

Wanbel: Conflict, Reconciliation and
Personhood among the Sam People,
Madang Province

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Abstract

The Sam communities of Madang Province in Papua New Guinea define, conceptualise, and demonstrate a way of relating they refer to as *wanbel* ("one insides, reconciled" TP) which is essential to wellbeing. Living among three villages spread along the Kabeneo River, which runs from the Finisterre Range northward to the Astrolabe Bay in Madang Province, the Sam people spend a great deal of time talking about being *wanbel* and participating in ceremonies to restore or maintain a state of *wanbel*. They believe that a lack of *wanbel* causes barren gardens, sickness, sorcery, and death; conversely, being *wanbel* brings about bountiful gardens, healthy families, and access to "development." In the vernacular, this state of good and harmonious relations is articulated in four ways: *pari beli* ("good insides"), *pari kujex* ("one insides"), *udud kujex* ("one thought"), and *pari xosolox* ("calm insides").

The notion of *wanbel* is a state as well as a process that occurs within both individuals and groups that provides a way to resolve divisive issues and be well, in terms of obtaining a holistic vision of a "good life" referred to as *gutpela sindaun* ("wellbeing" TP). However, Sam speakers believe that a person's thoughts and emotions are opaque to others, and thus, they cannot know whether others are *wanbel*. Hence, to resolve conflict and demonstrate amity, individuals must choose to reveal their inner self through speech and behaviour in village meetings and ceremonies. In these contexts, *wanbel* provides a way for the community to talk about and critique relationships, and, importantly, resolve disputes and mediate conflict.

In recent times, even as Sam people affirm the importance of *wanbel* in their daily lives, some acknowledge that episodes of disharmony seem to be increasing due to recent modernising influences, independence, and the "time of money." These varied influences provide differing visions of what *wanbel* should yield, and are felt to be obstacles to maintaining a state of *wanbel*. Through *wanbel* discussions, the Sam interrogate these influences, navigate and negotiate conflicting desires, and how to become *wanbel* in the present.

This thesis focusses on how Sam villagers conceptualise and talk about *wanbel* and practice it in their daily lives to strengthen and benefit themselves, the clan, and the wider Sam collective. These discussions about *wanbel* are dynamic and turbulent negotiations with overtones of efficacy, in which individuals and groups provide feedback on the status of their relationships and how to improve them in ways that will lead to health, good fortune, and prosperity. Moreover, *wanbel* is a reflexive way to critique, create, and sustain mutually dependent relationships. This thesis contributes to Melanesian themes of conflict, reconciliation, personhood and agency through an

ethnographic exploration of how personhood and relationships are managed, mediated, and navigated in contemporary Papua New Guinea.

Declaration

I certify that this work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in my name, in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text. In addition, I certify that no part of this work will, in the future, be used in a submission in my name, for any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution without the prior approval of the University of Adelaide and where applicable, any partner institution responsible for the joint-award of this degree.

I give permission for the digital version of my thesis to be made available on the web, via the University's digital research repository, the Library Search and also through web search engines, unless permission has been granted by the University to restrict access for a period of time.

I acknowledge the support I have received for my research through the provision of an Australian Government Research Training Program Scholarship.

Signed: _____

_____ Date: 25/05/2018

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Glossary

N.b.: Asterisks mark the Sam translations of *wanbel*.

abu (“true, truly”)
abu sam (“true speech”)
agrag (“anger, hostility”)
agrag tambi (“habitually angry”)
aksmun (“slaked lime”)
ala (“birth father, uncle”)
ama (“birth mother, aunt”)
amamas pe (literally “happiness payment”)
ambrang kadung (“petitioning the spirits to sicken or kill someone”)
anggli asem (“wife, literally married woman” used when talking to the wife's husband about her)
anggli beli (“good/mature woman”)
anjurum (“spirit”)
asa gadi (“ancestor head”)
asa urum (“ancestor house”)
au (“male to male sibling/cousin”)
auwa (“female to female sibling/cousin”)
au kube (“group of brothers/male cousins”)
bagarap (“be destroyed” TP)
bail (“strong”)
baim susu (“buy the milk” TP)
balax (“flame”)
balax toxour asi (“flame that jumps and breaks”)
banis (“fence, protective barrier” TP)
baxalu (“sitting bench”)
bel hevi (“heavy insides” TP)
bel hevi nogut tru (“very burdened insides” TP)
beli sixa (“be well”)
bet brata (“bed brother” TP)
beten (“prayer” TP)
bik man (“big man, village leader” TP)
bik nait (“the darkest time of night” TP)
bili ud (“remember, think again”)
bili ud kere jal (“forget, not able to think again”)
bilum (“string bag” TP)
bisnis (“business” TP)
blesim (“bless” TP)
bol (“pig, pork”)
bol alak (“pig with teeth”)
bol xunun (“pig shadow”)
bom moi (“sago leaf roofing mat”)
boyo (“a thank-you gift given in exchange for work”)
brata (“brother” TP)
buga (“spirit, foreigner”)
daka (“a seed from the pepper family, Piper betle”)

dinau (“loan” TP)
do (“skin”)
do onjumi (“spirit that masquerades as a human being to deceive others”)
domei (“shy, quiet, embarrassed”)
do ngaring (“skin hot”)
drug bodi (“drug users” TP)
dubli (“friend”)
dubli toxour (“ending a long friendship”)
xele (“knowledge”)
em nau (“That is it!” TP)
rong (“error” TP)
pilim pri (“feel free” TP)
fogivim (“forgive” TP)
gai (“parallel cousin”)
gadi (“head”)
geme (“ginger”)
gerei (“straighten, put right, fix”)
givim bel long ol (“give them their insides” TP)
givim tingting long ol (“give thoughts to them” TP)
gugurus (“corn”)
gutpela sindaun (“wellbeing” TP)
hago ker (“our blood”)
hago mangau (“our actions/behaviour”)
hago sam (“our speech, language”)
hajo du (“my son”)
hajo ker (“my blood”)
hajo ker kujex (“my one blood”)
harim tok (“heard and obeyed what someone said” TP)
haus lain (“clan or family living area” TP)
hevi (“a heavy and weighty problem” TP)
Histori Dei (“History Day” TP)
holim buai (“hold betelnut” TP)
huyudxo (“he will give”)
inapim tingting bilong ol (“fulfil their thoughts” TP)
isong (“sorcery”)
isong anggli (“sorcery/poison lady”)
isong suma (“sorcery man”)
jager sam (“deceptive speech”)
kadoi (“close friend, such as a girlfriend or boyfriend”)
kago kalt (“cargo cult” TP)
kago kalt lain (“cargo cult people” TP)
kaikai (“food”)
kanangge (“small, younger”)
kanda (“vine used to build houses, bows, and fences” TP)
karim kaikai (“produce food/benefits” TP)
kas (“tobacco”)
kas hali (“bad tobacco/marijuana”)
kas hali suma (“bad tobacco/marijuana man”)

kastam (“customary ways, ceremony” TP)
ker kujex (“one blood”)
kirapim bel (“raise insides” TP)
kisim maus bilong komuniti (“summarise the community’s consensus” TP)
kisim ples (“took the place” TP)
kol (“cold” TP)
kol (“go down”)
komiti (“village government leader” TP)
kukurai (“colonial government-chosen village leader” TP)
kulik (“burdensome problem/issue”)
kulik jalxo (“there is not a burdensome problem/issue”)
kulik pesxa (“get a problem/issue”)
kulu (“source, foundation, essence”)
kulu kujex (“one source”)
kumu (“green leaves sometimes cooked along with the garden food and meat” TP)
kunyam (“speaking magic”)
lain (“related people, family” TP)
lait of (“light off” TP)
las pe (“last pay” TP)
lo (“commands, taboos” TP)
long laik bilong ol (“(acting) without regard for others” TP)
lotu (“conduct church services, worship God” TP)
malanggu (“family/clan”)
Mama’s Grup (“Mother’s Group” TP)
mana (“different sex sibling/cousin”)
mana kube (“group of sisters/female cousins”)
mangau (“actions/behaviour”)
mangau beli (“good actions/behaviour”)
mangau hali (“bad actions/behaviour”)
maror (“clan-to-clan exchange”)
mbolkol (“sweet potato”)
miyang gamba (“ground illness”)
miyo (“divination”)
miyo xo (“divination tree bark, literally skin”)
morota (“woven coconut/sago frond mats” TP)
mul (“meetings, ceremonies”)
mun tuwax (“clan-owned songs and dances that can be bought and sold in *wanbel* meetings”)
mundor (“spirit, wind”)
mundor hali (“harmful spirit, wind”)
namba (“worth, social value” TP)
nanar (“mentally ill”)
nanar suma (“mentally ill man”)
ngarang (“poison”)
ngarang anggli (“poison woman”)
ngaring (“hot, explosive”)
ngodo (“bush spirit”)
nyamur (“nutrients in the soil”)
nyoblo (“good fortune, blessing”)

obrox (“broken,” used for *wanbel* and coconuts)
papa (“father” TP)
pari (“insides, feelings, dispositions”)
pari xalul (“ruined insides”)
 * *pari beli* (“good insides”)
pari beli anggli (“good insides woman”)
pari beli sam (“good insides speech”)
pari beli suma (“good insides man”)
pari beli suma ko anggli ko (“*wanbel* man or woman”)
pari beli mangau (“good insides behaviour”)
pari beli hunjudxum (“I will give them good insides”)
pari bulya asix (“turning one’s insides, repenting”)
pari hali (“bad insides”)
 * *pari kujex* (“one insides”)
pari ngaring (“hot insides”)
 * *pari xosolox* (“calm insides”)
pari xosolox suma (“calm insides man”)
pari ru (“cold insides”)
pari tinga (“raise insides”)
pari turdis ne udud kujex desxa (“combine insides and become one thought”)
pari xurang (“worry and feel sad,” literally “insides pain”)
pilim nogut (“felt bad” TP).
pin balax (“cooking fire”)
pipia man (“worthless man” TP)
poisen (“poison” TP)
pong (“clarity, awareness”)
rong (“error” TP)
rop buai (“betelnut stalk” TP)
ru (“cold”)
Sa nyi pari belimbix. (“I am good insides with you.”)
sagi (“armbands”)
sabor (“axe”)
sam (“language/speech”)
sam bail (“strong speech”)
sam toxour domonx (“breaking a promise”)
samting nating (“a thing that is nothing” TP)
sangga tingaborxo (“stand up a *sangga* tree”)
sanguma (“sorcery” TP)
save (“knowledge” TP)
saya (“words or thoughts that have a negative impact”)
sek han (“shake hands, be reconciled” TP)
sem (“shame” TP)
sisiri (“cordyline bush, bushes with bright yellow and green leaves, *tanket* in Tok Pisin”)
sindin (“small bird that warns or gives helpful advice in the Sam language”)
barum (“slit drum”)
samting nating (“a thing that is nothing” TP)
so mexo (“death place”)
sori (“sorry for them” TP)

Sori, brata ("Sorry, brother" TP)
sosori ("sorcery" TP)
spak ("inebriated" TP)
spak man ("drunk man" TP)
spirit ("unun")
stap laip ("stay alive" TP)
stap nating ("not active or useful" TP)
stori ("a story of an event or person in the past" TP)
straik ("strike, refuse to comply" TP)
suma asem ("husband, literally married man" used when talking to the husband's wife about him)
suma beli ("good/mature man")
suma mexo ne unun ("dead man's reflection/spirit")
suma nol ("special tune played on a slit drum to call an assembly")
suma unun ("dead man's spirit")
taim bipo ("before time" TP)
tambaran ("spirits" TP)
tanket (see *sisiri*)
tenger ("affines")
tingim gai ("remember *gai*" TP)
tok baksait ("gossip" TP)
tok sori ("say sorry" TP)
toxour ("broken")
tubar ("village, hamlet")
tubel ("of two minds, doubtful" TP)
tumbuna ("ancestors" TP)
tupela tingting ("of two minds, undecided" TP)
turdax ("combine, join")
udu ("let it go")
udud ("thoughts, ideas")
udud beli ("good thought")
** udud kujex* ("one thought")
udud lixlilxo ("two thoughts/ideas")
udud pong ("clarity of thinking, self-awareness and an understanding of others")
uli ("feathers")
unduman ("burial and mourning practices")
unun ("reflection/spirit")
unyi suma ("greedy man")
urum maringbe ("bush house")
wanbel ("one insides, reconciled" TP)
wanpela tingting ("one mind/thought, single-minded" TP)
wantok ("speakers of the same language" TP)
wantok pasin ("treating relatives differently from other people" TP)
wari ("worry" TP)
was ("grandfather")
was papa (literally, "watch father" TP)
was xalal ("recent ancestors," literally "mushroom uncle/aunt")
was xobol ("earliest ancestors," literally "breadfruit uncle/aunt")
wokim disturb ("causing a disturbance" TP)

xa (“betelnut, *Areca catechu*”)
xalal (“mushroom, mould”)
xelagi (“children”)
xiliyai (“big, elder”)
xo minjiri (“goose bumps”)
xobol (“breadfruit, father and mother's father”)
xolong (“woven string bags”)
yag sarara (“water spirit”)
yawa (“fermented banana alcohol” TP)
yo ge (“pepper catkin, *Piper betle*”)
yo moi (“pepper leaf, *Piper betle*”)

Chapter 1: *Wanbel* among the Sam people

A glimpse of wanbel

The Sam people live in three villages in a rural region of Madang province, Papua New Guinea. The villages are spaced about an hour's walk apart, in a line stretching from the Astrolabe Bay up into the foothills of the Finnesterre Range. My family and I began living in Buan, the centrally located Sam village, in 2002. One of our first tasks was to investigate how they used their language in daily life and how they thought literacy could help them. We began to learn that the Sam spend significant time negotiating their relationships through their speech and behaviour. As they met together to uphold relational ties or become reconciled after conflict, they often discussed their desire to be *wanbel*, a word in Tok Pisin, one of Papua New Guinea's national languages.¹ When they spoke about *wanbel* in their vernacular, they used four terms, which reflected different meanings of *wanbel*: *pari xosolox*, *pari beli*, *pari kujex*, and *udud kujex*.² *Pari xosolox* is an emotional state felt within an individual. Individuals should have *pari xosolox* ("calm insides") to have success in what they are doing, indicating they know what to do in a certain situation and do not doubt that they are right. The second term, *pari beli* ("good insides"), refers to amity among one or more agents, which may be people, the deceased, God, and spirits. The last two terms describe a situation in which people have unified intentions: people may be unified and in harmony, which is called *pari kujex* ("one insides"), and they may be committed to a single course of action, known as *udud kujex* ("one thought"). Sam speakers refer to all four of these vernacular terms as *wanbel*; thus I use *wanbel* in the thesis to refer to all four, and use the specific term when appropriate. *Wanbel* is their focus in a variety of contexts, including adjudicating village court cases, planting *mbolkol* ("sweet potato") together, and performing ceremonies that affirm familial bonds. Initially, I inferred that *wanbel* referred to agreement, or social harmony. However, an experience in August 2008 transformed my understanding of *wanbel*, and revealed to me that while becoming *wanbel* is how the Sam people approach conflict and resolve trouble and material need, they also strongly desire to be *wanbel* because being *wanbel* changes their situation to allow them to "be well".

¹ The Sam people primarily speak their vernacular language, called Sam, but many of the younger people have learned Tok Pisin as well, which is a national language used in many places in Papua New Guinea. Throughout this thesis, I write the vernacular of the Sam people as the unaccented form (i.e. without notation), and mark words in Tok Pisin with TP. For example, *pari* ("insides"), and *meri* ("woman" TP).

² Please refer to Appendix 3: Glossary for the meaning of non-English words. The Sam alphabet follows the sam pronunciation as in Tok Pisin except for the letter x, which signifies a glottal stop.

After visiting Songum, another Sam-speaking village, some Sam friends and I were attempting to ford a flooded river to drive back to Buan village. There were black rain clouds upstream, and the river was both deeper and swifter than when we had crossed it an hour earlier. Instead of its usual greenish hue, the water was a turgid brown colour and the strong current carried branches and leaves swiftly downstream. I had become apprehensive, and was contemplating turning back and spending the night in Songum. From my passengers' focussed and intense expressions, it seemed they shared my anxiety. All of us knew stories of drivers who, misjudging the flow and power of the water, had capsized and lost people and vehicles in this river.

I asked the men if they thought it was safe to cross, saying, "*Inap yumi brukim wara o nogat?*" ("Are we able to cross the river or not?" TP). The man in the passenger seat paused, reflected, and then suddenly said, "*Yumi wanbel na go!*" ("Let us be *wanbel* and go!" TP). Deciding to follow his intuition, and noting that he neglected to say whether the river looked safe to cross, I agreed with him and called it out to others to get their perspective. The men in the back chorused back, "*Yumi wanbel na go!*" After we all agreed that we were *wanbel*, we nosed out into the river and slowly moved against the flow. Though the river was powerful and we bumped up against a few large rocks, we crossed safely and came out on the far side. Breathing a sigh of relief, I asked what would have happened if one of us had not been *wanbel*. "The vehicle would have tipped over and we could have been swept downstream," one man said, and the others agreed. In their view, being *wanbel* had saved us.

Through this experience, I realised that *wanbel* means more than agreement or happiness — it has social efficacy/performativity. The term *wanbel* encapsulates and links notions of personhood and relationality with agency. In other words, our *wanbel* overrode the potential dangerous depth and speed of the water and the unseen submerged rocks in the river to bring us safely to the bank on the other side. Later, I was to learn that *wanbel* is in focus in discussions about Christianity and modernity as well.

The Sam people and the researcher

The Sam communities, nestled between the mountains and the ocean, are swidden agriculturalists and occasionally supplement their garden food with fish or prawns that they catch in the rivers, or tinned meat they buy from the nearest city, called Madang, or trade stores in the villages. Below is

a picture of one of my village brother and his daughter carrying food from their garden to Buan village.³



Figure 1: A Buan father and daughter carrying food from their garden to the village

Some have been able to find paid employment outside the Sam area as labourers for mining or timber companies, or as a provincial politician and a businessman living in Port Moresby. Those remaining in the village obtain money by selling food at markets and cash crops to buyers in Madang (for example, dried cocoa beans and coconuts), while a few have received royalty payments from the three timber companies from East and Southeast Asia that logged hardwood timber on Sam

³ Throughout this thesis, I refer to certain people in familial terms to indicate the close relationship we have with certain Gadaibi clan members for the last fifteen years, and the way they referred to us. We were informally adopted into the Gadaibi clan when, after the Buan community invited us to live with them, a Gadaibi leader, Philip Bagen, allocated land for us to build our house. Papa Philip told us that thereafter we would be members of his family, and he would call me *hajo du* (“my son”) and I would call him *ala* (“father”). When we needed to build another house, after the first one disintegrated, Papa Philip requested that we rebuild next to his house. To this day, since 2002, we are called kin names such as *mana* (“sister”), *elagi* (“child”), and *suma asem* (“husband, literally married man” used when talking to the husband's wife about him) and *anggli asem* (“wife, literally married woman” used when talking to the wife's husband about her), and we refer to those in the Gadaibi clan correspondingly. We have been included in the Gadaibi clan discussions, exchange ceremonies, and mortuary rituals. When Papa Philip died, one of his sons asked us to pay for and coordinate the building of a cement monument over Papa Philip's grave.

land over the last twenty years. In return for the logging rights, the companies disburse royalty payments to the leader of the clan that is the guardian of the land, who then gives each clan member a share. Each of the logging companies operated in the region for a few years before the clans expelled them for not fulfilling their obligations. See the map (below) for the location of Madang within Papua New Guinea.



Figure 2: Papua New Guinea Overview Map
(courtesy of the University of Texas Libraries, the University of Texas at Austin)

The Sam population numbers approximately 1,200 and are spread among Songum, Buan, and Wongbe villages.⁴ These villages are located near the Kabeneo River, which flows from the Finnesterre Range into Astrolabe Bay. Songum village is the northern most village, closest to the road to Madang, and surrounded by several other language groups. It is the largest of the three villages with about 650 people. Buan is the central village, and has the next largest population of nearly 350. Wongbe is to the southwest, with approximately 200 inhabitants. It is the furthest from the coast, at the end of a logging road that begins at the gravel road leading to Madang, and passes through Buan before ending at a river near Wongbe. The two maps below show the three villages in relation to villages around them, and how the Sam area is located in relation to Madang.

⁴ In the absence of current census data, I multiplied the published 2000 census data for the Sam villages (National Statistics Office, 2001) by the annual birth rate (2.7 %) for Madang province for the years 2000 to 2011 (National Statistics Office, 2013).

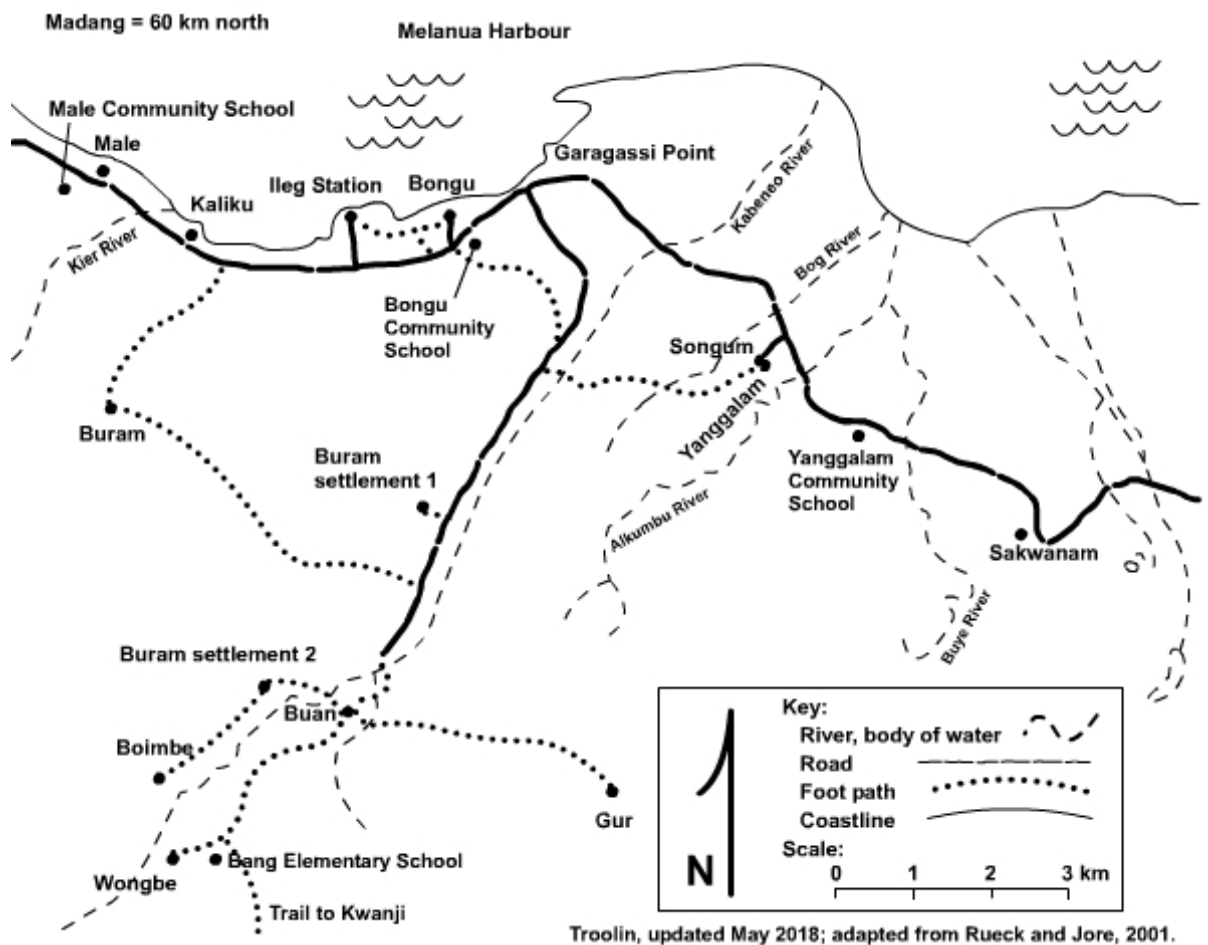


Figure 3: Three Sam villages



Figure 4: The three Sam villages: Songum, Buan, and Wongbe
 (adapted from T504 – SB55-6, Madang (1962), courtesy of the University of Texas Libraries, The University of Texas at Austin)

The Sam villagers are patrilineal and are distributed among four main groups that they call *malanggu* (“family/clan”), which can be thought of as clans. Though each person belongs to one of the four Sam

malanggu, they say that they are all of one blood (“*ker kujex*”). I was told that people, including the Sam, originated at a place they call Jeleng. Jeleng is a special and sacred area between Buan and Wongbe without vegetation that is covered by white stones, where they say their first ancestors “came up out of the ground.” People do not often visit it because they are afraid of the powerful spirit beings residing there. After emerging from the ground at Jeleng, the people separated into the different languages and peoples that now exist. The story of how they were divided is called *Wol Urum Ido Xatusam* (“The story of the big leaf house”). The Sam people have two myths that narrate how they were created as “one blood” and later divided into *malanggu*, which contain themes that are crucial to *wanbel*. I discuss them in Chapter Three, but I will briefly recount the myth here that explains how they were separated into *malanggu*. This story describes how, after all the people of the earth “came up out of the ground” at Jeleng, they began to build a house for themselves. As they were building it, suddenly their language changed, and they all spoke differently. They interpreted the others’ inability to understand as wilful stubbornness, so one man came down from the roof of the house and killed a man on the ground. At that, the whole group was afraid and ran away, each to begin a different *malanggu*.

Each *malanggu* is distinguished by having their own ancestor which appears as an animal (*was xobol* meaning “most distant ancestor,” literally “breadfruit uncle”),⁵ clan-owned song tunes and dances (*mun tuwax*), and clan origin story (*malanggu ido xatusam*). For instance, the Bang *malanggu* owns the land on *Lang Paru*, the hill behind Buan village, on which lives a giant lizard *was xobol* called *Kumblang*. If someone enters that area without permission from the Bang elders, they could become ill and die because of *Kumblang*. If they become ill, then a Bang leader must speak to *Kumblang* and ask it to relent from causing their sickness. In one example, my village brother observed a man’s arm swell up and appear severely burned after he acted in a way in which *Kumblang* disapproved. My village brother took some ginger (*geme*), blew on it, and said to the spirit, “Stop, that is enough.” The man’s arm improved immediately afterwards. Dances also belong to certain *malanggu*, though they can be sold to other *malanggu*, who then own them and can perform them. Finally, the *malanggu* have their own stories of how they are connected with the land: stories that do not simply tell information, but are significant summaries of the *malanggu*’s association with the land and the land’s connection with the *malanggu*. That is, a *malanggu*’s story

⁵ Terms for similar beings are *mundor* (“spirit, wind”), *buga* (“spirit, foreigner”), *anjurum* (“spirit”), *maring suma* (“bush man”), *doxonjumi* (“spirit that masquerades as a human being in order to deceive others”), *suma unun* (“dead man’s spirit”), *sindin* (“small bird that warns or gives helpful advice in Sam”), *maring suma* (“bush man”), *ngodo* (“bush spirit”), and *yag sarara* (“water spirit”).

shows how they, including the spirit beings, the animals, and the land, are interrelated. Below is a table with the names of the four *malanggu* with their subdivisions:

Malanggu name	Subdivision name
Bang	Bang Bangberab Bangwolbe Yanggalambi
Gadaibi	Wanjing Gulentubarbe/Bangajax Gwajo
Sanjimbe	Aibidop Barasbe Mararumbe
Xuidimbi	Songengbi Xuidimbi

Table 1: Four Sam *malanggu* with their subdivisions

In the pre-Colonial era, the four *malanggu* were located on different ridges of the foothills of the Finnesterre Range. Each family had tracts of land near their village where they cleared land and grew gardens, and to which they are still connected to this day. While they related together through exchange and intermarriage, they also fought each other. When the colonial government began to exert influence over the people in the Sam region of Madang, it sent representatives to tell them to join together into villages.⁶ The head of the Gadaibi *malanggu* invited the others to come and live on some land that he looked after that was large and flat. This is where Buan village is located today. In a similar fashion, people came together to form Wongbe village. The people from these two villages, referred to as *tubar* (“village, hamlet”) in Sam, congregated together to be near their garden areas. Later, some of the Sam people from various *malanggu* decided to move down nearer to the coast. They formed a village called Songum near to Yangalam village, and these two villages are now touching. The Sam contingent there continue to relate with their fellow clans people in Buan and Wongbe, and have a link to land belonging to their *malanggu* in the hills and valleys around Buan and Wongbe. Similarly, the people in Buan and Wongbe see their Songum family as connected to their lives, and they visit often, send their children to board there if they attend school in Bongu or Yanggalam, and participate in meetings and ceremonies that concern their *malanggu*.

⁶ According to my interlocutor, the government official who gave them this instruction was Yali. As I discuss further below and in Chapter Five, Yali reportedly played a role in cargo cult movements in Madang (Burridge, 1995 [1960]; Errington & Gewertz, 2004; Lawrence, 1964).

While the Sam collectives have a connection to their *malanggu* and their land, they also feel more related to those of other Sam *malanggu* than to non-Sam others. Thus, as mentioned above, Sam speakers say they are all “one blood” (*ker kujex*). Some things that characterise them as “one blood” are, first, the language they speak, called “Sam” (“language/speech”), though those in Songum speak a variety that differs slightly from that spoken in Buan and Wongbe. When my wife and I visited the Sam area to ask where they would like us to be located, the Lutheran District Chairman (who is from Songum) said we could live in any of the three villages. I asked where we should live to learn the Sam language, and he replied, “If you want to learn Songum Sam, you should live in Songum. But if you want to learn Buan Sam, you should live in Buan.” Hence, the people that live in the three different villages feel that they all speak “Sam,” though their speech varies slightly. Secondly, people relate with those of other *malanggu* in ways that demonstrates that they are connected. For instance, people are expected to marry between *malanggu*; marrying those within their *malanggu* is seen as inappropriate because they are too closely related. Hence, marriage links people together from different *malanggu*. The marriage ceremony is accompanied by exchange, which is another way that the village people relate across *malanggu*. In exchange, they give things, primarily pigs, to those of other *malanggu* to affirm their relationships. Besides exchanging bride payment, villagers also affirm their interconnectedness through exchanging gifts, primarily pigs, with their *gai* (“parallel cousin”). In these ways, they show that they are connected with other *malanggu* as well. Finally, they demonstrate interrelatedness through their physical residence in a village, which is composed of several *malanggu*, and they live and work together with members of these *malanggu*.

That is, the Sam villagers connect with each other at multiple levels: church, clan, school, village, and larger village collectives. These multiple and overlapping relationships create a variety of different groups in which people have responsibilities to resolve problems that occur within them. When there is an issue that needs to be addressed, the individuals in that group discuss and help to resolve it in what they call *mul* (“meetings, ceremonies”). A *mul* is oriented around issues; it momentarily gathers certain people that are affected by a problem in order to address their concerns. The obligation to participate in the *mul* finishes when the dispute is resolved. For instance, sorcery cases primarily involve the suspected sorcerer and those in a single *malanggu*, and people in that *malanggu* will participate in the *mul* to uncover possible reasons for sorcery. Church services are considered *mul*, since they gather together people who are all connected by their membership in that church. A marriage involves a *mul* to give bride wealth payment, and thus involves two or more *malanggu*. Logging companies may cut logs on land whose ownership is disputed, provoking a *mul* to determine who should receive the royalty payment for those logs. I

also observed *mul* that involved people within a single *malanggu*, whom sought to determine when they should go to fish in their section of the river, how much food to give in an upcoming exchange, or to collect money to pay a student's school fees. Finally, people in a single *tubar* ("village, hamlet") held a meeting every Monday to discuss issues that affected the entire village, such as an upcoming immunisation visit or the need to build a house for the Aid Post Officer. In summary, the people that are expected to attend a *mul* are those who are directly touched by it, and how they define "us" depends on who is plays a role in the conflict. Therefore, I will use the term "the Sam people (or villagers)" throughout this thesis when I am discussing the people as a wider collective, but I will identify which individuals are involved, the "us," when I explore specific case studies of *mul*. Below is a picture of a *mul* in which Quentin prepared a meal for those who helped him build his new house.



Figure 5: An example of a *mul* to show appreciation

My family and I are members of the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL), a faith-based Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO), whose purpose is to assist local language communities to meet their language development needs (SIL International, 2015). The Sam community suggested Buan village would be a practical location in which to live. Buan village has less exposure to neighbouring

languages than Songum and thus is seen to speak “pure Sam,” and it is more geographically accessible than Wongbe. Living in Buan, we have worked with all three villages to develop an orthography based on the sound systems of their language, a curriculum to teach their children to read, and vernacular materials, including a dictionary and over 70 booklets on health, mathematics, science, literature and history stories, and the Bible.

In this research context, the village people positioned me in several ways. Firstly, I was positioned as a father and husband. I had decided to bring my family with me to the village for doctoral fieldwork in 2014, partly because they had already lived there earlier, and leaving them behind would have been peculiar, but also because Sam people see each other as existing within a web of relationships. In bringing my family, the villagers could place me in a similar social position. Secondly, I was also positioned as a researcher because my wife and I had already been documenting their language for language development purposes. For both SIL and this doctoral project, I conducted research, although for different purposes. I clarified this difference in public and private conversations, and people seemed to accept it, at least at first. But I soon realized that many people still assumed that I was working in my previous SIL capacity.

