinea, the other for the Museum der Kulturen Basel – and with the support of Joachim Tokas to pass on the knowledge concerning these masks to a group of young men. Warambana village, 11 July 2002



Fig. 167 Joe Lugutele carving a *kipung* mask, 15 May 2001

composed in the vernacular language of Anir. Songs to more recently imported dances are usually composed in the language of their area of origin.²³

While I was in the field, *tedak* and *kipung* were always said to be ‘only for fun’ (*bilang amamas tasol*). People emphasized their theatrical and entertaining nature and the fact that they, as a rule, are not harmful because they do not represent or embody spiritual beings and have no inherent power. This assessment seems at least partly to be due to historical changes and Christian influences: Alois Katkat (fig. 166), a senior carver and bigman who has rights to *kipung* and *tedak* pointed out that both types of mask could be used, after specific treatment, as vehicles to affect or harm people. Joe Lugutele (fig. 167), who inherited the rights to and knowledge about *kipung* from his father, explained that these masks have agency and that their proper manufacture is associated with taboos which, if not followed, cause sickness among either the men directly involved in the process or among their members of their family. Thus, according to Lugutele, exactly the same rules apply to the manufacture and treatment of *kipung* as to *tubuan* and *sangsangmat* masks.

The content of the two *kipung* songs I recorded, including the interpretations I received at the time, indicate that *kipung* masks were once believed to be associated with certain bush spirits (*tambaran*) which could attack or do harm to people. The same seems to be the case with *tedak*. Richard Parkinson wrote in 1907 that these masks were believed to be embodied spirits, and that women, under pain of death, were neither allowed to come close to the place of their manufacture nor were they allowed to see the *tedak* masks before they performed (Parkinson 1999[1907]: 283). Thus it is likely that *tedak* and *kipung* are older forms of artistic expression (and secret societies) that were relegated backstage after supposedly more powerful new ones were imported from the mainland. As a result they were only rarely activated and public performances became less frequent. With increasing conversion to Christianity the belief that masks such as *tedak* and *kipung* embodied certain spirits declined so that the performances are classified as merely entertaining today.

23 Both, *tedak* and *kipung*, are described in more detail in Appendix VIII.

Aesthetic experience and the power of the art work

So far, I have concentrated on the contents and basic ideas associated with the powerful performances, and on the groups that stage them. In this section I turn to the performances themselves, that is, the question of how they are executed, what is being disclosed in the performances, and how the participants experience them.

Each time a *tubuan* performance took place, an enclosure was erected, hidden among the trees and bushes not too far away from the dancing ground. From here first the musicians, and then, a little later, and in complete silence, the mask or masks make their ceremonial entry. Led by a guardian they approach the centre of the square with light-footed, frisky steps which seem to defy the weight of their heavy leaf costumes and cause the latter to make unmistakable rustling sounds which are called *wengweng*. As soon as the choir strikes up the song, the mask(s) start to dance. Initially they move rather slowly, and in bouncing strides they explore the entire dance square. Then they gain momentum, the placid movements are replaced by energetic, vigorous ones, the masks move faster and their motions involve leaps, twists and twirls; sometimes they hop on one leg, only to then anchor their feet firmly on the ground and to shake the leaf costume as forcefully as possible.

During all this time the masks' guardian follows them, carefully picking up even the smallest fragment of leaf or fibre that might have fallen off (fig. 168). At the end of the performance the song stops quite suddenly, the music fades, and the masks stand still: the singers triumphantly emit a series of loud shouts, rapidly repeating “*úa-úa-úa*”, the *bar-cry* of the *tubuan*, before the masked figures are solemnly led back to the enclosure. But shortly afterwards they reappear and perform a second piece. This process is repeated many times; sometimes only one mask dances, sometimes several; altogether the performances continue for several hours. What is communicated here in the form of dynamism, strength and capacity is, quite obviously, power – the power of the *tubuan* as a spiritual force and the power of the performers who bring the *tubuan* onto the stage.

Very clearly, but in a different manner, power was also demonstrated during a *tubuan* performance that took place in the context of the opening of the new church building of the Pentecostals at Nanlel in November 2001. This performance had by no means been a matter of course – Pentecostal doctrine officially prohibits customary dances – and in the run-up it had prompted several heated discussions among the villagers (cf. Denner 2005). In the afternoon of the celebrations, when the *tubuan* presented its second dance, something unexpected happened. A young Pentecostal man threw a coconut at the mask. Such an act is a serious offence against, in fact a desecration



Fig. 168 Joachim Tokas during a *tubuan* performance acting as the guardian of his own male mask, Togiligili (right), and the female mask, Tinpai (right) that belongs to his friend, the *tena buai*, Patrik Liting. Verambif, Natong village, 6 December 2001

of, the *tubuan*. Immediately the performance was stopped and the masked figure left the square. The 'law of the *tubuan*' demands that in such a case dancing is interrupted and a mediation is held on the *tarain*. Only when the offence has been dealt with and the offender has been fined, can the performance recommence.²⁴

In contrast to the cheerful ambiance that prevails during the entertaining dances, powerful performances are created to impart an awe-inspiring and respect-instilling effect. The dance of the two *sangsangmat* masks that performed at the Balgnit mortuary ceremony not only included mock attacks and threatening gestures, the masks themselves with their black heads, penetrating eyes and wide gaping mouths were designed to look like ferocious creatures. This effect was reinforced by the application of contrasting colours: the shiny green of the leaf ruff, the brilliant red of the eyes and mouth, and the gleaming white of the pupils, teeth and claws. The leaves used for the ruffs were collected from plants that grow in hidden and tabooed places in the bush believed to be the abode of spirits; the tubular eyes and gleaming pupils as well as the long fingernails or claws are features of wild bush spirits. Red, as in many other cultures, symbolizes blood and vital energy. The composition of the masked costume and the movements and gestures of the two performers communicated, beyond doubt, that the *sangsangmat* masks can be dangerous and are inspirited with a mysterious power.

²⁴ See also Errington 1974: 168-173, 185-188. The mediations can take a long time, in this case they lasted until after dark, but the *tubuan* did dance again on the same night.

A couple of days after this feast I was chatting with two of my best friends. I mentioned that among the performances presented on that day I had particularly liked the two *sangsangmat*. Christine and Rose just shook their heads, looked at me rather suspiciously and then added that, from their point of view, the masks and the singing that went with the performance could at best be called terrifyingly beautiful. This was exactly the impression that the men had intended to create. As Ngurngurus pointed out, the audience should realize that the *sangsangmat* “do not merely offer an entertaining show, no, they have power and this is what the spectators are meant to feel and learn to fear.”²⁵

Women and children (as elsewhere in New Guinea) are told that the masks are materialized spirits from the beyond. Moreover, women are warned never to approach the masks too closely and not to stare at them for too long. They are supposed to only throw brief glances, otherwise the power of the masks might harm them. As far as my observations during masked performances go, women behave accordingly: they keep to the background and sometimes shade their eyes with their hands.²⁶ The use of the ensorcelled, protective lime powder that is daubed on the corners of the eyes, emphasizes this, and the fact that it is applied to that specific spot is not a coincidence. True knowledge and real insight, it was often said, are only gained through witnessing things personally. This primarily refers to seeing them with one’s own eyes, but also to hearing, smelling or feeling them. The practice of applying protective lime powder not only underlines the fact that the masks are assigned an innate efficacy but, more importantly, that perceiving and aesthetically experiencing them is considered to involve an insightful, cognitive process that is endowed with epistemological quality.

What do I mean by this? The performances are concerned with *pindik*, things that are considered taboo and secret due to their numinous qualities. But despite their secret nature, they are presented in public enactments and thus made accessible to non-initiated members of the community. The men who stage the performances protect their *pindik* by means such as enshrouding them in mystery, denying public exegesis and singing songs that are not readily intelligible. Nevertheless, the performance itself, that is, the objects, songs, and other components it consists of, carry in them the possibility to discover something of their hidden nature and to draw conclusions about their deeper, implicit meanings. I want to explain this in more detail by returning to the example of the *tubuan*.

25 Gerbrands (1994), in a similar fashion, refers to a mask type of the Kilenge of New Britain as the “awe-inspiring *nausang*”.

26 Some do so because they believe what the men tell them, others because they are behaving according to the expected role model.



Fig. 169 Patrik Kameta, the *ainpindik* of the *tubuan* lodge of Satulai greeting Anton Tengmil, a *tubuan* owner from the neighbouring village of Pikan who had staged a *limbung* dance presented prior to the appearance of the Satulai *tubuan* mask. The male *limbung* dance is closely associated with *tubuan* performances; it can contain *gar* (*tubuan* songs) and the dancers perform steps and movements that also are performed by *tubuan* mask dancers; *limbung* is said to be a dance the initiates learn and perform prior to the masked performance in order to learn and practice for the *tubuan*; note the *tubuan* eye design that is painted on two leaves on Tengmil's ruff. Verambif, Natong village, 6 December 2001

When *tubuan* masks appear to display their first dance, they are announced with loud, rapid calls which include the individual names of the masks. Many of these names are identical to the names of local birds. The masks' body costumes consist of an artfully combined arrangement of hundreds of leaves that elicits the notion of a bird's plumage. Steven Albert (1987b: 24) mentions that *tubuan* masks in Siar, which were named after birds, often featured design elements that echoed the typical colours of these birds' feathers. The choreography aims at setting the leaves in motion and causing the distinctive rustling *wengweng*-sound; indeed, from the first time I saw *tubuan* dances they reminded me of the movement and behaviour of birds. Actually, the song that belongs to the *tubuan* Kanai (fig. 156)²⁷ – *kanai* is the name of a common sea bird – relates how it dips its body into the sea and then shakes itself to clear off the water, and how it searches the reef for food, often standing on just one leg.

References to a possible relationship between birds and *tubuan* can be found already in the early German sources on the Tolai. Schnee (1904: 322) for example

²⁷ Each *tubuan* has a song that is composed when the mask is created and thus is assigned or 'belongs' to it.

reported that “the leaf costume is an imitation of a bird (*a beo*), and the same name (*a beo*) sometimes is used to refer to the *dukduk* itself.”²⁸ Parkinson (1999[1907]: 252) and Peekel (1937: 69) likewise mention that among the Tolai *tubuan* and *dukduk* masks were referred to as *beo*. Parkinson adds that old people sometimes also called the *tubuan* ‘*turadawai*’, an expression used for the crowns of trees. And Peekel (1937: 103) points out that the songs (*tapialai* among the Tolai, *kapialai* on Anir) alternatively are called *quarana-beo*, that is, ‘bird songs’. Several of the examples published by these two authors are, like the *kanai*-song performed on Anir, descriptive of birds and may be interpreted as simultaneously being anthems to their beauty and conduct as well as portrayals of, and guides to, the masks’ way of performing.

Patrik Kameta, the leader of the *tubuan* lodge of Satulai (fig. 169) confirmed that many masks and songs carry the names of birds, and he verified my impression that many dances impart images of birds and are mimetic of their typical movements and behaviour. However, he negated the seemingly obvious conclusion that *tubuan* represent birds or, vice versa, that birds are manifestations of the *tubuan* spirit. Other men I asked did not want to give their view on this question. I was (and still am) unsure whether I was refused an answer because I had touched upon aspects I should know nothing about; or because I had posed my questions wrongly, since what is at issue here are not straightforward symbolic representations but, rather, indirect ways of eliciting, associating and connecting diverse ideas and concepts about the beyond and its numinous powers. It is also possible that the knowledge about the deeper implications of the relationship between birds and *tubuan* became backgrounded and were lost through Western influence and cultural change or in the process of transferring the *tubuan* to Anir. Interestingly, early scholars such as Parkinson as well as contemporary authors such as Albert, who mention the connection between *tubuan* and birds, express their regret that they were unable to find out more about this relationship.

Practically all sources agree that the *tubuan* is a dangerous wild female spirit. According to Peekel (1937: 64-67) *tubuan* in Kuanua means “old woman” or “ancestress”. He points out that the people he talked to associated the *tubuan* with powerful spirits of the beyond and occasionally with specific ancestors, and he argues that, ultimately, the *tubuan* goes back to an original ancestress and culture hero. Kingston (1998: 332) on the Lak of southern New Ireland emphasizes the “identity of the *tubuan* as the dead (if not individuals)”. Although this does not in itself add anything to the possible relationship between the *tubuan* and birds, it is conspicuous that the call of a certain small bird is considered an omen of an imminent death. The two moieties and many clans are named after birds. The sea eagle not only is the emblem of one of the moieties, it is also

28 Translation by the author.

associated with important mythical ancestors and one of the chief manifestations of the *iniat*. These references support the suggestion that connections between birds and the world of the ancestors and other spiritual beings are drawn upon, although the exact way they are related remains unclear. Perhaps this is purposefully left undetermined, as islanders neither feel the need nor the necessity to verbalize or further explain it.

