



THE UNIVERSITY OF QUEENSLAND

A U S T R A L I A

**Garamut (Slit-drums) Among the Kayan: A case study of the historical
and contemporary significance of garamut among the Kayan people of
Madang, Papua New Guinea**

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Abstract

People “make” the world through physical manipulation and ideational construction. That humans shape, change, and manipulate the material world is readily apparent and uncontroversial. Less obvious are the ways in which objects in turn shape human existence. Drawing from this concept that objects do influence human social behavior, this research investigates how garamut considered as imbued with power and agency affect some groups of people in Papua New Guinea. Garamut were considered indelibly linked to their prosperity as a people and gave them collective and individual identity. Yet they have been misunderstood since the arrival of colonial administration.

The study explores how since the days of ancestors, garamut had social influence on their lives, and how the garamut is keeping abreast with the new changes that have come in with the advent of colonisation. It is based on a case study of the garamut culture in the village of Kayan in the Madang Province, of Papua New Guinea.

DECLARATION

This thesis is composed of my original work, and contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference has been made in the text. I have clearly stated the contribution by others to jointly-authored works that I have included in my thesis.

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No contributions by others.

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None.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my wife Pauline Aime and children, Willie, Fonsie, Fabie, Tess and Gorettie for putting up with me for the time I have been away.

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Chapter 1 Garamut the misunderstood objects

1.1 Overview

Garamut one of the most prestigious and sacred objects of some groups of people in Papua New Guinea has become a misunderstood object as a result of colonial intervention. In this thesis I propose a paradigm shift to understand garamut through the cultural lens of the people of Melanesia, especially Papua New Guinea. The thesis challenges the existing framework of anthropological studies that have placed emphasis on garamut primarily as musical instruments. It argues that garamut is much more than a hollowed piece of log that produces a sound but rather an object that is enmeshed with the life of the people.



A Kayan clan garamut

1.2 Introduction

Since the days of ancestors, garamut¹ (the Tok Pisin² word for slit-log or slit-drum, sometimes referred to as slit-gong) have played a significant role among some groups of people in Papua New Guinea in constructing their social and kinship structure. I will not italicise the term garamut because of its common use in Papua New Guinea English as a synonym for slit drum. Also I will not italicise Kukurai as the word is commonly used. Garamut were considered to be living social agents which, fostered intimate and personal relationships in their political, social, economic and religious domains. There were different distinctions and use of garamut; from spirit garamut, to clan garamut, and to private garamut which were used as general purpose garamut during singing or sending messages. However I argue that since the time of European intervention there has been a cultural shift in the understanding of garamut, and now they are collectively misunderstood primarily as musical instruments. In this thesis, I want to extend understanding of them beyond their classification as musical instruments. The approach I

¹ Garamut: A Tok Pisin word for slit-log which has been referred to in English as slit-drum or slit-gong. Throughout the thesis, I will use the term garamut and not anglicise the spelling to garamuts. This is because the Tok Pisin word garamut is used both as a singular and plural word.

² Tok Pisin: One of the lingua francas spoken in Papua New Guinea.

have taken to do this has been to conduct a culturally located study among the Kayan people of Madang Province of Papua New Guinea.

The study draws on Gell's (1998) theory of *Art and Agency* which advocated that objects mediate social agency and can be considered as secondary agents because they extend the agency of persons. This reflexive relationship in the ways objects interact with people is responsible for the creation of the particularities of human existence, and it is a useful avenue for studying social power and agency of objects such as the garamut, the object of my study.

For the benefit of the reader, it would be good to know how communities with garamut make distinctions and relate to garamut.

Here now I provide an example from the Kayan people among whom I carried out the research. Kayan elders pointed out to me that they make a distinction between spirit garamut and ordinary garamut. The following is an explanation of this distinction.

To educate me as it were about their belief, a Kayan elder told me of a particular spirit garamut of the village, called *Ruknai*. *Ruknai* is said to have been carved in 1920. The garamut is owned by the *Samngae* clan. Though the



The spirit garamut Babacbi

garamut bears the name of the spirit *Ruknai*, the spirit who abides in the garamut, is called *Babacbi*, a ngumtik spirit. These spirits are said to be living in the forests near the boundaries of the village. I asked the elder how the spirit Babacbi got into the garamut, and he told me that some of the Samngae men by carving the garamut, trapped the spirit in the garamut with magic (see also Poser 2008).

It was forbidden to take photographs of the inside of this garamut, only the outside. The garamut is covered all the time with woven coconut leaves. To take a photograph of the garamut without the coconut leaves, one must ask the custodians to remove the coconut leaves. I did not manage to do

that because it was taboo to do so with the consent of the custodians. Here I use the term taboo as prohibition imposed by social custom or as a protective measure. By not adhering to it has potential of bringing about undesired calamities. I was aware that they felt insecure hence I only took the photograph of the garamut still covered with coconut leaves.

I observed that there was an element of real fear, of what the spirit might do, if photographs of the inside were taken. This is one of the garamut that cannot be sold. It has a stone in it, and the elder said that when Babacbi moves, the stone roles back and forward making noises that can be heard. I observed that very little noise was made around or near the shelter where Babacbi lives. Considered as a sacred area, children were forbidden to play near the place and young people were constantly reminded not to unnecessarily sit and talk under the shelter.

As a way of pointing out to me the power of the spirit Babacbi who lives in the garamut, two Kayan elders told me the following story. Some years ago, the men's house where Babacbi lived started to leak and rain dripped inside the garamut. Babacbi was angry and caused an old man to fall from the verandah of his house and injure himself. They quickly built a new men's house and placed the garamut under the new shelter to avoid further wrath from the spirit (see also Poser, 2008).

Among the Kayan, garamut are regarded as social persons with feelings and emotions. Lipset (2005) also points out that a similar belief is held by the Murik people of East Sepik Province that sacred objects are persons and not inert art. The people of Kayan believe that the agency of the spirit is a living reality, a living spirit person, who makes a habitat in the man-made objects. This concept differs from Gell's suggestion and other scholars such as Tilley and Knappett that only human agents bestow agency to objects. For the Kayan, a garamut can be personified by the presence or the dwelling of the spirit. I term this, as an article of faith rather than an intellectual argument. According to their belief, the spirit agent animates the garamut with agency and the garamut can become an agent of the spirit. Thus as the Kayan elders said, 'garamut can destroy the village'. Therefore, following Kayan logic, the agency of the garamut is not brought about by the humans who carve it, but it is the spirits who give agency to garamut. One Kayan elder, Michael said in Tok Pisin, "ol spirit i ken stap long garamut long laik bilong ol", translated as, spirits can take up residence in garamut at their own will.

Kayan elders also pointed out that there is a distinction between spirit garamut, sacred garamut, and ordinary or private garamut. Spirit garamut is a garamut within which a spirit has taken up residency. One such garamut is the spirit garamut Babacbi which I have just mentioned. This garamut is never sounded, and it always remains covered in a small shelter specially built for it. Sacred garamut were carved with ritual and were considered empowered with spirit powers. These garamut were used for initiation ceremonies. Those garamut considered sacred as well as spirit garamut are kept in the men's house together with the clan garamut. Ordinary garamut considered void of sacred power, usually owned by individuals including the Kukurai are kept at private homes. These garamut are often used for sending general or private messages or during singsing. The clan garamut in the clan men's house are only used to send messages involving clan matters. Nevertheless, there is always some anxiety and precautions are taken because all garamut are considered potential habitats of the spirits, especially clan garamut in the men's house. Therefore the elders emphasised that in order to avoid calamities, which will be obviously the work of the spirits, they have a responsibility of care to provide shelter for the garamut.

Willie Kawang, the elder of the family who are the custodians of the garamut, told me that the spirit Babacbi has two wives; the first wife Garum lives in a waterhole near the village and the other Yongsmeke lives in a pond near the mouth of the river. This story shows that garamut have their own individual personalities, characteristics, and are considered spirit persons, who have social and kinship connections and relationships to people and family groups. I interpret this to mean that together with humans, the spirits constitute the interconnected sociality of Kayan community. Willie continued that Babacbi is a good hearted spirit and does not unnecessarily cause them any harm; but people are cautious as there is always the unpredictable side of the spirits; they must always take precautions such as providing good shelter, and not making too much noise near where the spirits of the garamut live. I confirmed this with my observation that this was the social order of everyday life that men's houses were kept as noise free areas with no unnecessary gatherings in the men's houses. Since the Samngae have not built a big men's house, the garamut is currently kept in a small shelter with two other garamut as companions which are not spirit garamut.

Garamut are multifaceted prestigious objects of high status which have intimate relationships with people. They drive political, social, economic, and spiritual values of the people and empower leadership with voice of power and authority. Among the Kayan, I also observed that garamut connect people in a web of relationships. Garamuts bestow and legitimises the leadership of the big-men commonly known as Kukurai. Garamut gives them power and authority to govern or have a say over the affairs of the village. Garamut can be referred to as Chief Kukurai. It is the mouth piece of the Kukurai. Clan garamut link clan members together and gives them identity.

As influential objects, garamut construct ordered social structure in kinship relationships. I use the term social structure to mean how people organise themselves in clans and family units in the village and their relationships to each other. Furthermore it takes into account the connected bloodlines in kinship relationships. By the term kinship I mean the various descent groups who live in the village which is a feature of many traditional societies in Papua New Guinea. These descent groups could either be from patrilineal or matrilineal lines. For example, Powdermaker (1971) as cited by McElhanon and Whiteman (1984, p. 115) provides one form of kinship relationship which, is called matrilineal kinship found among the Lesu of New Ireland. She writes that among the Lesu both the descent and the inheritance of property rights are passed from mother to daughter.

Taking these relationships into account, in this thesis I will engage the theory proposed by Gell that art objects have social agency, thus arguing that a classic object of anthropological study – the garamut – is much more than a musical instrument. Garamut is embedded in kinship relationship, social ranking, leadership, gender roles, and contributes to debates on exchange, modernity and religiosity among the Kayan. The Kayan say that since the days of their ancestors, garamut has had immense influence on their lives. I will investigate this further and reveal the ways in which garamut elicit social forms of relationships and given them identity as a people.

1.3 Overview of the argument

The basis of my argument is that while early literature on garamut (slit-drums) implies that garamut were basically gongs, the connotation of a gong to me is that a gong produces noise whereas a garamut communicates. The definitions and meanings introduced by early researchers

describing slit-drums of Oceania, as slit-gongs, especially in Papua New Guinea, have become the standard reference upon which further studies have been conducted. Works of early anthropologists cited by Fischer (1893, p. 25), such as that of Finsch (1893c), Eberlin (1910), Ivens (1927), and Layard (1938), concur that the basic function of the slit-drum/garamut was to give signals and to produce dance rhythms. This interpretation in my view suggests a typical Euro-centric representation which wrapped up garamut with layers of introduced meanings. Hermann (1943) having examined the drum/garamut signals came to the conclusion that Oceania does not have a true “drum language”. To the contrary, garamut had a language of communicating. This means that garamut had coded signals that people used to express thoughts and feelings to one another, in particular sending messages. The claim by Hermann that garamut had no language not only presumed the indigenous knowledge but also denied the understanding of the agency and the power of garamut which had very close affinity with the local people long before the arrival of the Europeans.

I argue that the early imposition of the colonisers’ interpretation of the use and function of steel drums of Europe onto garamut set the precedent for the current misunderstanding. The introduced definition grossly obscured the efficacy of garamut which had deep cultural and social influence on the life of the people. To simply understand garamut as musical instruments is fundamentally denying Papua New Guineans’ understanding that garamut are unique cultural objects of the ancestors in some communities. Garamut played a profound role in holding those communities together. Unlike a guitar which only plays music as entertainment or to generate tender feelings, garamut are intricately linked to the daily livelihood of the people in their political, social, cultural and spiritual domains.

When I was going to school I learnt that garamut are musical instruments because this definition was already in place associated with the word garamut. We were asked by our teachers to name some traditional musical instruments. I recall listing garamut as one of the instruments. Maybe the correct question should have been, name some traditional communication instruments. The definition has now become the overriding contemporary definition that even some learned Papua New Guineans adopt, on the one hand stating that garamut are traditional communication instruments, but at the same time are leaning towards accepting also the definition that garamut are

musical instruments. By the term communication in the context of garamut, I mean that traditionally some communities used garamut to send messages by beating coded signals to communicate with members of their community. These coded messages were then interpreted or decoded by those who knew how to interpret the message which is still the practice today in communities such as Kayan. Paul Yamngarpise's (1997) article "'Tapr: the drum (garamut) signals of the Maramba society'" is an example of this. Yamngarpise writes that the Maramba people in the East Sepik Province, for thousands of years have been using the garamut (slit-gong) as the only medium and means of communication. Paul continues that the garamut has been part of the everyday life-style of the people and it is of immense value to them. It has also played a very significant role in the social, spiritual, ritual, cultural and also the political life of the Maramba society. However he contradicts himself by saying that in a broader sense the garamut is used extensively during traditional singsing³. In the context of the Kayan I differ with Yamngarpise by saying that traditionally garamut were not used extensively in singsing but only when they were required on given occasions. By this I mean that garamut did communicate messages of celebration of life during singsing. However as stated, in this thesis I want to provide an understanding that goes beyond garamut being understood as musical instrument but more so an instrument that communicated sociality in various ways such as in sending messages, its' use in rituals, given as gifts, giving identity to individuals of the clan or being in possession of bigmen as status social symbols or indicator of bikmanship and masculinity.

Early anthropological work as I have cited defined garamut simply as slit-gongs comparable to drums and percussion instruments of Europe, thus the name slit-drum (a term I also take issue with) because it conjures up images of a steel drum. Therefore I argue that the introduced definitions sowed the seeds of the misunderstanding which followed. This then confused the cultural understanding of garamut. By cultural misunderstanding I mean that garamut were given meaning out of the cultural context of the people who use garamut as one of their highly prestigious objects. As time evolved, garamut took on new social meanings and instilled among Papua New Guineans a legacy which I argue, misrepresented the cultural understanding of garamut. I do agree that garamut were used at times to accompany traditional singsing, a function that early scholars would have noticed but that was not the primary role of garamut. I also assert

³ Singsing: A Tok Pisin word for traditional dance

that people did not refer to garamut as musical instruments but rather as sacred objects which only the initiated elders could use to send messages and also used for special purposes such as during initiation ceremonies. I will use the word sacred throughout the thesis to mean powerful; that is, being animated by the spirits, rather than holy.

1.4 Personal Story - Why Study Garamut?

Many researchers undertake research motivated either by personal interest or research enquiry. My story begins many years ago in the late 1950's. As a child growing up in my village of Kinakatem in the East Sepik Province, I was always fascinated and intrigued by the garamut. Apart from hearing and seeing people using garamut to send messages and during singing, I also noticed that there was an aura of mysticism surrounding garamut. I observed that garamut emitted power or voice of social control and influence over people. Stories told about garamut possessing mysterious power lingered in my mind. As garamut were rarely carved any more in the village, I had no opportunity to see the process and production as well as the ritual performances. Nor did I learn how to send, or interpret messages. Sending messages was considered the privilege of initiated big-men or elders. I also observed a sense of reverence and even fear accorded to garamut.

We were forbidden to play with the garamut and more importantly had to be silent or shut up to listen to a garamut message. There was common understanding that women and girls were forbidden to sit on the garamut including men and boys. Also we were sternly warned by the elders that we should not playfully beat the garamut, because if people heard the garamut and came we should be prepared to feed them. In language or in Tok Pisin they would remark, ‘yupela i gat inap kaikai long givim ol manmeri i kam taim ol i harim garamut’; translated as, do you have enough food to feed the people who would come upon hearing the garamut? This is because the garamut has this unique ability to arouse emotional anxiety and draw attention among people and they would want to find out the reason the garamut was pounded when they least expected the voice of garamut to be heard breaking the silence of the day or the night. In that regard when a garamut is heard, (that is in the village) people ask the question, “What is the garamut talking about?” The voice of garamut is associated with the messages of life and death. Therefore one of

the unique characteristics of garamut is that its' voice evokes varied emotions pertaining to matters of life and death.

Reflecting on my experience, I have always been curious to find out more about the power of garamut. What is it about garamut that people revere, even fear? In particular, how have garamut influenced and shaped the lives of the people from the time of ancestors and how might it be changing with modernity and what is their future? Given this curiosity, I always wanted to research garamut and investigate the concept of agency, power and its efficacy.

Garamut are considered to have unique personal characteristics which sets them apart from other cultural objects. They hold a high status rank and are closely associated with big man leadership. They command respect and reverence and also have influence on the social conduct and behavior of the people in villages. These characteristics of garamut led me to investigate further beyond the now popular and simplistic understanding of garamut as musical instruments.

1.5 Opportunity of studying garamut

The opportunity for study came when I was offered a Peter Goodenough Wantok Scholarship in mid-2010 under the auspices of Queensland Brain Institute (QBI) to pursue further studies at University of Queensland.

Arriving at the University in early January 2011, I began to think what might be the appropriate item of study I should select among the many collections in the University



A garamut at UQ Anthropology Museum

Anthropology Museum. With the assistance of Dr. Diana Young the Director of the Museum and Jane Wilcock the Collections Administrator, I looked at the various types of collections ranging from ritual artefacts such as the masks to the numerous items and objects which represent the everyday lifecycle of the people. As I had seriously given thought to research garamut, a garamut in the Museum caught my attention and I was drawn to it because I felt there was a social and cultural connect between me and the garamut. The garamut is from Bogia, Madang Province of

Papua New Guinea. It was donated in 1975 to the Museum by Bernhard Landman of 23 Brisbane Street, St. Lucia. Thus this sets the background and the story of my curiosity in researching garamut and arguing that the agency of garamut extends beyond simply being musical instruments.

1.5.1 Aim of the Study

As the research is culturally located, it was aimed at producing an in-depth ethnographic study of the social and cultural understanding of garamut. I believe by understanding garamut through an ethnographic study of its production, use and application, I could better understand how garamut organises the social structure, kinship groups, clan affiliations, family units and relationships of the Kayan. The research is relevant to the discipline of anthropology because most existing studies of garamut have emphasised the functional use of garamut related to song and dance or signaling gongs. Yet, as I argue in this thesis, garamut are multifaceted objects which promote sociality in unique and multiple ways. My study is a contribution to knowledge of garamut that has not been previously researched, especially the concept that garamut are imbued with agency which impact on the lives of the people in affecting their social and cultural livelihood.

1.5.2 Hypothesis of the study

The hypothesis that led me to this research was: garamut are imbued with power of social influence which constructs social relations among people. The study is culturally located in the village of Kayan where garamut are highly valued cultural objects. As most studies have concentrated on the use of garamut primarily as musical instruments, in this research I will take a different approach by investigating *what garamut do* among people in influencing their lives. To argue that garamut are imbued with much deeper characteristics beyond musical instruments, I will engage the theory of the agency of objects as offered by Gell (1998), to investigate the agency of garamut among Kayan. In this theory, Gell speaks of art objects as having social agency, that art (objects) have a personhood of their own. The same can be said of garamut because as sacred objects they are believed to be imbued with their own personality. Furthermore the research was also motivated by Leach's (2002) study on the aesthetics and social process of the drum in Rai Society through which young male initiates were given a voice.

1.5.3 Research Questions

The central investigative research question was, ‘What do garamut do?’. Through this question as my principal research probe, I wanted to investigate the influence of garamut on their daily life in their political, social, economic and religious affairs. Simply put, what have garamut done to them in the past and what is garamut doing to them at the present? And what might be the role of garamut in the future? In order to engage the participants in this investigative process I also developed the following list of secondary questions which I used as a guide in discussions and sharing.

1. What role have garamut played in bringing them together as a people?
2. What is the relationship of garamut to women and men?
3. What type of exchanges have they had with neighboring people through garamut?
4. What are their religious beliefs about garamut?
5. What changes have they noticed regarding garamut with modern influence such as tourism?
6. How have garamut survived the period of colonisation, modernity, and Independence when such objects were sometimes confiscated, destroyed or given new meaning as a result of broader cultural changes associated with this period? And what is the link of this process for contemporary understanding of garamut and their role in social change?
7. How have garamut connected them to others, locally, provincially, nationally and internationally?

In many Melanesian stories, the origin and the knowledge of making certain sacred objects is said to begin with mythical ancestors or spirits. Because of this connection, the objects are said to possess power of the spirits which animate the object. The same is true for the garamut, as I will demonstrate; where there is a connection among the Kayan to mythical ancestors or spirits and how this might influence their social structure and relationships.

With the arrival of colonial administrators and missionaries, significant changes were brought upon the lives of the Kayan people. The new social order encouraged people to abandon their sacred objects of belief and ritual or give them new meaning. By the term new social order, I mean to say that the colonial powers introduced new values, new belief system and new administrative

system. Here I make particular reference to leadership, where powers once held by traditional village leaders were replaced by new system of leadership. Equally people had to let go of many of their traditional practices and embrace new ideas. In this context I wanted to find out how garamut survived and what new changes or meaning the garamut embraced. Certain objects give identity and solidarity to people of a particular group, both as a local icon or as a national icon. In modern states, flags of countries, for example, give identity to citizens of those countries and connect them as a people of those countries. Garamut among Kayan have likewise since the time of ancestors given them identity and character among their neighbors and surrounding villages. I also enquired how garamut have extended their identity to Provincial, National or International events.

The reason behind this enquiry as I have stated is that most anthropological work (in PNG) including ethno-musical studies on garamut, have not talked about garamut as active contributors to sociality of the people. Rather they have written about garamut as passive instruments used as musical instruments or as gongs for signaling purposes or during cult ritual. This is evident from the following studies which generally identify or refer to garamut as gongs for signaling purposes. Works of Schmidt (1923), Wedgwood (1933), Bateson (1958), Burridge (1959), Lawrence (1964), Tuzin (1980), Fischer (1986), Spearitt (1987), McDowell (1991), Niles (1992), Yamada (1997), and Zemp & Kaufmann (2010), are some examples which make reference to the use of garamut primarily as musical instruments or signalling gongs. This emphasis reinforces the definition and classification of garamut as slit-gongs. Thus I am of the view that based on this classification, many museums around the world have classified garamut under the category of musical instruments. For example, the University of Queensland Anthropology Museum classified garamut as musical instrument.

I offer another view by presenting garamut as active living objects or members of the community imbued with power of social influence. It is this cultural understanding I want to contribute as new knowledge of the character of garamut and what they do, to people.

1.6 Significance to Papua New Guineans

This study is significant to Papua New Guinea because it will contribute new knowledge towards better understanding of one of the sacred material cultural object of Papua New Guinea. Traditionally Papua New Guinea is an oral society and the knowledge of many traditional objects of power and influence is diminishing at great speed with the passing of older generations. The older generations are reminiscing about the past and are sad, that many traditional values and knowledge are being eroded with the influx of modern values and life-style. What can be done not only to preserve this knowledge but more importantly to pass it on to future generations? It is imperative that Papua New Guineans conduct research and document this knowledge in various ways such as in written works, film documentaries, plays, poetry and drama so that this knowledge is recorded and stored for future generations and also taught in schools.

I believe this research is significant in encouraging Papua New Guineans to learn and appreciate the cultural relevance of certain objects which in the past had great influence on the livelihood of their people. This is important because many Papua New Guineans today do not know the social or cultural meanings and significance of many of their cultural objects which from the time of ancestors have had power of social influence in their community. Understanding the significance of what garamut do among Kayan will provide an avenue to understanding transitions in social and religious life of Kayan people since colonisation and the advent of the mission, as well as an expression of modernity through its reproduction and trade in tourist markets. To the best of my knowledge this study would be the first of its kind by a Papua New Guinean.

1.6.1 Purpose of the research

The purpose of the research is to begin a new Melanesian Ethnography in studying cultural objects such as garamut as a way of reclaiming cultural ownership of knowledge. It would be an attempt to look at or revisit cultural objects from a Melanesian or indigenous lens or perspective and meanings in comparison to Western perspectives. Burth (1998, p.101) cites Andrew Strathern (1975, p.24) who pointed out in *Research in Melanesia*, that as ‘outsiders looking in’ to rural communities, who take the position of ‘insiders looking out’, anthropologists should be able to communicate their research to both these parties. However, he says that their work is more often

addressed to one another, and this is the common focus of more recent reflections on the subjective and cultural bias which anthropologists have brought to their representation of other people's realities. I agree with Strathern that most of the cultural representation of the people of the Pacific has been written by outsiders and in certain writings this has infiltrated the cultural understanding of the people regarding their own knowledge. The current understanding of garamut is a case in point, where an interpretive definition given by the early anthropological work outside of its cultural context obscured the cultural understanding of garamut. Therefore the purpose of my research is to give a Melanesian lens by providing a deeper understanding of garamut, one of the sacred prestigious everyday cultural objects among some groups of people in Papua New Guinea.

1.6.2 Methodology and Methods used in Study

The choice of which methodology and methods to use in research is dictated by the type of research being conducted. Methodology describes the theory of knowledge that guides the research whereas methods describe the specific techniques used to collect information (Lather, 2006). According to Davidson et al. (1999, p. 21) a research design should always be "tailor-made". Taking into consideration the importance of culture as a very important aspect of life and perception in PNG, with a vast number of distinct cultures and languages in the country, it was important that this research project took an ethnographic approach of 'Participant Observation'. This is because ethnographic method examines behavior that takes place within specific social situations, including behavior that is shaped and constrained by these situations, plus people's understanding and interpretation of their experiences (Wilson, & Julius, et al. 2010).

Guba and Lincoln's (1997, p.198) definition of ontology as one perspective on the nature of what is being studied; whether it exists as some objective fact of reality, or whether the nature of that being studied varies due to a range of possible factors, including social, economic, political, situational, or experiential/personal. They adopt their definition of epistemology as perceptions of research findings, as an objective product of the neutral observer, or as an inter-subjective product constructed by the relationship between the researcher and the study population. Malinowski (1922, p. 25) pointed out many years ago in his ethnographic study, *Argonauts of The Western Pacific*, the goal of ethnography is "to grasp the native's point of view...to realise his vision of his world". In this vein Spradley (1979, p.18) cites Franz Boas who clearly stated this objective thus:

We know what we mean by family, state, government, etc. As we overstep the limits of one culture we do not know how far this may correspond to equivalent concepts. If we choose to apply our classification to alien cultures we may combine forms which do not belong together... It is our serious purpose to understand the thoughts of a people, the whole analysis of experience must be based upon their concepts, not ours (Boas 1943, p. 331).

Informed by these perspectives of different methodologies of research I chose the Ethnographic Participant Observation Method as the most appropriate approach for this type of study. This was because I wanted to understand garamut from the Kayan's own system of meanings. So I decided that living with the villagers would be the best way to understand the social dynamics of garamut among the Kayan. Moreover I was aware that as suggested by Guba and Lincoln the various hypotheses, theories, and interpretive frameworks brought by outside investigators "may have little or no meaning within the emic view of studied individuals, groups, societies, or cultures." With this in mind, the crafting of the research methods for participatory engagement by informants and participants was also important. I was aware that the object of study is immersed within their epistemological and ontological worldview and this meant as the researcher, I had to understand garamut from their own system of meanings. Since language of communication was to be an obstacle I translated the research questions into Tok Pisin, one of Papua New Guinea's National Languages which is commonly spoken in the Kayan community, though I was very much aware of its limitations.

1.6.3 Participant Observation

Spradley (1979, p.3) writes, ethnography is the work of describing a culture. Spradley puts it this way: 'Fieldwork, then, involves disciplined study of what the world is like to people who have learned to see, hear, speak, think, and act in ways that are different. Rather than studying people, ethnography means learning from people'. This view is also expressed by Keesing and Strathern as cited by Sluka Jeffrey A. and Anthonius et al. (2012, p.8) who define fieldwork as follows:

For anthropologists doing ethnographic field research, instead of studying large samples of people, the anthropologists enters as fully as possible into the everyday life

of the community, the neighborhood, or group. One learns by participant observation, by living as well as viewing the new patterns of life. Successful field work is seldom possible in a period of shorter time than a year, especially when a new language and culture must be learned. Ideally the researcher stays a good deal longer, sometimes on several field trips. Sustained and deep research yields deep insights into a culture, and in the process of continuity and change, scarcely attained any other way (Keesing and Strathern 1998, pp.7-9).

Furthermore according to Antonius and Robben (2012, p.117), ethnographic understanding through empathy and detachment has been generally accepted as a common dialectic in fieldwork. They say that we must establish a good rapport with our interlocutor to grasp the world from their perspective, while a simultaneous reflective detachment as observers must objectify our perceptions and enhance our analytical insight. They cite Ellen (1984, p.227) who wrote, “One of the most persistent problems we confront is how to so subject ourselves and yet maintain the degree of ‘detachment’ necessary for us to analyse our observations: in other words to be anthropologists as well as participants” .

As I wanted to learn, feel, think, and understand garamut relationship to people from within Kayan own system of meanings, participant observation was deemed the most appropriate method to employ. Therefore I undertook field study and stayed in the village for nearly eight months of the year 2012.

During these months, I got immersed in observation of garamut relationship to clan and family groupings. I observed where garamut were kept, who owned garamut, who carved garamut, who beat garamut and when and why garamut were used. I also participated in the process and production of garamut. To that end I arranged with the Kukurai⁴ and the elders to actually provide finance for the construction of three garamut as discussed in the latter sections. This gave me greater insight in understanding the pervasive influence garamut have in the social structure of the people. It also led me to understand their system of meanings and beliefs that the garamut evoked and facilitated. I also observed garamut relationships to women, especially gender demarcations

⁴ Kukurai: A Tok Pisin word for hereditary big man

and social divide of space as regulated by garamut and the taboos, restrictions and responsibilities garamut placed on the members of Kayan community.

1.6.4 Participants

To begin formal interviews, Teddy, one elder and principal informant helped me in organising how these interviews should take place. With Teddy's help we arranged the following groups for the interviews. In group one, were the Kukurai and elders whose ages ranged from 50 – 70 years old; in group two, young married men of 25 – 35 years; in group three, young boys ranging from 12-20 years old; in group four, mature married women from 40-60 years; in group five, young married women and young girls from 12 – 30 years old; and in the last group were carvers and other elders with whom I had random conversations. This arrangement for interviews was helpful because given that villagers were very often occupied with other activities, the interviews were spread over a couple of weeks. This worked fine because it allowed participants to make themselves available to come for the interviews. Most interviews were conducted in the afternoons as it was cooler. For the men including the young boys, the interviews took place in the men's houses and with the women and the young girls the interviews were conducted in the small open huts near their homes.

The composition of participants as indicated was to get a broad spectrum of ideas from the elders to the young people. Interviews took the form of sharing, and story telling, a most popular way among the locals to encourage participants to talk. Separate discussions and sharing were conducted with each group with the knowledge that the Kukurai and certain elders were not put together with younger married men. This is because culturally in Papua New Guinea it is common practice that when the Kukurai or big-men talk, younger men only listen and would not interject during conversation or express their views. The category of young men was deliberately divided in order to gauge how the young boys feel about garamut in the community compared to the young married men. There were also one to one discussions with informed interlocutors as the carvers and some elders. These informed elders included Teddy (my principal informant), Paul Kuri, (the master carver), Philip Apa, Willie Kawang, and Michael Kaskus (who was also referred to as Komiti⁵). Women and girls were separated so that young women could also feel free to share. At

⁵ Komiti: Tok Pisin word introduced by colonial administration for someone who oversees village community work, and also assists the councillor

other occasions I asked questions randomly at odd places such as during communal work or during leisure times while chewing betelnut, (in Tok Pisin, *kaikai buai*) and telling stories.

1.6.5 Questionnaire

The principal question of my research enquiry was, ‘What do garamut do?’ However I realised that this was a theoretical question which I knew the participants would not be able to engage with, so I devised a two pronged approach. I kept the question ‘What do garamut do’ as my observation question and posed the more pragmatic question, ‘What are garamut’ as my investigative question. The intention was that this question would draw from the participants responses that would provide answers to the principal question, what do garamut do?

The question, what are garamut?, drew two types of responses from the participants. The elders talked about the power of garamut, referring to what garamut do in the community and not about the descriptive look of the material composition of the garamut; the wood, the carvings, the designs, and the size of garamut. Rather they talked about the sacredness, the power and the relationships garamut have with them. They talked about the social influence of garamut, the Kukurai and kinship relations, the clans and the men’s house and how garamut maintain these relationships. The young people were ambivalent in their response. They spoke generally of garamut as objects used for sending messages and in singsing/traditional dance. Those young people who grew up in the village gave responses similar to the elders, but I noted that those who grew up in towns and have recently come to live in the village referred to garamut as objects used in village primarily for singsing. Women interviewees were able to offer very limited information on many of these matters. However they offered the view that garamut are objects for sending messages by the Kukurai and big men.

1.6.6 Challenges

One of the major challenges encountered among participants, apart from the general lack of knowledge, was the fact that the knowledge about garamut was exclusive to only a few individual men. Conducting interviews with the Kukurai and some elders I found out that they knew no definitive myths or legends of the origin of the first garamut among Kayan. However there is a

general yet a vague reference that garamut appeared with the earth. This collective response was given to me by the Kukurai. This either shows the stories have been lost or their grandparents did not pass on the stories or they never had any such story in the first place. Only Teddy and two other elders recalled a story of a spirit garamut. Teddy told me that he believes this story is not a legend (in Tok Pisin Tumbuna stori⁶) but a story nevertheless to explain how the Kayan came to be elaborate garamut carvers. The story he narrated to me which he heard from his grandfather goes like this: a spirit garamut for mysterious reasons floated either from Ramu or Sepik River and beached itself at their beach at Kayan. Their grandparents took it, and it is from this garamut that their grandparents learnt the art and skill of carving garamut. Teddy further explained that after they came and settled in that area, their grandparents applied their canoe designs on garamut.

This apparent lack of knowledge about the origin of garamut in the village raised the issue of verifying the story with a bigger number of informants. I also came to realise that when I needed further information about garamut I was always referred to the same one or two elders such as Teddy to verify or confirm some aspects of the stories. As garamut are considered property of men, women could offer very little about the stories except about the responsibilities, restrictions and taboos placed on them including provision of food as their contribution. In Tok Pisin they said, ‘em samting bilong ol man’; translated as, it is men’s business. Another challenge was of language. A few elders and the Kukurai and a few women felt more comfortable in using their indigenous language rather than Tok Pisin. I did not conduct any interviews in their vernacular because I did not know their language. This was not because they could not speak Tok Pisin but they felt they could express themselves better in their vernacular. Their responses were translated by young men and young girls.

1.6.7 Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations are paramount in any research project, and there are some particular issues around conducting research in PNG. Vallance argues that a researcher who is not ethnically Melanesian (Melanesia is the Pacific region that includes PNG) can conduct research in this setting with cultural sensitivity and appropriateness, provided that the researcher has a “lived experience

⁶ Tumbuna stori: Tok Pisin term for a mythical legend or ancestral story.

of Melanesian culture” (Vallance 2007, pp.10 -11). I might add since there is diversity of cultures in PNG, Papua New Guineans themselves also, are to be sensitive. I was aware of this and made every attempt to be culturally sensitive in respecting the Kayan people’s point of view during interviews.

In research, privacy and rights of participants is important. Before the interviews and discussions I stressed this point to the participants prior to discussions taking place, reminding participants of their right not to participate if they felt uncomfortable and that they freely chose to participate. I emphasised this because in the village an elder might coerce people to participate. Participants were told they could leave any time they felt uncomfortable and were also free to join any time they decided to participate in the discussions. I also provided the ethical consent form to those who could read. I asked those who understood the purpose of the research to explain in their own language to others who could not read, and they were encouraged to sign the form. They were told that their names would not be mentioned if they did not give their consent and that any matter raised in confidence would remain confidential. If they did not want to sign a consent form a general consent agreement was voiced and this was taken as formal consent of participation.

According to Vallance (2008, pp. 3, 8) even using translated consent forms is unsatisfactory. He says that this difficulty is compounded by the local style of village leadership, which could mean that it is difficult for an individual to choose not to take part after their leaders have given their consent for the community’s involvement (Vallance 2008, p.5). Therefore it is recommended that consent must be garnered both from the community and from each individual taking part (p. 9). I was aware that the object of study, garamut, is considered sacred by some groups of people such as the Kayan. So I followed the village custom and protocol of getting the collective consent from the Kukurai and the elders of the community. Thus after gaining their trust and confidence, they gave their consent both verbally and they signed the written consent form as well. This was encouraging because they felt themselves not only participants, but contributors to the research.

1.7 Setting the Context of study

The writer is of the Melanesian cultures of Papua New Guinea and this work is imbued with the principal, narrative style of those cultures. Discourse in PNG at all levels may not be so much pervaded by explanatory or even descriptive work. Information, ideas and instructions are arrived at rather through story. Thus for the present exercise the author was immersed in the life of the Kayan village and was a party to many discussions mostly built around stories, which imparted the main body of what he wanted to discover. The talking and yarning is ostensibly, and for the most part casual and informal, but as can be seen from the accounts given in this thesis, will be concerned with complex and formal sets of ideas and rules, especially in relation to roles, social hierarchy, dealing with the 'spirits', and the garamut.

Furthermore, Papua New Guinea is made up of many small village societies. There exists a great diversity of language and culture within the country and some 750 language groups have been documented encompassing a quarter of the world's languages (Laycock in Wurm 1982). Since the societies are fragmented, customs, beliefs and practices, descent and kinship systems and patterns of residence differ widely. Nevertheless, even within this diversity, it is possible to isolate and identify certain commonalities within the different cultures (Epstein 1974, p.25). In Papua New Guinea, each traditional culture shares a similar technology and economy and is composed of groups, the members of which carry out similar tasks and are interdependent by virtue of kinship, affinal and descent ties (Epstein 1974, p.25; Lawrence 1969, p.21). The focus of this study is based on one of these commonalities that communities in Papua New Guinea share cross-culturally. There is the common belief that certain objects such as garamut are sacred and have power of significant social influence on their lives. These objects through trade exchange or given as gifts to the neighboring people have established extended relationships and fostered alliances either through blood lines or kinship connections. However I have argued that garamut was not considered an exchange object (see Chapter Two, p.78).

Waiko (1993) writes that Papua New Guinea's images of history and its people have been pieced together by scholars from a wide range of disciplines, such as anthropologists, botanists, linguists, archaeologists, and missionaries. This being the case, my research argues that the current meanings and definitions accorded to garamut have been heavily influenced by earlier anthropological work,

and over the years eroded the cultural understanding of the word garamut. Subsequently, the traditional cultural understanding was replaced with the arbitrary introduced meanings, which trivialised the cultural importance of garamut.

Verna (2011, p.185) cites Gegeo, and Gegeo and Watson (2001, p. 55) who write that in many cases Papua New Guineans have accepted Western ways as superior, often at the cost of their own cultural identity. Gegeo and Watson argued that Pacific Islanders need to find their own research and epistemic frameworks rather than continue to rely exclusively on those of the coloniser. These authors emphasise that it is not about the ‘content of traditional knowledge’ but rather how knowledge is theorised and constructed, encoded and passed on to the next generation. Theory has traditionally been conceptualised through the Western ideas of objective science, whereas indigenous knowledge has often been regarded as belief, not ‘knowledge’ (Mihesua, 1998). Seeing that there is a gap in knowledge about garamut being spiritually connected to the belief systems of the people I took to research garamut from a culturally grounded context of the people of Kayan where their cosmological, ontological, and epistemological world view is intricately linked with their existence. Based on their systems of meanings and beliefs, the thesis traces the historical and contemporary understanding of garamut among the Kayan and discusses the changes garamut are also experiencing. Also it will look at the concept of exchange and kinship that Kayan were engaged in through trade and other exchanges with their neighboring peoples with particular reference to garamut.

1.7.1 Arrangements for lived-in experience at Kayan

Through acquaintanceships at Madang town, where I had lived for nine years, I was introduced to Caspar Bass, a Kukurai, one of the big men of Kayan village. Kayan is known for maintaining garamut became the choice of location for research after first considering another village, as related elsewhere in this dissertation.

I proposed that I might provide finance for the production of three garamut, within the strict traditional protocols for that work. It would be an opportunity to assist with the preservation and recording of custom associated with the garamut. This came to be undertaken in the village during the eight months of my stay and enriched the experience, by providing an exact demonstration of

all the procedures followed, with people of the village directly explaining the practice as it was being observed. It is usual enough for garamut to be carved for outside buyers, though almost always outside of customary practice and without the endorsement of elders. In my case the garamut were produced within the envelope of custom. By the term envelope of custom, I do not mean the traditional rituals of the past but make reference to the procedure of seeking the collective consent of all the tribal Kukurai of the village. And also the fact of carving garamut in a secluded place away from the prying eyes of women and children. Furthermore, the garamut were carved with traditional Kayan clan designs. Whereas garamut carved for tourists or potential buyers by certain individuals of the village, are often carved without the knowledge and the collective consent of the Kukurai. Nor are they carved with traditional designs but with improvised designs. This is because the Kukurai and the elders of the village declared that garamut carved for private sales should not depict any of the clan designs. This can be interpreted as a way of placing restrictions that their designs are not copied by outsiders. The garamut I requested were for placement in three locations; at my university in Australia, University of Queensland, in the Divine Word University Library, and in the Chapel at Divine Word University, Madang. Financial assistance was obtained from UQ and the transfer of the garamut was achieved after negotiation with the village providers, and the relevant authorities in Papua New Guinea and Australia. The garamut at Divine Word University Chapel was financed by me and the one in the library was sponsored by library itself.

After I had come to be accepted into the kinship system of the village, and had taken up residence there, the experience of observation was further enriched when it was decided to construct a new men's house, where garamut would be kept. Once again it became possible to obtain explanations of the process and its meanings from several elders in the village, directly as the work was being done.

As a guest but also an initiate as a member of the kinship system I contributed to some of the costs of the building work on the men's house, especially by donating food for the cooking being done, to support the workers. This was in accord with general custom in that region of Papua New Guinea, and beyond, where a guest will bring some gifts such as foodstuffs or some betelnuts. The

process of my invitation into the village and acceptance there, after some lengthy deliberations is recounted in Chapter five.

It was established with the members of the host community that I would be living among them, and would be observing, so as to study and understand garamut, as part of my university degree. It was accepted at meetings of people of the village that my findings would become known in the outside world, and would in fact help to preserve knowledge of custom in Kayan. I would not be writing for financial gain, such as, to write a book for the general curiosity of people outside. I correctly established with people that for much of the work, I would be relating stories about what I was observing. I am habituated to the use of narrative as my chief means of assembling and relating information and ideas. That strong development of a narrative style is part of my own cultural background, which I shared with the people of Kayan village also.

1.8 The Choice of Kayan

The choice of Kayan was a suggestion by a Manam⁷ elder. Initially when I contemplated doing this research, I approached an elder from the Island of Manam whether I could research garamut at Manam where use of garamut has remained the prerogative of only the Kukurai. However he recommended that the best place to do this research would be at Kayan. He said that Manam people do not

carve garamut. The Kukurai of Manam gets their garamut from their Kukurai friends of Kayan, and with a smile he said that the Kayan are referred to as the ‘factory’ for producing garamut.

The Kayan are renowned for elaborate carving of garamut and still maintain a strong garamut tradition. Some garamut of Kayan have travelled the world, and are found in museums such as Berlin Museum in Germany, New York Museum in America, as well as in Australian Museums especially the South Australian Museum. The Kayan word for garamut is *rumbung*. According to



Kayan village - 2012

⁷ Manam is an offshore island about sixteen kilometres from Kayan.

the elders *rumbung* is the name given to the slit-log. However I will use the word *garamut* throughout the thesis as it is widely used throughout the country even among the Kayan themselves. The meaning of the term *rumbung* will be further discussed in this chapter.

Also to the best of my knowledge, though many artefacts were collected from the people of lower Ramu including Kayan in the past, there has been no comprehensive anthropological account of the Kayan and their material cultural objects. The only recent study was conducted by Poser (2004 -2007) on Kayan history. Therefore my research is relatively new especially about understanding the role *garamut* play in constructing their social and kinship structure, most notably in exploring what *garamut* did in the past and what *garamut* do now among the Kayan.

1.8.1 Location of Kayan



Papua New Guinea maps.google.com.au



Map from sil.org/pacific/png maps/Madang

The Kayan live in the Bogia District of Madang Province of Papua New Guinea along the border of Madang Province and East Sepik Province. Because of their geographical location demarcated by the natural landmarks of the Ramu and Sepik Rivers, the people share cultural aspects from both the lower Ramu and Sepik villages. I observed that Kayan have practices, traditions, customs, trade links, and traditional social networks that connect to the lower Ramu and Sepik river villages along the coast as far as the Murik Lakes in the East Sepik Province. They also have very close ties with the people from the offshore Island of Manam who were their main traditional trade partners on the island, and who similarly have a strong Kukurai system of leadership.

1.8.2 The layout of the village - 2012



Nongdangan	Nondangan
<hr/>	
Samngae	Samngae
<hr/>	
Warngem	Warngem

In the past the Kayan lived in family units close together comprised of three different tribes represented by three large clans of Samngae, Nongdangan, and the Warngem clan which are also referred to by the Kayan as tribes. I observed they still live together in a similar order in the village. Members of these clans which include the sub clans live close together in their allocated areas. The Nongdangan occupies the top eastern section of the village, the Samngae the middle, and the Warngem the lower western end of the village. Houses are built on both sides of the village. Also some houses are scattered about in other sections of the village. The four men's houses where clan garamut are kept are at both sides of the village, two on one side and the other two on the other side.



Teddy's house where I stayed

When I enquired with Teddy on the notion of political and kinship units, Teddy said that in the past it was normal that family units lived close together and clan members built houses next to one another. However nowadays, there is a breakdown in close kinship connections and young people have greater choice to live with the wife's clan relatives or live in their own clan residential area. I also noted that families belonging to the same clan prefer to live close to each other in certain spots of the village where their grandparents lived. This can be interpreted as by building their houses on these portions of land in the village, they make a statement that they have the right to live there and claim ownership to various portions of land, or forest, or sago patches.

I also observed that members of sub clans live around their main clan or scattered around. It was apparent to me from the layout of the village where clan members lived, and who they lived with identified their kinship and family relationship. This view is also shared by Gillespie (2000, p.1) who says that kinship should also be looked at from a broader perspective apart from the classical biological position. She writes that in certain societies, people conceive and enact kin or “kin-like” relationships as a group by virtue of their joint localisation within a ‘house’. I lived with the Kainmbat clan of the Wargnem tribe in a section of the village where most members of the Kainmbat clan lived, considered as lower end of the village. As a way of acknowledging me as an associate member of their clan, Kainmbat elders would say in Tok Pisin, ‘yu wanhaus bilong ol’. This meant I belonged to their men’s house, the clan or the same house with them. The term “haus” in most Papua New Guinea societies is a reference to both metaphorical and literal association of kinship relations.

After staying for a few days I began to familiarise myself with the village set up. With the assistance of a young man Cascius who was assigned to me as a guide and a companion, we walked around the village. Cascius I also noted deliberately took me around to introduce me to members of Kainmbat clan because he himself belongs to the clan. Going around with Cascius I noticed that there were family residential homes scattered just within the perimeters or what can be termed as edges of the village, referred to as camps by the villagers. I asked Cascius the reason why some people were not living in the main village. He explained that because of economic activities, families now prefer to stay close to their projects so they live away from the village in order to look after their cocoa or vanilla crops or betelnut trees. Furthermore with increasing population size and crowding in the main village, some people now prefer to live at their portions of land which are termed as bush camps. He also added that these days there is stealing going on and people live close to guard their property.

1.9 Origin stories

Poser (2008, pp. 33-35) reading early German records at Divine Word University Library in Madang, writes that the Kayan settlement was founded in the 1700’s. There are two theories surrounding the settlement. One theory is that the original Kayan people migrated from the volcanic Yomba Island off the coast of Madang which erupted and sank thus displacing its

inhabitants and its survivors spreading over several coastal areas (cf. Meiser 1955 & Mennis 2006). The possible scenario would be that after their arrival, they fought with the Mbore (Boroi) for the ground, and took the women of defeated neighbors. Teddy my principal informant also told me this story which he heard from his grandfather. Comprising mostly of men they came in their big sail canoes. Upon seeing that the islands of Karkar and Manam had been occupied with people they came ashore at their current location at the beach East of Ramu River. It is a low lying swampy sandy area surrounded by lagoons and mangroves. They fought off the original inhabitants and since they came with few women the men married local women.

Another version of the story of Kayan settlement is that the Kayan are recent immigrants from the inland regions of Ramu and have moved down to the coast (see Swadling et al. 1988, p.14, Swadling 1997, p.2, A.Von Poser n.d). Hearing their language to be different from neighboring villages along the North Coast of Madang, I asked Teddy my principal informant why this was the case. His response was that much of the original Kayan language has been lost and the language they speak now is a hybrid version which includes elements of other languages of the area. Poser (2008) citing Mennis (2006, p.42) also points out that for a coastal people, the Kayan speak a non-Austronesian language which contradicts the Yomba theory.

Referring to the story of Yomba, Teddy went on to say in Tok Pisin, ‘taim ol pikinini i bin dring susu bilong mama, ol i dringim tu tokples bilong mama’, translated as, when children drank from their mothers breasts, they also drank the language of the mothers. He meant that the local women outnumbered their men and the children grew up speaking the mothers’ language, thus metaphorically speaking, they drank the language, custom and traditions of their mothers’ people. Teddy and the other elders I spoke to, align themselves more with the Yomba story than the latter story of them coming from inland Ramu, though there has been connection through trade and intermarriages as well. They said that since their great great grandparents were only a small number, and through intermarriage their original Kayan blood got assimilated into a much bigger pool of people, over time there is hardly any Kayan person with original Kayan blood got assimilated into a much bigger pool of people, over time there is hardly any Kayan person with original Kayan blood.

These were interesting comments because these stories seem to indicate that it is plausible there was high level of convergence of cultures. Informed by these theories and stories, my view is that the garamut culture of the original inhabitants was passed down through marriage to local women. Also with the existence of well-established trade exchange going on along the coastline with neighboring villages of Awar, Boroï, Bodbod, Gamai, and Watam as far as Murik and villages along lower Ramu and Sepik rivers, including offshore islands of Manam and Boisa, this would have contributed to much cultural borrowing among the people (see also Leach 2004, pp. 3,100).