As an educated, male foreigner, data collection with female respondents was at times constrained. Most of the women I interviewed had not attended school past the grade three. They were inhibited and formal in the interviews, and spoke only when I asked them a question, and then their replies were quiet and subdued. They never interviewed singly, but usually asked more people to join the group, and preferred to let men lead the conversation. The one exception to this rule was a female neighbour who was in the process of moving to Songum after a divorce and was positioned on the fringes of Buan society. The gender difference also had an impact on which subjects I could or could not discuss with women.

Finally, as a Christian, I found that my religious beliefs also positioned me and this affected my research. Many Sam people assert that they are Christians. In Buan, villagers belong to one of the three established Christian churches, all of which I attended at various times. The Sam people often compare and critique other churches. For example, Lutherans tended to feel that their denomination was pre-eminent because it had arrived first and had existed in the Sam area for over 100 years. Those of other churches averred that the Lutherans taught “impure” doctrine, forcing the other church leaders to split from the Lutheran church and establish newer denominations, such as Lutheran Renewal, Revival Centres of Papua New Guinea, and Four Square (also known as Gospel Lighthouse). Thus, I was incorporated into questions of which church was the “true” one. Occasionally, Christians tried to influence me to critique other denominations, which I resisted.

Sometimes, my own belief system was critiqued, and some condemned me as not a “real” Christian, that is, not “spirit-filled.” This negative evaluation came from the Revival Centres of Papua New Guinea Church, which posits that new believers, who are baptised soon after they confess their belief, must evince glossolalia as they come up out of the water to prove that the Holy Spirit dwells within them. Since my wife and I do not speak in tongues, they told us we were “observers” at their Sunday meetings. This meant that we could associate with them before and after services, but could not participate in certain parts of the services, namely taking communion and speaking publicly. On the other hand, Lutherans, who do not practice glossolalia, accepted me as a fellow Christian, though they could not understand why I did not chew betelnut or smoke. Thus, my faith at times meant that people considered me as like or unlike them in terms of belief or practice.

Wanbel in Papua New Guinea

Wanbel is a complex social concept that is woven through much of Sam life. It is a dynamic value which intersects with other ideas, such as relationality, personhood, harmony, and conflict. The local people reinforce *wanbel* through frequent *wanbel* ceremonies, exhortations by village leaders to be *wanbel*, and reconciliation meetings. In their quest to be *wanbel*, the community share, critique, and agree to a common vision of their individual and collective goals. While researchers have described this complex notion in other areas of Melanesia, this thesis seeks to add to our understanding of *wanbel* by reflecting on how one group of people in Papua New Guinea conceptualise and use *wanbel*, and on the difference being *wanbel* makes in their lives (Brison, 1991; Lawrence, 1964; Schram, 2013; Street, 2014; Tuzin, 1997). In the ethnographic literature on *wanbel*, researches commonly refer to this concept in English as social harmony, agreement, or spiritual unity (Hemer, 2013:73; Mead, 2001 [1928]:15-17; B. Schieffelin, 1990). Others focus on the result that being *wanbel* should bring about, such as healing or sickness, group identity, or prosperity (Brison, 1991; Lawrence, 1964; Schram, 2013; Street, 2014). This thesis aims to contribute to the existing literature by exploring how Sam people conceptualise, practice, and embody *wanbel* in daily life, and the role that *wanbel* plays in Sam notions of personhood and reconciliation.

In Melanesia, *wanbel* has been defined in a variety of ways. While not listed in two definitive Tok Pisin dictionaries (Mihalic, 1971; Murphy, 1973 [1943]), two others define *wanbel* as “agreement, peace” (Dutton & Thomas, 1985:380; Volker, 2008). Concatenation is not unusual in Tok Pisin, such as *wantok* (“someone who speaks the same language” TP) and *wanwok* (“someone who does the same work” TP). Thus, Tok Pisin speakers join each morpheme: *wan* (“one” TP) and *bel* (“insides,

viscera, stomach" TP) to yield the meaning "one insides, viscera, or stomach." ⁷ Idiomatically, *bel* can refer to a person's emotional centre, and so being *wanbel* has an emotional component that is shared by those who are *wanbel* (Dutton & Thomas, 1985:159-160, 361; McElhanon, 1978:9; Mihalic, 1971:67; Volker, 2008:8).

While such definitions are helpful, ethnographies illustrate what *wanbel* means in peoples' lives. Many anthropologists have described the focus of many Melanesians on meeting to make group decisions, some have described groups for whom being *wanbel* makes a key difference in their future circumstances. For instance, Brison (1991) wrote about the Kwanga people of East Sepik Province, and located the desire for *wanbel* within the expectation that their unity would result in prosperity. As she notes,

the Kwanga ... are pre-occupied with social harmony because they think that prosperity depends on it. They believe that if everyone works together, lives in harmony with their neighbors, and follows a set of prohibitions for a short period, this will generate a collective ritual power that will bring good harvests and success in warfare and hunting. In short, a few months of intense communal effort may effect diffuse and generalized improvement in the quality of life. (Brison, 1991:326)

She goes on to show how the Kwanga and other groups believe that cooperation and working together will make magic effective, but if the community exhibits disputes, internalised anger and failure to cooperate, these will lead to illness and environmental issues like bad weather and drought (Brison, 1991:349). Cargo cults, among the Kwanga and also in the Madang area, have also emphasised the importance of working together and being in harmony in order to obtain desired results (Brison, 1991:349; Lawrence, 1964:80, 82,123). Unfortunately for the Kwanga people, they reported that although they could resolve their issues and restore good relationships, they were unable to sustain their harmony for long. Each time they started a new initiative to work together, such as male cult initiations, disagreement and conflict would erupt. As Brison concludes, "...each new failure proves to people that they cannot do something they traditionally prided themselves on, that is, to transcend petty bickering in the community and launch magnificent and empowering communal endeavors like male cult initiations" (Brison, 1991).

While the Kwanga were unable to realise their hope for prosperity, other Melanesians depend on being *wanbel* to achieve their Christian hopes. The Bumbita of the East Sepik Province, for instance, believe that Christianity and consensus both work to bring about a change in one's current situation

⁷ Due to the many meanings of *bel*, which could be "belly," "heart," or "insides or viscera," compound words that include it could have multiple translations. One source translates it as "twin," since twins (or presumably triplets, and so on) come from their mother's womb, although Sam villagers do not think of *wanbel* in this way (cf. O'Donnell & Todd, 2013:41).

(Leavitt, 2001). A Christian revival started in 1984, and grew to include about three quarters of the community, only to suddenly decline two years later (Leavitt, 2001:151). The purpose of the revival was ostensibly to be prepared for the Second Coming, but Leavitt records that “people hoped for such things as a reunion with the dead, the acquisition of wealth on the order of that of the Europeans, the transformation of black skin into white skin, and the eradication of all social conflict” (Leavitt, 2001:151). The reason for the movement’s decline reportedly centred on the perceived lack of *wanbel* among the participants. The Bumbita believed that “the revival’s success depended on the community’s ability to foster an environment of near unanimous pursuit of its collective goals. It was consensus that would make the revival work, and without it, the revival would fail” (Leavitt, 2001:152). Imbricated in the performative nature of *wanbel* is its similarity with religious ceremonies performed by ancestors and passed down through the generations. As Leavitt points out, “with all of attempts to transform the basis of social interaction through sustained consensus, the revival was drawing upon a well-established and thoroughly traditional view of the power of collective action” (Leavitt, 2001:164). Tuzin, working nearby among the Iahita, also notes that the *Tambaran* ceremony, referring in this case to the activities of a spirit cult, depended on collective action to function, and that such close cooperation yielded a personal and group identity, as subordinated to and under the protection of the *tambaran* (“spirits” TP) (Tuzin, 1980:xiii, 319-320).

The way social groups construct their identity may also be demonstrated by outward expressions of unity. Schram, in his research among the Auhelawa people of Milne Bay, refers to a form of Christian worship called *tapwalolo*, which, as he says, “serves as a model for the kind of social group which Auhelawa people think of as Christian” (Schram, 2013:31). The Auhelawa, who have had a long period of interaction with Methodist missionaries, see *tapwalolo* as part of their social identity. It is no longer a form of Christian expression imposed from the outside, but part of their society. They participate in *tapwalolo* before important activities or uncertain situations, such as harvests, feasts, or sickness. This way of worship requires that participants have “one mind.” Schram posits that, “‘One mind’ means a unity in purpose that is both subjectively felt and outwardly expressed” (Schram, 2013:30-31). If the group is of “one mind,” “cooperative work will go smoothly because everyone will help achieve a common aim. ... When work doesn’t go well, this is because individuals still have different thoughts and have not subordinated their own minds to the mind of the group” (Schram, 2013:36). Schram discusses the contradiction inherent in a social, collective practice that depends on individuals becoming “one mind,” which is impossible to verify.

Street, in her ethnographic study of biomedicine in the Madang General Hospital, explores the role of *wanbel* in causing and/or healing sickness. She writes,

William had many people who were angry with him and who could be causing his sickness. Even his broken relationship with his wife could be making him worry and stopping the hospital medicine from working...It was up to "*bikpela*" (God) to make William better, and he would only do this if he saw that the family were *wanbel* (of one mind) with Him. (Street, 2014:5)

In this case, when one's family was *wanbel* with the patient, the patient would improve. If not, they would worsen to the point of death. While God was seen to have the ability to heal the patient, if their relatives were not *wanbel*, God could not act. Thus, words or actions demonstrating *wanbel* are indexed to health. As Street notes, "Patients examined their bodies for signs of improvement or deterioration and related those changes to the gifts of garden food that were or were not brought to the hospital by kin" (Street, 2014:124). Similarly, Sam villagers feel that one's health is directly a result of the state of their relationships.

Problematizing wanbel

While my interlocutors told me that being *wanbel* with each other was the only way to obtain the good life, my research and life in the village gave me opportunities to observe cases in which individuals did not always pursue *wanbel* and sometimes deliberately ruptured a *wanbel* relationship or prolonged conflict. This response to a dispute seems counterintuitive: why would people disrupt a good relationship or delay repairing a broken one? In multiple examples, which I relate in this thesis, people raised difficult issues that upset and angered others which led them to all realise there was a divisive issue dividing them that they needed to work together to resolve to become *wanbel* again. Through extended time with the Sam, my observations and interviews helped me start to problematise *wanbel* as a practice. I found that while they ideally want to be *wanbel* continually, their desire is not always fulfilled in practice. I began to realise that *wanbel* was easy to talk about, but difficult to bring about in practice.

Part of the difficulty in becoming and remaining *wanbel* is that when a conflict occurs, sparking the need for people to begin the *wanbel* process, often previous disputes will surface which people remember and want to revisit. Thus, my research shows that *wanbel* ceremonies can expand from simply addressing one issue between a certain set of individuals to including discussions of past conflicts involving people in the same or different collectives. Although people who are reconciled say they are *wanbel* sometimes participants may still harbour unresolved frustration or angst. When this is the case, they see the discussions about the current crisis as a platform to bring up past issues, and this substantially impacts who needs to be involved in the negotiations, and what the talks need to include to move people along the path to *wanbel*. Conflict is a serious issue because it can expand to other issues and involve more people than just those implicated in the initial dispute.

Another aspect of *wanbel* which creates tension and angst in creating amicable relationships is rooted in opacity. Sam peoples' ambivalence toward *wanbel* comes from their belief that they cannot accurately gauge the inner state of others. Thus, they want to be *wanbel* and agree that their reconciliation will yield benefits to them and their family, and yet, they are unable to know if others feel the same way they do. The Sam live in doubt that others are *wanbel* with them, and fear that something may arise in the future that may cause someone to change their mind and disrupt the *wanbel* relationship they have with them. They can never be certain that their *wanbel* toward others will be reciprocated, and this causes them to approach negotiations cautiously. One reason Sam people value the *wanbel* process so highly is because, as people negotiate compensation for past wrongs, meet in a group of the *malanggu* of both parties, and exchange pigs or other valuables, they demonstrate and assure each other of their inner desire to be *wanbel*. As they say, it is not enough to say they are *wanbel*, they must "do *wanbel*."

Finally, while people want to be *wanbel*, to live peacefully as well as to experience the benefits they believe will come about, sometimes they do not choose to reconcile, at least right away. Some conflicts take weeks or months, or even years, to resolve. In the intervening state of unresolved hostility, the leaders of one side may delay becoming *wanbel* to try to negotiate a more favourable compensation settlement, which will increase their own political and social capital if they succeed. Each side is caught between wanting to come to an agreement and continuing to reject the overtures of the other side to try to obtain a more beneficial settlement. Often, people feel additional pressure as time goes on because they fear the other side might resort to sorcery to force them to give in to their demands.

In all these ways – revisiting earlier unresolved issues, not knowing whether others are *wanbel abu* ("truly"), and delaying agreement to gain a "better" settlement – *wanbel* is not easy to bring about in practice. Instead of thinking of *wanbel* as a relational state that is static, which people pursue at all costs, this thesis offers a more nuanced ethnography of how villagers in the Sam area experience and navigate the tension between what *wanbel* will offer them and how to become *wanbel* in practice.

Wanbel, personhood, and modernity

While the ethnographic references above elucidate aspects of *wanbel*, this thesis takes *wanbel* as a lens through which to discuss a variety of key themes and topics among the Sam. Sam speakers use *wanbel* to refer to the relational state between people who are reconciled. Being *wanbel* will have a beneficial outcome for themselves and their collective, and thus, they respond to all manner

of misfortune by bolstering their relationships. In any conflict or dispute, they say that people must become *wanbel*. Becoming and maintaining *wanbel* raises several broad topics for the Sam villagers, as they navigate issues having to do with personhood, relationality, emotion, speech, and behaviour. For example, the villagers I lived with did not analyse the way they used exchange in their society but were very interested and concerned with the way to enhance *wanbel* through various ways of relating together, which included exchange. Thus making *wanbel* the focus of this thesis enables understanding of the ways in which a wider variety of social dynamics, practices and institutions are interrelated. As Weiner asserted, using reciprocity as an example,

I argue that in focusing on ‘norms of reciprocity’ as a core principle, we continue to employ a Western construct of linear sequences basically concerned with discrete acts of giving and receiving. While it may be argued by others that the ‘norm of reciprocity’ must be the primary focus having logical priority, in that without the obligation to give and to receive there would be no system of relationships, my premise is that ‘norms of reciprocity’ must be analyzed as part of a larger system — a reproductive system — in which the reproduction and regeneration of persons, objects, and relationships are integrated and encapsulated. (Weiner, 1980:71)

Similarly, I find that by taking *wanbel* as a starting point in my analysis, which is what the Sam villagers are primarily concerned with in their meetings and ceremonies, I learn much about common Melanesian themes such as exchange, reciprocity, and agency, and how they are interrelated in the pursuit of *wanbel*.

While the research into *wanbel* has pinpointed some of the expected results of *wanbel* and its absence, such as good health or sickness (Street, 2014) and prosperity (Brison, 1991), Sam people have another long-term, overarching desire of having a good life, which they call “wellbeing” (“*gutpela sindaun*” TP). *Gutpela sindaun* is more than simply obtaining material goods; it is a holistic vision of a good life (Gibbs, 2010:39; Lawrence, 1964; Mantovani, 1984:5). The Sam view of *gutpela sindaun* resembles recent research on wellbeing (Adelson, 2000; Agee, McIntosh, Culbertson, & Makasiale, 2013; Camfield, Crivello, & Woodhead, 2009; Diener, 2012; Diener, Oishi, & Lucas, 2003; Fischer, 2014; Hirsch, 2008; Jiménez, 2008; Mathews & Izquierdo, 2009; Obst & Tham, 2009). Wellbeing, like *gutpela sindaun*, is defined as more than owning material possessions; the term includes ideas of the good life, such as “aspiration and opportunity, dignity and fairness, and commitments to larger purposes” (Fischer, 2014:2). Wellbeing is influenced by one’s perception of needs and resources, which have been dramatically changed with the influences of modernity, new diseases (e.g. HIV/AIDS), education, and development (Appadurai, 1990; Dundon, 2002a, 2002b, 2004, 2009; Eves, 2000a, 2000b; Gewertz & Errington, 1999; Zimmer-Tamakoshi, 1997).

As they seek to be people characterised by *wanbel*, and thus make *gutpela sindaun* a reality in their community, the Sam villagers navigate diverse themes that are at the core of Melanesian studies.

In this thesis, I will be using *wanbel* to explore the insights it provides into current conversations in Melanesian literature, including relationships, communication, and exchange; personhood and relationality; and modernity and Christianity.

Relationships, communication and exchange

From the earliest Melanesian studies, anthropologists have documented practices and ways that people relate together to resolve conflict and influence relationship (Malinowski, 2014 [1922]; Mauss, 1990 [1954]). Social interaction as it pertains to resolving conflict is a fruitful area of study, and involves meetings, ceremonies, speeches, and ways of using language to navigate relationships (Brison, 1989, 1992; Myers, 1986; Watson-Gegeo, White, & Arno, 1990). Meetings in Melanesia provide important venues for current and potential village leaders exercise their abilities and verbally engage in politics, as one researcher said, the “‘talking side’ of Melanesian politics” (Brison, 1992:xiii). As I have observed in the Sam area and focus on in Chapter Five, meeting participants use verbal and nonverbal communication to accomplish a number of political and relational purposes, such as performing marriages, adjudicating court cases, and raising grievances. The Sam have a clear rhetorical style to the way they broach issues in a village meeting, and often speak loudly and argue energetically. While disputes are common in these settings, rarely will one result in physical violence. It is much more common for people to express disagreement through verbal disputes and gossip (Arno, 1990; Besnier, 2009; Brison, 1992; Duranti, 1990; Hemer, 2013; Stewart & Strathern, 2004; Watson-Gegeo et al., 1990).

But Sam villagers do not believe that words are only important for conveying information or persuading people; for them, saying certain things can also affect people for good or ill. Words are seen to have power in the sense of skilful oratory that causes people to act or think in certain ways (Brison, 1992:xiii; Paine, 1981), as well as in the sense of bringing change to the fabric of reality (Kulick, 1997 [1992]:82-84, 249-250). Sorcerers and healers use verbal incantations to entreat the ancestors to heal sicknesses, help pigs grow well, protect people from spirits, and other important functions (Malinowski, 1987 [1929]:181-183; Stephen, 1987; A. Strathern & Stewart, 2010 [1999]:55-63). In parts of Melanesia, certain men and women know magic words which when they utter them over food, a person, or some other object, will bring about a certain effect (Malinowski, 2014 [1922]:428-463; Tamoane, 1977:125; Whiteman, 2002 [1983]:354). Even words spoken about others and not connected to an actual incantation, can negatively affect others. Thus, Young noted that villagers on Goodenough Island believe that hostile gossip, which they call *veyaina*, is nearly as harmful as sorcery (Young, 1971a:135). Many Sam people, and those in other regions in Papua New

Guinea believe that a person's feelings of frustration or anger will cause harm to the one who has wronged them (Smith, 1994:54-56; Street, 2014:5-7, 126-127).

In conjunction with verbal and nonverbal communication, Melanesian people place emphasis on gift-giving and reciprocity to navigate harmony and conflict (Lederman, 1986; Mantovani, 1984; Mauss, 1990 [1954]; Sahlins, 1974; E. Schieffelin, 1980; Von Poser, 2013). As Robbins noted, "...one reason why exchange at the level of goods is so elaborated in Melanesia is that it is doing a lot of the work of social coordination handled at the level of the exchange of speech elsewhere" (Robbins, 2012:40). Mauss was one of the earliest anthropologists to document the central role that gifts play in relationality in various societies around the world including Melanesia (Mauss, 1990 [1954]). People come together to participate in reciprocal group gift exchanges, or as Mauss calls them, "archaic forms of contract" (Mauss, 1990 [1954]:5). The gift giving practice is often a part of multiple institutions (e.g. religion, politics, moral) at the same time, and Mauss asserted that giving gifts was a "total social phenomena" (Mauss, 1990 [1954]:1). Reciprocity, especially, appears to entail an obligation for people to enter a relationship of giving and returning gifts. While it seems to be a free and isolated activity, in reality, it is "based on obligation and economic self-interest" (Mauss, 1990 [1954]:1). The gift is seen to be not only a material object, but, as in the Maori view, to contain an aspect of the person giving the object which resides with that item and must be reciprocated. Mauss described this trace of the giver as the "spirit of the gift," called *hau*, which goes along with the object and wants to return to its origin, to its "birthplace" (Mauss, 1990 [1954]:10-12). Thus, gifts themselves are seen to play a role in building relationships as they are circulated between people.

Melanesians demonstrate relational ties with others in their society through intricate trade networks, complex pig exchanges, and the ways they link each other in kinship ties (Bateson, 1958 [1936]; Evans-Pritchard, 1929; Hocart, 1937; Macintyre, 1983; Malinowski, 1930, 2014 [1922]; Meggitt, 1974; Radcliffe-Brown, 1929; Rubel & Rosman, 1978; Sahlins, 2011, 2013; Young, 1971a). A prototypical example of the importance of giving in Melanesian society is the *Kula* in the Milne Bay area (Kuehling, 2005; Malinowski, 2014 [1922]:81-104). In exchanging arm bands, called *mwali*, from island to island in a counter clockwise direction, and necklaces, called *soulava*, in a clockwise direction, islanders are maintaining important societal connections. In giving these valuable objects, called *vaygu'a*, men become exchange partners for the rest of their lives, and likewise, the objects themselves that become part of the *Kula* exchanges are circulated ceaselessly (Malinowski, 2014 [1922]:83). As Malinowski notes, "...once in the *Kula*, always in the *Kula*," and a partnership between two men is a permanent and lifelong affair" (Malinowski, 2014 [1922]:83).

While these anthropological studies are valuable contributions to Melanesian studies, they are either general area studies on gift exchange, or see gift exchange as a voluntary and impartial activity. This is different from the Sam view of gift exchange – that giving implies the desire to create relationship and is ordered by principles of reciprocity. The Sam view giving as reciprocal and integral to forming relationships between individuals in different collectives and among those within a single collective. They believe gift-giving means more than simply transferring something to someone else; the act of giving most things creates relationships between people by transferring some part of the giver to the receiver – a partible view of gift. As M. Strathern asserted, gifts are partible, that is, the giver is giving an aspect of him or herself, and the recipient is accepting the gift, and also accepting the relational tie offered by the other (M. Strathern, 1988:192). Differing slightly from the situation that Strathern describes, my research showed that some items, like money given to buy diesel or store goods, belong to a category of “business” and are given without transferring part of the giver. Generally though, my research aligns with the claims of other Melanesian researchers, that a person affirms their dependence on and interrelationship with others through reciprocity, and that giving has an impact on personhood (Lindstrom, 1984; Manderson, 1986; Mauss, 1990 [1954]; Sahlins, 1963; M. Strathern, 1988; Young, 1971a).

Personhood and relationality

Documenting relational personhood in Melanesia has been an early focus of anthropologists, who have noted the variety of ways that groups in Papua New Guinea create and maintain relational ties (Foster, 2005b; Malinowski, 2014 [1922]:167; A. Strathern, 1971). Much of the anthropological discussion about relationality has incorporated the anthropological concept of dividuality (Marriott, 1976; M. Strathern, 1988). Marriott used dividuality in researching Hindu society, as an alternative to the “peculiar Western philosophic burdens of dualism, universalism, and individualism” (Marriott, 1976:109). In his view, dividuality was a fundamentally different way of conceiving of the self; the self was composed of material substances people receive from others, and, in turn, give back, thus leading to his insight that some people are not individuals, but “divisible” (Marriott, 1976:111).

Marilyn Strathern (1988:13) proposed that dividuality characterized societies she researched in Papua New Guinea, arguing that “Far from being regarded as unique entities, Melanesian persons are as dividually as they are individually conceived. They contain a generalized sociality within” (see also Battaglia, 1990; Leenhardt, 1979 [1947]). In this view, a Melanesian person is born into a framework of relationships with others. Within this framework, a person may work to strengthen or weaken relationships, but they cannot change the framework (M. Strathern, 1988:161-162).

These connections imply that people act with others in mind (Leenhardt, 1979 [1947]:153). As Strathern says, “One always acts so to speak ‘on behalf of’ another, though the English phrase has misleadingly positive overtones. The object or outcome is their relationship, the effect of their interaction” (M. Strathern, 1988:272). In this way, people exercise an agency rooted in what one thinks others demand of them, not based on fulfilling their own desires (M. Strathern, 1988:272-273).

Dividual personhood (or relational, holism, or composite personhood) has become a prominent notion in Melanesian studies (Lipuma, 1998:56; Schram, 2015:320), leading one researcher to call its hegemony a “nascent orthodoxy” (Scott, 2007:31). However, some argue that while people feel as if they are integral members of a community, sometimes they may act as individuals (Lipuma, 1998; 2000:55, 130-132; Wardlow, 2005). For instance, LiPuma (2000:55) notes that violence within the Maring family is “highly intentional and draws forth the individual aspect of persons,” while “warfare was persuasively dividual and had little to do with the personal intentions of the combatants” (cf. Harrison, 1995:85). Still others point out that while relationality may be a dominant value for a group of people, individualism may be foregrounded or activated by ideologies like Christianity or modernity (LiPuma, 2000:130-132; Robbins, 2004a:293-294). Some researchers critique dividuality for its idyllic implication that Melanesians give freely to each other out of a principle of generosity and try to maximise the benefit of others (Hemer, 2013:88-91; Macintyre, 1995:30).

Papua New Guineans vary not just in notions of personhood and behaving relationally, but also in how they express their intentions and desires revolving around relational action. While intuiting what others are thinking can help a person tailor their actions toward others in order to enhance cooperation, many Melanesians believe that it is impossible to know how others are thinking; that is, they assert that one’s thoughts are opaque to others (Duranti, 2008; Keane, 2008; Robbins, 2008; Robbins & Rumsey, 2008; Rumsey, 2008; B. Schieffelin, 2008; Stasch, 2008). While in general, opacity leads to a focus on what others do rather than what they say they are going to do (Robbins & Rumsey, 2008:408), groups express and think about opacity differently. Some groups, such as the Bosavi and Urapmin, believe that ascertaining another’s inner thoughts is not possible, and that trying to do so can lead to misinterpretation (Robbins & Rumsey, 2008:409). Others, like the Ku Waru, practice public confession in order to share their inner thoughts so that others can overhear, while still others (like the Korowai) say they believe in opacity, but, in practice, try to discern what others are thinking (Robbins & Rumsey, 2008:409). The Korowai refrain from trying to read other’s minds because “not presuming to know others’ minds is intertwined with sensitivity about not

presuming to impinge on each other's self-determination. Reflexive models of the possibilities and problems of knowing other minds are also models of the political terms of people's coexistence" (Stasch, 2008:443). Communication style and opacity may be linked: for example, speaking may help to prevent miscommunication due to opacity. As Robbins and Rumsey note,

While evidence is thus sometimes sketchy, it is nonetheless clear that there is a wide range of variation in the content of opacity ideas, in how thick and impenetrable the barrier separating people from one another is understood to be, and in the role that speech is or is not expected to play in overcoming it. (Robbins & Rumsey, 2008:409)

Sam people do not speculate on what others are thinking and feeling. Asserting what someone else is thinking and feeling is not just bad manners; they hold that people cannot know for certain what is in each other's *pari* ("insides, feelings, dispositions"). Like the *noman* of the Melpa (M. Strathern, 1979:250) and the Trobriander concept of *nanola* (Weiner, 1984:166), no one can know what is in another's *pari*, and they become reconciled by revealing their *pari* through their speech and behaviour. When what they say and do both illustrate that they are in concord, then they have related their *pari* sincerely.

Modernity and Christianity

Modernity and Christianity influence and shape the Sam pursuit of *wanbel*. Significant research has been done concerning Christianity and modernity in Melanesia.⁸ Anthropological interest in the influences of modernity accelerated starting in the middle of the 1980s (Knauft, 2002b:vii).⁹ Although the concept of modernity is difficult to define, Knauft (2002a:4) argues that "it remains true that aspirations for economic development and for associated institutional if not cultural progress are, if anything, stronger than ever in much of the contemporary world" (see also Besnier, 2011:6; Keane, 2002:68; Yack, 1997). That is, the ideology of modernity is not just an academic term, imposed by outsiders, but is embraced and desired by those living within the area (Knauft, 2002a:4). For Keane as well, "However much we may want to doubt the analytic purchase or

⁸ (see Barker, 2013; Besnier, 2011; Dalton, 2005; Dundon, 2002a, 2007b; Dundon, 2016; Eves, 2003, 2008; Foster, 2005a, 2005b; Goddard & Heekeren, 2003; Jebens, 2005; Knauft, 2002a:10; 2002b; Magowan & Schwarz, 2016a, 2016b; R. Marshall, 2014; Robbins, 1998, 2001, 2004a, 2004b, 2005, 2007a, 2007b, 2009, 2014; Robbins, Stewart, & Strathern, 2001; Robbins & Wardlow, 2005; Sahlins, 1992; Scott, 2005; P. Taylor, 2007; Tomlinson, 2009; Tomlinson & McDougall, 2013; Wardlow, 2005).

⁹ Cultural diffusion is not a new phenomenon; transnationalism, long practiced in the Pacific, offers local people new concepts and ways of living that they can take and adapt for their own purposes (Barnett, 1953; Hirsch, 2001:133-134; Lindstrom, 2008:163; Magowan & Schwarz, 2016a:9; Tonkinson, 1979:61; 1982c:46; 1994:39-44; Worsley, 1957:lvii-lviii). Cultural innovation can benefit the person (and their community) who can take advantage of new ideas and relationships (Lindstrom, 2008:172). In Vanuatu, "A strong desire to gain advantage in local political arenas impelled men into sometimes long and risky voyages to obtain through trade exchange items, rituals and spells that promised enhancement of power and prestige" (Tonkinson, 1982c:46).

descriptive adequacy of the concept, its ubiquity in popular as well as in official and expert discourses is empirically undeniable” (Keane, 2002:68).

Difficulties in defining modernity arise due to the term’s multivocality; different communities define modernity according to their perceptions of those institutions and images, usually from the West, that they think exemplify progress and development (Knauft, 2002a:18; Miller, 1994). Thus, modernity takes different forms in different social contexts, and is not a single, coherent force of “global progress and collective improvement” (Knauft, 2002a:2). As local communities interact with “modernity” as they experience it in their context, their reactions also may differ, sometimes becoming more or less culturally diverse (Knauft, 2002a:2). These varied reactions to modernity led in the late 1990s, to discussions of local (alternative or vernacular) modernities (Englund & Leach, 2000; Knauft, 2002a:4-5; Patterson & Macintyre, 2011a:1-3; Sutcliffe, 2011).

In this thesis, I do not assume a causal or ontological connection between modernity and Christianity, though they may have entered an area at a similar time in history (Cannell, 2006:38). As Cannell cautions, “Christian experience cannot be seen properly if it is tied exclusively to a supposedly destined trajectory of modernity...” (Cannell, 2006:39). In addition, Cannell urges researchers to not take Christianity outside of its historical context, but to understand that there are local expressions of Christianity, often referred to as Christianities (Barker, 1992, 2001; Cannell, 2006:7, 22; Dundon, 2015; Englund, 2000; MacDonald, 2004:320-321; Scott, 2005).

Foster posits that different responses to modernity and Christianity seem to come more from context, more from “unevenly experienced circumstances of colonization, formal political independence, and location within the global (cultural) economy,” than from differences among cultural values (Foster, 2005b:173). Within these historical and geographical constraints, he explains (2005b:167-168) that people have the ability to navigate modernist influences, saying, “People everywhere meet what comes to them over the horizon with neither passive acceptance nor heroic resistance” (see also Carrier, 1992; McDowell, 1988; Sahlins, 1992). As they interact with these new ideas and practices, the boundary between what is local and global is fluid, and it becomes more difficult to distinguish what is “foreign” and what is “indigenous,” as people appropriate and integrate those ideas that they think fit their needs and context (Barker, 2013:147; Jolly, 2005:138; Jorgensen, 2001; Sahlins, 1992:15-16).¹⁰ Thus, people living in Papua New Guinea and Vanuatu have interacted with and developed their own understandings and relationships with

¹⁰ Besides Christianity’s ability to become indigenised, as communities take it and allow it to become part of their lives, Christianity can also be a globalising force, when, for example, Pentecostal Christianity among different communities and countries stays recognisably similar (Robbins, 2004b).

Christian ideas to construct their modern and Christian identity (Dundon, 2016; Errington & Gewertz, 1996; Lindstrom, 2008:162; Robbins, 2004a; Tonkinson, 1982c, 2004).

Amidst these diverse fundamental changes, many Pacific communities pursue strengthening relationships as a way to create and take advantage of opportunities. As Foster notes, “Pacific Islanders now seek and have long sought to establish a range of relationships with agents and agencies deemed foreign. ...the transformative engagement of the foreign by the domestic is above all oriented toward generating a productive and reciprocal relationship” (Foster, 2005b:167). This is an apt description for how the Sam people approach those outside of the village. Sam villagers try to cultivate relationships with as many people and collectives as possible, and now they have access to more people and their collectives than in previous generations. As people throughout Papua New Guinea have come to value *wanbel* with other villages and regions, they find that they are able to initiate and sustain productive relationships with them.