Be this as it may, the example clearly illustrates that powerful performances are enactments that not only communicate to non-initiates what kinds of *pindik* exist, but that also allow them to grasp, and speculate on ideas about their meanings which are not elaborated on (and if, then not in the public sphere and not necessarily to every member of the society in question). Although this means that the conclusions a person might draw are not verified, and therefore remain somewhat vague, what is at issue here is a larger, integrating system of polysemous, multifaceted and multi-layered verbal and non-verbal, epistemic images that allows for manifold associations and exegeses.²⁹

The participants' perception of the powerful performances – the way they evaluate them and what meaning and significance they attach to them – varies with the type and level of knowledge a person has access to. The performers as initiated men know about the songs and objects presented. They are aware of the way the masks are made and of the identity of the maskers. They know what sort of spiritual beings *pindik* are associated with and what kind of power emanates from them. A man who is not a member of the association staging the performance, but who belongs to another secret society, is likely to appreciate the performance in a similar manner as the performers. Many middle-aged and senior men have knowledge on more than one *pindik*, and they realize and acknowledge that what they observe is yet another facet of a comprehensive and integrating system that links a pantheon of spiritual forces.

But for women and other non-initiated persons this is different. They have no 'inside' knowledge or view; rather, the majority of them seem to feel slightly intimidated or at least uncertain about the enactments and what they involve. They view them with different emotions, and as they lack the experience of seclusion in the bush, they will also associate them with other events and assign to them a different meaning. When the two *sangsangmat* approached the ceremonial ground, several women started crying. Nandaou, the deceased in whose honour the performance was put on, had been known for his preference for masked performances and as a composer of songs for their staging. At the sight of the two *sangsangmat* the women were reminded of him and other deceased

29 As studies from other areas show – for example of the Iatmul and the Abelam in the East Sepik Province of Papua New Guinea (Wassmann 1991, Herle and Moutu 2004, Hauser-Schäublin 1989, Coupaye 2006) – this is not only characteristic of Anir or New Ireland, but typical for other Melanesian cultures as well.

men who had formerly put on such performances. Kingston (1998: 332, pl. 45) reports that women in Siar who started wailing when *tubuan* masks made their appearance explained that they had seen the deceased in the faces of the masks. Thus it is memories of former performances and of the men who had been responsible for them that the masks primarily evoke in women. Often such masks belonged to the deceased for whom the mortuary feast is being celebrated and which are now being passed on to the next generation – a fact the women are aware of. For them, what the performances call to mind and stand for, apart from the strength and power of ancestral and other forces, are social networks and relations, the way they pass from the past to the present (and future), and the identity-establishing effect this creates.

These aspects of perception also hold true for the entertaining dances. What seems to be at the fore for many performers – apart from the joy and gratification they associate with dancing itself – is the shared experience, team-spirit and the sense of community that goes with it. As far as the spectators are concerned, an important factor in the evaluation is the question which groups contribute (or do not contribute) a performance, who participates (or who does not participate) and what this reveals about the strength and energy of these groups and about existing relationships of mutual support and connectedness within and beyond them. The mortuary cycle consists of rituals that serve the social reproduction of the community. The dances not only signal that the dead now are being ‘finished’, as collective actions they also endorse the community-perpetuating function of mortuary feasting. In this sense it is not necessary that the wordings of the songs are intelligible to all. In case they are, their content, that is, the humorous or slightly ironic reflections on social events or human idiosyncracies and patterns of behaviour, contributes to the positive atmosphere and thus the overall effect of the performance. In case they are not, they add zest for the minority of more knowledgeable participants and give the composer the opportunity to prove his skills.

The songs that accompany the powerful performances always contain archaic, foreign or ambivalent expressions, allusions and metaphors. Their abbreviated, encoded form serves to protect rights and knowledge, which, on the one hand, need to be preserved and passed on but, on the other, have to be publicly presented for the sake of validation. A particularly important aspect of these performances is the power they are associated with. Above all, this power refers to the spiritual forces that are roused. If they are to be taken seriously, then they have to be respected and treated accordingly. This involves the performance of duties such as the observance of taboos, the correct enactment of the public dances, the passing on of the knowledge and paraphernalia linked to the spiritual forces in question, the initiation of new members, and the instruction of non-initiated people in order to make sure that they do not desecrate these powers.

In its second sense the power of the performances addresses the virtue and strength of the men who brought them about and the authority and influence they gain through their actions. The uneasiness with which many women experience masked dances has much to do with the threats and warnings that the performers express concerning the dangers that the enactments hold. Although there are rumours and stories about exceptional cases where women became members of one or the other secret society in the past, none of these cases could be verified, and neither on Anir nor elsewhere in New Ireland today is there a named women's association.³⁰ In their introduction to a two-volume exhibition catalogue on male societies around the globe, Gisela Völger and Karin von Welck point out that terms such as secret society, male association and men's house refer to a

historically grown, basic trend in male behaviour: men team up with the aim of upholding male dominance in society; a fact that is freely admitted by many members of male associations. (Völger and von Welck 1990b: xxi)³¹

I cannot confirm this latter aspect for Anir but the secret societies here are also certainly linked to authority, hierarchy and social advancement. Through membership in a secret society a man is able to gain knowledge that grants him prestige which he then may be able to convert into personal authority, often even political power. The performances are manifestations of aesthetic as well as spiritual force. And they involve partial revelations that serve to legitimize the members' claims to authority and social prestige vis-à-vis non-initiated people, particularly women; in other words, they are necessary ingredients for maintaining the socio-political role and status of these groups.

As far as the power of individual men is concerned, a second aspect is of importance too, namely the hierarchical structures within the societies. Despite the solidarity of the members and the equality and sense of *communitas* on behalf of the initiates, frequently emphasized in the literature (see for example Turner 1967, 1969 or Johansen in A. Rao 1990: 188), novices and junior members are generally subaltern to the senior members (see Nevermann 1933, Allen 1967). On Anir each individual branch of a secret society is presided over by one or two leaders to whom the other members are subordinate. Membership itself also is graded: as a rule, the more intimate esoteric knowledge is reserved for the leaders and important senior members. The various types of masks produced by the *tubuan* society are hierarchically structured and reflect the relationship and difference between the initiated men. Leaders and senior members are

30 Only Neuhaus (1962: 344) claims that among the Patpatar there once existed a female secret society called *a gaga*.

31 Original quote in German, translation by the author. Since the 1970s, the term 'male association' has often been used by feminists to polemically describe structures that allow men to deny women access to various domains by indirectly eliminating them.

in possession of more important masks and thus command more prestige, while junior men own lesser masks, or none at all.

A man may join several secret societies at the same time and is thereby able to gain a considerable amount of status and prestige. Membership and position in a secret society – although not the only criteria with regard to claims to bigmanship – thus are often important factors in the regulation of ascendancy in the local political system. This seems to be one of the reasons why societies like the *tubuan*, *kenit* and *buai* are so popular in New Ireland and rapidly proliferating in many new regions of the province (cf. Eves 1998: 30, 51). Taken together, the different male societies and the *pindik* they deal with represent constitutive elements of an integral and interconnected system that links humans, spiritual beings and mighty numinous powers. The system as a whole gives rise to as much antagonistic competition as it strengthens solidarity and feelings of shared identity.

The dances and masked performances that are staged at the end of a mortuary cycle stood at the centre of this and the previous chapter. The focus of inquiry was aimed at the underlying significance of these enactments, namely, what they effectuate, how they achieve impact and what characterizes their attractiveness.

Two kinds of performances were distinguished: entertaining dances and powerful enactments. Both types are expressions of the gratitude and satisfaction that the mortuary rituals have successfully been brought to a close. The enactments signify the strength, ability and energy of those who commission and of those who stage them. They develop an identity-establishing effect and contribute to the solidarity and sense of community on behalf of the participants. At the same time they serve as platforms for rivalries and competition, and they are a means to demonstrate or achieve authority and political power.

Dances thus become effective in various domains – the ritual, the political and the aesthetic – and on an individual, a social and a systemic level. The way and extent to which each single performance achieves these effects varies and depends on its specific nature. Similarly, the significance and meaning a person assigns to dances and dancing depends on his or her focus and point of view and, accordingly, varies depending on whether we are speaking of a performer or a spectator, an initiated man or a non-initiated woman, a member of the group who organizes the ritual or a guest of the event.

The efficacy of the performances, and thus their agency, is based on the performers' ability to enact a forceful piece based on, and reflecting, concepts of

spiritual power. This is especially true of the powerful performances since they involve the appearance of masks thought to embody spiritual forces, but it also features in the entertaining dances in the form of the dancers' proficiency, the luminosity and brilliance of their ornaments and their capacity to captivate the audience. Efficacy depends on expertise, experience, practice and excellence in execution, that is, on the intimate knowledge of the elements that make up a performance, on the ability to combine them effectively and to bring to bear one's knowledge on how to stage-manage a compelling display with the desired impact. This in itself is a highly creative process; in addition, dance performances always should surprise and astonish the spectators and invariably contain new components or facets.

If the actors succeed in staging an inspiring performance they transform the power of their enactment, thereby achieving underlying aims such as the transfer and acquisition of knowledge and ownership rights or the enhancement of social prestige, influence and political power. At first glance dance performances may merely look like beautiful, enjoyable spectacles. A closer look reveals not only the fascinating activities and ideas related to them, but also the far-reaching repercussions they have – from the individual to the systemic level. Dances represent one of the most creative aesthetic fields in contemporary Anir and, as a result, significantly contribute to actuality and thus the stability and durability of the prevailing ritual and the customary political system.



Fig. 170 Last walk of the 'dead' *tubuan*; a few days after the performances the masks are killed, their eyes are smeared with black paint and before they 'leave' they are led to the hamlets of their owners; members of the *taraiu* of Satulai crossing the Nifin River, 10 December 2001, photo taken by Rafael Tonagol

CHAPTER 9

CONCLUSION

The Anir cycle of commemorative rituals and the question how contemporary Anirians employ ceremonial exchanges and various forms of aesthetic expression to render the mortuary rituals efficacious stood at the centre of this study. My concern has been with the presentation and analysis of empirical data gathered in a small Melanesian island community in order to investigate the relationship between ritual and art, and to contribute to the development of state-of-the-art interdisciplinary, cross-culturally valid approaches to ritual, art and aesthetics. By way of conclusion, I would like to draw attention to points of my argument that reflect this general concern. In doing so I shall complement my findings on the Anir ritual cycle with some remarks on the process of value creation and transformation, but not attempt to summarize each chapter or specific strands of argument made in the course of the thesis.

Focus was on the question of how Anir mortuary rituals acquire meaning and what role the art forms produced therein play. The answer to these questions emerged from an analysis of practice. It included an investigation of how Anirians make use of art and ritual to achieve certain aims, how they experience and evaluate them, and of their significance, mode of action and efficacy. The efficacy of the performative actions, artefacts and images that a ritual contains stands in a relationship of mutual conditionality to the values the latter embody and are associated with. Value, as it is understood here, on the one hand refers to conceptions of what is ultimately good, proper, important or desirable in human life (cf. Graeber 2001: 1) and, on the other, denotes the relevance a social or cultural group attributes to certain actions, objects or ideas. Value is related to meaning insofar as performances, artefacts, etc., are valued for what they express and convey, and it is connected to efficacy insofar as people value the respective units for what they are capable of achieving as a means of expression. Seen

from this perspective, value (just as meaning) is not an intrinsic quality, but only emerges in socially recognized human action. I here build on Nancy Munn (1986) who, describing the *kula* exchange network of the Massim area, showed that social action is the means by which value is created and transformed.¹ The more successful a medium proves to be as a generator and carrier of values – thus enabling their transmission (and critical reflection) – the greater its efficacy and the significance that is attached to it.