Analysing conversations I had with Kayan elders, it is evident that the culture of garamut originally did not belong to the Kayan but they applied their skills of craftsmanship transferring the designs of their canoes and elevated garamut to a different level. Thus as a commencing notion, it is very plausible to me, that with the lack of a story of origin, the garamut among Kayan is an adopted



A clan leader's garamut - Kayan village

phenomenon. Through the process of adoption, garamut became central to their life as a people. Garamut gave them identity and a sense of belonging to their new locality. Teddy was in agreement with my proposition that as a migrant people their ancestors adopted the cultural practices and customs of the surrounding people. In fact it was Teddy who told me that their grandparents borrowed or adopted the culture of the local inhabitants. Comparing garamut designs of Boroï with Kayan I noticed a marked difference from Kayan designs; but the finials looked the same depicting the face of tumbuan⁸. Boroï is a neighbouring village to Kayan which is about fifteen kilometers away.

One particular story of interest is about the inner conflicts the early Kayan settlers had among themselves. As a consequence of these conflicts, two groups departed for other locations. One group, the Kacsoir, went to a place towards the east now called Tobenam along the North Coast Road of Madang. According to Teddy the Tobenam people use the same family names as the Kayan. However, the language has changed slightly taking on the dialects from surrounding

⁸ Tumbuan: Tok Pisin word for long conical mask worn during ritual dances.

villages. The other group Saikjan left in a westerly direction and settled in the area near Porapora region between the Sepik and Ramu rivers (see Poser 2008, p. 9). In fact during my stay some men from Porapora visited Teddy. During the conversation the elder of the group told me in Tok Pisin, “Kayan em tumbuna ples”; meaning, Kayan is their ancestral village. He also confided in me that Teddy’s great great grandmother originally came from their village of Porapora to Kayan. Because of that connection they were trying to encourage Teddy’s sons to settle at Porapora because these sons had a lot of land due to them through their blood lines. In Tok Pisin they said, “ol lain bilong Teddy ol i ‘wanblut’ bilong mipela’, literary, “Teddy’s line is of the same blood line as us”.

1.9.1 Origin of garamut among Kayan

One of my research findings I have highlighted is that the Kayan adopted the garamut culture that already existed. This is evident from their story of applying the designs of their traditional canoes which were called *Raing*, *Yoberber*, and *Baewarup* to garamut when they arrived and took up residency at their new settlement. Michael Kaskus one of the elders (referred to as Komiti) also pointed out to me a design they call *Dauginamot* on a garamut. He told me that this design was borrowed by their grandfathers from a neighboring village of Daugi which is about forty kilometers southwest of Bogia. The design was seen on a turtle shell during one of their trade exchange trips to the village. When they copied it they gave the name *Dauginamot* which means, the ‘man from Daugi’, *Daugi*, the name of the village and *namot*, in Kayan language, man. Michael continued that Kayan people have lost the knowledge, the art and the skill of making big sea going canoes. He further told me that when he was growing up in the 1950’s, the practice of making big canoes had long disappeared. However he heard stories of the past big canoes of Kayan which had sailed to Manam and nearby offshore islands and as far as Murik lakes for trade purposes.

Also from my interviews, I deduced that the Kayan did not have a definitive ancestral story of the origin of garamut except a reference to a spirit garamut which drifted from either Sepik or Ramu and came ashore at their beach. Teddy and the elders including the Kukurai could only offer this story as the source from which their grandfathers learnt how to carve garamut. They concurred with my view that they have no other story apart from the story of spirit garamut. They said that may be there was another story but none of them knew. As this story is vague, my view is that the

story serves two purposes: One is about their arrival as displaced people coming ashore, and the other is about them adopting a culture that was already there to give them identity as a people among their neighbors. In other words, through garamut they carved themselves an identity. My findings suggest that there was convergence of cultures and Kayan who were a minority used their craft making skills to apply their designs to garamut. In this way garamut became their vehicle of assimilation.

Apart from garamut, Teddy informed me that the clan men's house tradition is also part of a culture adopted by the Kayan. Their forefathers continued the culture of the original inhabitants by maintaining the adopted practices, while at the same time applying some of their own values. For example, the seating arrangement on beds in the men's house was arranged into different subsections of how men sat according to their seniority and relationships (see Poser 2008, p.76). Philip one of the carvers told me that in former times in the men's houses they also had a cross beam across the bed which had the design called *Baewarup*. This beam was a divider between in-laws, playmates, and those who could and could not sit together. It was not proper for them to reach over or jump over to get food which was placed on the either side of the divider. They had to jump down and walk over to get the food. However these days the men's houses do not have these cross beams anymore. Philip again pointed out to me the design *Baewarup* on a garamut and said that this design was transferred to garamut by their grandparents.

1.9.2 The meaning of the word garamut

The source of the Tok Pisin word garamut is said to have originated from New Guinea Islands especially from the Kuanua language of the Tolai people. Since then the word garamut has now become the common word used throughout Papua New Guinea. Mihalic (1971) provides the following meaning of the word garamut, 1) a tree with hard white wood (*Vitex Confossus*), and 2) a native wooden signal drum, the slit-gong, used to give short signals as well as send messages. This definition I argue was influenced by early anthropological studies which I identified earlier. Even some of my interlocutors referred to garamut as musical instruments in our conversations about garamut. It is interesting to note from literature that many anthropological studies and ethno musicological studies use the term slit-drum and slit-gong interchangeably. These works still present garamut primarily as

musical instruments or gongs for signaling events similar to bells signaling clock time for beginning or ending of activities such as class periods in schools.

The slit-gong definition was popularised when garamut began to be pounded outside of its cultural context as a signaling gong. Taken away from the custodianship of the big-men and their restricted use, garamut were now used in a similar way to metal bells. At Kayan Primarily School I also saw a metal bell and a garamut. The garamut was placed at the school as a cultural symbol. A male School Board Member told me that only male teachers especially the Headmaster beat it on a few occasions when they wanted to call together School Board Members for a meeting. Interestingly the garamut is placed under the School Notice Board. The bell was always used for class periods which I could hear on school days and on Sundays it was rung to begin Sunday Service in the Church. This bell was part of a small gas cylinder which had been cut to be used as a school bell. The use of empty gas cylinders as school bells is a common practice in many of the schools in Papua New Guinea.



A garamut at Kayan Primary School

As I began the research I asked the elders the meaning of their language word *rumbung* for garamut. In Tok Pisin I asked, ‘*rumbung* i gat wanem mining long Tok Ples Kayan’; translated as, what is the meaning of *rumbung* in Kayan language? They answered that the language word *rumbung* is a combined word. This is similar to the Kuanua word garamut which is now used as the Tok Pisin word (see p.43). *Rum* is a hardwood tree and *mbung* is breath of a person. This is an interesting finding that garamut, to use the Tok Pisin word, is an object that has very close affinity with human persons. To take this further, I suggest that garamut produces breath or wind from the slit or the mouth as agency of human persons. This can also be interpreted as human breath is life. Thus I see that there is a correlation to life and death in that garamut celebrates life as well as mourns life. And rituals in former times pertaining to initiations and ancestral practices seem to indicate that garamut was part of this cycle of human and spirit life. For this reason garamut were seen as sacred items and were not used unnecessarily. Even the use of garamut during singing was limited to special occasions only. The Kukurai in

particular with some caution told me in Tok Pisin, ‘garamut ol i no pilai samting, ol i ken bagarapim ples na kilim man’; translated as, garamut are not toys, they can destroy the village and kill people. One Kukurai said that the garamut is the voice of the Kukurai or the Chief Kukurai that members of the community are obliged to hear. The Kayan word *rumbung* anticipates listening in silence to the voice. The young people’s responses were ambivalent especially those who grew up in town, who said that they have seen garamut used for many purposes such as in Cultural Shows, in Church worship, in singsing and also in some musical performances. A few mentioned that they did know that in the village context the Kukurai and some elders send messages through garamut. This clearly shows that among the young people there is lack of knowledge of how deeply involved the agency of garamut is in their community. One of the findings that emerged from the interviews with the young people is that they spoke about the general use of garamut whereas the elders spoke about the clans, the men’s house, spirits, kinship, leadership and ritual connectedness of garamut among the Kayan as well as with neighboring people.

My other conversations with elderly people from communities where garamut are used, such as the Sepik, Manus, Rabaul, Bougainville, and Madang, all produced the comment that culturally, garamut were not for making music. They said that though garamut were used to accompany singsing, they were special instruments through which people communicated. When and how garamut were used was decided by the elders. Though some activity of garamut also includes traditional singsing either to celebrate life or mourn life, they emphasised that culturally garamut were occasionally used in dances as required but not frequently as is the case today. Interestingly one of them said that it is an offence to the people to call garamut musical instruments. He insisted that I should write this down and further offered the comment that the modern use of garamut is not representing culture in a proper and respectful way. One of the main characteristics of how garamut communicate sociality as a voice will be further discussed in Chapter five.

1.9.3 Guide to Chapters

Comprising Eight Chapters the thesis traces the historical meaning of garamut and points out the changes and transformation that took place with the intervention of the European contact. The first chapter includes the introduction, background to the research project, fieldwork details, and the

concepts that drove this research. It also discusses the methodology and methods crafted for engaging research participants, the ethical concerns and the challenges faced.

Methodology describes the theory of knowledge and enquiry that guides the research whereas methods describe the specific techniques used to collect information (Lather, 2006). As the research is situated in a Papua New Guinea village studying a specific cultural object very important to the people of Kayan, ethnographic field work was deemed most appropriate. Wolcott (1995) defines fieldwork as a form of inquiry that requires a researcher to be immersed personally in the ongoing social activities of some individual or group carrying out the research.

Moreover, as suggested by Guba and Lincoln (1997, p.198), the various hypotheses, theories, and interpretive frameworks brought by outside investigators “may have little or no meaning within the emic view of studied individuals, groups, societies, or cultures.” As the researcher I wanted to understand the power and social influence of garamut from Kayan’s own system of meanings. The research questions were translated into Tok Pisin, one of Papua New Guinea’s National Languages which is commonly spoken in the Kayan community as well. The purpose was to engage informants and interviewees in sharing their stories and ideas as freely as possible.

Chapter Two presents a literature review about the contesting views on concepts and theories concerning material culture and agency of objects. Positions of various scholars of material culture are looked at. However particular attention is given to Gell who in his anthropological theory of *Art and Agency* (1998) suggested that art objects have social agency and have a personhood of their own, as they become ‘enmeshed in a texture of social relationships’. The central question posed is, how do objects operate in ways that make them person-like? If they do, how is this agency exercised? In this vein, I explore the concept of the agency of garamut among the Kayan and investigate what garamut do.

Chapter Three presents the ethnographic understanding of the process of construction of garamut among the Kayan. Here I address the connection between constructing a garamut and the generation of social forms which garamut emanate in process and production. Leach (2002) writes that garamut production brings forth social relations in a certain form, and this elicitation is

possible because the object is not simply produced through a complex technological process, but because the technology of production is also the technology of elicitation. It works on and through social relations, drawing sociality from others including spirits and directing that sociality into a form recognisable as human, (political, affinal, reproductive). According to Leach, the difficulty is not to get raw material of tree and paint into a finished product but the real achievement, however, is to bring forth a form of sociality itself (Leach 2002, p.730). This was also my observation and experience among the Kayan that throughout the process and production of my three garamut, it elicited social interaction among the Kukurai, the elders, the carvers, the clan members, family members and me as the owner of the garamut.

In the Handbook of Material Culture (2006), the authors introduce '*Material Culture*' as being the study which centers on the idea that materiality is an integral dimension of social existence that cannot be understood without it. It is about the study of objects and their relationship to persons. And my study is about garamut and their relationship to Kayan people. Lipset (2005, p.109) writes that Art objects according to Gell, should be viewed as resulting from and or/in possession of human powers so that they may assert themselves through one form or combination of several forms. He says that Gell adopted Peircean terminology to define three dimensions of their efficacy:(1) an object may 'index' the magical skill of the artist;(2) an object may 'index' its relationship as a living entity to its user; or (3) an object may be an 'icon' of a spirit, that is, it may manifest a divine prototype.

In this vein, I explore how garamut extend their agency in the three index modes and influence sociality among the Kayan in their process of production and the finished product. The study discusses as Leach (2002) says, the everyday technologies which structure the relations of production and thus structure social forms. Gell makes the following suggestion as to how art achieves its social effect. He says, 'the power of art object stems from the technical processes they objectively embody' (Gell 1992, p.44). Gell further says that in all domains of art production, among technical processes involved in the creation of a work of art is the production of relations via art (cited in Leach 2002, p.717). In addition, I say that both the social and the technical process desire a benevolent outcome. Fear and anxiety about potential harm are ever present, with the

feeling that people should adhere to traditional prescribed norms of behavior (see also Leach 2002, p.722).

Chapter Four reflects on clan garamut and the men's houses which are traditional agents that represent masculinity. Here I will discuss the ways in which clan garamut and the clan men's house form identity with male persons to provide a segregated social space for men only. This has implications in the engagement of women in areas of decision making and the place of girls in the community. Each Kayan men's house contains objects of male power such as the clan garamut, flutes, sacred masks, sacred spears, or a spirit spear called *mais* (in Kayan language) and items considered to facilitate certain energy. Clan garamut in the men's house represent the collective voice and unity of the clan and the men's house metaphorically houses the clan members under one roof with each Kukurai as head of the clan. Though this arrangement denies women access to the men's house and does not permit women to beat garamut, it is inclusive of women as members of the clan under a patrilineal lineage.

Chapter Five deliberates on the notion of garamut being referred to as 'voice' of a man or a person, a 'voice' that people are obliged to hear. Here in the context of garamut I define the voice as being the voice of leaders who are privileged to speak out with recognised authority. The reference to 'voice' is also mentioned by Leach (2002), and Bateson (1958) speaks of some middle Sepik societies who refer to garamut as 'voice' of the spirits. The discussion looks at the corollary between young men becoming adults and given a voice and how the voice mediates social relations. Leach writes that among the Nekgini speakers, when constructing slit-gongs they follow a process akin to the process whereby young men are initiated into the male cult. The culmination of this initiation is the decoration of the neophytes. They say that a garamut is a man; they mean that it has a voice which others are obliged to hear (Leach 2002, p.715). A garamut demands a response because of "who" it is (Leach 2002, p.730). Garamut among Kayan are also considered as the voice of the Kukurai, the big man. The Kayan term for Kukurai is *Kakos*. However the term Kukurai will be used throughout because they often use the Tok Pisin word, Kukurai. Garamut give the Kukurai voice of authority and status of leadership. A Kayan elder expressed to me that a Kukurai without a garamut has no 'voice'. Though he may beat a garamut his voice alone would have no recognised authority.

Chapter Six explores how garamut have transformed and taken new meanings, and these new meanings have embraced a broader national landscape giving identity to people under various national slogans. This identity extends into various aspects of everyday life of the people, not only in the village context but as well in a modern context, as evidenced through its production for tourists; its imagery in politics and business; as in Radio Madang ‘Maus bilong Garamut,’ ‘Garamut Enterprises’ and ‘Garamut Blog’ in social media; in sports where the National Junior Cricket team is called Garamuts, and Garamut biscuits are marketed.

Foster (2002) writes of the way images of cultural objects have been used as national symbols to foster new national identity. He provides an example of bank notes which are adorned with images of shell and other traditional forms of wealth, to link their users to indigenous identity. According to Foster state currency functions as a fetish of value in which one’s membership in a national body entails the guarantees usually found in intimate social relations, yet also gives the user new freedoms to spend and consume. Money signals modernity, but for it to be seen as valuable, it needs to be reinforced by the concept of a national population, a new community that will guarantee it. Thus the traditional symbolism on PNG currency can be seen as an attempt to co-opt nostalgia toward the end of promoting a new regime of value. Likewise the image and the use of the name garamut in social media represent the voice of the public. It is anticipated that garamut used as a National Icon will promote unity as the ‘voice’ promoting the affairs or events citizens are engaged in such as in the political, social or economic arena.

Chapter Seven presents discussions and analysis of research findings. Primarily it presents the views, the thoughts and the beliefs of the Kayan people as discussed throughout the thesis. As the aim of the research was to investigate what garamut do to elicit forms of sociality among the Kayan, I tried as much as possible to understand their system of meanings not only about garamut but also of their character as a people. Studying garamut gave me an opportunity to look into Kayan social relationships within their own clans as well as their relations and alliances with neighboring peoples. I also analysed the broader issues of modernity where garamut now seem to take on new meanings as well as the social changes taking place in which people of Kayan have to negotiate between tradition and impact of modern changes.

Chapter Eight provides a short summary of the investigative journey of the research and the final conclusion reached. It culminated in a statement that is of significant contribution in understanding garamut. Garamut are to be understood as powerful social agents which still affect the lives of those communities such as the Kayan. As to their future, it is the Kayan community's challenge to find ways to preserve and pass on the knowledge to younger generation that garamut have played a definining role in constructing who they are. With the encroaching modern influence, garamut have taken on new social meanings and introduced new social values.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

2.1 Overview

In this literature review I look at the theories and concepts of material agency of objects and how objects as it were begin a conversation with humans, a controversial topic that has aroused debate among scholars of material culture. Some of the pertinent questions about the agency of objects have been: Do objects or things have power over us? Can inanimate objects or things possess agency or some form of ‘intentional will’ to act upon humans? The thesis overall draws on the thought of the British anthropologist Alfred Gell, whose work in Melanesia, and in other fields, contributed largely to understanding of the relationship between the inanimate and human. It has assisted this writer in grasping the claims of ‘traditional’ and ‘western’ notions of the importance of *garamut*. Gell (1998) with his theory published in *Art and Agency*; proposed that art objects embody complex intentionalities and mediate social agency; persons and objects merge together in his conceptualisation; thus objects can be considered as secondary agents. It is a heavily contested concept which has attracted both critics and supporters such as Tilley (2001) Knappet (2005) and Morphy (2009) who resist the idea that inanimate objects could possess independent agency of influence. As Russell (2007) puts it, ‘we must ask: Can artefacts act? Can they speak?’ My research will engage Gell’s theory in investing *garamut*, one of the everyday material objects of some groups in Papua New Guinea which are considered to have agency of influence on their lives.

2.2 Introduction

Since its posthumous publication, Gell’s *Art and Agency* has drawn more questions with regard to the concept and theories of the agency of material culture, such as, can objects have independent agency? To argue that objects do have agency, Gell presents a theory of art which moves away from concentrating on aesthetics and visual communication and focuses on the concept of agency that interlinks the object and the artist, and human relationships. For Gell, art is defined by the

distinctive function it performs in advancing social relationships through ‘the abduction of agency’ and indexes of the artist’s agency (see Layton 2003, p.447). However, the theory of social agency of art objects proposed by Gell also poses several questions of enquiry, the most central being: Must all agency be human? To me, from a Melanesian perspective, it is an enquiry that would include the notion of spirit agents. This is because in a Melanesian epistemological worldview, humans are not the only ones with agency.

Discussing Gell’s concept of agency Russell (2007, p.74) writes that rather than simply asserting the re-enchanting or re-animating of objects, Gell chose to develop a concept of dispersed agency (see Gell 1998, p. 12-22). That is, that primary agency was still located within the scope of human action, but that objects, as indices of human agency, possess secondary agency. However Russell (along with others such as Tilley and Knappet whose views I will discuss later in this chapter) draws attention to the main contested view in this debate by arguing that despite scholars such as Gell making efforts to bring into balance the relationship between the human and objects in the discourse of agency, this does not move beyond the fundamental issue of existential exceptionalism. Russell (2007) says that although Gell brings objects into play within dispersed agency as secondary agents, this does not overcome the modern ‘ego’ of the human as primary agent. Thus he points out as a matter of fact that objects, no matter how much secondary agency they can wield, are still reducible to indices of human action and will (Russell 2007, p.75). The danger to this discourse, Russell points out, is that it falls back into the classical arguments over the notion of the prime mover. He says that as there are efforts to locate a kinetic starting point for agency and action in the world, Gell continued the socio-theological and cosmological argument for a hierarchy or chain of command in the casual relationships between agents and objects. In asserting that the conception of a primary agent and a secondary agent still functions within the discourse of the search for a prime mover, the tremendous risk for this position is that it merely replaces what were abstract conceptions of divine will with human will and choice. Thus, the questions and concerns of this debate are of a cosmological order, in that they ask us the question how we position ourselves within the evident and experienced complexities of our shared ecologies, environments, architectures and worlds.

2.3 Concept and theories of material culture

The authors of the *Handbook of Material Culture* (2006) introduce Materiality as being the study which centers on the idea that materiality is an integral dimension of social existence that cannot be understood without it. Yet the material and the cultural are regarded as fundamentally opposed, for instance, as the physical to the intellectual. Material culture is a principal source of evidence about the human past. It is about the study of things or objects and their relation to persons and vice versa (see *Handbook on Material Culture* 2006, p.1). Hence materiality has become a subject of extended debate on whether things or objects are active agents impacting on human lives. The objects also affect the social status of people, demarcate gender roles, give identity and meaning and build relationships among people. Literature on material culture has focused on how things or objects make and give identity to people in various social contexts, and how people give meaning to objects in different contexts.

Literature on materiality suggests that objects have social agency impacting on people. Attfield (2000, pp.35-39) points out that material culture has several definitions one of which is simply the study of objects, or the specialised study of object collections as in museum studies, and more specifically the integration of artefacts into the social world beyond the empirical study centered on the physical features -- through the acquisition of social meaning within specific cultural or historical contexts. Attfield also asserts that confusions which sometimes arise in the definition of 'material culture' derive from the empirical and more abstract types of cultural analysis. The empirical is associated with a very precise object analysis that seeks to document the concrete particularities of the form, materials, and making processes which result in a specific manufactured product and don't necessarily engage with its meaning or its social relation.

Another qualification relates to the relationship between people and objects where emphasis is on the dialectical nature of relationship (see Gell 1992; 1998). This position suggests that people and objects are mutually constitutive, as people act on objects and objects act back to affect people. People are given priority in this relationship (which is an asymmetrical relationship, as seen in Gell's primary and secondary agents) and are thus thought to be ontologically separate from things. This approach of seeing art and material objects as a window for looking into society

provides an understanding that material objects are not passive but active agencies. They are not to be seen only as decorative ornaments which have technological enchantment to captivate the imagination of the viewer. This position suggests that objects become independent actors in engaging people in relationships. This is relevant to garamut and I will address this in Chapter five.

Busse (2008,p.192) argues that the agency and efficacy of objects matter, that objects are kinds of persons, and are valued because of the associations they have acquired through time. They draw implicitly on recent anthropological theorising about objects and persons by Gell and Strathern, which suggests that objects are social persons. The fact that their debt to these theorists, and to those who have criticised and extended their work, is largely implicit, speaks to the extent to which Gell's and Strathern's ideas have been taken up by contemporary anthropology. Busse, as mentioned also points out that Gell speaks of art objects as social agents, and that where objects themselves are not intentional beings, they frequently act as mediums through which people manifest or realise their intentions. Gell argues that an object acts as an agent when the artist's skill is so great that the viewer simply cannot comprehend it and is therefore captivated by the image.

His notion of captivation asserts that an object is art on the basis of what it does, not what it is. He provides an example of the prow-boards of the Kula canoe as having this impact or affect (*see* Gell 1998, p.69). Gell's emphasis is that objects have independent agency because of human engagement with material culture, lending the objects agency. He also suggests that many objects which in fact are objects manufactured by human beings (the artists), are not believed to have originated in that way; they are thought to be of divine origin or to have mysteriously made themselves (*see* Gell 1998, p.23). In Chapter three I will discuss this further as garamut so apparently belong to this category of objects.

According to Hoskins (2006), Gell formulated a theory about creation of art objects where Gell asserts that things are made as a form of instrumental action. In Gell's thinking, art is produced in order to influence the thoughts and actions of others. This is to say that material objects embody complex intentionalities and mediate social agency. However contesting this conversation of agency of objects are scholars such as Tilley (2001) who argue that the meaning of an object is born when that object is used towards a purpose by a group. He is of the view that meaning is

created out of situated, contextualised social action which is in continuous dialectical relationship with generative rule-based structures forming both a medium for and an outcome of action. In his thinking, objects can have agency only when an object is used. Like Tilley, Knappett (2005) argues that objects cannot have agency on their own by saying that ‘if an artefact holds any kind of psychological presence, it is only a secondary effect of its connection with human protagonists, the ‘real’ and primary agents’. He resists the idea that objects cannot have true agency, because they are not alive, whereas, when imbued by humans with a purpose, an object may act in a manner similar to that of an agent.

Russel who I mentioned also debates the concept by saying that the term object carries connotations of tangibility and manipulability. Regarding agency he writes, we are dealing with the definition of the ‘faculty of an agent or acting or working as a means to an end’ (p.72). He says that the fused-together phrase ‘object agency’, attempts to unite what is a constructed separation between the role of humans as agents and objects as instruments wielded in the pursuit of a human-defined ‘end’ (Russell 2007).

Speaking of objects as social agents, Gell says that the immediate ‘other’ in a social relationship does not have to be another human being. The mention of ‘other’ as social agents by Gell feeds into a line of thinking that resonates with many Melanesian beliefs, that the ‘other’ could refer to a ‘spirit’ source or power, an idea that I will further discuss in the following chapters. Gell’s ideas extend to accepting that social agents can be exercised relative to ‘things’ and social agency can be exercised by ‘things’ (and also animals). Another theorist closely sharing Gell’s concept of agency, Harrison (1998), suggests that Gell proposes art objects are most profitably regarded, from an anthropological view, as material parts, or extensions, of the agency of those who create or utilise them. Artworks are artefacts endowed so to speak with the status of honorary persons, with the special property of participating, actively or passively, in social relationships with human beings and with each other (Harrison 1998, p.1).

Harrison argues that one of the most arresting ideas of Gell is that art works as a ‘technology’ of human social interaction, are produced specifically to captivate, intimidate, soothe, coerce, attract, and engage with each other in sociality. This follows from Gell’s conception of art as part of a

social or interpersonal technology, where personhood must be understood as extended or distributed among the many objects it fashions and employs in social action, not as something singular or discrete. Social agency, properly conceived, is not co-terminus with the human body; it is disseminated among all the 'prosthetic' extensions and augmentations by means of which it acts towards others and thereby expresses itself. Harrison points out that one implication of Gell's theory is that the things people create are parts of themselves which may, after their deaths, carry on pursuing their intentions for them, continuing as it were to act and speak in this world on their behalf.

It is a view shared by Weiner (1992) who introduces the concept of inalienable objects, where she says that objects carry their own humanity or biographies; thus the concept of extension of persons is also connected to materiality. Hoskins (2006, p.74) writes that in certain contexts, persons can seem to take on attributes of things and things can seem to act almost as persons. She refers to studies of traditional exchange systems (from Boas and Malinowski to Strathern, Munn and Campbell) which elaborated on this insight by detailing how objects can be given a gender, name, and ritual function. She also cites Weiner (1992) that some objects can be closely associated with persons as to seem inalienable. Similarly Kopytoff (1986) offers another view where he talks about the biography of things, focusing questions on particular objects, asking: Who makes it? In what conditions? From what materials? For what purpose? What are the recognised stages of development? How does it move from hand to hand? What other contexts and uses can it have? Strathern (1988) uses the concept of 'distributed personhood' in describing this interconnected relationship of objects with people. Leach (2002, p.717) builds on Gell's concept of art in arguing that the elicitation of a particular configuration of social relations is an 'aesthetic act'. These ideas will be further discussed in chapters, three, four, five and six.

According to Harrison (1998, p.1), Gell proposes that art objects are most profitably regarded, from an anthropological view, as material parts, or extensions, of the agency of those who create or utilise them; artworks are artefacts endowed so to speak with the status of honorary persons, with the special property of participating, actively or passively, in social relationships with human beings and with each other. They form part of what Gell conceived, in one of his most arresting ideas, as a 'technology' of human social interaction: the panoply of material artefacts which people

devise and use specifically to captivate, intimidate, soothe, coerce, attract and otherwise engage with each other in sociality. It follows from Gell's conception of art as part of a social or interpersonal technology that personhood must be understood as extended or distributed among the many objects it fashions and employs in social action, not as something singular or discrete. In this context, garamut sits neatly in Gell's conceptual framework, however as I will point out there is a difference in understanding the agency of garamut from the epistemological perspective of the Kayan.

2.4 Agency of objects

Material agency refers to the ability of objects to influence human actors and society in general. It is a controversial concept that many authors have attempted to explain through various theories because the concept of agency presupposes an act of will; an intention, which is deemed resident only with humans. In one camp are scholars who argue that objects have no agency. These scholars resist the view that inanimate objects could have agency thus being considered as intentional objects. They argue that agency only refers to capacity and not intention. In the other camp are scholars who have taken up Gell's position that objects do have agency because they mediate the social agency of the human person. First I will discuss the position of scholars – such as Tilley (2001), Knappett (2005) whom I have mentioned -- holding the view that objects have no agency but are solely dependent on human agency.

Tilley (2001, p. 260.) argues that the meaning of an object is born when that object is used towards a purpose by a group. For Tilley, an object gains agency, therefore, when it is used for a specific means by a human. He is of the view that objects can have agency only when an object is used. In other words, following Tilley's thinking in relation to garamut, it would mean that a garamut becomes an agency only when a human agency is applied in its use for a particular purpose. It is not a stand-alone agency but its 'agency' is merely an extension of human agency when the object is in use. Thus without the application of human agency, the object has no agency.

Similarly Knappett (2005) asserts that objects cannot have agency on their own by saying that if an artefact holds any kind of psychological presence, it is only a secondary effect of its connection

with human protagonists, the 'real' and 'primary agents' (Knappett 2005, p.29). He holds the view that objects cannot have true agency, because they are not alive, whereas, when imbued by humans with a purpose, an object may act in a manner similar to that of an agent. Pickering (1995, pp.17-18), going further, says that separating agency from intentionality reveals that whereas agency may be either human or material, intentionality is a human trait that 'appears to have no counterpart in the material realm'. He further adds that the human plans and goals that constitute intentionality are not formulated as pure internal mental representations simply executed in the exterior world; intentionality is 'predisciplined' by the cultural environment in which the human agent is located (Pickering 1995, p.19). Knappett's argument suggests garamut has no agency; it is only the agency of the person that is mirrored. Garamut remains a passive object with no agency and it would only transmit and echo the personal agency of the person beating it. However such considered and articulated understandings of agency are different to the outlook found among the Kayan, in turn firm and resolved narratives of life, perceptions, feelings, attitudes and beliefs which this thesis presents as themes to better understand garamut from the cultural perspective of the Kayan.

As can be seen from the above, the ideas and thoughts emerging from these concepts and theories on agency of objects vary among scholars. Gell represents those scholars who argue that objects do have some autonomous agency as an extension of human agency; Tilley represents those scholars who have the view that objects only have agency when they are used for a particular purpose; and Knappett represents those scholars who cringe at the idea that inanimate objects should poses any form of agency at all. From these debates I conclude that the concept of agency fluctuates in meaning for individual scholars of material culture.

However, all agree including Gell that objects and their subsequent actions and legacies are dependent upon human interaction and societal intentions. They concur that humans do, indeed, instill objects with a certain purpose. Whether or not this purpose and ability can be called true agency depends, ultimately, on an individual's perception of the state of materiality in the world.

I have already mentioned that the concept of agency is very much contested between humans and objects, and there is ongoing debate among scholars whether or not objects possess agency or can also be referred to as agents. On the other hand Gell proposes the anthropological theory of agency

that objects do have social agency, because in extending the agency of humans they can be regarded as secondary agents. Gell suggests that art has agency, and the power of enchantment, which stands out as having autonomous agency, independent of the artist, yet connected to the artist as an extension of the artist's mind. Gell's primary focus is on the artist as agent. An agent, Gell writes, is any 'thing' (e.g. an artwork or a person) 'who is seen as initiating causal sequences of a particular type, that is, events caused by acts of mind or will or intention' (see Gell 1999, pp. 172-173). My intention in this study is also to look at the agency of garamut, and further to study the social relationship which is built into the process of the production of garamut.

For Gell, the discussion is about analysing the contexts of social relations that are objectified in the art object and which 'social objects' constitute. Gell proposes that whenever an event is believed to happen because of an 'intention' lodged in the person or thing which initiates the causal sequence, that is an instance of 'agency' (Gell 1998, p.17). Though Gell suggests that art objects have autonomous agency he qualifies that view by stating that persons are always the primary agents but artworks and other inanimate objects can be agents in a secondary or indirect sense, for although they themselves are not intentional beings they frequently act as the mediums through which people 'manifest and realise' their intentions. He also suggests that objects are 'extensions' of the persons whose agency they express – are part of their 'distributed' personhood.

To differentiate between primary and secondary agent Gell provides the example of a motor car-human relationship. Primary agents he says are intentional beings who are categorically distinguished from 'mere' things or artefacts, and secondary agents, are artefacts, cars, dolls or works of art. In his example of a car human relationship, Gell pointed out that the person is not the car, but the car as an autonomous agency represents the person (see Gell 1998, pp.18-20). I will take this further in Chapter three in discussing how garamut, unlike the car, have close affinity to the person to be considered imbued with personal agency. Following Gell's theory, garamut would qualify as secondary agents, as extensions of human agency. Again, as I will discuss in the later chapters, while this interpretation is very useful to understanding the role of the garamut in life of the community, the Kayan understanding of the agency of garamut will be yet different.

The theory of the secondary agency follows from Gell's earlier conception of art as part of a social or interpersonal technology where personhood must be understood as extended or distributed among the many objects it fashions and employs in social action, not as something singular or discrete. Harrison also points out that one implication of Gell's theory is that the things people create are parts of themselves which may, after their deaths, carry on pursuing their intentions for them, continuing as it were to act and speak in this world on their behalf (see Harrison 1998, p.1).

In the Handbook on Material Culture (2006) Chapter Five, Hoskins writes that Gell formulated a theory about the creation of art objects that could be in fact be a theory about the creation of all forms material culture, where Gell asserts that things are made as a form of instrumental action. That is, art, being object is produced in order to influence the thoughts and actions of others. Even those objects which, seem to be without a directly identifiable function – that is, objects which have previously been theorised as simple objects of aesthetic contemplation – are in fact made in order to act upon the world and to act upon other persons. Therefore for Gell, material objects embody complex intentionalities and mediate social agency even when they are not in use. It is a view relevant to understanding *garamut* as I will demonstrate in Chapter four.

The discussion in this chapter to this point has been driven by the theories offered by various scholars on social and material agency of objects. In particular, I was intrigued with the concept of agency of objects offered by Gell. In his concept of Art and Agency Gell advocates that objects, do have agency as social agents, as extensions of human agency. Gell makes a connection that humans are primary agents with intent and will, whereas objects can become secondary agents representing the agency of the human person. This concept raised a number of questions among scholars of material culture whether to accept that inanimate objects can be considered as possessing some form of independent or autonomous agency. Pursuing the concept of agency as advocated by Gell, I will investigate how *garamut* affect the social structure, leadership, gender, kinship relations, and exchange, as well as the religious beliefs of the Kayan people.

2.5 Literature on *garamut*

Literature on *garamut* is not in short supply as much is provided by various ethnographers. However they deal predominantly with the *garamut* as a signalling device, or with construction and

design, or else with a range of esoteric issues. My focus is on how garamut interact with people as person-like objects. The garamut's associations with magic, esotericism and the supernatural are many and diverse and they may vary considerably from one cultural group to another. My enquiry narrows to garamut among the Kayan and how garamut affect their lives. But first, a brief mention of what other ethnographers have written about garamut and its use.

Yamada (1997, p.160) writes that the sounds of the Iatmoi garamut of East Sepik Province are believed to be endowed with a special symbolic power, flowing from a spirit being, Guxaj, able to control the performance of songs. Leach (2002, pp.713-725) whom I have earlier cited, reported that the Nekgini-speaking people of the Rai Coast, will often say "a garamut is a man". A garamut is said to have a voice (*cf* also Bateson 1958). It appears in the village for the first time as a new man, that is, as an initiate returning from the seclusion of the forest where it went through a transformation process into adulthood. Leach writes of the Reite's people's belief that Spirits (*kaapu*), adopting the forms of various birds, have a significant role to play in the making of the Rai Coast garamut. He provides a detailed account of the involvement of bush spirits which are said to effect the hollowing of the trunk. Reite people say these spirits manifest themselves as different birds, which eat away the wood. The first to appear is *kengiau*, a green parakeet which drills holes in forest trees. Men who "attend the spirits" as they work, and "clear up after them" must observe dietary and behavioural restrictions. Sexual contact is particularly inimical to the work of *kaap sawing*. A man who arrives at the secluded site of manufacture carrying *samung* (dirt) from contact with women risks frightening away the "spirit". *Kengiau* is followed by *siurr songarangting* (a hornbill), which breaks away the upright pieces left by the parakeet's boring. It is quickly followed by *nung sarr* (white cockatoo), which peels the bark from the exterior of the slit-gong.

Whiting and Reed (1938, p.192) write that amongst the Kwoma, men tell women and the uninitiated youths that the sounds of the gong are made by spirits. The same authors indicate (1938, p.215) that when a Kwoma lies close to death the gongs in his house tambaran⁹ or clans

⁹ Tambaran: A Tok Pisin word with the following meanings: 1) the spirit of ancestors; since this must be placated this is often synonymous with malign spirits; the very secret system of ancestor worship in which only male participate. 2) the wooden masks used in tambaran cult; some are believed to be inhabited by the spirits.

men's house are tolled to deliver the message. According to Wassman (1991, p.24), the Iatmul garamuts have the capacity through certain rhythms, to represent a clan totem, and the exclusivity of such rhythms to their particular clan. The clans are totemic in that they are assigned portions of the surrounding world. Totems are not only animals, plants and tracts of the countryside but they are also mental constructs, i.e., imaginary creatures of primal times, water spirits, bush spirits, the so-called *wagin* spirits, and even certain melodies, garamut rhythms and ceremonial instruments. Wassman continues that the relationship between totem and clan is exceptionally close and charged with emotion. The 'ownership' of a totem carries with it both rights and duties. It is only in regard to its own totem that a clan is entitled to use its proper name, to know and above all to narrate the associated (secret) myths, to play the pertinent melodies and garamut rhythms and to represent the totems not only auditorily but also visually.

Meyer (1995, p.295) speaks of the relationship of the Wogumas garamut and beater to a 'great mythical canoe' and its paddle, the ornamentations on the beater probably representing the faces of water spirits. Stella (1990, p.52) offers a vivid account of the solemnity with which the garamut are treated by the Banoni people of Bougainville, and protected by their guardian spirits: the *kabasa* or club houses (which are also referred to as haus- garamut) are special houses in which the garamuts are kept. The construction of the *kabasa* and the garamut involves feasting and the invocation of spirits to protect the owner against other persons or evil spirits trying to harm him. Thus, spirits become guardians of the *kabasa*, the garamut and the owner. In many cases the guardian spirits manifest themselves as animals, especially snakes. These spirits are very dangerous in many ways; even to the *kabasa* and the owner of the garamut, who, ironically, they are supposed to protect. For example, if the owner of the garamut and the *kabasa* does not make regular sacrifices to the spirits or if he does not fulfil certain undertakings or promises made in the *kabasa*, the spirits may get angry and cause the owner to become sick or even kill him.

Another detailed account of the magical and spiritual powers of the garamut comes from Pongap's discussion (1979, p.10) of the Manus garamut. Pongap writes that the *pairap* of the garamut – a Tok Pisin term derived from the English 'fire up' – as a crucial element in both its acoustic and

magical properties, also addresses the role of the *masalai*¹⁰ spirits. The ‘pairap’ or power of the *garamut* is a reference to the aesthetic sound quality. In general, as Pongap describes, the Manus people recognise and strive for a good aesthetic sound quality. They also use magic to capture this. For instance, in several areas of the Manus Islands the chewing of betelnut together with special ginger is used for these magical purposes. A piece of ginger is said to be given by the spirits (*masalai* in Tok Pisin) to a man in his dreams, which he then cultivates for use when imposing power or sound quality of the *garamut*. To deliver the power to the *garamut*, the man would chew the mixture of betelnut, ginger, mustard-pepper and lime and spit onto the slits of the *garamut*. The *masalai*’s name and the place from where he came, is also mentioned during the ritual as an entreatment to his presence, and the powers he possesses.

It is also well established from my personal conversations with a number of interlocutors that playing of the *garamut* is an overwhelmingly male activity. Spearritt (1984, p.35) writes that the manner in which the *Iatmul* *garamut* is protected from exposure to women and children is indicative of denying women access to *garamut*. The performance takes place in the ceremonial house (or men’s house, as it is often called), because of the secrecy attached to the two big slit-drums on which the rhythms are to be played, which are housed there. From his observation Spearritt noted that a small enclosure was built round the drum area inside the men’s house; another, much larger enclosure was built round the men’s house itself to ensure that the drums were hidden from the view of women or children. Moyle describes a similar situation with regard to the ceremonial *garamut* of the *Abelam* (1972, p.814) that among the *Abelam* people ceremonial slit-drums are carefully sheltered in the men’s house away from the prying eyes of women. Stella (1990, p.52) suggests a more severe set of conditions for women among the *Banoni*. As a taboo, women are not allowed in the *kabasa* (haus-*garamut*) or to sound *garamut*. According to Stella, in ‘traditional’ times, women who ventured too close to the *kabasa* were killed by these guardian spirits.

I have talked about *garamut* and relationship of power that *garamut* emanates.

¹⁰ *Masalai*: A word from Vanuatu (formerly the New Hebrides) in its original context meant a water spout or a large snake. The *Jacaranda Dictionary and Grammar of Melanesian Pidgin* (1971 edition) gives the following meanings for *masalai*: 1) the spirits thought to inhabit streams, rocks, trees, whirlpools, eddies, and such like. These are good or indifferent, feared not worshipped. 2) a bogey, a bugbear, an ogre.

Now I introduce as part of this review of literature, a brief overview of leadership and big man concepts in Papua New Guinea. This is important because as will be discussed in the following chapters, garamut are considered high ranking objects owned by the big men or chiefs, which give them power and authority of the voice, and demarcate social ranking.

2.6 Leadership and social influence

Before I write about garamut and power of the voice of the big man, to be further discussed in Chapter five, let me first talk about some of the characteristics of big man leadership described by anthropologists. Sahlins (1963) described a kind of leader known as the big man common in Melanesia as a leader who tends to be a man with a large extended family or clan. He can marry many wives. According to Sahlins the primary role of a big man is to mobilise labor and the support of other people to achieve public goals, such as sponsoring labor parties to fence a garden, or mobilise fighters for battles with an enemy. His rank is not permanent. He may lose it suddenly if he fails to maintain the loyalty of his followers or if he is successfully challenged by another big man. Sahlins further writes that big man status is not inherited, although a big man's son may learn his father's skill. Furthermore Sahlins (1963, p.289), popularized the term big man as the prototypical leader of the Highlands region by arguing that the big man status was achieved through series of acts of prowess which elevated the person above the common herd. Newman who studied Grurumba people of highland New Guinea (1965) writes: 'Big men' are men of prestige and renown; men whose 'names are known' (p.44). He highlights that for the Gararumba, the characteristics essential to become a prestigious person include physical strength, demonstrated ability as a warrior, heading a lineage, oratorical skills, success in manipulating a rather complex system of economic exchange, ability to determine and express group consensus, and a forceful assertiveness of character.

Similarly Langness (1999, p.36), presents a stereotypical view of a strong man who may be described as a person who is both assertive and aggressive. He is preeminently a warrior, a man who is quick to take offence, to suspect a slight or injury and likely to resort to force. He is a 'hard man', a proud man, an individual who is not likely to defer to others, a person who tends to act

precipitately. He expects obedience, is motivated by a desire to dominate and cannot abide opposition. He is an individual who easily feels threatened by the 'quality of strength' in others. Such a man may be admired for his ability. Furthermore Liep (1991, p.28) writes that Godelier offered another model of the 'great man' and his theory finds contrasts between 'great man' societies and 'big man' societies generally. First, Godelier argues that the big man is the holder of power where wealth enters into the formation of kinship relations, with goods being exchanged in a complex exchange structure, and into the reproduction of inter-tribal relations. Secondly, he suggests that another range of societies are governed by 'equivalence'. He holds that where there is no articulation between the production of wealth and the reproduction of kinship (as in situations where goods are exchanged, there is development of kinship, and marriage can later be negotiated; events perhaps not clearly grasped by Godelier), the big man as an accumulator and manager of social relations cannot arise. I would argue that though there are similarities, the general characterisation of big man leadership based on studies in the highlands cannot be simply applied to big man leadership found in some coastal areas.

For the Kayan as I will point out, the status of Kukurai is determined by hereditary rather than by achievement which will be different from a big man whose achievement gives him recognition as a leader. For example, Teddy my principal informant was recognised as a big man, an influential leader however he is not a Kukurai. The succession of Kukurai is usually transmitted from father to son. A case in point is that during my stay, Caspar who is the Kukurai of Kainmbat clan, initiated plans to transmit the title of Kukurai to his first born son Kevin Melchior. Kevin works as a chief accountant of Air Niugini in Port Moresby. This ceremony took place in December 2013 after I had left the village, thus I did not have the opportunity to see the ceremony. This indicates that among the Kayan there is a difference between a big man and a Kukurai. The position of the Kukurai is hereditary whereas big man status can be contested, however not in an aggressive manner as in the highlands. My observation was that among the Kayan, some clan influential leaders were referred to as big man. Their responsibility was to work in collaboration with their Kukurai to look after the welfare of their clan members. And as Teddy informed me, though Raphael Manabun is referred to as the Chief Kukurai, he has no overriding powers over the Kukurai of the other clans in the village (see also Chapter five p.106)

Godelier and Strathern, in *Big Men and Great Men* (1991), write about big men as entrepreneurs of exchange while great men are associated with restricted exchange (*cf.* also Wagner 1991). Citing Godelier (1986), Lipset (1997, p.106) writes that Godelier argued that bigmen gained power from production and exchange of nonequivalent material, goods. They transact objects “to buy women” whom they or others marry, to make compensation payments or to offer sacrifices to their deities. By contrast, “great men” make equivalent exchanges. Marriage, for them, required some form of women-for-women exchange and the primary response to injury or homicide is similarly eye-for-eye. Control of material resources does not give rights to political hierarchy. Instead of wealth, great men master ritual by which they gain magico-religious control over the continuity of the society. This distinction of big men and great men offered by Godelier is not necessarily the practice I observed among the Kayan.

My observation of the leadership of Kukurai of Kayan was more of a big man figure rather than the great man leadership. Each Kukurai is ranked as the acknowledged leader of the clan. The Kukurai is recognised as the guardian of the men’s house (*Ngmor* in Kayan language) and of the clan *garamut* and the sacred items. He is also considered the head of the clan. As head of the clan, the Kukurai is expected to own one or two *garamut* as manifestation of his leadership. Thus when the Kukurai use *garamut* to call his clan members together, the *garamut* gives witness to his position as a Kukurai. Therefore the clan Kukurai is expected to have knowledge of the history of his group and customary law for dealing with disputes among his clan members. Further discussion on *garamut* and Kukurai leadership will be discussed in Chapter five on *garamut* being the voice of the Kukurai.

The Kayan are a patrilineal clan-based society in which leadership is conferred on a Kukurai hereditary big man system, where the son inherits the title Kukurai from the father. The Kukurai are the heads of the clans. As the clan leader, the Kukurai is expected to do things on behalf of the clan and to foster relationships which would benefit the clan. His fame is not derived from aggression as a warrior but from his social skills as a negotiator. He should not amass wealth but generously distribute it to win loyalty and the trust from his clan members. In this way he would be renowned and his name would be known among the neighboring peoples.

As is the case with a patrilineal system, ownership of land and property is handed down through the male persons, and so too Kayan hand down property through male persons. This is unlike the Massim of South–East Papua whose leadership system follows some elements of an Austronesian hierarchical system of leadership (see Liep 1991, p.34) along matrilineal lines. The Kayan Kukurai system operates along patrilineal lines of inheritance and it is expected that the first born carries the voice of the father. However I was informed by my chief interlocutor Teddy that this is not always the case. He told me that there have been cases where some of the Kukurai were not biological descendants. Even one of the current Kukurai is not a direct descendant of his predecessors. Unlike the Trobriand Islanders where people are divided into two clans headed by hereditary chiefs (Waiko 1993, p.10), whose sons automatically inherit chieftaincy, the position of Kukurai as further explained by Teddy, could be taken up by any one of the male siblings who are related to the father's line. For example, referring to the current Kukurai of Samngae who is referred to as Chief Kukurai, Teddy told me that since the old chief of the Samngae tribe had no surviving sons, Raphael was adopted from the Niam clan of the Warngem tribe to become successor to the highest chief-rank in the village. Raphael was born a big man of the Niam clan (see also Poser 2008, p. 182).

The leadership among the Kayan I observed is not based on the forceful aggressive display of personal characteristics of the big man leadership, a typical model of big man leadership displayed by some groups in the Highlands of Papua New Guinea as described by Godelier, Newman, Langness and others. Rather, the Kukurai leadership among the Kayan revolves around clan solidarity and negotiations built around kinship relationships. The idea of Big men leadership mustering support from individual clan members to be part of a corporate group is also talked about by Wagner (1991, p.159). Wagner writes that Big man have been seen as exemplars of sociological activity, as mobilising social forces, for they appear to change the scale of men's actions from an individual to a group dimension by virtue of the numbers they command. Contrary to Sahlins who says that the big man status is not inherited, Kayan Kukurai leadership is inherited. But unlike Polyneisan or Micronesian systems of chieftainship which has some degree of social stratification and political centralisation, Kayan leadership is relatively egalitarian and politically non-centralised which is typical of the majority of Melanesian societies (see Chao 1984, p.127). The status of Kukurai is attained by default, that is, the Kukurai title is inherited. It usually

involves passing on of a title as chief or clan leader to the title-holder's son. A clan leader is a man who carries out a function; he is the leader of the clan. He can either have a chiefly status or be an elder in the clan. He usually has a lot of status because his clan members seek his leadership and guidance. His status is not measured by wealth, but by his ability to provide leadership. Having fathers as big men gave young men who were aspiring to become big men, a 'hereditary advantage' over others in establishing their position (Standish 1978, p. 33).