While relationships provide stability as people interact with new ideas posed by modernity and Christianity, these new ideas generally affect many cultural aspects, including but not limited to notions of personhood and time (Cox & Macintyre, 2014; Dundon, 2016; Eves et al., 2014; Lee & LiPuma, 2002; Lipuma, 1998, 2000; Macintyre, 2011; Patterson & Macintyre, 2011a). Keane summarises these deep, cultural changes from the work of Berman (1982) and Taylor (1989), “At the heart of this version of the modern is the conjunction of personal and historical self-transformation with a vision of the self, abstracted from material and social entanglements” (Keane, 2002:68). Thus, among the Maring, LiPuma explains, this influence has led to an expansion of the region of political influence, such that “the public political sphere within which clan members exercise power now extends well beyond the clan and clan cluster” (Lipuma, 1998:72). Likewise, Christianity also exerts an individualising pressure on local communities, seen in the way that conversion is a call on a person, not their community, to state their newfound belief and allegiance to God, in what Peter van der Veer calls “the modern conception of the individual person, essential to both capitalism and Protestantism” (Van der veer, 1996:9). For instance, among the Urapmin, Christians judge an individual’s behaviour as moral or immoral according to the commands in the Bible, and not whether they bring benefit to one’s community, which is the gauge of morality in a typical relational setting (Robbins, 2004a:293-294).

Another transformation takes place regarding the concept of time (Appadurai, 1996:27; Bainton, 2011; Smith, 1994, 2016). Christianity posits that individuals, when they convert, are placed from a state of rebellion against God to one in which they are saved by him. This transition is a break in time, after which the believer is forever changed (Cannell, 2006:38). In modernity as well, time is

affected. Researchers refer to this abrupt transition to a new temporality as a rupturing event, as people find themselves in a new situation where the cultural meanings with which they used to navigate life are changed (Hirsch, 2001:132; Jolly, 1997:156; Miller, 1994:304). Hirsch (2001:133) refers to this sense of sudden change of Melanesian time as a “re-occurring sense of modernity and tradition, as both relatively separate, and as co-existing: a distinctive temporal relation between past, present and future.” He goes on to suggest that in Melanesia, people think of time not as linear, but as recurring epochs, within which they live their lives. These epochs cannot be teased apart, for, as he says (2001:133), “...the periodisation of modernity and of persons are inextricably connected” (see also Scaglione, 1999). However, this view of time is challenged because modernity, according to Miller, presents a “new temporality” of a separation between a past, present, and future time. He posits that this temporal change leads people to have to think more and more about time as a quality in their lives that structures how they live (Miller, 1994:79). The more recent understanding of clock time, as opposed to an episodic view of time, leads to the idea that time may be wasted or scarce. Hence, among the Kragur, Smith notes,

Kragur villager’s behaviour often suggests an indifference to the passage of time inconsistent with a developed sense of time scarcity. ...Kragur is, however, in a period of transition... Scattered throughout speeches and conversations in the Kairiru language one sometimes hears such Pidgin phrases as *westim taim* (to waste time),... *taim i sot* (time is short), or *taim i no nap* (time is insufficient). (Smith, 1994:220-221)

The linkage of notions of “using time” and “making money” leads to the newer Melanesian view of time as something that can be wasted or used productively, thus aligned with the modernist ideal of exercising control over one’s future (Bainton, 2011; Bainton & Cox, 2009; Cox, 2011, 2013; Cox & Macintyre, 2014; Tam, 1997:28-29). For instance, the “Personal Viability” training course, endorsed by the PNG government and promoted by Lihirian leaders, urges Lihirians to make a chart of the time they spend in “productive” activities (gardening, fishing, and so on) versus “unproductive” ones (such as gossiping, napping, or visiting relatives) (Bainton, 2011:245).

The introduction of modernity and Christianity into local Pacific communities has set up a complex and debated relationship with *kastam* (“customary ways, ceremony” TP) and cargo cults (Bainton, 2008; Burt, 1982; David Counts, 1984; Hermann, 1997; Jebens, 2004b, 2004c; Keck, 2007; Lindstrom, 1982, 1993a, 2008; Martin, 2007; Tabani, 2013; J. Taylor, 2016; Tonkinson, 1981a, 1982a). Some aspects of these ideologies are held to be in opposition, such as the practices reportedly at odds with a church’s doctrine, such as regards practicing sorcery (Forsyth & Eves, 2015b; J. Taylor, 2016:139). Similarly, as they reject *kastam*, the Wam people of East Sepik disagree over whether to follow church or development to produce *komuniti* (Stephenson, 2001). As local people engage with newer ideas, they also hold on to older ones, and in this process, may transform

both. For instance, Knauff's description of Gebusi would also apply to the Sam, "local modernity is marked by the redefinition and reperformance of traditional customs as well as by participation in contemporary institutions and by adopting fundamentalist Christian beliefs" (Knauff, 2002a:28).

Cargoism is another influence, along with modernity and Christianity, in the Sam area (Burrige, 1995 [1960]; "Cult of Baigona: The rise of a religion, strange story from Papua," 1913; Jarvie, 1963; Lawrence, 1964; Steinbauer, 1979; Worsley, 1957). Madang has been a site of frequent cargo cult activity, and was the site of the cults associated with Yali in the 1940s (Burrige, 1995 [1960]:137), but which originated earlier (Inselmann, 1991 [1944]; Lawrence, 1964). The term "cargo cult" is problematic, and some argue against its use (Hermann, 1992:69). Some early researchers described cults as mental illness or essentially irrational (Mair, 1958:178; Mooney, 1896:945; Williams, 1923, 1934). Others critique the term because it carries negative connotations (Kaplan, 1995; Leavitt, 2000; Lindstrom, 1993a, 2000). In an attempt to refute the exotic, sensationalistic connotation of the term, some researchers argue that "Cargoism is nothing less than the Melanesian world view applied to the task of providing meaningful interpretation of European culture" (Biersack, 2013:85; Harding, 1967:21; Kaplan, 1995; Lindstrom, 1993b; McDowell, 1988). Perhaps seeing cargo cults as routine and unremarkable led Yali's widow to assert, "All of us actually belong to 'cargo cult'!" (Hermann, 2004:36). While I agree that the term "cargo cult" has been misused and overused, in this thesis I use it to denote a set of beliefs and practices that Sam speakers themselves refer to as "*kago kalt*" (see Douglas, 2001:617; Jebens, 2004a:4).

In Melanesia, Christianity, modernity, and development have often occurred together. For instance, churches were often instrumental in establishing hospitals, schools, and vocational training (Dundon, 2002a; MacDonald, 2004; Street, 2014:70-73). Missionaries and explorers distributed gifts and/or carried out health care as part of their endeavours (Dundon, 2002a:217; Mikloucho-Maclay, 1975:15-18). Modernity and development also entail each other, though their meanings are not fixed and they may be foregrounded in different domains (Karp, 2002:83). At the local level, the term "development" can have multiple meanings (Dundon, 2002a; Robbins, 2004a:100). Thus, as Robbins noted, development can mean, "...everything from a few chickens surrounded by a bush material fence or a tin roof on one's house to the advent of a gold mine on one's land" (Robbins, 2004a:100). He goes on to explain that all the things the Urapmin say they want have something in common, namely, that they are instances of a market economy, which is what the Urapmin want to access and control in their region (Robbins, 2004a). However, when the church becomes the example of development, "development" can also have a moral dimension. As MacDonald states,

For many, the church has been an influential institution in their village or neighborhood – gathering people to express commitment to God and each other, providing educational and health services, promoting development works, addressing social concerns. Today among most Papua New Guineans, a notion of following Jesus’ example, and of obeying God’s law, is held as a moral norm. (MacDonald, 2004:320)

Thus, people yearn for development, and yet, as they invest the term with their own meaning, it is an equivocal and fluid concept. Through fieldwork in the Sam villages, I tried to learn what development means for people in the Sam villages, and how they relate this to their notion of *wanbel*.

Chapter overview

The following chapters look at *wanbel* in a variety of contexts, using *wanbel* to interrogate Sam ideas and practices surrounding personhood and relationships. Chapter Two is a reflexive account of a conflict which culminated in the *wanbel* process of reconciliation between all three Sam villages. The conflict between anonymous community members and I centred on what they thought I could and should do for the community. Ultimately, by being unexpectedly thrust into the *wanbel* process, I gained crucial insights into *wanbel*, including the importance of giving and reciprocity, sharing one’s inner self, and practical ways to interact socially to create *wanbel*. This reflexive aspect to my fieldwork was a pivotal part of gaining experiential knowledge of the complexities and process of *wanbel*.

Chapter Three explains how negative events, called *kulik* (“burdensome problem/issue”), lead the Sam people to the conclusion that there is a lack of *wanbel* within their collective. They continuously monitor the state of *wanbel* between themselves and others; when a *kulik* occurs, they begin to search for individuals who might have a grievance with someone else. As they search for the broken relationship(s), the community questions whether someone has been immoral, someone has not shown commitment to another sincerely through speech and/or action, whether someone is justified in feeling anger or jealousy, and what sort of compensation would help everyone concerned to become *wanbel* again. It is through this investigation and finding possible causes that the Sam villagers navigate divisive social issues, including sorcery. In this way, *wanbel* provides the reason for becoming harmonious, as well as giving the opportunity for people to discuss issues that divide them.

In Chapter Four, I describe the nature of *wanbel* through the Sam conceptualisation of personhood. A fundamental aspect of the Sam theory of personhood is that each person has an inner nature that is opaque to others, and prevents them from knowing things that could help to prevent conflict. At the same time, they desire to be continuously *wanbel*, and depend on being in this state

of communal harmony for the health and safety of their collective. In other words, they must manage their lack of full knowledge of what others are thinking and feeling to pursue harmony to be well. Opacity, in a theoretical sense, could provide an obstacle to good relationships, but the Sam people overcome this by expressly requesting and making clear their inner self through speech and behaviour, and, ultimately, they look to the result. Sam villagers think of personhood as something that emerges as a person engages with society. They purposively construct and maintain the self through the *wanbel* framework, and so there are four types of *wanbel*: inner peace and certainty (*pari xosolox*), general happiness and love (*pari beli*), comradery (*pari kujex*), and being of one mind in a plan to accomplish something (*udud kujex*).

Chapters Five and Six deal with Sam speakers make their thoughts and feelings visible to others through social action in order to become *wanbel*. While they do not dichotomise speech and behaviour in the *wanbel* process — both are seamless elements to become and maintain *wanbel* — I focus on speech in the *wanbel* process in Chapter Five, while acknowledging the behaviour that accompanies what people say. Sam villagers use verbal expression in strategic ways to either enhance or limit *wanbel* depending on what they are trying to accomplish. An important use of speech is to retell and reaffirm the role that someone or their ancestors have played within the life of the social group, thus narratives take on qualities of group memories. In Chapter Six, I look at how Sam people embody and perform *wanbel* through gift exchange and behaving relationally. Through *mangau* (“actions/behaviour”), a person shows what they are thinking and feeling, and Sam villagers believe that *mangau* may confirm or contradict what is said. In addition, for the Sam, someone’s behaviour, in the way it enhances *wanbel* or erodes it, is also a statement regarding the nature of past and future relationships, and can lead to redefining memories of relationships. Since the Sam believe that their community must be *wanbel* in order to obtain *gutpela sindaun* (“wellbeing” TP), they say it is unthinkable for them to be in disharmony for long, yet conflict and debate are common in *wanbel* meetings. This happens even though all the Sam people I talked with said that they will always return to a state of *wanbel* in the future regardless of difficulty or difference of opinion.

Chapter Seven discusses the role of *wanbel* in mediating conflicting desires now, which they call the “time of money.” In the present time, people have many, sometimes conflicting, desires which form part of their vision of an ideal future, and, if their community is *wanbel*, they expect that they will be able obtain what they seek. However, interviewees reported that they feel frustrated and angry. They do not think they are able to be *wanbel* to the extent that they will obtain what they want, because there are many challenges that their ancestors did not face. Visions of *gutpela*

sindaun are framed in terms of elements drawn from both “tradition” and “development” that differ according to generation and gender. People believe that *wanbel* itself has changed due to the effects of modernity, capitalism, and Christianity. In this time, people are navigating what it means to pursue *wanbel* with others, including those outside of their community, who may have differing ideas of what *wanbel* should bring them, and how to become reconciled in a way that is efficacious. Thus, the Sam people face challenges in this “time of money” as they conceptualise their future and seek to maintain good relationships via the *wanbel* process.

Conclusion

In exploring the concept of *wanbel* and its importance for the Sam people, this thesis discusses and interrogates notions of conflict, reconciliation, agency, performativity, personhood, and relationships as understood and practised by the Sam. There has been much anthropological discussion and debate in Papua New Guinea about ideas of social conflict and harmony, as well as how to achieve social change and development, often sought by committing to cargo cults or various forms of Christianity. This thesis will contribute a new perspective on these debates by asking how the Sam people address disorder and conflict through becoming and sustaining *wanbel* with each other, which also incorporates notions of personhood and relationship as understood and practised by the Sam. I argue that being *wanbel* is an ideal that they choose to pursue in order to experience a good life. They believe that acting in a *wanbel* way will create *wanbel* with others. In addition, the Sam choose to become *wanbel* by monitoring their relationships with others and following a process to create and strengthen relationships, which creates a state of equivalence, amity, morality and wellbeing.

Furthermore, the process of becoming *wanbel* illustrates the way in which they integrate both individual and dividual aspects of personhood into the way they become *wanbel*. Through dynamic and turbulent *wanbel* negotiations, individuals and groups constantly provide feedback on the status of their relationships and how to improve them in ways that will lead to good fortune and prosperity. In these discussions, people reveal things known only to themselves in order to create the conditions by which they can be *wanbel* with their collective.

Finally, *wanbel* is more than a means to have good health, bountiful gardens, and prosperity; it is a comprehensive way to critique, create, and sustain mutually dependent relationships. *Wanbel* provides a way for the Sam to, in Schram’s words (2015:317), “theorize themselves in the process of doing sociality” (see also Hemer, 2013; Lipuma, 1998; Robbins, 2015). The process of becoming *wanbel* is both a reflexive way to discuss personhood and relationality and bring up issues of “local

modernity” as they also work to create good relationships, which will allow their community to experience *gutpela sindaun*.

Chapter 2: A personal experience of *wanbel*

Halfway through my fieldwork term, I received a hand-written letter detailing a grievance someone had with me.¹¹ This letter led to a three-month period of reconciliation, culminating in a *wanbel* meeting of the type I had been researching. As I write this chapter, two years later, I still feel the raw emotions and anxiety I experienced then as I worked through interpersonal conflict. Although this was a difficult time for me, it taught me much about *wanbel* on a personal level. Becoming *wanbel* was a matter which concerned me and my family, not people I was interviewing. I had to put into practice concepts and actions that I learned from my village friends, such as the gendered nature of *wanbel*, limits of knowing what others are thinking, and the importance of making one's thoughts and feelings visible through one's speech and behaviour. When I began to engage with *wanbel* personally, I gained a first-hand understanding of the reflexive nature of *wanbel*. The letter opened up a dialectical process of discovery, which informed my analysis and writing (Davies, 2008:4-6; Okely, 1992; Segal, 1990). Okely asserts, "Reflexive knowledge of fieldwork is acquired not only from an examination of outside categories, but also from the more intangible inner experiences" (Okely, 1992:16). Research is a two-way process of discovery, characterised by "...personal, emotional and identity work," as the community and researcher interact and derive meaning from each other's actions (Coffey, 1999:1, emphasis in original).

In this chapter, I explore the events that propelled my wife and me into a deeper relationship with the community through the conflict that arose. The chapter describes how this unfolded, and the various steps in the process by which we resolved it, and serves as a model of the chapters of this thesis. Initially, conflict is felt by only one person; it spreads to include their family, and then to others. Hence, although people must have been upset with me earlier, I did not become aware of how they felt until they shared their *kulik* ("burdensome problem/issue") with me in a letter.

Conflict is embodied

I was initiated into the *wanbel* process one Monday morning, about six months into my fieldwork in Buan village. My eldest daughter had pushed open the door and descended the house steps,

¹¹ The meeting covered issues that had arisen from my earlier work with SIL. Although I was not conducting language development work with SIL at the time of the meeting, the Sam people still associated me with SIL, despite my frequent explanations that I had become a postgraduate student at the University of Adelaide.

almost stepping on a piece of paper lying on one of the steps. She brought to me. It was a page of notebook paper, folded, with the names of my wife and I on one side and a message on the other.

The message was written primarily in Tok Pisin, with a few words written in English and Sam:

Monday.
29/09/04.

Dear David

Mi kisim maus bilong community na youths mangi, na mi laik toksave long you lo warem pasin you mekem em mo stait lo laik na trusting bilong ol community.

David hama pela years ago pinis tasol you no bringim wampela gutpela service ikam lo community, na you no senisim wanwan wokman blo you tu. Gutpela samting bossman bilong you save ~~sa~~ salim kam lo neim blo Sam Community, you save lukim na ownim olsem samting bilong you. Na community blo Sam mo save lukim wampela samting bilong SIL, you save givim hatwok nating long ol bikman blo you yumi. Sampela ol idai na sampela ol i stap yet. Eg: Philip Bagen na Samuel Bagen. So please tingting gut na wokim samting stait. Sapos nogot dispela em last year bilong you.

Emtasol tingting wampela igat tot long em.
Kaye-e.

Figure 6: Anonymous letter

Below is my English translation of the body of the letter:

Dear David,

I am taking the mouth of the community and young people, and I want to give you a message of what things you are doing that do not match the wishes and thoughts of the community. David how many years have gone but you did not bring one good service to the community, and you don't change your workmen. The good things your boss man sends in the name of the Sam community you see them and own them like they are yours. And the community of Sam don't see one thing of SIL, you give our big men hard work for no reason. Some of them have died and some are alive yet, for example Philip Bagen and Samuel Bagen. So please think well and make things properly. If not, this is your last year.

That is the end of our thoughts on that.

Thank you.

This letter was written in an assertive and authoritative tone similar to the tone used in meetings.

As a medium of communication, the letter was useful in that it summarised the topics that were

hindering *wanbel*. The mutual desire for *wanbel* that Sam people expect to share with each other invites them to talk about and resolve difficult issues. Their dialogue in community meetings, as in the letter, has an assertive and authoritative tone. This forceful way of speaking is a distinctive style of oration. One Sam friend referred to this way of speaking as, “coming [at them] with force” and “burning them” (“*kam wantaim fos*” and “*fairim ol*” TP). They take authority from the community, not from themselves. As Sam speakers say, “*kisim maus bilong komuniti*” (“speak the community’s words” TP). Likewise, Kulick, comparing how Gapun speak and the letters they write (1997 [1992]:136-139) states, “The recipient of this note is not being written to so much as orated at.” In using this phrase, “speak the community’s words,” the author was stating he was merely asserting what the community was already thinking. At the same time, he assumed the authority to bring the thoughts of the community out in the open. The letter ends with another common Sam (and Gapun) way of finishing an oration: “This is the end of our thoughts on that” (Kulick, 1997 [1992]:125).

Although the letter carried overtones of Sam oratory, it was written as a letter, which is not the way the Sam usually make known their disagreements. In taking this unusual step of writing their thoughts, I realised that the author(s) must have felt a significant amount of frustration with me. I have never heard of Sam villagers sending each other letters. With the profusion of cell phones, though there are not always strong cell phone signals, Sam people frequently call each other. But apart from this relatively recent innovation, the Sam live near to those with whom they have conflict, and will signal a severed relationship with subtle nonverbal cues, such as ignoring the other person, looking at them without smiling, and walking away from them. If that message is ignored, then they restate this message either verbally, like shouting at them in public, or by physical actions, including cutting down a cocoa tree planted on disputed land, killing the pig that has angered them, or by eating their garden produce. In this case, I was unaware of the cues they may have sent me, which probably led them to take more explicit action to get my attention. Since they were aware that we often communicated by letter with our parents and friends, they possibly judged that this method would be most appropriate to communicate the message to me.

The letter had an emotive effect, drawing my wife and me into the dispute not just by spurring us to consider its claims objectively, but also emotionally. As we read it over and over, we felt a burden pressing down on us — we felt *kulik* (“burdensome problem/issue”). We were discouraged and unsettled by the letter, and threatened by the reference to this being our last year.¹² We were

¹² Sarah and I feel safe in the village, and that is why we are comfortable with taking our family to the village with us. We are looked after by the nearby clan members who think of us as their clan members and friends. In other conversations with our neighbours, the night after some drunken men walked near our

demoralised by what seemed like a sudden and unexpected critique, exposing a rupture that we did not know existed between us and the author. We had been living with the community for years, and functioning as researchers and language development workers on goals the community had said they supported and desired. Yet the letter indicated there was a radical disjuncture between what we had thought the Sam people wished for, and what the letter's author, and apparently others, hoped to obtain.

My neighbours reacted to the letter differently than I did. Although I felt the letter signalled an ending of a relationship and was a *kulik*, I noticed my neighbours reacted to the letter with interest and fascination. In retrospect, I realised they were focussing on this as the beginning of the *wanbel* process, and the conflict itself was secondary. The letter was intended to provoke us to initiate the *wanbel* process. When one friend read it, he advised me not to try to find out who wrote it, but instead have a public meeting to discuss it. By holding a meeting, we would find out who held this point of view, and could interact with them. He seemed to suggest that the letter was not something that I alone would face, but together with the entire community. I also realised that while the letter raised points of disagreement, it was not an ultimatum to expel us, but an overture to build consensus. My wife and I began to reconceptualise it as an invitation to sit down and work toward becoming *wanbel* with the author, and potentially, the community.

Arranging a wanbel meeting

When the Sam become *wanbel*, the disputants must talk together, negotiate their different claims and grievances, agree on the loci of blame and the associated need for compensation, and state their *wanbel* publicly. Public meetings in the village are often turbulent times, and exemplify a type of sociality that Errington and Gewertz (2007:93) call "commotions." As they explain, "This sociality was predicated upon on-going and self-assertive engagements: one in which people compelled each other into active participation in each other's pasts, presents and futures" (Errington & Gewertz, 2007:93; Gewertz, 2002). Likewise, Sam people often become *wanbel* through intense periods of discussion and negotiation.

Often, the negotiations are difficult and require a mediator to help determine the specific nature of the conflict, and the compensation both sides will pay. Usually, both sides give something to the other, often the same amount each to repair the relationship, and more from one side to compensate people if their property was damaged. Once they agree, the opposing parties come

house and yelled threats at us, my neighbour said, "Do not worry! They were 'just talking.' If they did anything, then you would see the community rise up and protect you!"

together on a specified day in a meeting that is open to the community. They exchange valued items, typically pigs, chickens, metal pots, and/or money, after which a village leader publicly declares they are *wanbel*, which communicates to associated family members that they should not act toward each other as enemies, but as friends.

In this case, however, I did not know who wrote the letter. I guessed that some of my neighbours did, but they did not volunteer any information as to the author's identity. Without an author, I could not ask a village leader to mediate between us. Therefore, although I was nervous about approaching the village community leader to request a *wanbel* meeting, I knew it was the only way to initiate dialogue with whomever wrote the letter. I was anxious about participating in a *wanbel* meeting because I had seen them in Buan previously – their intensity, popularity, and divisiveness. *Wanbel* meetings are like village courts. Under the guidance of a village leader, both sides state their arguments, and then the community members can “cross-examine” them. Statements are peppered with English legalese like “evidence” and “eye-witness.” They are sites of great emotion. People speak loudly, shout, and laugh uproariously at ridiculous statements. To emphasize points, they gesture suddenly, stand up and pace back and forth, or abruptly tear a leaf from the mandarin trees that shade the meeting area. Considering that we knew the national language, Tok Pisin, but were not fluent in Sam, we would be hard-pushed to understand all that people said. In addition, the Sam style of oratory involves repetition, metaphor, and metonymy, which take great effort for us to follow.

Also, what if we met together and we could not resolve the issues? On the other hand, if the group endorsed what my wife and I said, condemning the author, would that damage our relationship with the author and potentially others? Finally, the subject matter, specifically the claim that we were profiting from language development work, could generate strong emotions. Reading between the lines, I wondered whether the author thought we were withholding profits from something we were doing in the village. Unfortunately, this worry is understandable considering that the Sam, like other Papua New Guinean communities, are experiencing rapid resource extraction. They have resources, like hardwood timber, which companies operating under a capitalist model extract with a view to maximise profit, not necessarily act to develop the host community (Auty, 2002; Coxshall, 2010; Ernst, 2004; Humphreys, Sachs, & Stiglitz, 2007; Karl, 1997; Robinson, Torvik, & Verdier, 2006; Ross, 1999). A frequent conversational topic in Buan is that the logging company is not doing all they should for the community, and thus should be expelled. Considering that these extractive companies are frequently discussed in newspapers and conversations, it is likely that the author thought that we were similarly making a profit.

Ultimately though, I could tell that my neighbours all thought it was better to have the meeting. In their view, if we did not participate in a *wanbel* meeting, we would not be able to hear or respond to the assumptions and expectations set out in the letter, or work through the points of tension. There was no way to become *wanbel* if we did not converse with the author(s). In addition, I was told that if we did not set a meeting, the author of the letter would feel an increasing sense of frustration inside, in their *pari* (“insides, feelings, dispositions”). This inner emotional tension needed to be released, because if it was not freed in a meeting, then it would grow and erupt with greater disruption and conflict later.

Revealing and discussing feelings

As one of the disputants in this conflict, it was my duty to try to meet with the other disputants. Instead of being able to observe and analyse the meeting from a distance, I was placed at the centre of the process to try to become *wanbel*. I had to take on the role of one of the people who explains their inner self, their *pari*, and defend my actions to others – and not just to those who felt I had injured them, but in a context that included whoever wanted to come from the three Sam villages because I did not know who sent the letter. Consequently, I went to the village community leader to ask him to set up a meeting with the three Sam villages, and on the third attempt, Monday, October 27th, 2014, “enough” people came to meet. As I mentioned in Chapter One, *mul* (“meetings, ceremonies”) are events which momentarily coalesce a certain group of people around solving an issue that concerns them. In this example, although I did not know who was a member of the community that needed to be invited, the village community leader did. He postponed two earlier meetings because the “right” people did not attend. He told me that to hold the meeting anyway, regardless of numbers, might lead to a decision, but it would not have validity because others were excluded. Additionally, by including as many people as possible, the outcome would be seen to be more meaningful to the entire Sam population. The objective was to interact with the author’s concerns, with enough people present, including recognised village leaders, in order to come to a decision.

On the morning of the meeting, I drove to Songum village to bring the village leaders up to Buan. When we returned, my wife and I joined the group of men from Buan, Songum and Wongbe villages, who were assembling in the communal meeting area. All community meetings involving more than one clan (*malanggu*), such as village courts and Monday community meetings, are held underneath two large mandarin trees in the middle of the village. In contrast, meetings concerning one clan are held within that clan’s area. People sit on whatever they can find: benches they have made for community meetings, tree stumps, individual *fom* (“single-person plank benches” TP), rocks piled

around the base of the trees, and on the grass further away from the trees. The participants, all male except for my wife, sat in clusters of two to six. All the clans were spread out, roughly pertaining to the direction of their clan houses, though some men walked around and occasionally joined other groups. My wife and I also sat under the mandarin trees, in roughly the centre of the circle of men.

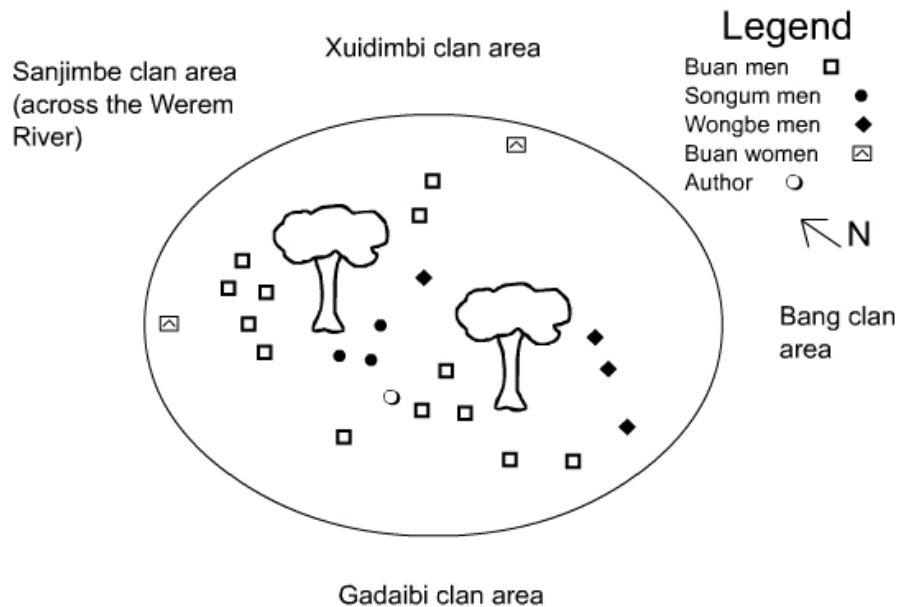


Figure 7: Location of clans and the community meeting area

As shown in the diagram, this meeting spot bordered the regions of three clans, approximately 100 meters from the nearest Gadaibi clan house, 100 meters from the nearest Xuidimbi clan house, and 15 meters from the nearest Bang clan house. The only clan not near the meeting area was the Sanjimbe clan, whose houses are clustered on the other side of the Werem River. As such, this location does not give any clan a geographical advantage, and lets members from any clan participate (see Appendix 1). The meeting area under the mandarine trees is shown in the picture below.



Figure 8: The Buan village meeting area under the mandarin trees

After settling in their seats in the shade, the men opened their carry bags made from palm leaves, or *xolong* (“woven string bags”), and took out tobacco leaves (*kas*) or betelnut (*xa*). Those with tobacco leaves dried them over the flame from an ember or cigarette lighter, often borrowed from others. They then separated a narrow strip of newspaper (they preferred English newspapers from town), into which they crumpled the brittle leaf before rolling it. Once lit, the cigarette tends to go out frequently, and so smokers needed to relight their cigarettes. Others drew out betelnut from their bags, split them open with their teeth, and chewed the whitish seeds with *yo ge* (“pepper catkin, Piper betle”) dipped into *aksmun* (“slaked lime”) made from burned sea shells. If they did not have *yo ge*, they used a rolled pepper leaf, *yo moi* (“pepper leaf”).

These actions were common to every *wanbel* event I observed. I often wondered what it was like for people who did not engage in it, as is the case for Revival Centres of Papua New Guinea church members, for whom smoking tobacco and chewing betelnut is sinful. But I observed that they often would also get out things to eat, like peanuts, or they picked mandarins from above their heads, and ate them. An important aspect of this stage was not just consuming these items, but also sharing the different components involved in preparing them, such as the newspaper, cigarette

lighter, or lime gourd, amongst themselves. In sharing these things, they exemplified their dependence on each other and their common desires, which was the foundation for becoming *wanbel*. Indeed, they referred to smoking tobacco and chewing betelnut as *kastam* (“customary ways, ceremony” TP). If the people meet to discuss obligations for a funeral, for instance, the relatives of the deceased person bring a *rop buai* (“betelnut stalk” TP) for the group to chew, while they discuss the multiple overlapping kinship, ceremonial, and exchange topics that arise when a Sam person dies. One group of men told me in Tok Pisin, “The way we have to become *wanbel*, the first thing is we go and hold betelnut. We hold betelnut and put it down, [and] the men will eat this betelnut [and] then start to share their talk.”

The men began this meeting by deciding on someone to lead the proceedings, who helped the attendees decide on an agenda. In choosing a leader and orderly discussion through an established agenda, the men classified it as a “formal” event, like the meetings to govern the local cocoa cooperative or Wongbe school board. “Informal” meetings are used for traditional ceremonies like bride price exchanges or an exchange with one’s *gai* (“parallel cousin”). In this type of meeting, the leader was required to guide the group through the process of approving the agenda, discussing the letter’s points, and at the end, he would pronounce us *wanbel* and close the meeting. He had to be able to lead well, but also be acceptable to all parties, and so able to mediate between them. The group, composed of Songum, Buan, and Wongbe residents, selected the former Councillor for the area, who lived in Songum.¹³

As the meeting began, the moderator broached the need for an agenda, but, acknowledging that we did not have a black board on which to write the agenda, suggested we simply follow the letter I had printed. He asked the letter’s author to make themselves known, so that they could clarify the thrust of the letter. After about 20 minutes, as various speakers urged and cajoled the author(s) to come forward with no result, the leader finally suggested that the group consider each of the letter’s allegations, and then allow me time to respond. In this step-by-step fashion, the group would cover each point, and the author, if present, would be able to speak if they so desired. In his role as discussion leader, he avoided making his own position known, but gave everyone the chance to speak, summarised the discussion, maintained order, and ensured the group stayed on the topic. His final act, after moving systematically through the letter, was to close the meeting in a definite way. The leader enthusiastically called out “*Ga pari beligi!*” (“Let’s be good insides!”). People stood

¹³ The Council position is elected by the people in a local area, and consists in this case of those living in Ward Three which covers the villages of Songum, Buan, Wongbe, Yangalam, Sakwanam and Kaiyeng.

up and circulated through the group, shaking hands, and saying, “*Sori, brata*” (“Sorry, brother” TP) and “*Sa nyi pari belibix*” (“I am good insides with you”).

Everyone in the community must be *wanbel* for the community to do well, however, men and women are involved differently in the process of becoming *wanbel*. Besides having the authority to speak in community meetings, men become village leaders capable of mediating in a disagreement or declaring they are *wanbel* when publicly reconciled. In addition, men will stand up and speak for the *malanggu* (“family/clan”) in a ceremony, such as paying a bride price, and summarise the community’s consensus (“*kisim maus bilong komuniti*” TP) in the Monday community meetings or village court cases.