This in turn corresponds with David Graeber's observation that value with regard to exchange ceremonies "is the way people represent the importance of their own actions to themselves" (2001: 45). This, of course, not only applies to Anir ceremonial exchanges of pigs and shell valuables, but also to the *am furis* performances and the dances. Graeber modified Munn's notion of 'value as action' to 'value as importance of actions', explaining that, socially, value is based on the recognition that the respective actions are significant: "one invests one's energies in those things one considers most important or most meaningful" (2001: 45). As far as Anir ritual and artistic actions and practices are concerned, I interpret the mutual interrelationship and conditionality of significance, meaning, efficacy, and the creation and transformation of value as follows.

Anirians are well aware of the role that mortuary rituals, and *kastam* more generally, play with respect to their culture and identity. When asked what the ritual cycle was about, most of them would point out that it was their way to 'finish the dead' – to honour and commemorate them – adding that the ceremonies were a duty the living had towards their deceased relatives in order 'to forget them'. Such statements reflect ethical concerns about the correct way to take leave of, and show appreciation for, the deceased, and reveal a feeling of pride concerning the elaborateness and complexity of the ceremonial cycle. The conversations these statements were embedded in, and the careful way the transactions and performances are contrived, planned and carried out, show how Anirians understand the wider implications and the significance of funerals and commemorative feasting. Through co-operation, mutual support and ceremonial exchange they confirm, strengthen and extend social relationships, at the same time introducing younger members of the community into roles of social and ritual responsibility. Most people also acknowledge the intimate coupling of ritual feasting, leadership and political power. The ceremonies are a forum for the acquisition of prestige, and thus a road to bigmanship; in addition they build a stage for competition and power struggles and thus a field of agency. Another factor with regard to the significance Anir islanders attribute to their rituals is the latter's role in the management of emotions, particularly with regard to the overcoming of grief at the beginning of the cycle, but also

1 Also see Morphy 2007 who explores how art mediates processes of value creation and transformation in Yolngu society in the political and religious domain.

with respect to the expression of joy at its end. This aspect, including the safe conduct of the spirit of the deceased to the beyond which nowadays comprises Christian church services and prayers, was not necessarily given first priority in discussions. But what senior men always emphasized was the importance that the ritual cycle had with regard to demonstrating and legitimizing rights to land and other resources through allusions to the hosting group's history: to its succession of leaders and burial sites, to past exchanges, former places of settlement, etc.

Anir mortuary rituals, and the various forms of art connected to them, are meaningful in more than one way. In and through them not only practical knowledge about how to do things (how to carry out a ritual, make a mask, prepare a dance, etc.) is transferred, but also knowledge about the history of the groups performing the ritual, about their rights and relations to others, and about culturally important beliefs, concepts and ideas. From this point of view ritual acquires meaning by way of representation and signification, and through the communication of information. But in the process of ritual action and performances, skills, information and knowledge are not just represented and transferred, they are thoughtfully and creatively modulated to fit the current situation. This is a process that involves strategic planning and adaptation, opening the door to innovation and change. Anir ritual and art also acquire meaning, this time in the sense of relevance and significance, and thus become valuable in Graeber's sense because they successfully convey knowledge, allow for its transmission and reflection, and effectively fulfil the functions mentioned above: they honour the dead, promote social reproduction, safe-guard land rights, etc. How exactly this is achieved, that is, on what the efficacy of Anir art and ritual is based, and how efficacy is related to meaning, was one of the major questions pursued in this thesis.

Anir rituals consist of various elements that can be deployed by the agents to render the undertaking efficacious. These elements take effect in different ways and on different levels. In the course of my analysis I concentrated on pig exchanges, *am furis* performances and ritual dances. What joins the three of them is that, in the process of preparing and carrying them out, values are created which are then transformed into other values. The actors invest time, energy, knowledge and other resources to bring forth a valuable product, for example, an impressive pig, a compelling *am furis*, an enthralling dance or an awesome masked performance, bearing witness to the agents' input. In the course of ritual action, as Munn pointed out, these 'objective values' are transformed into values of a different, less tangible but nevertheless potent nature; in this case leadership, power and prestige, the acknowledgement of rights, and feelings of social connectedness and mutual obligation. Subsequently these values not only guarantee the continuity and well-being of the group that performs the ritual, they can

and will be re-invested in the future, either to continue the mortuary cycle or to start a new one and thus to initiate a next cycle of value creation and transformation.

A prerequisite for the process of value transformation is that the ritual, actually the entire commemorative cycle, is viewed as being successful and efficacious. With regard to efficacy, the demonstration of skills and knowledge are as important as imagination and creativity, but success also rests on the multimedia-based form of the rituals and their performative, process-oriented nature. These features turn rituals into powerful instruments of aesthetic expression and multi-layered communication which synthesize representation and presentation, and therefore have impact on an intellectual/cognitive as well as an emotional/sensual level. This explains why the *am furis* performances and the ritual dances are such outstanding and essential components of Anir ritual undertakings.

The *am furis* performances are situated between two poles. Taking place in the present, they are oriented towards the future but invoke the past to assert claims to land and leadership. Despite structure-perpetuating rules concerning contents, design and procedure of *am furis* performances, each enactment is unique for it has to reflect the prevailing circumstances under which the ritual is being carried out. The examples discussed in Part III illustrate how *am furis* are adapted to the current demands through the selection of appropriate songs, the generation of meaningful imagery and the referral to names of deceased leaders and important places. The composition of the song and speech acts of *am furis* and the conception of the overall performances are considered as one of the most difficult and critical aspects in the planning of a ritual. Preparation requires the application and combination of knowledge from different fields – the history of the islands, the rules of poetic language, traditional songs and rights to them, etc. – in order to design a compelling, aesthetically powerful performance.

In this process verbal and non-verbal metaphors play an important role. They complement one another and significantly contribute to the performance's complexity and persuasiveness. Metaphors are one of the most salient characteristics of *am furis*. Due to the complex imagery they involve, they elicit multiple meanings and engage the recipient. Moreover, they facilitate the simultaneous perception and combination of seemingly unrelated concepts and open up the possibility of more than one interpretation, but also of leaving matters vague or ambiguous. Because of this, they are fields in which creativity is acted out and through which new prospects and ideas can be conceptualized.

As the descriptions and analyses in Part IV illustrate, much of what has been said about *am furis* performances also applies to the dances that Anir Islanders stage during the climactic *alal fafasu* feasts at the end of the ritual cycle. Like the *am furis*, the dances are selected, created or adapted to the current situation, and like the men's house

performances they should befit the deceased who is being commemorated, and reflect and enhance the social network of the kin group he (or, more rarely, she) belonged to. Although allusions to, and the safe-guarding of, rights to leadership and land is not an issue in the case of dances, they are also concerned with rights; in this case rights to songs, ornaments and masks that can only be transferred on the occasion of publicly performing the respective item.

Dances are the other domain of ritual that stands out for the creativity with which they are handled. Dances too are associated with power and prestige: they add to the reputation of the ritual's host who 'elicited' or commissioned (and paid for) them, and they boost the prestige of the *tena buai* who composed and staged them. Customary dances are only performed at the end of the mortuary cycle, and some Anir islanders likened them to 'ornaments' of the final feast. In a sense the dances complement the *am furis* and, with regard to function, meaning and effects, parallel them. However, the dances also add something special to the ritual system because they function as signs of celebration that stand for overcoming the period of mourning and highlight the success and continuity of the group completing the mortuary cycle. Furthermore, they enhance the aesthetic and spiritual power of the climactic final feasts.

What pertains to the *am furis* performances with regard to their multi-mediality and the interplay of representation and presentation that goes with it also comes out in the dances. They consist of different elements – songs and music, movements, masks and ornaments, etc., – that stimulate a broad range of senses: the visual, the aural, the kinaesthetic and the olfactory. The various elements involve representation and symbolization insofar as they are media through which knowledge is transmitted and messages are communicated. The presentational dimension, on the other hand, relates to the performativity of the enactments and hinges on their mediality and corporality, that is, the fact that the actors and artefacts involved not only mediate meaning, but are inextricably and existentially tied up with the performance. Through illocutionary acts, and with the physical and sensual presence of their bodies and the artefacts they use and that surround them, the performers create meaning and hence establish accountable facts.

Experiencing the event is a process that is as much conditioned by intellectual as by emotional stimuli and in which sensuality plays an eminent role. The participation in, or viewing of, a dance or appearance of a group of powerful masks is a spectacle that sets in motion chains of interrelated reactions: it triggers memories, elicits unique sensations, shapes awareness and creates insights. People are reminded of past performances and the persons involved in them. They remember and, through the enactment, honour

the deceased whose mask, song or dance ornaments now are being passed on. The enactments embody and manifest the presence and power of the deceased and of other spiritual beings or forces associated with the performances: one looks at the mask and immediately ‘sees’ the ancestor and feels the vigour of the *sangsangmat*, *tubuan*, etc.

The activation of memories and of knowledge related to the performance being presented is closely linked with the event’s vibrancy and aura: the guise and appearance of the performers; the elegance and verve of their movements; the voluminosity and strength of their singing and drumming; the brilliance, colourfulness and texture of the materials of which the masks, ornaments and body decorations are made of, etc. The diverse components a performance consists of not only possess explanatory power by way of representation but, in their sensuality, actually shape the perception of the event, and thus have an engendering quality. This means that the process the perception of the performance initiates is linked to the aesthetic experience of a sensual presence, which in itself carries the possibility of gaining epistemological insights. What particular persons lastly take away from a dance, or what they understand about the *am furis* they participated in or witnessed, depends on their age, gender, attitude and role in the performance, and on knowledge and experience acquired in the past. At the same time, their aesthetic experience is impacted by viewing practices and patterns of meaning that evolve from the cultural conventions they grew up with.

From these findings various conclusions can be drawn. I will first offer some additional comments on the notion of value and the relationship between memory and forgetting, then move on to the correlation between structure, process and practice, and finally come to a concluding assessment concerning the results of this thesis with regard to cross-culturally valid approaches to art and ritual.

The fact that each performance is assigned an innate, constitutive, cognitive and aesthetic efficacy on which its significance is based means that the concept of value as socially significant action needs extending by a notion of ‘value through experience’. In doing so we acknowledge that the value Anirians attribute to *am furis* and ritual dances not only emerges from the social repercussions these performances have, but also rests upon the sensual and aesthetic experiences they generate.² That these experiences are significantly co-determined by memory was one of the issues discussed in Chapter Six, and since the performances are part of commemorative rituals, this is not surprising.

2 The concept of value-as-experience was recently formulated with regard to theories about industrial design. Pine and Gillmore, for example, point out that consumers are not necessarily interested in the object itself but in how it engages them to “create a memorable event” (1998: 98). One of their examples is the TV set that is valued for the information and entertainment it provides and not as a physical thing. See Cagan and Vogel 2001, and LaSalle and Britton 2003 for further analyses and examples.

The question that now remains, however, is to see how the importance of remembering relates to local explanations that the ceremonial cycle is conducted for the purpose of ‘finishing’ the dead, so that the living can ‘forget’ them. In order to understand this, we have to return to the concept of transformation.

Many theories perceive the transformative power that rituals possess as one of their distinguishing features (e.g. Rao and Köpping 2000: 7-11).³ Transformation features in the Anir ritual cycle at various levels: firstly (and formerly more pronounced) as the passing of the spirit of the deceased to the beyond. Secondly, as the gradual shift from grief and mourning, to honouring and commemorating the dead and then to joy and celebration – a conversion that goes hand in hand with social reproduction. And, thirdly, as a process in which values are created by way of pig exchanges, *am furis* performances and ritual dances. In the course of the process these values are transformed and become what Bourdieu (1984) called social (interpersonal relations and networks), cultural (knowledge and skills) and symbolic (prestige, honour and power) capital.

Forgetting in the form of purposeful and conscious transformation of memory is another effect that the ritual cycle brings about, and for which it is valued. Although it sounds paradoxical, ‘forgetting’ is a value that is created in the process of ritual action. But what exactly are the things that can be forgotten? We have seen how important remembering the past is to assure the future, and that the Anir mortuary cycle is associated with fulfilling one’s obligations towards dead relatives and the ancestors more generally. From this follows that forgetting is not tantamount to erasing the deceased from memory, instead it means that one can put aside for good one’s own ‘debts’, the ‘dirt’ or ‘shame’ (pollution) that comes with death, the sorrow about the loss of an endeared kinsman and any concerns about the deceased not having received a befitting tribute. What remains after this transformative process are positive, and indeed valuable, memories which themselves become the source and foundation of future rituals and a prerequisite for securing future leadership positions and land rights.