The Kayan structure of leadership combines elements of both a Chiefly system and the Big-men authority systems. This then gives the Kukurai system a form of constituted authority with some organised hierarchical structure in clan family groups. Again this shows that Kukurai leadership differs to that of big man leadership in the Highlands where the Big Man must lead by 'persuasion and by force of personality', a character description of a big man style of leadership given by Newman (1965), Rappaport (1968), Brandewie (1971), and also Gelber (1986, p.74). The Kayan have a patrilineal clan-based society and allegiance to the clan is important for the survival of the clan. Therefore there is no strong hegemonic power of hierarchy of masculinity, as found in Manam Island under a paramount Kukurai, or as in the case of the Trobriand Islands where a chief has high rank while commoners belong to the low caste and have to pay tribute of yams to the chief (see Malinowski 1922).

Waiko (1993, p.9) writes that prior to the arrival of Europeans, in Non-Austronesian speaking societies, the 'big man' usually earned his status because of his physical strength, endurance, industriousness, skill as an orator and ability to organise events, and also through wealth. For the Kayan I will not emphasise the physical strength of the leaders but rather the strength of character and good will. These were the qualities of Kukurai leadership Kayan elders spoke about. Teddy and the other elders with whom I had conversation spoke of the following responsibilities expected of the Kukurai. It is expected that the Kukurai will promote the welfare of his clan. He must take the lead in beating the garamut concerning matters of his clan such as solving disputes among his clan members and also with other clans. He is not to be aggressive or arrogant promoting his own ego, but must lead in events and affairs which would strengthen the solidarity and unity of his clan members. Having given this account of Kukurai leadership Teddy, together with other leaders, went further in expressing some dissatisfaction with the leadership of the Kukurai today. Maybe in

the future when younger educated Kukurai replace the old regime they may be able to work together with the changing political, social, economic and religious landscape. I will elaborate on this further in Chapter three.

2.7 Garamut and gender

Weiner (1977, p.227) writes that exchange is a process that holds a system of power relationships in balance. She asserts that any study that does not include the role of women –as seen by women – as part of the way the society is structured remains only a partial study of that society. Whether women are publicly valued or privately secluded, whether they control politics, arrange exchanges of economic commodities, or perform magic spells, they function within that society, not as objects, but as individuals with some measure of control. Referring to the Kula shells of the Trobriand Islands she writes that women do not control male objects of wealth (*kula* valuable and *beku*) but they do operate within their own sphere of influence in mortuary distributions. According to Weiner, Trobriand exchange objects unlike Western money cannot be detached from the human experience of regeneration and immortality. They are not alienated from the basic concerns of society, and therefore social relations are relations between impersonal things, but remain relations that reify the cyclicity of life, death and rebirth.

Thus, Trobriand women and men, exemplified in the objects they exchange, perceive the value of each other through the interface of the value of human beings and the value of regeneration. Munn in her (1983/1986) research on Kula shells writes of shells defining the value of men and their relationships; that without shells men cannot be men of value. Kula circulation is identified as the workings of an extended mind, the mind of the Kula operator thinking (strategically) through objects and transactions, their history and their anticipated future; in other words Kula is extra-bodily cognition from a largely invisible but nonetheless ever-present Kula operator. Similarly I observed that garamut in their use as well as presence among Kayan represent the status and value of men especially the Kukurai and influential leaders.

Weiner also writes that for women, it is not Kula shells which give value to women but women's cloth wealth that is connected with matrilineal ancestors. According to Wiener, it is for this reason

that women at Gawa retain high prestige and authority despite the fame of male Kula exchange players. In contrast, for the Kayan, though garamut engages the involvement of women, they yet promote the value and the power of men. Then at the same time, they claim to represent both genders, in connecting blood lines through ancestral connections. Furthermore, unlike Kula exchange where individuals including women could make their own arrangements regarding exchange, garamut as gift objects remain property of the men. At the same time, in my view, among the Kayan, the value of women is subsumed in the garamut as a representative agency of both genders, which I will discuss in Chapter four in connection with the men's house and clan affiliation.

According to Ayers (1983) as cited in Knauff (1993, p 105) wrote that 'Men are the preeminent cultural beings who know their inner secrets, the esoteric mythology which accounts for the meaning of many customs. Men control the meaning of things, just as they control women'. Williams (1936) also states that women have only an insignificant public ceremonial role and no share at all in the esoteric rites or in knowledge of the sacred myths cited in Knauff (1993, p.105). This has given rise to interesting debates about the gender of certain cultural objects which represent dominance of men over women. Garamut fit this category of objects. In Papua New Guinea many stories have been written about objects once owned by women and stolen by men, with men taking advantage of this to assert their dominance. As already seen from Leach's (2002) research, garamut are commonly referred to as male objects. Yet garamut also are endowed with female features. According to Singer (2000, p.5) androgyny is another alternative gender mode. She says that on one level it concerns the expression of both male and female characteristics but on a deeper level there is an archetype of primordial unity, transcending the polarity of gender. Unlike male-to-female trans-gendering, androgynous enactments maintain a simultaneous consciousness of masculine and feminine identities.

In her book, *Androgynous Objects, the string bags of Central New Guinea* (1991), Mackenzie writes about how the materiality of the string bag connected gender relationships between men and women. Her study of Telefol people's string bags or *bilums* speaks of the bilum as a material object that has prominence in everyday social life of the people, both men and women. She describes how these bilums are made, who makes them, the different types of bilums, and how

ropes used in making a bilum¹¹ are a metaphorical association of knitting people together in social relationships. Mackenzie argues that for Telefol people, the bilum is much more than a mundane and useful container. Through the medium of metaphor its imagery is used by both women and men to model, and thus confront dissonance in the paradoxical nature of their relationship. She further adds that the Telefol looped string bag is an elaborate cultural construction which reflects the complex reality of people's lives and thoughts. Its intrinsic and attributed qualities allow men and women to use it both as a carry bag and as a vehicle for their ideas about their world and their place in it.



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She also cites Forge's (1973, p.189) study which suggests that for the Abelam speakers of Wosera in the East Sepik Province, the string bag (*bilum* in Tok Pisin) in all its guises (string-bag, womb, cocoon, initiation chamber, painted sago-spate panels), clearly stands for the primacy of woman's biological procreativity. In Tok Pisin, the womb is referred to as 'bilum bilong pikinini', (string bag of a child). According to Forge, the link between the string bag, cocoon and the men's house in Wosera derives from the association between women's

flexible bilum, which is used in the capacity of an external womb by women to cradle their babies, and the men's house as a surrogate social womb, from which boys emerge transformed into men, in the manner of butterflies from the cocoon. Kayan stories of the past practices where young initiates emerged from the men's house as adult young men are similar to the descriptions provided by Forge. However today, the boys at Kayan are no longer initiated in the men's house.

Mackenzie makes a connection that as a material object that is passed between the culturally differentiated realms of men and women; the bilum is a particularly apt medium for the Telefol people to articulate their views on the axis between the sexes. The bilum embodies an understanding of the obvious and the hidden nature of things, and gives visual expression to an

¹¹ Bilum: A Tok Pisin word for string-bag.

apparent contradiction in socially prescribed forms of relationships among women and men in the Telefol society. She explores the concept of the agency of objects and ‘extension of persons’ by using the analogy of weaving a string bag. She advocates that objects possess social agency; they connect people together either in metaphorical terms or through the production process of the object. In her analyses she speaks of the symbolic connecting of strings used in making a string bag representing a metaphorical association of knitting people together in social relationships.

This metaphor as I will demonstrate in Chapter Three is similar to those used by the Kayan referring to the garamut, where new garamut emerge as ‘new persons’ through the process of production where they would become fully fledged members of the community. I will demonstrate how garamut were given names with ‘voice’ and status in the social structure of the village connecting people in a network, and knitting social relationships (*see* also Leach 2002). This understanding conforms to Gell’s theory that art objects as much as persons are at the same time part of the social networks that embody relationships. The description of the string bag offered by Mackenzie, best describes the emergence or the birth of a garamut as a new person where it is welcomed and given a name. I take MacKenzie’s work as relevant to my thesis because there is a strong connection that the analogy of garamut being born as a new person from the womb of the mother, in this case the womb of the forest.

In the discussion on transgendered objects which Strathern (1988) cited from Gillison’s (1980) research about Gimi rituals involving flutes, an interesting account is given of how the flutes were mythically stolen long ago from women, and they are sounded during the male initiation ceremony in the all-male forest preserve. Stories are told commemorating men’s theft that the beard he will grow originated when the first man played the flute not realising it was plugged with his sister’s public hair. Maleness is revealed to include female features, knowledge of which is imparted through verbal commentary on what the initiands are seeing (Strathern 1988, pp.111-112). Kaufmann (1968, p.107) speaks of a myth she heard from the Kwoma of Sepik that the first slit-drum was a female deity who metamorphosed herself into a slit-drum. Among the Kayan I did not hear any stories about garamut being stolen from the women nor about women as garamut. However the concept of transgendered objects is relevant to my thesis because garamut features both male and female genitalia in the body of the garamut, yet unlike string bag or bilum, which

are considered androgynous, only the men are predominant users of garamut. Both the string bags and the garamut are powerful symbols representing the cultural beliefs and lifestyle of the people. Carved by the men, garamut has patterns and designs connecting kinship relations just the same as the string bags weaved by the women ties and connects kinship relations. I suggest that the garamut represent the power of the men and string bag/bilum, represents the power of the women, especially in terms of reproductive powers. The Tok Pisin expression, bilum bilong pikinini in reference to the womb, which is translated as string-bag of the baby, best describe the concept of the reproductive powers of the women. I will elaborate on this in Chapter three (p.121).

2.8 Did men steal garamut?

There are numerous stories in anthropological literature on Papua New Guinea, that in the past, women owned certain objects such as flutes, and the men stole these objects from the women to wrestle power from the women. Strathern (1988, pp. 110-110) cites Gillison (1980; 1983) who studied flutes of Gimi people of Eastern Highlands. For Gimi, the surrounding forests are regarded as a male refuge from women and from ordinary life within the settlement. The Gimi wilderness is an exalted domain where the male spirit, incarnate in birds and marsupials, acts out its secret desires away from the 'inhibiting presence' of the women (Gillison 1980, p.143). A special kind of knowledge leads to the realisation of men's ambition to identify with the nonhuman world and to be revitalised by its limitless, 'masculine powers'. This identification is achieved through initiation rituals where male initiands are likened to birds of paradise and hornbills, and male potency to tall trees and flowing rivers. Yet the knowledge imparted during the stages of the ritual makes it clear that this is no realm definitely cut off from things feminine. On the contrary, features of a male natural world turn out to be female characteristics detached from women, appropriated by "men" (1980, pp.147, 170). At the center of male self-identity, then, lies a statement of their power with respect to women. In Chapter Four I will discuss how garamut gives power of male dominance over women.

According to R. Johnson (1982) as cited in Mantovani (1984, p. 156), on ritual use of flutes, the power of the flutes comes from their secret use, from the secrecy which surrounds them. The secrecy gives meaning to them as tools to keep male superiority as a means of social oppression.

Johnson reports that the flutes were first used by the mythical ancestors to initiate their sons, implying that the flutes are powerful in themselves and that is the reason why the ancestors handed down the flutes to their descendants. In that account, the flutes used to belong to the women and the men stole the flutes from the women. Women are symbols of 'life' and fertility. An interesting question is also posed: Is the myth saying that even if the flutes are handled by men today, they are nevertheless powerful and loaded with 'life' like a woman? This description of the flutes easily can be applied to garamut. The secrecy which surrounds the carving of garamut, implies that the Kayan men still follow a similar practice where garamut would be carved in secluded forest areas away from the eyes of women. It can be interpreted that this was a way men could capture the power of the spirits and enhance their masculine powers.

Human characteristics and impacts upon the senses have been attributed to the garamut. The first intimation of the importance of this came to me in investigating a like phenomenon, the shell valuables of the Massim region of Papua New Guinea written about by Munn (1983,1992,) and Campbell (2002). In these exchanges, the sensory mix of both objects and humans are all part of the human experience. Writing about artefacts and senses, Howes (2005, p.161) suggest that every artefact embodies a particular sensory mix. It does so in terms of its production (i.e. the sensory skills, and values that go into its making), in the sensory qualities it presents, and its consumption (i.e. the meanings and uses people discover or ascribe to it in accordance with the sensory order of their culture or subculture). Howes writes that shell valuables (armshells and necklaces) which circulate in countervailing directions around the vast inter-island ceremonial exchanges known as 'kula ring' in the Massim region, is a good example of artefacts as extensions of the senses. The shells are endowed with human sensory attributes by the process of production and are transformed into things of higher value endowed with personalities or biographies. Continuing, a garamut as material object can be termed a super-material object where human (spirit) sensory attributes do not necessarily give it transformation but affirm its embedded self attributes. There is a clear application of this to social relations and cultural order, as will be seen also in the case of the garamut.

Howes (2005, p.166) elaborates on how the shell valuables provide a standard in terms of which the social status and the persuasive powers of their (always temporary) possessors can be judged

and communicated. In the Massim world, the broad region of PNG from Milne Bay taking in the Trobriand islands, every man of the kula wants to progress from being a face with no name (i.e. admired for his visual and olfactory appearance when he goes on a kula expedition to visit his partner on a neighboring island), to being a name with no name (i.e. have his name circulate quite apart from his body in concert with the named shells of note which have passed through to his possession). Howes cites Annette Weiner's (2003, p.67) revisionist analysis of kula exchange, arguing that the kula is not about the 'love of give-and-take for its own sake', as Malinowski suggested, 'but creating their own individual fame through the circulation of objects that accumulate the histories of their travels and the names of those who have possessed them.' However in such arguments the emphasis on individualism is more of a Western construct. Considering the fact that the Trobrianders are a matrilineal society with a chieftaincy hierarchy, I argue that enterprising individuals represented a collective communal face. The *mwali* or the shell primarily would not have represented the individual *per se*, but the village and the line in which it originated. I argue that in Melanesian communities, an individual does not have primacy over the community and this would be applicable to the Gawan community as well. It is an aspect of culture also pointed out by Forge (2006), Munn (1986), Kuchler (2004), and Were (2010). Howes (2006, p.166) quotes Munn (2003, p.82) who writes that 'the mobile décor makes the sound that ramifies the space (of the shell) as if putting it into motion - so that what might be out of sight may nevertheless be heard.' This idea resonates with *garamut*, when used in ceremonial occasions such as initiation, when the *garamut* and flutes are played in a secret enclosure through the night or day, producing bullroar sounds.

The pounding of the *garamut* or playing of the flutes is heard; it does not have to be seen. It reverberates and generates sensory emotions among the community. As Doubleday (2008, p.4) notes, the sound has transformative power very often endowed with personhood. I would say the same thing of the sound or voice of *garamut* and the flutes. It is very common to find them treated as magical 'beings' to be contested, protected, vaunted or demonised. In some communities in the Sepik, during the 'crocodile initiation ceremonies' the sacred *garamut* and flutes would be played continuously day and night for periods as long as several months. During these occasions while the *garamut* were being sounded, the community had to remain silent, not shout, argue or make disturbing noises. At the conclusion of the rites the old men, impersonating the crocodile would

emerge from the enclosure before the village women. The ritual is referred to as crocodile swallowing and vomiting out the young initiates. This is visual symbolism indicating to mothers that their sons have now become adults and have severed the umbilical cord. The eerie sound of the garamut and the flutes, and the sight of crocodile mask figures create an atmosphere of awe and wonderment. The colour, the design, patterns, motifs are all part of the sensory dynamics. Howes points out that sensory taste is culturally specific. Certain cultures develop higher sensors in certain areas such as those of smell or sight because of their physical, social environment. In my reading of Howes quoting Classen (1998, pp. 154 -156), Howes presupposes that the dominant group in society will be linked to esteemed senses and sensations while subordinate groups will be associated with less valued or denigrated senses.

Feld (1982, pp. 219 -220) writing about sound and sentiment gives an example that among the Kaluli of PNG, death and loss provoke women to respond identically, and reactions to this weeping compare the performer to the fruit-dove, because the weeping has a bird sound as its melodic base, and sadness over loss as its social base. The language of weeping is much more conversational, spontaneously improvised on the spot, while song, on the other hand, is formed by the sound of weeping and talk of sadness. For the Kaluli, Feld writes that 'becoming a bird' is the passage from life to death. The spirit representations for different categories (men, women, old, young), as well as for different temperaments (anger, docile, hostile, cranky), reflect which observations of bird behavior are analogised to human behavior (Feld (1982, pp.218-219). Tilley (2002, p.25) describes Wala canoes of Vanuatu thus: 'The power of imagery, resides in its condensation of reference linked with the sensual and tactile qualities of its material form and reference to the human body.' Thus I would also suggest that the garamut form as a human body appropriates the tangible sensory meanings, emotions and feelings associated with human persons.

The form of the garamut shaped like a female body raises ideas that the slit could represent the vagina and the stick the phallus. With reference to the slit-drum of Vanuatu, Sachs assumed that the slit represented the vagina, and the stick the phallus. However, Fischer (1983, p.28) writes that this cannot be supported anywhere. Nor have I heard any such inferences among the Kayan, nor even among my own community in the Sepik Province, though I observed that some garamut among Kayan depict female genitalia carved on the finial of the garamut. The suggestion that the

slit of the garamut represents a vagina and the stick a phallus is highly speculative and metaphorical and I would not go as far as inferring that the slit depicts a vagina nor the stick a phallus. Nevertheless the question still remains: What might be the significance of these representations of male and female features? Are they just the creativity of the carver? Did the first garamut in that story of the spirit garamut have these features as well?

My interpretation would be that it is a statement that garamut captures both the world of the male and the female, into one body as transgendered objects. However it is the men as producers of the object who exert their right of ownership. I also noted that on all the clan garamut, all had two round lumps referred to as testicles (in Tok Pisin, *bol*) and only a few had the depiction of a vagina. If the slit does not represent the vagina I suggest it represents the stomach where wind is produced. Hence I assert that the strong claim of ownership of garamut by the men implies that men do not want to let go of the voice which gives them dominance over women. The slit is referred to as the mouth, in Tok Pisin, *maus*. Thus among the Kayan, the garamut plays a perpetuating role as the agency of the voice of men over women. The string bag analogy offered by Mackenzie, of women knitting the community together is applicable to understanding garamut among the Kayan as an object that knits the Kayan community together.

2.9 Garamut and exchange

Various anthropologists in Oceania have also observed that people use objects or things, either artefacts; shells, gifts or exchange of valuables as social mediums to establish and maintain relationships either within their own social group or with neighboring people. Mauss is acknowledged for his contribution in the region of Oceania to the discovery that material objects are given agency to make relations visible and to mediate between persons (see also Strathern 1988, Humphrey and Hugh-Jones 1992, Weiner 1992; Schrift 1997, Godelier 1996). In *Gender of the Gift* (1988), Strathern writes about human relationships, with her concept of 'partible persons', where she sees forms of social relationships established or maintained in gift exchange in Papua New Guinea. Lisette (1991, p.146) writes that Strathern developed her analysis in a manner that affects certain immediacy: her observations are presented as descriptions of those patterns (cultural

meanings and entities, relationships) that are constructed out of the interacting events that constitute social action.

Gregory in *Gifts and Commodities* (1982, p.19), suggest that there is a difference between commodity exchange objects and gift objects. He writes that commodity exchange is an exchange of alienable objects between people who are in a state of reciprocal independence that establishes a quantitative relationship between the objects exchanged. Gift exchange is an exchange of inalienable objects between people who are in a state of reciprocal dependence that establishes a qualitative relationship between the transactors.

From stories gathered from Kayan elders about garamut given as gift objects, it is this latter statement of gift exchange which establishes a qualitative relationship that is in accord with the Kayan practice of exchange. To my question whether Kayan exchange garamut with neighboring people, Teddy and the elders rejected the idea that garamut and sacred objects were to be considered as exchange items, but could be given as gifts. Their view was that gift objects have a deeper qualitative value than quantitative value, and so are unlike the trade exchange of goods such as sago or fish. In this gift giving of value objects, I make a connection that garamut as gift objects extend kinship relationships to neighboring people whose genealogy connects them to the Kayan. Weiner (1985, pp. 210-227) also wrote about a system of connection by providing an example from the Trobriands. She said that in the Trobriand Islands, certain objects, lineage names, shell body decorations, and rights to land may be exchanged among individuals for years or even generations. Yet these things never lose their identity and attachment to the lineage that originally owned them. At some future time, the objects should be returned to the original owners or their descendants. A lineage, or actually the person who controls lineage activities, gives up part of its resources, creating through the giving the sociability inherent in exchange. Simultaneously it will be assuring the replacement for lineage members of those resources once given. She goes on to say that in the Trobriand, the processes of replacement are directly tied to the life cycle of individuals, for most things are reclaimed by the original giver or his descendants when the receiver dies. From this perspective, replacement is central to attaining some measure of keeping-while-giving.

Thomas (1991, p.22) citing Weiner, writes that inalienable possessions are imbued with affective qualities that are an expression of the value an object has when it is kept by its owners and inherited with the same family or descent group. This value of inalienability is expressed through the power of the objects to define who one is in a historical sense. The object acts as a vehicle for bringing past time into the present, so that the histories of ancestors, titles, or mythological events become an intimate part of a person's present identity.

Drawing on Strathern's concept of the distributed personhood in Melanesian anthropology, Gell explains the ways in which objects become part of the distributed personhood of the 'artist' – the person who is considered to be responsible in the first instance for the existence of the index, or an art object (see Harrison 2010, p.529). Also citing the example of a pig, Gell writes that according to Strathern, pigs objectify the unmediated exchange of domestic services between men and women in their roles as husbands and wives (Gell 1999, p.44). So the theory suggests that through the gift of a pig, the husband and the wife are giving themselves as individual persons. Gell expresses this view by saying that the relationships between donors and recipients during exchange are visible, notwithstanding the visibility of the events themselves. The events, and the human and non-human entities involved in the events, objectify the salient relations (Gell 1999, pp.38-39).

Strathern as I have alluded to, talks about human relationships with her concept of 'partible persons', where she sees forms of social relationships established or maintained in gift exchange in Papua New Guinea. According to Lisette (1991, p.146), Strathern develops her analysis in a manner that invokes a certain immediacy: her observations are presented as descriptions of those patterns (cultural meanings and entities, relationships) that are constructed out of the interacting events that constitute social action. The custom of connecting family lines through a 'gift' is best described by Strathern in the concept of 'partible' persons when she writes that a person in Melanesia is conceptualised as a microcosm of social relationships, constituted through the acts of others. The diverse internal qualities of a person are made visible and are given 'value' in dealings with others. Hence what is being compared in the giving or receiving of gifts is the respective capacity of the actors to detach and attach parts of their own, and thus the others' identity (see Strathern 1992). I add that in this gift relationship, the stories of their family ancestral connection

are also narrated for the benefit of those listening, that they should know to whom they are related in their blood line and family connections. I will further discuss this in Chapter five.

Munn (1983), writing about Kula shells states objects were central to new forms of community and relatedness in a number of ways. She wrote that the production and use of objects was through a series of forms of practical action which have a spatial extent in that they were distributed across the landscape in various ways, with a temporal pattern and social intensity. Patterns of action needed to make or use objects were not just about physical action in the world, but were means of provisioning and animating social relations. New chains of action by themselves created novel forms of communalism and views of the world. This was also my observation regarding the garamut of Kayan where garamut carved for public display or shows have taken on new design styles and colors to fit into the cultural frames of the world outside of Kayan. Some garamut have the PNG National Flag designs or the Provincial Government Flag designs and other designs borrowed from neighboring villages, as well as designs requested by certain individual buyers. For example, Paul one of the carvers told me he designed a garamut for one Catholic priest following the patterns on the vestment worn by the priest – indicating something about the new cultural mindset of the maker who is able to create new patterns and designs.

Engaging with the debates and theories of the agency of objects and material culture I want to look at garamut holistically as part of the Kayan social, cultural and spiritual meanings, rather than separating the material from the intellect. This view is also expressed by Narokobi (1983, p.6).

‘From our spirituality, we had a communal vision of the cosmos. Our vision was not and still is not an artificially dichotomised and compartmentalised pragmatism of the secular society. Ours is a vision of totality, a vision of cosmic harmony. Our vision sees the human person in his totality with the spirit world as well as the animal and the plant world. This human person is not absolute master of the universe but an important component in an interdependent world of the person with the animal, the plant and the spiritual.’

A similar belief is applied to malagan objects of New Ireland as described by Kuchler (2006) where malangan carvings are considered vessels of the spirits. MacDonald (1984), Lawrence and Meggitt (1965) and Rappaport (1968) also write of inferences to spirits with regard to objects in Melanesia.

The literature invites certain conclusions needing more investigation, and that becomes the purpose of this research. At each point I have indicated a connection to my observations on the garamut and the Kayan community, with a clear tendency to see the garamut increasingly as more the giver of voice and power, more a bonding agent of the community, in a sense animate; and less a material object only, of art, of communication, or of music for entertainment. Therefore, following on from the concepts found in this literature, and with reference to my findings in the field, I will work through the possibilities. In Chapter three I will discuss the importance of making garamut as making men. In Chapter four, I will write about the power of the men's house, clan garamut and spirits and gender relations. In Chapter five, I will discuss the importance of voice in relation to the Kukurai and the spirits; and in Chapter six look at garamut and the challenge of commodification. There is the consideration of garamut as agency. Can objects assume a corporeal form; can objects have spirit forms? As will be seen, garamut may ordain leadership roles and the very structure of kinship and society. They are known to be important in gender relations. While there are conventions of exchange associated with garamut, the objects themselves were never the subject of commodification, although as it will be seen, pressure for commodification and commercialisation has arisen in recent times.

Chapter 3 Making of garamut

3.1 Overview

This Chapter discusses how garamut goes through a social process of animation and formation similar to the process of initiation of young men who become social agents as fully fledged members of the community. As the young initiates were put through the process of becoming a man in the men's house, so too, were the garamut put through a process of becoming fully fledged members of the community in the seclusion of the forest. The men's house became the surrogate womb of the male initiates, so too the secluded spot in the forest became the surrogate womb of the garamut. The Chapter draws out this close affinity of garamut with humans as well as spirits, and concludes that garamut among the Kayan are imbued with power, and they have social, cultural and religious influence on the life of the Kayan people.

3.2 Introduction

In this chapter I will discuss the process of making garamut among the Kayan. For the Kayan, one of the prerequisites of making a garamut is to seek the voice of consent from the Kukurai. A process I myself had to go through. It was the practice in the past that is also still required today. However I will also share in this chapter the way that modern demands of the cash economy have made certain individuals carve garamut secretly to sell to potential buyers without seeking permission from the Kukurai.

A man who wished to have a garamut carved for himself; would approach the clan Kukurai with gifts of green coconuts, betelnuts, and tobacco leaves, Tahitian Chestnuts (galip in Tok Pisin) or even dog's teeth. This custom gesture is called *kup*¹² in their language; a kind of exculpation gift which declares that the owner of the garamut has gone through the right process of getting permission. This act began a social process where amicable relationship with the Kukurai, were initiated right at the start of the process. As heads of clans, the Kukurai have authority and were

¹² Kup: A Kayan term for a present or an exculpation gift

considered to be wealthy and knowledgeable persons who have greater say over titles of land, and the resources of the forest. They had knowledge of the custom and ritual processes, of land and sea boundaries, of spirit names, knowledge of how to settle disputes and in some instances knowledge of magic. I see a correlation between, in the past, it was the Kukurai who decided when the young boys should enter the men's house to be initiated and it was the Kukurai who gave permission to carve garamut. This is because the Kukurai as heads of their respective clans were the ones responsible to organise such events. Besides, garamut was synonymous with the voice of the Kukurai and I suggest they wanted to control the power of the voice in order that others did not override their voice.

After the period of formation away from the prying eyes of the women and children, to become a 'man' in the seclusion of the men's house, each young man was decorated and emerged from the men's house and presented to the community as a young initiated adult. Similarly for garamut, after the Kukurai had given permission, the garamut were carved in seclusion again away from the prying eyes of women and children and underwent formation to become like persons, with a voice. Drawing on Munn who speaks of the canoes of Gawa as having connection with the human body, I observed that there is also a strong connection between the garamut and the human body and the body decor. For the Gawan Munn (1992, p.138) writes that in the Gawan view, the canoe projects the image of the ceremonially decorated person, especially a youthful man. Garamut among Kayan as I have mentioned were also introduced as decorated youthful men who appeared from their seclusion, as fully fledged members of the community. For example, when my garamut were delivered to the village, the community, both men, women and children, assembled at the new men's house to welcome the garamut as members of the community. In the past, the elders told me that the event was celebrated with feasting and a big singsing. Similar observation is offered by Leach of the Reite people, where their young initiates' first appearance in the village underwent a similar process to that of garamut's first appearance in the village (see Leach 2002, p.715).

3.3 Selection of the tree

Paul as well as the other carvers said that in the past, selecting a tree to carve garamut was important. It was not just a matter of going to the bush and cutting down any tree. The tree was

owned by clan members who owned the forest area and also a dwelling place of spirits. Therefore harvesting the tree followed a ritual process of appeasing the spirits of the forest as well as negotiating with the clan owners of the tree. They explained that after selecting a tree, which was a garamut tree that Kayan ancestors have always used to carve garamut, ritual offering of gifts such as betelnuts, tobacco leaves, fresh coconuts and food to the spirits were placed under the tree. The owner of the forest area where the identified garamut tree was to be cut, together with family elders brought the 'kup' during day time and spoke to the spirits to appease them in order to establish a good working relationship. This act suggests the idea that with the giving of the gifts, the spirits in turn reciprocated with giving of the voice. These elders reiterated that methodically following these steps ensured that social equilibrium and peace existed among the community - 'good life', in Tok Pisin, 'gutpela sindaun'. Not to do so, would bring about some unwanted consequences to the community. After all, the collaboration of the spirits was vital to give voice to the garamut. They believed that ultimately through the power of the spirits they would be able to dig out the belly of the garamut. The spirits who were considered to be directly involved with garamut are called *ngumtik* spirits. See also Leach (2002) who speaks of a similar belief among the Reite people that spirits called *Kappu* are the ones who dig out the belly of the garamut.

For the Kayan, Teddy and Philip, and also Paul explained that their ancestors only used the garamut tree to carve garamut. The reason they provided was that the garamut tree produces a good voice and is resistant to termites and does not rot. In my view, this explanation relates to the nature of the tree itself that it produces good sound. However I would suggest that beneath this pragmatic explanation lies the belief that the spirits give garamut its voice. As is the case in all communities in Papua New Guinea, the Kayan people believe that the physical and social environment of time and space is shared with spirits as well. Whiteman (1984) pointed out that Melanesians rely primarily on religious knowledge as their basis of knowing and understanding the world in which they live. Melanesians do not live in a compartmentalised world of sacred and secular domains. Rather, they have an integrated world view in which physical and spiritual realities dovetail. The spiritual, secular and sacred, function together, in a Melanesian's worldview (Whiteman 1984, pp.87, 88).

Paul the master carver I interviewed, commented that in the past, establishing friendly relationships with the spirits, who were also part of the social and physical environment, was important because without their help, garamut would not have power or a voice (see also Leach 2002, p. 718). Fugmann (1984, p. 283) puts it this way, ‘the given and predetermined relationships of a communal context were determined by kinships, status, by obligations towards ancestral spirits or other powers and beings within the biocosmic world’. I would also suggest that among the Kayan, the relationship of the clan garamut, the men’s house, the spirits, the masks, the human relations, and the environment, all merged together as one big interlinked kinship relationship.

3.4 Agency of garamut

This garamut from Kayan is called *Raing* after the design. The two stands depict the face of the spirit called *Kangai*. All the clan garamut in the men’s house are placed on the stands carved depicting a spirit face or a tumbuan face.



Garamut Raing, donated to Queensland Brain Institute - 2013

For the Kayan, as I observed, the agency of garamut is intricately linked with what they believe to be a sacred residential power. This power is linked to the agency of spirits who are considered the primary source or agents who animate the garamut. Thus the inanimate material object becomes an animated sacred object. This understanding I observed is at the core of their beliefs. From conversations with Kayan elders I gathered that Kayan share their physical and social environment with a multitude of spirits (see also Poser 2008, pp.39-40). These spirits are the creator spirits, the bush spirits, and the ancestral spirits. For names of some of these spirits see Chapter three. Kayan elders attributed the knowledge of carving garamut to a mysterious spirit garamut which I mentioned in Chapter One. Therefore to discuss the agency of garamut among Kayan is not only to talk about garamut as agency of humans but is inclusive of the agency of the spirit.

From my research the following themes have emerge which I now explore: 1) the agency of garamut is intimately connected to human persons and spirit persons and can stand alone as an agent, 2) understanding of agency of sacred objects is a belief and not a concept, 3) this belief is anchored in collective religious epistemology which is not reliant on individual thinking or

perceptions. For the Kayan, agency is that residential power of the spirit which animates *garamut*, which is ultimately the spirit. From my observation and based on information gathered from informants, I shall now categorise the belief in the agency of *garamut* among Kayan in three observational frames: First the spirit agency; second the human agency; and third the object agency. My view is that the agency of *garamut* has an indexical agency of both spirit and human.

Lipset (2005, p.12) says this about Murik art objects, ‘such objects possessed agency because culturally speaking they were persons and not inert art. In Melanesia, art was no less embedded in society than were people – not figuratively, but literally’. He further comments that according to Gell, art objects should be viewed as resulting from and/or have origin in possession of human powers so that they may assert themselves through one form or combination of several forms. He writes that Gell adopted Peircean terminology (Peirce 1972) to define three dimensions of their efficacy: (1) an object may ‘index’ the magical skill of the artist; (2) an object may ‘index’ its relationship as a living entity to its user; or (3) an object may be an ‘icon’ of a spirit, that is, it may manifest a divine prototype (Lipset 2005, p. 109). In this vein, I explore how *garamut* among the Kayan extends its agency in the three index modes. I now write about these three different yet interlocked frames of the agency of *garamut*.

Spirit agency. In the past, Kayan believed that the production of *garamut* was a collaborative work of the spirits (called *ngumtik*) with the people. These are spirits who live in the forest and were credited with giving voice to the *garamut* especially in the most critical part of digging out the slit from which the voice or sound is produced. The *ngumtik* were considered primary agents who animated the *garamut* with their presence and thus empowered the *garamut* with ‘certain power’ of agency. Though *ngumtik* spirits were credited as giving the voice to the *garamut* the Kayan believed that any spirit could take up residency in *garamut* such as the spirits of the men’s house. The Kayan consider sacred *garamut* as abodes of these spirits. Some of these spirits are talked about as members of clans and some are spirits known only to some people or individuals. From my observation *garamut* among Kayan are not only material objects but a spiritual phenomenon.

Strathern (1988) speaks of the distributed personhood of human persons extended through gifts or objects. For the Kayan, I observed that they also believe in the distributed personhood of the spirits

who can take up residency in a garamut. In other words, the material agency of garamut mediates the personal agency of the spirit. This is the belief the Kayan hold to in spite of the fact that Christianity in the form of the Catholic Church has been there for nearly seventy years. In one of our conversations Teddy remarked that they believe in God but at the same time, they believe also in the existence of other spirits with whom they share the environment.

Human agency. Garamut are the work of human hands. Apart from the belief that garamut are animated by the spirits I would suggest that for the Kayan, garamut are also animated by humans whose agency finds extension in garamut, an idea that Gell suggests as an extension of human agency thus rendering garamut as secondary agents. This begins with the process of production as well as when garamut are used on various occasions. The Kukurai and certain influential leaders use garamut as a social indicator of their status in the community. Through garamut they demonstrate their leadership by relaying important messages such as announcing a death or a feast or calling their clan members together. Garamut connects them as a people and also carry will stories of the carvers, and the names of their owners. For the Kukurai of Kayan, garamut are the agency of their voice. The garamut as the Kukurai themselves told me is the ‘Chief Kukurai’. As the process and production of garamut involved numerous people, my observation suggests that garamut encapsulate representational agency inclusive of the owner, the clan, the carvers, and the Kayan community as a whole. The object agency of garamut among Kayan links them in a web of interconnected relationships not only with humans but with the spirits as well and the environment they live in.

Object agency. For the Kayan, garamut is not just a hewed piece of log bearing inscriptions of clan designs, totems and motifs. Garamut give them identity and unify them as clan members of their respective clans or sub-clans. I also observed that the size of the garamut indicated the status of the Kukurai or an influential leader. They were social indicators of wealth and authority of leadership. In the village I noted that Teddy had three big garamut and two smaller ones in front of his house. The two big ones were carved by his father from whom he also learnt how to carve garamut. These are private garamut which I interpret as indicating Teddy’s social status as an influential leader. Furthermore I suggest that since Teddy comes from a leading family line of the

Kainmbat clan he needed to demonstrate that leadership by possessing garamut which indicated his status as a leader.

To put it another way, my interpretation of the garamut relationship I observed among Kayan would be: the Kayan believe that spirits are the primary agents, humans being secondary agents, and garamut the tertiary agency (or secondary agent as Gell puts it) of material manifestation of creative social relations between humans and spirits. In other words, the interactive relationship of the agency of garamut is primed with both the acts of spirit agents and human agents. Therefore they live in reciprocal relationships. To borrow from Lipset (2005, p.121), both man and spirit joined together to cause the garamut to come into being. I also cite Leach at this point, where Leach heard Reite people say ‘garamut is a man’, that it has a voice of a man, a person (see Leach, 2002).

However contradicting this belief that garamut have agency or personhood, Rio referring to slit-drums of Ambrym of Vanuatu writes that Melanesians create objects with no agency, objects that have eyes without seeing, or that have a social life without living (Rio 2009, p.305). I argue that for the Kayan as well as for Melanesian societies, whose religious epistemological concepts underpin their cosmological worldview, a sacred object is not considered intentional because of its material form but rather the belief that the object is the vessel of the spirit who gives intentionality to the object. It is a living spirit who has his or her own individuality and personality and is said to have eyes to see and a social life to live. To deny the spirit connection to certain objects such as garamut which people consider sacred falls short of understanding Melanesian spirituality from their cultural lens and systems of meanings.



*Vanuatu garamut at
New Caledonia
Photo taken 2013*

3.5 The inalienable character of garamut



Garamut named Emrang, Kayan village 2012

Weiner (1992, p.227) writes; “some objects can be closely associated with persons, and while seeming inalienable can have their own humanity. Therefore objects can be said to have own biographies”. My research identifies garamut among Kayan as one of these objects which is considered imbued with inalienable character. Kopytoff (1986) offers another way to think about specific objects through what he terms as “cultural biography of things.” A biographical approach recognises that the values given to an object change over time. Like people, objects may have a number of different potential ‘biographies’ focused on different aspects of their ‘lives’, including those focused on technical, social, and economic values. A cultural biography focuses specifically on the chain of events through which an object becomes culturally marked and unmarked as a particular type of thing. Kopytoff (1986, p. 68) writes, “a culturally informed biography of an object would look at it as a culturally constructed entity, endowed with culturally specific meanings, and classified and reclassified into culturally constituted categories”. Hoskins (2006) cites anthropologists Mauss (1924/1954) and Malinowski (1922) who have asserted that the lines between persons and things are culturally variable, and not drawn in the same way in all societies. They wrote that in certain contexts, persons can seem to take on attributes of things and things can seem to act almost as persons. Studies of traditional exchange systems (from Boas, and Malinowski to Strathern, Munn and Campbell) have elaborated on this insight by detailing how objects can be given a gender, name, and ritual function. Miller (2010, p.67) in reference to the study by Munn ‘The Fame of Gawa’(1986) writes that in Kula Trade not only the people who become famous through their adventures in kula, individual shells also gain their reputation through the circulatory process. Furthermore, Miller expresses that Munn in her work on both Wabiri and Kula illustrates the process by which society creates itself through objectification. Likewise I would suggest that garamut in its process and production among the Kayan, creates Kayan society.

This idea is well described by a Kayan elder Romanus in his description of the garamut called *Emrang*, the unifier clan garamut of the Kainmbat clan. Romanus whose family are the custodians

of the garamut Emrang told me the following story which, speaks of the biography of *Emrang*, as a living object.

Emrang with a characteristic ‘voice’ different to the others, carved from an aged garamut tree trunk, is said to have been carved in 1935 by one of his grandparents assisted by other carvers. They used traditional tools such as stone axes, fire, and hard sago barks. The design on the garamut called *Baewarup* was carved using sharks’ teeth and shark skin as sandpaper to smoothen the garamut. It was carved near a water logged area. During dry season it was a place where small birds would come to feed on small fish and insects. These forest areas are considered dwelling places of spirits (*ngumtik*) who are the ones said to animate garamut. The name *Emrang* is the name of the resident spirit of that part of the forest. Romanus continued that they believe the garamut at times manifest the power of the *ngumtik* spirit. *Emrang* bears the actual name of that bush spirit. Carved on the finial on both ends are images of two clan totems, the monitor lizards. The images of the lizard depict another form that the spirit takes in dispersing its agency. According to their belief, the garamut *Emrang* also embodies the agency of the spirit in these various forms of appearance.

Another aspect is that I counted around twenty two grooves incised along the non - pounding side of the garamut. Romanus said it was the number of enemies their grand parents killed long ago. The garamut is placed in a row with other clan garamut in the new men’s house of the clan.

As related above, Romanus told me that a businessman twice offered him ten thousand Kina K10,000 Papua New Guinea currency (which is about to five thousand Australian dollars) to purchase the garamut *Emrang*. The businessman even told him that he would top it up by buying him a big truck. According to Romanus this offer had to be refused as the garamut belonged to his *Kainmbat* clan, and was not personal property. He said: ‘if I were to sell it, I am afraid all sorts of trouble may befall us’.

Obviously this dilemma was real to Romanus as the following story he himself and other elders told me shows. This story confirms the existing belief and fear they have about the sacred objects. The story is of the two young boys who stole a mask from a men’s house and took it to Wewak

and sold it to an expatriate buyer. A few weeks before the buyer departed Wewak for his country, a Kayan villager who works in Wewak had a dream that the mask appeared to him. The dream troubled him so he made some enquires and got information from the village that a mask had gone missing and they suspected the two village boys who had been to the village and had returned to Wewak. He then confronted the two boys and they confessed to have sold the mask to an expatriate buyer. He approached the custom officials in Wewak and they went to the hotel



Spirit mask called Kangai

where the expatriate was staying and got back the mask. He repaid the expatriate's money and sent back the mask to the village. The elders told me that one of the boys, the one who climbed up the men's house and stole the mask from the rack, got sick and died a few years later. In their view, this was a punishment from the spirits.

On several occasions I observed that when *Emrang* was pounded by Teddy who is an influential leader of the clan, clan members came together. I continued to observe that garamut among Kayan were not simply art objects with social agency of individual artists or carvers as Gell suggests, but more importantly, garamut were social agents which mediated social agency in a public and involved relationship which knitted and connected the community together.

In her (1983/1986) research on *Kula*, Munn writes of shells defining the value of men and their relationships, by saying that without shells men cannot be men of value. She further writes that 'Men appear as the agents defining shell value, but without shells men cannot define their value' (Munn 1983, p. 284). According to Munn, shells and men are reciprocal agents of each other's value definition where men operate to create the stage on which people lead their daily lives – they are markers of status, gender relations and so on. In relation to this concept of objects defining the value of persons, Strathern, in *Gender of the Gift* (1988), also writes about the Melanesian interdependent living where she says that 'clearly the idea of the isolated agent that acts upon the world, imposing shape and meaning upon inert matter, can hardly be accommodated in a Melanesian context where the category of persons and things are inseparably distributed over time and space' (Strathern 1988, p. 8). Similarly my observation of garamut among Kayan is that

garamut give value to men, demarcate gender roles, determine social ranking, as well as indicate the social status and the character of men, especially the Kukurai and the influential leaders.

3.6 Garamut process and social construction among Kayan

The Kayan use technical skill and creative vision to transform raw materials into objects of great value and significance. This was demonstrated in the process of constructing the three garamut I had requested. I observed that as objects, garamut among the Kayan have not only helped define who they are, nor only connected them to their past, but more importantly, maintained their social structure as a group of people, who share relationships among themselves, as well as with neighboring people around them. These neighbors also include the spirit world. This leads me to say that as much as the process of construction is to transform the log into something enchanting and beautiful, so too is the process of transforming their social relationships into lasting relationships (see also Leach 2002). At least this is always their intent and purpose which is one of the core values of Melanesian societies. The garamut in part help define the Kayan as to who they are, connect to their past, and share their values.

Studies by Hoskins (1993, 1998) and Keane (1997) of the Kodi people of Sumba, eastern Indonesia, also speak of the relationship objects have, in giving meaning and value to people. They write that the Sumba have a named 'history of objects' which demarcate and preserve a sense of the past and collective memory. These are called the 'traces of the hands and feet' of the ancestors, and consist of heirloom gold valuables, porcelain urns, spiritually potent weapons, and musical instruments used to communicate with the spirit world (see Hoskins 2006, p.79). Leach (2002, p. 730) also draws attention to this basic communal value of achieving meaningful relationships through the process of construction of garamut. Leach writes, 'the process is not primarily one of production. Instead it reveals the ontological basis of human existence. The production of the object is this mode of revelation. The knowledge of how to transact with spirits and use bush material manipulates existing social relations and instigates new ones to produce an effect'. Ideally this effect, I might add, is to be experienced in the form of prosperity with abundant life, plenty of food, good health and amicable relationships here and now.

Furthermore, Leach writes that the emergence of the garamut cannot be seen as the end of the process. The object has an effect within and upon the relations given form by its emergence and as Leach puts it, 'formation is ongoing, with becoming built in' (Leach 2002, p.713). Taking this further, I say that garamut among the Kayan are characterised as primordial ancestral objects which have power of social agency that serve to link them together as a group of people. To the Kayan, garamut define their social, economic, political as well as religious welfare since the days of ancestors, and constantly remind them of who they are among their neighbors.

The emphasis on the importance of the process is also highlighted by Louise Lincoln (1987, p.33), showing that in 1929 when Hortense Powdermaker asked the old men of the village of Lesu in Kavieng, what she should tell her own people about the malangan sculptures she was taking with her, the answer given was not what she expected. She expected that the responses would have emphasised the aesthetic or iconographic features of these art works. Instead the old men unhesitatingly instructed her 'to tell these people who would look at the malangan that they were not just carved, painted pieces of wood, I must make the people understand all the work and wealth that had gone into the making of them – the large taro crops, the many pigs, all the shell money, the cooking for the feast, and other essentials of the rites. These, said the old men of Lesu, are the important things to remember about malangan'. These words highlights one of the core values of Papua New Guinea societies that 'the process of establishing the right relationship' is of paramount importance in order to reap life giving flow- on effects to the community. In the traditional sense, the economy of social value signifies the value of the object as succinctly expressed by the old men from Lesu.

People talked about the number of pigs killed, the amount of food distributed, and the number of people who attended. Ultimately people believe that a right relationship enhances prosperity of life and a broken relationship brings death to life. Here death not only means physical death, it includes shortage of food, women not bearing children, and being faced also with various disasters. See also Lane's (1965) comments on the beliefs of the islanders of South Pentecost (Vanuatu), where he says that 'the ultimate purpose is to create and perpetuate satisfactory relations within the inner circle of kin, to cope with dangers from outside, and to ensure successful existence for the group and, within the framework of the group, for the individual'.

In this vein, Fugmann writes that the given and predetermined relationships of a communal context are defined by kinship, status, by obligation towards ancestral spirits or other powers and beings within the biocosmic world. The communal context also included societies beyond their own, because traditional trade links in marriage connections needed to be established and upheld in order to secure allies in case of warfare, or to exchange goods necessary for well-being of the community. Fugmann also writes about the life of the community as an intrinsic value, such as that which I believe the *garamut* animates among the Kayan. He suggests that in traditional Melanesian society, life was primarily experienced as a very intricate system of relationships, which affected the fate of each individual, community and cosmic entity. Fugmann continues that the given and predetermined aspects of a communal context were defined by kinship, status, by obligations towards ancestral spirits or other powers and beings within the cosmic world. Thus all realms of life hinged on these relationships (Fugmann 1984, p. 283).

Mantovani also offers the view that that life is the main value in Melanesian societies. That life is achieved and kept and enhanced through good relationships with the whole cosmos: with brothers, with ancestors, with the whole environment. The good relationships are expressed and established through exchange (see Mantovani 1984, p.181). For the Kayan, I would say, *garamut* can be considered as principal agent of expressing and maintaining these relationships. Were (2010, p.76) also provides a good example of an object which acts as an agent in connecting family groups together in a network and circles of relationships. When he asked a *Maimai*¹³ about the origin of *kapkap* the response in Tok Pisin was, 'taim bilong ol tumbuna', translated as, the time of the ancestors. This was a logical response from the respondent that the *kapkap* originated from the time of the ancestors. From the Melanesian perspective, I believe that the spatial and temporal reference is always to the 'time of the ancestors'. The Kukurai and the elders of Kayan also made this reference about their *garamut* having its origin in the time of ancestors. Were also writes that the Nalik people of Kavieng often refer to *kapkap*¹⁴ by saying that 'everything comes from within the *kapkap*', *olgeta samting i stap insait long kapkap*. That *kapkap* is the source of everything, of all knowledge, 'as bilong olgeta samting' (see Were 2010, p.31). These pronouncements affirm

¹³ Maimai: A New Ireland word for big-man /chief

¹⁴ Kapkap: A New Ireland word for neatly incised shell worn by New Ireland big-man as symbol of authority.

that among people of Melanesia, certain objects are embedded with a core value of social relationships. Just as the incised patterns of *kapkap* described by Were connected the Nalik people in their family lines, so too the designs and patterns of garamut connect the Kayan in their family and clan lines and to their men's houses and to the spirits. Similar to Malangan sculptures, garamut are stand in for many important subjects, including identity, kinship, gender, death, and the spirit world. They often include representations of fish and birds of identifiable species, alluding both to specific myths and the animal's natural characteristics.