Women speak and debate when they gather informally in women-only groups, such as while working at their garden or around the family’s kitchen fire, but they do not generally speak in meetings when men are present. However, I observed the few exceptions are when I observed elderly women speak or when men directly addressed women in a meeting. In the first case, older women occasionally share their *kulik* in public, or comment loudly from where they sit on the outside of the circle of men. In one meeting, an older woman stood up in a community meeting and accused a man of molesting her. She, supported by a few other women, loudly shouted out their arguments and retorts, as the man tried to assert his case. Also, I discuss a meeting in Chapter Five in which an elderly woman contributed to a debate. However, younger women did not usually speak in *mul*. The few cases when men directly I observed related to when women were specifically addressed, such as when they were accused of adultery, seducing a man, sorcery, or fraud. In those situations, the group wanted to hear the perspective of the women involved. For example, when a local women’s business group, called a *Mama’s Grup* (“Mother’s Group” TP) was accused of cheating Highland men who had bought betelnut from them over a period of several months, the group of women asked a local male pastor to speak for them. The community wanted to find out what the women had done wrong, if anything, and what steps they should take to correct the charge. But at this meeting, though the women were the ones who had overseen the operation, they asked a man (a pastor) to speak on their behalf.

Aside from these cases though, I observed that men represented women, children, and mentally ill people in community meetings. I am not implying, however, that Sam women are seen to have a different personal nature than men. Sam men and women, and older children, are seen to be persons because they have *pong* (“clarity, awareness”). Additionally, when they die, they remain a part of the Sam collective, but they are seen to play a less active and efficacious role in affairs than male ancestors. Thus, while the Sam mourn their deceased female family members because they

are sad and to not offend the deceased person's *unun* ("reflection/spirit"), they tell stories about their male ancestors did, talk to them, and petition them for things they desire. Strathern notes the similar conceptualisation of male and female persons in Hagen. As she writes, "Women quite as much as men are credited with minds, a capacity for judgment and choice, an ability to entertain as points of reference both a consciousness of selfhood and a consciousness of social relationships" (M. Strathern, 1988:90).

Hence, in the *wanbel* meeting about the anonymous letter, none of the women spoke up during the meeting, though some women sat where they could hear. For instance, the closest woman, apart from my wife, sat on the grass near her house that was near the meeting area. She did not speak, nor was acknowledged during the meeting or when she in the middle of the discussion. The other women were further away, and no one referred to them. It seemed that the matter of discussing the letter and its implications was a context in which men, not women, were to attend and verbally take part. Only after the meeting did some women feel comfortable sharing their opinions with us.

The meeting exhibited the deference the community gives to men to speak publicly about areas of disharmony. The gendered context of speaking in public meetings is common in Papua New Guinea (Dickson-Waiko, 2001:50-52; Smith, 1994:3). Dickson-Waiko posits that this fore-grounding of men and back-grounding of women is common in Melanesia, and in fact, existed in pre-contact era and was reinforced in the colonial times (Dickson-Waiko, 2001:52). She posits that,

Between 1884 and 1960 it was men who came forward or who were sought after to take up the few opportunities that were made available by the colonial administration. Opportunities for education offered by the missions generally attracted the male colonial subjects. Similarly, the limited openings through the native policy on plantations owned or leased by colonists for employment as miners, crew 'bois', police, clerks and domestic servants were available only to the male population. Women remained outside the colonial state because of a gendered colonial policy... Still today women are seen by the male dominated societies as somehow existing outside the state. (Dickson-Waiko, 2001:54-55)

Similarly, Sam men, not women, are seen to have the right to act and speak in public, though women can use their limited roles to express their opinions. That is, while women may sit near a public meeting, outside the circle of men, they make comments to themselves, or occasionally express their disgust or mockery of what men say through laughter, both of which men can hear. These quiet expressions of self-revelation, though constrained, are still seen to be permissible.

The power of speech

For the Sam, words have power, because someone's words can mirror what they think and feel in their *pari* ("insides, feelings, dispositions"). Which attendees speak, what they say, and how they

say it are all important facets of becoming *wanbel*. In the meeting above, the moderator said several times that he wanted to hear from everyone, and that this was their chance to *autim tingting bilong yupela* (“share your thoughts” TP).

Before the meeting, a Sam friend told me that he had a strategy to find out who was upset with me. He said that I should not worry, but that in the meeting he was going to verbally attack me, so that it seemed that he was critical of me. This would encourage any who might be reluctant to speak against me. Not only would we find out who could have written the letter, but speaking their frustration and anger would be therapeutic for them. In speaking about their hurt, their thoughts would go out from their *pari* (“insides, feelings, dispositions”) and relieve the pressure and negative results those ideas would inevitably create if left inside. Afterwards, he said, smiling broadly, “Remember? Remember when we talked about releasing pressure in the meeting? It worked!”

While *wanbel* was the eventual goal, the Sam people accept that there will be vigorous disagreements on the way toward persuading others to adopt a different point of view. One technique is to directly critique people. The meeting was filled with forceful exclamations, as individuals stated their various thoughts. A few asked for clarification, or snorted at comments they thought were silly or unfounded. One village friend likened *wanbel* meetings to driving on the dirt road that leads to Madang. It starts out with lots of bumps and potholes, but it gradually improves closer to Madang town. To think that one could start out on the smooth section of road was a mistake; acting as if there was not an issue would only delay the inevitable conflict later.

Another strategy is to use language to either reveal or conceal knowledge, which demonstrates one’s power to either enhance or weaken *wanbel*. At one point during the meeting, someone standing behind a tree on the edge of the shade of the mandarin trees said something to those sitting nearby, but quietly so that I could not hear it. It seemed as if they did not want to commit to what they were saying, or perhaps be identified as advocating that position. Later, participants spoke in the Sakwanam and Bongu languages, which they knew we did not understand, presumably so that my wife and I could not follow what they were saying. Other language was metaphorical and indirect, and seemed to be used strategically to approach a sensitive topic without touching it directly. Kulick comments on this phenomena, explaining that “...in a system where one should not explicitly say what one means, the attention of both speakers and listeners becomes focused on ways of not saying what one means” (Kulick, 1997 [1992]:127). Brison wrote that the Kwanga also speak indirectly, “Telling stories and dropping hints about current events is one way of influencing people without provoking a negative reaction” (Brison, 1992:23).

Wanbel was often *obrox* (“broken”) by gossip, rumours, and exaggeration (Besnier, 1994, 2009; Brison, 1992; Guerin & Miyazaki, 2003). *Obrox* has the sense of dividing a unitary object into two pieces, like splitting a coconut in two halves. During the meeting, several people asserted things that they had heard, rumours they had taken as accurate representations of events or situations. For example, one discussant dismissed the things we had done to help the Sam, both practically and in language development, saying they were not important and what we had not done had *pari beli obrox* (“broken good insides”). He claimed that an SIL language team in another village had given more material things to the village people with whom they lived than we did. He looked at me and asked, “Why, if that other SIL team provided the community with services, did you not? If the donors sent money to buy things for the local people, like solar panels, then you should give them to us for free!” He was sharing rumours and gossip he had heard from others, which later I countered by stating the view of the SIL language worker from that area.

Although one could think of rumour, gossip, and exaggeration as deliberate misstatements, I believe the Sam people judge what they say by two equally valid criteria: a statement’s truthfulness and the effect that a statement has on *wanbel*. While I was in Buan, several times I would ask people if I could interview them the next day, and even though they agreed, they would be away helping a relative when I arrived. I believe they said what they knew I wanted to hear, and fully intended to help me, but, the next day, when their relative asked for their help and stood there waiting, they had to go with them to make them *wanbel*. We see the same practice in arranging meetings, like this one, which were set to take place on a certain day, only to be cancelled because not enough people came along. For the Sam, “truth” is not the ultimate criterion for choosing what to say. Instead, one says what will, in a certain cultural context, bring about a certain reaction, which is often to enhance or create *wanbel*. In focus, for the Sam, is the effect their statements have on relationships with others. Kulick describes Gapun oratory in a similar way:

In oratory, stress is not placed on solving problems or actually achieving concrete results, although this is one potential outcome of the meetings in the men’s house, and it is occasionally realized... [But it] is interpreted as being consensus-oriented ...and the particular facts under discussion and the specific points made by speakers in their oratories are not as important as the evocation of a general feeling of agreement. It also means that a person’s statements on any subject are expected to reflect not their true opinions on the matter, but rather their willingness to exhibit their *save* and agree.¹⁴ And this means that no one in the village can ever be sure of what anyone else is really thinking. (Kulick, 1997 [1992]:126-127)

Individuals may communicate information for other reasons than to transmit a strictly “truthful” account (Besnier, 1989, 1994, 2009; Brison, 1992; Duranti, 1988; Kulick, 1997 [1992]:126-127).

¹⁴ Kulick defines *save* as the sociable, cooperative side of a person (Kulick, 1997 [1992]:19).

Besnier writes that, “What constitutes the truth for members of different societies, the extent to which it is a universal or relative notion, and how it is animated, constructed and negotiated in daily life are fundamental concerns in discussions of the nature of belief systems, rationality, and social action” (Besnier, 1994:1).

Along with how language is used, Sam speakers in the *wanbel* meeting used extra-linguistic behaviour to demonstrate their *pari*, and to either increase or decrease emotion. Instead of downplaying anger, several speakers showed their anger and frustration in their voices and in their body postures and movement. When men wanted to make a strong point, most would stand up to speak, and some walked a few quick steps along an oblique angle to the group, and, at the end of the climax of their statement, then return back to where they had started. One man crouched and held his arm outstretched, sometimes momentarily pointing a finger at those he was addressing. It seemed that, like for the Kaluli people in the Southern Highlands province, showing controlled anger, or just a bit of anger or frustration to seem especially vulnerable or offended, lent force to the argument and the one presenting the argument (E. Schieffelin, 1983:182-183). Language could also decrease the level/intensity of emotion. Usually after a speaker’s outburst, they would apologise, sometimes in the same statement. It seemed that they were apologising for, as one speaker acknowledged, “making people angry” (cf. Kulick, 1997 [1992]:138). Talking around a point, especially using stories, helped to keep emotions cool (Brison, 1992; Kulick, 1997 [1992]:127).

In summary, the participants in the meeting sometimes used language to contravene normative Sam behaviour, to achieve their goal of becoming *wanbel*. Thus, I saw people getting angry, shaming people, and speaking bluntly in the meeting to convey their meaning. At one point, perhaps to explain his bluntness, one of the speakers said that he was going to speak openly to me because while “white men do not speak directly, Papua New Guineans go straight to the point,” he said to me in Tok Pisin. Up to this point in my life among the Sam, I had rarely heard my Sam friends “go straight to the point.” Instead, their language use reflects the understanding that language and action bring one’s thoughts and feelings outside of themselves. As such, individuals may speak in strategic ways to help people express their inner thoughts and feelings to become *wanbel*, as was shown at the end of the meeting, when the participants shook hands and expressed their mutual *wanbel*. In this variegated and turbulent setting, *wanbel* meetings are sites of possible misunderstanding, exaggeration, and, perhaps intentional, confusion (Besnier, 2009; Brison, 1992).

Creating *wanbel* through exchange

Exchange is integral to *wanbel*, and as I mentioned in Chapter One, the Sam people use exchange terminology to talk about *wanbel*. They describe the purposes of their ceremonies, for example, as

giving a bride price in order to compensate the mother's *malanggu* for her time and effort caring for the babies she would bear the husband's *malanggu*. As they say, they "pay for the mother's milk." They also use exchange terminology to refer to aspects of becoming *wanbel*. For instance, when someone wants to be reconciled with another person, they will *givim bel long ol* ("give them their insides" TP). When a moderator, usually a village leader, goes to one of the parties in the dispute, he will say that he is going to *givim tingting long ol* ("give thoughts to them" TP). In Sam, they talk about this similarly, using the words *huyudxo* ("he will give"); one can give their *pari* ("insides, feelings, dispositions") and *udud* ("thoughts, ideas"). Additionally, the term *turdax* ("combine, join") can refer to when people join their *pari* to become *wanbel*, as in *pari turdis ne udud kujex desxa* ("combine insides and become one thought."). Another context in which Sam villagers use the term *turdax* is to describe the process whereby clan members come forward to combine their contributions for events like bride price or parallel/cross-cousin (*gai*) exchange ceremonies. Both of these usages of *turdax* involve bringing together something, either *pari* or exchange items.

As discussed in Chapter One, exchanging items is an important way throughout Melanesia to make and reinforce social bonds (Lederman, 1986; Mauss, 1990 [1954]; McDowell, 1980; Robbins, 2012:40; Sahlins, 1974; M. Strathern, 1988; Von Poser, 2013). The giving of an item to someone signifies that the giver has noticed their need and gives the item to uphold the *wanbel* relationship they share (Malinowski, 2014 [1922]; McDowell, 1980; M. Strathern, 1988). Giving does not have to be spontaneous on the part of the giver, but is often initiated by the one asking for something. It is also a component of Sam morality. I was told that generosity is the mark of a good Sam person, whereas a bad person, or *unyi suma* ("greedy man"), will refuse to share or hold things back from others. In that context, lending someone a lighter to dry their tobacco leaves or lime gourd, exemplifies the role of a good person.

Sam society is marked by giving things back and forth, and during meetings, giving things has a number of purposes. One is to share items needed in order to consume betelnut and/or tobacco while the discussion takes place, as mentioned above. I observed the importance of betelnut when, soon after we arrived in the village to begin fieldwork, a woman died and her husband, a Revival Centres member, arranged the funeral. Although his denomination forbids the chewing of betelnut, he brought it for the other clan men to eat as they gathered to discuss her death and whether it indicated sorcery. Betelnut also plays a role in the actual exchange transaction. In describing the *wanbel* transaction between one man who killed another's pig, one interviewee explained,

“And he will get money with some betelnut, and I also, I cannot go with nothing because I took him to court, so I also must get some betelnut. And he will give me money and betelnut and say “I am very sorry that I shot your pig. Here is the money, K700, I give you now.” He will give it to me and while he is giving it he will give me betelnut, and we will shake hands. I too brought some betelnut and I too give it to him, and we shake hands.”

People also exchange items as payment when the payment is part of the ceremony (such as in a kinship exchange) or compensation in a court case. The Buan people we lived among were often visiting us and each other, and spent significant time in activities that strengthened their relationships with each other. These ceremonies reinforce relationships between cousins, matrilineal and patrilineal uncles and aunts, and relatives by marriage. When I asked about their purpose, my interlocutor would explain them using exchange terminology, such as “I am repaying my uncle for his hard work for me” or “I am remembering my cousin in my mother’s family.” They give pigs, money and food to the other person and their family in order to repay and remember an earlier transfer or action made to them.

Family terminology is frequently used in these ceremonies, and in conversations generally. They have several words to refer to their friends and relatives during these ceremonies: *au kube* (“group of brothers/male cousins”), *mana kube* (“group of sisters/female cousins”), *dubli* (“friend”), *kadoi* (“close friend, such as a girlfriend or boyfriend”), *gai* (“parallel cousin”), *ala* (“father/uncle”), and *ama* (“mother/aunt”). A male refers to his male siblings and cousins as *au*; a female refers to her female siblings and cousins as *auwa*. *Mana* is used between siblings and cousins of a different gender. Adding *kube* to *au* and *mana* expands the range to include male or female cousins, respectively. *Au kube* and *mana kube* live in the same *haus lain* (“clan or family living area” TP), and share the same *pin balax* (“cooking fire”). The image of sharing the same *pin balax* evokes an image of living together, and is used by village leaders to urge *au kube* and *mana kube* to be reconciled. They use the metaphor of being of the same blood, *hago ker* (“our blood”), to refer to the larger Sam collective made up of several villages and *malanggu*. People related by marriage are called *tenger*. *Tenger* do not call each other by their names because that would seem too familiar and might offend them; they just call them “*tenger*”. If someone does say their *tenger*’s name, and their *tenger* takes offense, the person has to give them a pig to become *wanbel*.

Within the *malanggu*, a person calls their parents and their parents’ siblings the same term: *ala* (“father”) and *ama* (“mother”), using qualifiers such as *xiliyai* (“big, elder”) and *kanangge* (“small, younger”) to indicate birth order. Children are *xelagi*; sons are *du* and daughters are *dindongge*. Firstborn sons are *mulum*, while firstborn daughters are *naman*. Sam people are exogamous, and are exhorted to marry outside the *malanggu*. When I asked about weddings, my informant said that the groom’s *malanggu* brings the bride price and places it down in the middle of the group. In

Sam he said, "*Suma ido malanggu pinhalel dagi pidaxabarxo* ("The man's family will put some things")." The bride's family ("*anggli ido malanggu*") then receives it. When someone defined *malanggu* for me in English, they either used "family" or "clan."

One common familial exchange in Buan centres on a person's repayment of a debt to a certain, assigned cousin, called *gai* ("parallel cousin"). Only a person's parallel cousin of the same birth order is their *gai*. Everyone knows their *gai*, and they respect and regularly exchange things with them, like pigs and money. The bride price for a woman is given to her *gai*, and the *gai*'s family (not the bride's father or his family) eats the pig meat during the wedding feast. In a ceremony I observed in Songum, one man gave a coconut with one shoot sprouting up from the side to the *gai* on his mother's side. The coconut shoot was an image of how many pigs would be given: if he was going to give one pig, then the coconut would have one shoot, and if two, then two shoots. My friend explained that the coconut itself was a symbol that he remembered his obligation to give a pig in the future, and was promising to fulfil it. In this way, he was showing that he had not forgotten his mother and her family, and only the lack of a pig now prevented him from giving it. Thus, he showed respect for and honoured his *gai* ("*kamapim nem bilong gai*" TP) when he gave the coconut.

Compensation for the purposes of resolving conflict is also common. The village leader, formerly the *kukurai* ("colonial government-chosen village leader" TP) and the *asa gadi* ("ancestor head") in the pre-colonial time, assigned the items each group owed the other. During colonialism and now in the time of national independence, the village magistrate, operating in a village court setting, has the latitude to assign payment based on what the other person has done to them. Outside of the village courts, the Sam village leaders, such as the *komiti* ("village government leader" TP), law and order Komiti, and village magistrate, negotiate between the conflicting groups to determine compensation that is mutually satisfactory.¹⁵ The items to be exchanged are meant to make the aggrieved party feel *pari beli* ("good insides"), but often requires that both sides give things to the other. In this way, both feel they have received something, even as the one who suffered more theoretically receives more. The exchanged objects physically transfer to the other person, but are still thought of as having an essence that is part of the giver. They create, as Strathern asserted,

¹⁵ Giving items in a reciprocal exchange happens at traditional *wanbel* meetings and village courts, but is reportedly not a part of the Provincial court system. Thus, the divorce proceedings in Provincial court (called "welfare" by an ex-magistrate I interviewed), are simply a matter of a judge hearing the case and making his decision, and there is not a reciprocal exchange between the disputing parties. This ex-magistrate felt that the traditional method of reconciliation was much better, because he could use his government authority to make divorce unpalatable, by forcing people to either pay an exorbitant penalty or resume living in socially sanctioned ways (such as going back to live with their spouse instead of continuing to live with another person).

“mediated relations” (M. Strathern, 1988:178). The Sam keep these objects as physical embodiment of past reconciliation, in that they see them and remember the *wanbel* event, and what their *wanbel* achieved for them at that time. Even more, the objects contain part of the giver — they are partible (M. Strathern, 1988:192-207) — and thus the recipient, in having the objects close to them, also has part of the giver close to them.

Food that someone has worked hard to tend and nurture, like pigs, garden food, and betelnut, are seen to be more representative of the owner than store-bought food. These items that people eat come from the ground, either absorbing the *nyamur* (“nutrients in the soil”) or eating plants that have *nyamur* in them. They think of this *nyamur* as similar to the fat of a pig, which makes the pig plump, robust, healthy, and tasty. Since *nyamur* comes from the ground, it is linked with a clan’s history, its *stori* (“a story of an event or person in the past” TP) and their relationships with the ancestors and other spirit beings that live on that land in the past and in the present.¹⁶ The narrative of a clan’s presence on the land is called its *stori*. Thus, food and other substances that come from a person’s land and embody who they are as a member of that clan, with a *stori*, are seen to be a part of the giver. Hence, while a tin of meat is valuable because it is a rare treat, it does not have a *stori* linking it to the giver, unlike betelnut, which came from a tree on land belonging to a certain clan, planted by a certain person, and picked by a relative of that person. Pigs and betelnut are valued also because they are emblematic of feasting which occurs in creating and maintaining *wanbel*. For the Sam, the exchange items are valued for the relationships they can enact (see also McDowell, 1980; M. Strathern, 1988:192).

In the example that I began the chapter with, the participants spent a significant amount of time discussing what we had given to the Sam community. The letter mentioned that the author(s) was disappointed with what we had presented the community. The author(s) was saying that we were not meeting our relational obligations as part of the Sam community. They perceived that we had not given the community “good service,” by upgrading the living standards of the translators and literacy trainers, and sharing things with the community. They questioned our actions, and thus our relationship with the community.

I explained to the group that we had tried to help the community according with our skills and abilities, but from the sighs and visible lack of interest from certain people in the group as I spoke,

¹⁶ To avoid miscommunication, I have used the convention of calling “spirit beings” the general term for beings that are unseen, while reserving ancestors for those Sam individuals who have physically died and are tied to their *malanggu* (“family/clan”) in some way, and spirits for those spirit beings that are unseen and not bonded with a *malanggu*.

I sensed that this was not significant. For example, those not interested in reading the Bible did not seem to think that the Bible stories we had translated into the vernacular were helpful. A few people spoke up, supporting the translated materials, saying that these books were the word of God, and Christians should value them. One man averred that while he did not read the Bible stories, he did look forward to using the Sam dictionary, and he wanted his children to use the trilingual (Sam, English, Tok Pisin) school dictionary. Others specifically asked Sarah to assist the three villages to support literacy efforts for both children and adults. One man from Songum requested that Sarah help the existing Songum elementary school teachers with training and materials. From this, I gathered that some people appreciated the focus on using the vernacular for everyday tasks, including reading and writing, and our non-education related assistance.

We knew, however, that we had already been delivering on some of the things they requested above. The picture dictionary was finished, and some people had bought copies. After intensive linguistic study and assistance from the village people, Sarah had helped to produce a curriculum, reading materials, and a training program that she used to train five Sam pre-school teachers. We provided them with free literacy materials. Additionally, I had thought that some of the things we had done would appeal to the wider community, such as giving food, matches, and other items to villagers, as well as helping people buy solar panels and solar light units. I also bought nails, door hinges, metal files, and padlocks, and brought them to the village, so that villagers could buy them at cost without having to carry them from Madang. Although the people who received these items, and others, commented on how this service helped them in a small way, they placed a greater emphasis on development projects that would provide the more substantial benefits they saw in Madang town, such as electricity, an airstrip, petrol, stores, and vehicles.

In effect, language development work was debated during this *wanbel* meeting, as opposed to physical objects. Since Sam relationships are generally mediated, utilising objects that are seen as partible, perhaps they expected me to exchange objects (see M. Strathern, 1988). Physical objects can contain the essence of the giver, but Sam villagers do not see language as something that can be exchanged. They refer to their language as *hago sam* (“our speech/language”), and in their view, language is not something that can be separated from someone or owned by any one person; it is seen to be a “bridge” among the Sam community.¹⁷ Since people cannot lay claim to language, it cannot be exchanged. This analysis indicates that material objects can be used to enhance relationality through exchange, whereas language development products, because they are

¹⁷ Stories are another matter. The clans have their own *tumbuna* (“ancestor” TP) stories which only leaders in each clan can narrate fully.

inherently communally owned, cannot. Consequently, it is likely the conflict raised through the anonymous letter and subsequent *wanbel* meeting arose because of an ongoing debate over the place and relevance of language development work.

Initiatives that bring good results

At stake in much of the meeting's discussion was what would bring good results, which the Sam participants refer to as *karim kaikai* ("produce food, benefits" TP). Clearly, people must have *kaikai* ("food") to have life. *Kaikai* are the garden vegetables and animals that people nurture, and these are productive if the soil has *nyamur*, as mentioned above. Thus, *kaikai* is linked with the land, and the relationships of those associated with the land: the living humans, deceased ancestors, and other spirit beings. When people are *wanbel* with these beings, their village acquires *nyamur*, prosperity, health, and other benefits. *Kaikai* used in a figurative sense means the good things that come from a person's labour, and it collocates with words that refer to good outcomes, like *unun* ("shadow, having substance"). For example, helping maintain the dirt road to the coastal highway is referred to as worthwhile because it will *karim kaikai* and, because a good road allows them to transport their cash crops to town by vehicle, it has *unun*.

Of these terms, Sam speakers often use *kaikai* and *karim kaikai* ("produce food/benefits" TP) in daily conversation, as they discuss their central concern about which activity they should choose to pursue as a group on a certain day. It is important that the group is *pari kujex* about that one activity, because then they will have a good outcome from their labour. But even before they can become *pari kujex*, they need to decide which activity to be *pari kujex* ("one insides") about: for example, will they work together on carrying the cocoa cooperative's dried beans to the main road, or will they instead assemble at the Wongbe school yard to construct classrooms?

Their choice is important, because while *wanbel* will bring results, people have their own *udud* ("thoughts, mind"). They will not cooperate in activities which they judge are unlikely to succeed, because they only have a finite amount of time and strength, and every activity must be weighed against others, perhaps in terms of repaying one's kinship obligation, assisting a brother with his work, or providing for their own individual needs. They know that some activities do not work out, like the intensive effort they put into growing and selling vanilla beans several years ago, after the Madagascar vanilla production decreased significantly. After hearing that they could sell vanilla beans for a much greater price than they could get for cocoa beans or *copra* ("dried coconut meat" TP), about K15-30 per kilogram, they learned how to grow, pollinate, and harvest vanilla. They dug in the plants they bought from a nursery in Madang, tended them carefully, and then, when the

market collapsed again some months later, they tore them out and planted cocoa trees in their place. Reportedly, the vanilla prices had risen again when I was doing fieldwork, but no one in Buan was growing vanilla anymore.¹⁸

The men at the *wanbel* meeting vigorously debated whether language development work would *karim kaikai*. The wide-ranging discussion covered ideas of what constituted *kaikai* itself, and ways to obtain *gutpela sindaun* (“wellbeing” TP). Underlying this discussion and providing its complexity and contentiousness, was that Sam villagers live in a context in which people feel drawn to multiple influences. People in the village are not “traditional” or “modern,” but are influenced by their interactions and experiences with others, and in the process, they take in traces of each, which they then express through what they choose to say and do. In West’s terms, they are “both embedded in and generative of transnational social and ecological relations” (West, 2006:xv). The discussion in the village raised many issues that were part of a wider underlying evaluation of ideas people learned from their parents and grandparents and those they gained from outside of the village.

The diverse statements, from peoples’ *pari*, illustrate that the Sam people believe there are a variety of pathways about what will *karim kaikai*, which can be grouped into three broad categories: Christianity, memories of ancestral ways of life, and/or explanations of “development.” The first pathway I discuss is Christian-based discourses. These were based on the idea that God endorses the *wanbel* of church members, implying that the church needs to be *wanbel* so that God will allow *wanbel* to work. For example, the Revival Centres church leaders feel church attendance will lead to God’s blessing on the group. Therefore, they chastise members for not attending church services and Bible studies.

People insisted to me that *wanbel* is effective for everyone, regardless of faith. Christians averred that non-Christians, as well as Christians, are under God’s benevolence and thus, they are also impacted by God’s role in causing *wanbel*’s efficacy. In several interviews, informants told me that while their ancestors did not know about God’s provision of *wanbel* and its effect, God was the power behind it. Now too, God has come to help both the Christian and non-Christian, and whether or not they believe in God, he sees their *wanbel* and protects them and/or brings good things to them. Another group of people used God’s generosity toward all to contend that since

¹⁸ Buan friends told me stories of being cheated, both by smooth-talking swindlers who came to the village as well as by the increasing tricksters in Madang town. One day, as I was sitting underneath my village house, a Buan friend came to ask me about an advertisement he had seen in the Post-Courier newspaper. He showed me the ad, which offered to share some secrets about how to create financial wealth if the initiate would send money to a certain address. My friend had sent the money requested, and had been waiting for about six months without receiving the response containing the advice he wanted so desperately.

God was allowing *wanbel* to work for all, even unbelievers, those who did not value the translated Bible portions were ungrateful. Further, they were unaware that God was the ultimate authority, and that they needed to submit to him. In holding this opinion, they were showing that they had never loved God in the first place, which they would realise when they passed from this world into “judgement.”

A second pathway, which some believe is opposed to Christianity and others think complements it, is the belief that ancestral speech and conduct are the model for how people should live now to obtain *kaikai*. Those arguing for this view favour a strict obedience to a way of life likened to their ancestors’ days. Briefly, they harken back to pre-colonial time, when the *asa gadi* (“ancestor head”) was the person who mediated between humans and the spirit beings, trained men in warfare and told them when to fight and organised the community to work together. He punished those who did not follow what he said, and people were afraid to do things that would disrupt the community’s *wanbel*. The ancestors followed various laws he set for the people, which the *asa gadi* said was important for them in order to be well and safe. The people who adhere to this second pathway reside in Jimpinden (a part of Buan village, separated from it by the Werem River). They felt that the translated Bible portions were of little value to them because they did not use them to relate with their ancestors and other spirit beings and obey the previous laws. Additionally, the primary spokesman for the Jimpinden group felt Christians and their teachings were a hindrance to living like their ancestors. In his view, they pulled people away from an ancestral way of life. Instead of following the behaviour of their ancestors, of which one key component was obeying the *asa gadi*, they claimed that people should follow only what God has commanded in the Bible. Another change Christianity has brought, he averred, was speaking in Tok Pisin and English. He told me, “Because the churches came into the village, now people are not using Sam, which the ancestors gave us, and they are speaking incorrectly (“*paulim tok*” TP). The result of this is that the community will not receive *kaikai*.” In his perspective, speaking Sam was part of the framework by which they lived like their ancestors, and thus would help them to be well as a community.

The third pathway, which was the most prevalent of the comments expressed during the *wanbel* meeting, surrounded the desire, and the origins of, “development.” In this view, *wanbel* and development are causally linked. As one friend told me, “*wanbel* is development.” That is, the natural outgrowth of being *wanbel* is *kaikai*. The process of becoming *wanbel* transforms people from being in conflict to being reconciled, and it causes a corresponding shift in the world such that the people who are in concord receive *kaikai*, called “development.” But people do not have a single definition of “development.” As I explain in Chapter Seven, the term “development” is equivocal;

the meaning cannot be pinned to any one effort or project, but it means different things to different people at different times (Dundon, 2002a; Robbins, 2004a:100). What one person might see as a marker of becoming “developed” might be denied by someone else who does not think it has gone far enough. However, one thing that people agree on is that they do not have development at the present. As Robbins noted in the case of the Urapmin, the Sam people think of development as not only having such desirable things as lights, electricity, and financial services, that they see in Madang, but also having them in the village and under their control (Robbins, 2004a:100). For village people, *gutpela sindaun* will be a reality when they have the capability to enjoy and have control over the items and services they see others using in Madang.

While there is no unified agreement on what “development” is, Sam people feel that it has three general characteristics: it is not what they currently have in the village, knowledge is required to access it, and its coming will be sudden. Regarding the first point, people view “development” as not present in the village; if people want it, they must go out to Madang or elsewhere, and bring “development” to the village. If they do not find a way to convince companies or development groups to come in to the Sam area, they will not receive the benefits from those programs or initiatives.

Secondly, their emphasis on the role of knowledge aligns with using *udud* (“thoughts, ideas”) to decide which development initiative to follow, discussed above. They insisted in the meeting that unless they possessed the right knowledge (“*xele*”) of how to access “development,” their lives would not change. This concern for having the right knowledge was voiced by the moderator in the meeting, and led several people in the meeting to say that I had the knowledge of how to “find funding” from donor agencies, and would tell them later. “Find funding” is the term Sam people use to encompass researching development agencies, their priorities, and application processes. All of these steps are opaque to the Sam, who know about donor agencies, like AusAID, only in general terms. They know they lack sufficient knowledge, however, because others do appear to have this knowledge, as evidenced by the bridges, mines, and stores being built in other places.

Finally, Sam villagers believe another component of development is that it takes place suddenly, not in stages. They see development projects in other places in which construction is relatively rapid, such as the Asuar bridge built over one of the rivers on the road to Madang, the Ramu-Nickel Mine pipeline which runs through Sam land near the coast, and the timber companies that can grade and lay gravel in a relatively short amount of time on the dirt road leading from the coast highway up to Buan and past it to Wongbe. This understanding of material development over time, common throughout Melanesia, is not based on slow, progressive improvement, but a sudden

change, such that the realisation of all their hopes will come about in a sudden, intense, and climactic moment (Hooley, 1978; Lawrence, 1964:239-243; Scaglion, 1999; Telban, 2015).

All three of these notions of general features of “development” contrast with the language development work we had been doing. For example, we were providing them with materials written in their own language, instead of providing them with something from town. Although it is true that we were providing translations of materials they could not find in the village, many seemed unimpressed that the result was only in their indigenous language, a known and familiar medium. Likewise, in terms of providing knowledge about “development,” several people denigrated language development because it does not lead to the knowledge necessary to bring about “development.” The booklets convey information, true, but it is all information that they expect their pastors, Aid Post Officers, and teachers to provide. Finally, language development work proceeds slowly, and incrementally.