The latter, as we have seen, belong to the ultimate aims of the commemorative cycle and are constitutive of its legal and political significance. With regard to efficacy, the interplay between memory and creativity is crucial. In order to be efficacious, rituals cannot rely on the reproduction of established patterns, but build on malleable components that allow for the processing of and reflection on recent developments and current situations. The ceremonial exchanges, the *am furis* performances and the dances are the spheres in Anir rituals that give the actors involved the necessary room to pursue their agendas and not only to reproduce imparted knowledge, cultural concepts and

3 But also see Grimes (2004: 116) who emphasizes that transformation is not the aim or effect of all rituals; it might also relate to protection, purification, or the *celebration* of transformation.

prevalent courses of action, but to exert agency, acknowledge changed circumstances and imaginatively fill the ritual with life. They are creative assets on which the flexibility of the ritual system's structure is based and that guarantee its survival and resilience. With regard to theory and methodology, the recognition of this dynamic goes hand in hand with an emphasis on practice, on the one hand, and a revised concept of creativity, on the other. The latter acknowledges the role that experience and the ability to combine have in creative processes. It does not link creativity with the ingenuity of an individual who conjures up an absolute novelty, but conceptualizes "*re ... creation* as an ongoing transformation of past-through-present-to-future and self-through-other-to-otherwise" (Pope 2005: 87).

The values that are created in and through the process of ritual action may be reevaluated and modified; basic social and cultural conditions change and with them beliefs, concepts and views of life, but also meanings, interpretations and patterns of behaviour. The resilience that characterizes the Anir system of ritual and art, which I so far have described as an outcome of flexible structures, is based also on the fact that they are not only religiously motivated and relevant, but also have legal and political import. Anirians' concept of kastam as it was explained in Chapter One shows that the realms of art and ritual are not autonomous or sealed off, but interconnected with other domains such as lotu (church), gavman (state politics) and bisnis (business and economy). Transformations in one of these fields often lead to changes in the other domains as well.

This study concentrated on the analysis and interpretation of empirical data gathered in a small group of islands in the Pacific. The results and insights gained in the process, however, bear reference to the development of cross-culturally valid approaches to art and ritual and to questions of methodology and theory. The ethnographic example of the Anir islands demonstrates how resilient, but at the same time adaptive, art and ritual can be, even in the present time of globalization. The rituals and forms of aesthetic expression I discussed are associated with kastam and tradition and thus, conventionally, with repetition, iterability and continuity with the past. The creativity that is involved in them, and how contemporary and up-to-date they actually are, emerged from the investigation of how Anirian islanders view and deal with ritual and art with a view to their functional pattern, significance, meaning and efficacy. The analysis combined anthropological approaches that foreground practice with a performance-oriented focus and an examination of aesthetic experience grounded in art history and aesthetics.

It is obvious, I think, that there is a lot to gain from a thorough observation and precise examination of practice, on the one hand, and ritual, performative and artistic

form, on the other. The focus on form goes hand in hand with the investigation of aesthetic experience and enables us to appreciate the intrinsic and generative quality of art and ritual, independent of the discourses and the social, economic or political processes that shape their production and use. These aspects, that is, the context that lies beyond the ritual or art work itself, but in which it is embedded, is best approached through the analysis of practice if one wants to fully understand their value, scope of meaning, efficacy and cultural, social and political significance. In this coupled approach, power and agency are not only granted to those who create art or organize rituals and those who participate in or consume them in a specific situation in space and time, but also to the art works and ritual actions themselves. The advantage is two-fold: it takes into account form and content and combines seemingly opposing perspectives (object-focused and subject-focused), and it is broad and open enough to account for the most diverse types of ritual action and forms of art and still appreciate their distinctiveness.

APPENDICES

I. TYPES OF ANIR MEN'S HOUSES

BLA

Bia is the generic term for men's house. The design and the materials of the different types of men's houses constructed in the course of the third phase of the mortuary cycle vary, as does the minimum number of pigs distributed to celebrate the final *alal fafasu* feast.

FARFARUR

Preliminary men's house that is built before the final phase of the mortuary cycle starts; the *farfarur* serves as an assembly place where the planning of *bok bif* can proceed. The meeting during which the building of a *farfarur* is decided on and announced, confirming the resolution to carry out a *bok bif*, is called *enen musum bia*: 'meal related to the building of a men's house'.

Farfarur men's houses often look like smaller versions of the rectangular, permanent *biakis* men's houses, and they act as indicatory signs that the owners are in the stage of planning larger rituals. The most important difference between a *farfarur* and a *biakis* is the large central post that the latter features. Once the *biakis* that is built in the course of *pok bif* is finished and inaugurated, the *farfarur* is declared 'rubbish' (*rabis*) and demolished.

Farfarur are the only men's houses that can be built outside a ritual context, for example, when a group that presently does not have a men's house wishes to have a meeting place but does not intend to carry out a *bok bif* in the near future.

BLAKIS

Nowadays this is the most commonly seen men's house on Anir. It is rectangular with a gabled roof, a front and a back door and a few windows to allow fresh air to circulate. It usually has three main supporting posts (*tu*), one at the centre and one on the inside

of each door. These posts are usually neither carved nor painted¹, and if they are, this is often said to be 'bilas tasol', that is, merely ornamental.

A comparatively small number of pigs (three to four) killed and distributed in the context of the accompanying *alal fajasu* feast is apparently sufficient. However, the examples I know of all involved more pigs (five to twelve). The reason for this seems to be that, at present (and in the recent past), temporary men's houses of the types described below are built only occasionally, and the erection of a *biakis* on the basis of a larger number of pigs has the potential of being accepted as a substitute or equivalent of building one of these other (temporary) types.

The *biakis* men's house is permanent; it is the house that is built 'to stay' (bilong stap). Unlike the types below it is not just built for the festive occasion: it is a men's house 'for sleeping' (bilong slip), not one 'for eating only' (bilong kaikai tasol). A *biakis* men's house seems to last about 10 to 15 years; it is the place where the corresponding *matambia* stages all its rituals.

The men's houses described below all are temporary structures. They are built for the *alal fajasu* feast, after which they are left to deteriorate without being used any more. The owning men's house community may also decide that they are to be dismantled – for example, with the intention of reusing certain parts as building materials – this, however, has to be done ceremonially with a festive meal and accompanying customary payments.

1 The term for plain, undecorated house posts is *tu milmil*. The post near the front entrance is called *an warampas*, the centre post is *an warampansinol*, and the post at the back entrance *an sugelbugu*. The posts usually feature designs that make reference to the origin myth and history of the men's house community and to ancestors and spiritual beings associated with it. Some of these designs are figurative, for example showing human figures or faces, animals or plants, while others are more abstract (some of the latter are said to be purely ornamental and have no further meaning). Sometimes, instead of a carved support post, a figure was carved which was then placed next to the (undecorated) post. These figures often represented the deceased who were commemorated in the respective feast, or important ancestors. Conceptually they resemble Western portraits, although the style they were worked in was conventionalized. For the feast such figures were often equipped with ornaments that once belonged to the respective dead relative and which, after the feast, could be destroyed. Certain magico-religious rites were performed to animate the figures and give them power so that protect the men's house and the community it belonged to. After the *alal fajasu* such figures were either kept in (or, alternatively, in front of the entrance of) the *bia* or ritually buried; the figures that were to be kept were carved from hard wood, the others from soft wood such as *Alstonia scholaris*. A special type of figure only featured a carved human body onto which the exhumed, overmodelled skull of the deceased ancestor whom the figure represented was attached.

BATKONIM

The *batkonim* is named after a large tree (*airima* in Tok Pisin) that has a sprawling crown which epitomizes the shape of this men's house (cf. figs. 76, 77). The *batkonim* is the most common of the 'round' men's houses. Normally it features five to eight carved and painted house posts along the central longitudinal axis, occasionally even more (cf. fig. 79). For each post the organizer of the corresponding *bok bif* has to distribute at least one pig at the final feast. According to some Anir men, the height and width of these structures measures about 3 to 3.5 metres. This corresponds with Schlaginhaufen's information (1959: 78) stating that a *batkonim*-type men's house he had measured on Tanga in 1908 was 3 m wide, 3 m high and 13 m long.

PANAWIN

The distinguishing feature of this type of 'round' men's house is its length and the large number of pigs associated with it. *Panawin* men's houses feature the same general shape as the *batkonim* men's houses, but they are longer and higher and should have at least ten carved and painted house posts. They are costly, but very prestigious ceremonial buildings. An alternative term for this type of men's house is *pamfit*.

FELUMPAT and FELMIL

According to information I received, these two men's houses closely resemble the *batkonim* with regard to general shape and design, although they might be somewhat broader in width. One of the seniors of Natong village remembered that he had once attended a *kastam* ceremony for which a *felumpat* and a *felmil* had been erected; both had been rectangular and corresponded to the *biakis* men's houses in terms of shape and design. What is special about *felumpat* and *felmil* is not so much their physiognomy, but the rules and customary procedures that go with them.

Felumpat is a type of men's house that is absolutely taboo for women; all the food that is brought to it must be consumed inside the *felumpat* by the invited male guests. The entrance to this house is 'locked' by a log called *bokut*; whoever wants to leave the *felumpat* has to contribute a small payment. As all the food associated with this type of *bia* must be consumed on the spot, the *felumpat* only has two or three carved and painted posts; these stand for the number of pigs which are eaten in the *felumpat* in the course of the *alal fafasu* feast meal.

Felmil is the 'female' counterpart to the *felumpat*, and it seems that normally when a *felumpat* was built, a *felmil* was erected too, facing and complementing the *felumpat*. *Felmil* is a ceremonial house for the women where they can assemble on ritual days and

where they meet to eat the pork and other food they receive at the feast meal. Men may enter the *felmil*; it is not locked or closed like the *felumpat* which means that food can be taken outside and further distributed. This in turn means that the *felmil* can be larger and feature more carved posts than a *felumpat*.

KALKALOG

This type of *bia* was always described as a house that is ‘not really a house’ because it ‘shakes’ (*guria*) and ‘moves in the wind’. The reason for this is that it had no supporting posts and ridge beam. Basically it consisted of a ‘round’, or barrel-shaped, roof made of rafters covered with sago leaf tiles and reaching to the ground on both sides. In the interior it had a freestanding, plain or carved post around which a large mount of food was arranged. The *kalkalog* was said to be at least 4 m high. The men disagreed on whether, during an *am furis*, a man climbed onto the roof (to shake the house) or whether the structure was too weak to carry an adult.

Anir men repeatedly stressed that each *matambia* (and every leader) had its ‘own ways of doing things’ (in Tok Pisin: wanwan i gat tingting bilong em yet). This also means that sometimes men’s houses are built and *kastam* held that ‘look different’. One example was given to me by Neantele and Langgar (both born around the time of WWII). The feast was held when they were young and was organized by Karat, a highly renowned leader from the village of Banakin, to commemorate a group of deceased people who had been buried in the graveyard there in the course of the preceding years.

The house had the rectangular shape of a *biakis*, but was ‘very long indeed’ and featured five male carved posts, or figures, that represented Palangbolbol, Toeni, Nediis, Semian and Roi – all of whom were being honoured in the feast – as well as a carved female figure in a crouching position that represented Tinusir, Palangbolbol’s deceased mother. His image actually consisted of a carved and painted human figure on which the exhumed skull of Palangbolbol had been placed after it had been overmodelled with *Parinarium laurinum* putty and painted. Around the figure’s neck the deceased’s necklace featuring a (Christian) cross was hung, and a loincloth was draped around its hips.

Like in all rituals, the posts and figures marked the recipients of pigs; what was special about this *kastam* was that Karat not only distributed killed and cooked pigs to the guests, but additionally provided each recipient with a live animal.