I will further elaborate on this in the section on designs of garamut.

Leach also speaks of this understanding among the Reite people's relationship to garamut where the question of what a garamut does is played out in the process of construction of garamut (see Leach 2002, p.715). The examples of the work put into the production of objects such as malagan sculptures described by Kuchler (2006), Were (2010) about *Kapkap*, Munn (1986) about the *Kula* in *Fame of Gawa* and Leach (2002) about garamut of Rai Coast, all agree that people put a lot of energy into the process of creating these objects which give significant meaning and value to their lives. In my view, Leach correctly points out that in the Melanesian cultural context, the emergence of sacred objects such as the garamut cannot be seen as the end of the process. He says that 'the object has effect within and upon the relations given form by its emergence. Formation is ongoing, with becoming built in' (Leach 2002, p.173). During the research, I was privileged to observe and participate in the process and production of my garamut. The process initially began with negotiations and establishing right relationships. Therefore I say that it is the 'process' rather than the 'event' that is of critical importance. The 'event' of the emergence of garamut or that of the initiation of young men, or other festive occasions only highlights and gives witness that the process has been successful, and life can continue to flow to the community. In other words, the successful finished product is evidence of a good and satisfactory process.



Shaping garamut into a form of a human body



Smoothing body for artwork and designs

3.7 Materiality of Garamut

Carved garamut appear in different sizes, shapes and designs, small ones to large ones ranging from two meters to four meters. Some can be 50-70 cm in diameter and 150-180cm in length. Garamut carved for tourists and various public displays, the garamut also carry designs which are not traditional but improvised from pictures and other images. They can be carved from any number of good sound producing trees that people have identified from experience. However for the Kayan, they only carve garamut from a garamut tree, called *Waor* in their language.



Picture showing various types of garamut

The carvers told me that this was the tree of choice for their ancestors, and they have kept the tradition since. I observed that garamut among Kayan are not simply technological art objects but are also religious objects endowed with personality. Busse (n.d)in his article ‘The National Cultural Property (Preservation) Act’ of Papua New Guinea also comments that objects are more than physical things. They are manifestations of creativity, knowledge, physical skill (as a type of embodied knowledge) and social relations. In reference to the garamut he says that they are not simply carved and hollowed out logs which can be used to produce sounds; they are products of skills and the genius of the persons who carve them. They contain and express the beliefs and

aesthetics of the people, who make and use them, and they are embedded in a system of social relations, both in their ownership and their production, for the person-in-the object is a social person.

I also observed among the Kayan that influenced by tourist attraction to artifacts, there is a new trend with the intention to give it more aesthetic appeal to potential buyers rather than representing traditional story or beliefs. Designs are copied from books or magazines and generous bright store colours are applied to capture the attention of potential buyers. Lipset makes a similar observation about Murik artefacts; that the composition of masks and statutes carved for commercial purposes has changed (Lipset 2005, p.122). Even Philip and other more traditional carvers prefer to use modern colors and not traditional colors of white, black and red because traditional colours easily fade. Furthermore, the material such as a certain type of clay for producing red colour is no longer easily found. Here I will discuss the procedure and process of production of garamut among the Kayan.

3.7.1 Production of garamut

After hearing stories and conducting interviews with participants and informants, I was fortunate to see in action, the process and production of garamut. I now share the process that unfolded in which I equally participated. The process as mentioned earlier began with me seeking permission from the Kukurai. This permission was granted in a collective consensus after the Kukurai had deliberated on my request. Teddy my principal informant then identified the following carvers to take charge of carving the three garamut I requested. Their names were Philip Apa, Arnold Jongtai, Paul Kuri, Willie Kawang and Teddy himself. Paul was engaged especially to carve the finials as he was the expert garamut carver.

The garamut logs were identified by the carvers themselves and work began in shaping them down to form in secluded spots in the forests. One tree had fallen down by itself from which two garamut were carved; the other was from the trunk of a garamut tree that had been cut previously in 2010 by Philip to get posts for his house. During the process I observed that even though there was no longer much ritual involved, I noted that there is always precaution to do things right according to



Taboo signs warn women and girls to keep away

custom. Taboo signs were erected to keep away women and girls. In the past, if any woman came upon men carving garamut, she was killed and the story was, 'the spirits killed her'. An informant told me that as late as in the 1960's, a woman was gang raped and killed when she came upon men carving garamut. This would mean that men of Kayan still at the time still believed in protecting their tradition and secret.

Can this still happen now?, remains unknown.

Another observation was that the production or carving of garamut took place in a spatial location of the forest away from the precincts of the village. This also suggest the idea that garamut is the thing of the forest which when completed, will become a member of the village community. When we came home and relaxed, sitting on the bed, chewing betelnuts and telling stories, no mention of work on garamut was uttered in the presence of women and children. In the former times, men retreated to the men's house to rest but that is not the case today. Only in the absence of women and children would we talk about the day's work concerning garamut. The initial stage of carving the garamut began with chopping the outer flesh and shaping the garamut into form. When it was decided that they should now be moved to a new secluded spot, I engaged the young men who were members of a soccer team with an incentive that I bought them two soccer balls, a new modern way of establishing relationships. They then moved the garamut by carrying them to the new location. Young men made frightening noises by blowing into young banana shoots which they had cut, to warn women and girls not to come near that part of the bush. It was a sign indicating that the spirits were bringing the garamut. Unlike Reite people who drag their garamut (see Leach 2002, p.724), Kayan carry their garamut when the log has been shaped into a body like the form of a person. They also carry the finished garamut to the village after it has been decorated.



Preparing garamut to be carried



Young men carrying garamut

The carrying of the garamut appropriates the idea that they must take care of the young body/skin which, has not been hardened and must not be hurt or harmed in any way. It may also suggest that as young children are often carried by their mothers until they have been weaned and are old enough to walk and have voice for themselves, so too, the garamut are carried until they are placed at the men's house and have their own voice.

When carrying the garamut I heard Teddy say to the young men that as strong young men they must carry the garamut. In Tok pisin he said, 'yupela ol pikinini man, yupela inap karim ol garamut', translated as, you are young men, you can carry the garamut. These words imply that as young men, they should have strength to protect the life of the community of both men women and children.

3.7.2 Digging out the belly

During my stay and participation in carving of garamut, Philip and Teddy both explained that the digging out of the belly/slit was of critical importance to the voice of the garamut. The expression digging out the belly is used in Tok Pisin as 'kamautim bel', which literary means, intestine. I suggest here that this is the most critical part that women are not allowed to see, just the same as men are not allow to see mothers giving birth in the women's secluded area of giving birth.



Using chisel to dig out the slit

The custom was that the first piece of wood cut out was given to the owner of the garamut who kept it hidden away. It is a practice, I suggest, similar to that of cutting the umbilical cord of the baby, and giving it to the mother or the sister who buries or hides it. It was feared that if another person got hold of cut piece of wood, he could curse the garamut and it would not sound like a garamut but would sound like a stump of a tree. The Kayan men say that the masalai spirits are the ones who eat out the inside (in Tok Pisin, *bel bilong garamut*) of the garamut. This metaphorically implies that the spirit eats the intestine of the garamut. As stated, 'kamautim bel', digging out the inner strips of the slit, is the most critical part of the production that must be completed with care to produce a good sound. In the past, the owner of the garamut would kill a pig for the carvers when they reached this stage. The importance of pig is that among many Melanesian societies pigs are not only good to eat, but more importantly, pigs represent wealth and efficacy of life that is linked to the ancestors (see Mantovani 1984, p. 149).

I observed that while digging the inside of the slit, the shavings were always tipped over to the side where the stick would beat the garamut. Teddy explained that the reason was: if you tip the shavings over the non-pounding it side would mean that you would be suffocating the breath that comes from the stomach - a belief of the ancestors they still follow. When the last bits of the inside were taken out, each garamut was tested for sound. If the sound needed improvement, the carvers carefully shaved off the inside of the slit until the desired sound was produced. Teddy told me that in the past, if people were pleased with the sound, a piece of clay pot with fire was placed inside the garamut. I interpret this to mean that the fire and smoke was as a way of airing or drying the wet stomach or the vocal chord of the garamut where voice was going to be produced.

It is a similar concept that can be related to the practice of drying the skin of the new born baby over the fire by its father's sister after the birth (see Kuchler 2002, pp. 38-39). This can also be compared to the initiation of young boys where to become young adults, they must first get rid of the fluids or the wetness of a child by getting rid of the female substances in order that they can have a voice to speak out. If there were a number of garamut, a knotted leaf was placed in the garamut to indicate that the garamut should not be touched again. But I also suggest that the tied knot was a way of containing the breath that it should not escape. By breath in this context, I mean the breath of life. I make this connection to the untying of the knot by the Kukurai to lift the ban of

silence, that the breath of life now should flow into the community and among people going about their normal activities (see Chapter five, p. 169). By the term breath of life, I do not mean just wind that passes by, but the life giving force that forms life. During the work, every piece of the log or shavings of the garamut were gathered and burnt. I was told to do this as well. I asked whether we could bring some home to use as firewood. My question received a stern ‘no’ from Teddy and the carvers. They said that these were important precautionary measures taken to ensure that no jealous person came around and collected the wood chips and performed magic to stop the garamut from producing a good sound. I observed that though the layers of rituals had been shaven off by the influence of the Catholic Missionaries, the core belief in the agency of spirit in the garamut still remains.

3.7.3 The designs on garamut

The Kayan have four clan designs, which they share, but the clan totem or motifs are not interchangeable, they belong to respective clans and also to respective family groups. An elder Alois said that in the past, when different clans lived separately, clan designs were not shared. Each clan had their own design. I observed that all garamut finials represent their tumbuan mask faces and they all looked the same. I also noticed that on almost all the garamut there were genital features



Putting paint on the design Yoberber

especially of the male resembling two testicles, in Tok Pisin called ‘bol’, and a few depicting a vagina carved at both ends of the garamut. All the finials at both ends represent a tumbuan face. The Tok Pisin term tumbuan refers to the conical face mask worn during ritual dances. They represent spirits but not the ancestral spirits which are referred to as tambaran. The designs on the body of the garamut depicted what look like eyes and mouth and even ears. I interpret this to mean that these are designs connected to the ancestral spirits, though they are invisible, they still watch over or have their eyes on the people.

Another observation is that unlike the Sepik garamut which predominately depict images of ancestral crocodile images, Kayan garamut do not depict any crocodile images, which seemed odd to me because of their close connections to the Sepik river people. My interpretation of this marked difference is that this has a lot to do with them adopting a garamut culture of the earlier inhabitants which I described in Chapter One. It is my theoretical notion that the Kayan carved their canoe designs on the body of the garamut which most probably depict sea creatures especially fish, but for the finials they carve the tumbuan mask face which is a common feature of the garamut among their neighbours. Furthermore I also noted that some garamut designs depict images of land creatures such as frogs, eagles and lizards and rats (*Kadid* in Kayan language) or even bamboo leaves, images of connection to the forest



Clan garamut called Dauginamot depicting an eagle, Tarego in their language which is the name of a spirit

or their living environment. Bamboo leaves implies that spirits also live in bamboos, thus the sacred bamboo flutes. Therefore garamut is part of the living thing. At the time of the research none of the elders could explain to me the meaning of these designs except that the designs were originally applied to their big sailing canoes. They no longer build these types of canoes. I observed that some incised designs on the side of garamut represented animals or parts of animals. For example, on garamut Dauignamot, tails of fish were incised on both sides of the garamut. Some designs represented human faces.

I now share my observation of the application of designs on the garamut I requested. After the garamut had been sanded down with sand paper or pieces of broken bottle, the incision of the design, and the finials were carved; which was then followed with the application of painting the designs. The two clan designs incised on my garamut were, *Raing* and *Yoberber*, both originally canoe designs of the *Kainmbat* clan. The third garamut also had the design *Raing*, but was given a *gnumtik* spirit name, *Kabining* (see Chapter three, p.108) by Caspar, the Kukurai of *Kainmbat* clan. Modern store paints of red, white and black were used instead of traditional paints which the carvers said will fade quickly.

3.8 Symbolism of colours

Campbell (2002, p. 118) writes that in many societies colours receive considerable symbolic attention. In some societies colours represent bodily functions such as breast milk, semen, or blood and excrement (see also Young (2005, p.179). Speaking of the Vakutan people of the Trobriand Islands, Campbell writes that the part played by colour in their thought, was concerned overwhelmingly with stages of the life cycle: a trajectory from birth to youth, age and inevitably death. She explains that for the Vakutan, the colour white is associated with birth, red symbolises the gradual process of maturing, and black generally corresponds to physical age and social maturity. In this vein, my interpretation of colours red, black, and white, applied on garamut among the Kayan, is about the representation of the life cycle of the Kayan persons.

As young babies, they have white skin, they are soft in physical form and character as well. Then after initiation, they become young adults with firm skin, appearance, and character. The third stage is when they now are considered fully grown adults with tough skin and maturity of character as elders. This interpretation was prompted by a comment uttered by Philip when I asked him about the significance of colours. Philip said in Tok Pisin ‘taim ol yangpela i go insait long hausman, ol i no gat kala. Taim ol i kam ausait, ol i kam ausait wantaim kain kain kala’. This means, when the young boys went into the men’s house, they had no colour. When they came out they were adorned with different types of colours. Philip was not only talking about the material colours of red, black and white painted on their bodies, but also about the character of persons. Teddy confirmed that the basic idea of colour for the Kayan is that colours represent the life cycle of the people of youthfulness, symbolised by white and red, aging and maturity symbolised by black. Teddy also said that colours also represent experiences of life such as joy, happiness, and sadness, represented by the colour black. He provided an example that people put on black in times of mourning. Teddy also said that they had yellow colour, but the type of clay they used to abstract yellow from, was no longer available. For colours themselves, I observed the mixing of lime (*kambang* in TP) with water, making a thick paste and applied as a base after the garamut had been washed. The lime made the grooves of the design stand out. The excess was scraped off and the colours, black and red were applied on top.



Garamut at various stages of painting



Furthermore on symbolism of colours, Young (2005, p.179) writes that Material colours may tell us about the relationship between things and people, whether certain objects are, for example, regarded as possessing an animation or agency, and what kind of spatial effect they are intended to produce, while other things are construed as passive. For the garamut, I also say that colours of red, black, and white, made the garamut lively in appearance as was expressed by Teddy. Taking this further I would like to suggest that the colours red, black, and white painted on garamut represent the colours of birth, and the life cycle of the Kayan people. The colour red in particular in many Papua New Guinea societies symbolises life and death. To smear with blood or red is a symbol of necessity of 'life' and the desire for the flow of 'life' (see Mantovani 1984, p.162). Young suggests, the intuitive idea of colour in phenomenology, can be a compelling, exact and calculated medium for producing and reproducing power and for transmitting knowledge and an essential facet of knowledge systems. Drawing on Wagner's (1987) writing on the power of images, Young writes that colours have agency and can communicate and also effect complicated ideas and relationships instantaneously. Colours are also able to convey and embody a sense of becoming, and of being (Young 2005, p. 180). She also provides an example that among the Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara people living in the central desert of Australia, the becoming green of the land is echoed by wearing bright green clothing, thus re-embodying the attachment of persons to their 'country' and the equation of this is interchangeable (Young 2005, p.181).



Decorations made from sago fibre and bush material

Likewise, using sago fibre and ropes collected from the bush to make decorations for my garamut also has the idea of connecting persons to the bush and forest environment. These are the same materials also used to make grass-skirts with, which both men and women wear during singing or in the past grass-skirts were worn by women as their regular dress. This is also related to women who made decorations for their sons during initiation. The women used coloured dyes bought from a Chinese

shop in town to prepare decorations for the garamut. Bright colours were used as expressing joy. I gave money for the purchasing of these dyes because the use of traditional paint has declined. I wanted traditional paints on the garamut, but the reason the carvers persuaded me to go for store paints because traditional paints fade quickly. This was important for them because as Willie one of the carvers said in Tok Pisin, 'mipela i laik bai ol arapela i lukim kala na stail bilong Kayan', translated as, we want others to see the colour and style of the Kayan. It is an idea I could relate to with Gell's (1999) essay on *Technology of Enchantment and Enchantment of Technology*.

There was an added concern that if traditional paints were applied, it would not have been that easy for me to bring the garamut to Australia due to quarantine concerns to do with the importation of soils. Women prepared young sago fibre leaves and bush string material and dyed them with the dyes. Modern dyes have brought unlimited choices. Today shredded white nylon strips from rice bags are also used. The day before the appearance of the garamut in the village, these decorations made by the women were attached to the garamut by the men whilst still in the enclosure in the forest. Though the women prepared the decorations it was the men who decorated the garamut. This suggests to me that men protected the power of masculinity from the women. It relates to the stories of the power of women weakening the male strength. Similar to the elders decorating young boys who had gone through a period of transition and transformation to become young adult men, I observed that the garamuts' appearance in the village followed the same process. The garamut as it were, were becoming men in the community and bright colours resembled the exuberance of youthfulness. The three garamut took four to six months to complete.

So far I have described the process that getting a garamut carved was akin to the process of initiating young boys to become men. It was a process that required planning and deliberations following required traditional operational norms as laid down by the ancestors. In the past, young boys had to undergo various stages of initiation to become men with a voice, so too as I have described, garamut logs also go through various stages to become mature garamut with a voice.

3.8.1 Garamut appearance in the village

This is the account of how my three garamut were launched. The appearance of the garamut in the village was an occasion for both apprehension as well as celebration. Teddy and the elders said that the tambaran (spirits) were going to bring garamut to the village. They explained that in the past, some men slept with the decorated garamut at the secluded enclosure before it was brought to the village. Teddy further said that the ngumtik spirits were not the ones who brought the garamut to the village, but the tambaran spirits. It can be interpreted that the delivery of garamut has connection to the men's house because the tambaran spirits are associated with the men's house. There is a correlation that the initiated young men were also initiated by the tambaran spirits in the men's house and presented to the community. Likewise garamut was initiated by the spirits and presented to the community. In the past it was the initiated young men who brought garamut to the village. But the story as I have mentioned was that the tambaran brought the garamut. When the garamut were brought to the village, women and children ran away and hid in the bush. This is no longer the practice as I observed during the presentation of my garamut.



On the day the garamut were brought to the village, women and children did not run away as was the practice in the past. In the early hours of one Saturday morning around 4:00 am, shrieking eerie noises broke the silence of the morning. The noises could be heard going up and down the village. People knew that the tambaran (men) were bringing garamut to the village. Following the past practice of delivering garamut to the village, the three garamut were thrown down, strewn about at different spots, with their stands and beating sticks, later to be found by owners and placed

together. As the owner of the garamut, I woke up and with the help of Teddy and some boys looked for the garamut, the garamut sticks, and the garamut stands. We collected them and placed the garamut in front of the new *Kainmbat* men's house. This had to be done before the women and children woke up.

According to Teddy, in the past if there were a number of garamut for different individuals, the owners had to identify them and match the sticks and the stands with their own garamut. These sticks are actually special big hard ropes. If one of the garamut was for a Kukurai, his garamut was placed in the front of the others. In the past, elderly women who had been appointed to break dry coconuts, would break a dry coconut each in front of a garamut and gave a name to the garamut. This practice is still followed today. This they demonstrated when three elderly women broke dry coconuts and named the three garamut. Giving names to the garamut was important. Just as the new born children is given a name and is connected to the family and to the clan, so too the garamut were connected to *Kainmbat* clan. These names were not names in themselves, they contain relationships. And these relationships are kept alive by the names. The women were the wives of Philip, Arnold, and Teddy who were the carvers. One was named *Raing*, the other *Yoberber* and the third, *Kabining*. *Kabining* is not a design name but the name of a spirit of the forest which



Women giving names to the garamut

Caspar the *Kainmbat* clan Kukurai said was his 'spirit'. The garamut *Kabining* is now kept at Divine Word University Chapel in Madang; the other two are in Australia. The one called *Yoberber* is in the University of Queensland Anthropology Museum, and the other called *Raing*, is at the Queensland Brain Institute.

I noted that even though the women gave the names, they had few formal acts during the garamut presentation. It was the men who gave speeches including myself. Strathern makes a similar observation of *moka* ceremonies where she observed that women have few formal acts at public *moka* presentations. They do not participate in preliminary meetings to decide when the exchange

is to take place; they lead prized pigs to the ceremonial ground and attend to beasts their husbands are to receive, but do not publicly allocate them (Strathern1995, p.141). Munn also writes that among the Gawa, in contexts of public food giving such as mortuary rites and entertainments, it is the men who determine the distribution of food (Munn 1992, p.53). An observation that I also noted at Kayan was that food placed near the garamut was distributed by the men. The placement of food can be related to initial offering of food to the spirits in selecting the tree. There is a correlation that giving food is a common denominator of establishing friendships.

When I enquired about the women breaking dry coconuts and giving names to garamut, Teddy explained that the significance of this gesture was to acknowledge and appreciate the contribution of women's provisioning the production of the garamut. These women I noticed were past child-bearing age and I suggest that this gesture could mean that the son is grown up and now is initiated. Women giving a name to garamut could also relate to the fact that public name-giving in the village context is an exclusive right of the women in Kayan, even though the husbands are allowed to make suggestions (see Poser 2008, p.123). I also offer another view. The breaking of dry coconuts could signify the next step in the life of the young boys. During the initiation period they were not fed with food creamed with coconut milk, a likely connection to the mother's breast milk which was considered polluted and would have made them weak. Rather they were fed dry foods to make them strong, which was one of the main reasons for getting them into the men's house. Now they have gone through getting rid of female substances and have become strong they could now consume food creamed with coconut milk and express who they are as men and no longer boys.

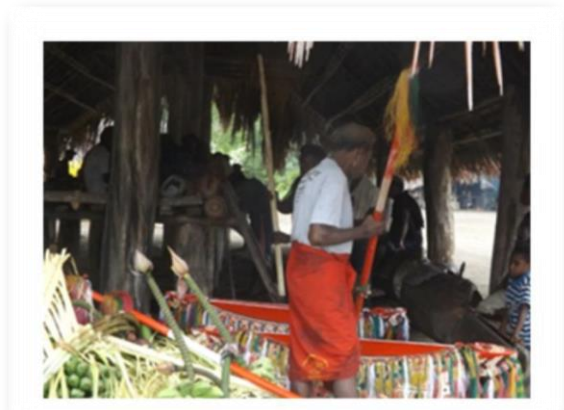
After the garamut were named I was officially handed the garamut sticks especially made for each of the garamut. I now became the owner of the garamut. Philip explained that this was and still is the Kayan traditional way of officially handing over the garamut to their owners. He further explained that though these were my garamut and I had spent money and other resources for carving the garamut, I was not officially the owner until the garamut sticks were handed over to me. So during the process each leading



Philip handing me the garamut stick

carver of the three garamut handed the stick to me in front of the garamut they carved. They were Philip, Arnold and Teddy. The handing over of the stick symbolised that now I as the owner of the garamut, I had the authority to produce the voice or the sound of the garamut.

The next step was equally important, now that the garamut had a mature voice of an adult to invite or join others to participate in the activities of the village. Michael as well as Philip, explained that in the past, after receiving the stick, the owner of the garamut would invite his best play mate



Teddy beating the garamut

(called '*mor*' in Kayan language) to beat the garamut. This play mate was someone who they could crack jokes with. If there were a number of garamut, after every *mor* had taken a turn in beating the garamut of his mate, all of them would beat all the garamut in unison. Then the holders of clan garamut in the village men's houses would be invited to beat their clan garamut. This was also demonstrated with my garamut. As a demonstration, Teddy beat the garamut on my

behalf, as my *mor*. One young man ran across to *Gnombreak* men's house and sounded a garamut in response as a welcoming gesture to the new garamut, as if responding to a voice. I interpret this to mean that the new garamut as initiated young men, now have a voice as adults in the community and their voice also needs to be heard.

While the carving of my garamut was in progress I observed that they were laboriously carved with patience, with care and diligence, shaping them to form, tuning them, giving them voice, and creating them as objects of technological and social enchantment. During the launching, women joined to celebrate this productive achievement that men created with their help. Though women are excluded from access to the knowledge of garamut, elderly women had the honorary task of breaking dry coconuts and giving names to the garamut. I enquired with Teddy about this generous gesture of letting women break dry coconuts to give names to garaumt. His response was, to 'make women happy' and also to appreciate women's contribution and participation with the provision of food throughout the construction process which resulted in a fruitful outcome.

3.8.2 Garamut link to spirits

In the second part of this chapter I discuss more fully the link between garamut and spirits. In Papua New Guinea, the sacred nature of objects always had a link to spirits or a mythical source, as found in the stories of origin. These stories are important because they connect the people to their ancestors or to mythical beings who first introduced the object or provided their ancestors with the knowledge of producing these objects. Since this knowledge is considered sacred, it is vested with powers of efficacy, which is heightened by certain rituals. Garamut likewise have their stories of origin. Some stories of origin of garamut have been recorded by various researchers such as the story of *To Kabinana* and *To Karvurvur* the two brothers and mythical ancestors of the Tolai people. Fischer (1986, p. 25) cites Meier (1908) who wrote of the Tolai people where two brothers *To Kabinana* and *To Karvuvu* wanted to make canoes. *To Kavurvuvu*, the bringer of misfortune instead makes a slit-drum, and tells *To Kabinana* “the deaths of our children will be drummed out on it when they die”. Fischer also points to other myths (Chinerry g 103; Thurnwald c 1/394-Bougainville; Meier b 47 – Gazelle Peninsula; Gerstner a 487 – Tumelo), producing stories that the first slit-drums were made by spirits or mythical beings (ref. Fischer 1986, p.29).

During discussion with the Kukurai and some elders, I posed the question whether they had any legends or mythical stories of the origin of garamut. Their response in Tok Pisin was, ‘ol garamut i kamap wantaim graun’, translated as, garamut appeared with the earth. This response intrigued me. I pursued this further with Teddy my principal informant, asking him why it was that the Kukurai and elders do not have a story of origin similar to the stories I just mentioned. Teddy referred me back to the story I have mentioned in Chapter One about the arrival of a spirit garamut on the shore. He said that it is a vague story that not many Kayan elders are familiar with, and the Kukurai’s response attests to this lack of a story.

The Kayan only relate a story of a spirit garamut which is said to have mysteriously come from the Ramu or Sepik river basin to their shores. He said it was shrouded in mystery and he himself has always wanted to know. I suggest that this lack of a story indicates that as migrants, they invented or borrowed a story to identify with, in order that it would give them an authenticity to carve garamut, because the neighboring people already had garamut. Here I see a link to their religious

epistemology. Epistemology refers to the origin, the nature and limits of knowledge. It is concerned with how we come to know something or what is the basis of ones' understanding of knowledge. Hence for the Kayan a garamut is not simply a technological object, but essentially a religious object animated by spirit and is critical to important areas of life and death. As Berndt (1965, p.79) puts it, "Mythology as such is not subjected to empirical inquiry and testing. It is regarded as true, as having a reality of its own, which is not at all levels separable from the reality of social living".

3.8.3 Colonisers misunderstood garamut

Upon their arrival, colonisers and missionaries were often not aware that in the making of sacred objects, the carver was creating the habitat for a spirit being who was believed to have particular functions such as protecting the health and welfare of the community and providing assistance in hunting, fishing or warfare. People consider their sacred masks and other artifacts as vessels of spirits who take up residency in certain man-made objects. The power of these objects was motivated by beliefs in spirits and consecrated by magic rituals during their production process. Those who do not understand the over-riding spiritual dimension of the objects would consider them simply in aesthetic terms; in other words, in much the same way as they describe Western Art. The missionaries in particular felt it was their moral obligation to get rid of such stuff as they were considered associated with pagan worship. Most of these objects were burnt or destroyed. From my father I heard stories that a lot of the sacred objects were burnt under the supervision of the missionaries. The Kayan elders also told me of the similar sort of the cleansing of the pagan stuff by the missionaries.

When I began this research, one of the first things said to me by the Kukurai was that garamut were powerful objects. In Tok Pisin they said, 'ol garamut ol i no pilai samting, ol i gat pawa'. By the word 'pawa' they meant the power or the influence of the spirit that animates the garamut. One Kukurai emphasised that garamut are not toys, 'they are powerful objects'. Garamut are considered animated by the spirits and are believed to be agents of the spirits. He further added in Tok Pisin, 'ol garamut i ken bagrapim ples'; meaning, translated as, garamut could destroy the village by afflicting calamities such as deaths, not only physical death, but this includes denying prosperity of life. The belief that garamut are animated by spirits, who have their own personal characteristics

and attributes, is a dominant belief among the Kayan. Garamuts are considered to have a spirit and they have names. They are powerful like masks figures. They can kill people or make them sick. A garamut may take on other forms and walk at night. Garamuts are used in initiation ceremonies. Those are firm beliefs or understandings in the community.

In the message(s) drummed out to people through code messages, it is like a person speaking, and its voice needs to be heard. The message, if it is personal, is filtered and relayed through social networks and linkages, through blood lines and affinities. Generally speaking, this is an art of communication. The inference that a garamut is a man or voice of a man, (see Leach 2002, p.715) is in agreement with the anthropological theory of art which ‘considers art objects as persons’. Gell endorses this theory which Mauss used to say about kula shells as ‘exchange of gifts’, ultimately exchange of persons. The shells are extension of persons. In this vein, I suggest that garamut given as gifts were no ordinary gifts. They were more than gift objects. They extended the personhood, the status and the voice of the Kukurai and the clan leaders of Kayan over time and space establishing and exchanging relationships among neighboring tribes. The purpose of these exchanges of goods or gift objects such as garamut was not simply the free flow of goods, but rather the achievement of a friendly and trusting relationship. Every time an exchange was made, it built up a greater sense of friendship. Thus the occasion of exchanging goods created the opportunity of building up relationship, and it was the relationship rather than the exchange of goods that was of more importance (see Whiteman (1984, p.109).

The Kayan as the thesis shows, believe that garamut possess agency. The agency of garamut connects to various trajectories, linking them to their ancestors and to their social and living environment. Knappett’s (2005) view that objects have no agency at all but only a reflection of human activity would not be accommodated in the belief systems of the Kayan. In discussions and sharing with Kayan elders, I understood that they were adamant that their clan garamut are imbued with invisible powers. As Gosden puts it, the formal properties of artifacts are influenced by the genealogy of the object class, including historical continuities and changes, and also its perceived source. The forms of objects, the historical trajectories of the class of objects, and their perceived sources, combine to have social effects on people, shaping people as socially effective entities (Gosden 2005, p.193).

For the Kayan, it is not an imagined social agency or intentionality imputed to *garamut*. Yet it is precisely this suggestion which many scholars have found unsettling: inanimate objects turning out to be alive, the inanimate as an animated, living being which defines a living presence response. In the Western concept, a 'person' is an individual agent, a subject, the author of thought and action, and thus 'at the center' of relationships (Strathern 1988, p. 269).

However for Melanesia, she provides a Melanesian view that the person is distributively constituted, extending themselves out, a sum of relations with others. According to Strathern, in Melanesia, 'social relations are the objects of people's dealings with one another' (1988, p.172) and hence any object that moves between people will be efficacious, in so far as they personify relationships themselves. I agree with Strathern's observation. She also writes that persons or things may be transferred as standing for parts of persons (Strathern 1998, p.178). Strathern was interested in 'people's conceptualisation of each other; that persons can constitute the 'objects' that have effects. Following Strathern's views, I suggest that the agency of *garamut* gives identity construction to the Kayan, especially the character of the male.

According to Whiteman (1984, p.87), Melanesians rely primarily on religious knowledge as their basis for knowing and understanding the world they live in. Whiteman writes that the world view of Melanesians is divided into two parts: (1) the empirical, which includes the natural environment, its economic resources, animals and human inhabitants; those things which one can touch and see; and (2) the non-empirical part which include spirit beings, impersonal occult forces and sometimes totems (Whiteman 1984, p.89). Drawing on Whiteman I suggest *garamut* among Kayan encapsulates both the empirical and the non-empirical world view of the Kayan. Kuchler (2004) writing about *malangan* sculptures, also talks about the connection to the spirits as the original source or provider of the knowledge in recreating the object or a dance performance associated with *malangan*. The objects are revered as embodiments of people's beliefs of the power that is dynamic and real, connecting them to the spirits. An observation I suggest which prompted Tuzin (1980, p. 324) to say that *tambaran* is more than the sum of ideas and artefacts. Before I write further on the ethnographical understanding of *garamut* among the Kayan, it is necessary to provide the names of some spirits of Kayan, associated with masks and the *garamut*. These spirits are considered part of the social and spiritual landscape of the Kayan people. This is

important because as I have mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, the Kayan social structure is not only connected to humans but also connected to the spirits, to the land, sago patch areas, fishing areas, and family property. By knowing the names of these spirits they can claim rights to these properties.

According to Teddy, these spirits can also take up abode in garamut and he provided the following names of the spirits; how they feature, and which clan or sub clan they are related to. The names are only for the two tribes, *Nongdangan* and *Samngae*. Kept hidden in the men's houses, the masks are only brought out to perform during special occasions such as the mask festival. Considered imbued with power that would be harmful to women, only the men wear them. This can be interpreted as an enactment of the 'power' which is derived from the men's house, the clan garamut, and the spirits who are considered the primary agents from whom this power originates. The use of these masks in dances, generally known as tumbuan masks; are always accompanied with the beating of garamut during tumbuan dances. This can be interpreted as bolstering and capturing the power of the spirits. There is a strong connection of the concept of the power of garamut, the spirit masks, and the power of men. Though some garamut and masks are named after female spirits, it is the men who take control of these objects as a measure of dominance over women. The reason I have listed the names of the masks is that the masks represent the concept of the power of the spirits in some form of visible expression of the invisible nature of the spirits. For the Kayan, I argue that garamut, the men's houses, and sacred objects will have no power if they were not connected to the spirits as the source of the power which animates these objects.

Here now are the names of the masks of the *Nongdangan* Tribe with the following clan *Waot*, and its sub clans of *TaungNongem*, *Kuring* and *Sargum*. In the first table are masks owned by *Waot* clan and *TaungNongem* sub clan.

Name of Mask	Feature	Ownership
Agadua	Tambaran/ Kaidaban mask	Waot clan
Emrang	Same mask as of Kainmbat clan	Waot clan
Ndamai	Same mask as of Yakatongem sub clan of Samngae	Waot clan
Mbungruk	Ordinary mask	Waot clan
Raing	Mask with the name of garamut design	TaungNongem sub clan
Yaumjere	Ordinary mask	TaungNongem sub clan
Ndonae	Mask borrowed from Gamai village	TaungNongem sub clan

Musari (male Ngapai)	Mask of Mamuse's husband	Waot clan
Mangor (male Ngapai)	Mask of Musari and Mamuse's son	Waot clan
Kakae	Mask of Musari and Mamuse's younger daughter	Waot clan

These next masks are owned by Kuring and Sargum sub clans

Name of Mask	Feature	Ownership
Poakerek	Tambaran/Kaidaban mask	Kuring/Sargum
Sandam (Sukun) another name	Mask borrowed from Gamai village	Kuring/Sargum
Wangandamot	Mask, Gnumtik Mumun	Kuring/Sargum
Mbang	Ordinary mask	Kuring/Sargum
Arambara	Ordinary mask	Kuring/Sargum
Mamuse (female Ngapai)	Mask of Musari's wife	Kuring/Sargum

Samngae tribe with sub clans *Niam*, *Ndaenung*, *Yakatongem*, *Kawang* and *Anze*, own the following masks.

First, the masks of *Niam* and *Ndaenung* sub clan masks.

Name of Mask	Feature	Ownership
Manore	Tambaran/ Ngazu	Niam/Ndaenung sub clans
Mauktar	Ordinary mask	Niam sub clan
Sandam (Akam)	Borrowed from Bodbod village	Niam/Ndaenung sub clans
Rangndamot	Male Ngapai	} partners Niam sub clan
Kumarur	Male Ngapai	
Mbangzam	Male Ngapai	Niam/Ndaenung sub clans
Yamba	Male Ngapai	} couple Ndaenung sub clan
Sumbura	Female Ngapai	
Banty	Female Ngapai daughter	

Yakatongem sub clan owns the following masks:

Name of Mask	Feature	Ownership
Ngomai	Tambaran Yawarkap	Yakatongem
Ndamai	Special mask same as Emrang	Yakatongem
Wangar	Ordinary mask	Yakatongem
Tomotia	Ordinary mask	Yakatongem
Gedai	Sacred artefact	Yakatongem
Naboare	Male Ngapai	} couple Yakatongem
Ndaumare	Female Ngapai	

Kawang and *Anze* sub clans own the following masks:

Name of Mask	Feature	Ownership
Mbosai	Tambaran Waudan	Kawang/Anze
Weangai	Ngumtik Babakbi	Kawang/Anze

Waudan (also known as Kambambanger)	Tambaran Waudan	Kawang/Anze
Maumbra	Special mask	Kawang/Anze
Rangngiok	Ordinary mask	Kawang/Anze
Kockbi	Special sacred mask	Kawang/Anze
Garap	Male Ngapai	Kawang sub clan
Namnameak	Female Ngapai	
Mbundamot	Male Ngapai Son	

The composition of the masks is made of a variety of spirits, both male and female. An observation that Poser (2008) also made was that among the Kayan, the spirits are on the border between village and bush; they build the line between order and disorder, between control and chaos. MacDonald (1984, p.131) writes that the variety of spirits which the Tok Pisin speakers call *masalai* are a legion. They include tricksters, demons, pucks, spooks, mischief-makers, monsters, wild-men and wild-women spirit beings. Usually they are invisible but when they take on animal and human form they can be weird, charming, playful, or grotesque. According to Teddy, these masks are a manifestation of their belief in the spirits with who they share the social and the environmental landscape. Some of the names of these spirits are given to garamut.

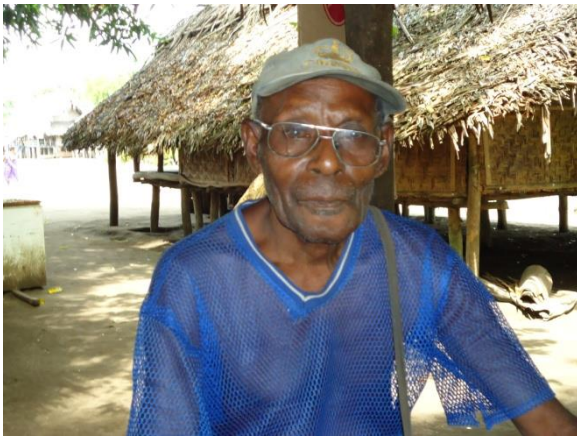
3.8.4 Garamut and past tradition of Kayan

In talking about ownership of garamut, Paul and Philip pointed out that in the past, very few garamut were carved. They were carved either for the Kukurai or the clan men's house. They were of the same standard size, large around 40-50 cm in diameter and 140-150cm in length. Several factors account for these few numbers. Firstly, they said that only the Kukurai had the right of ownership and the Kukurai had big garamut; two, garamut were sacred objects to be feared; and three, traditional tools such as stone axes were not capable of mass production and it took many months to carve one garamut. Thus a standard large size was carved so that designs could easily be incised with shark teeth or other crude implements. They continued that with the introduction of modern tools things changed, and varying sizes of garamut were now being carved. These garamut I noticed are owned by individuals. For the clan garamut in the men's house, I observed that they all have a standard measurement. Paul further said that those garamut carved for the men's house were placed in the men's house and used for ritual purpose such as initiation of young men. Some

were carved for private use by the Kukurai or influential leaders which were kept in front of their homes.

Though Paul and other informants told me that today, herbs, rituals and magical chants are no longer used to equip tools with spirit power, nevertheless I observed and even heard stories that belief in the constant presence of the spirits still permeates their working and social environment. On spirits see also Poser (2008, pp. 11, 39, 401) who noted that life in the village consists very much of contrasts between traditional and modern, between mission and spirit- beliefs, between subsistence and the cash-crop economy.

3.9. Interview with a Master Carver



Paul Kuri the Master Carver - 2012

It is always valuable to get an insight into the past, look at the present and project the future from the lens of the elders of the community. Interviewing one of the remaining master carvers Paul Kuri, I could see how garamut among Kayan have tuned their voice and representation, to accommodate the changes and challenges that have come from the outside as well as from within. Paul is 71

years old. He does not live in the big village of Kayan but lives in another village called Gamai. Because of his expertise Teddy invited him to come and work on the garamut I requested, especially in applying the designs and carving the finials. A skill that I observed is now almost in limbo. The big question Paul raised was: what is the future of garamut?

In our discussion, Paul talked about the past customs, practices and rituals of carving garamut and how some of those practices have changed over time. He shared that traditional knowledge and style of carving is also changing because of modern technology and tools. As one of the few remaining master carvers, Paul lamented that young people are losing interest in learning the skills and the art of making and designing garamut. I noted that traditional master carvers are a dying breed, and if no remedial action is taken, the Kayan will regrettably lose their identity as master garamut carvers. With Paul we counted fewer than five middle aged men who can confidently

carve and design garamut. Paul was very concerned that there will be nobody to replace him and few others to hold onto these skills or indigenous knowledge. Furthermore with old age they are losing their eyesight, including Paul himself.

3.9.1 Past process and ritual of garamut production

Paul elaborated on the traditional ways and custom rituals and social process of producing garamut in the past, that is, before the arrival of colonisation and mission intervention. These custom rituals were a prescriptive formula handed down by the ancestors where each step had to be followed diligently to capture and produce an object that contained supernatural power or agency, (in this case the garamut), while at the same time producing good relationships. Leach (2002, p.717) points this out where he differs from Gell (1992) who starts from an object, focusing on the technical mastery of the artist embodied within the object, whereas Leach emphasises more the elicitation of social form. Though he agrees with Gell generally, he argues that not only the technical mastery of the artist is to be seen as an ‘aesthetic act’, but also the elicitation of a particular configuration of social relations is an ‘aesthetic act’. Leach raises the issue that the process of garamut construction and the object itself are not the representation of a more fundamental sociological reality; they are the elicitation of social form. In agreeing with Leach I say that in the Melanesian or Papua New Guinea context, establishing social relationships is an ‘aesthetic act’ just as creation of art object is an ‘aesthetic act’.

Because of this intent and purpose much time and energy is spent on getting relationships right prior to the production process of an object. I further agree with Leach when he says that the emergence of the garamut cannot be seen as the end of the process. Formation is ongoing, with becoming built in (Leach 2002, p. 713). This was my experience that after achieving the feat of getting the carvers to carve my three garamut, it was not the end but the beginning of my ongoing relationship with the Kayan, especially the Kainmbat clan.

There is a body of literature which talks about sacred objects being constructed in secluded areas. For example the ritual of Gimi flutes took place in secluded areas of the forests to harness the powers of the nonhuman world of spirits and to be revitalised with its limitless, ‘masculine power’ (see Gillison 1980, p.143). Likewise, I observed that Kayan carve garamut also in secluded forest

areas where spirits (nggumtik) abide. Paul the master carver also said that in the past, the secluded areas were heavily fenced off but today they only put up signs to keep away women and children in accordance with the custom. Rituals performed acted as a buffer to keep a lid on unpredictable powers of the spirits and other benign forces. Also as a precaution against the efficacy of harmful powers, carvers were forbidden to hold babies and stay close to women. He said in Tok Pisin, ‘ol samting mi tokim yu, em ol pasin bilong bipo. Ol i bilip tumas long ol dispela samting’, the things I am telling you now are things of the past. They really believed in the power of the spirits.

Speaking about the tools used in the past, Paul said that their grandfathers did not have the luxury of the type of tools used today. He said in Tok Pisin, ‘mipela i laki tude wantaim ol tamoik na naip na ol sisel bilong wok’, we are lucky today with axes, knives and chisels to work with.

He continued by saying that in the past their grandparents used stone axes, shark teeth, and hard sago barks. Ritual cleansing of these tools was also performed. It was done as a way of empowering the tools to work efficiently. They were soaked in boiling hot water with ginger and herbs. Whilst working on garamut, the carvers would chew some of the ginger and chant as they used the tools. The practice I interpret was associated with the harnessing of power from the spirits to energise them in carving garamut. These rituals are no longer practised. The reason for abandoning these rituals I suggest is that since the introduction of modern steel tools, the job became much easier which did not require ritual empowerment. Indeed in the past, the job looked impossible, with the kind of tools they had. A miracle was needed and accomplishing such a feat with crude implements was a miracle in itself. Ritual made this possible.



Men carving garamut in the seclusion of the forest

3.9.6 Food for the Carvers

Continuing the conversation, Paul said that it could take six to eight months or more to finish one garamut. He also pointed out that it was not only the technical part of production that mattered but more importantly the social process of making enough gardens, sago, raising pigs and preparing for the day of the launching of garamut. The carvers and their assistants had to be generously fed throughout the whole process. Therefore it was not only a ritually demanding task, but also expensive in terms of the provision of food including constant supply by the owner of the garamut of betelnuts and tobacco leaves.

The opening of the slit and testing of the sound was marked as an important milestone celebrated with the killing of a pig. The food brought to the carvers was eaten in the enclosure where garamut were carved. Paul also said that in the past no left-over food was brought back home, the reason being that because spirits had partaken of the food, it would be harmful to women and children. Paul also said that the carvers kept their baskets away from women and children. Otherwise the wife or children might pick a betelnut, and chew. This was dangerous as these things have been exposed to the power of the spirits. Paul told me that if the wife chewed a betelnut from the basket of a carver or from those who had worked or visited the spot where garamut were carved, her reproductive powers would be rendered useless, she would not bear children and her children would also get sick. Also if their wives had a menstrual period, men should not eat any food cooked by them as well as not have sexual contact with them or spend too much time with the women. The reason was that this would weaken their masculinity (see also Meggitt 1964, p.210). It was also strictly forbidden for any of the men to mention to their wives that they were carving garamut. If any of the men did, the penalty was death. Women and girls were forbidden to go anywhere near, the place where the garamut were being carved and the death penalty was the punishment for breaking this taboo.

Women cooked and brought food but stayed at a distance and called out to the men to come and get the food. Sometimes a long rope with rattles was tied to a small tree or stick near the enclosure and the end tied to a small tree near the road where women pulled, to indicate that they had brought the food. My interpretation is that this food was not only to feed the carvers but also it was

believed that the spirits partook of the food. There is a strong correlation with the situation where during selecting a tree, food items were brought to appease the spirit inhabitants of the forest. Likewise spirits also were partaking in sharing of food. Apart from the social gesture of eating, this could also explain the reason that during the launching of my garamut, I observed that foodstuffs such as bananas, sugar cane, betelnuts, coconuts especially kulau were brought by men and the women to be placed near the garamut in the men's house. This gesture of presenting foodstuffs I suggests is a way of acknowledging the prosperity of life brought about by correct relationships apart from the social act of eating. Munn refers to the idea of abundance of food among the Gawa as *mariya*, a state of abundance, entails more than simply an experience of plenty of food. It connotes a world in which there is an abundance of food remaining external to the body as well as lack of it (Munn 1992, p.88).

3.9.7 Women are co-creators of garamut



Boys scraping sago



Women extracting sago starch

Though the men claim ownership of garamut, and are credited for the hard work put into carving garamut, I observed that women equally put in tireless energy in cooking and providing food for the carvers, right from the beginning of the process of production and to launching of the garamut. Munn (1992, p.530) also writes of the similar role of womens contribution among the Gawa, that the role of women as cooks rather than direct kula transactors is connected to a more general position women occupy in transaction of food. The fact that female activities are typified by cooking and the preparation of food for consumption is a feature that in certain respects associates women with eating rather than with the giving of food. She says that what should be empahsised in

general is that the part women play in value production associates them closely with the medium of comestibles, especially garden produce, a feature that is critical in the position of women, and that of the female gender principle, in the transformation process. I also observed this active role played out by the women at Kayan during the carving of my garamut. They provided garden foodstuffs, sago and fish they caught in the lagoons which supplemented the food bought from the stores such as rice and tinned fish. The relationship of women providing food as sustaining the work of men has interesting connotations. It can be interpreted that women being the source of procreation and generating life, ensured that by feeding the men they were sustaining the life of the community to continue.

Drawing on Munn on the aspect of value production, I would also suggest that the concept of value production and transformation process goes beyond food itself into value production of good relationships as well. I observed that the work on garamut not only brought together the carvers and the men who exchanged ideas about the carving and about the future of garamut but women as well. Women exchanged food and stories of where and how to get more food to provide for the men. For women, garamut also elicited social forms of relationships. During a conversation, I heard some women expressing views that these days food was hard to collect when gardens were not bearing much food, and they would need money to buy food. They planned their food gathering activities such as when they would make sago, go fishing, go to the gardens, collect firewood, or look for greens in the forests. Women were the managers of food production while the men spent time working on the garamut. Women were responsible for not only making ends meet, but for 'holding the fort', providing well for workers, while the men would be away, spending long hours on the garamut, but also being absent from ordinary sustaining work. Therefore I would argue that the women of Kayan are equal co-creators of garamut. It was acknowledged by the men that their contribution in the process of production of garamut was vital in the outcome that would benefit the community.

To draw attention to the important productive role women played in the making of a canoe among the Gawa, Munn speaks of women's productive powers by providing a legend. According to Munn (1986, p.139) legend has it that a dala (lineage) sister who had recently given birth to a child was cooking for the men who were making the canoe. Going out to investigate, she called to the workers, 'Hey, you men! Where is the canoe? When they showed her the hollow trench and piles

of soil, she said, 'What canoe is this? You are hollowing the soil'. Going to the bush she took blood and white discharge from her genitals, smearing 'her redness', her blood on one tree and her white discharge on another. She then called to the men and showed them the appropriate materials for building a canoe. They worked quickly to make a canoe, and were soon ready to sail.