While I argued, in the meeting, that the Sam language was inherently valuable because it allowed speakers to communicate ideas, thoughts, and emotions better than in other languages they knew less well, they pointed to the need to speak the languages of those bringing development. They reminded me of the situation they faced when a timber company from Taiwan started working in the area, whose managers did not speak Tok Pisin or Sam. The villagers needed to communicate with them in English, which they did, only with difficulty. Another point I raised was that materials written in Sam can convey information that is difficult to remember and retell orally. Christians in the meeting affirmed that it was important to have the Bible in their language, as well as those other materials favoured by non-Christians. However, non-Christians said they did not care to read the Scripture portions, although a few desired the dictionary and booklets about vanilla production, health, and education, and Sam school curriculum materials to educate their children.¹⁹

Overall, the group was divided over whether the language work was *kaikai*. Some commented, with approval from others, that it had no *unun* (“shadow/reflection”). While these did not value the vernacular resources we had produced, they acknowledged our assistance was helpful in other areas, such as typing grant applications, school board minutes, and church posters; translating and printing vernacular reading materials; selling items that are difficult to transport by trail (e.g. nails and petrol); and transporting people who needed medical assistance to the government health

¹⁹ I concur with the research showing that early childhood education in a child’s vernacular is more effective than introducing children to a new language concurrently with unfamiliar educational content (Baldauf & Kaplan, 2006; Hornberger, 1996, 2008; Litteral, 1999; Schneider, 2015; Troolin, 2013; Volker, 2015).

centre about ten kilometres away.²⁰ All of these efforts were providing tangible benefits, but were side issues to our main goal of writing their language. Crucially, language development work is fundamentally different from the objects Sam villagers use in their daily lives, that is, the objects they exchange to create and maintain *wanbel*. If objects cannot be used within the logic of becoming *wanbel*, they are seen to be ephemeral, without *unun*. For instance, if people think Sam story booklets, used in literacy classes, do not lead to “development,” they question their value.

Giving one’s insides

Wanbel in the meeting was elusive because of the lack of agreement over the definition and nature of *pari huyudxo* (“he will give his insides”). Briefly, the giving of *pari* in a *wanbel* meeting occurs after the disputants have talked about how they feel in their *pari*. Sharing emotions is an important part of the *wanbel* process that cannot be sidestepped. As a speaker shares how they feel, others begin to feel *pari beli* (“good insides”) toward them, and they respond in a way that shows they feel *pari beli*, first in their speech and then in their actions, such as giving objects of value (for example, betelnut, pigs, garden food and/or more durable, store-bought items). The recipients accept and consume the food, thus embodying their reconciliation, just as they embodied their conflict beforehand.

In the meeting, while the different sides in the conflict shared their *pari*, we had difficulty in deciding whether what we had done for the Sam community qualified as giving *pari*. It seemed that many attendees measured the worth of the language development work by its ability to *karim kaikai*. In the meeting, multiple Sam speakers rejected those intangible benefits, desiring *kaikai*, objects with material value. For instance, the main complaint in the letter was that we did not use the material things we had to bring development, that is, material changes in the community’s living standards. They suggested that our SIL leaders had sent our vehicle and house so that the local people could use them, and that we were keeping these for ourselves. Quite a few people listened eagerly as I broached the rumours that other SIL members in other places were freely giving local people money, airstrips, solar panels, laptops, and roads. I countered these ideas by explaining that SIL’s

²⁰ This last point was much appreciated; several people I talked with mentioned that transporting injured people in the “Buan ambulance” was an important benefit. Several people are alive because of the “Buan ambulance” (our vehicle) including a young man with suspected appendicitis and several expectant mothers and their babies. In one memorable trip, my vehicle’s lights were faulty when a seriously ill man needed medical treatment at Ileg Health Centre. I had to drive through one large river while a friend in the passenger seat shone a torch to show me the direction to drive. When I arrived in Ileg, the doctor was unable to treat the invalid, and asked me to take him halfway to Madang, where I would meet the Madang Hospital ambulance. Thankfully, my lights began to work when I drove through the other three large rivers to meet the ambulance, and back to Buan.

funding model puts the onus for fundraising on its members. In making the member dependent on funds that people send to them for language development, the member is responsible to spend the funds on activities that are aligned with their donors' goals, to whom they regularly send reports. I also noted that SIL's desire for local ownership of the project means not simply giving people money and/or equipment, but showing the people that they have the responsibility and ability to work alongside SIL members in their own language development. Therefore, when an SIL person had helped a community get access to an airstrip, for instance, it was not by giving money and equipment to the people, but through the blending of SIL funds and expertise with the community's initiative and hard work.

At this point in the discussion, we seemed to be at an impasse; we were unable to be *wanbel* over the concept that the results of language development have value, nor that my wife and I should be providing more things of material value than we were already. One man, recognising the stalemate, said, "It is not good if we talk about things we do not know. It is clear to me, they are church people, and it is all about translation. World Vision helped us [with a water project]. SIL will translate. I do not have anything to say. I understand."

A pastor, realising that the group was at an impasse, boldly urged the community to decide right then if they wanted us to be helping them to develop their language. "If you do not want them to be here, then release them to go to someone else!" He said. I concurred, saying that we did not need to stay in the Sam community if they did not want what we were able to produce. I explained there were many other groups in Papua New Guinea that had requested SIL help developing their language, and we could go and help one of these. I said that just as they had invited us to come and live with them, we would honour their wishes, and leave if they requested it.

I felt this decision was the point on which the entire meeting, not to mention our last 13 years of life and work in the Sam area, hinged. After a moment of silence, the moderator spoke up, saying that it was not good to decide too quickly, nor with too small a group. This sort of decision needed to have the consensus of more of the Sam villagers. One man reminded the group that I knew how to procure funding, and they should sit down with me and learn about this way of obtaining development. Another affirmed my wife and I, saying that we were *suma beli* ("good men/people"), even if we did not provide everything they wanted. As he phrased it, "You have to go and talk with him. If you ask for cold water and he gives you hot water, you cannot be mad. He is a good man." One of my friends stood up and cautioned the group that if the community was considering whether or not to send us away, they should remember that, "He is our white man." For the Sam, and many other people in Melanesia, having an expatriate in their village is prestigious and a sign that they

have an alternative route, besides local cash crops and markets, of obtaining money and/or objects. In some places, including the Sam area and other areas where cargo cults were present, some believe white people are their dead ancestors, and thus have access to power and goods and a predisposition to give them to their living relatives.²¹

Finally, after the sun had dipped low in the sky after conversing for four hours, the moderator pronounced that the discussion was finished. He urged all those assembled to stand up, shake hands, and affirm our *wanbel*. Men slowly rose, and circulated, talking and smiling. My wife and I stood as well, and moved through the group, shaking hands and saying “Thank you, brother” and “I am *wanbel*.” I noticed that a majority of those I greeted smiled and laughed with me, and seemed to be *wanbel*, but a few avoided me, or did not say anything when they shook my hand. The emotional aspect of this meeting was a very real part of becoming *wanbel*, highlighting the difference between those who are sincerely reconciled, after vigorous debate over incompatible desires, and those whose *udud* was not persuaded. As I mentioned in Chapter One, sincere *wanbel* on both sides will produce good results, while a lack of sincerity on the part of one or all parties, yields misfortune.

Conclusion

While I had been researching *wanbel* for several months prior to receiving the anonymous letter, I learned to think about *wanbel* differently by participating in the *wanbel* process myself. I found that experiencing the *wanbel* process clarified my understanding of it. For example, I experienced personally how the Sam idea of personhood prevented others from assuming they knew what I was thinking; they expected me to explain my thoughts to them. In addition, I felt a sharp sense of alienation after receiving the letter; this was disturbing for me as I had been welcomed by the Sam community for the previous 13 years. On the other hand, the feeling of separation and the intensity of the dispute, through forceful arguments and critical language, were strong incentives that pressured me to be reconciled. Additionally, by participating in the meeting, I realised that, despite the arguments and emotions, the Sam expected that it was through revealing *pari* that people would — perhaps not now, but eventually — be *wanbel*. Emotionally, I felt tremendous relief at the end, when the majority of the group said they were *wanbel* with my wife and me. Even now, as I write this, I feel the palpable, intense relief that I felt then, which gave me peace and hope as I entered my remaining period of fieldwork.

²¹ The name for “white person” in Sam is *buga*, which has been translated elsewhere as “ancestral spirit” (Hannemann, 1944:40-42). A white person’s skin is called *buga xo* (“foreign skin”).

This experience offered me an invaluable, though emotional, glimpse of the inherently reflexive nature of *wanbel*. I realised that the *wanbel* process accomplishes two things at once: it is a way of commenting, critiquing, and discussing specific community relationships, which, by its very nature, leads to (ideally) enhancing such relationships. That is, as individuals comment on relationality, they influence that same state of relationality. One also sees this reflexivity in the way that individuals behave with *wanbel* toward each other, thus gaining reputations for being *wanbel* people, which further enhances their ability to sustain future relationships. Thus, having a reputation as a *wanbel* person means more than simply labelling one's character, but is an index of their relationality, which emerges as people speak and act together in certain ways over time. For instance, Sam villagers compliment both men and women as *pari beli suma* ("good insides man") and *pari beli anggli* ("good insides woman"). Among Sam speakers, one of the primary markers of a good person is showing hospitality, exchanging gifts, and being friendly to visitors.

The nature of the *wanbel* process, and the negotiation over what will *karim kaikai*, is a vivid example of how the Sam people critique and transform them, even as they are encompassed by influences originating from outside the community (Lipuma, 1998, 2000). The anonymous letter and the resultant meeting illustrate a critique of the validity of language development as it relates to perceptions of *kaikai* and *gutpela sindaun*, and indigenous expectations that community members have toward those who come into the village. As Foster (2002:235) notes, Melanesians in general undergo a "fundamental ontological shift: the self-knowledge that modern subjects of history must reconcile an expanding gap between themselves and the products of history and so must continually forge the criteria by which they live" (see also Errington & Gewertz, 1996; Gewertz & Errington, 1996; Wardlow, 2002). The *wanbel* meeting illustrates the Sam practice of, through *wanbel*, "establish[ing] a range of relationships with agents and agencies deemed foreign. ...the transformative engagement of the foreign by the domestic is above all oriented toward generating a productive and reciprocal relationship" (Foster, 2005b:167). The letter and *wanbel* meeting illustrate the difficulties in defining "productive" and "reciprocal," which leads to differing ideas of what will bring *kaikai* and *gutpela sindaun*. The ways the Sam realise people have desires and ideas that are different, and how they reconcile them, is the subject of the next chapter.

Chapter 3: Burdens, spirits, and sorcery

Sam villagers most commonly learn of a strained relationship through unfortunate or devastating events referred to as *kulik* (“burdensome problem/issue”) that demonstrate evidence of discord, not by letter, as I did and discussed in the last chapter. *Kulik* cause a person to feel discouraged and emotionally weighed down. This chapter explores the Sam view that misfortune is evidence of conflict between people, and how the affected individual and their *malanggu* react in seeking out the other party to become *wanbel* with them to restore their wellbeing. *Kulik* touches not just the individuals directly impacted by it, but it will cause disaster and harm to their *malanggu*. If more people are entangled in it, the conflict can spread to other *malanggu* as well. Therefore, *kulik* represents a danger for the wider community, and they want and need to make sure that it is resolved in a way that brings about *wanbel*. Besides having a stake in the resolution, they also have the knowledge distributed among their members to be able to investigate how it appears, theorise possible past conflicts that could have led to it, and then pinpoint specific relationships that need to be strengthened or renewed. They discuss these ideas in an engaged and dynamic way of relating together referred to by Errington and Gewertz as “commotion” (2007:93). I begin to explore these issues with a case study of a Buan man who contracted an illness during my fieldwork. This case study raises issues I go on to explore, such as what *kulik* is, how people seek the source of *kulik*, and the role of the community (including people and spirit beings) in discerning which relationship(s) must be repaired in order to bring an end to *kulik*.

Roger’s illness

Soon after arriving in the village in March 2014, I heard that Roger was ill with a disease that no one could diagnose. When I visited him, he was sitting with his father at the latter’s house, where I learned he was now residing, instead of at his house with his wife and their three children. The illness, he told me, had begun about six weeks earlier with a sore and swollen stomach. At times, he could feel something moving inside his stomach, and occasionally, into his lungs, making it hard for him to breathe so that he thought he might die. He also had infrequent bowel movements, and sometimes his cognition was affected. As if to underscore the last point, his uncle called to him in Sam from his house nearby, asking Roger to give him back his thongs. It was only then that Roger looked down and realised he was wearing them. As he walked over, tossed them at his uncle’s feet, and walked back to us, his father asked him why he had taken them. He said he just saw them and put his feet in them without thinking.

Roger began to search for the source of his illness. He first went to the Aid Post in the village for help, but the medicine that the village Community Health Worker prescribed for him did not relieve his symptoms. After a few days, he began to suspect that this sickness was not something that medical doctors knew how to treat. He called it *miyang gamba* (“ground sickness”), or sickness that is caused by a lack of *wanbel* or spirits. Although he was a Lutheran, he felt God was not protecting him. He theorised that he was, in his words, “inside of God’s curse,” that is, God was judging him for his past sins by removing his protection from attack by *mundor hali* (“harmful spirit, wind”) and *isong suma* (“sorcery man”). Since he was vulnerable in the Lutheran Church, he approached leaders from the Revival Centres of Papua New Guinea church who often pray for sick people in their services. His father, a member of the Revival Centres church, recommended that he stop taking the Aid Post medicine and join the Revival Centres church, so that church leaders could pray for him. The Revival Centres church doctrine holds that God does miracles on earth, and that he works in people’s lives when they are *wanbel* with others in the church. People must be *wanbel* for God to take their prayers and add his strength to theirs. Before any prayer, the pastor or lay leader will ask everyone to be *wanbel*. Other Sam people had previously joined the church to obtain healing, like one father whose daughter had an eye disease. Members regularly shared testimonies about accidental knife cuts and sicknesses that would miraculously heal after they prayed to God.

Roger converted to the Revival Centres church, but he had improved only slightly despite intensive prayer sessions. Now, he told me, he depended on his father in a childlike state of dependency, such that, for example, he and his father shared the same mosquito net.²² Like a child, he said, holding out his finger, he needed his father to lead him around by the finger; he once again needed his father’s supervision.

Four months later, I gained more insight into possible causes for Roger’s illness in a weekly community meeting that involved all of Buan village.²³ The village leader announced, “There is an issue between two married people. I have a report from the lady, who says her man left her and her children, and has been away many days now. She reports that she has *wari* (“worry” TP).²⁴ She

²² In Sam society, fathers will share a mosquito net with small male children, and mothers will share with female children.

²³ Called a *Mande Fo Lain*, it is a transliteration of “Four Line” (“Four People Group” TP), referring to the people of four clans that live in Buan: Bang, Garaibi, Xuidimbi, and Sanjimbe.

²⁴ I have only heard *wari* (“worry” TP) used to refer to the emotion arising from being separated from one’s friends or family. For instance, *wari* is what a child and wife feel when their father leaves them for another wife. As one Sam man said, “The practice of divorce means that you, the father, you leave the woman and go completely to start another family now. And you will become the father of another family and your wife will be off to one side with the children. They will be off to one side with a lot of *wari*. All the time they will see you walk around with another family, and they will feel big burden because ‘That is our father, why did he become the father of that family?’ And all the time they will have *wari, wari, wari.*”

wonders what thinking her man has. Does he see something else he wants, or does he think she is a poison lady [sorceress]? Why does he not return?" Those who attended the meeting began to discuss Roger's situation, while Roger occasionally walked over to the village leader and spoke with him privately. Roger's father and another church leader claimed that Roger was still sick, and that without God's help, he would have died. They claimed that his wife hated the Christian life, and she exerted a pull on him away from the spiritual cure he needed so that he could recover, while he felt compelled to continue to stay with his father to receive help and prayers from the church leaders.

The community members voiced a variety of opinions for his illness. Several men were sceptical that he was ill because he looked fine physically. His wife also denied he was sick, saying "So he is a child, ah? ...what sickness? He is not a child..." A second possibility the men discussed was that he was sick due to sorcery. Someone asked whether a certain man, suspected of sorcery, was living in the area, but his father replied that the sorcerer had already left. Someone brought up the idea that his wife had fed him food she had contaminated in an *isong* ("sorcery") practice called *poisen* ("poison" TP).²⁵ Several other men blamed Roger himself, noting that "He keeps everything inside of himself." He hid his thoughts and feelings within his *pari* ("insides, feelings, dispositions") and would not cooperate in sharing them to allow others to analyse his illness.²⁶ As the meeting progressed, various speakers voiced another possibility that Roger's sickness was caused by a lack of *wanbel* inside the family. Reportedly, Roger and his brother had argued just prior to his illness, though one mentioned they had already reconciled and "shaken hands" ("*sek han*" TP) to demonstrate that they were *wanbel*. If the family became *wanbel*, they said, that would bring about healing. One man said, "Why did his problem last so long? It has been at least a month! I see people going after churches, and they are still sick. We ourselves made this problem!" That is, their own family dispute needed resolving.

Soon after, the meeting finished, but the community had still not pinpointed what was making Roger ill. Following the meeting, people volunteered new information. One person said that Roger had said that whenever he went to his marital house (which he referred to as *so mexo*, "death place"), he felt like his health worsened, so he stayed at his father's house instead. This indicated

²⁵ The term "poison" refers to a type of magic that involves the victim ingesting something which has been tainted by magical means, which causes their death.

²⁶ The Sam people believe that holding one's thoughts inside prevents others from knowing what he is thinking. Not sharing one's thoughts in a meeting to become *wanbel* is discouraged, because those who do not speak up will tend to think they have not been heard, and thus their opinion has not been considered in making the decision. In meetings, I have repeatedly heard the village leader urging everyone to share what they were thinking. In fact, in the meeting about the anonymous letter we received, one of my friends deliberately spoke in a way that would embolden those who were behind the letter to reveal their thoughts.

to him that his house was somehow a place of danger. Another person inferred that Roger and Julia did not love each other anymore, because while she did not laugh and speak with him when they were together, she did laugh and talk with others who visited her. A third person, a community leader, recalled a situation that had happened a few weeks earlier, when Julia, Roger's wife, clashed with a woman from another clan over land and hit the other woman. He posited that perhaps an unresolved argument between his wife, Julia, and a woman from another clan over garden land created a breakdown in *wanbel* that was affecting Roger.²⁷ Finally, Roger had left Julia and his two daughters approximately ten years before to live with another woman, and maybe, it was suggested, this issue was still bothering Julia. Perhaps she had not "shaken hands" ("*sek han*" TP) and become *wanbel* with Roger. After apologising to his wife and the community, he had returned to live with his first family a few months later. Although Roger was still sick when I left the field at the end of the year, I have since then received word that he has recovered. These multiple and comprehensive postulations are typical of the way the *malunggu* searches their collective memories of situations they have heard about or observed, and are actively involved in finding out the cause of a person's *kulik*.

What is kulik?

In the case study above, Roger's illness was a manifestation of *kulik* ("burden"). *Kulik* is an issue or event arising either through negligence or deliberate action, which causes someone to feel discouraged or weighed down. *Kulik* has the sense of being heavy, and they use this term when they lift up copra bags to check their weight ("*copra ido kulik*" ("the copra's weight")). When people refer to a negative occurrence as *kulik*, they are referring to its discouraging and weighty effect on people, but *kulik* is not an emotion. There is no feeling called *pari kulik*. *Kulik* causes someone to feel certain emotions, such as *pari hali* ("bad insides") and *pari xalul* ("ruined insides"). While *kulik* causes a person to feel weighed down, its opposite is *wanbel*, which makes a person feel light, which the Sam convey with the term *kulik jalxo* ("there is not a burdensome problem/issue") or the emotion of *pilim pri* ("feel free" TP). This is a good feeling, and one desires to feel this way. But when one has a disagreement with someone, they say they *kulik pesxa* ("get a problem/issue"). Becoming *wanbel* is the way to convert *kulik* into *kulik jalxo* and *pilim pri*.

Events that cause *kulik* happen due to someone's negligence or unintentional action, or their intentional desire to cause harm to someone because they feel *pari hali* ("bad insides") toward them. The first category of *kulik* are unintentional and result from human error, forgetfulness, or

²⁷ I found out a few days later that Julia gave the woman a chicken that week and they became *wanbel*.

carelessness. People do not mean to harm someone else, and it happens without their explicit approval or sanction, such as when a pig's owner fails to repair a hole in its fence which allows it to escape and forage for food in someone else's garden. They say in these cases, "*Em i no minim*," ("He did not mean [to do it]." TP), or "*Adu ugel yixo. Adu pari hali jal.*" ("He made a mistake. He was not bad insides."). Even though it is unintentional, however, it still can create *kulik*. For instance, when the pig eats the other person's garden food, this creates a burden for the owner of the garden; it is a burden that upsets their *pari beli*. They must make their angst known to the pig's owner in order to start the *wanbel* process. In these cases, they are able to identify the person at fault because the action which caused the dispute was done openly. They may go to the person to discuss the damages and compensation face-to-face if the damage is minimal, or make the matter public in an overt manner by yelling out their frustration and anger in front of the entire village and demanding compensation. In either way of voicing their disapproval, the *kulik* becomes shared between both parties, which moves the disputants to the point at which they can start the *wanbel* process to be reconciled.

The second category involves *kulik* that people intentionally cause. This happens when someone means to cause harm to someone else through visible actions, such as stealing, cutting trees, burning toilet houses, fighting, or through the influence of spirit beings. They feel *pari hali* ("bad insides") toward someone which causes them to want to harm that person. If the person with *pari hali* decides to act on their feeling, they may act on their own, such as yelling at the person or stealing one of their chickens, or asking a sorcerer to act on their behalf by targeting the other person with *isong* ("sorcery").

They also behave in certain ways to signal that something is wrong between people. They might ignore someone or conspicuously go around their house when walking through the village. They will keep their facial expression stern and unsmiling, and not speak to them or respond when they are addressed. If the intended recipient of these messages does not respond by trying to repair the issue that divides them, the person with the frustration may talk to someone else about the person, knowing the news will spread and go back to the other person, or perhaps damage their things, cut down their cocoa tree, or yell at them in public. These actions that damage something someone else owns, or in other ways disrupts *wanbel* are called *mangau hali* ("bad actions/behaviour").

Their *mangau* ("actions/behaviour") reflect their *pari*. Often, people feel *pari hali* because someone else's behaviour has angered them or made them feel jealous. A common exculpatory phrase after a vengeful act is, "*Ido mangau ne sa pari hali hambixo*," ("His behaviour gave me bad insides."). Thus, the reason for acting in a premeditated way to cause injury to another is to respond to the

other person's behaviour. Usually, Sam people will take action toward another that is premeditated or a response to a previous action, but occasionally they might act spontaneously; if they do, this is *mangau hali* ("bad actions/behaviour"). Such action is *hali* ("bad") because physical fighting is seen to make a conflict worse, and hence is warranted only if it propels the hostile parties to begin to dialogue to become *wanbel*. If people wantonly and/or recurrently physically hurt someone else, this prevents them from being *wanbel*, and thus blocks them from receiving its benefits. Thus, while verbal fighting is common, people rarely exchange blows in Buan, and when open conflict does occur, it is because the *kulik* one of them feels is so intense that they are incapable of controlling their emotions.

Issues like domestic violence, common in Papua New Guinea (Bainton, 2008; D. A. Counts, 1990; Hermkens, 2012; Lepani, 2008; Macintyre, 2008; J. Taylor, 2008), seem to deny my statement that violence between people is not common, and that it is seen to be *mangau hali*. However, one view of domestic violence, which takes place frequently in Buan village, that I heard voiced by men and women, is that physical abuse is a reaction to something the wife did or did not do that the man felt was neglecting their obligation to the family. One day, after a night when a husband had hit his wife with a board, his father said that she had not obeyed what he said and he had had to show her that she needed to obey him. Other reasons I have heard for domestic abuse are not having the husband's food cooked when he comes home in the evening, or not taking food to the market in Bongu to sell. The man gets angry because the wife does something that, they say, "gives" them *pari ngaring* ("hot insides"). As Hermkens (2012:141) notes, however, "The perceived 'misbehaviour' of women, however, suggests that there is an underlying cause for domestic violence, namely male domination and men's fear of losing control over women." There are many other factors involved in domestic violence, such as drinking and gambling (Hermkens, 2012:141), and it is a complex topic that needs more research in the Sam area.

Sam men told me that *pari*, discussed in detail in Chapter Four, is limited in the amount of anger it can contain, and when the limit is reached, it explodes out of the person, resulting in physical confrontation. Thus, violence is seen as necessary when the other person refuses to reform their behaviour and so prevents the two or more of them from becoming *wanbel*. In contrast, destructive action toward someone is usually rationalised as a reaction to a previous conflict that is meant to initiate the process of becoming *wanbel*.

Kulik can be "given" and "received" in that a person can do something that makes someone else feel burdened. For instance, a common comment when someone has *kulik* is to say, "*Adu kulik pemexo*," ("He got a burden."). *Kulik* are conceptualised like an object in an exchange. This

figurative imagery is seen in the way to become *wanbel* called *pari beli hunjudxum* (“I will give them good insides”) to the other person(s) in the conflict. The other person also gives their *pari* (“insides, feelings, dispositions”) and as both sides participate fully in this exchange, they both give and receive, and thus become *wanbel*. They help others who have *kulik* by carrying it with them, “*Sa ino kulik kubaisixam*,” (“I am shouldering, carrying your burden.”). Hence, in Roger’s situation, he felt a type of *kulik* which entailed that the community help him search for the source of the *kulik*, which would show the way to resolve it.

Kulik is a pivotal event in the life of a *malanggu*, causing communal introspection and scrutiny. People try to discern *kulik* and interpret its source in order to understand how to help the person suffering with it. As mentioned above, some events leading to giving someone *kulik* may be accidental and unintentional, but others are created by people to expose broken relationship(s). In this case, a person brings about *kulik* to call someone’s attention to a relationship that they damaged without realising or, if they know about it, they do not want to admit it. In this type of *kulik*, one side feels their relationship is delicate or even severed, but the other party claims they are unaware of what they caused. The emergence of *kulik* demonstrates that at least one person in the interaction is not *wanbel*. When both sides become aware, they realise they need to start the *wanbel* process. However, not all negative events are seen as *kulik*. If something happens that is bad for someone but for which they do not feel a sense of burden, then the event is not *kulik*. In that case, the happening is called *samting nating* (“a thing that is nothing” TP).

Therefore, the Sam villagers view *kulik* as an unfortunate event that provokes a process of discerning who in their community is not *wanbel*. They refer to *kulik* as showing a relationship is *obrox* (“broken”). There are a variety of Sam words describing breaking or cutting an object: *anjang* (“to cut”), *toxour* (“separate into pieces”), *kenjeng* (“cut into small pieces”), *bubrax* (“rip”), or *nyoxru* “chip off, crumble.” *Obrox* is used to refer to the division of an object that is thought of as essentially a whole thing, like a coconut, for example. A coconut is grown and harvested when it is a whole object. When it is cut in half (“*obrox*”), it loses its essential characteristic of wholeness. It is transformed from an intact entity to something else. *Obrox* can be used refer to both coconuts and *wanbel* because the actions are similar: breaking a coconut shell resembles breaking a community’s *wanbel* in that a coconut, like a united community, is a whole.

Seek the source of kulik

Kulik can have multiple causes, and it is important to find out what caused *kulik* to understand who to talk with and which relationships to mend in order to bring an end to it. Sam people think that

every *kulik* that happens has an origin that initiated it. They refer to the *kulik's* source as *kulu* ("source, foundation, essence"). Kulick documents a similar understanding of a basic essence when talking about the importance of women in the clan,

Women produce (*kamapim*) the clan. They're the root of the banana tree (*as bilong banana*). As long as the root of the banana tree remains, children will be born and grow. But [if] you get rid of the root, how will children come to be? (1997 [1992]:89)

Kulick asserts that the Gapun word *kandang* for "clan" is also the word for "foundation," showing that when people think of women as the foundation, they are implying that they are the basis of the clan (Kulick, 1997 [1992]:88-89). Similarly, my Sam language teacher in Buan taught me that an object's *kulu* is the part that provides stability, strength, and sustenance. People point to the trunk of a coconut tree that is close to the ground as the tree's *kulu*, since it supports the part of the tree above ground and sends the nutrients, the *nyamur* ("nutrients in the soil"), up to the top of the tree. Inanimate objects can have *kulu* as well, like the base or lowest point of a mountain or cliff. *Kulik* also has a *kulu*, which is the initial disagreement that can flare up into a larger conflict that incorporates a wider range of people and relationships.

After realising *kulik* exists, the person who is affected and their *malanggu* begin to seek its source. A common source of *kulik* among the Sam collectives are the effects of spirits caused by strained or torn relationships. In Roger's case, he felt no relief after taking Aid Post medicine, and hence, his *kulik* seemed to show signs that it was *miyang gemba* ("ground illness, illness caused by a spirit") caused by a negative relationship with someone he knew. As mentioned above, every *kulik* has a *kulu*, which points the way to resolving it. Discerning the cause of *kulik* caused by *isong* or someone's negligence are more straightforward to diagnose than *kulik* that manifests as *miyang gemba*. Those caused by people can generally be unravelled by looking at what happened, and finding witnesses or evidence. For instance, in cases when a pig gets loose and consumes garden food, the garden's owner can observe the pig and know whose pig it is. Likewise, in physical fights, the assailants are easy to identify. Stealing, if it happens when no one is nearby, is problematic because it could be that no one has observed the theft. Men often complained at Monday community meetings that someone had stolen from them, such as a watermelon or chicken. Their view was that someone had stolen and consumed it, and they often suspected the teenage boys or *ngodo* ("bush spirit"). What is required in these cases is evidence. As a former magistrate explained about solving a crime carried out by people, the owner must observe someone as he or she is doing it or find some trace that links the perpetrator and the crime. Then, since the crime is *kulik* that needs to be resolved in a *wanbel* manner, they accuse the suspect in front of the village in a community meeting, and give their eyewitness or material testimony.

However, it is more difficult to uncover someone with unexpressed hostility toward another person. Discerning the *kulu of kulik* in cases when people are not *wanbel* requires either omens or dreams, or the assistance of the *malanggu* to inquire and think about who might be upset with the person who is suffering under *kulik*. Firstly, omens and dreams can indicate that something bad will happen soon, and give clues about what it might be (Chowning, 1987:178, fn. 10; Lohmann, 2003c, 2003f; Young, 1971b). For example, the screen of my mobile phone broke in my pocket on a trip driving to and from Madang with some Buan villagers, and afterwards, when I described the crack to a young man that lived near us he said it was telling me to be careful. He couldn't tell me exactly what might happen, but it was after this that I received the *wanbel* letter on my house steps. Dreams can also communicate important messages (see Lohmann, 2000, 2003f; Tonkinson, 2003). Like the Asabano (Lohmann, 2000), Sam villagers believe the dream images and experiences are actually happening to the dreamer. As I discuss in the next chapter, dreams provide one way for the ancestors to share important information with their living relatives. Sam people regularly tell me their dreams, and they take the interpretations seriously.

Secondly, the Sam community can also play an important role in discovering a link to someone who might have caused the *kulik*, as demonstrated in the *malanggu's* reaction to Roger's sickness. The way people discussed and judged the relevance of past experiences exemplifies a type of sociality of interest and involvement in each other's lives, which is common in Melanesia (Errington & Gewertz, 2007; McDougall, 2016; Robbins, 2004a; E. Schieffelin, 1976; M. Strathern, 1988; Young, 1971a). The Sam energetically discuss their relationships in daily social interactions to resolve conflicts and promote good relationships. As Smith found, "Kragur people live in a densely packed and intimate social world in which controlling conflict is a chronic problem" (Smith, 1994:67). Besides the practical aspect of resolving conflict, being sociable is the mark of a "good person," a *suma ne anggli beli* ("good man or woman"). In this, the Sam people feel that to be human is to have relationships. In myths and stories of the "time before," McDougall (2016:66) relates that these narratives all had a similar topic: that being human involves engaging with others. She found, "Though fragmentary and disconnected, many of the stories I was told shared a common theme: proper humanity requires engagement with other people" (McDougall, 2016:66). These engagements are fulfilling as well as demanding. The phrase, "bittersweet life of intensive sociality," which Young (1971a:34-35) used to apply to the type of social interactions he witnessed in Massim society, matches the close and intimate interactions of the Sam.

Errington and Gewertz (2007:93) identify this dynamic and assertive sociality, which they call “commotion,” as integral to creating amity in Papua New Guinean communities. As Errington and Gewertz assert, commotions are,

predicated upon on-going and self-assertive engagements: one in which people compelled each other into active participation in each other’s pasts, presents and futures. (Errington & Gewertz, 2007:93)

Sam people likewise interact in what approximates “commotion.” For example, at the meeting to discuss Roger’s illness, people volunteered theories of past hurts and times when people said they were *wanbel* but maybe were not. They asserted claim and counter-claim, volunteering and evaluating alternative scenarios, based on what they had heard someone said or did — anything that could lead to disunity. The meetings were unscripted and the outcome uncertain, and highlighted the importance of oratory. In this context, *wanbel* meetings have a sense of improvisation and drama in which the eventual outcome is not entirely certain. Strathern also writes how performances, for the Mianmin, near the West Papua border, lead to improvisatory behaviour. She writes “Mianmin ... act in a context of uncertainty about outcome, which makes every performance also an improvisation. A successful outcome may be judged in the display itself, but this is only there to be judged by subsequent effects, in the long term affairs of the community” (M. Strathern, 1988:174).