Fig. 171 Men's house posts collected by Schlaginhaufen in 1908 on Tanga; he also collected several posts on Anir which are now in the Ethnologisches Museum Berlin; unfortunately they have never been published. Photo published in Schlaginhaufen 1959, fig. 35

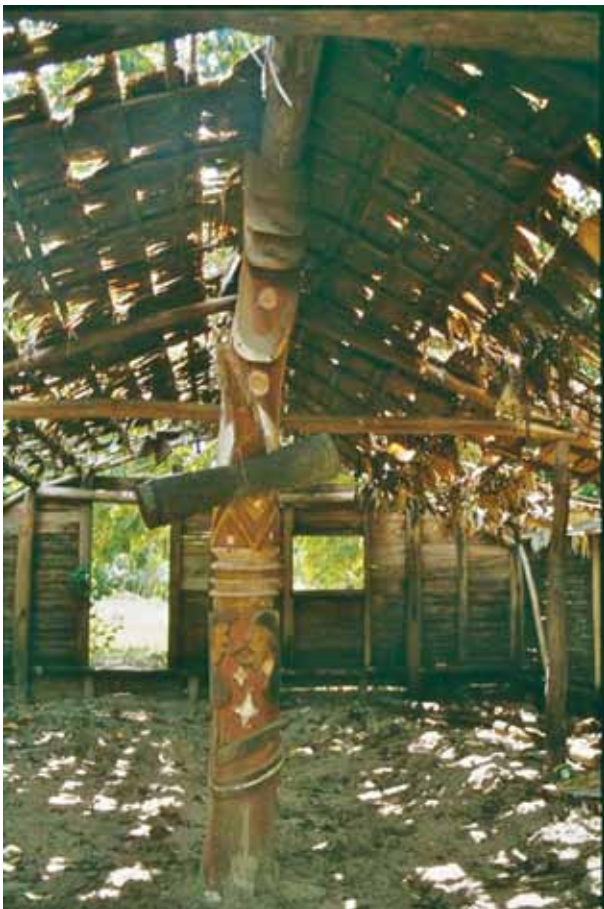


Fig. 172 Derelict men's house in Waramintin in the village of Naliu, 14 August 2000

II. CLASSIFICATION OF *AM FURIS* ACCORDING TO RITUAL CONTEXT

One way of classifying *am furis* takes into account the ritual context, that is, the occasion and the stage of the commemorative cycle in which it is performed. The categorization below follows indigenous terminology and includes five sub-types.

AM FURIS LO KENIT

Kenit is an Anir term used to denote the spirit, or soul, of a deceased person. The expression *am furis lo kenit* is used for performances that are staged during funerals.

AM FURIS LO SO PUEK

The term *so puek* is used to denote the ceremonial act by which a pig is offered by a supporting group and handed over to the organizers of the funeral or commemorative ritual. *So puek* performed during funerals never featured songs. Here the *am furis* always consisted of a standard, ritualized behaviour: the presenter would touch the pig (that was lying on the ground) with one foot and then explain in the whose name the animal was being offered and for what reasons. In other contexts, for example *so puek* connected with an *alal fajasu* (the climactic and final feast of the mortuary cycle), *am furis lo so puek* were performed either with a chorus or featuring a dramatic action.

AM FURIS LO FESE BO

This term refers to *am furis* that are performed at the ceremony of *fese bo*, the distribution of pigs on the day before the major ritual feast (cf. Chapter Three).¹ After the pigs have been arranged in a line in front of the men's house, but before distribution, an *am furis* chorus might be sung. On Anir, the *am furis lo fese bo* is the only one that can be performed by women (cf. fig. 109).

AM FURIS LO BLA

This term literally means '*am furis* of the men's house' and refers to performances held on the main feast day just before the food is distributed. As the name implies, this sub-

¹ This ceremony might alternatively be called *fese kant* and, accordingly, the *am furis* that goes with it can be called *am furis lo fese kant*.

type is associated directly with the men's house and therefore with the rituals of the second and third phase of the mortuary cycle. An *am furis* of this type can take place at rituals such as *kepufu andu ma antamen* and *taif lo panatof* (in the second phase) and at rituals like *en balam bia* and *alal fafasu* (in the third phase). It is this sub-type that is most closely associated with the ideal type of *am furis*; it almost invariably includes a chorus. Furthermore, there appear to exist certain rules, or at least conventions, according to which specific rituals of the cycle should encompass an *am furis lo bia* with a lineage representative climbing onto the roof of the men's house. This is definitely the case in the two final ceremonial feasts of *pok bif* (*en balam bia* and *alal fafasu*, cf. also Foster 1995: 132-33, 135). A further event that seems to be associated with a lineage member walking across the ridgepole is *taif lo panatof*, the symbolic destruction of the deceased's house and the ritual cleansing of the place where he/she lived.² In comparison, rituals like the lifting of taboos from relatives after a death usually included an *am furis* choir but never a lineage member climbing onto the men's house.

AM FURIS LO FELE WOK

Fele wok means 'to pay the bride wealth'. This action is usually incorporated into a ritual of the commemorative cycle, preferably the final feast, *alal fafasu*. On two occasions, however, I witnessed the bride wealth being handed over in a separate and independent ceremony. Both of these ceremonies took place in the village of Warambana (Ambitlei) and it is possible that this practice is characteristic only of this area. In both cases the *am furis* performance did not feature a chorus; instead they included a number of quite elaborate dramatic scenes.

2 However, there was one case when this ritual was carried out on a very small scale and involved only a short speech instead of an *am furis* with a chorus.

III. *AM FURIS* PERFORMED AT MATAMBI

This *am furis* took place on 28 December in the village of Bulam in the course of the commemorative feast that Francis Neantele held for his deceased father, Simon Neantele. The circumstances and further details are described in Chapter Five in the section that deals with the emic classification of *am furis*. What I do not mention there was that Francis Neantele also held a *fufen paket* ceremony to thank the old leader Tomonmon for the care and support Francis had received from him as his adopted son. In addition, Francis handed two large paddles that had been in the possession of his father over to a young classificatory SZ. These paddles were about 1.6 m high and were used by Simon Neantele when he participated in or organized journeys to other islands of New Ireland in the large ocean-going canoes called *mon*. According to Francis, giving the two paddles to his young relative Batsok (the son of one of the Banakin leaders) was a call to stage a mortuary feast where he should burn and destroy the two paddles and later establish himself as a bigman.

Fese fam fu fi (26/12/2001)

Joachim Tokas

Rek iau, rek iau, rek iau

Simon ma Palal, kamu sangfi

ini ges kertul iniam kausi iwa?

Ges keretul e mati kaus esam sak.

Rek iau, rek iau, rek iau

Simon and Palal, do you two think

that the joy and good life of the three of us still remains?

The joy of the four of us here has ended,
it has become sour/bad [it is definitely gone].

Francis Neantele

Papa, ti fasap kama ma kama ku bingian,

Kais, ti fasap kama ma kama ku bingian.

Dad, do you understand that the two of us will
dance and be joyful again?

Kais, do you understand that the two of us will
dance and be joyful again?

Sunmaii (28/12/2001, Francis Neantele)

U-isne tuaklik-ik e amtek ti tum lara

gina male gi-i-i-i,

kara kutal giinva namiri u-i-i.

Le kara utubil ma eu tamu u-i-i?

Hey brothers, there are no more bigmen
here at this place.

The four of us will be ignorant and confused after
them [i.e. since they have died].

So when we go wrong, what will we do?

I-ingita ri giüwa ring giau farir nge ni u-i-i.

If they were still among us, they would bring things in order again.

Am furis song (18/12/2001, choir)
(1-3)

U-u-u, le-u, u-i, le-e, ni, le-u-ni.

Are Neantele, o purpuris kemem,

Kemem na anman taufi,

kemem enen kaok.

Arombi akte kemem,

kemem ku rop puek.

Kemem ku fafang,

kemem ku enen niver.

Leno-i-ing gam na berat liklik gamam bi rop puek. And you small boys, all of you all will come as well.

Kerer ku te as ufu e polpolon manlam, ku taraf uram

U-u-u, le-u, u-i, le-e, ni, le-u-ni.

Finally, Neantele, you have become our ornament
[you are ashaming us]

We, the big birds of the flock,

we will eat until it gets dark.

Yu try to us lift us, (and)

all of us will come.

We will assemble, (and)

we will eat the words [listen to the *am furis*].

And you small boys, all of you all will come as well.

We will destroy the nest of the see eagle, we will scatter it.

Question (Joachim Tokas)

(1-3) *Ua, se toto?*

Oh, who is calling?

Answer (Bernard Sinang)

(1-3) *Iau, ia toto, ma tiririk ma bakok ma teuten wagii lo betkin giü, ri kasu of sing iau.*

Me, I am calling, and all the birds* of this beach here, they got up and flew away from me.

Response (Joachim Tokas)

(1-2) *Ma o la nil u ia mang?*

And you? Where have you been wasting your time?

(3) *Eh, ma obuk la entirik ulo keu san waran male una Mosbi,*

o kam, peteng ini, o kam ti par lo tamam,

ma tamam e fes sam kanek wagii ma fat mikit una

Ampelpau kabuk la kemi.

Eh, and you have only eaten in Port Moresby, which has become your home town,

you didn't come here to see your father,

and now your father, he has gone on top [to heaven] and the black stone at Ampelpau has swallowed him.

Counter question (Bernard Sinang)

(3) *Ma e siaro, ma e iaku masa?*

Will (the sea) calm down, and may I come ashore?

Final statement (Francis Neantele)

Eh, fatiki bok ma o ku wes aunaf! Siaro balik o ku filau masa.

O pu!

You wait a bit and you count the waves! When the sea calms down a little, you may run ashore.

You come down!

* *Tiririk, bakok* and *teuten* are birds often to be found on the beach.

IV. *AM FURIS* PERFORMED AT WARANTABAN

This *am furis* was performed on 10 January 2001 in the context of the *alal fufasu* final feast, that was held in commemoration of Guamanwok, a former leader of the Ku clan in Warantaban (hamlet and village). Guamanwok, who had had no children himself, used to be the classificatory mother's mother's brother of John Folen and his three brothers Charles Sugoi, Joseph Maul and Norbert Neguam.

The *kastam* was held in the name of these four young men. It was organized by Folen and Maul with the support of Maul's father John Simail (originally from Lavongai/New Hanover). In the course of the ritual, other members of the kin group were commemorated as well: Maul's mother, Maria Mariot, and one of his classificatory brothers-in-law, Thomas Mone. Furthermore, the basket of Folen's young sister's brother, Emanuel Mitir, a school boy who had died when the *MV Feni* capsized, was burnt. On the occasion Maul and his brothers also presented their father Simail with *bikuf baling*, a compensatory payment to thank him for the care and support he gave them. In the course of the feast, the *tubuan* Kanai danced. The mask originally had belonged to Guamanwok and was now passed on to Maul and Neguam.

Another important aspect of the ritual involved a large, gabled old men's house post. It previously had supported the roofs of two former men's houses of the group which had stood in the village of Warambana and in Warantaban *kem respectively* (men's house posts are not destroyed, but left as commemorative signs and can be used again). The hamlet of Warantaban had remained unpopulated for many years and one of the aims of Maul and his brothers was to secure land rights for their little sister's son Winfried Taiman by erecting a new men's house. Using the old house post underscored this claim.

The *am furis* is of the type called *am furis na lugu*. Folen and Maul explained that they had chosen it because they had no bigman to lead and instruct them, and because their *matambia* had been in decline over the last generations due to a lack of descendants. The *am furis* featured no changes as the recycling of the house post and the appearance of the *tubuan* Kanai delivered enough references and allusions to the past.

The *sunmaii* contains a phrase, *mismis keltot*, that literally means 'to count the stars', but also has the connotation of having been expelled. The two lines of the preliminary song therefore can be translated as 'The boys are counting the stars in this place, they clarify (or: discuss) who will settle here in the future'; but it also has the alternative reading of 'The clan brothers are estranged and the children (of the lineage)

have been expelled; you have driven them out, so who is going to stay here now?’ As Simail and Folen pointed out, the *sunmaii* was not chosen because it alluded to a conflict, but because it was meant as a warning not to start arguing at a time when land in general was becoming scarce and the lineage was growing again.

Sunmaii (John Folen)

*I-is berat gau mismis keltot mating wagii,
fasap se mang ma kam u kis, u-i-i.
I-is berat gau mismis keltot ma ting wagii,
fasap se mang makam u kis, u-i-i.*

The boys are counting the stars of this place,
they clarify who will settle here in the future.
The boys are counting the stars of this place,
they clarify who will settle here in the future.

Am furis song (1-3)

*U-u-u, le-u, u-i, le-e, ui, le-u-ui.
Lugu-u. Lugu i tengteng,
lugu i tengteng.
Iau gii, ia sau bim sigit bing malo kia-r, le
u-ung.
Iam su tengteng
iana neng na funmat lugu.
Iam su tengteng
iana neng na funmat lugu.*

*U-u-u, le-u, u-i, le-e, ui, le-u-ui.
An orphan. An orphan is crying,
an orphan is crying.
Me here, I am the one of us here who is all lost and
alone, le u-ung
I am just crying now
because I am one of those orphaned clans.
I am just crying now
because I am one of those orphaned clans.*

Question (Charles Sungoi)

(1-3) *Ua, o tengteng use sa?*

Hey, why are you crying?