Munn says that the productive knowledge held by this dala woman derives from capacities drawn from her own body or person that give men the artifact-making ability to work on wood and make a sailing vehicle. From the story and listening to people, Munn wrote that in the basic component of the canoe which is the hull, the female wood becomes the dominant unit, the basic carrier of people and goods, while the male wood, the outriggers, becomes the attachment to this core without which the canoe cannot sail on the sea. As 'prime movers' women themselves do not make the canoe. Rather, they continue to provide the cooking that is enabling work for the fabrication that must be accomplished through masculine work upon the appropriate raw materials (Munn 1998, pp.138-145).

Though I did not come across such a story among the Kayan, nevertheless drawing on Munn, I make a correlation that men through the production of garamut, imitate the reproductive powers of women by forming garamut in the surrogate womb of the forest. Just as men are not allowed to go near the birth house, women are not allowed to go near the place where garamut are carved. If there was such a story it may have faded in the memory of the people. Nevertheless, the story highlights the important role of women in the production of valued objects, and assumptions about the insight, power and influence of women that may lie behind it.

3.9.8 Discussion

The process of making, and engaging with garamut entail achieving meaningful relations with highly desired outcomes for the whole community; a common goal of abundant life, food, good health and amicable relationships. The question of masculinity at the heart of the garamut process, or journey, and therefore the question of female roles also, dominates sections of this account of the understanding of garamut among the Kayan.

To recapitulate: All put energy and resources into the process of creating objects, the men's houses and garamut, with significant value to their livelihood. In this production there is a kind of 'division of labour' where the Kayan work together. Women have the sustaining role of producing food for the carvers and builders, paid for by the garamut owner; and they contribute also in ways closer to the core ritual, involving creativity, for example, making decorations for the clan garamut, and naming garamut by invitation of elders.

To modern sensibilities in Papua New Guinea, as to the world outside, the anxieties about a 'contamination' by women, for example the exclusion of women during menstruation, abstaining from sexual relations with women, anxiety about being weakened and losing masculinity through an over-association with the opposite sex, will harbour misogyny. That is in conflict with formal rights accorded, if not fully enacted, such as rights to political participation - raising the possibility of custom blocking wanted and widely sought-after change. This may be mitigated by the element of protection of women and children, who are seen as vulnerable to spirit power, protection from loss of fertility, or concern that eating food taken from a garamut site will do them harm. To appreciate this it must be seen that belief in spirits residing in the garamut, which may be malevolent as well as benevolent, and which must be dealt with according to custom, is strong and residual in the minds of people belonging to this culture of the village.

At another level, women of the village will include those, mainly younger individuals who express an interest in changing the tradition, even drumming on the garamut, but gender relations, certainly where discussed with this researcher in relation to the garamut, are not adversarial. There is some shifting in practice where gender relations are concerned, such as admission of visiting women to the men's house. The World Bank document, *Gender Analysis in Papua New Guinea* (1998, p 19), which deals with new gender relations, gives further instances of change, in the wider community, such as custom in relation to managing fertility. In origin, the garamut tradition, which continues in an attenuated form, was to do with an absolute and consensual belief in spirits and spirit power, with which the Kayan might engage for the common good.

The process called for right relationships, observation of certain taboos, and of adhering to social and spiritual obligations. The women are specially mentioned that they adhere to specific taboos as taking precaution to their health and well-being. The residual belief is that in the process of production, the garamut is transformed into an object imbued with power of social interaction. Hoskins (2006) cites Gell, who says that anthropologists have always argued that ‘things’ can, in certain conditions be or act like persons: they can be said to have a certain personality, to show volition, to accept certain locations and reject others, and thus to have agency. The garamut of Kayan fit into this category of inalienable objects as Weiner (1992) describes them, and as such they wield power of social influence on the lives of the people.

3.9.9 Conclusion

The above is a position which Gell took in his work on *Art and Agency* (1998), in which he focused in particular on the relationships between social agency and art objects. By positioning material objects in the web of social relations normally associated with a person, Gell boldly argued that art objects should be considered as ‘indexes’ of social agency and even described them as secondary agents. Drawing on Gell, I have established that from their ontological and epistemological world view, the Kayan believe that garamut are imbued with power and social agency. Therefore this Chapter has provided an understanding of garamut among the Kayan, that since the days of their ancestors, garamut considered as social agents have structured their social, political, cultural and spiritual affairs. This understanding goes beyond the understanding that garamut are simply material objects with no deeper cultural meanings than to be used as drums for signaling or objects of entertainment.

Chapter 4 Garamut and clan men's houses

4.1 Overview

Arriving at the village of Kayan, one of the special features one comes to see are the men's houses with clan garamut in them. Kayan call their clan men's houses *Ngomor*. This chapter speaks about clan garamut and the relationship they have with the men's houses. Put together, the garamut and the men's houses are two powerful agents of male power among groups such as the Kayan. The men's house and garamut complement each



Men resting the Mens House Kayan Village -2012

other in influencing the social demarcation of gendered space, and gender roles between men and women. The men's house acts as an institution where knowledge and lessons pertaining to male masculinity is disseminated, and the clan garamut, legitimises the status quo of the voice, as the domain of men. The process of carving garamut and building men's houses are cooperative ventures of the community involving women and men, as being of common interest in building and maintaining the community. Consensus around this is weakened in contemporary times with men and women considering adaptation of ritual relations.

4.2 Introduction

In chapter three, I talked about the making of garamut and the process of assimilating garamut as members of the community akin to young initiates. I now continue to speak about garamut but in the context of the men's house where sacred objects of male power such as the masks, flutes and clan garamut are kept. Garamut and the men's house I observed complemented each other as the source of a power base for men. I would like to use the expression, 'One House; One Voice', as the best description of the relationship of the men's house and clan garamut. Metaphorically, the men's house shelters all clan members including women under the 'one roof', and the clan

garamut places clan members under the 'one voice' of the clan Kukurai. I observed that though women were excluded in the direct ritual activities relating to garamut and the men's house, women's contribution in the management and provision of food was seen as an important role in ensuring the continuity of life in the community.

Before I talk about the ethos of the men's house, I want to discuss the concept of the agency of garamut and its close affinity with the men's house. This is because among the Kayan both garamut and the men's house are considered powerful agents of masculinity as they manifest the power of the spirits whose agency animates the garamut.

4.3 Men's house and transmission of knowledge

According to Kayan elders, men's houses were in the past, places where young men received knowledge of how to be a 'man'. In Tok Pisin one elder said, 'hausman, em ples we ol yangpela i bin kisim skul bilong kamap pikinini man'; translated as, in the past, the men's house was a place, where young boys received lessons of how to be a 'man'. This concept of 'pikinini man' means that a male child must not be an effeminate person. He must be strong, ready to protect and defend the clan. It was not surprising as well that this conversation took place in the seclusion of the men's house, as if, I was getting lessons of how to be a 'pikinini man'.

Following the conversations of Kayan elders in reference to the men's house, I deduced that one of the key lessons young initiates received from the men's houses was about ways to protect themselves from the power of menstrual blood. The young men were instructed to observe taboos which would shield them from coming in contact with women's menstrual blood or blood from childbirth. These taboos they should also observe after initiation if they wanted to hold on to their power and masculinity. A similar observation is offered by Sillitoe of the Wola men who fear that women may poison them with menstrual blood; the Melpa men believe that menstrual blood and anything associated with birth can pollute and kill them. Sillitoe also continues that for this reason the Iatmul upon introducing the boys to the men's house world, were separated from females (Sillitoe 1998). The Baruya have an attitude about women's blood, that it is lethal, polluting, and dangerous and a permanent threat to men's strength. The same sentiments are shared by Sambia (see Herdt 1981; 1987). For them, menstrual blood is dirty, and they rank it with those other

polluting, repugnant substances, urine and faeces. Above all, though, it is a substance that weakens women whenever it flows from them, and it would destroy men's strength if ever it came into contact with their bodies. I see a correlation that garamut proposing the idea of women's bodies coming in contact with garamut bodies, representing men's bodies, would render those weak, and they would lose their power as men.

The clan garamut in the men's house also reveals the connections between clans and their respective founding ancestors. This knowledge was imparted to the young clan members. They were to know their lines of connection and kin relationships, which were important in collaborative activities such as feasts, marriages, and acquisition of land (see also Were, 2010). Willie Kawang and other elders said that in former times, the house posts depicted carved images of clan mythology, constituting thereby the foundation not only of the house but, symbolically, of all the Kayan. Clan members were to know their clan designs, clan totems, names of clan spirits, clan garamut and clan land boundaries.

The knowledge the young initiates gained from the men's house was to make them become assertive in defending the rights of their family, kinship line, and of the clan. They could voice their position regarding disputes of ownership and clan boundaries. During interviews with the women, I noted that women in general did not know the names of clan designs, names of clan garamut, and names of clan spirit masks, except two elderly women. The two said that they knew only the names of the common ones. They further said that in the past, only a few women knew, if their fathers or their husbands had told them; otherwise, women had no knowledge of these things. Responses from the women indicate that the women could offer little knowledge into the secrets of garamut and the men's house. This was obvious because in my view, in any study of sacred cultural objects owned by men, such as my study on garamut, women informants were not able to offer any further insight based on their own independent knowledge. This knowledge was exclusive to only certain male individual elders. Thus the reader would see that in my dissertation, my key informants were certain male elders whose names appear throughout the thesis. These elders include Teddy Tamone, Willie Kawang, Michael Kaskus, Paul Kuri, and Philip Apa; whose ages ranged from fifty – seventy years.

The Kayan elders repeatedly told stories of the past that men's houses were used frequently as a sanctuary for men. Each clan men's house had features which distinguished them from others, represented by special designs and unique architectural features (see also Poser 2008). These elders continued that each clan men's house had carved clan totems such as an eagle, dangling in front of the entrance of the men's house. Certain individuals regarded as custodians of the men's house, acted as guards and managers of their respective clan men's house. Philip and also Michael told me that these individuals spent most of their time in the men's house guarding against intruders. Women and children kept their distance and only the elders and initiated young men could enter the men's house. If any woman or a young child was carrying food and passing through near the men's house, the guard would rush out with a spear and take the food. Unlike modern day men's houses which are now built near family homes, the former ones were built at selected private spots away from family homes with an enclosure around them.

The research shows that garamut and the men's houses among the Kayan since the days of ancestors, have been socially powerful and considered as agents imbued with power and social control. In this capacity, garamut and the men's house extend power to men, to have power over women. Derived from the men's house were the lessons that men should possess power of the voice over women, and the garamut amplifies this voice. I also interpret the taboo on women sitting on garamut as figuratively forbidding women to sit on the mouth of the men, thus muzzling the men's voice. This interpretation is based on my personal knowledge that very often men and women themselves express in Tok Pisin, 'man ya olsem meri ya, em nogat maus bilong toktok, em mauspas man olsem meri, meri bilong em i save bosim em'. In English, this literally means, this man is like a woman, he is a silent type like a woman, he does not have a mouth to speak, and his wife controls him. This reflects the underlying gender based social relationship, that women should not dominate men. Women are to speak of food and rearing of children in the confined space of home or house and not open their mouth in public. There is a perception also that women utter unintelligible words and if their voice is heard in public, they can bring shame to their husbands. Again, I would consider this to be a measure of control over the voice of women.

Visiting three men's houses because the fourth at the time of this research was not yet completed, I observed that each one had several clan garamut. One had seven, the second had four and the third had five. For the fourth men's house, their clan garamut were placed near their family houses, and one elder of the clan told me that when they had completed their men's house, they would then move the clan garamut to the house. In the men's houses, I saw on all clan garamut, the two Kayan traditional designs, Raing and Baewarup, and a few with the borrowed design Dauginamot. I observed that garamut with other contemporary designs were not put in the men's house.

These clan garamut were big and of similar size ranging from around 40-50 cm in diameter and 160-170cm in length. I noticed on all clan garamut, there was uniformity of design, size and shape. Most were not painted, but the few with traditional colours of white, brownish red and black, which were produced from red clay, lime and black charcoal, faded over time. Noticeably, the colours were not bright as one now sees on new garamut carved for the tourist market. Each clan garamut had their totems carved on the garamut. (The symbolism of colors will be further discussed in Chapter Five). Some garamut had spirit names and others had clan design names. The head and tail figurines all looked the same, depicting the face of tumbuan. I did not see on any of the garamut the design Yoberber which Philip had mentioned and shown me a photograph of, in an earlier conversation. I asked him the reason why these garamut did not have the design Yoberber. Philip responded that the design was lost. As a consequence, nobody knew how to carve the design any more, even among the current carvers. Now, however, it has been restored, through the work of the researcher Alexis Poser.

Philip was born in 1954. He recalls his father telling him about this design. Furthermore, Alois another elder aged around sixty eight who assisted Philip with carving the design of one of my garamut, recalled stories from his grandfather, that on three occasions, Kayan men's houses and clan garamut were destroyed or burnt. He said that the first time was by the Germans, the second time again by the Germans, and then by the Japanese during the Second World War. He said that most probably, a few garamut with the design Yoberber perished. From German records, Poser (2008, p. 170) provided a more detailed account of these incidents. The first incident took place in 1900, when a German punitive patrol burnt the village to retaliate against the killing of a worker from a trade-ship and for the stealing of a boat by some Kayan men. The second incident was in

1912 when the village was burnt down again over the killing of bird of paradise hunters and Chinese traders. The third time was during the Second World War in 1942 when the Japanese troops burnt down the men's houses and destroyed part of the village. Philip expressed joy that now they were fortunate they had got the design Yoberber back, thanks to Alexis Poser who photographed it in a Berlin museum in Germany. Poser was an anthropologist who did his research among the Kayan from 2004 -2007.



Photograph of the design Yoberber taken by Alexis Poser



The design Yoberber

Philip was delighted to carve the design on the garamut I requested, and to reintroduce the design back to the community. He happily said that what was lost has now been found. The design Philip said, belonged to the *Warngem* tribe and his *Kainmbat* clan are custodians of the design. Philip added that in the past, the designs were owned by individual tribes, but later, they began to share the designs across the three tribes and the clans. For example, the design *Baewarup* was owned by the *Samngae* tribe. So if someone from one clan wanted a design from another clan, he would ask the Kukurai of that clan to have that design carved on his garamut. He further told me that most of the clan garamut I saw in the men's houses were only carved some time after the Second World War. Therefore they are relatively new with the exception of three old garamut which could be eighty years old. Carved from trees also known as garamut (in Tok Pisin), it is resistant to termites, and does not rot easily. This gives a reason why garamut among Kayan if not deliberately destroyed or burnt, outlive their owners.

Another elder told me that the men's houses of the past were regarded as sacred places, and therefore were treated with reverence and respect, because they contained sacred objects of power, such as the sacred masks, flutes and clan garamut. He emphasised that according to Kayan tradition, women were forbidden to enter the men's house and they are still forbidden today. However I also observed that the young men of Kayan are torn between adhering to these taboos

of the past or adjusting to the changing times, and make allowance for women to enter. The following example demonstrates this position challenging the young men.

During the Garamut and Mask Festival which took place in September of 2013 at Kayan, lunch was served for visitors at Gnombreak clan men's house. Several of the visitors from Madang town had been invited by myself. I overheard questions were asked, whether women visitors should be allowed to enter the men's house for lunch. There was talk with some hesitation among the elders, whether to allow the women who had come as invited guests, to share food with men in the men's house or be served at another location. The young man Benson, who was in charge of catering, said to me that he had no problem providing for the women; however the elders had to be consulted. Benson was one of the committee members for the day's event. He was also the person who was very sick in the previous told story, which resulted in the quick building of the new *Kainmbat* clan men's house. The Kukurai and the elders were consulted and they gave their approval, but women were not to climb onto the platform/bed but to sit on chairs placed on the ground at the end of the house where the roof hangs down, practically away from the garamut.

When lunch was ready, Benson apologetically told these women that according to Kayan custom, women were forbidden to enter the men's houses. However for them as invited guests, this was an exception. These were special guests; obviously no Kayan woman would have been allowed. I noted that the young men were not too concerned about women entering the men's house, but more so the elders of the clans. I also noted that the chairs were placed deliberately away from the row of clan garamut. The young men who had come as guests were seated on the chairs closer to the garamut. Some elders and invited guests sat on the platform of the men's house.

As the person responsible for inviting these ladies to the festival, I also made sure that I did not breach any custom protocol. Before going to the men's house for lunch, I informed the ladies of the reverence and respect of the men's house among the Kayan. So when the ladies came, I deliberately sat on the last chair which was closer to the row of garamut, to save them any embarrassment from sitting too close to the garamut. In serving the food, I directed them to approach on the side of the bed away from the row of garamut, but for men and boys they were free to approach from any direction. These people were staff from Divine Word University,

Madang, including both male and female staff members. None of the ladies were from Kayan or a neighboring village or from Madang Province.

During the research, I became more immersed in understanding the role clan garamut play among Kayan. Their place in the men's house, gives garamut character of sanctity and power of social influence which indirectly endorses the power of men. I observed that when Teddy or Philip wanted clan members to come together, they would beat one of the clan garamut and not their private garamut which were in front of their houses. For the Kayan, custom or clan related activity was announced through clan garamut, and private garamut were used for personal calls or messages. The call to get ready for Sunday Service at the Catholic Church was also signaled on a private garamut. Every Sunday morning while I was there, I heard the beat of the garamut and noted that it was pounded at 7:00 am. I made enquiries, who was beating the garamut? I found out that it was Willie Kawang. Willie acted as a Church leader at times, and is an influential village elder. Willie has a private garamut in front of his house.

I also observed as well that the use of clan garamut was related to ritual activities of the clan. For example, when they were thatching the roof of the new men's house which I have mentioned earlier. I heard them beat the garamut at different stages. Philip explained that this was one of their customs to announce that a new men's house is getting a roof over its' head. I observed that this was not done when the posts and the frame were put in place. In addition, this ritual beating of the garamut is not accorded to any other house of the village, but a men's house. This was another observation that the clan garamut were used for tradition or ritual related activity, and private garamut were used for general purpose messages or activities, including Church activity.

4.4 Garamut the voice of spirit

One of the existing beliefs among the Kayan people is that a spirit can beat a garamut. As an example, Michael and Philip told me stories of their revered garamut called *Emrang*, that on a number of occasions in the recent past, people of the neighboring villagers of Bodbod and Gamai, heard the unique sound of *Emrang*, and thinking that the Kayan were being attacked by enemies, or there could be some big trouble, had rushed with spears and weapons to Kayan village. Upon

enquiry, they found out that there was nothing happening in the village. No Kukurai or an elder had sounded any garamut in the village and no trickery was expected or thought possible. Philip and Michael continued that the Kayan villagers were surprised at seeing them and asked, 'why have you come with spears and weapons?' They would reply, 'we heard the voice of garamut and we thought you were being attacked or in trouble so we came'. The Kayan people would tell them, 'sorry, none of us in the village, not even any of our Kukurai sounded a garamut'. Since no Kukurai or an elder in the village was identified to have sounded the garamut, it was concluded this was the work of the spirit. This act is said to have been the doing of the spirits who must have playfully beat one of the garamut. I interpret this story as more evidence of the belief that garamut are associated with spiritual powers, especially the clan garamut in the men's house. Since the clan garamut are in the men's house where spirits are also said to take up residency, it gives legitimacy to men to claim the power of the voice.

While living in the village, I observed that garamut are central to Kayan kinship and social structure. Clan garamut give clan members identity to a particular clan. Designs and patterns carved on garamut connect clan members together as descendants from one common mythical ancestor. I suggest that the combined power of clan garamut and the men's house, demarcates a gendered space barring women from entering, thus giving men power of dominance. The men of Kayan identify with the power of being connected to the men's house and the clan garamut. Thus they legitimise their claim as owners of the voice of the garamut. The claim that was expressed to me by the Kukurai that garamut is their voice (see Chapter five).

I asked one young man what he thought about allowing women to enter clan men's houses. His response was; it was against the custom of the Kayan people. I also asked him further, whether women will be in danger of being afflicted with some illnesses if they entered. He said in Tok Pisin, 'mi no save', I do not know. But he sounded a bit afraid of the prospect of women entering the men's house. I posed the same question to an elder who would be in his late sixties. His response was very affirmative; women should not be allowed to enter the men's house. That space only belongs to men, and he also said that he was not happy about what he is seeing now, that at times women have even dared to go near the men's house. He did not explain further, but remarked that now, young people are like women spending too much time in family houses, a

practice he does not condone as being unmasculine. From his comments, I interpret that the men's house and clan *garamut*, institutionalises the power of the men and their voice.



Carved image of a crocodile



A pig being prepared for dinner

The new men's house has an image on the beam of the roof carved by Kawang. When I saw it being carved, I asked Philip another elder, what the image represented. He told me, it represents a crocodile (in Tok Pisin *pukpuk*) one of the totems of the Kainmbat clan. In Tok Pisin he said, 'em olkain mak bilong mipela long ol hausman long taim bipo'; translated as, these were some of the features in the men's houses in former times. Hung near the carved image was the jaw of a pig. I interpret this as symbolising an appreciation of the gift of the pig by the spirits. This pig was captured in a trap set by one of the men during the initial construction of the house. It was brought to the house and a *garamut* was sounded. Philip expressed that this was a positive sign that the spirits were pleased, thus rewarding them with a pig.

My conversation with Philip continued, reflecting on the past practices associated with the men's house. Philip said that in the past, the posts in the men's house were elaborately carved with various clan images. He continued that clan designs, especially *Baewarup*, were also carved on the cross beams of the platforms or beds of the men's house. This was a way of social demarcation among male members of the clan. Clan members sat according to their kin relationships. If food was placed on one side of the sitting area in the men's house, it was forbidden to stretch over or jump over and take the food. They must step down to the ground and walk over to take the food

and come back to where they sat (see Poser 2008, p.72) The current men's houses no longer feature these elaborate designs and decorations of the past.

Philip also talked about the lessons of the men's house where young men learnt the secret knowledge from cultural experts and different skills, which were important for the group. They learnt the designs to be carved on garamut including masks and other objects and the associated rituals and taboos. He emphasised that more importantly, young men were also warned that contact with women would pollute them and prematurely rob them of their masculine strength. They were also advised to obey their elders and to adhere to ritual customs and sacred rules.

Some of the admonitions were about the dangers of spending too much time with women: The young men were told to keep their distance and avoid the energy draining power of women. Men should not spend too much time with their wives in the house because the women's heat will reduce their strength and masculinity. He said that elders often reminded them, that as young men, they should not spend too much time with women. In Tok Pisin, 'ol yanpela man i no ken pas wantaim meri tumas'; meaning, men, especially young men will become effeminate if they spent too much time with women. Once their powers of masculinity are eroded by constantly being close to women, they would not be in a position to perform manly duties such as protecting and defending the community against enemies. Philip said that he heard these stories from his father and other elders. From these stories I suggest that the Kayan men's house was considered not only a place of being initiated into 'manhood' but also a place of gaining knowledge of how to live that 'manhood', especially, how to deal with the negative power of women.

Among the most important advice received, was that they must guard and preserve their power of masculinity. One way of doing this was to take refuge in the men's house to escape from the power of women. These lessons are derived from ritual and myth, and it is institutionalised in the men's house with its bullroars, sacred flutes, clan and spirit garamut, including sacred masks (see also Beben (1990, p.81). I observed that this advice of not spending too much time with the women or not to let women have control over the men, is considered a proper behavior between men and women, as demarcated by the gendered space, and the gender roles. Equally, the rather constant utterances of antagonism I heard in the village toward women who showed dominant behavior over their husbands, indicate that according to Kayan tradition, men should never lose their power of dominance over women.

4.5 Masculinity and the making of men in the men's house

The rituals associated with the transition from childhood to adulthood have been a major focus of anthropological studies of masculinity in PNG (Herdt 1981, 1992). Writing on the initiation practices of the Sambia young men in the Highlands of Papua New Guinea, Herdt writes that among the Sambia, pre-initiates were seen as boys, not men, for they showed feminine traits such as shyness and crying, and they engaged in female tasks and routines such as babysitting and weeding. In this sense they belong to the female world, though they are not female...They must learn new things, but they must also unlearn old traits and ideas, so that they can truly feel in their identity: 'I am not feminine; I am masculine' (Herdt 1987, p. 102). These rituals confirm the point that gender, in this case masculinity, is cultivated through ritual and other cultural means. From my observation clan garamut is one of those objects which cultivate male masculinity and this cultivation begins in the men's house. As my conversations with the Kayan elders indicate, in the past the men's house was considered an educational institution where young men learnt about being a man.

In one of my conversations with Paul Kuri, the master carver, he shared with me that young men were taught clan designs and rituals and taboos relating to garamut in the men's house. However today this is no longer the practice, and he feels that part of the culture is lost. He emphasised that young people should be encouraged to learn the art of carving garamut in order to replace the old folks like himself. He wears glasses now and he told me that he is losing his sight, and he thinks that he will not be able to carve any more within the next five years. Paul is about seventy years old.

Poser writes that in the past, each clan men's house had distinctive designs and features which distinguished one clan from the other. During my research, elderly informants told me the same story. However they said also that today the current open style of men's houses does not represent the stature of the types of men's houses Kayan had in the past. They said that the demise of this type of men's house is the result of mission influence, especially of the Divine Word Missionaries (SVD) in the area around 1899, and the opening of the mission station at Kayan in 1934 (see Poser, 2004, p. 71). Though they do not blame the missionaries for this loss, they said that this

contact brought about a big change to the lives of the people. One elder referred to the presence of the early missionaries, who spoke of the new religion and the new way of life. Upon hearing the talk of this new religion, their grandparents abandoned building big men's houses and many of their cultural and ritual practices in order to embrace Christian beliefs. He said in Tok Pisin, 'lotu i kamap na mipela i lusim planti ol pasin kastom'¹⁵, meaning, church came and we abandoned a lot of our customary practices.

The Kayan have three tribes which comprise the three major clans with additional sub clans. Each clan has a men's house. These men's houses store clan sacred masks, sacred spears, and clan garamut, sacred flutes and other sacred items which are kept in small enclosures built at the top of the house near the roof. From observation and stories narrated to me, I term Kayan men's houses as institutions of cultural embodiment, especially of the male voice. This is interpreted as when a young man has been initiated and passes out from the men's house he should speak or have a voice like a 'man'. This similar view is also expressed by Peltier when writing about the men's houses of Porapora in the East Sepik Province. Peltier writes that a men's house constitutes a visible world of symbols whose meaning could be detected in the mystification that convinces the women that these houses embody supernatural power (Peltier 2005, p. 63).

At Kayan, I observed that the men's houses are still regarded with some cautiousness of approach as imbued with powerful objects. However, according to one Kayan elder, the former reverence accorded to men's houses has almost disappeared. He further said that in former times, only initiated men and elders were allowed to enter. This was evident when I saw on several occasions, village young boys and men traveling to Madang from neighboring villages, sleeping in the men's houses. Such activities promoted the elder to make a calculated comment that the men's houses today are like school dormitories, because a lot of people passing by, especially men, sleep in them.

Numerous anthropologists have written stories that at one time, women were believed to have power and control of the sacred objects, but men stole them from the women. Since then, men have been jealously guarding these objects. For example, Lutkehaus (1995, p. 218) recounts one

¹⁵ I use the term kastom, simply as the way people describe some of their traditional practices

such story from Manam that women formerly had beards and no breasts. When men wrestled the flutes from them, the women, besides saddling men with difficulty in learning to play the flutes, also exchanged their beards for men's breasts. Thus women came to have breasts and men to have facial hair; women to suckle babies, men to play flutes. However from the elders of Kayan, I heard no such stories of men stealing garamut from the women. Their story as I have already mentioned in (Chapter One) is that their ancestors learnt how to carve garamut from a mysterious spirit garamut that beached itself at their village. I also asked several men during a conversation why women were not allowed to enter the men's house. The simple answer they gave was; it was their custom that forbids women. However, they offered me a more serious explanation. They told me that since the men's house contained sacred objects of 'power' it would be unwise to permit women to enter. Women can be struck down with debilitating diseases, causing death, implying that men can deal with the powers of the men's house, not so the woman. This story has connections to the taboos placed on women sitting on garamut (see p.131).

4.5.1 The men's house and construction of male character

There is a body of literature which connects male character and power to the men's house, (haus tambaran) or a secluded area where boys received induction and training to becoming 'men'. Therefore character building of boys to 'manhood' and socialisation of men was one of the hallmarks of the men's house. Herdt (1981, 1992) writes that the rituals associated with the transition from childhood to adulthood have been a major focus of anthropological studies of masculinity in Papua New Guinea. He also argues that in New Guinea societies in general (and Sambia in particular) gender roles and norms are legitimised and mystified, and surrounded by notions of religiosity; ritual and tradition at every turn (see Herdt 1993, p.193).



A young boy standing in the Gnombreak men's house, Kayan

According to Herdt, these 'rituals of manhood' involved the radical separation of boys from any contact with women and fostered male sociality and bonding. Refer also to other anthropological

studies such as by Allen (1967), Whiting (1941), Meggit (1964), Glasse (1965, 1962) Godelier (1986), Langness (1974), Strathern (1988), Gillson (1980; 1983), and Tuzin, (1980, 1982) who also speak of this concept which is prevalent among Melanesian societies that in order to be a 'man', a young boy must undergo rituals of cleansing oneself of female contaminated blood. Central to this concept of 'manhood' was the notion that getting rid of women's polluting nature through ritual means of shedding female blood was vital to male masculinity and power of dominance. These rituals confirm the point that gender, in this case masculinity, is cultivated through ritual and other cultural means.

To many traditional Papua New Guinea societies, as elsewhere in the world, the basis for subordination of women and the exploitation and the manipulation of their sexuality was men's control of most economic resources and the fabrication by men of ideologies which portray women as dangerous, inferior, and untrustworthy creatures who are to be feared, kept under control, and avoided where possible (see Gelber 1986). This aversion to women was instilled by beliefs such as that 'over indulgence' in sexual relations with women depletes a man's vital energies leaving his body permanently exhausted and withered (Meggit 1964, p. 210), or that too much contact with women causes a man to accumulate debilitating dirt in his body resulting in the same end (Newman 1964, p.265). In the cases of women who rebelled against such attitudes or in some way interfered with the activities and plans of the men, the dominant male ideology was bolstered by men's ready use of physical violence to control women's behavior (see also Berndt 1962, Josephides 1985, Meggit 1964, and Strathern 1972). My observation among the Kayan attests that garamut and the men's houses still play a significant role in controlling the voice of women.

One of the findings of my research is that even today, among the Kayan, male voice hinges on the social and cultural framework of opposite sexes and power relations that are sourced from the men's house. Regarding garamut, I see a close correlation that without getting rid of the female blood, men will not be strong enough to voice their masculinity. Garamut was a medium through which men can expand this voice. However following ancestral sets of rules, this voice was restricted to the Kukurai and a few influential leaders. Poser (2008, p.132) wrote that the practice of penile incision, of growing up and becoming an adult male member of Kayan society, was still upheld at time of his research. However during my research (2012), I asked some men whether

they still held onto the practice of penile incision, and they said in Tok Pisin, 'nogat mipela i no moa holim dispela pasin', no, we no longer hold onto this practice. To highlight this point of penile incision to release female blood, Poser also cites Hogbin's (1996, p. 120-121) study in Wogeo Island in the East Sepik Province, where Hogbin gives a good ethnographic account of the practice. This regular bloodshed clearly symbolises, or better, mirrors the female menstruation. Meggit writes that 'a menstruating woman can sicken a man and cause persistent vomiting, turn his blood black, corrupt his vital juices so that his skin darkens and wrinkles as his flesh wastes, permanently dull his wits, and eventually lead him to a slow decline and death' (Meggit 1964, p.207).

This similar view was expressed to me by some married informants when I enquired about the stories concerning menstrual blood. They told me that these stories of the dangers of female blood that can stunt the growth of young men, and the young men can become effeminate, losing the strength and power of men, and them being considered as weaklings, is also talked about by a few elders in the village. However, one man also said that in the past, these warnings were taken seriously, but not so much now. One of them said that this was one of the reasons the elders recommended the men's house as a place to escape to, to avoid being under the influence of women. To the question, were they told these stories in men's house, they responded in Tok Pisin, 'nogat, mipela harim nabaut', no, we heard this from here and there; meaning, they heard this from various elderly people.

I further asked whether today's young people are afraid of menstrual blood, and the response I got was ambivalent. One of them said, 'some of us are afraid, but he does not know about the others' (not explicitly referring to himself). They continued with the stories that menstrual blood can harm the man, and his body will show signs of deterioration; go pale and lose complexion. In Tok Pisin they said, 'bodi bilong man bai kamap yelo na em bai lusim skin', meaning that the man will lose weight, become skinny, and eventually die. This is because as Kuchler (2002, p.38) writes, skin is thought of as a substance that is life-giving because it absorbs heat and retains water. So when the skin is not retaining water, the skin loses complexion and shrinks, leading to eventual death. According to these young married men, this belief is still strong among the Kayan. I further asked whether they learnt this from the men's house. They replied, no, we heard this from here and there,

from our elders. We do not get any more such instructions from the men's house; in Tok Pisin 'no gat, mipela harim nabaut long ol bikman na stori bilong mipela i olsem. Mipela i nogat ol dispela kain skul moa long ol haus man'. They emphasised they have abandoned many of the past practices of the men's house. In Tok Pisin they said, 'mipela i lusim pinis planti ol pasin bilong hausman', meaning, they themselves did not go through any form of initiation.

In a later discussion about initiation with Michael Kaskus, I learnt from him that he was among the last group of boys who were initiated in the traditional way, in 1961. According to Michael since then, no such initiation has taken place. Michael suggested that since they have abandoned the past initiation practices, he sees that many young men in Kayan are ill-disciplined and lack responsibility. I interpret Michael's sentiments to mean that in his opinion, the young men are not community oriented but more self-centered, a form of individualism encroaching on the community.

During my stay I got to know a number of young married men, but I never got to see them in the company of their wives. In the village these young men walked around by themselves. I also observed that women especially younger women did not walk together with their husbands in the village. I saw mothers and children walking together. On a few occasions I asked the children about their mothers, and they would say in Tok Pisin, 'i stap long haus', in the house. I got to see the faces of some women, only when their children pointed them out. I observed that for the Kayan men when they see a woman following her husband around in the village, it is considered a despicable behavior. For example, whilst I was there, a man from the village married a woman from another part of Madang Province, and she had come to the village. At times she would follow her husband whenever he would go to various houses of his relatives. Upon seeing this behavior, I would hear men commenting with disgust in Tok Pisin, 'dispela em i no pasin o **kastam** Kayan', translated as, this is not Kayan way or custom.

These comments can be interpreted as highlighting the existing perceived fear of the power of women in eroding male masculinity. This fear is also related to the urine and faeces of women and children, which can degenerate male masculinity. Godelier (1986, p.61) writes that among the Baruya it is the job of the mother to wipe the child's bottom, as well as to clean up the little one's

urine. This could also explain the reason for one of my observations, at times when a baby was sick, and often I would see only the mothers would take the sick baby to the hospital at Bogia Government Health Centre in a truck. On one occasion, I was on a truck going to Madang, and I saw a mother with a very sick child in the truck as well. I asked the mother in Tok Pisin, 'Papa i stap we?', where is the father? She replied that the father was in the village. And I further asked, 'who is going to help you with the child?' She pointed out her sister to me as the one who was going to help her with the child. This story, and the attitude of Kayan men towards women, explains the legacy of the instructions and the lessons that has been handed down from the men's house. Though these lessons and instructions are no longer taught, the connection is rooted to the men's house and the clan garamut.

4. 5. 2 Putting on the character of the men's house

Among the many practical aspects of socialisation provided by the men's house, there were those ceremonies and teachings concerned with initiates' economic duties and rights. Boys were taught to be strong providers and defenders of the clan and were to demonstrate the clan's characteristics. Clan garamut represented these characteristics as well as those of clan identity. Teddy explained to me that each clan has an introductory call sign. This call sign identifies the clan before a message is sent to a member of that clan using that person's individual call sign. If the message is a general message to the clan members, then only the introductory call sign will be used, followed by the message.

He further explained that in the past, Kayan men's houses represented the collective character of the clan members. As an example he told me that the Kainmbat clan bears the character of 'doers of good' or 'Peace Makers'. It was expected that the Kukurai and the leaders of Kainmbat clan would demonstrate this charisma, that in times of disputes they would take the lead and show leadership in peace mediation. They were also to lead in accommodating and playing host to visitors. As testimony, during my stay I observed that the Kainmbat clan received numerous visitors into their men's house. I saw many travelers especially young men and women coming from the lower Sepik and Ramu river villages on their way to Madang town for business or leisure staying overnight at Kayan. Young men found shelter in Kainmbats' men's house and females

were put up in family houses. It is like a traditional signature of Kainmbat clan to receive and host visitors. Other clans also had their own character such as ‘murders’ (warriors), ‘thieves’ (ref: Poser 2004, p.76).

During conversations, I also heard men using the expression in Tok Pisin, ‘hausboi bilong mipela’, our men’s house. For example, I heard a man from the Samngae clan utter that in the former times, their men’s house was renowned for carrying spears, meaning, taking the lead in fighting in defence of the community. The men’s house was considered an institution of producing men of valor and strong character who can withstand pain. Poser writes that in the past as part of the ceremony of initiation, the young boy would have to walk through a wall of fire to reach the inside of the men’s house, and then he would be beaten with bundles of nettle-stalks and leaves. Inside the men’s house, the young boy would be beaten with a stick while lying on a slit drum/garamut (Poser 2004, p.129). The garamut will be beaten throughout the ceremony to cover the cries of the boy. These rituals of empowering male masculinity however were abandoned upon the arrival of colonial contact and are only talked about by a few elders.

At the time of the construction of the new men’s house, a couple of young men told me that though building a men’s house required back breaking physical labor, it gave them a sense of pride, identity, and connected them as a clan. However one of them wished that they had enough money to build a more permanent men’s house, so that they did not have to carry heavy logs any more. Also a few young men expressed to me that they had on a few occasions come up with certain excuses to run away to town to escape these back breaking tasks. Another young man confided in me that since most practices of the men’s houses have disappeared, he sees no reason why the elders should burden them with erecting unnecessary big men’s houses which loaded them with tiring work and waste of money. He preferred that they build smaller ones for each clan, big enough to accommodate their clan garamut and maybe one big one to represent Kayan for the visitors to see. These sentiments indicate that young people are at the crossroads of deciding how to assimilate their cultural identity with modernity. By modernity, I mean the challenges of daily living dependent on the cash economy as well as new systems of governance, leadership and value systems which are affecting their traditional lifestyle.

Here I also cite Pelteir who makes a similar observation of this dilemma faced by young people of Adzirab village in the East Sepik Province in relation to their men's houses. Peltier (2005, p. 81) writes that whenever something goes wrong, the young men immediately accuse the men's houses of being behind the disorders and the old men of keeping up an outmoded tradition that jeopardises the group's survival. He asserts that with the end of initiations came the disappearance of the basis of political organisation and authority. Thus he says that there is an irreversible evolution taking shape. He also points out that as I observed at Kayan, for the young people, things are somewhat more complicated. However anxious they may be to create a society free of sickness and death, and therefore dream of going back to the way things were, in the beginning, without sin and therefore without men's houses — which is why they condemn them — they are nonetheless the heirs of their past. They cannot ignore the system that underpins the land distribution pattern and the relationships among descent groups. For the Kayan, some young men said that for them, the clan garamut stood as vehicles for their identity which connected them to their Kukurai and the clan men's house. Nevertheless, I observed that they were also aware of the evolving change taking place in the village, thus living a life of double consciousness of tradition and modernity.

More stories with the Kayan elders revealed that in the past, it was in the men's house that warriors gathered, before going to a fight, or headhunting. There they placed the spears on top of the spirit garamut to harness the power of the spirit. While this is no longer the practice, I observed a new form of harnessing the power of the spirits of the men's house had emerged. The modern version of fight now is sports, in particular the village soccer competition. During my stay I observed that as the finals of the soccer competition were to be played, team members of various teams slept in men's houses. I interpret this to mean that they wanted to harness the power of the spirits of the men's house to play football and win.

Tuzin (1980, p.192), writing about the men's houses of the Ihalita of the East Sepik people, suggest that the configuration of icons on the spirit house facade serves as a sign and reminder, that the activities of men are ultimately meaningful only by reference to the timeless idea of the tambaran. The spirit exalted is none other than the spirit of man in a collective setting. The art, architecture, and the ritual of the tambaran thus serve as a grand, unifying nature of man, his place

in the social order, and cultural meanings of his acts. I do not fully agree with Tuzin's suggestion, that the central beneficiaries of the tambaran rituals of the men's house are men. In my view, these rituals were considered to bring about benefits to the entire welfare of the community including women and children and men were the ones responsible. Also I would not easily conclude that the spirit exalted is none other than the spirit of man but is an expression of the belief in the presence of the 'other' as well; the 'other', being the ancestral spirits and other spirits who they share the social environment with.

My observation of clan garamut and the men's house among Kayan confirms this aspect of the belief people have that sacred objects are vehicles of the agency of spirits. An elderly informant of Kayan confided in me that people including women now know that the stories told of spirits making garamut were lies and women and children were tricked to believe this story. Nevertheless the one aspect he stressed is the belief they have in the presence of spirit beings. This belief in the power of garamut and the men's house has not subsided.

4.5.3 Men's house generates sounds of male power

In the past the imposing features of the men's houses were visible representation or metaphors of male power because it was a technological construction by men. Not only that but also the sounds it produced from garamut and flutes generated an aura of mysticism rendering these places elusive with mysterious powers. The sounds of garamut and of the sacred flutes were often referred to as voices of the spirits or tambaran. According to Kulick, the flutes are the voice of the tambaran, of the gods, and they manifest the power and glory of manhood in general and of the clan in particular (Kulick (1992, p.164), see also Lutkehaus (1995), Yamada (1997), Godelier (1986), Tuzin (1980), and Niles (2010). Though today Kayan no longer build physically imposing men's houses similar to the ones in the past, nevertheless I observed they still represent male segregated space attesting to masculinity. It is the sanctuary where only men discuss important matters concerning the clan or the community. These important matters according to one Kayan elder; are matters concerning land, hunting grounds, appointment of leaders such as the village Councilor or a Village Court magistrate. Obviously as can be seen from the elders' comment, appointment of

leaders excludes women as well. This also presents the position that women do not have the power, or the voice to become leaders.

Doubleday (2008) writes an interesting article on *Sounds of Power and Musical Instruments and Gender*, discussing relations of various groups of the world. The article reflects on the agency of musical instruments in constructing gendered meanings and power. She points out that through their presence and through the sounds they produce, they have a special ability to transform consciousness. To possess or play a musical instrument is to wield power. This article resonates with the practices of the men's house of Kayan where taboos are placed on women and men monopolise the use of the objects. In this way men keep women at a distance and claim possession and ownership in asserting their power. This separation can be interpreted as a consequence of radical expropriation by the men of the creative powers that had formerly belonged to women, and of which men have legitimately it is said, dispossessed them (see Beben 1990, p.79).

The men's house and the clan garamut, and private garamut also publicly 'voice' the status of men, especially the Kukurai and the influential leaders. In another conversation in reference to flutes, an elder Michael, told me that flutes were considered the voice of the tambaran and were played only at nights strictly in the men's house. They were only handled by initiated men. Unlike clan garamut which could be seen by women and children because the men's houses today are open and are not enclosed, the sacred flutes were kept hidden in the men's house and were only taken down at night to play the flutes. This is still the practice today. One evening, I heard flutes being played in the new men's house and I approached the house; there was no light. I could figure out the shadows of the two men; one of them realising who I was, called out my name Alphonse, and I answered it was me. After a couple of attempts to play the flutes they gave up as both were out of breath. The two men were Teddy and Willie.

Both Teddy and Willie told me in Tok Pisin, 'mipela ol Kayan i lusim ol mambu nau', translated as, we the Kayan are losing the knowledge of playing the flutes. I asked why this was the case, and they said that today people are not interested anymore in learning how to play the flutes. They further explained that one of the main reasons for this cultural loss, was that since the power of the men's houses has diminished in terms of ritual practices, it does not carry the same sort of power it

had in the past. In the past they said that custom was strong and one would hear flutes being played in various men's houses late into the night. Now these customs are not strong anymore. Besides, today's men's houses are open to the public and very close to family homes. It was another remark which seemed to indicate that some powers of the men are on the decline. Much that is traditional is retained with difficulty.

An important by-product of the process of observation and inquiry in this section on masculinity and the men's house; has been the evidence of decline of custom under the pressure of modernity – deriving from the early impacts of first-contact with the European world. To recapitulate on the record established here, which cites a general folk memory of more than a century of contact, commencing with German missionary activity around 1899: There is memory of German colonial authorities destroying the men's house in 1900, then the whole village in 1912, in punitive actions; then again, by the Japanese in 1942, causing the loss of the *Yoberber* design. The establishment of the Divine Word mission station in 1934, with people adopting Christianity, in at least one testimonial, supplanted tradition - "we abandoned a lot of our customary practices." The Australian administration in 1947 caused massive relocation and compression of the village into a compartmentalised urban space, bringing men's houses into 'town'. The record now shows a 'correction' or adjustment, where custom continues, but is weakened; the men's houses built as open not closed-in buildings, no longer in secluded places, no longer as ornate in their construction, with some design elements missing, only retrieved through a stroke of fortune (the case of the recovery of the *Yoberber* design). Young men are ambivalent about contributing work and participating in the rituals of the men's house and *garamut*. The structure of men's houses is now allowed to deteriorate, though this was seen as a situation that had to be retrieved. Initiation rites have been discontinued since 1961. Visiting women may be admitted, conditionally, to events inside a men's house.

On the last point, custom is perpetuated in certain habitual enactments and attitudes which in a pervasive way, have fed back against aspects of modernity developed since the Second World War; notably expansion of the rights of women. The extension of women's social, economic and legal status, to equality with men, is seen as blunted by a possible distortion of custom, with its relegation of discrete fields of community life and activity to the separate sexes.

4.6 Conclusion

This chapter has argued that in the past the men's houses and clan garamut were indeed a statement about the culture and society of Kayan as a whole. Kayan men's houses were institutions of learning and shaping of male persons. My observation is that the legacy of the men's house in instilling a particular perception about gendered space and demarcation of social roles between male and female still exists among Kayan. In spite of modern education, Christianity and Western influence, I observed that the men's houses and clan garamut still perpetuate a male claim to the 'voice' of control or leadership as their right, thus restricting the voice of women to the confines of privacy of homes. I would also suggest that the men's house inscription of 'traditional' conceptions of masculinity legitimises new forms of power in the contemporary context such as denying women voice of representation in positions of leadership. As Kilavanwa (2004) also points out, gender and leadership in Melanesia are socially constructed and culturally bound. Much of the difference between women and men's leadership approaches were based on gender stereotyped scripts underpinned by the society's socialisation process. At Kayan, the men's house and garamut still employ the legacy of the past socialisation of gender roles, which directly endorses men to think of themselves as socially and culturally equipped to assume positions of leadership. The men do not view women as capable leaders who can operate perfectly well outside the confines of their homes. This I observe is culturally endorsed where women are made to feel that they do not possess a 'public voice' to be assertive in the public arena as leaders. Women are even openly told that they do not possess assertive voice, to assume positions of leadership.

Further observation was that the men's houses and the clan garamut reinforce the concept of *pikinini man*, a Tok Pisin term I explained earlier. It is a term that explicitly challenges the male child to exhibit a type of behavior of male power and masculinity. The following Tok Pisin words best summarise this concept of 'pikinini man': *Em mas strongpela man, man bilong toktok, man bilong wok*. Translated in English as, he must be a strong man, a man who can talk; a man who works.

Following Gell's theory that art objects have social agency, I suggest that both the men's house and clan garamut, seen as agents, expand the concept of '*pikinini man*' and masculinity or the male

voice among the Kayan. I also noted that among the Kayan, the elicitation of social forms of masculinity was also demonstrated when the roof was thatched to the new men's house. When the work began on thatching the roof, women did not come anywhere near the house. I observed that when the first row of sago leaves was thatched, clan garamut were brought in and lined up. One of the garamut was the unifier garamut *Emrang*. *Emrang* and the other three garamut were pounded during intervals whilst the roof was being thatched. I interpret the unfolding of these events as follows: The process and procedure of defined gender roles demonstrated an enactment of power separation between men and women. The beating of the garamut when the first layer of the sago leaves was attached was to make a public statement, that the voice of the clan garamut which had not been heard for a long time because they had no roof over their head could now be heard. In the broader perspective, metaphorically this would also mean that the voice of the Kukurai and Kainmbat clan now could be heard. Not only that but I make a much deeper connection, that this was a call to the spirits of the clan garamut, and the men's house that they should return, now they have a home. The beats on the garamut as I was informed by Philip were not any ordinary beats or signals, but associated with clan garamut. I interpret this to mean that upon hearing the garamut, the spirits of the men's house and the clan garamut should come back and take up residency. Their absence had resulted in clan members getting sick due to the broken relationship that had existed over time and now reparations have been made. It also restores broken kinship relationships among themselves.

Regarding sending messages, I asked one Kayan elder, Peter, how garamut messages are sent. This is how he explained it to me. He said first, you rattle the slit of the garamut with the garamut stick. This is a wake of waking up the garamut. Then you pound three short beats to alert the public as a way of alerting the public that someone is conveying a message through garamut. After that you send the message to the person you want the message delivered. Depending on the type of message, the beats will vary from slow, to medium, to fast pace at various intervals. After sending the message you would then identify yourself with your own code signal. This signal could be the name of your clan spirit or a bird. People are free to come up with their own personal code signals. But this skill and knowledge I observed is slowing dying. More than half of the young population are ignorant of how to create code signals as well as send messages via garamut.

Back to the thatching of the men's house, throughout the day, I observed that men worked with a boisterous happy nature. An elder informed me that according to Kayan tradition, the roof of the men's house had to be completed in one day. So the men went back and forward collecting sago leaves and a truck was also used to help. I interpret this active involvement as an outward expression of the power of the men in completing a labor intensive task within the short space of time, which demonstrates to the women, the men's masculinity. The men's house and the clan *garamut* are visible agents which represent male power. I also observed that the women were deeply involved in the preparation of food to feed the team of men thatching the roof. Women were also involved in the preparation of decorations that adorned the *garamut* as young initiates who emerged from their seclusion. These decorations were made from young sago fibre, bush ropes, and modern nylon strings bought from the stores and shredded rice bags. Though women had contributed in providing the food for this male activity, they were not allowed to enter the men's house after its completion.