The improvisatory nature of commotions could be seen, in Roger’s case, through the meeting’s discussion and informal conversations about a multitude of possible disputes that could be the source of Roger’s problems. Sam villagers can interact with various agents, such as spirit beings, animals (including spirits, God, and their ancestors who have died), and the living, which reside with them in the same social space and affect them (Dundon, 2002b:142-143; Mantovani, 1984:202-204; C. Taylor, 2007:32-33). The discussions brought up many possible agents and ways they could have affected Roger. Spirit beings were viable suspects because the Sam people believe they reside and affect living people and their world, which I discuss in detail in Chapter Four. For example, while spear fishing with some men in the Kabeneo river, at a section of river called *Mangbe*, I felt a sudden coldness constrict my chest, forcing me to open my mouth and start to inhale water. Panicking, I shot up to the surface, spluttering and coughing. While I thought the water was just too cold for me to stay down longer, my companion attributed it to a water spirit (*yag sarara*). He felt that since I was an experienced swimmer, my distress must have been caused by another reason for my incident, namely, the spirit being living in that section of the river.

Regardless of how contentious *kulik* is, the Sam people insist that all *kulik* can be “straightened” (“*gerei*”). They apply the root *gerei* to the action of sorting through a jumbled group of different items and organising it into piles. They can also *gerei* a ford through a river, when they move aside rocks that the river has washed into the path that vehicles normally follow. Finally, they also *gerei* thoughts by organising them and coming to a decision of what to do.

But, even though all *kulik* can be “straightened,” some incorporate more relationships than others and require the *wanbel* of many people, like *kulik* involving adultery, divorce, or disputes over land. One example of such an intractable case was over which *malanggu* owns the land on which a logging company wanted to cut timber. At the time of my fieldwork, the disputants had been in the land court for more than a year. While the court case was still in process, some men from Songum came to Buan village to finish it through force, and a fight broke out, which resulted in several Songum men being hurt and sent to the Madang Hospital. Both parties were waiting for the verdict of the judge regarding the land dispute, but those I talked with were sceptical that even after the land court’s decision, one of the parties would not accept the decision. The land court was perceived to have little power to enact its decision, and hence the parties would try to resolve the dispute in another way. One method that was frequently more effective than the land courts was a *wanbel* meeting, called *Histori Dei* (“History Day” TP), in which both sides laid out their ancestral claim to the disputed land. The *malanggu* spokesmen took turns to talk about their relatives who had lived, gardened, fought over, and died on the land. Each narrated the events and names of people living on the parcel of land in question back as many generations as they could remember. The one who spoke most convincingly and in more detail won the contest. They spoke in the presence of their peers, that is, other men from various *malanggu*, who were respected for knowing the history of their *malanggu*. The assembled men, with the assistance of a moderator, listened to and judged the claims, and the group agreed on who had the strongest claim to use and manage the land.

Ground sickness

Kulik often result in illness, called *miyang gamba* (“ground illness”). The name seems to be derived from a connection between the agents who cause *miyang gamba*, the spirits and ancestors, and the ground, which nourishes them and is integral to life (see “Initiatives that bring results” in Chapter Two), and not because the person or people they affect are disputing over land. *Miyang gamba* do not improve with hospital medicines, but require other types of remedies. The view that there could be multiple causes or remedies for an illness is not unique to the Sam, and can be seen in examples of medical pluralism throughout Papua New Guinea (Barker, 2003, 2012 [1989]; Frankel

& Lewis, 2012 [1989]; Lepowsky, 1990; Lindenbaum, 1991; MacFarlane, 2009; Macintyre, Foale, Bainton, & Mokter, 2005; Schwartz, 1969; Street, 2014; Van der Geest & Finkler, 2004). Frankel and Lewis (2012 [1989]) give a broad summary of the interplay of different sets of knowledge of healing in different Papua New Guinean societies. As they note, “Medical pluralism, the coexistence of differing medical traditions, is now the common pattern in all but the most isolated areas of the world. In Papua New Guinea there are now few, if any, populations that still rely exclusively upon their traditional treatments” (Frankel & Lewis, 2012 [1989]:1). Barker avers that the Maisin people in Oro Province have a variety of remedies for treating sickness, which they use in their specific cultural contexts and which are influenced by their ideas of which remedies work best in different situations (Barker, 2012 [1989]). As a variety of researchers note, Papua New Guineans hold a robust set of ideas and practices about actions that harm people or make them healthier, and the role of spirit beings in causing sickness, and they view biomedicine as not the only or necessarily the best alternative in each situation (Barker, 2012 [1989]; Lepowsky, 1990; MacFarlane, 2009). Street, in her study of the Madang Hospital, documented participants’ perception that a sickness could have multiple possible causes which needed to be pursued to find the cure that brings relief, including *wanbel* (Street, 2014:1-7, 124-125).

Likewise, Sam people hold that illness can result from various causes, some that respond to medicines they obtain from the Aid Post, but some also that come from broken relationships which then lead to *miyang gamba*. Community members carefully scrutinise someone’s symptoms to ascertain which type of illness they have.

In cases of *miyang gamba*, people in the village try to understand whether the invalid became ill because someone was not *wanbel* with him or her, or if they are the target of *isong* (“sorcery”) or *ngarang* (“poison”). The discussion at the meeting about Roger’s condition explored both of these possibilities. Thus, people suggested that his wife was an *ngarang anggli* (“poison woman”) who was doing sorcery on him, the Boimbe sorcerer was doing sorcery on him, Roger himself was keeping his thoughts and emotions inside and did not tell them to others and this prevented his cure, or there was a lack of *wanbel* in the *malanggu* after an unresolved conflict (such as occurred between Roger and his brother). After the meeting, I heard additional suggestions: some unknown element of Roger’s house sickened him, Roger and his wife did not love each other and she was causing the issue, his wife and another woman’s unresolved fight was the cause, or Roger and his wife were really not *wanbel* after Roger had run away with another woman ten years previously. As the community continued to cogitate on the sickness, they uncovered reasons that invalidated certain of the possibilities. They found out that Roger and his brother had become *wanbel* over

their recent incident, and their anger could not be causing the sickness. They also confirmed that the sorcerer from Boimbe was not in the area and thus could not have caused his problems. Finally, his wife had already given a chicken and “shaken hands” (*sek han* TP) with the lady with whom she had fought. *Sek han* is the accepted way to conclude a *wanbel* reconciliation ceremony.

Kulik and spirits

The reasons above to explain Roger’s *kulik* focus on two broad categories, both of which involve spirit beings: either someone felt a lack of *wanbel* with him that negatively affected him, or someone did sorcery (“*isong*”) against him. In the first category, someone feels a lack of *wanbel* and yet makes the active choice to not express it, which causes the *kulik*. Sam villagers believe that even unvoiced thoughts and feelings have the power to exert a harmful effect on others. As one person expressed it to me, when someone holds a negative feeling about someone else, a *mundor hali* (“harmful spirit, wind”) is attracted to this feeling. It attaches itself to the source of one’s displeasure and causes misfortune to occur in their life. *Mundor hali* is a type of spirit being, though people said it finds its target from the negative feelings of people and does not choose people to afflict from its own volition. Thus, the community explored the possibility that someone was angry with Roger for something he had said or done toward them, which made Roger ill.

This type of *kulik* is difficult to trace and alleviate because it typically emerges as people are upset in their *pari* over something that has happened, which no one else can see. For instance, Roger did not know what he did that caused the other person’s displeasure. I describe the nature of *pari* and its role in the *wanbel* process in detail in the next chapter. But briefly, a person’s feeling of *pari hali* (“bad insides”) or, more devastating, *pari xalul* (“ruined insides”) is held in their *pari*, where it exerts a harmful effect on the one who has caused them to feel this way. People in Buan have become sick for this reason, such as a lady who suddenly, in the midst of labour, was unable to push out the baby and began bleeding heavily. I drove her to the Ileg Health Centre and at the same time her *malanggu* met and talked about who was not *pari beli*. They found that the father had been angry at her choice of husband. He had mentioned it to her but did not try to prevent their marriage. As the father reported to me afterwards, when she thought about the negative things he had said about her spouse, these thoughts affected her body; they were, in their words, a “magnet,” that attracted a *mundor hali*. He did not intend to affect her in this way, but as she thought about his words, she began to feel discouraged and sad in her *pari*, which attracted her medical ailment, caused by the *mundor hali*. The *mundor hali* acted in her body to prevent the baby from coming out easily. Although the father did not intend to cause pain and potential death to his daughter and granddaughter, his anger had a dangerous and unforeseen effect. Likewise, after her father became

wanbel with her choice of husband, the baby was born successfully, and both the mother and baby survived. To provide a remedy for her distress, her *malanggu* needed to discuss and decide upon the person or people who were not *wanbel* with her, and once they did so, they could start the *wanbel* process to become reconciled.

Kulik and sorcery

Secondly, *kulik* can also happen because of *isong* (“sorcery”), which is requested by the disgruntled person but performed by a third party, an unknown, powerful expert in *isong*. Sorcery has received much attention in Melanesia from national governments, academics, and the press.²⁸ The feelings of inequality and jealousy are common sources of sorcery in Papua New Guinea and in other places around the world (Eves & Forsyth, 2015; Fisiy & Geschiere, 1991; Forsyth & Eves, 2015a:5; Humble, 2013).

Within Papua New Guinea, people use a range of terms to refer to sorcery and witchcraft, such as the Tok Pisin terms *malira*, *sanguma*, *sosori*, *poisin*, and *puri puri* (Eves, 2013; Gibbs & Wailoni, 2009:68-80; Onagi, 2015:vii; Reay, 1987:90-91). Accounts of sorcery differ over whether, in discussing cases of sorcery, one is referring to the victims who suffer the effect of sorcery or the suspected sorcerers that are attacked, whose deaths have been reported frequently in the media in Papua New Guinea (Davidson, 2018; Jorgensen, 2014:267; Zocca, 2010). Additionally, researchers note there is great variation in how sorcery is manifested in various cultures, such as whether women or men perform it (Forsyth & Eves, 2015a; Jorgensen, 2014; Onagi, 2015; Zocca, 2009, 2010).

In the Sam area, a person who is angry or jealous towards another, and is not able to get redress through the *wanbel* process, asks a knowledgeable person to perform sorcery on the one they dislike, in exchange for a chicken or money. Most of the discussions I heard about sorcery in the Sam area centred on *isong* (“sorcery”), which is conducted by men. I was told that women also can do a type of sorcery, called *ngarang* (“poison”), but I did not hear people talking about *ngarang* until the meeting about Roger’s illness, when several men suggested that Roger’s wife was a *ngarang anggli* (“poison woman”).

²⁸ (Davidson, 2018; Eves, 2000a, 2013; Eves & Forsyth, 2015; Foana’ota, 2015; Forge, 1970; Forsyth & Eves, 2015b; Gammage, 2006; Gibbs & Wailoni, 2008, 2009; Glick, 1973; Hock, 2006; Humble, 2013; Knauff, 1985; Kuman, 2011; Lawrence, 1987; Lindenbaum, 1979; Lindenbaum & Zelenietz, 1981; "Mass trial for 'sorcery' killings in PNG," 2017; Office of Legislative Counsel, 1971, 2013; Stewart & Strathern, 2004; J. Taylor, 2016; Tonkinson, 1981b; Zelenietz, 1981; Zocca, 2009).

While both *ngarang* and *isong* are done in secret, they work in different ways. *Ngarang* (“poison”) is a ritual in which an object causing sickness and death, wrapped in food called *ngarang pin* (“poison food”), is given to the victim to ingest; the victim contracts *ngarang gamba* (“poison sickness”), which is a type of *miyang gamba*. *Isong suma* (“sorcery man”) hold something that was intimately connected with or part of a person (such as a few strands of their hair, a Band-Aid, or a fingernail clipping) as they whisper certain special words to spirit beings (see also Eves, 2013; Eves & Forsyth, 2015:11(fn4); Gillison, 2016:8; Glick, 1967:41; Hogbin, 1932:442; Knauft, 1985:36; Tait, 1954:67).²⁹ *Isong suma* perform a practice called *ambrang kadung* using the bones of dead people, such as a human skull, to petition the spirits to sicken or kill someone (see also Smith, 2013:101-103, 144). The breath of the *isong suma* called *mundor* (“spirit, wind”), exhaled as they speak the ceremonial words, activates the *mundor hali* (“harmful spirit, wind”). *Isong suma* can reportedly take on the shape of an animal and appear next to their target’s house to carry out sorcery. They knock on the wall of their house, cough, or make some other noise, and when the person comes outside, they paralyse them, lie them on the ground, cut open their chest, and replace their organs with dirt, grass, and mud. After sewing them up, they awaken the person and send them back into their house, where the victim forgets all that has happened. Whenever they wish, the *isong suma* manipulates the person to act carelessly so that they die in an apparent accident, like a passenger relaxing their grip on a vehicle speeding to town over the rough road and falling off, or not looking around while walking under a recently cut tree and being hit by it. *Isong suma* also cause *miyang gamba*, as was suspected in Roger’s case.

The *isong suma* will stop his efforts to harm his target when the one who hired him tells him to — after people have died or the sick person has become *wanbel* with the one who hired the *isong suma*. Thus, identifying the person who hired the *isong suma* is imperative. Due to the difficulty of detecting the *kulik’s* initiator, the affected person needs the collective effort of the *malanggu* and/or village to think back through past interactions and conflicts and decide which could be likely to make someone angry enough to bring about the misfortune. Other ways to reveal if someone has been affected by sorcery is by taking note of an animal seen lurking near the targeted person’s house or garden, which could be the sorcerer in disguise, or by hiring a man who practices *miyo* (“divination”).³⁰ Reportedly, some men practice *miyo* to discover the source of illness by speaking to the spirits while they hold a certain type of pungent smelling tree bark, *miyo xo* (“divination tree bark,” literally “divination skin”). I was told that alternative divining methods are speaking to certain

²⁹ While treating people’s wounds in the village, people often asked me for the plastic Band-Aid strips when I was finished. They would dispose of them in a way that no one could use them to do sorcery on them.

³⁰ Knowledge of *miyo* is passed from father to son in the Sam area.

leaves held in the hand and listening to what they say, cutting off the head of a live chicken and observing the family or house toward which it runs, or boiling water on a fire and watching the house to which the steam points. The house that is indicated this way is where the *isong suma* lives.

The Sam villagers feel that sorcery occurs when there is a relationship breakdown because, generally, *isong suma* and *ngarang anggli* do not practice their craft unless there is someone to recompense them. I never heard of an *isong suma* killing people wantonly and without cause. Usually, the manifestation of *isong*, in terms of causing someone to become sick or die, makes the dispute clear to everyone. Whereas, before the *kulik* manifested, the sadness and frustration was only felt by one side, it is acknowledged by both parties after the *isong*. The sick person's *malunggu* will be motivated to find the source of the *kulik* and resolve it quickly to try to make the *isong suma* stop affecting more people. As a man from Songum explained to me,

If [people] are not *wanbel* again, then everything will get worse. ... A death will happen, fighting will happen, stealing will happen, destroying something will happen, adultery will happen. Many big problems. And there will be a kind of reckless living, if *wanbel* does not happen. ... Accidents. Sorcery (*isong*), poison (*ngarang*) can happen. ... [The sorcerer] can do it with an animal, snake, or some insects. ... Or he can do it with something like a dry coconut tree that falls and kills you, or this kind of thing.

When two or more people have a serious disagreement, such as over land or a woman, sorcery is seen to be a valid option. At a meeting in Wongbe to find and charge a suspected sorcerer, one man explained to me, "Sometimes he [the jilted husband] finds a *sanguma man* ("sorcerer" TP). He tells him, 'Come, kill this man. He did adultery with my wife' [Then] he will be *wanbel*."

The victim calls in a sorcerer because there is an absence of *wanbel*, and the sorcerer makes this conflict visible and urgent. Dalton, an anthropologist who lived with the Rawa people, east of the Sam area, wrote that the sorcerer, in making tensions in society concrete, "enable all of the elements of the social process, including healing and redemption"; they "[make] the hidden tensions and power in a community manifest so that they may be dealt with..." (Dalton, 2007:48). As Smith writes,

Failure to cure an illness thought to be caused by hidden anger can lead to further accusations and suspicions; but the curing process provides a means of airing disputes and resolving grievances, and the explanatory theory itself may act as a check on the escalation of minor disputes. (Smith, 1994:67)

As people react to sorcery's effects, their efforts raise issues that need to be resolved in order to become *wanbel*. Hermkens describes a meeting held after a case of suspected sorcery in the Maisin area, "The point of the meeting was to re-establish a state of balance and harmony and to stop the

cycle of revenge which, the councillor presumed, had started with Sylvester's mistakes" (Hermkens, 2015:43). Likewise, researching the Rawa, Dalton notes,

From an historical perspective, the classic Rawa sorcerer can be seen as a barometer or, more aptly, a thermometer whose physical-emotional state measures his moral times and circumstances. Sorcery does not have to exist solely on the level of belief and accusation to be a gauge of the strains in a culture. The same can be said of other mystical illness with imputed social causation: they reflect and measure the conditions that give rise to them. (Dalton, 2007:49)

People in the Sam area also believe that *isong* is evidence that the community is divided. Although the Sam feel that divisiveness is increasing, they continue to work to become *wanbel*. They frame *wanbel* meetings in terms of becoming reconciled again.

At a *wanbel* meeting concerning sorcery I attended, a Boimbe man was accused of killing several Sam people, including, most recently, two women from Wongbe.³¹ The spouses of the two women who died invited others in their malanggu and two local government workers (including a policeman), to discuss these deaths. They suspected someone but did not know for certain if he had performed sorcery on the two Wongbe women, nor whether he had acted on his own initiative or at the behest of someone else. They needed to talk to him to try to ascertain the answers to these questions. Talking was the only way to *wanbel*, a Buan man told me, and if they could become *wanbel*, then they would be able to stop further bloodshed. The core question to discover, one man insisted, was whether he did it for himself or for someone else. If he was hired to do the sorcery, then those who hired him were guilty and he was not, because he acted on behalf of others. Additionally, if others had hired him, then they would need to find out what those others wanted, so that they could reconcile with them, become *wanbel*, and cause them to stop the sorcery. In this way, sorcery prompts the individuals involved in the dispute to engage with the *wanbel* process.

For the Sam, one primary reason someone asks an *isong suma* to perform sorcery is because one of the parties with a broken relationship refuses to acknowledge it is *kulik* and even worth trying to resolve. As mentioned above, if something bad happens which does not affect how someone feels in their *pari*, then the event is *samting nating* ("a thing that is not a thing" TP) and does not affect *pari beli*. Sorcery, and the threat of it, brings pressure to bear on those who do not know or who ignore that a *kulik* exists (see Bowden, 1987:193; Lindenbaum, 1979, 1981; Lindenbaum & Zelenietz, 1981; Tonkinson, 1981b:78; Turner, 1991:431). However, sorcery can also bring up

³¹ A Buan village leader told me that the community is afraid of the sorcerers among the Boimbe people. They fear them because the Buan people stopped practicing sorcery due to admonitions from the mission and the Australian kiap (the appointed colonial government patrol officer), but the Boimbe people kept the knowledge of sorcery, and can use it whenever they wish.

further conflict, as the targeted individual's family feels compelled to exact revenge on the sorcerer and/or those who hired him or her. No one with whom I talked seemed to think that sorcery was a preferred option, but rather a weapon of desperation.

Even the possibility that someone might perform sorcery was a powerful incentive to begin the *wanbel* process. During my fieldwork time, clans in Buan and Wongbe were in dispute with a clan in Songum over logging rights. While I summarised this case briefly above, I will describe this case study in relation to the fear and anxiety experienced by people in Buan and Wongbe that since the dispute was not settled, Songum people were going to attack them through sorcery.³² The dispute may have been going on for a while, but it worsened when, sometime in the year prior to my fieldwork, a group of inebriated men from Songum drove up to Buan village to press their claim on the land in question. In the ensuing discussion over reports that the logging company was giving a clan in Buan the royalties, a fight broke out, their car was destroyed, and several of them were badly injured and needed to be hospitalised. The police set the amount of compensation the Buan people should give to those in Songum as a car, two pigs, money, and compensation for the spilled blood. They said that the two parties would then shake hands and be *wanbel*.

Then, although the Buan clan were ready to give compensation to become *wanbel*, the Songum clan withdrew from the *wanbel* process. As I was told in Buan, a message came from Songum that they "had cars, pigs, and money," implying that they did not need what Buan had agreed to give them. The Buan people repeated the Songum people's response to me several times, as if to underscore their refusal to begin the *wanbel* process. Clearly, in saying this, they were stalling becoming *wanbel*. During this period, whenever the Buan *malanggu* involved in the logging dispute walked the hour and a half to the coast, they walked anxiously and in groups.³³ They still needed to go to town to buy items for their families and sell cocoa beans and market produce, but they worried about what Songum people might do to them along the way. "Never walk by yourself," they advised each other, "go in a group, so you can defend each other." Their fears were confirmed when a Buan man returning alone from Madang was attacked by Songum men. They lashed out at him with bush knives, missing his body but cutting open the kerosene container strapped to his back and spilling out his kerosene.

³² I refer to "threat of sorcery" not meaning that someone will always verbalise that they will do or ask someone else to do sorcery on someone. Rather, I mean that the power of sorcery lies not only in the actual illness or death it is perceived to bring about but also the threat that, in the context of a long-standing dispute, members of another group will perform sorcery on them.

³³ Just one of the clans in Buan was targeted. When I talked with Buan men from other clans, they said they were not worried because they were not the target. "We are free," they said, "they will not fight with us."

The only reason for not reconciling, my Buan interlocutors reasoned, was because the Songum men were dissatisfied with the compensation amount set by the police. By delaying the process of becoming *wanbel*, the Songum *malanggu* could wait for more favourable terms. This also made sorcery more likely, because those in Songum were still angry and wanted revenge for their injured men. “Why else would Songum refuse to become *wanbel*?” one man argued. “It is because they want to do something to us, to attack us and get revenge, or to do sorcery.” Another man said, “If we do not shake hands...men and women can die. Someone will buy *isong* and one of us will die. And we will continue to die, and continue to die, die, die.” The Songum ambivalence to becoming *wanbel* was a shrewd negotiation strategy that raised Buan people’s fears of suffering from violence and/or *isong* unless they could repair relationships with those they had harmed in Songum.

Restoring wholeness

Kulik come to an end when the issues between people that gave rise to them are dealt with and the community is restored to wholeness. The power of spirit beings and God to act is limited by whether *kulik* is resolved and people are reconciled.³⁴ Becoming a whole and *wanbel* community is, however, dependent on the individuals involved in the dispute feeling they are “equal” to others (Burridge, 1995 [1960]:17; Errington & Gewertz, 2007:93-94; M. Strathern, 1979:250). As Strathern (1979:250) notes, “The aspect that seems the subject of self-decoration is a Hagen notion of basic worth, an inner capacity for achievement. All individuals share a common potential; it is degrees of success that, in Hagen eyes, differentiate them.” Similarly, Sam define equality not exclusively in material terms, though people do compare what they have with the possessions of others, but also in the sense that each individual has the same freedom to act as everyone else does.

Thus, “equality” refers to the principle that people will ideally be similar, or potentially similar, in terms of their material possessions and agentive capacity. Firstly, magistrates often consider how to compensate people for material loss, such as if a pig goes in to someone’s garden. The magistrate will first listen to the case, but then often tell the owner of the pig to reimburse the gardener for the approximate value of the produce that was eaten. If the pig goes and forages three times, the garden owner can kill the pig but not keep the meat. In this way, the magistrate tries to keep the amount that each side loses roughly the same. One magistrate told me that his goal was to render a decision that was “fair” (using the English word) for both parties, so that eventually they could become *wanbel* and not harbour ill-will toward the other side.

³⁴ Chapter Four discusses the role of spirit beings in making *wanbel* efficacious.

The second aspect of “equality” is that the parties feel the same freedom to act in a way that seems best to them. In *wanbel* exchanges, for example, people exchange roughly similar amounts to each other, and to seal their *wanbel*, they each chew betelnut, and cook and eat the food they were given. If one *malanggu* does not reciprocate with food and betelnut, then the scale has tipped to disadvantage the more generous exchange partners. As my Buan neighbour told me during a *gai* ceremony, “If they eat pig, I too must eat pig. If they chew betelnut, I too must chew betelnut. It must be fair.” Bride wealth payment is seen in terms of maintaining equivalence also, since the gifts of food, money and other items from the groom’s family to the bride’s is said to *baim susu* (“buy the milk” TP) of the bride in raising children for the groom’s *malanggu*. Additionally, since the bride herself might feel anxious or out of place in her new *malanggu* (since the bride goes to live with the groom’s family), her brothers give her some items too (bowls, a knife, a mattress, and so on), so that she feels like she is not totally bereft — she has some things of her own to offer the new *malanggu*.

As these examples illustrate, the Sam people esteem equivalence and portray it as being a good state between people. Being “equal,” neither inferior nor superior to someone else, is an integral component of Sam morality. As Errington and Gewertz assert about many places in Papua New Guinea,

In such a sociality, morality or amorality could be measured by one’s willingness to recognize or repudiate another as worthy — as efficacious — players in the same game. Such recognition or repudiation was, in essence, an affirmation or a denial of agency — indeed, of the capacity to effect history. (Errington & Gewertz, 2007:93-94)

Moral equivalence is the way people feel when they, along with everyone else in the community, are equally supporting, helping, and valuing and being valued in the community. In valuing their *malanggu* and village, they show it by their participation in its exchanges, ceremonies, and activities; that they too, as Errington and Gewertz say, have “the capacity to effect history” (Errington & Gewertz, 2007:93).

Therefore, people often create *kulik* because they feel unequal compared to someone else, either materially or in capacity to act as they wish, and this perceived inequality inhibits people from being *wanbel* (Burridge, 1995 [1960]:17; Errington & Gewertz, 2007:93; Smith, 1994:66-67). Living in Tangu, situated on Madang’s North Coast, Burridge asserts,

Amity is itself most significantly manifested in the idea of equivalence: in the idea that individuals are in a state of moral equality, one human being, as a whole, being neither morally worse nor morally better than another. Amity is a function of equivalence: through equivalence the most perfect kind of amity may be found. In action, equivalence, and therefore amity, finds

primary expression in formal exchanges of foodstuffs, whether they are between individuals, or groups of households. (Burridge, 1995 [1960]:17)

Likewise for the Sam, when they feel equivalent and on a similar level with others, they are able to be *wanbel*. When people feel comfortable with each other, they demonstrate this by telling jokes and laughing together, relating in an easy-going and friendly manner. They are able to associate together in this personable and relaxed style because they feel equal to the others with whom they are talking. Showing camaraderie in this way not only shows that a person is comfortable with others, but also indicates to the group that they are *wanbel*.

Interplay of kulik and wanbel

Kulik and *wanbel* are integrally related; out of *kulik*, *wanbel* will emerge, only to be broken with another *kulik*. Though *kulik* will always arise, Sam people state that *wanbel* is the essential nature of the wider Sam community. Two Sam myths illustrate that *wanbel* and *kulik* were a part of daily life from when they were created. The first is the story of how their ancestors originated, which shows that all Sam people have a common origin, leading them to refer to each other as being *ker kujex* (“one blood”).³⁵ They tell about the time, long ago, when *was xobol* (“earliest ancestors,” literally “breadfruit uncle/aunt”) were created (by God, in some accounts), emerging from a hole in the ground at a place called Jeleng. These ancestors begat *was xalal* (“recent ancestors,” literally “mushroom uncle/aunt”) who looked like people. Although humans cannot see them, they are still a part of the Sam community now.

While being of “one blood,” the second myth narrates that disputes and division are also part of communal life in the time of the ancestors. The *Wol Urum Ido Atusam* (“The Story of the Big Leaf House”) tells how the Sam people became divided when they tried to build a house made from large leaves, in a style not used today called *wol urum*. One ancestor was perched on top of the house tying on the leaves, and others were standing on the ground, handing him supplies of leaves and *kanda* (“vine rope” TP) to cover the roof. He asked for something he needed to do his work, and at that time, suddenly for a reason that is unexplained, the ones on the ground could not understand him. They called up in puzzlement, and he too could not understand them. Thinking they were intentionally disrupting the work, he jumped down and began to berate them. In the confusion, tempers rose and they began to fight. In the ensuing conflict, one man on the ground

³⁵ Both men and women who die are first *unun* (“reflection/spirit”), who stay near the village until after the funeral and burial. During the time between death and burial, people are afraid that the *unun* will get angry, either because of how they died or the ceremony the family conducted with their physical body. After burial, both men and women become ancestors and live with the community, though they are invisible. But gender is not explicitly mentioned when people talk about spirits.

was killed, and everyone ran away into the trees and bushes to hide in fear. Their exodus led to the propagation of the many different people all over the world.

While the first story upholds the notion that the Sam are one people, the second anchors their disputes in their ancestral history as well, creating a tension between *wanbel* and conflict that runs throughout daily life. Although people in Buan talk about their *wanbel* as a community ideal and exhort each other to act for the good of the community, they also acknowledge that people sometimes pursue their own desires without considering how it impacts others in their community. Ultimately though, interviewees averred that the only way of responding to *kulik* was to follow the *wanbel* process; as people insisted in interviews when I asked how to respond to conflict: “whatever the problem, *wanbel* is the answer.”

Besides the myths which point to the interrelationship between *wanbel* and *kulik*, the Sam people also refer to it in two ways. First, their underlying unity is often appealed to in times of dispute, when people say, “You are brothers who shared one cooking fire. You must be *wanbel*.” The message that they did not originate as enemies, but as close and intimate family urges them to return to their original and primary state of unity. Second, as mentioned above, the word they use to refer to the “breaking” of *wanbel* is *obrox*. When *wanbel* is *obrox*, the essential nature of the community as united has been split. The Sam link *kulik* and *wanbel* in a constant cycle: their essential unitary nature as one community, which they refer to as *ker kujex* (“one blood”), is ruptured by *kulik*. *Kulik* must be addressed so that the community can become *ker kujex* again.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have described the impact of *kulik* in making clear that there is a breach in *wanbel* of the *malanggu* and/or village, which is the first step of the *wanbel* process: acknowledging involvement in the dispute. *Kulik* is a concrete sign that some members within the community are not *pari beli*. *Kulik* surfaces because one or more people are angry with someone else, and when it happens, it causes the one(s) with whom they disagree to understand that they need to address the breach in relationship. In this chapter, Roger’s mysterious illness provides a framework to explore how *kulik* arise, what causes them, and how people begin to deal with them. As Roger’s illness shows, either people or spirits can cause *kulik*, through various mechanisms such as physical violence and robbery, or, more devastatingly, the harm caused by someone choosing not to reveal their lack of *wanbel*, and sorcery. Therefore, finding the *kulu* (“source, foundation, essence”) of *kulik* is crucial to discerning the origin and initiator of *kulik*, which will point the way to resolving it and becoming reconciled.

While villagers help each other complete large tasks like building houses or planting taro gardens, they help each other with *kulik* as well. *Kulik* affect the *malanggu* as well as the individual, causing misfortune, conflict, and devastation within the community, not just for those individuals implicated in the issue (see also Smith, 1994:54-69). When *miyang gamba* (“ground illness”) takes place, the *malanggu* and/or village assembles, theorises about what could be causing the misfortune, and searches for its cause. This process of discovery encompasses testimony, dreams, omens, and negative events. The resulting ideas are then evaluated, using standards oriented around the concept of *wanbel*. Realising there is a burden is the first step in becoming *wanbel*, because people learn, as they discuss and interact together, who feels out of balance (not equivalent) with another person. Once the community establishes which relationships need to be mended, those people can begin to interact and relay their grievances and frustrations.

The entire community is included in resolving *kulik* because it affects the “wholeness” of the community. Villagers struggle with the constant recurrence of *kulik*, but even as they acknowledge *kulik* happen and work to alleviate its effect through becoming *wanbel*, they acknowledge their essential and primary nature as *ker kujex* (“one blood”). The understanding that *wanbel* restores them to a previous state of unity which protects and benefits them, motivates them to find out why bad things happen to them, and to seek *wanbel* even when conflicts are difficult. The next chapter explores the Sam notions of personhood and opacity, which influence the ways in which the Sam reveal their thoughts and feelings to move further towards becoming *wanbel*.

Chapter 4: Personhood and opacity: Revealing thoughts and feelings

As described in the last chapter, the Sam notion of *wanbel* plays a role in discussing difficult issues and reconciling disputants. But becoming *wanbel* also depends on each person choosing to be *wanbel* by sharing what they are thinking and feeling, so that the group can talk about and resolve the concerns of the people involved in the dispute, and, after discussing and negotiating compensation, realise when everyone is genuinely *wanbel*.

In this chapter, I explore the way in which communal *wanbel* emerges as people deliberately choose to reveal their inner thoughts and feelings in *wanbel* meetings. Specifically, they share their inner thoughts and feelings with others, and emphasise that other people must express theirs as well. In addition, I explore how and why reconciliation hinges upon people revealing their feelings and listening to others. In the chapter I use the following case study of two sorcery ceremonies held in Buan village as they illustrate what the Sam notion of *pari* (“insides, feelings, dispositions”) is, who in the community has *pari* (including spirit beings), and why choosing to reveal *pari* is vital to resolving disputes and becoming reconciled.