Answer (Norbert Neguam)

(1-3) *Ia tengteng use funmat lo iau
ri sam rop kosing iau,
ma bis ka tengteng lo iau.*

I am crying because my clan mates
have passed away and left me,
and because I am now totally covered up by thorny
lianas.

Final statement

*Ung kaltu kamu tengteng use sa?
Ma tanga matuk wagii,
ri sam rop.
Kamum pu!*

You two men, why are you crying?
And all the old (knowledgeable) men of this place,
they have passed away.
You two come down!

V. SANGSANGMAT SONGS

The performance during which the following songs were presented took place in the hamlet of Silalangit, Balngit village, 2 November 2001. It was staged by members of the *taraiu* of Limigitgit under the leadership of Benjamin Mano and Jacob Ngurngurus.

First part (prelude) – *seksek kale*

Lili-o-e, lili-o-e, lililio-e-lililio-e sangsangmat

Lili-o-e is an onomatopoetic word without further meaning; *sangsangmat* designates the mask, the spiritual being and the public performance which is announced by continually repeating this line.

Second part – *iri e u*

Iang gi la tuni, iang gi la tune

I will go fishing, I will go fishing

Iang gi la tuni, iang gi la tune

I will go fishing, I will go fishing

Iau malira le, iang gi la tune

I will cast a spell (love magic) on you, I will go fishing

Iau malira le, iang gi la tune

I will cast a spell (love magic) on you, I will go fishing

The two central terms are *tune*, an expression that means to go fishing, and *malira*, the generic New Ireland term for love magic. What the song alludes to is a certain type of love magic associated with *sangsangmat*; when the singer – a man who has been initiated and has rights to *sangsangmat* – performs this type of love magic, the woman he has enchanted will think of him whenever he goes fishing.

Third part – *iri e tul*

Le sangmat mae toro kiap malu, le sangmat toro kiap malu,

Sangsangmat looks for the vagina of women, *sangsangmat* finds the vagina of women

Malu le sangmat mae toro kiap malu nang go e sangsang ma tuna-i-i-i

The covered *sangsangmat* finds the vagina of women, and it thinks of me.

Sangsangmat here is shortened to *sangmat*; *toro* means vagina, *malu* is the word for ‘cover’, and *kiap* (like *ne*) is a prefix for male names. *Kiap malu* according to Damian Neanawi refers to a covered up man or men and in the context of this song (that is, together

with *toro*/vagina) designates a woman or women in general; another reading is that the *sangsangmat* spirit in its disguise as a beautiful human being (in this case in the appearance of a man) begins to search for a woman – either one who has committed adultery and whom he wants to punish, or one he has cast his eye on and wants to seduce. The last part of the song (*e sangsang ma tuna*) is a mixture of Tok Ples Anir – *sangsang* means ‘to think (of)’ – and Kuanua – *tuna* means ‘me’. This bit reflects the point of view of a woman who feels the powers of *sangsangmat* working on her.

VI. KENIT SONGS

The performance during which the following songs were presented took place in the hamlet of Matambi, Bulam village, 28 December 2001. It was staged by a group of men under the leadership of the brothers Toilik and Langgar, who are members and owners of *kenit*.

First part (prelude) – *seksek kale*

I-i-lupiri voivoi-i-i-voivoi e lupiri ma lupiri-i-e, lupiri voivoi-i-e ma lupiri

Like in the case of the *sangsangmat* performance explained in Appendix V, in this *kenit* performance, too, the first part announced the spiritual forces and secrets the performance deals with. Toilik and his friend, the *tena buai* Kiapbubuk, said that they did not know the meaning of this line nor of the other two parts. Damian Neanawi, a Balngit senior, whom I also consulted, explained that *lupiri* and *voivoi* both were archaic Anir words; *voivoi* once was used to refer to ‘things that are bad or dangerous’ (*mok e sak*); *lupiri* is a term that specified this in the sense of ‘things dangerous for women’ (*e sak lo re gelefin*).

Second part – *iri e u*

I-e pain kona mari, pain kona mari

Pain kona mari, pain ta ringgot, pain kona mari ta ringgot

Here, Neanawi explained, the expression *pain kona mari* most likely refers to the bullroarer (*tangalaoup*), the secret instrument of *kenit* that represents the voices of the mythical sisters who are said to be the founders and source of power (*ingal, turangan*) of *kenit*. Neanawi pointed out that he did not know the exact meaning of each single word as they were ancient Anir terms, but that they clearly referred to something that is secret and has to remain in the bush, something that cannot be seen in the village and by non-initiated persons. *Ringgot* is the word everyone (including me) understood, it means ‘knife’; the meaning of this word is readily understood: it is a warning telling those who do not obey the taboos that they will be punished.

Third part – *iri e tul*

Sangmat maturok Malum na angou e susuar matul mari ke-a-u

Sangmat maturok Malum na angou e susuar matul mari ke-a-u

According to Neanawi, whose wife was from the Siar-Lak area, these two lines consist of old southern New Ireland words. Malum is the name of a river south of Muliama (that is, in the Konomala area). Each line translates as ‘At the river Malum something came up, which the three of us cannot talk about to others [that is, not in the presence of non-initiated people].’ *Sangmat*: at the river; *maturok*: we three men; *na angou*: we can not talk about it; *susuar*: it came up, came into being; *matul*: we three; *mari*: they/ to them. These lines kept being repeated; occasionally the names of the two sisters – Timpai and Nuknuk – were mentioned.

VII. THE ORIGIN OF THE *TUBUAN*

The *tubuan* was originally ‘discovered’, that is, created by women and subsequently taken away from them by the men. They killed the women, appropriated the knowledge about the *tubuan* and made it their own secret. This rather familiar pan-New Guinea version of the men’s appropriation of creative powers that originally belonged to the women I heard from several men, among them the leaders of the *tubuan* lodges of Nanma’I, Petrus Doli, and Satulai, Patrik Kameta.

The *tarain* of Limigitgit is generally acknowledged as the oldest on Anir. According to their senior leader, Jacob Ngurngurus, it was here that the *tubuan* once was created. After the men had got hold of it, they awakened the *tubuan* themselves for the first time:

And they did it well, they raised its power, they made the first mask, painted it nicely, and they also organized a *singsing*. After the performance they dismantled the mask, but they only took away the feathers and cover, they did not take apart the frame. They thought this was enough to destroy its power; so they simply threw the frame into the sea. But, really, they had no idea. They had raised this thing, and it was alive now; it was strong and had its own thoughts and agenda. It used the power of the *iniat* to swim all the way to Point Siar [Cape St George] where it went ashore. There some men found it [that is, the frame] and used it again. They made a new cover and painted it, but they did it differently and that’s why the Siar *tubuan* look different from the Anir ones. They called the *tubuan* that came ashore at Siar Tananir, ‘man from Anir’, because it came from here. On Anir they did not raise the *tubuan* for some time, and in the next generation men from Siar came with the *tubuan* because they thought we did not have it. But in reality it originally came from here, it’s an Anir thing and its power still stays.

VIII. *TEDAK AND KIPUNG*

Richard Parkinson, one of the early German colonial writers, noted about Anir (1999[1907]: 284): “On Aneri they have no characteristic masks. From coconut shells, however, they make a type of spectacles, to which they attach a flowing beard of plant fibres.” Schlaginhaufen (1959), who in 1908 spent roughly a month as a member of the Deutsche Marine-Expedition on Anir, also does not mention any masks. However, Parkinson, Schlaginhaufen, and others collected bark cloth masks called *tedak* (Fig. 173). These painted bark cloth masks can today be found in several museums, specifically in Berlin, Dresden and Stuttgart. All except one were collected on Tanga, but according to the files of the Linden-Museum in Stuttgart another seven masks of this type also used to be part of the collection; these were acquired by Governor Hahl in 1910 on Anir (cf. table 8). Unfortunately they do not seem to be in the Linden-Museum any more, and the circumstances under which they were lost or sold are unclear. What is clear is that *tedak* were masks used by Anir islanders in the early 20th century.

My fieldwork revealed that a large variety of masks are, or were, made and used in public performances. Only one old man was able to recall the partial masks made from coconut shell mentioned by Parkinson, but he could neither remember their name nor could he say anything about their exact meaning (he had no rights to them). However, he mentioned that they were used for an entertaining dance and that they were associated with a bird called *pulus* that lives in the bush. On the basis of the classification by contemporary Anirians, two main categories of masks and public performances may be distinguished: ‘entertaining’ ones, on the one hand, and ‘dangerous’ or ‘powerful’ ones, on the other. The latter are operated by secret societies and associated with strict forms of ownership, while the former are less restricted and artists seem to enjoy considerable freedom in creating new forms. The *tedak* bark-cloth masks found in Western collections belong to the ‘entertaining’ masks. At least nine sub-types are distinguished. One of the sub-types is called *fiu* or *puk fiu*, and there also is a wooden mask that goes by this term. All other wooden masks known on Anir are called by the generic term *kipung*. Whenever informants discussed the various masks, they said that *tedak* and *kipung* were ‘for fun’, in other words, they stressed their theatrical function and the fact that they, as a rule, were not harmful.

Tedak

Today *tedak* masks are made only very rarely.¹ Adults and especially elderly people still know them but this knowledge seems to be restricted to merely naming sub-types, to descriptions of their general appearance and to how the various masked figures perform. Interpretations of particular designs were hard to get, and showing photos of *tedak* masks collected at the beginning of the 20th century was not very successful. Quite often informants were either not sure which sub-type the mask shown on a particular photo represented, or different men gave diverging interpretations. There may be various reasons for this: firstly, all the masks represented in museums were collected at the beginning of the 20th century. Innovation and change that has taken place in the meantime might have led to slightly different forms, so that earlier examples are not easily recognized or classified. Secondly, and this is in conformity with the first point, men manufacturing *tedak* today seem to enjoy a considerable degree of freedom in creating their masks. Thirdly, informants claimed that some of the sub-types are very similar in their design and appearance and therefore difficult to distinguish just on the basis of photographs, without actually seeing the performance.

Tedak masks are considered by the islanders to be an art form indigenous to Anir and Tanga. The masks are made of various plant materials, and almost always the construction consists of painted bark cloth from a breadfruit tree over a frame that usually consists of a basket made from palm leaf (figs. 175, 176). Most of the *tedak* found in museums have large ears pointing backwards and a long protruding plate-like structure underneath the mouth, which informants on Anir used to call the mask's lower jaw (mandible) or chin. In some of the museum examples this structure is missing. This does not mean a loss or damage as, according to documentation, that is, in descriptions as well as in masks collected on Anir, not all of the *tedak* sub-types have this protruding chin or lower jaw.

Tedak is a generic term, and two things are important to note: first, all informants on Anir agreed that the name *tedak* stands for this particular kind of mask and does not refer to some other entity, for example, to a certain kind of spirit. Secondly, there are a number of individually named sub-types. Each mask representing such a sub-type has its own design and is linked to a characteristic way of performance. The various sub-types are loosely associated with the spirit world. Parkinson (1999[1907]: 283) wrote with regard to the *tedak* masks of Tanga that they were made by artists called *anterere* in a small

1 No performance was planned during my fieldwork, but seven masks were made by various men from Babase and Ambitlei for the Papua New Guinea National Museum and Art Gallery as well as for the Museum der Kulturen Basel, Switzerland.

hut in the bush known as *borong fel*.² Women, under pain of death, were neither allowed to come close to this place of manufacture nor were they allowed to see the masks before the day of the performance. The identity of the mask wearers was kept secret from the women, as the *tedak* were considered to be embodied spirits. Still, according to Parkinson the *tedak* had nothing to do with honouring the dead, but were used at the conclusion of planting and to celebrate the harvest of the food crops instead.