This observation is similar to Munn's (1986) description of the practice of creating gendered space or social boundaries among the Gawa of the Trobriand Islands. Munn writes that the Gawa construct artifactual procedures that create spatial domains, 'carving out' the space or bounding structures, which are confined to male activity. She provides examples that the initial clearing of gardens and hamlets, the building of houses and canoes, are all essentially masculine activities. In contrast women make clothing, as well as mats that may be laid between the body and the ground, house floor, or wooden bed, or to be used to protect the body from rain and cold. Furthermore, as cooks, women prepare food for bodily consumption. Munn says, 'thus women's typical productive activities tend to focus on somatic space, whereas men's activities engage them in the construction of extrasomatic space – in preparing new domains of human activity and bounding them' (see Munn 1986, p.32). In the case of Kayan, I observed that the building of the men's house and the carving of *garamut*, viewed as essentially male activity, coupled with the understanding that both are powerful social agents of influence, expands the power of men and their voice to the wider public.

When the *garamut* were pounded at various stages as the roof was being thatched, I heard the men shout, 'eh, eh, eh' in a boisterous manner in unison with the voice of the *garamut*. This could be

interpreted as; the men were voicing their masculinity. Borrowing again from Gell's anthropological debate on theory of *Art and Agency*, I say, both the men's house, and the clan garamut can be termed as 'secondary agents' of power which, gives ascendancy to the voice of men among the Kayan.

Chapter 5 The Voice of the Kukurai

5.1 Overview

In this chapter I analyse the claim expressed to me by the Kukurai of Kayan that garamut is their voice. What did they mean? Oxford dictionary (1951) defines voice as sound uttered by the mouth, especially human utterance in speaking, shouting and singing. Taking this further, I want to link voice with power. Through our voices we express our thoughts and feelings in order to gain the response we desire. Our voices reflect our personal power. In this context I examine the claim uttered by the Kukurai of Kayan that garamut is their voice. The chapter presents how garamut as the voice of Kukurai connects people in their network of kinship relationships in their political, social, cultural and spiritual activities. The chapter also discusses the challenge the Kukurai are now facing as traditional leaders, whose ‘voice’, garamut empowers to whichever degree. It would be true for me to say that without the power of the voice of Kukurai, this research would not have been possible.

5.2 Introduction

In the introduction in Chapter one I wrote that garamut are living social agents imbued with power of social control and influence over the people. And also in Chapter four I continued that the Men’s house and garamut wields the power and authority of the men. Garamut as the voice of the Kukurai; is a good starting point to continue this conversation on the power of the voice. I interpret that the claim by the Kukurai that garamut is their voice, relates to the personal power and authority they have among their community at Kayan. There is a correlation that garamut considered as voice of the Kukurai exert the power of the voice as the domain of the men. Below I will give an account of how garamut as the voice of Kukurai; welcomed me into the Kayan community and connected me with their line of kinship and clan relationships. I make a link that the garamut as the voice of the Kukurai facilitates action along the chain of kinship relationships. It shows the central role garamut play in exerting the power of the voice of the Kukurai in the affairs of the clan as well as for the community. Tuzin’s description of the *Voice of Tambaran* (1980) also highlights the concept of the power of the voice attributed to the ancestral spirits of the men’s house. Tuzin writes that among the Ilahita of the East Sepik, secret sound making devices such as

bullroars, and flutes are not a mere imitation of tambaran's voice, they *are* its voice, the concrete instrument of tambaran power. This is why operating these devices in a ritual setting is a supreme sacred act. It is a moment when the power of the tambaran is made manifest (created in fact) through the agency of men, who by the same token, becomes godlike by the virtue of the power they momentarily command. Tuzin further writes that indeed in the voice of tambaran, men and spirits (both those dwelling within them and those dwelling outside in the form of supernatural beings) are rendered indivisible (Tuzin 1980, p.57). For garamut among the Kayan, my research shows that unlike Tuzin's suggestion that spirits dwell within persons, spirits dwell in garamut thus imbuing garamut with their own spirit agency. For the Kayan, there is a distinction between the voice of the spirit and the voice of the Kukurai. That is to say that the voice of the Kukurai is not the voice of the spirit nor is the Kukurai a spirit.

5.3 Leading into the field

The day arrived when Caspar Bass the Kukurai of Kainmbat clan brought me to his village of Kayan and introduced me to his fellow Kukurai and clan elders. This was on Sunday 16th of June 2012. Caspar had telephoned Teddy Tamone an elder of his clan that we were on our way. Travelling in a fifteen seater Toyota Land Cruiser from the town of Madang we arrived at the village around 4:30pm. Kayan is approximately 185



Teddy's personal garamut

kilometers and the trip took about four hours to get there on a rather bumpy road with numerous potholes. As the vehicle finally pulled up in front of Teddy's family haus-win¹⁶ (a Tok Pisin term for general resting place) I came out of the vehicle and was greeted by Teddy who became my village custodian as well as my principal informant.

¹⁶ Haus-win: A Tok Pisin term for a small shelter with no walls as a place to rest

Teddy is one of the influential elders of the village. A former banker and a Provincial Politician,



Kulau and betelnut

Teddy had retired to the village in 2004. He is a member of the Kainmbat clan of which Caspar is the Kukurai. Teddy then beat his garamut to announce our arrival to the other Kukurai and village elders. Upon hearing the garamut, some elders came including the Chief Kukurai, Raphael Manabun. I observed that as custom requires in accepting visitors, Teddy had already before our arrival placed some

green coconuts (*kulau* in Tok Pisin), betelnuts, (*buai* in Tok Pisin), and tobacco leaves (*brus* in Tok Pisin) on the platform of the haus-win. An elder informed me that this act in custom demonstrates Kayan's hospitality and acceptance of visitors. In Tok Pisin he said, 'em pasin Kayan', that is the way of the Kayan. In addition, for an important meeting a Kukurai would be present and it is an honor that the Kukurai is welcomed appropriately. On many occasions I observed that during gatherings to discuss important issues, people prepared betelnuts, green coconuts, tobacco leaves and mustard (*daka* in Tok Pisin) used to chew betelnuts. These treats from my assessment can be interpreted as a statement which extends social friendships that 'we drank *kulau* together, we chewed *buai* together, we smoked *brus* together, therefore; we are connected as kin, friends and family members'. I also observed that today, tea and coffee complement these food items.

As Leavitt (2011, p.170) puts it, the deep significance of transactions of this kind have become a well-known feature of Melanesian social relations. Leavitt cites Schielffelin (1976, p.150) who noted: 'As human relationships are actualised and mediated through gifts of food and material wealth, so these things come to stand for what is deeply felt in human relationships'. Furthermore, I would suggest that embedded within these social gestures of friendship, is the power of the voice that was transmitted through the medium of the garamut. The garamut message relayed by Teddy reflected the power of his voice to fellow elders of the community. I also make a link that Teddy's voice was endorsed by Caspar. The production of my garamut as well as the construction of the

men's house has connection to Caspar's voice which facilitated the process. Therefore one can read that Caspar's voice had power as a Kukurai, as well as he was seen to be a well to do person, living in town, and of generous character, an important attribute that the Kayan expect of their Kukurai. I also note that the power of the voice of the Kukurai is not of aggression, but of negotiation and generosity as I described in Chapter two (p.67), qualities that Caspar displayed.

Caspar as the Kukurai of his clan, the Kainmbat clan, introduced me by saying these words in Tok Pisin: 'Mi bringim Alphonse na nau mi lusim em long han bilong yupela. Lukautim em na helpim em long wok bilong em'. This means, I have brought you Alphonse. I am placing him in your hands. Look after him and assist him in his work. These were Caspar's parting words as he returned to Madang. In this way I was received as an honorary member of the Kainmbat clan. From that moment on, I was officially handed over to the care of Teddy's family as well as the Kukurai and the elders of the village.

Teddy has three surviving children, two boys and one girl and three grandchildren. Sadly his first born son died in 2011. He and his family generously offered me a room in their big house and I lived with his two sons and other boys (relatives) in this house. Teddy had built this house for himself and his wife but he let his sons and some of his nephews live in it while he and his wife lived in a smaller house with two of his grandchildren and their daughter.

After Caspar had left, Teddy and the elders who were present decided that there should be another occasion which other village elders and young people could attend. This meeting was to take place at Gnombreak men's house in the evening. Teddy informed me that this meeting was important to seek collective consent from the Kukurai and the elders of the village. In Tok Pisin he told me, "Yumi mas kisim tok orait bilong ol Kukurai pastaim", translated as, we must first get the voice of consent from the Kukurai. I interpret this to mean that the voice of the Kukurai had authority to grant me permission to conduct this research.

5.4 Getting collective voice of consent from the Kukurai

Let me now discuss how this meeting progressed.

For this meeting, again a garamut message was relayed by Teddy around 6:00 pm inviting the Kukurai and other leaders and elders including young people as well. This meeting was for two reasons; one, to seek consent from the Kukurai to conduct research about garamut among them, and the other, to introduce myself and speak of the purpose of my presence among them. From these talks I realised that the collective voice of consent from the Kukurai was necessary because only one Kukurai, Caspar, had given his consent. As this project was going to represent the Kayan as a community, consent from all the Kukurai and influential leaders of the village was needed. Again *kulau* (green coconuts for drinking) betelnut and tobacco leaves were also placed on the platform in the Gnombreak clan men's house. This was arranged by Teddy by asking some young boys to prepare the place. I helped with providing coffee and sugar.

Gnombreak clan men's house was chosen because it was across the road from Teddy's house. This is because the *Kainmbat* men's house had fallen down and was yet to be rebuilt. *Gnombreak* clan also belongs to *Warngem* tribe, the same as the *Kainmbat* clan. The reader would notice that I did mention that the project was going to involve the community. However the absence of women in the meeting would indicate that women's voice was excluded. Indeed this is the case in many traditional Papua New Guinea communities where matters considered as men's business, exclude women's voice in decision - making. The reason in my view is that there is an assumption that women do not have a voice that resounds with articulate ease and assertive confidence; rather it is weak with nervousness, anxiety and disempowerment. This is not to say that women's involvement was not important; to the contrary, as I have discussed in both Chapter three and four, that women's contribution was critical in the process and the production of garamut.

Around 7:30 pm we all gathered at the *Gnombreak* men's house. Teddy then spoke in 'language' – the vernacular of the area - at times switching to Tok Pisin (for my sake), saying that among them was a visitor who had come for a reason and would need their help in whatever way possible. They should ask me the reason why I came to their village. Teddy invited me to introduce myself and to

tell them of the purpose of me coming to their village. After I had told them who I was and the reason I had come, the Kukurai and the elders deliberated. They took almost forty to fifty minutes speaking in their own language. I sensed that there was some apprehension among the Kukurai and the elders because I could tell from the tone of their voices that they were divided. Then Teddy whom I had introduced as my village guardian and principal informant spoke. He spoke of the benefits that this sort of study could bring to the community such as economic benefits, preservation of cultural knowledge, as well as passing down of this knowledge to the future generations. He said that if they did not want the study to proceed, they, especially the Kukurai and elders, would be the ones held responsible for the loss of their cultural knowledge.

Having talked for some time, the Kukurai together with other elders then gave their collective consent which was important. This is because as I have mentioned, among the Kayan, it is the Kukurai who give permission to carve garamut. During the discussion one young man asked the obvious question, 'What was in it for us?' He said, he raised this question because very often anthropologists come, conduct research among the people, write books and benefit from the proceeds of the research but the people get nothing. I responded that this study was for my PhD and was not so much for publishing a book in the way of making money. However I did mention that we as Papua New Guineans need to write our own stories instead of only the white people. In this way we can hold onto some traditional knowledge and stories which are disappearing very fast. The meeting concluded with a positive note, that I should go ahead with the study and they were happy that I chose to come to their village. The two Kukurai, Raphael of Samngae tribe and Peter Ked of *Nongdangan* tribe then signed the written consent form used for this doctoral research as well as some elders. Caspar had signed the consent form earlier and Camillus Kadz the Kukurai of *Wargnem* tribe had given his verbal consent. During the meeting the Kukurai stressed that they are the ones who give permission for the carving of garamut.

5.5 Getting introduced to kinship social structure

On the following day Monday the 17th of June, Teddy took me around the village to introduce me to various leaders. He explained to me the kinship and social structure of Kayan. According to Teddy, Kayan is made up of three tribes and three tribal-clan Kukurai, who are heads of each tribe.

Referring to Caspar being regarded as the fourth Kukurai, Teddy explained that Caspar is only a clan Kukurai. Therefore Caspar felt compelled to seek collective consent from the tribal Kukurai in order that I could conduct research on garamut at Kayan. These Kukurai are heads of the three major tribal clans of *Samngae*, *Nongdangan*, and *Warngem* and their respective sub clans. Each respective Kukurai is the head of his clan's men's house and the clan garamut.

I counted four clan men's houses and asked Teddy why four with only three tribal Kukurai. He explained that the reason they have four men's houses is because one sub clan *Kadid* (referred to as rats, see Poser 2008, p.77) of the *Nongdangan* tribe wanted their own men's house. Teddy also added that clans are free to have more than one men's house if they have resources to do so. As we were walking around the village Teddy continued that in the past, the clans lived apart in their own territorial locations, some near the beach front and others scattered around. The *Samngae* clan which is the biggest clan occupies the middle section of the village (see illustration in Chapter One (p.38). According to Teddy, the current big village was established only after the Second World War, in 1947, when the Australian government demanded that the villagers from the different hamlets move together. I observed that the members of the three clans and sub clans live close to each other in their designated sections of the village as well as at other locations near the perimeters of the village.

5.6 Ownership of the garamut voice

In the past as my informants told me, among the Kayan, only the Kukurai and influential leaders had the right to own garamut. Garamut represented their status as leaders and gave them authority of voice. Whenever a garamut was sounded it was connected to the voice of the Kukurai. I observed that this understanding of ownership of voice still continues among Kayan. It is only the Kukurai and the influential elders who beat garamut to convey messages though a greater number of individuals now own personal garamut. I observed that the garamut exerts the power of the voice remain restricted to the Kukurai and clan elders. For example, when Teddy sent a message calling his clan members to come, they quickly came. They knew that Teddy as an elder of their clan wielded certain power or voice concerning matters relating to their clan. Therefore among the

Kayan, I observed that the garamut call, not only conveys the message, but also conveys the underpinning power relations.

I have said that garamut exert the power of the voice of the Kukurai. Each of the Kukurai is responsible for the general welfare of their clan members. Their voice has the authority of settling disputes among their clan members and clan members are obliged to hear. I propose that the reason for this power of the voice of Kukurai is associated with the fact that the Kukurai are considered to be the ones with wealth not only of property, but also with knowledge of rituals, stories and cultural matters of the Kayan. Through the garamut, the Kukurai of a clan may expand his voice that his clan members are obliged to hear. The consequence of not listening to the voice of the Kukurai would mean that the Kukurai may not come to the assistance of the disobedient clan member, when the clan member faces some problems or is in need of help.

I also observed that there is collaborative leadership among the Kukurai of each clan in dealing with matters which affect all the clans. To my question, whether they have a paramount Chief or Kukurai, Teddy said *Samngae's* clan Kukurai Raphael Manabun was the one referred to as Chief Kukurai. He represents the voice of Kukurai in some general meetings, for example, in local government council meetings. However Teddy said that though *Samngae's* clan Kukurai is referred to as Chief Kukurai he does not have overriding powers in relation to other Kukurai. Teddy continued that all the Kukurai are primarily responsible for the welfare of their respective clan members and no Kukurai exerts authority over the others. He further said that matters of disputes that involve different clan members and family groups are discussed openly by all the clan Kukurai and elders.

To the question, can women own garamut; Teddy responded that a father can carve a garamut for his daughter as an item of wealth that will accompany the daughter to her husband. The garamut represents the power of the voice and the wealth of the father which tells the husband that he is marrying a daughter of a well to do person and he should take care of her. Ironically the garamut will still remain a male object connected to the voice of the father though the ownership is with the daughter. She will pass it on to her first born son. This notion of ownership can be interpreted to mean that the ownership of garamut as material object belongs to the daughter; however, the

ownership of the 'voice' belongs to the father, the male figure. The garamut extends the presence and the voice of the father in space and time in its new residency. This is interesting aspect which can be for further research.

Teddy indicated that he might consider carving a garamut for his only daughter. On the day of her marriage he will hand over his daughter and the garamut to the family of the husband. But he added that this may be only possible if his daughter is going to marry a boy in the village or from one of the neighboring villages close by. He elaborated that among the Kayan the ownership of garamut and other property that belongs to the father is passed on to the sons and is inherited through the line or the clan. McDowell (1991, pp. 235, 236), cites similar custom of inheritance of the Mundugumor people of East Sepik from notes by Mead. She writes that the following items all followed 'rope' inheritance – a connecting cord: sacred flutes, some sacred objects, residential land sites, some names, slit-gongs, bows and arrows, spears, land, fishing areas (known as *baret* in Tok Pisin), old sago patches, and large sago storage pots. An inheritance of objects or things that made a person well-known, or carried the name of the person, was always kept as belonging to the clan or family members. Sai (2007, p.213) writes that even in matrilineal societies where women are entitled to land ownership, the men still dominate politically and make most of the decisions. This observation also reflects the findings of *Gender Analysis in Papua New Guinea* (1998), a study sponsored by the World Bank (eds.) Elizabeth C. Brouwer, Bruce M. Harris et al. It points out that in many societies the sort of authority and control that men exert over women including rights over her person, her fertility, her labor and restrictions of her movement from place to place. Rights of kinsmen (including fathers, brothers and husbands) to chastise women and punish women were pervasive and the majority of men and women in PNG still uphold many of these said rights of men over women.

When the voice of the garamut is heard, it instantly engages social relations and networks in their units of clan, kin or family relationships. I observed that in the village of Kayan when the garamut voice was heard, it generated instant attention. The power of the voice of garamut stopped people from what they were doing to ask, which Kukurai or leader was beating the garamut, and what might be the message. Even little children who were making noise were told to shut up so that

adults could hear the message. The garamut engenders sociality in its attributes of materiality, sound, spirits and power structure. It communicates messages for those encultured to hear them.

Leach (2006, p.719) writes that today the young people of Reite playfully liken their garamut to a telephone system, and it is common to hear one person say to another, 'ring me on a slit-gong', translated (in Tok Pisin) as, *ringim mi long garamut*. What they actually mean is, talk to me via a garamut. When people hear a garamut, they say, 'listen, a garamut is talking', translated (in Tok Pisin) as, *harim toktok bilong garamut*. Or they would say, 'put ear to the message of the garamut', translated (in Tok Pisin) as, *putim yau long toktok bilong garamut*. It is unlike the mobile phone, that when people hear it ring, the custom is to say, answer the phone. In schools when a garamut is pounded according to clock- time to begin classes, people say, that garamut is for the school whereas if it is heard in the village, people ask, what is the garamut talking about?

From my observation among the Kayan I deduced that garamut technology is embedded with human emotions and feelings and its use generates and recreates these emotions and feelings put into its process and production. The garamut voice is not only heard but is felt in the body as it reverberates. The rhythmic beats arouse an array of feelings, emotions or anxieties along lines of relationships. Therefore when a garamut is used to relay a message it is referred to as a voice to listen to, unlike a mobile phone that needs to be answered. A mobile phone does not arouse public emotions. The voice of garamut has the power of rippling effect, causing arousing emotions. For example, a message can be for or about an individual or a special kin group, or for the community as a whole. Each 'call sign' identifies the connection of relationships to the person who beats the garamut. At Kayan I observed that garamut communicates sociality in engaging kin, family and social relationships. Different types of messages generate different feelings and emotions, either of joy or sadness. On one occasion when a three year old child died, the Kukurai of the clan conveyed the messages of death through the garamut. This message instantly evoked emotions of sadness especially among family members and relatives who burst out crying. The voice of the garamut delivering the sad news gripped the family members with the sense of loss, anxiety, sadness, and even fear. The message was also heard by extended family members who lived in nearby villages and they came to mourn.

5.7 Garamut has power of generating sensory emotions

In arguing that garamut are not musical instruments, except in a most secondary way, I wanted to reclaim indigenous cultural understanding that garamut are regarded as social persons. They have agency or power of affecting people in numerous ways. I argued that the introduced definitions denied the agency of garamut and obscured the cultural understanding. Careful cultural analysis shows that the agency of garamut, affect social relationships in numerous ways. The research shows that the cultural understanding of garamut among the Kayan people is that garamut are like persons with a voice, in particular the power of the voice of the Kukurai.

Rumbung (for garamut) in Kayan language as I explained in Chapter one (p.44), is not defined as musical instrument but rather the generic name given to a slit-log which produces breath or voice that people are obliged to hear. Leach's (2002) and Bateson's (1958) works, speak of the voice that animates relationship, rather than simply the sound which gongs make. Bateson writes that in some middle Sepik societies they refer to garamut as 'voice' of the spirits. And Leach points out that among the Nekgini speakers, when constructing slit-gongs they follow a process akin to the process whereby young men are initiated into the male cult. The culmination of this initiation is the decoration of the neophytes. They say that a garamut is a man; they mean that it has a voice which others are obliged to hear (Leach 2002, p.715).

Kayan elders including the carvers told me that traditionally, garamut were not considered as musical instruments. They said that garamut were not toys; garamut could destroy the village. The Kukurai in particular expressed that garamut is the *voice* of the Kukurai. It is the Chief Kukurai. One elder told me in Tok Pisin, 'mipela i save paitim kundu¹⁷ long singsing, na mipela i save paitim garamut long salim toktok', we beat kundu drum for singsing and garamut to send a message. I interpret it to have meant that he was making a point that garamut are not primarily used for traditional singsing. Therefore from my study, I offer a different view and argue that the introduced definition of garamut primarily as musical instrument since colonial intervention, has obscured the social and cultural understanding of garamut. As a consequence, many Papua New Guineans today refer to garamut as a musical instrument. Though there is now acceptance that

¹⁷ Kudu: A Tok Pisin word for hand held drum used during traditional dance or singing

garamut have embraced new social meanings, it was an imposition that obscured traditional knowledge. On the other hand, among the Kayan I observed that when the voice of the garamut was heard, it instantly connected people in their network of relationships. They listened for who was beating the garamut, to whom, and what was the message.

The message of the garamut had special impact on people. It created and generated feelings of varied emotions, sometimes negative, from fear to anxiety and apprehension of what was in store for the community. It reverberated not only in individuals but also generated a chain reaction right through the social relationships among the people. For example, when one child died, the messages relayed made the family members sad and I heard crying coming from various houses in the village. Sadness enveloped the village and the village was quiet for a week with very little noise to be heard. Children were admonished not to play or run around in the village. When the message of lifting the ban on silence was sounded by the garamut, laughter was heard and children could play. I felt and observed the different emotions played out and the garamut was central to these varied emotional beats and rhythms of shared life experiences. This shows that as an object, the voice of garamut is also imbued with varied sensory meanings which play on the feelings of the people, and so upon hearing the beat of the garamut, peoples' sensory faculties of hearing, touch, feeling, and smell quickly are in tune with the message. I have mentioned earlier, the garamut message of death, evoked wide ranging emotions throughout the village community. Garamut I add, not only produce sounds but are immersed in an emotional sensory mix and cultural setting and beliefs of the people (see Howes 2006, p.166).

5.7.1 Beat, sound, senses and sentiments of garamut

In Chapter two, I mentioned works of Howes and Felds in relation to sensory mix and sound. Here I draw from my observation, how garamut as an object is also imbued with sensory mix. As mentioned above, in the village when the voice of the garamut is heard, it instantly connects people in their network of relationships. I observed among the Kayan that people would raise their heads and become attentive in a way best described in Tok Pisin, 'putim yau' (literally put their ear) to listen to the message, identify who was beating the garamut, and to whom the message was conveyed. During deaths, the beat, and the sound of garamut delivering the message of death, had

power to generate varied emotions, from fear to anxiety and apprehension of what might be in store for the community. This anxiety will last for the duration of time the garamut are silent. For example, when another child died, I heard crying coming from various houses in the village. The voice of garamut publicly announcing the death had an impact on the community. Sadness enveloped the village and again the village was quiet for a week. Very little noise could be heard. After the ban on silence was lifted, beats of joy pounded on the garamut brought back joy and laughter to the community. Children could now play freely and people could talk in loud voices. Being among the community, I not only observed but also felt the different emotions played out, and garamut was the medium of these varied emotions of shared life experience. The beating of the garamut to announce death and to announce lifting of the ban of silence suggests to me that the principal use of garamut was to mourn life and to celebrate life (see also Fischer 1983, p.25).

These emotions and feelings are triggered from the way the garamut beats are organised in communicating the message, either fast or slow with different pauses, long or short.

- Fast beating, rapid sound, can mean anger, fight.
- Exuberant sound can mean celebration-dance, a joyous occasion.
- Slow beats and sound with short pauses – can mean death.

However its use as a bell for school or meetings does not follow this organisation of beats. It is pounded as a bell to indicate clock time such as eight o'clock in the morning to go to school.

Similar to the feelings and associations the Kalui have to the bird sounds which Feld wrote about, I observed that garamut among the Kayan, especially during death, generate wide ranging emotions. The message of death conveyed through garamut creates instantaneous feelings, and heightens emotions of sadness, anxiety, fear, and worry. The opposite was true that when the message of celebration was conveyed, feelings of joy, relief and excitement reverberated among the community and this feelings of elation was shared through the networks of relationships. By this I mean, the garamut create instantaneous feelings, emotions, connecting people together in networks of relationships. Garamut evoke emotions that are socially shared, such as feelings of sadness, joy, anxiety, relief, excitement, anger, fear, and worry. As an object, a garamut conveys sensory meaning as well. There is a close sensory connection between the people and the garamut.

I also observed that amidst the feelings of excitement in cultural performances, the deep seated sense of fear and apprehension was also present. The elders spoke of the dangers of not following the way of the custom, whereas the young people tend not to worry, but they must follow custom protocols - an indication that though young people appreciate custom they question the efficacy of rituals. I noted that young people with some apprehension are trying to work out whether it is necessary to go through all these custom protocols. For example, a young performer at Kayan told me during a festival at the end of my time there, that for him his personal hygiene was important and not to wash for a week was unhealthy. However he had to conform to the custom because of a general fear that not conforming to matters of ritual can bring adverse consequences.

Another finding was that the fear of spirit influence is not only related to matters of tradition and custom but leisure activities such as sports. One soccer team had the name DMC which was abbreviation for Death Mans' Corner. The name was in reference to the village cemetery which is at one end of the village. The team performed badly that they lost most of the games and were last on the ladder. Public commentary I heard while watching the games was that this team played with no energy; they were like dead men. Sometimes, emotions ran high and players wanted to fight. Arguments and dissention arose that the name was a curse. I heard team members blaming their team manager who had insisted on giving this name. Some even came forth with stories of seeing dead people in their dreams. So during one evening, the team members got together in a men's house with the team manager and they decided to change the name. This had no immediate practical outcome as by then they had come to the end of the season. Here I note the obvious connection to the men's house and spirits as most members of the team were from the same clan or the men's house, in Tok Pisin, *wanpela hausman*. This demonstrates the importance of speech and the power of the voice which expresses varying moods, emotions and feelings connected to certain events, messages, or stories, which also filter through kinship relationships.

5.7.2 Voice of Kukurai and social networking

The voice of Kukurai through *garamut* has power of social connection that links together kinship relationships and family groups. From conversations and observation I noted that Kayan social and kinship structure links clan members to their respective clan Kukurai. The current tribal Kukurai are, Peter Ked of *Nongdangang* tribe, Raphael Manabun of *Samngae* tribe, who is also referred to

as Chief Kukurai, (a retired soldier with the rank of a Corporal), and Camillus Kadz of *Warngem* tribe. Camillus works as a Correctional Officer in town. Caspar is only a clan Kukurai of the Kainmbat clan as I have explained earlier. Therefore, though Caspar had given me his consent for the research, he was obliged to convey the message to the three tribal Kukurai to seek their voice of approval. This was the connection or relationship that saw me being taken into the *Kainmbat* clan.

When I first arrived at Kayan and walked around, some villagers, especially males asked me in Tok Pisin, “yu stap wantaim wanem ol lain”? It meant which line are you living with? When I replied I was staying with Teddy’s line, they would say, “ah; wantaim ol Kainmbat”, meaning, ah, with the *Kainmbat* clan. My interpretation of this remark is that Kayan terms of reference to kinship relations have strong connection to the Kukurai and clan relationships.

During interviews some of my informants mentioned the names of their Kukurai and which clan they belonged to. One young man said that it was important to know this because, it helps avoid problems such as marrying into their own clan, or harvesting sago from other people’s area, or making gardens on other peoples land. He continued in Tok Pisin by saying, “sampela yangpela i save paul nabaut na kamapim hevi long ples”, translated as, some young people lack this knowledge and as a result bring about problems to the community.

5.7.3 Voice of Kukurai facilitates clan activities

The extent of the power of the voice of Kukurai covers many areas of community living. I share how I observed the construction of a men’s house was facilitated by the voice of a clan Kukurai. The *Kainmbat* clan men’s house had fallen down a few years before. Since their clan garamut were placed in front of family homes, this was becoming a matter of grave concern. Caspar as the clan Kukurai was responsible for giving the word for work to begin on erecting a new men’s house. The following account demonstrates how Caspar’s voice obliged clan members to begin work in the construction of the new men’s house.

Philip and Teddy, as elders of the clan consulted with Caspar and with his approval, the two took charge of supervising the project. The decision to immediately action the building of the new men's house was tripped by one of the clan members succumbing to an illness, and after several attempts at taking medication from the hospital, finding his health still did not improve. There was talk that he might die. Therefore one morning, over cups of coffee at Romanus's haus-win where the sick person was also present, Teddy spoke up, that as clan members they should find out what might be the reason that this person's health had not improved. He told the sick person that as a clan, they had the responsibility to find out the cause of the prolonged illness.

The next morning, Teddy representing Caspar's voice beat their unifier clan garamut named *Emrang*, to call the clan members together. Again, the sick person was present at this meeting. I heard some individuals speak of having had strange dreams of spirits or ghostly figures chasing them with spears. From the ensuing discussion it was concluded that this is the work of the spirits of the men's house. The dreams were pointing in that direction. Teddy reminded them of the urgency to erect the new men's house. He pointed out that their men's house had fallen down and the clan garamut were placed everywhere near family homes. They had for too long neglected their men's house and the clan garamut and the spirits were not happy. Illness, sickness and deaths were results of this neglect. What more clues were they waiting for? Therefore it was paramount that the erection of the new clan men's house was given priority and every clan member should turn up for work. Teddy emphasised that they should act quickly to restore normality and bring back life to the clan members as well as to the community as a whole. He reiterated that various people especially clan members had dreams relating to spirits, clan garamut, masks, and the clan men's house and this was the message they should not ignore.

Conclusions I heard drawn from these dreams were that spirits of the clan men's house were not happy with the prolonged neglect of the men's house. Their clan garamuts had been sitting under family homes far too long exposed to the weather especially rain. They had a duty of care and responsibility to provide proper shelter to the clan garamut. Not conforming to this duty would only bring about despair and problems to the clan. Their anxiety can be interpreted as because they have neglected their garamut and the men's house has broken, relationships must be restored immediately, to avoid further calamities. Caspar as the clan Kukurai was looked upon to take the

lead. It was decided that work should begin quickly. From their expressions of anxiety in relation to the men's house another aspect or characteristic of garamut emerged, that garamut among Kayan are not simply everyday mundane objects but are esteemed as social persons who calls for attention and care. Therefore as social persons, garamut demanded personal comfort and their voice of displeasure at not being looked after, was expressed through the dreams and infliction of illnesses.

I also had to consider if my presence as an observer had influenced the decision to build the men's house. The additional attention paid to the garamut and custom might have contributed to awareness of a festering problem. Certainly the problem and thoughts about its meaning, and pathways to a solution had been there for an extended period of time before my arrival. It was a large project not to be undertaken for any shallow reasons, e.g. to impress the observer. However, I believe my study on garamut became the catalyst of their resolve to erect the new men's house. Whilst in the village, I came to know their plan; that they wanted to erect the men's house to coincide with the launching of my garamut, carved for me. Furthermore, they organised a Mini Garamut and Mask Cultural show which was held in the village in September 2013 (see Chapter six).

5.8 Construction of the Kainmbat clan men's house



Carrying logs for the men's house



Men's house at construction stage



Teddy preparing cane for thatching the roof



Women and girls bringing foodstuffs



Thatching the roof with sago leaves



Putting final touches to the roof

The program of constructing the new men's house began with collecting logs from the forest. On the morning of the day that was marked to collect logs from the forest I accompanied Teddy. On our way we came across the sick person who also carried an axe and was coming as well. Upon seeing him, Teddy uttered these words to the person in Tok Pisin, "mipela tok wanem, em wok

bilong ol spirit bilong hausman na garamut”, translated as, what did we say, this was the work of the spirits of the men’s house and the garamut. Meaning, the illness you have was the work of the spirits of the men’s house and the garamut. The sick man later recovered well.

During the construction stages of the men’s house, I observed that both Philip and Teddy as project leaders went into town on a number of occasions to consult Caspar and report on the progress of the work. The process began with gathering food especially making sago both by women and men especially young boys. Sago is a staple diet of the Kayan as well as the surrounding people. To supplement sago and other garden foodstuffs bales of rice, flour, oil, sugar, tea, coffee and tinned fish were also bought from town.



The Chief Kukurai Raphael Manabun and elders relaxing in the new men's house

Clan members contributed with money and garden foodstuffs as well. Members from other clans also joined as this was seen as a project of the village because any calamity that befalls a particular clan affects the entire community. I observed that not only the women and families of the *Kainmbat* clan supplied food; also members of other clans came with dishes of food, and raw food crops such as bananas. As an honorary member of the clan I also contributed towards buying of store foods. The house was completed over five to six months while I was there. A few family and clan relatives from neighboring villages of *Bodbod*, *Gamai* and *Marangis* also came to help thach the roof because they had heard about the project.

Since Caspar was not in the village, Teddy and Philip mediated Caspar’s voice. I make this connection now that when Teddy or Philip beat the garamut concerning work on the men’s house, the clan members connected the call of garamut to Caspar’s voice. In other words, using Gell’s term, the garamut ‘dispersed’ the agency of Caspar, the clan Kukurai to his clan members.



New Kainmbat clan men's house, Kayan Village, 2012

Built with posts taken from garamut trees from which garamut are also carved, the men's house stands tall and spacious with no walls around it. Timber from a palm tree called *limbum* in Tok Pisin was used for flooring and the roof was thatched with sago leaves. At one end near the top of the roof, a platform is used as a sanctuary for sacred masks, flutes, sacred spears and other sacred items. In the past, the men's houses were not built too close to family homes and they had enclosures built around them. But this is no longer the case. Now they build open long houses with no walls.

The new men's house is an impressive looking house. After seeing all this work turn out well as anticipated, Philip expressed to me in Tok Pisin, 'yu kam na tupela bikpela wok i kamap wantaim', meaning, your arrival brought about the achievement of two big projects. He implied that following of proper procedures and process of establishing right relationships, resulted in a fruitful outcome as evidenced by the garamut that were carved for me and the construction of the men's house. In a sense it indicates that the continuity of life is dependent upon following ancestral norms of social and moral behavior which is accorded to the process and production of garamut. The tall posts and height of the building can be interpreted as visible symbols of the power of men. The Tok Pisin expression uttered by Teddy to the young boys during work, 'yupela mas sanap

strong olsem strongpela pos', you should stand strong as the strong posts, captures this concept as well.

For the Kayan, to lose this claim to the past is to lose part of who they are in the present. In its inalienability, the garamut is seen by the Kayan as more than an economic resource and more than an affirmation of social relations. I noted that maintaining garamut and the men's house, continually demonstrate who they are in relation to others, and their identity must be attached to those ancestral connections that figure significantly in their statutes, ranks, titles and kinship relationships. To be able to keep garamut and the men's house that document these connections attests to the power of the men. I suggest that for the Kayan men, to let go of garamut and the men's house, is to lose their claim to the past as a link to their identity and masculinity. If this will happen, especially the Kukurai will completely lose their power of voice and authority.

The Kukurai also had to have knowledge about their clan unifier garamut and the spirit names and their clan call signs to call their clan members via the garamut. The reason I include these names is according to the Kayan elders, knowing names is important in connection with property ownership and ensuring social cohesion among the different clan groups. Also through garamut and clan relationships they would advice how marriage arrangements could be made. Clan members marry outside of their own clan. Below are names of the clan unifier garamut with their gnumtick spirit name, except number seven which has a tumbuan name (a name associated with tumbuan masks worn in ritual dance).

1. Mutborong with the design Dauginamot owned by Gnombreak clan
2. Watkopi with the design Dauginamot owned by Kainmbat clan
3. Emrang with the design Baewarup owned by Kainmbat clan
4. Ruknai with the design Raing owned by Samngae clan
5. Matnger with the design Raing owned by Samngae clan
6. Nokpai with the design Baewarup owned by Kadid clan
7. Kaidaban with the design Dauginamot owned by Waot clan

5.9 Garamut as voice of Kukurai to social order

I observed that there exists the influence of garamut as the voice of Kukurai on the social order of the village among the Kayan. Michael Kaskus (the Komiti) shared with me that in the past, the Kukurai had power of controlling social order. Power here means, the Kukurai had voice of social, political, and economic control, in other words, the voice of leadership. They were also highly respected because they were regarded as possessing greater knowledge concerning issues and matters of their clan. Each Kukurai was responsible for the general welfare of their clan members. If clan members caused trouble, the Kukurai was also burdened with shame and had the duty to make reparations. Their responsibilities involved solving disputes, bringing peace, supporting their clan members and generally being the spokesperson for their clan. This they did by beating the garamut and calling clan members together to discuss these matters of concern. Clan members were obliged to hear the voice of their Kukurai.

However these days, according to Michael, things have changed. The Kukurai have very little power or respect or voice of leadership. They lack knowledge and are not showing leadership. Similar to the sentiments expressed by Teddy, Michael said in Tok Pisin, “ol i slip tumas”, in English this would mean, they are lazy bones. As an example, Michael spoke of the time, he had to take leadership in controlling young boys who were getting out of hand, making and drinking homebrew and causing nuisance in the village. He had expected one of the Kukurai to beat the garamut and call young boys together to discuss this concern. However no Kukurai showed leadership, so he took it upon himself to beat the garamut and call the young boys together. Only then, the Kukurai supported him and together with other elders were able to stop the young boys from such behavior. They threatened the boys to have police come and arrest them if they continued. Michael is Caspar’s brother. Here again in my view, is a statement of the close working relationship of the garamut and the voice of Kukurai and the elders to maintain and uphold a desirable social order of peace and harmony in the community.

In spite of Michael’s assessment of the Kukurai leadership, among young men I interviewed there were those who were inclined to value the presence of the Kukurai, in a positive way. To these young men, the Kukurai represented authority of good social order, as a good thing. However

some expressed the view that now the Kukurai were becoming irrelevant and had little power. Yet I observed that there is also collaborative leadership among the Kukurai of each clan in dealing with matters which affect all the clans as a collective unit. I also noticed that there are now what I call, two complementary levels of leadership operating in the village. There is the traditional Kukurai leadership and the Government appointed leadership such as Village Councilor, and Village Court Magistrate. Settling of particular issues such as disputes over land or sago patches will also include the Kukurai of the clans. In the use of garamut I asked Michael whether all of these leaders use garamut to call people for meetings, Michael said; 'no'. He then explained that the Kukurai are the principal users of garamut, followed by certain influential leaders who are heads of family groups. He uses his garamut as Komiti of the village, government appointed, like a honoray assistant to the councilor, to call people together for community work such as building the road or cleaning the school grounds. Michael further added that one or two male Church leaders use garamut, only when needed to signal a meeting with youth or church prayer groups. Otherwise the use of garamut remains restricted.

Michael also assisted Philip and Teddy in encouraging the young men of the clan to commit themselves in building the men's house. At times when food was getting low he personally went to town to ask Caspar to buy store food such as rice, sugar flour, tea and coffee and other foodstuff to supplement sago and garden food crops, to feed the people working on the men's house. A good communicator and a respectable person he also became one of my key informants.

He further told me that for matters that directly concern tradition and village disputes such as land issues and family disputes, the Kukurai must be consulted or informed at all times. A good example is about my research where all the three tribal Kukurai had to be informed and consulted to get their collective voice of consent. In my sharing with the Village Court Magistrate, he explained that very often he would consult the Kukurai and the elders of the village whether or not he should bring a case or a dispute concerning a villager to the police as a police matter, or they should try and solve the case in the village.

Apart from the young people expressing that in general the voice of the Kukurai represents social order, the Kukurai themselves told me, they refer to garamut as Chief Kukurai. It is a remark that affirms my observation that among the Kayan, garamut is the agency of the voice the Kukurai. The Kukurai also said that the garamut are important in maintaining social order. I suggest this would mean that garamut as the voice of the Kukurai, are also secondary agents as overseers of social order in the village. In events of social disorder such as serious arguments or fights, or unruly behavior that disturbs the peace of the community, the Kukurai or certain influential elders will beat the garamut to call people together to settle the dispute. In addition, I also observe that garamut are not only the voice of the Kukurai, they are also the voice of certain individual influential elders of family groups. These heads of family groups work in close consultation with their clan Kukurai regarding matters of importance that concern the welfare of their clan members. Teddy Tamone, Willie Kawang, Philip Apa and Michael Kaskus are some of these influential elders who own private garamut. One observation that stood out was the two distinct ways of the use of garamut. I observed that the clan garamut were used to send messages relating to matters concerning the clan, and the private garamut were used to send personal messages. On a number of occasions I saw Teddy as well as Philip beat the clan garamut to call together the clan members to prepare themselves for various tasks involving building of the clan men's house. For personal messages I saw Teddy use his own garamut to call individuals. So among the Kayan as confirmed to me by an elder, the clan garamut were not used for sending personal messages but to clan members.

During interviews, elderly male participants told me that they do regarded garamut as the voice of Kukurai. As for women, they said that they only follow what the men say. Some women said that when they heard the garamut, they would wait for the men or their husbands to tell them what the message was all about. A few older male interviewees told me that they can tell the difference between a garamut beat that is the voice of the Kukurai and the sound of the garamut which is only a signal. That is because they know the call signs of the respective Kukurai of the village. But many young boys said that they do not know the call signs of the Kukurai nor can they can read the message. For example, I was chatting with some young men, when an HIV awareness team arrived from Madang. We heard a garamut sound coming from the top end of the village without being able to interpret it. Upon hearing the garamut, one elderly person said, ah, this garamut is

sounded to signal the arrival of some visitors to the village. He could tell the difference between a message and a signal.

5.9.1 Voice of Kukurai and death

Kayan elders told me that in the past, it was the Kukurai who beat the garamut to convey the message of death when someone died in their respective clan. This meant that when the message was conveyed, the power of the voice of the Kukurai obliged the community to observe silence. People spoke in low tones and no loud noise or voice was to be heard. This silence could last for weeks before the ban on silence was lifted. No feasts or singsing should take place during this time of mourning. If some people were making loud noise or laughing at this time, it was suspected that they could be the people who caused the death. I observed that when deaths occurred in the village even listening to radios or music boxes which are normally the favorite pass time of young people were put on silence.

5.9.2 Lifting the ban of silence

To lift the ban of silence, it was again the Kukurai who beat the garamut. One morning some



Red coconut with dog's teeth attached, and knotted bettlenut leave

elders demonstrated one of their past customs of lifting the ban. The elders told me that when a death was announced, all garamut were silenced from that very moment. Metaphorically they say that the garamut sticks are bundled together and put aside. In Tok Pisin they said, ‘‘taim wanpela i dai, mipela save pasim stik bilong garamut na putim i stap’’; translated as, when someone dies we bundle the garamut sticks and put them away. This means that the voice of the garamut is silenced and is not to be heard; meaning that there

should not be any celebration of life when there is mourning. As a community everybody observes the ban on silence and goes about their daily activities in a quiet way. Then may be after a couple of weeks, or even longer, an elder of the family who had lost a family member would approach the

clan Kukurai with gifts called *kup* (in their language). These gifts are comprised of: betelnuts, (*buai* in TP), mustard (*daka* in TP), and dried tobacco leaves (*brus* in TP). In addition they presented to the Kukurai, a small red coconut mounted with dogs' teeth and knotted betelnut leaf placed on the coconut as a special gesture of seeking the consent of the Kukuarai to lift the ban of silence.

These symbols were explained to me by an elder to mean, peace and good will; dogs teeth for wealth, *kulau* for fresh new life, and betelnut and tobacco for chewing and smoking together. The tied knots of betelnut leaf symbolised the muzzling of voice. The Tok Pisin expression "taitim win" best describes this custom gesture. It literally means, tying the wind or the breath that comes from the mouth. I interpret this to mean that when the Kukurai unties these knots, it symbolises that the wind or the mouth that has been silenced is now opened to speak. Metaphorically, the mouth can now also drink, smoke, chew betelnut and go about business in a normal way. The Kukurai then beat the *garamut* with the message, that the voice that has been silenced now calls out and invites people to freely go about their business of making gardens, going fishing, hunting and trading and hosting public events such as feasts. During the mourning period, these activities were restricted. Regarding the *kup*, the elders said that most people in the village have abandoned this custom of presenting the Kukurai with dogs teeth attached to a red coconut with the knotted betelnut leaf. However they still present betelnut, *kulau* for drinking and tobacco leaves as well as the modern version of the *kup* which includes coffee, tea or sugar.

Regarded as social persons, the voice of the *garamut* elicits social forms of relationships and networking. Apart from the clan *garamut* in the men's house, each clan also has a unifier *garamut*. In their capacity as powerful objects of social influence, *garamut* as I have mentioned, are considered as agents of the voice of Kukurai. However I observed that now, there is a growing disconnect of *garamut* regarded as the voice of Kukurai, especially in matters regarding modern day leadership, governance, politics and economic or business endeavors. The traditional leadership of the Kukurai is deemed incompatible with modern leadership. Therefore, though the *garamut* will remain as the agent of the voice of the Kukurai, people will not feel obliged to obey; especially if the call was not about inviting new ideas and discussions to create opportunities for business, which comes under the umbrella term 'development'.

With the increasing dependency on the cash economy to buy store goods, money for school fees and hospital fees and other needs, I observed that the *garamut* is becoming more the agent of the voice of influential leaders who are not Kukurai, such as Teddy. For example, one young man told me that they now look up to leaders such as Teddy who is interested in bringing about economic change to the community and not the Kukurai who only beat *garamut* to talk about custom and some trouble in the village. The comments uttered by the young carver reflect this anxiety that to live in the contemporary Kayan community one would need money for survival. I further observed that the voice of the Kukurai mainly deals with matters concerning land, forest, property and particularly clan disputes. For leaders such as Teddy, I observed that they want to facilitate development and change, in improving the lifestyle of the people; they also see *garamut* as empowering their own voice of leadership. Thus I also suggest that there is a paradigm shift, that the power of the voice of the Kukurai has declined and the power of the voice of the influential elders such as Teddy has increased. The following explanation given by Kier Martin (2013, p.192) also supports my observation at Kayan.

Martin writes when he arrived at Matupit (Rabaul), he asked who the Big Men were; only to be answered with the phrase time after time, 'all the Big Men are dead'. It was an answer he found initially hard to understand. His question of enquiry was, Big Men may die, but who took their place now? To Martin, 'no one' seemed to be the universal response. I suggest the answer can be found in his citing of Epstein's study. Epstein wrote:

Following the losses of the last war the older men have become poor in cash as well as shell-money, and the wealth of the community, measured in saving and personal property is mostly in the hands of the younger men who lack formal status with the village. Cash earnings are put to personal and private ends: building a permanent style house and furnishing it in a modern fashion, buying a motor-cycle or car and the like; unlike *tambu*, the new wealth is not invested in the sponsorship of ceremonies and other activities which in the past would have opened the way to prestige and influence. At Matupit therefore there has been a marked decline in ceremonial life, a tendency which the elders deplore but which they are powerless

to stem, still less to reverse. The conditions for the emergence of ‘big men’ of the traditional type no longer exist (Epstein 1969, p. 308).

As Epstein pointed out, I also observed among the Kayan that the Kukurai who once controlled the traditional economy power of personal property of shell-money and other valuable items which promoted them as men of value (Weiner 1983) had declined drastically. In the past they were the ones who organised feasts, arranged trade exchanges and distributed wealth. However with the introduction of new political, social, and economic conditions brought in by colonial administrative powers changed all that. Subsequently the power of their voice faded, as one Kukurai lamented.

5.9.3 The fading voice of Kukurai

In one of my discussions with a Kukurai, he lamented that this voice, referring to their voice which is mediated by garamut is now losing traction with the young people. It means that young people are not responding positively to their voice. The Kukurai are beginning to feel that the power of their voice that garamut once enforced is not getting the kind of response which was the case in the past, where clan members promptly responded. Sometimes, they the Kukurai are shunned. In Tok Pisin the Kukurai expressed to me, ‘ol yangpela bilong nau, ol i no save kam taim ol i harim singaut bilong garamut’, translated as, young people of today do not come when they hear our garamut call. When asked whether they the Kukurai knew that certain individuals were secretly carving garamut to sell to potential buyers without getting their permission, his response was, ‘yes’. However they could not do anything to stop these individuals. I asked him why not? He shrugged his shoulders and said, ‘ol i bikhet tumas’, translated as, they are stubborn. This indicates that times are changing and the Kukurai are realising that they are losing the power of their voice.