Two sorcery ceremonies

One morning in 2012, one of my Buan friends knocked on my door and invited me to a ceremony to be held that afternoon near the cliff. He explained that the upcoming ceremony was historic — it provided the resolution to a disagreement between two *malanggu* (“family/clan”) over a person’s clan membership that had lasted for 12 years. Because of a sorcery event, called *brukim selem* (“break coconut”), performed in early 2000, several Gadaibi people had died from sorcery and gardens were not growing well. In this event, a village leader knowledgeable in sorcery spilled coconut water on the ground and asked the spirit beings to reveal the answer to a question which the Bang and Gadaibi leaders had been grappling, namely, which *malanggu* a certain man belonged to.³⁶

The dispute began when a man, who until then had identified as being a member of the Bang *malanggu*, claimed he was really a member of the Gadaibi *malanggu*. Gadaibi leaders refuted this claim, but when the man insisted they could not reconcile their differences. It is common for people

³⁶ In my description below, I refer to the earlier event as the coconut ceremony. The ceremony in the present was designed to counter its effects through a ritual involving pouring pig blood on the ground; I call it the pig ceremony.

to claim ties to two or more *malanggu*: the Sam villagers believe that one's *malanggu* is influenced by several factors including the clan affiliation of one's father or mother, being adopted or cared for by another *malanggu*, or living for an extended period with another *malanggu* different from their birth *malanggu*. These alternative ways of determining kinship illustrate what McDougall has identified as a key genealogical indicator — that kinship is based not on “a set of neatly bounded, genealogically defined, tribal groups, but a translocal network of relationships connecting disparate people and places” (McDougall, 2016:21). In this situation, the man in focus had lived in a different village since his birth, and his father and mother came from the Bang and Gadaibi *malanggu* respectively. Thus, he had connections to his father's and mother's *malanggu* and the *malanggu* in which he had been living, and the dispute over which relationship was most significant prevented the Bang and Gadaibi leaders from becoming *wanbel*.

To become reconciled, the Gadaibi and Bang leaders held the coconut ceremony in 2000 to ask the ancestors and spirit beings to reveal to them the man's *malanggu*. They chose to hold the ceremony in Jimpinden, which is a section of Buan separated from the central village area by the Werem River.

When several Buan men started a charismatic church called Revival Centres of Papua New Guinea in the 1990s, the Jimpinden *malanggu* rejected this new variety of Christianity and moved across the Werem River to separate themselves from its influence and have the freedom to relate with their ancestors and other spirit beings as they wished. Reportedly, they still knew how to conduct cargo cult (“*kago kalt*”) rituals; those in Buan village refer to them as *kago kalt lain* (“cargo cult people” TP). *Kago kalt* ceremonies are felt to be efficacious because the members revere and petition a group of spirit beings who figure heavily in *kago kalt* myths from the Madang region: Manup and Kilibob (see further discussion in Chapter One). These brothers are important figures: some think Kilibob is the name for God and Manup is Jesus (Lawrence, 1964; 1988:16-17), but not every Sam person feels this way. Sam leaders of the Revival Centres of Papua New Guinea teach that those who revere and petition Kilibob and Manup act contrary to what the Bible teaches. When these leaders brought this denomination to Buan in 1993, they destroyed *kago kalt* houses and *asa urum* (“ancestral houses”) that the adherents had constructed in the rainforest. Reportedly, the *kago kalt* houses were small houses which contained a chair and table and were built in the rainforest. A container on the table held flowers, and *kago kalt* practitioners used a human skull in their rituals. While I did not hear about recurring *kago kalt* activities in the Sam area during my fieldwork, a group of *kago kalt* adherents reportedly met regularly in Male and Rerau villages in 2010, situated near the Raicoast Highway (Grummitt, 2011). This area is about 15 kilometres from Buan Village. According to an SIL member who lived there, the members were part of a movement

they termed *Kalsa Bilip* (“Culture Belief” (TP), previously called *Dapsau*). *Kalsa Bilip* members held weekly meetings and venerated Kilibob, Manup, and “King Yali,” while they waited for the return of Jesus (Grummitt, 2011; Strelan, 1977:46-47).

Since the Jimpinden *malanggu* regularly related with ancestors and other spirit beings, their leader agreed to conduct the coconut ceremony. The ceremony consisted of splitting a fresh coconut in half, spilling the coconut milk out onto the ground, and conversing with spirits. The leader at Jimpinden asked the spirit beings to cause adverse events to happen to the *malanggu* that had been unjustly excluding the man. He pronounced *saya* (“words or thoughts that have a negative impact”), which would become manifested through failing gardens, sickness, and/or death of people in one of the two *malanggu*. The only way to resolve *saya* is to give a chicken, pig, or cooked food to the one who was injured or negatively impacted in some other way. While extreme, this ceremony was necessary because one of the *malanggu*, though theoretically the man’s closest family, did not know or was unwilling to acknowledge it. The answer would affect which *malanggu* would give him and his descendants increasingly scarce land for a house, gardens, and cash crops.³⁷

Then, during the following twelve years, the village carefully scrutinised what happened to the two *malanggu*. The Gadaibi cocoa trees started bearing dry, shrivelled seed pods, and beetles attacked the stems of their betelnut and coconut trees. Soon after, the adversity spread from vegetation to people. Quite a few Gadaibi people became ill and some died. The man who had convinced the other leaders to hold the coconut ceremony died in 2009, followed by the death of another leader in 2010, and since then, four other Gadaibi adults. In contrast, the Bang people did not experience any deaths. To the Sam, these events showed that the ancestors and spirit beings had unequivocally determined that the man belonged to the Gadaibi *malanggu*.

Now, as my village friend walked me to a group of people near the cliff, he told me they were about to conduct another ceremony, designed to halt the illness and deaths occurring in the Gadaibi *malanggu*. When I arrived, a group of young Gadaibi men had already killed three pigs and were starting to butcher them. The pigs were laid on banana leaves, and three young men were cutting them open with sharp knives, while dogs circled cautiously nearby, and flies buzzed insistently, trying to land on the carcasses. The men cut the pigs into sections, gathered the blood into a small metal pot, and carried the meat to roast over a one-meter high metal rack suspended over a large fire.

³⁷ Land was already precious around Buan, and some people had to walk two to three hours from the village to get to their gardens.



Figure 9: Gadaibi men butchering pigs for the ceremony and meal

Gadaibi women were sitting a few meters away, surrounded by piles of garden food they were peeling and quartering: *sambi* (“yam”), *munggol* (“banana”), *mbolkol* (“sweet potato”), and *anying* (“taro”). After they finished preparing the food, they placed the chunks into metal pots, pushing and wedging them in to fit in as many as possible. Then they pour the water mixed with grated coconut over the vegetables.



Figure 10: Gadaibi women cooking for the *wanbel* meal

Another group of women, from the Bang *malanggu*, sat near them, sewing *xolong* (“woven string bags”). They did not take part in cooking the food, though they did take part in the ceremony and feast, because the Bang clan had correctly claimed that the man did not primarily belong to them.

In these preparations, the Gadaibi people were addressing two issues: stopping the *saya*, and becoming *wanbel* with the other *malanggu* and the person they had excluded from their clan. The *saya* would be ended if the party who was in the wrong gave an animal or cooked food to the others. In this example, they chose to bring an end to the devastation by pouring out the blood of three pigs to the ancestors (mirroring the pouring out of the coconut milk in the coconut ceremony, but with blood) and then giving the pigs to the community to eat together as a *wanbel* meal. The three Gadaibi divisions (Gwajo, Gwanjing, and Bangajax) each donated the pigs. To resolve the second issue, the group of Gadaibi and Bang people needed to discuss the dispute

together, agree on compensation, and state that they were *wanbel*. While the Gadaibi and Bang leaders and new Gadaibi member met earlier in the morning to voice to each other that they were *wanbel*, the rest of the Gadaibi and Bang members met in the afternoon (see the photo below).



Figure 11: The *wanbel* meeting

After they ate the cooked food together, prepared by Gadaibi, the community moved from their *malanggu* gatherings in which they had eaten the meal, and sat together in a large circle. Young men circulated to the men and women sitting on mats around the open space, and handed them betelnut; they, in turn, began to chew betelnut or to roll and light cigarettes. The meeting began as several Gadaibi leaders stood up to speak, acknowledging that Gadaibi people had died, and that, to stop the illness and deaths from continuing, they must become *wanbel*. They mentioned the pact they had made, apologised for making, and said they wanted to be reconciled. Bang leaders also spoke and affirmed their *wanbel*, as well as the man who had been the focus of the dispute. Part of the *wanbel* process is showing that one is *wanbel* through action, and commonly, the action consists of giving something one owns, like animals, money, cooking pots, betelnut, and food. In this *wanbel* meeting, the Garaibi leaders gave him a chicken, said they were sorry for what they had done, and shook his hand, and, in this way, concluded the *wanbel* meeting.

Defining pari

The case study above highlights the integral role that *pari* (“inner nature/feelings”) plays in becoming *wanbel*. Even though the people involved in the dispute had a desire for *wanbel*, this alone was insufficient — their pursuit of *wanbel* was blocked by their inability to reveal their *pari*. It could only be resolved by learning, by the manifestation of *saya*, which *malanggu* should accept the man. Before people can become *wanbel*, they need to recognise their own dispositions and express them to others. The rest of this chapter will outline what *pari* is, the people and beings who have it, and why people must choose to reveal it.

Pari is a person’s emotions, core identity and disposition. Each person’s *pari* is unique and inaccessible to most other beings. Village people say to each other, “*Ino pari ne hajo pari didedide sux*” (“Your *pari* and my *pari* are different/separate.”). Having separate *pari* gives each person the ability to influence the community’s wellbeing, because each person involved in a dispute must reveal it to become *wanbel*. Hence, each person has significance in the collective.

Pari is a bounded space in the body that, like a container, holds and, in a sense, “confines” emotions. Emotions are located in the *pari*, but they should not stay there. That is, the Sam feel a healthy person is one in whom feelings are constantly being felt and then relayed outside of them; the continual process of feeling an emotion and bringing it out of the *pari* to others is natural and healthy. Villagers express this by counselling those who are angry and unable to release the thought, “*ino udud ne hali, udu!*” (“your thought is bad, let it go!”). Someone who is insensitive and unwilling to resolve a *kulik* is said to *udax jal* (“not let it go”).

Thus, a healthy person is one who lets their emotions circulate from within themselves, in their *pari*, to others outside of themselves. A person who is happy relays that feeling to others, and if they are sad, they also show that to others. Sam people feel that they can easily express their positive feelings to others, because that also makes others happy. But while positive emotions can be expressed in positive ways and do not lead to conflict, negative thoughts are more difficult for people to express because they can cause *kulik* (“burdensome problem/issue”) if those to whom the emotion is directed feel *agrag* (“anger, hostility”) and do not try to resolve the source of the other person’s negative emotion.

While emotions must come out of the *pari* so that the person who has them does not suffer, the Sam believe that a person’s emotions are seen to exert a pressure on the “inner walls” of their *pari*. *Pari hali* (“bad insides”) grows over time and can burst out of the *pari* in ways that damage people and objects. In other words, if someone does not express their *pari*, their thoughts and feelings

grow, and, being constrained in the *pari*, increases in “pressure” over time, as one of my Songum friends phrased it (using the English word). If this pressure is not released in a controlled fashion, it will erupt suddenly and uncontrollably later, when people may not be present to stop or limit its effects. Sharing *pari* in a *wanbel* meeting neutralises the pressure in the speaker’s *pari*.

Another harm that comes from not expressing negative emotions arises from the Sam view that frustration and anger can change from not being “circulated.” They are in the *pari*, unable to get out, and they begin to change, to transform into a substance that can harm either the one holding the emotion or the one to whom the emotion is directed. While the Sam people think various negative emotions can transform and have a harmful capacity, the Gapun living in the Sepik region of Papua New Guinea seem to only imbue anger with this potential. Kulik explains,

If anger is not voiced or acted upon, it will, villagers explain, remain in the stomach (the seat of emotions) and ‘rot’ (*sting/pisimb-*). The putrefaction of anger may mobilize the ancestral spirits associated with the aggrieved person, and these may cause harm to whomever provoked anger in that person. Alternatively, rotting anger may ‘give bad thoughts’ to the aggrieved, driving them to seek out the services of a sorcerer, who will be paid to murder the object of the anger” (Kulik, 1992:285).

If someone does not state their *pari*, it may result in harm to the community, and in situations in which individuals are unable or unwilling to reveal their *pari*, the community may resort to asking the spirit beings for their direct, active assistance.

Kulik says the Gapun think emotions are held in the stomach; in contrast, the Sam explicitly locate this area in their *pari*, an inner, formless, and invisible “container” within the body. The Sam often butcher animals, and they can indicate the various internal organs, such as *parik* (“heart”) and *kweb* (“stomach, uterus”). But they do not assign a corresponding organ for *pari*. However, although it is unseen, it has a presence and can be manipulated, such as *pari bulya asix* (“turning one’s insides, repenting”). When one tries to persuade others, they speak and act in ways that will affect a person in their *pari*; specifically, they desire to change the emotions in their listener’s *pari* to *pari beli*.

In contrast to the Sam understanding of *pari*, the Melpa of the Papua New Guinea Highlands view their inner will or consciousness as *noman* (Stewart & Strathern, 2000:46-47, 53-54, 83; 2001b:113-137). *Noman* is unique to people, and is “emblematic of conscious mind, encompassing the phenomenological stimuli that shape the *noman* through experience or ‘being’” (Stewart & Strathern, 2001a:113). While *noman* is inside people, in an undetermined region of the torso (Stewart & Strathern, 2001b:114), they have a visible body part: their skin (A. Strathern, 1975). When someone does something deemed immoral in that society and is discovered, their transgression is observed by others, and is said to be “on the skin” (A. Strathern, 1975:348). As he

notes, “The skin, their outer self, is the immediate point of contact with the physical world outside them and can also conveniently symbolize the point of contact between themselves and the social forces that surround them” (A. Strathern, 1975:348).

While *noman* seems to share some similarities with *pari*, they also seem to have some significant differences. Firstly, the aspect of a person that could indicate “selfhood” appears to differ significantly between the Melpa notion of *noman* (glossed as will or consciousness) and the Sam concept of *pari* (“insides, feelings, dispositions”) (M. Strathern, 1979:250). For the Sam, *pari* does not contain a notion of will or awareness; that component is in one’s *udud* (“thoughts, ideas”), performed by their *gadi* (“head”). Secondly, though the Sam and Melpa both think also that people have an inner core that is by default unknown to others, and that they control how much of it they reveal, the Melpa contrast the inner self with the skin (M. Strathern, 1979:250). For the Sam, the skin is merely the outer, visible part of a person; it carries no sense of being a metaphor for talking about morality or what others know about someone. Thus, the Sam have idioms mentioning skin (*do*), like the pain they feel when they are working hard, *kinggal ne do yalambi* (“this work spears my skin”), and calling a fever *do ngaring* (“skin hot”). The Sam understanding of *pari* does not include a dualistic component in which the skin is the figurative point of contact with others.

Differences between *pari* and how other Melanesians think about their inner self also can be seen in representations of language. While the Sam view of the skin differs from the Melpa understanding, both Sam and Melpa see the inside of a person as the site where they are authentic. Therefore, the Melpa people speak genuinely about what they are thinking in their *noman*, while speech can be insincere, as they say, “in the mouth” (M. Strathern, 1979:250). However, Trobriand Islanders refer to their opaque inner self, consisting of a person’s private thoughts, as *nanola* (Weiner, 1983:693). When people say what they think, that is, from their *nanola*, they are speaking “hard words” as opposed to their everyday polite utterances they use to accommodate each other and live together (Weiner, 1983:693). Lipuma (1998:65) notes that the Maring posit that truth has two sides: the inner one, which is held inside the person, and the outer one, which is made visible through speech and exchange. Through what one says and gives to other people, they are displaying “the surface of an action, its skin, to use the Maring’s own metaphor, characteristically manifests deception, lies, and dissembling” (Lipuma, 1998:65). Their inner thoughts and feelings are opaque to others, and yet, when expressed, have a “power to pull or bend others” (Lipuma, 1998:65). The way the Sam think about *pari*, as the authentic internal core of a person, bears upon how they represent what they are thinking and feeling through what they say or do.

Emotions and thoughts

Pari is central in *wanbel* meetings because revealing it is the first step to becoming *wanbel*. Thoughts (*udud*) are contained in the head (*gadi*), but only become important in terms of being *wanbel* after the various parties have become *pari beli* and *pari kujex*. The *pari* is the component of a person that lets go of hurts and frustrations and decides to reconcile and become united; the *gadi* plays the role of implementing cooperative behaviour. *Pari* is where the significant work of becoming *wanbel* begins. Hence, Sam discussions about becoming *wanbel* involve talking about and harmonising their *pari*. As one man said in Tok Pisin,

Pari kujex is like a feeling inside, this feeling inside must be one. And *udud kujex* is like from everyone's ideas we have to come to one idea. And if we arrive at one idea, and we follow this idea, it will bring about a good thing. Father God will help a good thing to come about.

Both *pari* and *udud* must be reconciled to become *wanbel* and gain the good fortune that comes with it. The reconciliation process first begins in the *pari*; *udud* is used after amity has been created. They do not explicitly mention the process of thinking before they are first *pari beli*. For example, while they have a concept for "thought" (*ud*) and "thinking" (*udud*), they do not often talk about their thoughts in and of themselves. For instance, village people do not say "I think that you should tie that *bom moi* ("sago leaf roofing mat") there," but simply say, "Tie that *bom moi* there." These notions of thought and thinking resemble Lihirian usage, where people do not use words referring to "thought" except to mention remembering or forgetting (Hemer, 2001:93). While *udud* for the Sam people can be used for remembering (*bili ud* "think again") and forgetting (*bili ud kere jal* "not able to think again"), it is also mentioned with activities that they see as requiring careful consideration, such as planning an event or marking answers on a school exam. When someone has a good thought, others may comment "*udud beli*" ("good thought"). Worrying thoughts are called *udud tunggulxo* ("thought blocked"). One of the four Sam definitions of *wanbel*, *udud kujex*, refers to an agreement over the plan of what each person should do after the various parties are reconciled in their *pari*.

A change of *pari*, on the other hand, is a change at a fundamental level of what constitutes a Sam person. For example, one day a young man in Buan killed a poisonous snake and draped it across the trail to the river as if it were alive. A woman and her daughter soon came and they saw the snake. Momentarily stunned ("*pari tunggulxo*"), the woman could not react, but then grabbing her bush knife, she cut the snake's body over and over, while the young man laughed from behind a bush. She was startled; her "*pari* jumped badly." Likewise, if a person wants to say that they are in love with someone, they say *parig alam bisx* ("insides speared/shot"): their inner nature is speared.

Whatever happens in the *pari* has an impact on a person's nature and emotions. While the *pari* contains emotions, the Sam villagers do not have a single word meaning "emotion," but have two ways to refer to how a person is feeling. Firstly, there is a word that can be paired with feeling words to say that someone senses that emotion. They talk about detecting or sensing an emotion with a word, *angi*. This is the same word they use when a guitar player tunes his guitar and listens to the sound to assess whether it is in tune or not. It is also used to talk about listening to the sound of a *barum* ("slit drum"). It has the meaning of "hear," but can also be used when a person is eating to mean "taste," and therefore seems to indicate the act of sensing an external stimuli. *Angi* is paired with an existential verb suffix, so that they "sense," "hear," or "taste" (*angi* + existential verb suffix) an emotion. For example, they sense "anger" (*Adu agrag angi yix*, "He is feeling anger."), "fear" (*Sa xula angi bix*, "I am sensing fear [in me]."), and "disgust" (*Adu ngil angi yix*, "He is tasting vomit."). The feeling is not divorced from the person, but is sensed, felt, and tasted within them. However, they do not use *angi* when they talk about inner states other than emotion, like being hungry, thirsty, and "hungry for meat." These types of inner dispositions are expressed by using the specific verb forms for those states and the existential verb suffix, as when people say "I am hungry (*Sa mam bix.*)," "I am thirsty (*Sa yag xoag bix.*)," or "I am longing to eat meat (*Sa xalas bix.*)." Expressions that incorporate *angi* plus an existential verb suffix refer to a feeling that arises apart from the influence of other people.

The second way the Sam people talk about emotions and thoughts directly mentions *pari* and *udud*, thus reflecting that they originate inside them, in the *pari* or *gadi*. A similar understanding of emotions in terms of one's insides can be found in other places in PNG. Lihirians use a phrase *a ling sa* to indicate "my inside" is involved, such as *a ling sa ngat* ("happiness") (Hemer, 2001:94). However, they can also communicate a set of emotions through the expression "I am" (*Yo sa*), which, Hemer notes (2001:96), is difficult to distinguish semantically from *a ling sa*. The Rauto of New Britain classify emotions as either involving the heart (*momso*) or skin (*tandra*) (Maschio, 1994:53). As Maschio explains (1994:53), idioms that deal with the heart express the individual and strong aspects of people, such as anger and love. By contrast, idioms that deal with the skin are those emotions that involve influence or effects from other people, such as contentment and fear. In Sam, these terms are formed by adding *pari* to an adjective or body part. For example, sadness is *pari xurang* ("worry and feel sad," literally "insides pain"), anger is *pari hali* ("bad insides"), and peace is *pari xosolox* ("calm insides"). Although loneliness is not a familiar emotion, one man said that if he were far away from anyone else, he would say he was *pari xurang*. *Xurang* means physical pain, as in *gadi xurang* ("head pain") and *kweb xurang* ("stomach pain"). Thus, *pari xurang* means that one's *pari*, the invisible locus of emotions, can experience pain.

The table below lists emotions and thoughts composed of *angi* and the existential suffix, and *pari* and *udud* in Sam, along with their approximate gloss:

English	Sam (without <i>pari</i> or <i>udud</i>)	Sam (with <i>pari</i> or <i>udud</i>)
Ambivalence	<i>Iro bix</i> ("tired of something or someone") <i>pari irox angi bix</i> ("feel annoyed, lit. insides tired-of sensation")	<i>pari irox</i> ("annoyance, lit. insides tired of")
Anger	<i>agrag</i> ("anger") <i>agrag tambi</i> ("habitually angry") <i>Adu agrag angi yix.</i> ("He/she was angry.")	<i>pari ngaring</i> ("hot insides") <i>pari xalul</i> ("ruined insides") <i>pari xalul huyis</i> ("give ruined insides") <i>pari hali</i> ("bad insides") <i>pari hali tambi</i> ("habitually bad, greedy")
Become calm		<i>pari kol</i> ("insides go down")
Compassion		<i>pari kundoxu xasi</i> ("compassion")
Desire	<i>waxar</i> ("want, desire, lust for, covet") <i>dodo</i> ("want")	<i>pari miling</i> - "covet, desire for oneself"
Determined		<i>gadi hog</i> ("push my head in") <i>udud ndering</i> ("thinking about one thing for a long time") <i>udud bail</i> ("single-minded, lit. strong thinking")
Disgust	<i>ngil angi bix</i> ("disgust, lit. have a vomit feeling")	
Fear	<i>xula</i> ("afraid") <i>xula angi bix</i> ("have a sensation of fear")	
Greedy, Bad	<i>unyi</i> ("greedy") <i>pinden</i> ("greedy, lit. lean over") <i>hali suma</i> ("bad man")	<i>pari hali</i> ("bad insides") <i>pari hali tambi</i> ("greedy") <i>pari unyi</i> ("want to keep for yourself, lit. insides greedy")
Love, happy	<i>jajaxale</i> ("smile, laugh")	<i>magli beli</i> ("clean, lit. good stomach") <i>parig alam</i> ("fall in love, lit. insides speared") <i>pari beli</i> ("happy, love, lit. good insides") <i>pari beli huyis</i> ("give good insides") <i>Sa pari beli bix.</i> ("I am good insides.") <i>pari beli ayox</i> ("lose joy in, lit. good insides finished") <i>pari gusai suma</i> ("a continuously happy man") <i>udud beli</i> ("good conscience")
Peace	<i>der</i> ("quiet (person), notices things, peaceful") <i>domei</i> ("shy, quiet, embarrassed")	<i>pari xosolox</i> ("calm insides") <i>pari xoiloloilax</i> ("oily insides") <i>pari rru</i> ("cold insides")
Patience	<i>dadanga</i> ("patient perseverance") <i>kwaukwajix</i> ("impatience")	<i>pari arur</i> ("impatience, lit. insides hurried")

Secretive		<i>pari lanja per jal</i> (“hide your thoughts, lit. do not put your insides on your face”)
Serious		<i>pala per</i> (“serious, lit. put/set face”)
Stubborn	<i>asrei</i> (“disobey, reject authority”)	<i>udud bail</i> (“strong thinking, single-minded, inflexible”)
Surprise, sense of shock		<i>pari pudox</i> (“amazed, excited, lit. insides jump”) <i>pari tunggul</i> (“shocked, lit. insides blocked”) <i>udud tunggul</i> (“shocked, lit. thought blocked”)
Unloving		<i>magli bail</i> “strong stomach= hard hearted” <i>pari hu yix jalxam</i> (“unloving, lit. insides not give”)
Worry, concern		<i>pari ga</i> (“worry, lit. insides full”) <i>pari ga per huyis</i> (“give worry”) <i>pari hog</i> (“fill someone with doubt, concern, lit. fill up insides”) <i>pari xurang</i> (“worry and feel sad,” literally “insides pain”) <i>udud hali</i> (“bad conscience”)

Figure 12: Table of Sam emotions

While *pari* relates to a person’s emotions, and *udud* deals with their thoughts, the Sam ascribe a person’s nature and personal qualities to their *pari*. The *pari* is seen to contain an enduring part of the essential and unique aspects of the person. This contrasts with the Baining, who reportedly describe people not in terms of their “personality” but judge them based on their “social, relational, and productive characteristics” (Fajans, 1997:114). In contrast, the Sam, along with people in Lahir, commonly ascribe certain traits to people that are seen to be part of their personality, such as calling someone *pari xosolox suma* (“calm insides man”), or *pari beli suma* (“good insides man”) (Hemer, 2001:99-102). Often my family and I would be playing and sitting outside our house with our neighbours, and someone would comment on my children. They referred to one as *pari xosolox suma*. These characterisations contributed to their village nickname; village friends called the one they referred to as *pari xosolox suma* by the name *wera du* (“baby possum”) because baby possums are white, quiet, and peaceful.

The *pari* plays the crucial role of becoming *wanbel* with others (see Stewart & Strathern, 2001a; A. Strathern, 1981), and this is reflected in the terms for *wanbel* that incorporate *pari*. Three of the terms for *wanbel* in Sam are linked with *pari*: *pari beli* (“good insides”), *pari xosolox* (“calm insides”), and *pari kujex* (“one insides”). The *pari* is in view when a person feels *pari xosolox* within

themselves, then later, when the group is reconciled and is *pari beli*. The lack or presence of *wanbel* is felt as an emotion. One man described the feeling of not being *wanbel* with others,

You can clearly tell if there is *wanbel* (between you and another person). You will feel it in your body. You will try to be friendly with them, but no, they will not be *wanbel* with you. ... You will feel bad inside.

Another man agreed,

If you will never become *wanbel* with the community, they will say you are out of control. They will say you are a rubbish man. They will all look at you. You will feel bad, and you will know they feel you are nothing. They will all join hands, and you will be out. You will worry.

Thus, *wanbel* is both a statement about unity and a corresponding emotion. It is also an indicator and criteria for inclusion and exclusion within the village, as people seek to be *wanbel* in the face of divisive issues. When people have become *wanbel* (in the four different ways: *pari xosolox*, *pari beli*, *pari kujex*, and *udud kujex*) within themselves and with others around them, they experience feelings of belonging, acceptance, and purpose.

Pari is opaque

During fieldwork, I began to realise that though Sam speakers often discuss what other adults are doing, they do not often comment on their disposition – however, they do with children. A child might be called *domei* (“shy, quiet, embarrassed”) when they refuse to shake hands or greet someone, or *unyi suma* (“greedy man”) if they want to dictate what game the group of children will play or if they do not share food. However, while they regularly comment on children, interlocutors repeatedly refused to hazard a guess about how adults felt in certain situations, even in situations where I thought there were clear cues. Sam villagers say, “*Nyi hajo pari xele yax kerejal.*” (“You cannot know my *pari*.”). For instance, one day a man from the village took three pigs across the Kabeneo River to wait for a hired vehicle to come and pick them up. He planned to take the pigs to another village for a bride wealth payment. The day was very hot, and after waiting in the sun all day for the vehicle, which did not come, the pigs died. When a friend told me this story, I commiserated with the man in the story, and then said he must be feeling sorrow over this loss, which prevented him from paying his debt. My friend did not respond, and when I asked him directly how he thought the man was feeling, he said, “Why are you asking me? I don’t know. If you want to find out, go and ask him!”

Far from being a rare or localised phenomenon, opacity has been documented in diverse societies worldwide, including in Nepal (Ortner, 1989), the Philippines (Rosaldo, 1984), and Kenya (Levine, 1984). Anthropologists have explored perceptions of opacity since Mead wrote about its presence

and significance in Samoa (2001 [1928]:123). There is abundant research that confirms that some people believe that their thoughts and feelings are opaque to others (Besnier, 1993b:166-167; Duranti, 1988, 2008, 2015; Gerber, 1985:133; McKellin, 1990:336; Mead, 2001 [1928]:123; Robbins, 2008:408; Robbins & Rumsey, 2008; Rumsey, 2008; B. Schieffelin, 2008:431; Shore, 1982:176; Stasch, 2008). Opacity has also been referred to as the “doctrine of the opacity of other minds,” and as the inability to “read other minds” (Robbins & Rumsey, 2008:408), and is common in Melanesia (Duranti, 2008; Keane, 2008; Robbins, 2008; Robbins & Rumsey, 2008; Rumsey, 2008; B. Schieffelin, 2008; Stasch, 2008). Robbins and Rumsey in their introduction to a 2008 *Anthropological Quarterly* volume devoted to opacity, note,

The opacity doctrine is unusually well developed in many of the cultures of the Pacific, where it is not so much a matter of episodic personal reflection as it is a widely shared and taken-for-granted fact about the world, and one that shapes normative orders and everyday practice. In Pacific societies where the opacity doctrine is present, for example, people are often expected to refrain from speculating (at least publicly) about what others may be thinking, and penalties for gossip about other people's intentions are often very high. (Robbins & Rumsey, 2008:408)

They go on to demonstrate that, while opacity may be prevalent in Melanesia, it is not uniformly expressed (Robbins & Rumsey, 2008:409). Opacity in different societies varies in the sort of topics that people consider opaque, whether people are seen as distinct to a greater or lesser extent, and how speech is used to reduce opacity (Robbins & Rumsey, 2008:409). People hold a spectrum of views on opacity: some people may posit that reading other minds is impossible (as in the Bosavi and Urapmin groups), others think they can know what others are thinking only through their times of confession and tend to learn more about how others are thinking from non-verbal actions instead of what they say (as in the Ku Waru), and still others (for instance, the Korowai) who say that a person cannot “read other minds” but then routinely do so in practice (Robbins & Rumsey, 2008:409). The Ku Waru feel that while it is generally impossible for someone to know what another is thinking, they believe that this principle is suspended in certain types of interaction, such as “...in cases of strong mutual attraction it is said to be possible for each member of a couple to know what is in the other's mind because it is the same as what is in their own” (Rumsey, 2008:464-465). Spontaneous reactions, as people react to the words and actions of others, may help to reveal the role of opacity in daily life, as Duranti notes,

We need to take advantage of the fact that the recording of spontaneous interactions provides us with an ideal opportunity to examine a range of situations in which participants may, without realizing it, make inferences about what others are thinking, feeling, or wishing. (Duranti, 2008:487)

These differences in how people express opacity in everyday life can be clearly seen in interpersonal practices, such as the role of confession in revealing one's inner thoughts (Rumsey, 2008), linguistic

markers and the socialisation of children (B. Schieffelin, 2008), the struggle to adhere to the church practice of confession (Robbins, 2008), and the extent to which statements of opacity are perceived as political (Stasch, 2008). Morality can be linked to opacity as well, for example in groups that discourage or sanction speaking about what others might be thinking (Besnier, 1993b:166-167; Duranti, 1988, 2008; McKellin, 1990:336; Mead, 2001 [1928]:123; Robbins, 2008; Robbins & Rumsey, 2008; Rumsey, 2008; B. Schieffelin, 2008; Stasch, 2008).

For the Sam, opacity is entwined with how people interact. They consider and make decisions about whether and to what extent they keep their *pari* opaque, and yet also reveal their *pari* in relational ways to become *wanbel*. People manage their display of *pari* as they pursue becoming *wanbel*, because the community's *wanbel* depends on the extent to which everyone concerned with the dispute reveals their hostility, conflicting opinions, and disagreements. In turn, their self-revelations become the subject of relational processes of discussion, negotiation, and group reconciliation to become a united body of people.

In everyday life, Sam people value opacity, respecting each other's right and obligation to speak for themselves. They prefer not to guess someone's thoughts and feelings; doing so will likely lead to misunderstanding and offense, because no one can reliably know the thoughts of others. Their perspective is like the Korowai of West Papua. As Stasch explains, "Melanesian sensitivity about not presuming to know others' minds is intertwined with sensitivity about not presuming to impinge on each other's self-determination. Reflexive models of the possibilities and problems of knowing other minds are also models of the political terms of people's coexistence" (Stasch, 2008:443). Robbins avers that, by refusing to make guesses about how others are thinking, they must take time for the other person to share their thoughts before acting. As he phrases it, "Without knowing what others are thinking, one cannot dismiss them in advance by claiming to know what they will do... Each person equally possesses his/her own mind and as such is the origin of his/her own actions" (Robbins, 2012:41).