On the basis of these statements, Gunn (1997: 72) comes to the conclusion that “they [that is, *tedak* masks] were employed in the process of stimulating the life force or spiritual fertility of food plants.” Confronted with Parkinson’s statements about *tedak* as well as with Gunn’s interpretation, Anir men admitted that perhaps their ancestors believed that the *tedak* were representations of awe-inspiring or dangerous protagonists of the spirit world. However, the spirits the various sub-types today are (and in the past presumably were) associated with are bush spirits of the category called *masalai* in Tok Pisin. These have little to do with stimulating the fertility of the gardens, as, for the latter, and especially in garden magic, it is another type of spirit that is invoked.³ Today the *tedak* masks are neither regarded as embodied spirits nor as generating the spiritual fertility of food crops. Parkinson described the performance of *tedak* masks on Tanga as follows:

At a ceremony, first a single mask appears, shows himself to the participants, both men and women, then disappears to summon a second mask. After they have both shown themselves, they go off to collect a third mask, and so it continues, until all the masks are gathered on the ceremonial site, where they present a group dance and then silently disappear ... (Parkinson 1999[1907]: 283-284)

He is quoted here because the first part of his statement is more or less congruent with the my own findings on Anir, while the second part runs counter to these. According to information I received in 2002, *tedak* masks are made in secrecy and appear in public during the preparation for the large final feast of the mortuary cycle. The masks appear several times during the last weeks before the *alal fajasu* takes place. They first show themselves in the gardens where the food for the coming feast is being grown, when the crop starts to ripen; it is the women working there that usually get to see them first. Later the *tedak* appear again when the most important food, two types of yam, is harvested. The *tedak* come to surprise and chase away people in the gardens; later, they also show themselves in the village. Their last appearance takes place during the days when the large

2 In the indigenous language of Tanga and Anir *borong* means ‘small, little’ while *fel* is a generic term for ‘house, hut, building’.

3 In the language used on Anir, bush spirits generically are called *tara*, the spirits invoked in garden magic are mainly *warrantara* (*waram*: “base, root, origin”). These *warrantara* are considered to be spirits of ancestors that had special powers and knowledge.

feast meal is being communally prepared in the hamlet where the new men's house has been erected. However, the masks do not perform on the day of its actual opening when large quantities of ceremonial food are distributed and consumed. When appearing in the village the *tedak* show themselves successively as described by Parkinson. Ideally, as many as possible of the known sub-types are produced.

Although Parkinson's statement about the *tedak* being used for dances corresponds to inventory cards of some of the *tedak* masks collected by Hahl and Schlaginhaufen labelled as "dance masks", I never heard that the *tedak* come to perform a dance and, at least on Anir today, no *tedak* songs are known. Whenever the mask wearers appear, they come in order to make fun of, and to chase, the villagers. Each character has a distinctive way of performing and most of them carry attributes which they use to attack the onlookers. Depending on the sub-type, this might be a knife with which they try to administer cuts to the people's clothes or skin, a hook to get hold of their baskets or strip them of their loin cloths, or a piece of wood to throw at them, etc. To get angry at a *tedak*, even to try to oppose it, is taboo and customarily the consequence would be a compensation payment in the form of shell money or a pig. As mentioned above, there are various *tedak* sub-types; these comprise the following masks:

The one called *ngak* was described as being the mask that should appear first in the village and subsequently fetch the other masks from the bush. A mask from Tanga in the Neprajzi Muzeum in Budapest⁴ was classified as being of the sub-type *ngak*. The significant features of *ngak* are its deformed mouth, a round (not elongated) head and no, or relatively small, ears. Some uncertainty existed about the jaw plate, which apparently is not always, or not necessarily, a feature of *ngak*. The *ngak* figure, unlike the following *tedak*, does not come to chase people. Instead, it murmurs hardly intelligible words and begs for food and betel nuts. A *ngak* acts like a wounded or sick man, on the whole it is a pitiful creature whose behaviour is supposed to deceive and distract the audience from the *tedak* masks that appear later.

The figure called *paklun siksikbor* (fig. 174) is supposed to show itself either with or just after *ngak*. It is one of those masks that does not have a jaw plate, but a large round, bald head with small ears. The painted designs may vary, depending on the artist. The wearer of the *paklun siksikbor* mask may attach sharpened bamboo tubes to his fingers and uses his claws to scratch people's skin. Apart from that he usually carries a basket filled with some shells and stones. This basket he uses to beg for food and he shakes it to announce the appearance of the masks that now follow.

This is the group consisting of *solis*, *tunbes*, *toromalailai*, *kermelululu* and *sikin maket*,

4 Registered as 54329, published in Nicolas 2000: 119, fig. 94 and in Gunn and Peltier 2006, pl. 49.

which sometimes are also called the ‘true *tedak*’. These masks have features most of the museum examples show, that is, a painted bark cloth from a breadfruit tree over a basket made of palm leaf, large ears pointing backwards and a long, protruding, plate-like structure underneath the mouth. The wearers of *tunbes* and *solis* both carry knives with which they try to inflict small injuries on people in the audience. *Solis* is described as less dangerous in this respect, hiding the knife in a red cordyline leaf and more often just running around frightening people instead of really trying to cut their skin.

Tunbes (figs. 164, 180), it was said, was also used independently on two different types of occasion in former times. In the first, the adults of a village or hamlet could decide that their children should be collectively punished for wrong behaviour and have a *tunbes* mask appear to teach them better manners. Secondly, in the case of dispute, the aggrieved party could send a *tunbes* that would then make cuts to the accused person’s body. This act was equivalent to making the statement that, in the specific argument, the group making use of the *tunbes* mask considered itself innocent or wrongly treated.

The *sikin maket* mask, which visually is said to be very similar to the *solis* mask, represents a fisherman; its painted design includes a stylized frigate bird. The wearer usually carries a fishing net, a fishing basket and a bamboo rod when appearing in the village. The figure runs around chasing the villagers and uses his implements to try to hook people’s clothes or baskets. In the course of its appearance the *sikin maket* also walks out to the reef, imitating a man fishing or a woman collecting shells, and chases people who happen to be on the reef. Descriptions of *toromalailai* and *kermelululu* were less detailed. The tool distinguishing *toromalailai* from the other masks is a long barbed liana fastened to a stick and used by the mask wearer to catch the villagers’ baskets or clothes. *Kermelululu* is said to have an enormously long tongue that may extend as far as the mask wearer’s knees.

Unlike most other *tedak* masks, the wearer of the *paklun pul* mask – literally this means ‘dog’s head’ – neither really chases the villagers once he appears in the hamlet, nor does he carry anything with which to beat the people he encounters. Instead *paklun pul* imitates the behaviour of a dog in that he barks, runs up and down the square, jumps up to a person, licks him or her and occasionally tries to urinate on somebody. According to Francis Neantele, who used to wear a *paklun pul* mask when he was a young boy, this particular mask also consisted of a basket frame covered with painted bark cloth. The mask was constructed in such a way as to represent a dog as closely as possible and therefore had a separately attached mouth made from liana and bark cloth.

Visually as well as thematically the mask called *fin* or *puk fin* differs slightly from the other *tedak* masks. The only known early example classified as (*puk*) *fin* is a mask in the

museum in Dresden.⁵ It features an unusually long, pointed head and although it consists of painted bark cloth, the latter is fastened to a frame made from a spathe of either a wild betel or a sago palm. The mask has a beard made of fibres, two medium-sized rings are attached to represent the ears, and bamboo tubes are fastened to it to mark tubular-shaped eyes. It also has a tongue that consists of a red strip of bark cloth hanging from the mask's small but open mouth.

The tube eyes as well as the tongue (which, according to information collected on Anir, should be double or split) were said to be typical features of *fiu*. It was also mentioned that sometimes pig tusks were attached to the mouth to indicate the *fiu*'s teeth. According to local belief, *fiu* are said to be the spirits of people who died in a fight, or from accidents. *Fiu* are malevolent spirits who are able to fly. Their abodes are large trees in the bush called *sabaf*, and the *fiu* are said to hang in them upside down like bats. When a man wearing a *fiu* mask gives his performance he announces his appearance by repeatedly crying “*fuk iau, fuk iau, fuk iau*” like a *fiu* spirit. In imitation of the spirits he pretends to fly, running around and moving his arms like a bird's wings. The mask wearer also climbs up one or the other tree and hangs upside down from one of the branches. To indicate that *fiu* are malevolent and men's enemies, the performer throws sticks and sharp pieces of wood at whomever he is able to reach. With regard to its visual appearance and according to local interpretations, (*puk*) *fiu* masks differ slightly from the other *tedak*. *Fiu* is also the only *tedak* mask of which a counterpart in the shape of a wooden mask is known. However, in cases where a wooden *fiu* is manufactured, the masker will make his appearance solo, in a different kind of performance (fig. 165 shows a wooden *fiu* mask).

Seen historically, (*puk*) *fiu* was probably a separate category of mask. Primarily, it is only *fiu* that represent a certain type of spirit of the dead; all other *tedak* are related to the category of *masalai* or bush spirits. Secondly, the group of *solis*, *tumbes*, etc. are sometimes considered to be the ‘true *tedak*’, indicating other masks to be of a different character. This corresponds with the third point, namely, the fact that apart from *paklun pul*, the dog's mask which was always mentioned in connection with *tedak*, other animal masks are also known, but are not necessarily associated with *tedak*. These masks represent *bakou* (the shark), *bo* (the pig), *bek* (flying fox) and *ampongok* (wild fowl), or even animals that are not indigenous to Anir but are common in other parts of Papua New Guinea, such as crocodiles or cassowaries. These masks seem to be constructed in a similar way and consist of similar materials as *tedak* masks, and they also may appear together with the latter.

5 Registered as 12129 in the Museum für Völkerkunde Dresden, the mask was collected by Richard Parkinson before 1898. It was published by Foy (1900: pl. XV, fig. 4) and recently by Gunn and Peltier (2006: pl. 47).



Fig. 173 Two men with *tedak* masks now in the Ethnologisches Museum Berlin; photographed by Richard Schilling, Deutsche Marine-Expedition 1908, in Muliama; published in Schlaginhaufen 1959, fig. 10



Fig. 174 Joe Lugutele performing with a *paklun siksikbor* mask made by Bernard Komgoi, Funsil, village of Balngit, 2 June 2002



Fig. 175 Joachim Tokas, Gerard Tofe and Alois Katkat (from left to right) putting the bark cloth cover over the frame of a *tedak* mask they are making. Warambana [kem](#), 29 June 2002



Fig. 176 Tofe and Katkat with the *tedak* to which they attached eyes carved from coconut shell and a nose



Fig. 177 Dyes and colours: white lime powder, soot from burnt leaves or coconut fibre mixed with water or lime juice, seed capsules of the 'lipstick tree' *Bixa orellana*, curcuma roots and a large root of either a hibiscus or a mango species. Warambana [kem](#), 11 July 2002



Fig. 178 Katkat and Kosmas Fereti mixing the colours



Fig. 179 Tofe painting the tongue of the *tedak*



Fig. 180 Katkat and Tofas with two of the young helpers and the finished *tedak* mask of the subtype *tunbes*. Warambana kem, 13 July 2002

Table 8 *Tedak* masks in museum collections

Owner	Reg. Nr.	Origin
Australia, Sydney, Australian Museum	E 91556	Tanga
Australia, Sydney, Australian Museum	E 91838	Tanga
Germany, Bremen, Übersee-Museum	D 01744	Tanga or Anir (Feni) ?
Germany, Berlin, Ethnologisches Museum	VI 13542	Tanga
Germany, Berlin, Ethnologisches Museum	VI 14766	Tanga
Germany, Berlin, Ethnologisches Museum	VI 15165	Tanga
Germany, Berlin, Ethnologisches Museum	VI 36871	Tanga
Germany, Berlin, Ethnologisches Museum	VI 36872	Tanga
Germany, Berlin, Ethnologisches Museum	VI 42157 *	Southern New Ireland or Tanga
Germany, Berlin, Ethnologisches Museum	VI 42158 *	Southern New Ireland or Tanga
Germany, Berlin, Ethnologisches Museum	VI 51238	Tanga or Anir (Feni) ?
Germany, Dresden, Museum für Völkerkunde	12129	Tanga
Germany, Dresden, Museum für Völkerkunde	12130 (lost or sold?)	Tanga
Germany, Dresden, Museum für Völkerkunde	12131	Tanga
Germany, Dresden, Museum für Völkerkunde	12132	Tanga
Germany, Stuttgart, Linden-Museum	45814	Tanga, Tefa
Germany, Stuttgart, Linden-Museum	45816	Tanga, Boang
Germany, Stuttgart, Linden-Museum	45817 (lost or sold)	Tanga
Germany, Stuttgart, Linden-Museum	64995 (lost or sold)	Anir (Feni), Babase, Balngit
Germany, Stuttgart, Linden-Museum	64996	Tanga
Germany, Stuttgart, Linden-Museum	64997	Anir (Feni), Babase, Naliu
Germany, Stuttgart, Linden-Museum	64998 (lost or sold)	Anir (Feni), Babase, Naliu
Germany, Stuttgart, Linden-Museum	64999 (lost or sold)	Anir (Feni), Ambitle, Natong
Germany, Stuttgart, Linden-Museum	65000 (lost or sold)	Anir (Feni), Babase,
Germany, Stuttgart, Linden-Museum	65001 (lost or sold)	Anir (Feni), Babase, Waramintin
Germany, Stuttgart, Linden-Museum	65002 (lost or sold)	Anir (Feni), Babase, Naliu
Germany, Stuttgart, Linden-Museum	65003 (lost or sold)	Anir (Feni), Babase, Naliu
Hungary, Budapest, Neprajzi Muzeum	54329	Tanga
Switzerland, Geneva, Barbier Muller Museum	BMG 4321 (ex Dresden, MVK, reg. nr. 12133)	Tanga