Further exploring the claim by the Kukurai that garamut is their voice I asked some young boys and girls their opinion. The response from some older boys was that they do associate garamut with the voice of the Kukurai or some big man. One respondent said that he did not think the Kukurai of today represented the interest of the community. He referred to the Kukurai as ‘old timers’. Nevertheless, he said that out of respect they as young people come when the Kukurai beat

the garamut if the messages were for an important meeting. As for the girls, they said that it was the business of men and they did not have much to say.

Though the Kukurai claim that the garamut is their voice, I observed that it is the charisma of each Kukurai or an influential clan leader that draws clan members together. I say this because on one occasion I heard a comment made by a young person when he heard a garamut sounded by a Kukurai. He said in Tok Pisin, ‘‘ah, em longlong lapun Kukurai, em paitim garamut bilong wanem? Em i no save kamap long wok bilong komyuniti’’, translated as, that silly old Kukurai, why is he beating the garamut? He does not come to community work.

I also interviewed one young man who has carved a few garamut to sell. In fact he showed me a garamut in front of his house that he had carved and asked me to look for buyers in town for him. I asked him about the custom protocol of getting permission from the Kukurai and his response in Tok Pisin was, ‘‘Bilong wanem bai mi westim taim long kisim tok orait bilong ol Kukurai; bai ol i no inap givim mi moni’’. It is translated as, why should I waste time seeking permission from the Kukurai, they won’t give me money? From these comments by the young carver it is apparent that commodification of garamut as an artefact for sale is also challenging the voice and authority of the Kukurai. The Kukurai are losing control in this area where they once enjoyed the recognition as the ones who had the right to give permission for carving garamut. It was a right they wanted me to know of and acknowledge during my negotiation with them to carve garamut.

5.9.4 Voice and modern leadership

Leadership has been mainly the domain of men in Kayan. In the Melanesian context leadership traits and skills are entrenched deeply in the traditional view of ‘big man’ leadership (Narokobi, 1993). The big man traditional model of leadership is based on the traditional social construction of a man. Men had the leading task of being the family providers, hunters, gatherers, warriors, peace-makers and ceremony organisers and main possessors of personal wealth (Lemonnier, 1991; Narokobi, 1983; Tivinarlik et al. 2006; Waiko, 1993). Leadership became the ‘technology of the masculine’ (Theobald, 1996), which was reinforced by the men’s traditional roles and responsibilities, seen as requiring authority, decisiveness and assertiveness. The construction of

garamut among the Kayan I observed replicates this social construct which can be described as ‘technology of masculinity’, that male persons possess the ‘voice’ of authority, leadership and discernment.

Today this is also played out in modern leadership and politics, where ‘voice’ is used as criteria for selecting and electing leaders. During elections people say, we must vote for someone who has a voice to speak for us. In Tok Pisin, ‘Yumi mas makim man i gat maus bilong toktok’. In my view this selection criteria based on ‘voice’ as defining leadership which favours males, stands as a challenge for women who vie for positions of community leadership at Provincial, National, and local levels of government, as well as in the village. On various occasions at Kayan I heard men rebuking their wives if they voiced their opinion on certain matters that men alone were discussing. Men would say, ‘yu man ah, yu pasim maus’, in Tok Pisin: Are you a man?! Shut your mouth. In my opinion this would be one of the underlying reasons few women have been successful in politics or leadership positions. Men have not given them opportunity to voice their positions on issues. Betty Lovai, one of the nation’s most senior female academics, attests that even for women like herself ‘to speak up (raise her voice) in front of men, can be deeply intimidating’. Contesting National Elections some years ago as a female political candidate, she said, she was making a bold declaration: ‘I am the leader of this tribe’.

Women political candidates have to deal with the custom that forbids women from entering a Haus Tambaran (Men’s House) as the Parliament is colloquially known (Chandler, 2013). It is evident that custom suppresses and denies that women can be leaders in the public arena. These restrictions suggest that women do not possess an assertive voice to debate matters concerning land, leadership, politics or economic projects and other issues that men consider as men’s business. It seems to me that many aspects of the traditional views about the unsuitability of women for public speaking in general goes back to some of the deep seated assumptions



House of Parliament Papua New Guinea
Photo from google page

about the awkwardness with the female voice in public.

For example, one day a meeting was held to discuss land ownership with regard to a proposed pipeline associated with a mining company. The map showed that Kayan land area was included in the proposed pipeline route to transport gold and copper concentrate to a sea port that was envisaged to be built near the mouth of the Ramu River. At this gathering I observed that only men gathered at a men's house where a few clan garamut were. While the men were busy discussing the project, women were busy preparing meals for the men. I asked an elder why they did not include women's voice and participation. His response in Tok Pisin was, "ol meri ol i no gat save long toktok bilong graun", translated as, women have no knowledge about matters concerning land. I also asked two women, a younger one, and an elderly woman, why the women were not allowed to air their voice concerning this project. The elderly woman said, "em toktok bilong ol man na mipela i no gat save long en", translated as, it is men's talk, we do not know anything about it.

These remarks indicate that even among women themselves, to see a woman speaking in public would be deemed unusual. Furthermore, I suggest that the voice of garamut reflects the deep voice of the men as assertive indicating manly courage as compared to the high pitched voice of the women indicating female cowardice. This seems to be the criteria upon which men differentiate the voice of the women against their own voice. The Tok Pisin expression which I also heard in the village, 'ol meri i no gat pawa bilong toktok', translated as, women have no power to talk, best describes this perception of the voice of women. This implies that women are not equipped with the power of the voice, as well as knowledge pertaining to matters of public debate such as of land and property.

However the younger one offered an interesting angle to it. She said in Tok Pisin, 'ol man tasol i no save wok, mipela tu i save mekim bikpela wok na heplim ol man long sait bilong kuk na ol arapela wok bilong lukautim famili. Ol man i mas kisim tingting bilong mipela tu'. In English this means, it is not only the men who work, we too do a lot of work in the provision of food as well as getting involved in many other responsibilities in taking care of the family. The men should get our ideas and views as well. I understood her remarks to mean that she was not saying women should

enter the men's house, but they have power to talk and their voice should also be heard. However their voice is silenced by the men. These remarks by the two women speak of a common position taken by the men that women in the village have less knowledge about development projects and would not have the assertive voice to speak on these sort of matters. It is well noted also that this separation of voice in the village is also played out on the national stage where very few women have entered Parliament.

Since the first national election in independent PNG in 1977, less than ten women have been elected to Parliament. According to Kilavanwa (2004), 'big man' leadership implies that men are more suitable candidates for leadership positions than women because the attributes such as decisiveness, negotiating and networking with other males in the clan have been historically the men's role, for example, in the organising of community feasts. Brown (1988, p.125) says that generally, people in PNG are valued for their achievements. Although this applies both to men and women, the general rule is that women serve to assist a man to achieve renown. He suggests that women are valued for their role of raising children and producing the kinds of wealth (such as pigs, garden produce and artefacts) that are exchanged during the ceremonies and presentations where men gain political power and prestige. They have an important role in maintaining social relations between groups, since the exchanges on which men build their prestige depend on the kinship relationships gained through marriage.

In her article about elections and the status of women in Fiji, Usman (2013, p.154) citing Chandra & Lewai, (2005, p.6) writes that in many societies in the developing world women do not enjoy the same opportunities as men. They bear children and are their care-givers; they maintain households, produce food for maintaining families and also act as keepers and transmitters of tradition and culture. They work long hours and are paid less than men; they have limited opportunities and their choices are constrained by social, cultural and religious beliefs. Men are overseers of all these roles and activities because religion, cultural systems, traditional beliefs and the patriarchal nature of the society demand and reinforce their dominance. Men also have relatively more opportunities and choices available to them. These disparities generate substantive gaps for women, who lag behind in education, employment and social and political decision-making processes. This general situation is no different from the status of women in Papua New

Guinea, even in the village of my research where public voice of leadership is considered the domain of the men. Papua New Guinea is a predominantly patriarchal society. It is a view also highlighted by Sai (2007, p.18) in her study *Tamot: Masculinities in Transition in Papua New Guinea*. Citing Connell (2000), Sai writes that patriarchy plays a significant role in the formal and informal systems of power, which puts men and their 'patriarchal dividend' at the forefront in the running of all modern institutions. Constructions of masculinity are socialised, sustained and perpetuated in this patriarchal system that permeates the whole society forming an almost complete male hegemony.

Read (1982, p.70) is of the view that 'in the final analysis, the idea which men hold of themselves is based on what men do rather than what they have at birth'. Men must try to prove themselves economically, socially and politically, which usually requires self-assertion and public accomplishment in the form of oratory, conspicuous displays of wealth, political office or other public status. The 'big man' who has achieved renown is respected, while the man who has not is contemptuously labelled *rabisman* in Tok Pisin (rubbish man), a poor man. A man's reknown depends on his ability to cultivate and harness pre-existing kinship and social relationships, rather than being 'self-made'. As Brown (1988, p. 128) says, 'the chief characteristics that make up the dominant, exemplary form of masculinity are assertiveness and powerfulness. Traditionally, the masculine ideal is 'a strong warrior and orator, a "big man" directing and leading a group of men in warfare and ceremony'. My observation among Kayan Kukurai leadership is one of collaborating with the members of the clan. Therefore a Kukurai must have a voice as a leader and *garamut* is seen as an agent of the power of his voice. This understanding promotes 'voice' as a basic criterion of strong and assertive leadership. Men have enjoyed this idea that men possess the power of the voice to speak with authority and assertiveness about issues in the public arena. By doing so, they gain a reputation as strong men with a voice, in Tok Pisin, *em strongpela man bilong toktok*; translated as, he is a strong man who can talk.

I observed that owning a *garamut* by a Kukurai is essential to their status and leadership. Caspar told me, he needs to have a *garamut* made. He said soon he will be retiring to the village and he felt the need of owning a *garamut*, without which he would have no voice of recognition in the

village. This sentiment expressed by Caspar suggests that essentially he would not have power of the voice to call his clan members together without a garamut.

5.9.5 Garamut silences the voice of women

A peculiar observation worth pointing out is that garamut not only segregate gendered space but also silence women asking questions. Throughout the production process of garamut that were carved for me, I observed that very little information was shared about the work on garamut in front of women and children. Women did not ask about the progress of the work as it was considered not the proper thing to do. I asked an elderly woman why they did not ask and she told me that it is against custom. If they did, they would be reprimanded and told to shut up, it was none of their business. She confided in me that she was reprimanded by her husband when she enquired about how the work on the garamut was progressing. During interviews and discussions with women and girls they expressed to me that they knew very little about the past secrets of garamut. This also shows that the custom of silence imposed on women making enquiries, shuts out women's voice. I interpret this continued imposition of silence on women as not so much to safe-guard the secrets of men as in the past, but more to do with the fear of some jealous people. If and when women, including children hear about the progress of work regarding garamut, they might talk openly about it and certain jealous individuals may through magic bring a curse, shutting down the voice, and the garamut will not produce a good sound (see also Chapter three p.102). where I talked about burning the wood shavings of the garamut as a way of ensuring that they did not fall into the hands of jealous persons.

The young women in particular voiced their frustration that though they contribute heavily with a lot of cooking when garamut are carved they are silenced when they want to know more about garamut. The older women told stories about the past that when women brought food to the place where garamut were carved, they stood at a distance and called out to the men to come and collect the food. I asked the elderly women, which women brought the food and they responded that it was the wives and sisters, and close relatives of the owner of the garamut. Another practice of the past was that when women brought the food they would pull the end of a rope that had been tied to a small tree in the secluded area, and extended to the footpath leading to the secluded area. When

the men saw the tree shaking they would go and collect the food from the women. This practice has been abandoned, but the practice of women calling out, still continues in some circumstances, as I noticed in the production of my garamut. It was Teddy's wife and nieces who brought the food to the secluded area.

Women are constantly reminded of the restrictions, and taboos which they must strictly observe to avoid mortal consequences to themselves, to their families, and to the community as a whole. One story told is about a woman, who sat on a garamut, and her vagina swelled and dropped down and she died a painful death. Another is of a young woman who also sat on a garamut and became barren all her life, so that nobody wanted to marry her. These stories can be interpreted as social control stories warning women of the potential dangers. By disobedience they will bring shame upon themselves when their reproductive powers are violated and they become frowned upon by the community. Being not married and having no children, is seen as a curse in most Papua New Guinea communities. Furthermore it can be interpreted that a woman's reproductive power was taken away because she disobeyed. I want to extend this further by suggesting that in the past these were also measures to silence the women from enquiring and knowing the secret cult of men. Therefore by claiming the ownership of the voice of garamut, the men controlled and owned the voice of women and demarcated a social space where women can talk, that is, at the privacy of their home.

5.9.6 Conclusion

This chapter discussed one key finding of the study, that the garamut as 'voice' of the Kukurai, enforces the Kukurai with power of leadership into areas of the social, political, economical, religious, and the cultural value of the Kayan people. For the Kayan, garamut is not simply a noise producing instrument. In Kayan tradition and custom, male persons especially the Kukurai lay claim to the voice and garamut endorses this claim. It is the voice of leadership as was emphasised to me by the Kukurai. Through the technology of production, males produce themselves as voices or heads of the family who are providers, hunters, gatherers, warriors, peace-makers and ceremony organisers and possess personal wealth. This line of thinking, that the authority of the voice demarcates social roles and responsibilities of genders, implies that leadership and the voice of authority belongs to the male domain. This is consistent with the overall findings in my research

that among the Kayan people, the voice element in garamut custom or use, enforces the prerogative of men. The chief source for this understanding is the testimony of the Kukurai who say their voice becomes a manifestation of the voice of the garamut. Therefore garamut are considered to be inalienable objects of the Kukurai which connects the Kukurai to the clan members, to the clan men's house, and to the ancestors including the spirits.

In arguing that garamut are not primarily musical instruments, except in a most secondary way, I wanted to reclaim indigenous cultural understanding that garamut were first and foremost regarded as social persons. They had agency or power of affecting people in numerous ways. I argued that the introduced definitions denied the agency of garamut and obscured cultural understanding. Careful cultural analysis shows that the agency of garamut is not primarily about music but more importantly about affecting social relationships which are connected with the garamut. The research shows that the cultural understanding of garamut by the Kayan people is that garamut are like persons with a voice, speaking out, to convey a message. Being considered as person like, they have attributes as human persons with a voice to make known their feelings and emotions, yet they are not persons.

Chapter 6 Garamut transition and transformation

6.1 Overview

In Chapter three I discussed the Kayan process and production of gramaut. Before the arrival of colonial powers, the ownership and use of garamut was restricted to big men only. Garamut were fewer in numbers, and they were strictly used in the ritual and social cultural context of the people. However that changed with the arrival of colonial powers.

This chapter reflects on that paradigm shift and examines how garamut survived the period of colonisation, when such items were sometimes confiscated, destroyed, or were given new meaning or accorded less meaning as a result of broader cultural changes associated with the period of colonial intervention. The chapter also discusses how garamut instead of becoming obsolete objects transformed and embraced new social and political meanings both in the village context as well as the national context.

6.2 Introduction

For many years prior to the arrival of colonial intervention, as I have discussed in the previous chapters, garamut played a significant role in the leadership and social structure of the Kayan people in their political, social, economic, religious, cultural activities, and relationships. Garamut were agents of Kukurai power which gave them authority of the voice. According to Kayan elders, as I have mentioned in the preceding chapters, garamut were like ‘social persons’ interacting with them as autonomous influential social agents. Garamut were not simply art objects showing off their technological creative ingenuity, but objects imbued with power of agency and social influence, thus they were considered as social persons with individual characteristics and personhood. This belief was culturally embedded in the belief systems of the people and life continued accordingly. However as this chapter will discuss, the arrival of colonial powers challenged this pre-existing cultural belief, by redefining the role of garamut, giving it new social meanings. Thus garamut started a transition and transformation in embracing these social meanings away from their cultural context.

Before the arrival of missionaries and colonisers, garamut were considered sacred objects of political, social, economic and religious value. Ownership and use was restricted to big men for sending important messages or for special ritual performances celebrating life events such as initiations, or deaths, or feast or battles, or other significant accomplishments. A sacred garamut was revered and considered imbued with powers of life and death and was strictly handled only by a few men who had been initiated.

The arrival of colonial intervention brought with it changes to the status of garamut in its ownership, use and performance. Garamut were now taken out of their cultural context and given new social meanings. Many of the restrictions were lifted and garamut became simply objects of amusement to outsiders and collectable items for Western museums and individuals. Transformation in production time resulted in greater numbers being carved, transforming garamut to new life activities that came with new meanings. These new meanings ascribed to garamut have been embraced across broader national affiliations, expanding the symbolism of garamut as an icon of national identity as evidenced through their production for tourists, an imagery in politics or business, such as Radio Madang 'Maus bilong Garamut'. The word garamut also appears in business such as in 'Garamut Enterprises', and in Social Media 'Garamut' is one of the leading political blogs in Papua New Guinea. It also appears in sports where the National Junior Cricket team is called Garamut.

Foster (2002) writes of the way images of cultural objects have been used as national symbols to generate new national identity. Foster provides an example of bank notes which are adorned with images of shell and other traditional forms of wealth, to link their users to indigenous identity. State functions as a fetish of value



Papua New Guinea Twonety Kina note

in which one's membership in a national body entails the guarantees usually found in intimate social relations, yet also gives the user new freedoms to spend and consume. Money signals modernity, but for it to be seen as valuable, it needs to be reinforced by the concept of a national population, a new community that will guarantee it. Thus the traditional symbolism on PNG currency can be seen as an attempt to co-opt nostalgia toward the end of promoting a new regime

of value. Similarly this can also be said of the symbolism of garamut used as a national icon to promote national unity as the ‘voice’ of the people or of the nation.

6.3 Colonialism, missionaries and transition

According to Weiner (1982, p.72) colonialism brought missionaries, foreign governors, explorers, and exploiters, whose justification for their actions, regardless of individual differences, had one unified focus. They were the harbingers of Western progress, whose actions were couched in the rhetoric of doing something to and for the ‘natives’. Many anecdotes and stories have been told that missionaries encouraged people to get rid of objects that were associated with pagan worship and embrace Christianity. Men’s houses or haus tambaran, were to be dismantled as well. Even if they were still left standing, they were empty of sacred objects. In some communities leaders who did not want to lose their sacred objects hid them and only parted with objects of lesser cultural value. Some of these objects were sacred masks, flutes, and carvings. Some communities had most of their objects surrendered to the missionaries who either bought them or disposed of them by burning or collecting them and sending them off to their own countries. Some were sold to collectors and buyers for anthropological museums. However regardless of this onslaught, garamut survived. The Kayan elders (men) told me in Tok Pisin, ‘ol papa-tumbuna bilong mipela i bin lusim planti pasin kastam na pasin tumbuna long kamap Kristen’, translated as, their great grandparents by accepting Christianity let go of many of their custom practices and rituals.

6.4 Steel technology and transformation of garamut

The introduction of steel technology contributed to the survival of garamut when such older objects were being destroyed. Not only did the new technology transform garamut making, enabling new levels of production and ownership but also did not replace previous ones with colonial ones. Paul the master carver I interviewed, told me that the arrival of colonisers brought with it modern technology of steel axes, knives and other implements. With the efficiency of the introduced tools, production of garamut was transformed to a new level. Numbers of garamut increased because time spent on producing garamut was reduced. Not only big ones were carved but a lot of smaller ones as well for men. At the same time, ritual applied to traditional tools was

abandoned. He said in Tok Pisin, 'taim ol waitman i bringim tamiok i kam, wok i bin kamap isi tru. Na tu ol misinari i bin tok strong long lusim olkain bilip long ol masalai'. When the Whitemen brought steel axes, the work became much easier. The missionaries also spoke against the belief in the power of spirits.

He continued to tell me that in the past, their forefathers used stone axes, fire, sharks teeth and hard bark of sago palms to produce garamut. These tools were kept hidden from women and children as they had been cleansed with specially prepared water with ginger herbs empowered with magic. Paul continued that in most cases, the trees would have been chopped down and left for some time so that the outer flesh of the log would rot, leaving only the hard dry part of the log to work with. During work, ginger was tied to tools and magical words were chanted whilst working. Carvers also chewed ginger as well to harness power and energy from the spirits in order that the spirits (nggumtik) would assist them. However, Paul said that with the arrival of modern tools, they abandoned the use of the old tools and also many of the rituals associated with the process and production of garamut.

6.5 Exclusive use of garamut

In the past, as I have pointed out, the use of garamut among the Kayan was restricted to the big men only. They used garamut for announcing or communicating important messages such as that of death, a fight or danger. Broadly it can be argued that the Kukurai and the big men were using garamut to exercise their social power. Now the colonisers did away with these restrictions by taking away the right of exclusive use by the big-men only. Colonisers redefined the meaning of garamut and gave it the meaning of a slit-gong, a signaling instrument. This new imposition of definition lifted the restrictions that were customarily placed on garamut, making it possible for many more people to beat the garamut including women, or government appointed officials at government posts, as well as personnel in mission stations. This indicates that institutions such as schools and Church promoted garamut as a signaling instrument for class clock times as well as for Church activities. Garamut now coexisted with bells in Government stations, schools, mission stations, and Health Centres. It became a sound instrument to indicate clock time from being a voice instrument which communicated messages.

In my discussions with the young men, they suggested that taking away the exclusive use of garamut from the big men was not a bad thing after all. One of them said that the missionaries allowed their appointed Church leaders such as prayer and church leaders both men and women to beat garamut. The young men said that though this lifted the restrictive use of garamut, it brought with it some undesirable effects. The modern generation; referring to themselves, do not know how to beat messages or communicate messages through garamut. Thus the number of people who can beat garamut as simple signaling gongs increased and those who can beat to communicate an actual message drastically decreased, thus contributing to the breakdown of transmission of knowledge. From interviews with young participants, I noted that in the village of Kayan, only a few elders who are in their sixties know how to send a message via a garamut, let alone the young men. I approached six elderly men of around sixty years old and asked them individually whether they knew how to send a message via garamut. Two said that they knew a little bit, but the other four said, they had never learnt.

Various reasons were given for this lack of knowledge. One reason was they went to work at plantations or in town and they missed the opportunity to learn; another reason was their fathers never taught them. Others commented that when they were growing up these practices were no longer in place because the practices had been abandoned. I also asked the young men whether they would want to learn, and most of them replied, 'yes'. Even some of the young women expressed the desire to learn how to send messages. However for the women, this may not be possible for a long time because the men may not be willing to break with the tradition and teach the women. I also observed a much bigger problem that this knowledge is 'exclusive knowledge'. Though now many individuals own garamut, its use in sending messages is restricted to the Kukurai and influential leaders. And those few with this knowledge may die soon. Also since garamut gives them power of authority, will they be willing to teach the young men as well as young women to create codes and calls for the purpose of delivering messages? I asked some elders including young men, how many adult men in Kayan know how to send messages via garamut. They said, only a handful, not more than ten. Besides, in the past not everybody was taught the skill of sending messages. Only those who had been initiated and in position of leadership were expected to learn from the experts.

One elderly informant told me that not all men were taught how to send messages. He said in Tok Pisin, 'ol wan wan man tasol i lainim', only few individual men learnt. Thus the knowledge was restricted as 'exclusive knowledge'. He and others also told me that with the past practices of the men's house no longer in existence, this knowledge is no longer imparted to young people. Call signs were composed for the clan, or for the individuals. In addition they also said that in the past a bigger number of people could interpret the messages conveyed through garamut, but today this knowledge is also disappearing. I asked how would people know how to interpret? They said that those who know tell the others and through the process of 'hear and tell', people learn the call signs, even some women. For example, Teddy's wife told me she can identify Teddy's call sign, calling her to come home if she was in the garden because Teddy taught her to understand the message. Teddy explained to me that his call sign first begins with a few beats of a traditional song for identifying him, and then he proceeds to convey the message. This shows that the right of the exclusive use of garamut and call signs still remain with the Kukurai and the influential leaders such as Teddy.

Despite the transformation of garamut in embracing new social meanings, the right to own garamut is not only biased against women but also against men. Garamut demarcates social ranking among men, reserves the right of its use only to the big men as an agent of their social power. I assert that even if the call signs were taught to various men, the authority of sending messages will remain exclusive to the Kukurai and the few influential clan elders who are considered leaders of the village. Another reason for this exclusive use of call signs is that call signs were reserved for the Kukurai or the big men. The mark of the Kukurai or the big man was to be generous as a feast giver, to own many pigs and wives, to be a good orator, gardener, trader, and to respect the fellow elders and ancestral spirits. Thus as the Kukurai were considered wealthy persons, they could use their call signs to send messages to their clan members or other clans to host various festive activities. This also explains the reason that no garamut should be sounded unnecessarily because the voice of garamut brings people together. So when people gather, the responsibility of feeding them lies with the one who beat the garamut. Therefore in this context, there is an interesting correlation that the garamut has a belly and a voice and it has to be fed.

6.6 The disappearing knowledge of garamut

Upon reflection on Kayan garamut, I suggest that in the past, garamut not only shaped and maintained social structure but also beat the rhythm of the social order of life and events in the community. This changed immensely with the arrival of colonial administrators and missionaries when garamut were now used as signaling instruments for time keeping. Apart from the colonial intervention, new technologies such as mobile phones are contributing to the fast disappearance of this knowledge. In fact now at Kayan school ground there is a tall transmitter tower, installed by Digicel Mobile Company. Furthermore there is also in the village, a PNG Telecom Solar Dish which was installed some years ago. However during the time of this research it was not operational because lightning had damaged it.



Digicel Tower at Kayan School ground - Photo taken 2012

I observed that many people in the village now own mobile phones which they use, to communicate even in the village. It is becoming a preferred way for private messages whereas garamut puts out private messages in the public space. For example, after work on garamut, we would return home; Teddy's wife would have prepared dinner and a plate of food would be reserved for Arnold, whom I introduced as one of the carvers in Chapter three. Teddy would beat the garamut to call Arnold over. This went on a number of times. One afternoon, Arnold expressed to me that he became a little embarrassed, that Teddy would call him via garamut to come over and

meet Teddy and I. Arnold said that everybody in the village would know that Teddy was calling him to come and drink tea. He preferred that Teddy should call him via his mobile phone so that the message could be kept private.

The garamut in the social cultural context of Kayan is an object of power and agency of the voice of leadership which, has been handed down through the protocols of custom and tradition. From my observation, I predict that the knowledge of carving garamut most probably will remain for about ten to fifteen years or even longer as a number of young people told me that they have the skills to carve garamut. However of great concern is that hardly any of them know how to send messages, though I have observed that they can beat garamut during singsing. With these observations I predict that the knowledge of sending messages via garamut will disappear within less than ten years if young people are not taught this knowledge.

Museums around the world are full of objects of all kinds from third world countries including Papua New Guinea, collected during the time of explorers and colonial contact. People parted with many objects of deep cultural value. Some objects were sold because the objects once the rituals were over were considered no longer to have any sacred life. Others were given away by the people as they embraced new teachings of the missions. Many of these collections can now be found in museums around the world such as in France, America, Britain, Germany, and Australia. These collections are said to represent all sorts of possibilities for exploring other times, places and ways of life of the people of the countries where objects are taken from. But parting with these objects also contributed to the decline in the knowledge and skills to replace these objects and as well the cultural meaning attached to them faded in the memory of the people. The near disappearance of one of the Kayan traditional garamut design Yoberber is a good example of a breakdown of knowledge transmission. Many villagers did not know of the existence of this design. After the Second World War when they made new garamut to replace the ones which were destroyed, the design Yoberber was not carved on any of the clan garamut, as I discussed in Chapter Four.

Furthermore, museum collectors and individual buyers of artefacts also indirectly contributed to the loss of knowledge especially in the area of designs and with it the stories of these objects. One such case is the story of a garamut of Kayan which is now at a Berlin Museum in Germany. This garamut has the design called Yoberber of the Kainmbat clan. By coincidence as I have mentioned (in Chapter four) Poser took some photographs of the garamut and brought them to the village. Philip who owns these photographs told me that he heard from his father about this lost design. So when Poser came with the photographs of the design they were very grateful as they had believed that this design was lost forever. Now from these photographs they resurrected this design Yoberber on a new garamut which I donated to the University of Queensland Anthropology Museum.

6.7 Garamut as time keepers

During the colonial administration especially in what was then German New Guinea in 1884 – 1914, the German administration did not necessarily recognise the leadership of traditional big men but very often chosen and appointed their own leaders who were known as luluai¹⁸ also known as Kukurai, village chiefs, and tultul¹⁹. They were like government appointed officials. This administrative form of governance under the governorship of Albert Hahl who introduced the system in Rabaul also applied to the Kayan (see Waiko 1993, pp.45-46). Kayan big men known as Kakos were also sidelined and the administration appointed leaders of their choice as government representatives and gave the men the name Kukurai. Hence the Kayan have used name Kukurai since then. This also had an impact on the use of garamut; that they were now used principally to signal the arrival of a government patrol or call for a meeting to deal with government matters. These changes also weakened the power of the traditional leaders as the administration worked more closely with their own appointed leaders who were now regarded as the voice of the power of the government, translated in Tok Pisin, as ‘maus bilong gavman’, voice of the government. Likewise garamut also became an agent of colonial administrative power when it was pounded by a government official such as the tultul. I argue that these imposed changes denigrated garamut simply as a signaling gong, and obscured its’ primarily role as agents of the power of the voice of

¹⁸ Luluai: A Tok Pisin word for a big man or Kukurai who is considered a hereditary big man.

¹⁹ Tultul: Another Tok Pisin word for a big man, who is of lower rank to the Luluai as a messenger or an interpreter. Both words are originally Kuanua words from the Tolai people of East New Britain.

the Kukurai. They now became as signaling instrument for indicating clock time in schools, churches or signaling events such as the arrival of administration officials to villages.

6.8 Commodification of garamut and Tourism

Imbal (2009) writes that it is also possible both from tourists and host perspectives that as people's lifestyle and needs change, their demands will also change. I observed that the Kayan openly discussed their traditional customs and other aspects of their cultures but they also placed restrictions on the type of objects to be sold, in particular the clan garamut and the sacred objects in the men's house.



Garamut which was sold for \$60 Australian by a Kayan elder.

Teddy and Philip, including the young people told me that they now cannot live in

the past. Modern economic needs which now can be accessed by money have enticed people to sell garamut to buyers because they need money to buy modern day goods from the shops. Unlike in the past, when only big-men were allowed to own a garamut, now as I observed among Kayan, every male individual may become an owner of such a prestigious object. The trend set in when collectors and buyers came and paid cash for objects such as garamut. For example, in 1965 an elder of the village sold a garamut to a Catholic priest for \$60 Australian Dollars in order to buy a shotgun to shoot pigs. The gun is now in the custody of the old man's grandson who is a correctional officer. This garamut is now in South Australia Museum (see photo). When I showed the photograph of the garamut to the family members, they became emotional as they felt connected to this garamut and in Tok Pisin they said, 'em garamut bilong mipela'. That is our garamut; indicating collective family and kinship connection to the garamut and the old man. This garamut I was told by family members was not a clan garamut but a private garamut of the old man of their family line.

As this section is about commodification of garamut it would be necessary to distinguish between clan garamut and ordinary garamut. According to Kayan elder, in the past, clan garamut were

ritually carved. They were placed in the men's houses and were considered imbued with the power of the spirits. And they were only used for ritual and clan purposes such as calling clan members together. The elders further stated that even today the garamut in the men's house though they may have been carved without much ritual are considered sacred, are not for sale. The ordinary garamut are those carved with no ritual and are considered void of power. These garamut are owned by individuals for private use and they can be sold.

Commodification of garamut has resulted in a slight increase in the number of garamut produced for sale. An interesting remark was made to me by an elder of Kayan. He said that some young people or carvers were eager to get money and they have compromised quality with quantity. He said in Tok Pisin, 'ol i seksek long kisim moni na i no wokim gutpela wok, translated as, they are eager to get money and do not do a proper job. He pointed out that the garamut carved using traditional tools, were vintage garamut and were of higher quality in comparison to the ones carved with modern tools which are hurriedly carved from young immature garamut trees.

In the village, I saw a lot of smaller garamut owned by individuals. With the help of my companion Cascius, we counted around twenty standing in front of private homes. This leads me to suggest that these garamut were not carved for a ceremonial or cultural purpose, but rather were carved to take advantage of the tourist market. They were not produced with the intention of usefulness, but to illustrate culture for outsiders and to satisfy tourists' consumption. Going around with Cascius, I saw a number of small garamut stacked together under a house which was located away from the main village. I asked Cascius who owned these garamut. He told me that an expatriate, a white man, had been living in the village since 2007 and had collected the garamut from the people. The expatriate had told them that he was going to look for potential buyers from Europe and had made arrangements to buy and sell Kayan artefacts. However he left the village in 2010 and did not return. I asked Cascius, 'what did the Kukurai think of this?' Cascius said that the Kukurai and the elders were not happy but again the pressure of earning money prompted individuals to 'do their own thing'. This is another challenge to the Kukurai, who are held to be the only ones who give permission to carve garamut in Kayan.

I observed that most privately owned garamut were smaller than the clan garamut in the men's house. This could be an indication that tradition forbids carvers to make big garamut if they were

not for the Kukurai or for the men's house. Going with the carvers to the forest collecting garamut logs for building the new men's house, I saw that there were very few big garamut trees standing. This could also be the reason that smaller immature garamut trees are now cut to carve garamut. Besides, I suggest that with the increase in population, the use of garamut timber as posts to build private houses has depleted the forest. However I did notice some attempt being made to plant garamut trees.

6.8.1 Garamut as representational agent

I have observed that among the Kayan, garamut is not strictly owned by an individual but is a representational agent, in the sense that as an object of Kayan identity, the garamut resembles the collective ownership of the family, ahead of their being one person's property. The main reason is that the designs on the garamut are commonly held as belonging to the Kayan clans and through design, the garamut first and for most represents the clan. However this idea of collective ownership is now being challenged by individuals who carve and sell garamut with the claim that it is their private property. For example, one young man approached me to look for potential buyers in town who might be interested in buying his garamut. I asked him whether he asked permission from the Kukurai according to their custom to make a garamut and his response in Tok Pisin was, 'ol Kukurai i no inap givim mi moni, bilong wanem bai mi westim taim long ol'. The Kukurai will not give me money, why should I waste time on them? He added, 'times are hard and if a man can carve a garamut and sell it, that will help getting some money for his family'. One can see that though commodification of garamut is bringing income to individuals it has had some negative impact to the community. Permission is no longer sought from the Kukurai, and the value and significance of garamut as objects which connect their kinship network is now less understood and appreciated. Competition for resources is now apparent where clan members are contesting who has the right to harvest garamut trees in forest areas. One elder commented that the quality of garamut carved, have declined. That is to say that the garamut carved for sale are not carved in a ritual process which considered sound being important in carving garamut. This has changed and concentration is driven at the visual appearance in order to attract potential clients, especially tourists, which Gell (1999) describes as Enchantment of technology and Technology of enchantment.

Paul (the master carver) also confided in me that that he does not follow custom to seek permission and he knows he is breaking custom. His comments were similar to that of the young man. He said that he needs money to buy necessities of life such as kerosene, and batteries. He carves garamut discreetly for buyers such as school headmasters or for the Provincial Government Administration who present them as gifts to visiting dignitaries. He proudly told me of his greatest achievement of carving around forty small garamut for Pacific Island Ministerial Forum delegates who attended a meeting at Madang in 2008. Philip emphasised that any garamut either with clan designs or personal designs coming out of Kayan still represent Kayan. Philip's comments suggest that garamut from Kayan bear the identity of Kayan even when they travel out of Kayan. Referring to garamut designs, Philip said in Tok Pisin, 'em hanmak bilong mipela ol Kayan', that is the mark of our hands, the Kayan. A view that was also expressed to me by some young males at Kayan, that it was a good thing to own a garamut as this gives them status as 'pikinini man'. This means that as males they should own a garamut to identify with their masculinity. It is a new idea, because in the past only the Kukurai and influential leaders owned garamut.

6.9 Use of garamut during show

The Kayan have made attempts to present traditional performances to an outside public. In 1998, the first Kayan Mini-Cultural Show was held. Garamut of Kayan has participated in Provincial as well as National Cultural Festivals or Shows. One Kayan elder who had participated at Madang Festival expressed great pride that in all of Madang Province they, the Kayan, have a unique presentation of garamut. In 2008 whilst at Divine Word University, I heard the booming sound of garamut like the rumbling of a volcano, so I decided to go and find out where this noise was coming from. Arriving at the sports ground where the Madang Cultural Festival was taking place, I came upon about fifteen garamut being sounded at various intervals. I enquired where these garamut were from and someone told me they were from Kayan. It drew crowds of people to come and see the performance. A number of tourists were taking photos. In the village an elder told me that they had also participated in Wewak on the invitation of East Sepik Cultural Committee which organises the East Sepik Garamut and Mambu Festival. To one of my questions how garamut represented Kayan to other Papua New Guineans, the respondents said that it gave them pride and identity as a people of Kayan. Gabus one of their cultural representatives on the Madang Tourism Board, mentioned that the Kayan garamut presentation also represents the unique culture of

Madang to other Papua New Guineans. This shows that the Kayan have begun objectifying their own culture which gives them identity as different from other groups of people.

The elders further reminded me that these garamut were not taken out of clan men's houses but were privately owned garamut. Nevertheless all garamut taking part were assembled at one spot and some ritual farewell was done before their departure. I witnessed this custom of 'ritual preparedness' of objects especially garamut and masks also during the recent 2013 Garamut and Mask Festival held at Kayan. As some young male informants told me since they were handling objects of power they had to follow custom protocols as a precaution to avert unforeseen dangers.

One of Teddy's sons told me that since he was participating he was not sleeping in the house but at the secluded area with the tumbuan masks. Adherence to these custom practices was seen as shielding the community from the unforeseen powers both from the spirits as well as from jealous people who might bring about curse and the garamut will not generate impressive communal sound.

Next I describe the events of the Garamut and Mask Festival which I was privileged to witness during two days festival, on 30th August till 1st September 2013. This took place after I had done my field research in the village of Kayan in 2012. I was invited to attend because my research provided them with an opportunity to think seriously about the predicament of some aspects of their culture especially the garamut.

My observation of the tumbuan dance was that there is a close relationship between garamut and the tumbuan dance. When there is tumbuan dance, it is always accompanied by garamut as these dances are considered heavily ritualised dances. Because of this connection tumbuan face is always carved on the finials of garamut among Kayan.

6.9.1 Kayan Garamut and Mask Festival

Teddy told me that the intention of this event was primarily to preserve and hold to their cultural knowledge as well as to show it to outside visitors. Furthermore he expressed that as Kayan people they wanted to market their culture as an alternative way of getting some income from potential tourists. Other elders also said that with the hard times, given the drop in prices of cash crops such as copra and cocoa which they heavily rely upon for cash income, they must try different ways.

Some elders including Teddy, Philip and Michael particularly expressed disappointment that a village called Watam which is in the East Sepik along that coastline as the Kayan was attracting tourists and not them. The issue of contention was that the *Sambaur* Mask Dance which Watam have been performing had become a draw card for tourists. They told me that the Sambaur Mask Dance was taught to Watam people by a few Kayan villagers and this has been of great advantage to Watam. Tourists coming to Madang have gone straight to Watam by arranging with Madang Tours, a company operated by Sir Peter Barter a tourist operator in the Province.

In the village I heard some arguing that they must find a way to put a stop to Watam performing the *Sambaur* or 'dragon dance'. They even asked me for advice how to stop the Watam from performing this dance. Watam is about sixteen kilometers East of Kayan near the Ramu and the Sepik rivers and are traditional trade partners and also have ancestral connection to the Kayan.



Sambaur mask dance Kayan village, 2013

I arrived at the village of Kayan on Wednesday 27th August 2013. On the evening of the day I arrived, I was taken to two particular secluded camps where garamut and tumbuan masks were kept. The camp of the garamut was in the bush and the camp of the tumbuan masks was at the beach. At both camps I saw men working hard putting final touches decorating the garamut and the masks. I asked the men staying with the garamut how long they had been there and they said they

had been there for a week. I also asked why they should not leave the garamut alone, and the response was, ‘to keep garamut company’, otherwise misfortune might befall the participants as well as the community. The spirits would not be pleased with them for leaving them alone, because they are like people and they need company. The humans need the power and assistance of the spirits for the performance to be a success.



Garamut camp in the bush



Mask camp at the beach

The garamut camp was in the bush area and the tumbuan mask camp was down at the beach front. I asked an elder what might be the reason for this and he gave me a vague answer. He said that this had been the tradition and further added that he thought garamut were associated with forest spirits and tumbuan masks were associated with creator ancestral spirits of the village. In Tok Pisin the elder said, ‘ol garamut i makim ol spirit bilong bus na ol *tumbuan* i makim ol spirit bilong ples’, translated as, garamut represents the spirits of the forests and the *tumbuan* the spirits of the village. Poser also suggests that *Tumbuan* could have come from the coastal migration (see also Poser 2008, p.87).

Whilst visiting the garamut camp, I heard an argument amongst those who were with the garamut. The argument was not about garamut but about ‘Sambaur mask’ which is now advertised for tourists, as ‘dragon dance’. This is because a number of people carry a long structure like a dragon or a snake and dance, which is similar to the Chinese dragon dance. I enquired about the origin of this dance and Linus Yamuna a man from Murik told me that the dance is not a copy of a Chinese dragon dance as tourists and people from other parts of the country might assume. It is based on traditional stories of the coastal area from Kayan to the Murik lakes which speak of huge snakes

with multiple heads which spit out fire. This was confirmed by Paul Kuri who said that people referred to these snakes as spirit snakes or in Tok Pisin 'masalai snek'. Paul who was in charge of the *Sambaur* mask decided that he and his group would camp at another location. However at night around 8.00 pm, some young men reported that they had gone to that camp and found out that Paul had lit the lamp and had gone off to sleep. Nobody was seen staying with the mask. They were arguing whether to go and bring the *Sambaur* mask to the garamut camp. Some were in favour but others said they did not want to disappoint the old man as this arrangement had been agreed to by some elders. Later I found out that around midnight, the boys went and carried the *Sambaur* mask to where the garamut were because nobody was seen staying with the mask.

On the early hours of Saturday morning 31st August 2013, around 3:00 am, the official opening day of the Festival, shrieking eerie voices broke the silence of the morning moving up and down the length of the village. This was an indication that the spirits were delivering garamut to the village. Around 6:00 am, the owners of the garamut awoke to find their garamut thrown



everywhere in the middle of the village. Their task now was to identify their garamut with the garamut sticks and the garamut stands. This they did and the garamut were lined up in rows where the ceremony of beating of the garamut was to take place. During this time food crops such as bananas were brought and placed near the garamut by both men and women.





The beating of *garamut* began around 10:00 am Saturday morning with the official opening and continued throughout the day till midnight. On both Friday and Saturday, *Tumbuan* and other dances were performed.

In the village *tumbuan* masks had their own secluded area. Young men who were to carry the *tumbuan* masks slept in the enclosure throughout the preparation period which was about one week. I asked one of the young men who was to carry a *tumbuan* mask, what sort of rituals they were observing and he told me the following: They were not to eat food cooked with coconut cream, not to wash, not have any sexual activity and also sleep with the group in the enclosure. I asked why and the reason given was, this was to tone the body and prepare it to carry the heavy *tumbuan* masks so that they would be light-footed to dance. They also coated their bodies with traditional oils in massaging their legs and arm muscles. This was also done when they went out to perform and afterwards.



Tumbuan masks enclosure



A tumbuan spirit mask Katiknase

I also saw that after every performance they would come into the enclosure, take off the masks, and rub their armpits, and their shoulder blades and the back of the neck with the stalk of a certain type of plant called *gorgor* in Tok Pisin. A number of these stalks were cut and brought to the enclosure. They would also rub the area of the mask that rested on their body. I again asked why, and one elder told me that this is to wipe the sweat away, so the body remains dry and friction doesn't occur as they would be carrying the mask again. If there was a deeper ritual association, the elder most probably did not know so he could not tell me. There might be a suggestion that these measures were necessary to safeguard the young men from the powers of the spirits as well as to contain the power of the spirits. The festival began in the morning of Friday 30th. The *Tumbuan* came from their secluded area from the beach front to dance in the village. After every performance they would take rest in their new enclosure which was erected in the village. It was forbidden for women or girls to enter this enclosure. Photographs of the *tumbuan* in the enclosure were taken with permission. Some even said photographs taken inside the enclosure should not be shown to women. However some young people including some elders said that photos were appearing in magazines and they saw no reason why photographs should not be shown. In this way they could expose their culture to the outside world.

The *tumbuan* comprised of eight masks in total, four tall ones and four shorter ones. The shorter ones are called *Ngapai* in Kayan language. They are considered playful, tricksters and mischievous short spirits of the forest. The taller ones called *Tukumang* are resourceful spirits, guardians and providers of food. Two in particular were depicted by cassowary heads on top of the masks. One was called *Mberam* and the other, *Katiknase*. They are spirits of the Kainmbat clan. These two are spirits of the grassland which borders the neighboring village of Boroï. From this presentation I deduced a link between a public statement of legitimacy to ownership of property and rights of harvesting the resources of the grassland such as hunting pigs. The Kainmbat clan members have first preference. In fact some of them have cocoa plots along parts of that grassland in close proximity to Boroï villager with whom they have had fights over the ownership of the grassland.



Eldery women with dry coconuts

I also saw some elderly women carrying dry coconuts which they broke in front of the *garamut* when the *garamut* were assembled as well as when *tumbuan* masks came out to perform. Another peculiar observation was that when the *tumbuan* went through the village women threw food items such as bananas, sago flour and cut coconut flesh

on the ground. I asked an elder about this gesture and he told me that this was a sign of joy (in Tok Pisin, *amamas*). As for women throwing food on the path of the *tumbuan*, I interpret this gesture to mean that it is a sign of appreciation to the spirits for the provision of the food. The act symbolises that these spirits are custodians of food resources as well and they also contribute to the fertility and prosperity of the life of the community. It can also be interpreted that the gesture symbolises an act of offering some parts of the material substance of a previous harvest to the spirits so that renewal involves the generation of the 'new' from some part of the old (see also Munn 1992, p.18).

Philip said that the two spirits of the grassland, *Mberam* and *Katiknase*, operate in the following manner: one lights the fire, and the other stands watch to shoot pigs which flee from the fire. This story was also narrated to the public by Caspar the Kukurai of *Kainmbat* clan when the two *tumbuan* masks danced with the others. The story also places *garamut* in relationship to *tumbuan* masks. *Tumbuan* spirits known as *Kiadaban* (in Kayan language) also dwell in the men's house and when they come down to walk around, they step on *garamut*. I suggest that there is a connection to the story of an old man who saw two tall figures in the middle of the night, walking up and down the length of the village. The connection is to the men's house as these two spirits are also considered the creator spirits of the village. The two are more aligned to ancestral spirits than the other spirits of the forest. Some *garamut* are also named after the *tumbuan* ancestral spirits.

Teddy my principal informant, and the leader who organised the festival, told the gathering that the idea of the festival that year was based on four objectives: Firstly, to engage the community to come together for an event; secondly to attract public interest as well as tourists; thirdly, to present their case to the government officials to assist them in their endeavour to find meaningful income;

and fourthly to celebrate the enthusiasm my research had ignited in them about preservation and knowledge of garamut. He and the elders of the village felt that I had provided them a window of opportunity to showcase their culture.



Cassowary masks dancing



Ngapai dancing and entertaining the crowd

6.9.2 Use of garamut in Church Worship

Stories I heard in Wewak, indicate that the acceptance of the use of local instruments for worship especially in the Catholic Church was only in the late 1960s. Furthermore as I was growing up this was my experience as well. A prominent catechist Otto Kovingre of Boikin in the East Sepik Province, who has since died, told me the following story. In the early 1960s he composed a Tok Pisin Mass called Misa Boikin (in Tok Pisin) based on traditional tunes from his village to be accompanied with garamut and kundu (hand held drums). After they had practiced they decided to try it out in Church worship. One Sunday with the approval of the Parish Priest they brought the instruments to be played during a Sunday Mass.

However, on that Sunday a senior official from Rome who was touring the missions arrived at the parish unexpectedly. Hastily they removed these instruments from the church and hid them in the bushes. They did use the instruments the following Sunday when the visitor from Rome had left. This was before the Second Vatican



Catholic Church at Kayan

Council (1962- 1965) when approval was given for the incorporation of aspects of traditional culture and music not in conflict with Catholic beliefs, within the liturgy (see Niles 1996, p.13).

Kayan is a predominately Catholic village though lately two families have now joined the Seventh Day Adventist Church. Since I stayed in Kayan for the seven months I was curious that no garamut or kundu drums were used in Sunday Services, only guitars being used. I made some enquires and was told by a young Church leader that they did have a garamut in the Church before, but it was a private garamut and the owner took it away. He continued that when they had this garamut in the Church they occasionally used it with kundu drums to accompany singing in church. He said that if they were to have a garamut in the Church, they would need to carve one specifically for the church. It would have to be blessed by the priest because of the garamut connection to their belief in other spirits of the village. To me this response from a Church leader reinforces the understanding that belief in garamut as having connection to ancestral spirits still prevails.

6.9.3 Christian belief and relation to spirits

Christianity in the form of the Catholic Church has been present in Kayan since the 1930s. Most of the people are Catholics and they follow Catholic devotions such as going to Church on Sundays, have women and youth prayer groups, charismatic prayer groups, and the Legion of Mary. I observed that the statue of Mary was placed in three locations around the village and prayers were said, especially with the Rosary being recited most evenings by members of the Legion of Mary. During October (set aside as the month of Mary in the Church Calendar) a statue of Mary was brought from family home to family home, with prayers, singing and devotion. The family home that received the statue decorated the place before the statue was brought for the night to their home. The next evening it was brought to another home where prayers were said accompanied with songs using guitars. On the last evening of the month of



Village grotto



Statue of Mary at a family home

October the statue was brought back to the main grotto in a big combined procession with prayers and singing.

Another event where I witnessed people's demonstration of faith was on the occasion of the feast of Christ the King, the patron of the Parish. On the eve of this feast, a charismatic prayer group sang songs and prayed till about midnight. Then on Sunday morning a big procession took place in the middle of the village with prayers and singing, carrying the statue from the centre of the village to the Church. The statue was carved by Paul Kuri, the master carver of garamut.