* VI 42157 and VI 42158 in the museum in Berlin stylistically and in terms of construction and materials are a mixture of Tanga *tedak* masks and bark cloth masks recorded as *lali* from Muliama in southern New Ireland. (Cf. VI 33710 and VI 33712 in the museum in Berlin, collected by members of the Deutsche Marine Expedition and

	Field collector	Local name	Publication
	Bell, F.L.S., 1930		
	Bell, F.L.S., 1930		
	Winne, 2. Offizier der Helgo-land, Norddeutscher Lloyd		
	Umlauff before 1900		Helfrich 1973: fig. 148
	Schmidt before 1900		Helfrich 1973: fig. 144
	Korv. Kapt. Rüdiger before 1900;		Helfrich 1973: fig. Helfrich 1973: fig. 145
	Schlaginhaufen, D.M.E. 1908	<i>tedak</i>	Helfrich 1973: fig. 147, Schlaginhaufen 1959: 104, fig.10
	Schlaginhaufen, D.M.E. 1908	<i>tedak</i>	Helfrich 1973: fig. 143 Schlaginhaufen 1959: 104, fig.10
	Riech 1921		Helfrich 1973: fig. 142
	?		
	?		Helfrich 1973: fig. 146
	Parkinson before 1900		Foy 1900: Pl. XV, fig. 4 Gunn & Peltier 2006: pl. 47
	Parkinson before 1900?		Foy 1900: Pl. XV, fig. 3
	Parkinson before 1900		Gunn & Peltier 2006: pl. 48
	Parkinson before 1900		Foy 1900: Pl. XV, fig. 1
	Hahl & Wostrak 1906	<i>tidak</i>	
	Hahl & Wostrak 1906	<i>tidak</i>	
	Hahl & Wostrak 1906	<i>baluk-siksikbor</i>	
	Hahl 1910	<i>timbes</i>	
	Hahl 1910		
	Hahl 1910	<i>batin</i>	
	Hahl 1910	<i>solis</i>	
	Hahl 1910	<i>solis</i>	
	Hahl 1910	<i>tju</i>	
	Hahl 1910		
	Hahl 1910	<i>tju</i>	
	Hahl 1910	<i>solokem</i>	
	?		Nicolas 2000: 119, fig. 94 Gunn & Peltier 2006: pl. 49
	Parkinson before 1910		Gunn 1997: 72, Pl. 4 ; Foy 1900: Pl. XV, fig. 2

published by Helfrich 1973 figs. 150 and 154, field photos of these two masks were taken by Schilling and published by Krämer and Schlaginhaufen, cf. also Gunn 1997: 70, figs. 84 and 85 [Gunn erroneously mentions VI 36927, registered as a mask called *tilok* instead of VI 33712].)

Kipung

Kipung is a masking tradition which, under various but similar denotations, has been recorded all over New Ireland. On Anir, *kipung* designates the only known wooden masking tradition, with one exception as noted above (the wooden *fin* mask). When shown photographs of wooden masks from other areas, Anir informants usually classified them as *kipung*. A *kipung* consists of a carved and painted wooden facial mask to which a frame of liana is attached. To this frame various fibre materials might be fastened. The mask proper is a helmet-like structure covering the whole head as well as the face of the wearer. Like the *tedak* masks, *kipung* are worn together with a costume that ideally should be made of bark cloth, but alternatively, and especially when time is short, a costume made of banana and other leaves will do.

Kipung masks are used in dances that are performed by men at the opening of a new men's house. Always an even number of dancers will appear. As few as two are able to perform the dance; usually the number seems to be six to ten, but even up to twenty or more might be involved, each wearing a mask. The dancers form two lines; each pair in this line represents a couple, with one man wearing a male, the other a female mask. The manufacture of the masks and preparation of the dance takes place in secret, in a hidden place in the bush, but not in connection with an initiation. A master carver who has the knowledge and the rights to a *kipung* is responsible for instructing the group of helpers. All the masks to be worn in a dance have to be of the same style, having the same facial shape and features. Variation (which also is deemed important, as otherwise the dance and its masks would be evaluated as dull or boring) mainly comes with painting and involves the combination of various designs and colours. Whether a mask is male or female also becomes evident only at the time of painting, as the distinguishing marks are representations of typically male or female tattooing patterns.

In 2002, Joe Lugutele, Bernard Komgoi and his teenage son Judge made pairs of *kipung* masks for the National Museum of Papua New Guinea and the Museum der Kulturen Basel (figs. 181 to 183). When the masks were finished the men put on a small performance to show how the masks are danced, and Bernard Komgoi explained the contents of the songs.



Fig. 181 Joe Lugutele applying the frame to the carved face of a *kipung* mask, Funsil, village of Balngit, 20 May 2002



Fig. 182 Two *kipung* masks made by Joe Lugutele before being painted

***Kipung* song A**

First part – *seksek kale*

Mase tune? Mase tune?

Who goes finding fish? Who goes fishing?

Ra kipung te la ur, ra kipung

The kipung in the sea, the kipung

Mase tune: to go out to find some fish/to go fishing; *la ur*: the sea (Tok Ples Nissan).

Second part – *iri e u*

Kipung wuhvul na kipung tambaran

Kipung enchants and kipung is a spirit

Kipung wuhvul na kipung tambaran

Kipung enchants and kipung is a spirit

Wuhvul is an expression used for magically treating something and to bring magic to life, that is by chanting or murmuring certain words and/or by *spetim* ('spitting'); *tambaran* is a term used for spirits associated with the ancestors and believed to dwell in the bush.

The song evokes a *kipung* that emerges and magically enchants and changes the place; it is a spirit and thus has the power to do so.

Third part – *iri e tul*

Kipung e la tar, kipung e a lo

Kipung's eyes are turned up, kipung looks upwards

Kipung e la tar, kipung e a lo

Kipung's eyes are turned up, kipung looks upwards

Tar: to turn one's eyes up/to look upwards; *e a lo* stands for *alak*: to look or, more precisely, for *alal tanganga*: to look intensively/to stare.

The line describes the *kipung*'s gaze, which differs from that of a human being, thus indicating that it is a spirit. Additionally, the song refers to the *kipung* as looking for something or someone, thus alluding to its capacity to enchant or bewitch. *Alal* also is a term used to refer to the process of observing taboos, particularly to fasting; the use of this ambiguous term therefore also might be a hint to the procedures that have to be followed when preparing the performance.

***Kipung* song B**

First part – *seksek kale*

Kipung ru a tu ma kipung ru a tu

Kipung fetched it, kipung has got it

Kipung ru a tu ma kipung ru a tu

Kipung fetched it, kipung has got it

Ru: he; *a*: marker for past tense (has); *tu*: to fetch or go for something and take it

What this indicates is that the *kipung* was looking for something, although what is searched for is not specified, perhaps something to eat, perhaps a woman or, more likely, a person it wants to harm or punish. What the song says is that the *kipung* managed to find what it was looking for, that took it and did what it had intended to do with it.

Second part – *iri e u*

Nanges e la io ma nanges e la io

Something that smells has gone, a (magical) scent/an odour has dissolved

Nanges e la io ma nanges e la io

Something that smells has gone, a
(magical) scent/an odour has dissolved

Nanges refers to things that emit a scent or odour; *ges* is a term that designates magic aimed to enchant people so that they view something favourably; this type of magic is closely associated with fragrances (that often also act as a sort of carrier); *e la io* means ‘it is gone’ or ‘it is finished’.

The content alludes to and evokes various messages: the power of *kipung* to enchant; the magic that might accompany a singing; and the circumstance that the power of *kipung* only can be felt when it is roused and when the performance takes place; afterwards it is “finished and gone altogether until it is awakened again”.



Fig. 183 Male *kipung* mask made by Bernard Komgoi

GLOSSARY

<i>alal fafasu</i>	final feast of the mortuary cycle
<i>ainpindik</i>	leader of the <i>tubuan</i> society
<i>amfat</i>	shell ring made from <i>Tridacna gigas</i>
<i>am furis</i>	men's house performance
<i>an du</i>	taboo concerning personal hygiene and demeanour
<i>aninat</i>	festive food mound
<i>an tamen</i>	dietary taboo after death of a relative friend
<i>an sue</i>	pig that needs reciprocating
<i>an ulau</i>	taboo marker
<i>asok</i>	axe
<i>batkonim</i>	temporary, barrel-shaped men's house
<i>bia</i>	men's house / generic term
<i>biakis</i>	permanent, rectangular men's house
<i>bo</i>	pig
<i>bot</i>	nightly dance around slit gong
<i>buai</i>	initiatory society of dance and music
<i>en</i>	eat / meal
<i>fafen paket</i>	ceremony of compensating a person for support
<i>farfarur</i>	temporary men's house
<i>fel</i>	house
<i>fele wok</i>	bride wealth ceremony
<i>felumbintam</i>	mourning period
<i>fese bo</i>	ceremonial distribution of pigs
<i>fese fam fu fi</i>	ceremony of opening
<i>fiu</i>	spirit of a deceased who suffered a violent death
<i>fumberat</i>	family
<i>funmat</i>	clan
<i>ges</i>	joy / happiness; type of dance magic
<i>goigoi</i>	mourning song
<i>guigni</i>	to dance / dance
<i>iniat</i>	secret society
<i>ingal</i>	spirit / spiritual <i>alter ego</i>
<i>irion</i>	second and third parts of a dance

<i>kalukalu</i>	rattle made from seed pods and pig tusks
<i>kamar</i>	secret place of assembly of the <i>kenit</i> society
<i>kemetas</i>	string of orange-red shell money
<i>kenit</i>	spirit of a deceased / secret society
<i>kep male</i>	<u>kastam</u>
<i>kinaf</i>	cross cousin
<i>kipung</i>	wooden mask
<i>labar</i>	silent performance with whips made from liana
<i>lor</i>	headdress / secret society
<i>mapak</i>	taboo, bitter
<i>matambia</i>	lineage, men's house community
<i>male</i>	place, land
<i>malira</i>	(love) magic / silent performance
<i>mar</i>	hand movements in dances
<i>mon</i>	ocean-going canoe
<i>mumu</i>	incest, taboo
<i>ninlu</i>	ceremonial payment of a pig
<i>pikuf baling</i>	ceremony of compensating one's father for his support
<i>pindik</i>	secret
<i>pong</i>	cover / hidden speech
<i>rangan</i>	mourning song
<i>sangsangmat</i>	mask / secret society
<i>seksek kale</i>	first part of a dance
<i>so</i>	funeral / generic term for mortuary ceremonies
<i>sokapana</i>	secret society
<i>sombo</i>	spear
<i>so puek</i>	ceremonially handing over a pig
<i>sunmaii</i>	preliminary song in <i>am furis</i> performances
<i>sun tara</i>	abodes of spirits in the bush
<i>taif lo fel / taif lo pan atof</i>	ceremony of symbolically burning down a house
<i>tamen male</i>	taboo to visit the hamlet of a deceased relative
<i>tara</i>	bush spirit
<i>taraiu</i>	secret place of assemblage of the <i>tubuan</i> society
<i>taufi</i>	bigman, leader

<i>tedak</i>	bark cloth mask
<i>teko</i>	dance with dance shield made from palm leaf
<i>tena buai</i>	composer/choreographer, member of the <i>buai</i> society
<i>tomalanggen</i>	mask / secret society
<i>tubaibia</i>	shell wealth of the men's house community
<i>tubuan</i>	mask / secret society
<i>tu</i>	house post
<i>tu taur</i>	carved and painted house post
<i>tutun paket</i>	compensatory payment for the use of land
<i>turangan</i>	spirit / spiritual <i>alter ego</i>
<i>waran male</i>	place of origin
<i>warou e mus</i>	largest and most important pig distributed at a feast

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