Procession with carved statue of Jesus

Even for the during the Garamut and Masks festival, they had invited a national priest from Divine Word University to come as a guest in order that he could say Mass on Sunday. The Mass was said in the middle of the village where dance performances took place. This shows that though they still believe in other spirits, their belief in a Christian God is just as strong.

Given these strong expressions of faith in God as an omnipotent Christian spirit, one would think that the Kayan would have abandoned the traditional beliefs in other spirits, other than God, angels and saints. To the contrary, from my observation and confirmed by stories about the presence of numerous spirits and the belief that the garamut's optimal agency resides in resident spirits, I sensed there was some anxiety whether to let go of this belief or to hold onto it.

Both Teddy and Philip told me a story of a man in Boroi village, who became mentally disturbed, in Tok Pisin, called 'longlong'. They said that this person runs around naked, shouting and speaking unintelligible words. Once Catholic, the village has converted to the Seventh Day Adventist Church (SDA). According to Teddy and Philip, the Church pastor told Boroi villagers to burn all their sacred objects, including garamut. This individual made a public show of burning his sacred objects to convert to the SDA Church. Philip and some elders of Kayan are convinced that this person's mental disorder is a sure sign, that he has been punished by the spirits of those sacred objects. For the Kayan, the Catholic Missionaries were tolerant. They showed a mild attitude

towards many traditional practices of the people which they considered harmless (see also Poser 2008, p. 11.).

During my stay, I heard numerous stories of people's relationship to the spirits. As I pointed out, spirits of the men's house, the *garamuts*, and the masks have a personal connection and relationship to clan and family members. When a member of the clan is sick, and if no sign of recovery is seen, even if the person is on medication, they would consult the Christian prayer leaders as well as other healers, referred to as 'glasman'²⁰ in Tok Pisin to help with the healing.

On one occasion, I went on a boat trip to a neighboring village of Marangis close to Ramu River, about a forty minutes boat ride. We brought a community school teacher who had been sick for some time to see a 'glasman' whose name had become popular as someone who can heal people.

The trip was to find out the cause of this woman's prolonged illness and receive appropriate help. Her husband had been bringing her back and forth to town for medication, but there was no sign of improvement or healing. It was concluded that her illness was not from natural causes alone but could be compounded with a wide range of other possibilities such as, men's house, *garamut* spirit, family or clan spirit, her husbands' wrong doing, a curse from some jealous person from the village, her own wrongdoing, or she had been poisoned. She has continued to live with a disability affecting her walking.

In the case of Christian prayer leaders, they would pray and also seek answers to why the person is sick. They would also give water they had prayed over as a possible curing agent. Sometimes as I have already mentioned in the case of a young child who died, the prayer leader pointed out that there was trouble in the house, meaning that the family had to look inwards to find out what relationships might have been broken to bring about the death in the family. An example is when a young child of about four months old suddenly got sick and died at night, and the grandparents of the child began to ask questions why: Teddy and I went across to visit the family and I heard the following conclusion had been reached. The cause of death was the result of a fight between the mother and the father of the child which angered the spirits. The father had taken a sacred spear or spirit spear called *mais* (in Kayan language) that belonged to the men's house and chased his wife.

²⁰ Glasman: A Tok Pisin word for a traditional healer

The spear had been in a cover at a small house because the *Samngae* clan is still yet to build a bigger men's house to store all of their sacred objects.

Kayan also believe that spirits especially *gnumtik* spirits (sometimes referred to as *masalai*) who dwell in the bush, waterholes and all around the village can play tricks on people. For example, one afternoon I was with Willie Kawang and Teddy, where Willie was carving a *garamut* and I wanted to go to see Philip who was also carving a *garamut* at a different location. Teddy asked me whether I knew the road or would I be safe. If not he would accompany me. Since Philip's location was no more than a ten minute walk, I confidently said, I would be alright. Teddy's concern was, a *gnumtik* spirit might make me disorientated, and I could lose track of where I was going, since that part of the sago patch area was said to have some *gnumtik* spirits around.

During another occasion while we were collecting logs for the erection of the new men's house, villagers told me that this particular part of the forest was inhabited by a bigger number of *gnumtik* spirits because it was far away from the village. They told me that on occasions, individuals had found themselves lost and needed to be found by search parties. This has been the experience of especially those who do not belong to the clan which owns the forest area. In other words, for those who are not known to the spirits, they must be accompanied by those who own the area of forest. I also noticed that when *garamut* logs were pulled, one would say some words and tap the log with leaves and say in Tok Pisin, 'kirap na yumi go', translated as, get up and let us go. I interpret this to mean the elder was invoking the power of the spirits to let go of the logs so that they can be easily moved from the forest to the village.

My observation affirms Poser's (2008) description of the Kayan social landscape where the life in the village consists very much of traditional and modern, between mission and spirit beliefs, between subsistence and a cash-crop economy. In this vein, MacDonald (1984, p.196) also writes that life is experienced in different relationships, particularly in the relationship to the land, to the ancestors, and to other persons. People are aware of the area in which they live, of their garden land, their fishing area, the forest where they hunt, their mountains and rivers, their fishing zones, and so on. Many groups have beliefs about spirits, called *masalai* which inhabit and guard these areas. It is essential that people maintain the right relationship with the land if they want to obtain sustenance (fruit, nuts, game, and garden produce) from it. As stated, this was also my observation

at Kayan that the people live a life of double consciousness, that is, how to negotiate their lives in accepting the modern changes and the belief in the power of the spirits. This double consciousness is exemplified in the garamut and the men's house.

One particular observation that for me presented as a general attitude was the reluctance shown by the male persons to immediately seek medical assistance. The village experienced an outbreak of diarrhoea which resulted in the death of three babies. However I heard in the village that people were talking about the garamut and spirits of men's house as primary suspects of the babies getting sick. Another occasion was when one of the villagers was sitting near coconut trees waiting for the truck to go to town, and a green coconut fell down and broke his leg. This incident was said to be the work of the spirits of the men's house because on that very day, when we went to collect logs, the person did not come to help but was heading to town.

6.9.4 Conclusion

In this chapter I have argued that though garamut among the Kayan has gone through a period of transition, transformation, it has not changed the fundamental belief that garamut are animated by spirits who are in the form of spirit persons have social and kinship ties with them. This belief system has been in place long before the arrival of missionaries and the colonial administration. Thus the expression of this belief is also manifested in garamut as was one of these objects to have originated from the spirits. The Kayan as shown in this thesis, connect garamut to the spirits as the primary agents who animate the garamut thus imbuing garamut and sacred objects with mystic powers. On the other hand, the demands of modern lifestyle have pushed the Kayan people to embrace the changes that came with the transformation of garamut as iconic objects to their use as objects that could also benefit them in various trajectories such as tourism.

The Kayan believe that by taking care of the garamut, they are taking care of their own livelihood. From my conversations with the Kayan elders, I gathered that for the Kayan, garamut are much more than material physical objects. They are manifestations of their creativity, knowledge, physical skill (which is a type of embodied knowledge and social relations). I show here that

unlike in the past where garamut were reserved for big men only, and used as gift objects to extend social relationships, they have now become new status symbol of masculinity for all Kayan men.



Garamut with new designs

Chapter 7 Findings, Analysis and Discussion

7.1 Overview

In this final chapter of the research investigating garamut, I present my key findings in regard to understanding garamut from the cultural context of the people of Kayan. I have argued that the garamut have been misunderstood and this is backed up by the following findings. What do garamut do? This was the question I posed in the beginning of this research. What is the role of garamut? Are they not simply pieces of hollowed out logs to drum out messages and provide entertainment in song and dance as a number of ethnomusicologists have proposed? My findings show that what seemed to be a simple question, led into a complex study among the Kayan.

I will discuss each of my ethnographic chapters in turn beginning with chapter 3.

7.2 Making of garamut

I have argued in Chapter three that the process of making garamut in Kayan is akin to transforming the garamut log into a human social body. The process involves careful deliberation similar to initiating young boys to become men. Again here we see a correlation that just as the Kukurai gives voice or permission for the young boys to undergo initiation, the Kukurai also gives voice for the garamut to be carved as demonstrated in the process of making my garamut.

This was an interesting insight to me in that the involvement of the Kukurai in granting permission for garamut to be carved; the Kukurai opens the voice of the garamut to be heard in the village as well as in the forest. In this way, the relationship between the forest and the village is harmonious. See also Leach (2002) who speaks of a similar belief among the Reite people that spirits called Kappu are the ones who give voice to the garamut. This similar idea of voice agreement is also noted by Were (2011) where a Ngalik elder from New Ireland in Kavieng, told him that ‘olgeta samting i stap long kapkap’, meaning, everthing, all knowledge is in the *kapkap*. Similarly I would suggest that for the Kayan, ‘olgeta samting o save i stap long garamut’, translated as, all knowledge is in the garamut. See also the discussion in Chapter five (p.165) about lifting the ban

of silence where the Kukurai give permission to open the voice of the garamut to be heard again after a period of mourning for the dead.

When someone dies, the Kukurai beat the garamut announcing the death. Observance of silence envelops the village. Metaphorically they say that the garamut sticks are bundled together and put aside. In Tok Pisin they said, ‘’taim wanpela i dai, mipela save pasim stik bilong garamut na putim i stap’’; translated as, when someone dies we bundle the garamut sticks and put them away. This means that the voice of the garamut is silenced and is not to be heard; meaning that there should not be any celebration of life when there is mourning until the Kukurai opens the voice of the garamut again by beating the garamut to lift the ban of silence. From this line of thinking, I see some connection to the meaning of *rumbung* as I described in Chapter One (p.44) where as it were, the breath of life is given by the Kukurai and normality can now return to the community.

7.3 The human body and garamut

My findings show that among the Kayan, the sacred and clan garamut are of similar dimensions to the body of an adult human being. The material wood is transformed through a process of body creation in a secluded spatial location in the forest away from the village for a couple of months. The fleshing out of the outer layers of the log is equivalent to getting rid of the wet substance of the wood just as young initiates went through the process of getting rid of the female substance of the mother through blood-letting. At this stage, garamut is still the thing of the forest. From the first step of cutting the log, the log is carefully transformed and created to resemble a human body. The new social body of the garamut would receive careful and attentive preparation so that when it emerged from its seclusion, it would look attractive and strong, as a newly initiated body of a young man. Most of all, it had a voice. The most critical step is the digging of the slit from which sound or voice is produced. In former times, a pig was killed by the owner of the garamut to celebrate this critical milestone to appreciate the work of the carvers. I might add it would not only be the carvers; but the spirits who would further bless the work in progress. The finials of Kayan garamut always have a tumbuan face and also depict both the male and female genitalia. The designs incised on the body of the garamut had social and spiritual meanings of connection to people, to the clan, land, and kinship relationships similar to some tattoos.

Kayan carve their garamut from garamut trees which they call *Waor* in their language. The botanical name for it is *Vitax Confossus* or New Guinea Walnut. It is a strong hardwood tree with white meat resistant to termites and does not rot easily. It is also the same tree from which long tall posts are collected to build the men's house. In the past, the story was that spirits carved garamut, especially the digging of the belly or slit. This is still the story, but not a secret story any more because even women now know that it is the men who carve garamut. However the story can be interpreted as reinforcing the belief that without the help of the spirits, humans alone have no power to make things happen. By beating and listening to the sound of the garamut, when it has reached a desired sound the carvers prepare it for painting. Colours symbolising the human lifecycle of white, red and black are often used as I have discussed in Chapter five. Then the garamut were adorned with decoration prepared by women. The materials for the decorations were also taken from the forest, however nowadays shredded strips of nylon rice bags are also used.

When all the work on garamut were completed including the garamut stands and the garamut stick to produce the sound, the decorated garamut were brought to the village in the early hours of the morning around five o'clock by the tambaran spirits who made eerie noises that frightened the women and children. Again this was the secret story of the past, but now it is in the open, that it is the men who deliver the garamut. Similar to a decorated young man who leaves the surrogate womb of the men's house, so too, a decorated garamut leaves the surrogate womb of the forest. In this way, the forest meets the village. The garamut as a log was a thing of the forest, now born as a corporeal person, and it will find residency in the village. When the day broke, the decorated shining face of the garamut was now publicly viewed by all, including the women and children.

It would be obvious that people seeing the garamut might think to themselves of what might be the gender of the garamut. I had this question as well when I first went to the village. It was answered by the research that though the male claim ownership of garamut, there are strong features of femininity in garamut. Thus from the findings, I suggest that garamut represents both the male and female reproductive story of lifecycle, of being born and dying. I would propose that the women to be regarded as co-creators of garamut. With these findings, I suggest that garamut are transgendered objects, neither male nor female.

7.4 Importance of name giving

One of Kayan traditional custom is for elderly women who has passed child bearing age would give names to garamut by breaking a dry coconut. This could be interpreted as; the elderly women have weaned a male child to be a grown up and will now be an independent adult as a member of the community. This custom is still practiced today; however it is not applied to garamut carved as gifts or for the tourist market, it only applies to garamut that would be used in the village. For the garamut I took out from the village, the elders said they will carve new ones to replace them and give the same names to them, *Yoberber*, *Raing*, and *Kabining*. In Papua New Guinea, giving names is important, that without a name, one does not belong to the community nor is one connected to a family line. This is also critical in owning property such as the land of the village. Thus, the garamut had to be given a name to become a member of the clan or the community, connected to the kinship structure of the people. This is because when a message is relayed, the garamut call people by name using their codes and signals. Those encultured to understand the message will hear it.

7.5 The men's house and garamut as agents of male power

In Chapter four I argued that garamut including settings of the men's house are agents of male power. The findings of my research show that voice is at the heart of understanding the power relations of the clan garamut, and the men's house. It is important to know this because as agents, garamut and the men's house, instil in the minds of the community a cultivated system of social behaviour. Gendered space, gender roles, and social ranking all follow the social parameters of behaviour as detailed by the garamut and the men's house. This has broader implications on power relations between men and women. Garamut deny women public voice and give rise to the consideration of women as being a threat to male masculinity and power.

Based on the findings, I assert that in order to protect the power of dominance over women, garamut and the men's house have established rules denying the women access to power. Here I am specifically referring to the power of the voice. By social control measures to prevent women from speaking out, garamut and the men's house have effectively shut out women from leadership and participation in the public arena. The research shows that the men's house and the clan

garamut carved out a gendered space whereby voice considered as the domain of men would be perpetuated. The men's house by accommodating garamut, in a way protects the voice of men. It creates a socialised gendered space for men only whereby women do not threaten to take away this power of the voice. Taboos as I have mentioned of women entering the men's house or sitting on garamut, were measures constituted by tradition and ancestral rules, and I argue they were meant to protect the 'voice' of men. There was grave fear that the power of the voice could be taken away by the women, so a body of knowledge about the threat posed by women was instituted. In the past, the transmission of this knowledge was given in the men's house. From my findings I now describe how this knowledge was transmitted to the young initiates among the Kayan.

To be a 'man', in Kayan society, one needed to be initiated in the men's house. It was the place where lessons of life, especially men's life, were taught to the young boys. One lesson was to put on the character of a man. They, as men, should be virile and strong, and have assertive voice, as the garamut. Poser (2002) wrote that one of the acts of initiation was to beat the garamut to drown the screams of the boy being beaten in the ritual. The men's house was considered the house of power, the place where power objects were kept such as sacred masks, sacred flutes, clan and sacred garamut, and sacred spears. Men draw their power from being associated with these objects of power, taking in some measure the power of the spirits. It was the place where men learnt how to carve artefacts, listen to the stories of their ancestors, beat garamut, play flutes, and, an essential at key times, keep a safe distance away from women. It provided refuge for men as a male-only gendered space.

The men's house was forbidden for women to enter. This practice continues today, that women are not allowed to enter the men's house. It is the place of the spirits and spirits do not like women to enter, seems to be the logic of the continued taboo placed on women. The men feel that they have responsibility to protect the women from the wrath of the spirits who could destroy their life. In this way, men are protecting continuity of life of the community, since women are the fertility beings who reproduce life and are also symbols of life. I see a correlation that when women's lives are threatened, life of the community is threatened.

Furthermore, lessons were received that women have power to drain out men's masculinity. The young men would have to be careful and stay away from the dangerous substances of women which could render them weak. Young initiates were told of their responsibilities to the clan and

the community. They learnt about garamut designs, the names of clan spirits, the spirits of the men's house, their kinship relations and spirits of the forest. The symbolism of the men's house was very often used to describe to the young initiates that they should be tall and strong like the men's houses which are tall and strong. They must be like the tall garamut posts to carry the community and not be like women. They should put on the character of masculinity as strong adults or in Tok Pisin, 'pikinini man'. They must have voice to look after the welfare of their family, clan and the community. For example they must speak out and defend shared values such as of land boundaries to ensure that members of the community including their own wives and children benefit from these resources.

However the situation today is different to that of the past. These lessons of life are disappearing because there are no longer initiations taking place in the village. Such change has not meant that people wish to wantonly discard the past, for good or ill. I observed that young people are now trying to claim identity of self that is rooted in something as concrete as the garamut. Some expressed the desire to own garamut as a status symbol of masculinity. During research I observed that though many of the past practices of the men's house have disappeared, much of the attitude towards women carries the legacy of the men's house, all along supported by the garamut voicing antagonistic perceptions and attitudes toward women. Taboos, as against women beating the garamut, or entering the men's house to participate in meetings, are an aspect controlling the voice of women. Women still are not encouraged to take up leadership positions and speak in public, their voice is considered best confined to homes.

The idea of women using the garamut can become contentious, as public voice is heard when the garamut is sounded. With use of the garamut reserved for men, they may present themselves as having assertive voice, as against the 'timid, weak, irrational' ways of women. By acquiring authority of the voice women could change this, by taking up their own power and capacity for control. (Referring to earlier stories of the capture of power from women, this could be a taking-back of what was theirs!). Strathern's account of the silencing of a woman in a marriage negotiation, for 'putting her man to shame', was given as a demonstration of underlying assumptions about inherent weaknesses in women (see Chapter 5, p.187). Moore (1986, pp.184-85) also highlights this aspect of male domination by saying that women are not 'free' from the image society provides for them; they are socialised, just as forcibly as men, into accepting social

norms and values. The fact that women may end up supporting the male order in their effort to value themselves within does not imply that women's interests are ultimately with those of men, or that women want to become men. She continues that the continuing dominance of the male order, and the appropriation of male values or interests by women, is the result of powerful and reinforced homology between what is social and what is made.

7.6 The voice of Kukurai

Human voice is a powerful thing. It gives personal power to people, especially those in positions of leadership. For leaders such as the Kukurai, their voice accompanied with cultural knowledge such as of land boundaries, clan and kinship relationships, forest resources, and ancestral stories was important in asserting their personal authority. Likewise sound producing instruments such as garamut or flutes are associated with cult instruments. Their sound reveal the voice of a higher being, ancestor or spirit. One of my research findings was that sharing in this power of the voice, are the garamut. We may ask, how would a material object be imbued with a voice?, a powerful voice I might say. What is the connection that garamut can have with voice? From my research among the Kayan, my findings show that garamut get their power of the voice from three sources: Firstly, according to the belief of the Kayan, the power of the voice comes from the spirits who are primary agents animating the garamut. Secondly, it comes from the humans as suggested by Gell (1998), that an object mediates social agency of persons, in this case the voice, and thirdly, it comes from the garamut log itself that it produces voice as a form of human body.

In Chapter three I talked about making of garamut. My findings reveal that among the Kayan, the making of garamut is equivalent to making of young men into adults. relationship of the voice of the Kukurai, the voice of the garamut and the voice of the spirits are interconnected. The Kukurai could make the claim that garamut was their voice because their voice is supported with the voice of the spirit. The relationship of the voice, the garamut and the spirits is also mentioned by Bateson (1958) and Leach (2002), whom I cited in Chapter two (p.61). The claim uttered by the Kukurai that garamut is their voice, is in agreement with the view expressed by some of my interlocutors in the village that garamut are like persons who talk, rather than simply make noise or sounds, like

bells. The garamut gives the Kukurai the power and authority of the voice. The garamut expands the power of the voice of the Kukurai in areas of political, economic, social and cultural activities of the people. Therefore when a garamut is heard in the village, it is always associated with the Kukurai. People would ask in Tok Pisin, *husat Kukurai i paitim garamut?*, translated as, which Kukurai beat the garamut.

Another point as part of my findings show is that garamut links the voice of the Kukurai to the spirits. Though the Kukurai are not spirits, there is a correlation that their voice mediated through garamut can be linked to the spirits. The connection I make is from the materiality of the garamut tree. As a tree taken from the forest, the garamut tree is part of the living things of the forest where spirits are believed to dwell. The Kukurai are the big men of the village who are deemed equipped with the knowledge of forest resources, land boundaries, and the names of spirits. This knowledge connects the voice of the Kukurai to the voice of the spirits in the forest in making of garamut. The process of selecting a tree as discussed in Chapter five offers an insight into this connection, in particular, the offering of foodstuffs (*kup*) to the spirits as well as to the Kukurai. In this exchange, the spirit of the forest reciprocates the gifts in giving voice to the garamut or opening the voice of the garamut, thus opening the voice of the Kukurai, imbuing the Kukurai with the power and the authority of the voice.

The findings support my argument that garamut are not simply hollowed out logs but are person-like objects imbued with characteristics and attributes and with a voice. Garamut generate sensory emotions and feelings in the way they transmit messages as well as with their presence. See Chapter Two (p.74) where I cited Howes and Feld who describe how objects or things generate a sensory mix from culture.

In their statements, I would like to suggest that the Kukurai have been implying that the garamut have independent agency from them yet at the same time are a part of them. This led me to think, what is behind this claim that a piece of log called garamut could be referred to as their voice? What kind of voice? Does this voice have power? Where does this power come from? Who owns this power? Who is affected by this power? These questions were part of the investigation embedded within the body of the garamut that my research investigated.

7.7 Spirits and garamut

Colonisers did not understand or they discounted the significant role garamut played in maintaining the social order of the community. Missionaries saw garamut as objects of pagan worship and encouraged people to get rid of them. Best still, they told people not to carve spirit or tumbuan faces on the garamut but to carve ordinary garamut because they knew that garamut were useful as communication instruments. They encouraged more use of garamut as form of entertainment. With the introduced technology of steel tools, people were now able to produce greater numbers of garamut, further undermining their exclusivity to the Kukurai and the ritual tradition. This together with, the new introduced meaning as slit-gongs for drawing attention, I argue, opened the voice of garamut to what I might call a secular voice, placing emphasis on music and entertainment. Therefore many of the garamut carved now do not follow the ritual process and are considered void of power. This means that they are not animated by spirits. The Kayan elders told me, these garamut can be sold but not the clan garamut in the men's houses because they have been carved following ritual process. Most of these garamut were carved after the Second World War to replace the ones that had been destroyed by earlier German punitive patrols and the Japanese soldiers during the war (see Chapter four, p.131).

7.7.1 Voice of the spirit

I have also argued that for the people of Kayan, the garamut is a spirit phenomenon. This I have discussed in chapters three four and five. There is this underlying belief that garamut are not only material objects but are also spirit objects, initially given voice by the spirits. Thus according to their beliefs, garamut also carry the voice of the spirits. There are stories which speak of incidents where a mysterious voice of the garamut was heard coming from the village of Kayan by people from the neighboring villages. Upon enquiry they found out that none of the *Kukurai* nor anybody at Kayan, had pounded a garamut. The conclusion reached was, it must have been a spirit. Some garamut which were carved following a ritual process are considered abodes of spirits. Given these beliefs surrounding garamut, Kayan people believe that these garamut can themselves beat the garamut producing its voice. They can also impersonate people and walk in the village. Furthermore, as also discussed in these chapters is the finding that the garamut is like a body with multiple voices. It accommodates the voice of spirit; the voice of the *Kukurai*; and its own voice, especially doubling up the voice of the spirit and of the *Kukurai*. Taken from the forest and

transformed into a garamut in the form, size and shape of the human body, the garamut can also be termed as a vessel of the voice of the spirit as well as that of the Kukurai.

7.8. Garamut getting new forms of socialisation and meaning

In Chapters three to five, I provided the underlying argument that from the cultural belief of the people, garamut are not only material objects but are a spiritual phenomenon. My findings among the Kayan show that this was the belief of the Kayan in the past and still is the current belief. Garamut were regarded as sacred objects only to be handled by initiated adult men but more so the big men. Garamut were exclusively owned and used by the big men as a way of demonstrating their voice and authority of leadership. However the arrival of colonial administrations and missionisation, this exclusive use was derailed when garamut were now used as time keepers similar to bells. Even uninitiated men and if that was not 'bad enough' women were now allowed to beat garamut. Initially from my own Province, East Sepik, I saw European Sisters (nuns) or women, in the schools and Mission Stations beat the garamut because they were not culturally bound to observe the taboos. Eventually, encouraged by the European women, some local ladies, took up beating garamut within the confines of the mission and school grounds beat as a time keeping instrument. Obviously they could not beat the garamut in the village itself. It is the case today as I observed in Kayan. Thus I want to make an important distinction that when garamut were sounded, not by the big men, it was not understood as the voice of the big man, but rather as the sound indicating clock time or an event. When the big man beat the garamut in the village, it was understood as the voice talking and people were obliged to hear. I observed that this is still the situation at Kayan.

7.8.1 Garamut Commodification and Tourism

Now, new trends in global tourism have also given new meaning and transformation to garamut as commodified objects. This has also created tension among the people, how to keep the cultural values of their culture and at the same time accept the commercial value that could flow to the community by commodification of their culture. According Joseph Mbaiwa (2011), the concept of commodification has gained prominence in international tourism research. He cites several studies such as that of MacCannell (1973); Cohen (1988, 1989); Ateljevic & Doorne (2003); and Steiner & Reisinger (2006) who discuss the concept of commodification as a basis for analysing cultural

tourism. Mbaiwa writes that Cohen (1988, p. 380) argues commodification is a process by which things (and activities) come to be evaluated primarily in terms of their exchange value, in the context of trade, thereby becoming goods (and services); the exchange value of things (and activities) is stated in terms of market prices. In tourism, the packaging of cultural activities and artefacts for the tourist market is known as the commodification of culture.

Placing this argument in the context of Kayan, I would agree that this global trend has reached the shores of Kayan, and Kayan cultural objects such as the garamut have become commoditified as a marketable value object. The garamut are being transformed into a valued object of cultural commodification in enabling the people make a living in the modern PNG. To this end, Kayan have begun to look for opportunities to use their culture of song and dance to tap into the tourist market. I gathered that upon hearing the mention of my research on garamut among them, people saw this as a window of opportunity to market their culture. With the declining commodity prices for cash crops such as copra and cocoa which the Kayan rely on for cash income, the Kayan like many other communities in Papua New Guinea are faced with economic hardship. Therefore they see tourism as providing part of 'the solution' to generate much needed income. They were envious that their next door neighbours the Watam people were benefiting from tourist boats coming to their place, and the stories of economic benefits enjoyed by the Watam community.

The Kayan are aware that culture tourism can generate economic benefits, socio-cultural benefits and environmental resource benefits. Thus they have made several attempts to present their garamut and mask culture to the public. According to the PNG Tourism Promotion Authority website (2014), Papua New Guinea's Vision 2050 and the Medium Term Development Plan (MTDP) 2001-2050, would see tourism rise to become a significant driver of the economy. This ambitious aim also provides motivation for communities such as the Kayan to seek to tap into this market.

I observed that the Kayan are now more inclined to break with some elements of tradition, as they are eager to engage the elements of their culture which will attract tourists into their community. It is mooted among them that embracing the commodification of their culture as a tourism product, because of anticipated socio-economic benefits, is a good idea. However I heard some elders

express reservations that they feared cultural commodification could devalue their culture and belief system. Such reservations are echoed in arguments about commodification of culture and its impacts by MacCannell (1973, p.589). He writes that the commodification for the tourism market can have both positive and negative impacts for local culture. He asserts that the commodification of culture for touristic purposes can lead to culture losing its meaning for locals. Cultural commodification changes the meaning of cultural products and human relations, making them eventually meaningless.

As Cohen (1988, p.380) notes, local culture becomes altered and often destroyed by its treatment as a tourist attraction. The production and packaging of local cultures for the tourist market, sees their intrinsic value as part of the local cultural identity being lost. As example of destructiveness, and the contention over the Sambaur dance between people in Kayan and Watam, as to who were its rightful owners, created some tension among the people. In this concern over performances displayed for the amusement of the tourists, the Kayan men who taught the Sambaur dance to Watam people were considered as ‘traitors’ who disadvantaged the Kayan. Village leaders even asked my advice on how they might stop the Watam community from performing the Sambaur dance, because the Kayan claim it is their dance and not the Watam’s. More than pursuing this as a commercial, intellectual or cultural property matter, on a point of legal entitlements, the Kayan wants recognition of their own distinctive culture as an objective reality.

7.8.2 New demands on garamut

I argued in Chapter Six, that new technology and the commercial prospects of selling garamut, created pressure for the production of more garamut. This pressure saw some increase in quantity. Would this have been a good thing? The answer as my findings show, is ambivalent as well. One Kayan elder was concerned that while quantity had increased, quality of garamut had declined. He added that the colours might look attractive, but the sound might not be good. In the past the quality of sound was of paramount importance. Rituals were performed to give and protect the sound both in the spirit sense and material sense. By spirit I mean, the offering of foodstuffs to the spirits to reciprocate with voice, and by material sense, I mean that garamut were carved in seclusion and shavings of the garamut were carefully disposed of by burning them. In the latter

case, it was feared that a jealous person or an enemy might pick up the pieces and bring about a curse through magic that would strangle the voice of the garamut. The expression in Tok Pisin, 'pasim win bilong garamut', stop the wind/voice of garamut, best describes this fear.

There are some control measures in place which also restrict overproduction of garamut which I suggest might help preserve their social value. Firstly, among the Kayan one needs permission from the Kukurai if setting out to follow custom protocols; secondly, not every garamut can be sold, due to limits on the size of the market; thirdly, one needs to have proper tools; fourthly, carving garamut is a specialised skill and not many men have this skill and the knowledge; and fifthly, it requires a lot of resources especially food, and now money. These points were listed for me by a young carver, the one who asked me to help look for a buyer for his garamut.

Furthermore, my findings suggest that the demand may be high but the knowledge of producing garamut is diminishing. This is because there is increasingly less number of skilled carvers. Also at this time with heavy dependence on the cash economy, this knowledge is not easily shared by those who know. So keeping the knowledge to themselves, as an advantage, contributes to the breaking down of the transmission of knowledge. This also shows that the cultural or communal social value of garamut is now supplimented with a commercial monetary value, which promotes individualism.

7.8.3 Are the days of garamut numbered?

As participants in the research, the elders of Kayan were confronted with its initial findings, that they might lose their culture of garamut. Hearing the dire prognosis strengthened their resolve that a serious attempt should be made to encourage young people to hold onto their cultural knowledge. In consultation with myself, they drafted a project proposal to source funding to build a Village Cultural Education Centre (see appendix). Teddy expressed the wish that the skills and lore of garamut should be passed on to the coming generations, saying the culture had been important to them since the time of their ancestors and the elders had the responsibility to preserve it. Nevertheless it was also my observation that Kayan, once renowned for carving elaborate garamut,

indeed were slowly losing their cultural knowledge as very few elders were left with this knowledge and skill.

The impromptu performances put on for tourists, have also been devaluing the cultural meaning and value of dances. In the past, traditional dances were only performed during special festive occasions; not put on at any time as a show. Led by the big men, negotiations and preparations took months with invitations to other villages. Pigs had to be raised, fish had to be caught and smoked, gardens had to be planted, firewood had to be prepared, extra shelters had to be built for visitors, sago had to be prepared, and also people with magic to stop rain coming had to be engaged. Furthermore, the headdresses, the costumes, the kundu drums, garamut, and the masks had to be prepared or repaired. The dancers also had to undergo ritual preparation in a secluded area, as well as to learn the songs, and the dance steps. When garden crops had been harvested and food crops stored, at the appointed time, the performance took place. These dances were performed to celebrate certain milestones in life such as initiations which brought the community together. However this long process of building relationships is not the norm any more. People with money can easily call for a dance performance. The community commitment is weakened; the spiritual significance is weakened as well, and these performances exhibited for cash income are voided of meaningful social relationships.

7.8.4 Rebuilding culture

I noted that the Kayan responding to messages contained in my research, not only wanted to market their culture, but also to find ways to preserve and pass on their cultural knowledge and traditions to the young people. Thus the proposal of building a 'Village Cultural Education Centre' was born. They felt that tourism associated with that project could contribute to the continuity and revival of their culture, cultural arts and crafts. It might also help foster a sense of community pride as visitors would come to visit their village. To make a public pronouncement that this was their intent, they set up a committee which planned and organised the Garamut and Mask Festival at Kayan Village in 2013. That in turn was most helpful to me in monitoring practices followed with the garamut.

The festival ran for two days from 31st August to 2nd September attended by guests and people from neighbouring villages as far as Murik in the East Sepik Province as well as Madang town. The performance included the beating of around twenty five garamut with their songs, masks performances and other singing groups; an event that the Kayan as a community were very proud of. It was plain that such cultural events can contribute well to their holding onto cultural identity and help preserve local traditions. It was a claim that Teddy as the organiser of the event publicly asserted when he spoke during the festival.

This poses a problem in that if these traditional performances were only done for tourists and public shows, it might have adverse consequences; that these events once set aside to mark a significant milestone such as initiation, might lose their meaning and significance. I was invited to speak at this gathering, and made a fairly obvious point, suggesting that if they seriously wanted to preserve culture, they should consider carefully the idea of performance for the sake of tourists. They might rather perform on significant occasions to bring them together as a people in fostering in their relationships. See also Keir (2013, p.124) who writes that one Tolai person told him, about showing the tubuan, sacred masks:

You can't just raise a tubuan. Tubuans have work pulling clans together, showing who is related to who when someone dies. In the past the real big men would not have allowed a tubuan to be raised just for tourists. They would have said if a tourist wants to see a tubuan, they have to wait until the time for the tubuan to do its work. But now they just raise the tubuan to make money so that they can pay off their debt to the lousy World Bank.

For the Kayan, gathering family and clan members together was one of the roles played by the garamut. Through the garamut, the Kukurai expanded his voice of invitation to host feasts or mark significant events that would pull clan members together. However modern demands have been creating competition and rivalry among clan members thus emptying garamut of its communal values and promoting a culture of individualism, as against identity in the context of the supportive and co-operative group.

7.8.5 Conclusion

This Chapter brings to conclusion the key findings of my research into garamut. The findings establish that garamut among the Kayan are literally objects imbued with ambivalent power of efficacy. That is to say that to live their lives tenably, the Kayan make conscious choices between their traditional cultural beliefs and modern values. Though there was a general agreement that most of the rituals have become weakened, if not emptied of power to affect real-world events, I observed that there still exists a firm belief in the power of the spirits, with whom the Kayan share the social and physical environment.

To conclude, my findings show the following as key attributes of garamut among the Kayan: 1) they are ambivalent objects, imbued with both spirit and human agency, 2) they have voice like human body, 3) they have their own biographies, 4) they contribute to the social and kinship structure of the Kayan people, 5) they empower the Kukurai with power and authority of the voice, 6) they suppress the voice of women, 7) they demarcate gender space and gender roles, and social ranking, 8) they promote male masculinity and power of the men, 9) they give identity to the Kayan and connect their kinship relations to neighboring villages following family and ancestral bloodlines, 10) they are considered person-like; they are seen as spirits themselves, and have immense power of social influence.

Chapter 8

Summary - Garamut are Powerful Social Agents

This research journey I took investigating the depth and breath of garamut from the days of ancestors to the contemporary times, has profoundly brought out an understanding of garamut to a level that has not been explored before. It demonstrated that indeed garamut are in some mysterious sense, part of the human and spirit experience.

The research has brought me to a conclusion that garamut are powerful ambivalent social agents. They are neither spirits nor human. They find common bond in the body of the materiality of the garamut thus sharing in both the spirit and material agency. It is this mix of existence of garamut being spirit objects, as well as material objects that conjures up ideas of the supernatural relationships of garamut and the people.

Locating this study at Kayan, I discovered that a living and organised community existed in Kayan of more than 600 people, with the garamut, in a sense as 'spirit beings' at its core. It has a social organisation built around the clustering of people in clan groups, with big men, the Kukurai, or elders providing leading roles. The people of the village must balance contending influences in the cultural and social domains: an enduring belief in spirits which inhabit the area, are like persons, and can be very influential; belief in God and the teachings of the Catholic Church; urgent interest in economic development and demands of the cash economy; with that, modern-day politics, schooling, policing, and the benefits and problems of change.

Change has affected the practices surrounding the garamut such as the logic of producing more of the garamut as objects, for new, varied purposes, and a wider range of owners, because of the advent of steel tools that make possible this diversion from tradition. Yet despite the pressure on the Kayan from diverse quarters, and overbearing problems like severe economic stress and deteriorating productivity in the natural economy of gardens and forests, it is clear to the observer

that this is not a dysfunctional community, not a community marked by fragmentation and destruction of culture.

The research has discovered the garamut as primarily a voice, agency or embodiment of the spirits. The spirits of the men's house, and garamut, still give notable power, influence and status to traditional leaders, who in other respects are becoming marginalised in the modern village. How do individual people of Kayan village see themselves as they grapple with the various dichotomies of everyday life? Persons are deriving private identity from belonging to this group, and part of that membership of community is participation in a belief in the spirits, or at least acknowledgment of the idea of the supernatural having a bearing on the fortunes of life. The belief may be qualified and compromised, the spirits relegated to a lesser place than in the generational past, but respect remains due to the garamut and the elders. As for the Kukurai; these are not priests, nor sorcerers, nor modern-day politicians; they are more distinct within the culture: they are Kukurai of the Kayan. Their strategy, and strategy for the village, must be to continue to adapt to ever-changing circumstances, and to adapt in a systematic way, as elders such as Teddy have been making plain. With the realisation on my part, that this village culture is autonomous, distinctive, and with roots; what is to be done, in response to the strong desire of Kayan people to re-vivify their tradition, while also popularising and showing it to the outside world in a commercial form? The research, and the researcher have been drawn into this discussion, as it was thought that by studying the garamut, it could be explained to the outside world. I began by agreeing with almost all of the Kayan community, that it is not possible to go back in time to retrieve all of the enduring culture, and ways of life, that have been lost.

At the same time, I agreed also with the sentiment that affiliation with tradition is important to individuals growing up in Kayan and some must be restored or actively cultivated anew, such as the important skill of being able to code messages on the garamut – or indeed to carve garamut. I will draw attention to my conclusion that to the Kayan the garamut are ambivalent objects imbued with agency of both human and spirit-beings, and are a unifying element. Noting the pooling of ideas going on, on what is to be done I will have suggestions.

The first would be to promote the garamut and the culture of the community at the different levels: on the one hand, restoration of deep tradition, with a craft revival aimed at preserving the making of sacred and clan garamut, building of 'men's houses' for them, and regaining ritual. The second would be to permit and promote exposure of 'serious' artefacts, such as the larger and authentic private garamut, to the world art market. This would require professional advice, to set up an authority or cooperative structure, authentication or certification of objects, agency agreements to marketing through overseas galleries, or a catalogue system. The outcome of the present research would be useful in explaining, promoting and marketing the artefacts. This work would accompany promotion of the area for visits by tourists, more of a longer-term activity because of the weak material infrastructure of the district, (though the success of the East Sepik neighbours the Watam, hosting people from cruise ships provides a model for what might be attempted over time). The proposal for a cultural centre with state development finance would be in this context.

The third suggestion would be to accept the will of several people to make and sell souvenir garamut, masks and the like, and give performances - in a word to simplify the tradition. A second tier of authentication of cultural products would help to protect the villagers' interests.

At more depth, I would like to advocate a new drive to put the garamut tradition firmly into the absolute heart of the community once more by making it a large factor in modern-day public life. For example it would be plausible for a young politician, seeking office on the provincial council, or election to the House of Parliament, to seek the endorsement of the garamut and campaign around the re-entry of these powerful agents into decision-making and the ordering of things. Part of that might be to propose a 'modernisation' and liberalisation, to put old and new together in harmony; as, for instance a step-by-step opening of sacred places and practices to women. Reintegration would see such a leader conferring with elders on the restoration of initiation rites, suspended since 1962, as a phenomenon of belonging that may appeal to the young.

Kayan is a community that has venal concerns like any other but is protective towards enduring riches of family solidarity, culture and creativity. Many will be prepared to sacrifice these in a struggle for bare survival, commercial success and prosperity. At the same time one can see the society of Kayan does cohere and may go on to more successes as a community. It is a community

of minds. The building and unifying factor is the garamut, that which evokes common beliefs, gives voice to leaders, brings people together, and so puts meaning into life.

From the research findings, I identified that the key to understanding the agency and the efficacy of garamut is that embedded within garamut, is the power of the sound, and the voice. As the research has shown, it is these attributes of garamut that men claim to be theirs, to own, and to possess.

Finally in conclusion to the thesis, I offer this salutation to the garamut one of the most unique ancestral objects of Papua New Guinea.

Salutation to garamut

Listen to the voice of garamut

Be attentive o people, the garamut speaks
Be silent o people, feel the beat in your heart,
feel it in your person
Hear o people, the messages is spoken

Be still o people, feel the reverberations
Listen o people, the message is in the air
Recall o people, the message of the past

Recollect o people, the call to celebrate life
Recount o people, the call to mourn life
Listen o people, to the call of the future

Listen to the voice of the garamut

A.Aime



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Glossary of terms

Kakos – A Kayan term for Kukurai

Kapkap: A New Ireland word for neatly incised shell worn by the big man

Kukurai - Hereditary title for a big man

Gnumtik – A Kayan term for spirits who are responsible for giving voice to the garamut

Kup – A Kayan term for presents or gifts

Rumbung – A Kayan term for garamut

Luluai – A Tok Pisin word for a big man who is of lower ranking to the Tultul as a messenger or interpreter. Both words are originally Kuanua words from the Tolai

people of East New Britain

Maimai: A New Ireland word for big-man/chief

Masalai - A word from Vanuatu (formerly the New Hebrides) in its original context meant a water spout or a large snake. The Jacaranda Dictionary and Grammar of Melanesian Pidgin (1971 edition) gives the following meanings for masalai: 1) the spirits thought to inhabit streams, rocks, trees, whirlpools, eddies, and such like. These are good or indifferent, feared not worshipped. 2) a bogey, a bugbear, an orge.

Tultul - Another Tok Pisin word for Kukurai, one who is considered a hereditary big man.

Tumbuan - conical spirit masks worn during ritual dances

Tambaran - A word from the Kuanua language of the Tolia people of East New Britain for which the Tok Pisin dictionary gives the following meanings: 1) the spirits of ancestors; since they must be placated this is often synonymous with malign spirits; the very secret system of ancestor worship in which only males participate. 2) the wooden masks used in tambaran cult; some are believed to be inhabited by the spirits.

Appendix

Funding Proposal and the Letter

Kayan elders were concerned that the art and skill of making garamut was slowly dying. They saw my study as window of opportunity for them to resurrect this skill as well as other skills and the values of right living. Teddy arranged for us to meet. Present were: Teddy, Paul, Willie, Arnold, and Philip. They discussed the importance of keeping their culture of garamut and passing on the customs and skills of carving garamut to their children. With this idea in mind they decided we draft a funding proposal and a letter to present to the Governor of Madang Province seeking some funding to establish a village Cultural Education Centre. The following is the letter and the Proposal we put together.

To: The Madang Governor
Honorable Jim Kas – MP
Madang Provincial Government
P.O.Box 2138
Madang – 511
Subject: Funding Assistance Request

Dear Honorable Governor

We the following elders of Kayan community; Philip Apa, Willie Kawang, Paul Kuri, Arnold Jongtai and Teddy Tamone, are very concern that our traditional knowledge, skill and art of carving garamut including other artefacts is disappearing fast. If no remedial action is taken now all this knowledge will be lost. The initially findings of a research on *Garamut Among the Kayan* by a PhD candidate Alphonse Aime from Divine Word University, attest to our concern. Mr Aime predicts that by the year 2020, if nothing is done to preserve and pass on this knowledge to young people this knowledge will be lost ever. This lose will not be only for Kayan but also for Madang Province as well as Papua New

Guinea whose preamble in the National Constitution speaks of preserving our noble cultural heritage and passing it onto future generations. Furthermore garamut is also one of the National Icons of PNG and NBC Madang prides itself with the name, “Maus Bilong Garamut”.

With this grave concern, we as responsible leaders submit to you a funding assistance request proposal for your deliberation and support.

Please consider our request genuine.

Yours sincerely,

Teddy Tamone (spokesperson)

.....

Title: Kayan Village Cultural Education Centre

Subject: Requesting Funding Assistance

Amount Requested: Ten Thousand Kina (K10,000)

Honourable Governor

As elders of the Kayan community we are requesting the amount of Ten Thousand Kina as a one off grant to assist us purchase a wide range of tools especially for carving and designing. We have also included a chainsaw especially to cut down trees for carving as well as for building the Cultural Centre. Please refer quotation of chainsaw. With the remainder of the money, we will purchase chisels, files, adzes, hatchets, crowbars, and other special tools necessary for carving garamut as well as other artefacts. The idea is to introduce hands on deck approach where interested young people will be engaged to learn the art and the skills of carving garamut and other artefacts. The shortage of these tools, also contribute to young people showing lack of interest.

Purpose

The purpose of building this Cultural Centre is of critical importance to the Kayan community. This is not only important to Kayan but also to Madang Province as well as to Papua New Guinea. It is common knowledge that traditional or indigenous cultural knowledge and skills is disappearing very fast in the country. For this reason we at Kayan are aiming at these two objects.

- One - To pass on the traditional knowledge and skills of carving garamut and other artefacts to young people and
- Two – To undertake serious efforts to hold onto or preserve our rich cultural heritage

Background

For many years buyers and art collectors have come and collected our carvings especially garamut, and have taken them overseas. Many of these garamut now adorn private homes and museums throughout the world such as in Berlin Museum of Germany, Western Australian Museum, and New York Museum. Some of these garamut were carved before the European contact by our grandparents using stone axes, fire, sago palm skins, and sharks teeth for designs. However after the European contact, garamut were carved with introduced steel technology of axes, hatchets, adzes, chisels and crowbars.

Two punitive patrols in 1900's by the German Administration burnt the village of Kayan and many garamuts were burnt or destroyed. In 1945 during the war, the Japanese again raided the village and destroyed some of the remaining garamut. In 1956, people made a collective decision to carve new garamut to replace the ones that had been destroyed. After that no major attempts were made to carve more garamut. The reason is obvious that those with the knowledge and skills are dying and very little attempt has been made to pass on this knowledge to young people. From an initial research findings conducted by a PhD candidate Alphonse Aime from Divine Word University, less than five elders (men) who already are in their late 60's know how to carve a garamut competently from start to finish. Very few young people are interested, about less than five know some basic idea of how to carve a garamut however are not competent. From his findings Mr Aime predicts that by the year 2020, the knowledge, skill and art of carving garamut will be lost if no immediate

action is taken now. This then is a matter of grave concern.

Therefore the proposal to set-up a Cultural Centre is to address this concern. Having such a place will be a positive step to engage interested young men to learn from those remaining seniors, the art, knowledge, and the skills of making garamut, other artifacts as well as various dances traditional dances. This centre will be regarded as a cultural knowledge education centre.

Beneficiaries

The beneficiaries are Kayan people who will benefit from the Cultural Centre and continue to maintain their reputation as master garamut carvers. The preservation and passing on to young people of this knowledge will ensure that this rich heritage is not lost. Added benefits will be that carved objects and items can be displaced for sale to tourists or other interested persons. The broader beneficiaries as mentioned will be Madang as a Province as well as PNG as a whole and its people.

Project Leaders

The named project leaders with the collaboration of clan Kukurai (chiefs) will oversee that the project gets started as soon as funding is approved.

Mr. Teddy Tamone, carver/ spokes-person

Mr Phillip Jong Apa – carver

Mr. Paul Kuri – master carver

Mr. Willie Kawang – carver

Mr. Arnold Jongtai carver

We believe your favorable deliberation and a positive response will be of great benefit not

only to the Kayan community but to Madang Province and the country.

Please consider this request genuine.

For further clarification or information contact:

Mr. Teddy Tamone on Mobile Number: 71290016

Postal address: Mr Teddy Tamone

Kayan Village

Post Office Bogia

Madang Province 244

Methodology and Methods used.

Participant Observation was the key ethnographic method used which also including the following:

- interview with elderly women
- interview with young men and boys
- interview with the Kukurai and elders
- interview with young girls
- interview with informed elders and carvers

I initially began with the interviews in order to emerge myself into understanding how the Kayan lived with garamut. Eldery women were interviewed separately from the young women likewise with the Kukurai and elders separatley from the young men and boys. This information informed my Participant Obsevation and during the carving of the three garamut I requested to be carved, I observed the intertwined relationship of garamut with the people. I also used other methods such as through conversations while chewing betelnut, and story-telling to collect data. There were also formal and informal occasions where I gathered information.

20th October 2011

Dear Chiefs and Councilor,

My name is Alphonse Aime. I am a lecturer at Divine Word University. However this year 2001, I am a student at the University of Queensland, Australia.

I am writing this letter to seek your permission to come and stay in your village to conduct research. I intend to come in the month of March 2012 to do this research.

You know since the time of ancestors, garamut have had special place in communities. In this research, with your help in the village, I want to explore the sort of changes garamut are going through in looking at what has become of the power and agency of garamut? 245

I intend to stay for nine or twelve months in your village. I have also sent similar letters to the Provincial Administrator, Bogia District Manager seeking their permission.

To give your consent, write your name and sign in the space provided below.

Name.....

Sign.....

Send this letter back to me to the following address:

Divine Word University Madang, PO.Box 483, Madang.

Principal Supervisor: Dr. Diana Young

Tenk yu na God Bles Olgeta

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alphonse Aime', written in a cursive style.

Alphonse Aime