Thus, opacity, while it could potentially lead to misunderstanding, forms the context within which people participate in *wanbel* negotiations and agreements; it is through momentarily and voluntarily revealing the state of *pari* that they can learn what others are feeling. We see this, for example, in the coconut ceremony from the beginning of the chapter. The Gadaibi and Bang leaders conducted the coconut ceremony because people were unable to express their *pari*. Their request to their ancestors for guidance demonstrates their deep desire to repair their relationships. Similarly, when I attended *wanbel* meetings, I frequently heard the leader ask people to express their *pari*. They often accompanied these exhortations with the Tok Pisin translation of "Do not be

afraid,” because they were obligated to do so to achieve a higher purpose despite the fear of speaking in front of the group about conflict.

Sharing opaque thoughts and feelings is vital so that the *malanggu* can become *wanbel*. Their pre-eminent goal is *wanbel*, the good things and protection it brings to the collective, and thus is deeply a part of their view of community. Although they see many conflicts arise that divide the community, they always affirm that people will eventually become *wanbel*, and expect that *wanbel* meetings will lead to their resolution. Their focus on repairing relationships that have been ruptured partially resembles dividual (relational) personhood, in which people are made up of their relationships with others (Leenhardt, 1979 [1947]; Marriott, 1976; M. Strathern, 1988). Leenhardt describes the relationship between the individuals and the group, “He knows himself only by the relationships he maintains with others. He exists only insofar as he acts his role in the course of his relationships. He is situated only with respect to them” (Leenhardt, 1979 [1947]:153). In Strathern’s words, “They contain a generalized sociality within. Indeed, persons are frequently constructed as the plural and composite site of the relationships that produced them. The singular person can be imagined as a social microcosm” (M. Strathern, 1988:13).

Not unlike dividual frames of action and belief, the Sam people say, “We must be *wanbel*, we do not have another path,” to urge people to choose to reveal their thoughts and begin to negotiate to become *wanbel*. Out of multiple emotions and thoughts, they eventually endorse one idea, which involves a process of relating together and beginning to understand how the other person feels. In this process, disputants begin from a stance of *pari hali* (“bad insides”) toward each other. As they discuss the issue and recognise the *pari* of the other people, they are “getting, taking” (*pesxa*) their *pari*. If someone shows someone else a new perspective, they call it “getting/taking a thought” (*udud pesxa*). In return, as they speak about their emotions and experiences, they “give” their *pari* to other people. People can irritate others by *pari xalul huyis* (“give ruined insides”), or show love for them by *pari beli huyis* (“give good insides”). Eventually, they move toward feeling *pari beli* toward each other. They then affirm that they have one insides (*pari kujex*), and after sharing and discussing their various ideas (*udud lilxilxo*), they agree on *udud kujex* (“one thought”). At that point, they are both feeling and thinking as one. The term *wanbel* in Tok Pisin is a general term for harmony, but the Sam vernacular terms bring out the various aspects of the *wanbel* process.

However, the Sam view of *wanbel* and conflict also contains elements of individuality, as seen in the need for individuals involved in the *wanbel* process to each “give their *pari*.” That is, having an opaque *pari* requires that the individuals involved in the *wanbel* process act to reveal it. Not acting

is unthinkable, because *wanbel* must come about, and by acting to become *wanbel*, they affirm their unity. Sam villagers feel that individuals have the right, means, and obligation to say what they are thinking and feeling. Just as someone acts on their own and creates the conflict, the people involved must choose to act in a way that allows the group to reconcile. In LiPuma's words about the Maring of the Papua New Guinea Highlands, "...it is not only that the person comes into being in the context of relationships: to some degree agents always act as their own cause because they always have the option of doing so or not" (Lipuma, 1998:67). In this way, the admonitions of the leader to talk about their thoughts and feelings provides a way to ensure that all the negative feelings and frustrations come out into a public space, where the group can consider and deal with them. Their opacity is the basis for their individuality, while it is also the basis for coming together and being *wanbel*. The Sam solution to intergroup conflict is to work through the issue together, each person overcoming their reluctance to speak (and revealing more of their *pari*) and becoming *wanbel*. At the same time, the fact that they depend on revealing *pari* as the only way to be *wanbel* and give significant time and significance to being *wanbel* in *pari*, indicates the strong relational bond that exists among the Sam.

For the Sam, opacity sheds light on a long-standing debate regarding personhood in Melanesia, encapsulated in the question of how Melanesians think about their relationships with others in their community. The Sam people do not fit into the dividual or individual dichotomy. They feel the need to reveal their *pari*, and exhort others to do so as well, in order to facilitate their deep desire to become *wanbel* to ensure the community is prosperous and safe. Through the *wanbel* process they manage this tension between acting as wholly individual or dividual/relational by weaving them together in the *wanbel* process. The role of the individual is seen to be bound up in this communal process, and the individual and community are tightly linked. When individuals attempt to step out of this framework, such as when a successful businessman might feel he does not want to satisfy the demands of his family in the village to be *wanbel* or a father expels his son from the village, they create a *kulik* ("burdensome problem/issue"), which the community must eventually resolve through following the *wanbel* process. In *wanbel* meetings, participants navigate how they will choose to relate with other people, and whether and how they will express their *pari* amid pressures to interact with their *malanggu*.

Other Melanesian research reflects that people in other communities also act both communally and individually. As Robbins and LiPuma note, the way people relate with each other and express their relationality may be affected by the ideas they hold dear, such as Christianity and modernity (LiPuma, 2000:130-132; Robbins, 2004a:293-294). Strathern, though often quoted for her

statement that Melanesians “contain a generalised sociality within,” also avers that they are not exclusively dividual or individual (M. Strathern, 1988:13). As Hemer argues,

When closely read, Strathern’s analysis does allow space for non-relational aspects of Melanesian personhood. She argues that ‘Melanesian persons are as dividually as they are individually conceived’ (ibid.:13, added emphasis), indicating that Melanesians still conceive of persons individually at least partially. Persons are products of relations and so are internally differentiated, but this differentiation is eliminated to produce the ‘unitary individual’ (ibid.:14). ...That Melanesians can act as their own cause suggests possibilities for selfishness and individualism that are not elaborated in the rest of Strathern’s text. (Hemer, 2013:88)

In addition, some have argued that societies exhibit elements of both, and that personhood is not easily separated into types. As Schram (2015:318) notes, “we need to step away from thinking about individual and dividual persons as each exclusively associated with a certain type of social system and cultural ethos.” Macintyre writes that a view of societies that are wholly cohesive, whose people are composed of aspects of each other (as the idea of partibility suggests), is

an essentially romantic vision of Massim social worlds. This view emphasises solidarity, cohesion and benign social relations. It represents introduced change as alien and misunderstood. It minimises disruptive forces and, insofar as it engages with the issues of substitution or incorporation of new objects, new exchange media or new beliefs, sees these as accretions or replacements within a homeostatic system. (Macintyre, 1995:30)

In this passage, Macintyre argues that people, at least sometimes, act as individuals and not as a cohesive, united whole, and thus they come into conflict. The existence of conflict in society, in that it ruptures relationships and is an expression of disunity, indicates the presence of an individual aspect in their concept of personhood.

In the Sam view, those with *pari* are both “dividually and individually constituted” (M. Strathern, 1988:13), since they can choose whether and to what extent they want to be part of the community, and they also are embedded in a framework of action that includes other people, in which their actions impinge and influence others. Similarly, Wiessner (2012:76) notes that “Enga society has always hosted both individualistic tendencies as well as a commitment to sacrifice for the clan or sub-clan. When clan unity breaks down, the individualistic tendencies remain and appear more prominent.”

By seeking *wanbel*, the Sam villagers acknowledge that people are always “individual,” but can choose how much they relate with others. They try to bring about reconciliation within and across what they see as different social networks, from the level of *malanggu*, up to the village (groups of *malanggu*), and up to groups of villages comprised of people who mainly speak the same language. Outside of this network, people also cultivate relationships with those from different language groups they might meet in Madang or at high school. The way they form relationships with these

different groups is the same: by becoming *wanbel*. We see this differentiation of networks in the vernacular words translated as *wanbel*. *Pari xosolox* takes place within a person (“calm insides”), and the other terms apply to relationships between two or more people: *pari beli* (“good insides”), *pari kujex* (“one insides”), and *udud kujex* (“one thought”). That is, one feels *wanbel* as an inner feeling within themselves, between other people as love and camaraderie, as brotherhood or togetherness, and as united around a specific purpose. Additionally, several interviewees mentioned that being *wanbel* starts first inside one person. As they explained, a person is *wanbel* within themselves first, which they feel as peacefulness and certainty that what they plan to do next will succeed. Then that person becomes *wanbel* with those in their household, then the household becomes *wanbel* with other households in their *malunggu*, and so on, spreading outward to their village, language, province, nation, and world. In this sense, they see *wanbel* as potentially opening opportunities to become reconciled with people outside of their *malunggu*, among progressively more distant social networks (see Shaw, 2001:178). They feel that the good relationships spread from the most intimate ones out to the more distant ones.

Personhood and pari

For the Sam, *pari* is an awareness of community and development of independent thought. People realise that they are part of a community of other people who have *pari* — living and deceased, men and women, and human and spirit being. Interviewees told me that men and women acquire *pari* as their capacity for independent thought develops. They refer to self-awareness as *pong* or *udud pong* (“clarity of thinking, self-awareness and an understanding of others”), and believe it arises around the age of six, though this differs from child to child. *Pong* resembles what Kulick reported among the Gapun of the Sepik, where people demonstrate that they have *save* (“knowledge” TP) by responding to conversation with appropriate remarks of their own. As Kulick says, “This [view] entails the expectation that speech will occur in the presence of an audience of socially competent and potentially responsive listeners, of listeners who themselves have *save* and who can collaboratively participate in the construction of a discourse” (Kulick, 1997 [1992]:190-191).

For the Sam, children have the capacity for *udud pong* when they are older, and their *tingting i bruk pinis* (“their understanding has broken (open)” TP). They think of *pong* as clarity in understanding how to relate as mature members of the Sam community. They laugh when they see children younger than five or six display emotions that show they do not have *pong*. They think it is funny because the children are unaware that other people have *pong*, with their own needs, motivations, thoughts, and emotions and cannot control their anger and navigate their emotions as a person in

a community of other people with *pong*. When people obtain *pong*, they moderate their behaviour in view of how their behaviour affects others. One woman said in an interview that she remembered that when she was very young and acquired *pong*, she realised she needed to change how she dressed so that she covered her genitals. The Sam people consider mentally ill people not to have *udud pong*, and therefore are not fully persons in that sense (Kulick, 1997 [1992]:191). I observed this in the case of a woman who used to live in the village, who would steal things, speak nonsense, and act irresponsibly. People commented that she did not have *udud pong*. One day, without consulting her, and tired of the burden of taking care of her and her inability to make decisions on her own, her family took her to town and left her there with relatives. Another group of people who were felt to not have *udud pong* are *kas hali suma* (“bad tobacco/marijuana man”). There were reportedly two *kas hali suma* residing in the bushes along the road from Buan to the main road. They had become “confused” due to smoking marijuana, and now lived out in the bush and chased people travelling on their own to or from the village. Like a *nanar suma* (“mentally ill man”), they did not know what they were doing, but they tried to hurt and scare people.

While people have *pari*, other beings also have *pari*, namely spirits. The Sam villagers hold that spirits and ancestors are present with them, and reflect this in their language. They do not have terminology that delineates empirical, non-empirical, supernatural, or religion. Instead, they believe that all beings, visible and invisible, are distinct and coexist in the same realm (see Lawrence, 1973; Lawrence, 1988). If there is a lack of *wanbel*, it affects the wider Sam community, including the ancestors.

The view that ancestral beings play a role among the community of the living is common in Papua New Guinea (Dundon, 2002b; Lawrence, 1973:214-215; Mantovani, 1984, 2009; Smith, 1994:76-79). For example, among the Gogodala, spirit beings called *ugu lopala* appear to living people and interact with them in various ways. *Ugu* “is a spirit or force that underlies the life and capacities of the beings that inhabit this living landscape” (Dundon, 2002b:142). *Ugu lopala* can bring benefit, such as an abundance of fish to those who they know, but danger to those they do not know (Dundon, 2002b:142-143). One of the many cases Lawrence describes in the Madang area is of Ngaing garden magic, which only a person with special knowledge of the ritual may perform (Lawrence, 1973:214). In the ritual, one builds a stone structure, prepares it and several garden digging sticks with the *Canarium* almond plant, and plants shoots of the crops the family wants to plant, and which were given by the goddess, near to the structure. He invokes a silent spell using the name of the goddess, and then, out loud, asks the ancestors for assistance. The ancestors, who gardened this land previously, are seen to be the real guardians. People may also periodically leave

food for the goddess and ancestors (Lawrence, 1973:214). Smith also refers to the ancestors' intimate involvement in the lives of the inhabitants of Kairuru Island, saying, "The spirits of the dead...are very immediately and significantly present in the daily world of living men and women" (Smith, 1994:76). He records one man's assertion, "Every man has his own God. When I die, I'll be the God for my son. He'll call on me whenever he wants to do something. My God is my father" (Smith, 1994:79).

Spirit beings, in addition to being part of the Sam community, have *pari*, that is, they interact with other beings, and most have the capacity for independent thought (the exception is *mundor hali* ("harmful spirit, wind"), who are attracted to negative thoughts toward others, as discussed in Chapter Three). But for the Sam, only God and the ancestors can know what living people are thinking and feeling. The notion that spirit beings have superior knowledge and power is not a new concept in Melanesia (Gesch, 2015; Lawrence, 1964, 1987; Lawrence & Meggitt, 1972; Lohmann, 2003a, 2003b, 2003c, 2003d, 2003e; 2005:190-191; Sillitoe, 1987; Stephen, 1979:5-9; 1987; A. Strathern & Stewart, 2010 [1999]:55-68, 76-78). Sillitoe documents the process called *komay* which the Wola follow in order to decide who is a fault for someone's death by sorcery (Sillitoe, 1987). As he relates, in *komay*, the Wola enter into a complex ceremony in which the two sides, the accused and the accusers, infect pig meat with the essence of their dead ancestors, which is then cooked and eaten by the main adversaries. The ancestors, who have tremendous power, will kill the one who is lying and their family, and thus reveal who was telling the truth (Sillitoe, 1987:140-141). Dreams are also pathways for the spirits to communicate to humans (Eves, 2011; Lawrence, 1987; Lohmann, 2000, 2003c, 2004, 2003f; Stephen, 1979; Tonkinson, 2003). Lohmann asserts that, like the Tangu (Burrige, 1995 [1960]:252), dreams are an important way that the deceased Asabano ancestors communicate their superior knowledge to the living (Lohmann, 2000; 2005:191; 2010, 2003f). For the Asabano, dreams depict people and places that, because they can be seen (in the dream), are taken to depict real people and places (Lohmann, 2000; 2005:191).

The Sam people do not inquire into the relationship between *Xotei* ("God") and other spirit beings. That is, they do not question or talk about whether one type of being is pre-eminent over other types of beings — they believe that *wanbel* is efficacious for people regardless of which spirit being they relate with. Since *wanbel* is the criteria that has efficacy, people will see good benefits if they are *wanbel* in a variety of contexts and with different spirit beings. For instance, they call the spirit being who created the world *Xotei*. *Xotei* is also the being that Sam Christians say makes *wanbel* efficacious. If they are *pari beli*, God is aware of it and adds His power to their reconciliation, and thus causes good things to happen for the community. Hence, in church services, Christians believe

they must be *wanbel* for God to listen to their prayers, and they attribute the success of *wanbel* to God, as the beginning of many prayers implies, “*Yumi wanbel na beten*” (“Let us be *wanbel* and pray (the Christian term)” TP). As one man told me, “God sees our thoughts and if they are *wanbel*, God will protect us.” The beneficial outcome of being *pari beli* is due to God’s ability to verify that, besides expressing outwardly they are *wanbel*, people are truly *wanbel*.

On the other hand, people who do not believe in God posit that there are other sources that make *wanbel* bring efficacious results, such as a “team spirit” or the ancestors, who affirm the *wanbel* that exists. A group of young soccer players attributed their soccer victories to their “team spirit” (in English). They explained that team spirit meant being *wanbel* with each other that they would win the game and *wanbel* in general with their family and community. In their view, some common hindrances to being *wanbel* were family disputes over whether the player worked hard in the garden to provide for the family, not knowing the rules of the game or not practicing enough,³⁸ or if one of them was *tubel* (“of two minds, doubtful” TP) that they would win. As one man said, “Whichever team holds its *wanbel* will win this game. Their *wanbel* would bring results” (“*Wanbel bilong em bai karim kaikai.*” TP). If they won, it proved their *wanbel* was stronger and incorporated more people than the *wanbel* of the other team. Their *wanbel*, more than the being who affirms them, makes their *wanbel* efficacious.

Thirdly, interviewees noted that non-Christians also benefit from being *wanbel* because their ancestors are aware of their *pari* and they assist people in their *malanggu* if they are *wanbel*. For example, they explained that when non-Christians cross the river, they first affirm their *wanbel* with each other and that they will cross without mishap. If they are *wanbel* in their *pari*, their statement will come true; but “if they are not really *pari beli*,” one man said, “the water will take them, and they will *bagarap*” (“be destroyed” TP). The coconut ceremony introducing this chapter also incorporated the ancestors into the *wanbel* process. It was through their intervention in human affairs that people were able to pinpoint which *malanggu* the man in question belonged to. I discussed a third example of ancestral influence in Roger’s case study in Chapter Three, in which a village leader explicitly elevated *wanbel* over the ability of God to make Roger healthy, insisting that, “What man did is stronger than prayer to God. You can *lotu* (“conduct church services, worship God” TP) but it will not help. She [Roger’s wife] has brought a “curse” (in English) on Roger and the church cannot fix it.” He claimed that their ancestors, along with other spirit beings, were the power

³⁸ If someone made a technical mistake, then *wanbel* would not counteract that mistake and help them win. As one man told me, “...both [teams] form *wanbel*, okay, and underlying *wanbel*, they must follow the law of soccer. If one messes up the law of soccer a little bit, he will lose.”

behind *wanbel*, and when Sam Christians followed the *wanbel* process, they pleased the ancestors who then allowed their *wanbel* to bring good results.

The Sam villagers identify three types of ancestors, created at different times: *was xobol* was *xobol* ("earliest ancestors," literally "breadfruit uncle/aunt") came up out of the ground first, followed by their descendants, *was xalal* ("recent ancestors," literally "mushroom uncle/aunt"), who they begat the ancestors of the previous several generations. They used to have a house called *asa urum* ("ancestor house"), where the men would gather under one man, called *asa gadi* ("ancestor head") and hold important meetings. The ancestors, *was xobol*, *was xalal*, *xobol* ("father and mother's father"), and *was* ("grandfather"), are still present in the area as spirit beings, and it is from them that the sub-divisions of the clans derive their names. For example, Gadaibi is the name of the *was xobol* which begat the Gadaibi people. The *was xobol* are guardians over the land and sections of river that a certain *malanggu* uses, and they are protectors of the land and water, and their *malanggu*. They wish good for their *malanggu*, and if someone does not consult the *malanggu* before entering that land, the *was xobol* may make the person ill. They will remain sick until they die, unless that clan's leader comes and asks the *was xobol* to relent and allow them to recover. Another spirit being, not an ancestor but still linked to a *malanggu*, is the *yag sarara* ("water spirit"), which resides in the rivers. For example, if a visitor to the Sam area bathes in the Werem River, the small river that runs alongside Buan, they may become covered in a rash, brought on by the spirit of that section of the river. Hence, when my wife asked some of her village friends about the cause of a rash that spread over the body of one of my sons, they blamed a *yag sarara*. We had recently moved downstream from our usual bathing spot, and they suggested that because we were bathing in a new spot in the river, the *yag sarara* of that section of the river did not know us and had made my boy ill. It would go away, they said, if the clan members told the *yag sarara* that he was a friend, and to take away his rash for a similar discussion, see Dundon (2002b:142-143).

In becoming and continuing to be *wanbel*, the ancestors verify whether people are sincerely *wanbel*, and cause the results of *wanbel*, or the lack of it, to occur. They acquire this enhanced ability to know others' inner thoughts and feelings when they die and transition from bodily to spirit form. When people die, the Sam people think they become ancestors, though if they die violently, first they become *suma mexo ne unun* ("dead man's reflection/spirit"). The word *unun* also refers to a mirror's reflection. The *suma mexo ne unun* is not the person's resurrected body, but a manifestation of that person. The *suma mexo ne unun* appears to those who were responsible for its death, and it seeks revenge. It appears to living people as a light, near the spot where it was

killed, and it disappears if people try to surround it and look at it. The *suma mexo ne unun* becomes an ancestor when it is avenged.

Through burial practices that this generation's grandfathers conducted, the Sam people carried on a relationship with the deceased. Several men I talked with explained that the bones of their dead ancestors were venerated for their power in helping them hunt wild animals and choose a new garden plot. To obtain their bones, the family would lay the body in a basket, tie it to a stick, and then prop it up vertically against a tree near their house. Then they would make a hole in the basket and dig a hole underneath. When the body rotted, the juices would drip down and into the ground. When the body started to stink, they would petition their dead relative to not smell bad, reportedly saying something like, "Father (or mother, sister, or brother), do not smell or hurt us. We are going to eat. Stay with us, but do not hurt us." The *suma unun* or *anggli unun* ("man's spirit or woman's spirit") would take away the reek of the rotting corpse. When the person's bones were all that was left, they would collect them and put them in an *xolong* ("woven string bag"). They kept the bones in their house, and spoke to them when they needed their help, for example, to have a successful hunt, or to plant a bountiful garden. One informant, asserting that they trusted those bones to give them what they requested, said the bones were like their "god." However, when the missionaries arrived they introduced several changes. One was to bury their dead people in the ground in wooden coffins (see also Lohmann, 2005), and another was to petition God for help, not the ancestor's bones. One Songum man I interviewed complained that his group adopted what the church suggested and did not experience the same level of benefit. "Now we are suffering," he said angrily.

The ancestors can communicate their *pari* with their living descendants. One way, mentioned above with the Asabano and Tangu, is through dreams. A Buan man I will call Erik was about 65 years old when I first met him and had elephantiasis in his legs. However, when he was younger, he was a powerful *isong suma* ("sorcerer") and could "make a house walk like a person." He was believed to be a rival of Yali, the *kago kalt* leader in Madang after WWII (Lawrence, 1964). He lost his power, though, when he had a fight with Yali, who "put blood on his heart" and took the power out of him. However, the way Erik obtained his power initially was through a dream. As I was told, the night his mother died, her *unun* went on top of his *haus boi* ("boys' house" TP), a house that unmarried men build and live in with their friends, and he dreamt about her. In his dream, she told him to not go to the funeral, but to the cemetery, after she was buried. He obeyed, and in his dream, around midnight, he approached the cemetery and saw a fence around her grave and her burial hole uncovered, with a man standing there on guard. His dead mother emerged from the hole, stood at

the gate, and told him to return tomorrow at the same time. At that time, if he passed certain tests, she would give him gold, money, and power. He returned the next night, in his dream, and the *anjurum* ("spirit") tested his mental and physical strength. He won, because he had *wanpela tingting* ("one mind/thought, single-minded" TP), but if he had had *tupela tingting* ("of two minds, undecided" TP), the *anjurum* would have killed him. This man was convinced his dream depicted a real place and set of trials that he conquered through being *wanpela tingting*.

Spirit beings can also communicate their *pari* with the living through signs, which the observant can decipher. In the example of my mobile phone breaking (in Chapter Three), my friend interpreted that to mean that the ancestors were warning me of impending misfortune. In this view, divination is merely an aspect of communicating with the community, which includes living humans as well as spirit beings. In all those ways the Sam people look for and interpret the signs they observe in what happens to them as clues to what the ancestors are trying to tell them.

While God and the Sam ancestors can observe people's *pari*, there are three other spirit beings that cannot. They live in the bush, and they are helpful, mischievous, or harmful. Firstly, the helpful spirit being is a small, black bird, called *sindin*. Its role is to send messages to living people. This bird speaks Sam and will come to someone and tell them vital news they could not learn any other way, such as if there is danger on the trail ahead, or a relative has come to the village and so the traveller should return home. When I asked if it would also speak to me, my companions assured me it could, when I learned Sam well enough to understand it.

The second are a mischievous spirits being who look like small, hairy people that live in trees called *ngodo* ("bush spirit"). They hide from people and watch them as they go to their gardens. When the gardeners move away from their *xolong* ("woven string bag") or ripe fruit, *ngodo* may sneak up and take something. They are pests but are not malicious.

The third type of spirit that cannot know what the living people think and feel are the harmful and feared *anjurum* ("spirit"). *Anjurum* operate either from their own desire or by the urging of sorcerers through *isong* ("sorcery").³⁹ Numerous ancestral stories relate how *anjurum* appear to people to kill them. For example, a Buan man told me that a Buan villager took his brother with him to spear prawns at night. As they were walking, his brother disappeared and an *anjurum* looking like him took his place. They had a torch with them, and began walking through the river, looking

³⁹ Many stories refer to interactions between this class of spirit and living people. They often involve spirits who change shape to appear human, have a lust for flesh from animals and humans, and sometimes demonstrate that the living can outwit the spirits.

down in the water with the torch, spearing prawns as they went. The brother in front speared them and passed them to his brother behind him, who was really an *anjurum* in disguise, ate the prawns. Eventually, the brother in front realised that the being with him was a spirit and tricked it into climbing a nearby tree. The brother ran back to the village, brought the other men from the village, and burned down the tree. In the process, the *anjurum* vanished.

The *anjurum* roam at night, and may be harnessed and directed to kill others using *isong* (“sorcery”) by *isong suma* (“sorcery men”). But they may also kill anyone they find away from the village at night and alone. Some of these can appear like living people. Called *dox onjumi* (“spirit that masquerades as a human being to deceive others”), they lure their victims away from the village, where they cannot call for help, and kill them. Humans can see *anjurum*. One day, my two sons and their village friends started running down to the Kabeneo River to swim. My boys started down the usual path they took, but the other boys stopped them, and told them, “Do not go that way. There are *anjurum* on that trail.” They returned and went down a different path. Another time, the boys were already down at the river, when Kevin, who was swimming, saw something in the water going past him. When he stuck up his head, he spotted an arm sticking straight up out of the water. He screamed to the other boys, and everyone raced out of the river, gathered up their belongings, and ran back to Buan.

Choosing to reveal pari

While God and the ancestors can see into the *pari* of others, the only way that humans can overcome their inability to know what others feel about an issue is if they reveal it. There has been a great amount of research into why and how Melanesians reveal knowledge (Burrige, 1969; Gibbs, 2016b; Harrison, 1982, 1989; Kulick, 1997 [1992]; Lindstrom, 1984, 1990; Reithofer, 2006; Robbins, 2004a; Rumsey, 2008; Slotta, 2014; Smith, 1994, 2002; A. Strathern, 1981; M. Strathern, 1979). Some may keep some knowledge secret because those that have knowledge the village values are seen as having political power (Lindstrom, 1984; Slotta, 2014). In addition, keepers of special knowledge may transmit it to those they deem capable of using it to assist their community, like male initiates, and keep it from others (Gibbs, 2016b; Harrison, 1982:145; Smith, 1994:83; 2002:113).

Christianity’s practice of confession has become a part of local notions of sharing what a person is thinking. As Burrige notes, confession in church becomes known to others, and those confessing use this time to express their remorseful thoughts and feelings to those they have offended in order to become reconciled (1969:130-131). Others feel that their confessions are only meant for God,

like the Ku Waru Catholic Christians who confessed their sins to a priest who did not speak their language; they said that whether the priest understood their language or not, “the important thing was for the confessant to acknowledge those sins as such, express contrition, and in return to be absolved of them” (Rumsey, 2008:462). Likewise, among the Urapmin, people confess their sins to make themselves fit to be visited by the Holy Spirit in Holy Spirit possession dances (Spirit Disko) (Robbins, 2004a:xix). As Reithofer reports, Honda villagers in the West Mendi region of Papua New Guinea confessed the wrongs they did to each other:

Public confessions and pledges formed the core part of these *Lotu Penans*...In a manner much more direct and open than I had dared, or even wanted, to suggest in the workshop, sins, conflicts, grudges between spouses, parents and children, and individuals, were named, confessed or put aside as a thing of the past. (Reithofer, 2006:325)

In addition, he writes that people met and confessed issues and frustrations with each other before going to fight with another community, believing that “if a serious breach of conduct against a clan brother was not confessed, it was believed to cause many casualties and nasty wounds” (Reithofer, 2006:95, n. 43).

The Sam view of *pari* has many similarities with the notions of knowledge revelation above. Uttering one’s feelings is not a secret form of knowledge, like initiatory secrets, but it is knowledge that people use in strategic ways to influence others (see Chapter Five). It is also not “confession” in the strict sense that it is performed in a church setting, and primarily to God. The Sam villagers reveal what is in their *pari* to beings, both living and unseen, including God. However, their purpose is to interact with those with whom they are opposed. They tell others what is in their *pari* primarily to become *pari beli* (“good insides”).

The Sam belief that *wanbel* leads to benefits while a lack of it brings misfortune resembles the view held by other communities that confession prevents a person’s negative thoughts and/or feelings from making someone ill (Burrige, 1969:127; Reithofer, 2006; Robbins, 2004a:135-136; Rumsey, 2008:460-461). In the Tangu villages, an angry person will cause the person who makes them angry to get sick (Burrige, 1969:127), while among the Ku Waru, anger afflicts the angry person (Rumsey, 2008:460-461). The Gapun people in the Sepik area of Papua New Guinea fear the effects of holding anger inside (Kulick, 1997 [1992]:285). As Kulick (1997 [1992]:285) asserts,

In village discourses on emotion and knowledge, anger in adults is always linked to danger. If anger is not voiced or acted upon, it will, villagers explain, remain in the stomach (the seat of emotions) and “rot” (*sting/pisimb-*). The putrefaction of anger may mobilize the ancestral spirits associated with the aggrieved person, and these may cause harm to whomever provoked anger in that person.

Likewise, among the Melpa, people hold a type of anger inside their *noman* called *popokl*:

Anger of this kind may lead to revengeful action or to sickness; if the second, it is sent by ghostly relatives, who perceive the persons' distress and make them sick to draw the attention of their kinsfolk; or else sickness is a punishment for the person's own wrong doing, similarly effected by the ghosts, who perceive that the person's *noman* has led him or her into mischief. (A. Strathern, 1981:283)

Thus, to neutralise the danger of unexpressed *popokl*, people must reveal it to their fellow clan members.

For the Sam, each person's *pari* can harm the village or help it in the extent to which they are *wanbel* with others, and each person must participate in being *wanbel*. As people told me in interviews, the *pari* is where *pari hali* ("bad insides"), such as frustration, selfishness, and anger, will spark first, before these emotions extend out to break good relationships with others in the community. *Pari hali* ripples out to affect wider and wider circles of relationships.

The *pari* can be dangerous when it contains hostile feelings because first, this invites negative sanctions from God and the ancestors, who try to encourage people to be *pari beli*, and second, because the *pari* itself is unstable, such that suppressed *pari hali* grows inside the person and eventually explodes outward and impacts others. In the first instance, everyone's *pari* must be reconciled for the community to be *wanbel*. God and the ancestors will monitor and punish people if they harbour feelings of anger or selfishness, which works against *wanbel*. Since spirit beings are part of the community, they, along with living people, have their own *pari* which they display, promote to others, and agree with or not. While it was not common to hear people discussing what deceased ancestors thought or felt, one day I heard Buan men discussing a flood that washed away a significant portion of the Anjam cemetery. Anjam is the language spoken by villages north of the Sam area, and the Minjim River erodes the ground on which Lalok Village and the cemetery is situated. During the night, the river flooded and washed out some of the graves in the cemetery. People in their houses nearby reportedly heard the dead protesting, saying things like "See what is happening to us! You must help us! This is a big *kulik* ("burdensome problem/issue") and is not good!" From the perspective of the Buan people I was talking with, the ancestors were upset at how their bones were being treated but did not blame the inhabitants of Lalok. They reasoned that because nature had caused this problem, the living people were not at fault and would not be attacked in some way. However, the living people now had a responsibility to find their bones and resituate them in a respectful way. Hence, the dead ancestors, having *pari* and the ability to sense the *pari* of Lalok people, were able to think about what was happening in the village and that village people did not harbour ill will toward them.

The spirit beings urge individuals within the Sam community to become and remain *wanbel*, and thus experience the subsequent good outcomes, by rewarding or punishing people according to the *wanbel* or lack of it in people's *pari*. The state of a person's *pari*, unknown by the rest of the living people, affects all the living people in the group. Thus, becoming *wanbel* depends on people revealing and harmonising their *pari* (whether expressed or not). The spirit beings and ancestors endorse the community's *wanbel*, or the lack of, and occasionally will act if individuals transgress moral norms (such as trespassing intentionally into another clan's land, or a wife not going to live with her husband's family after marriage). These sorts of behaviour are held to be unwise, and those who practice them will acquire afflictions caused by the spirit beings and ancestors such as social discord, misfortune, illness, sorcery, and eventually, death in the community.

The state of the *pari* is powerful, in that those who have *pari hali* ("bad insides") toward someone and are not *wanbel* with them attract *mundor hali* ("harmful spirit, wind"), which cause illness and death. I was in Buan when a young couple's baby became sick and died. As with Roger's *kulik* in Chapter Three, this propelled the *malanggu* to consider what caused the baby's death. The community met several times, both formally and informally, to try to discern the reason the baby died, and after making and discarding several theories, settled on the one they thought most likely. Their theory was that when the young couple were married, the woman wanted to live near her parents, which is unusual in the Sam area, where newly married couples go to live with the husband's family. She convinced her husband to build a house close to her parents. The woman's mother-in-law was upset at this, and felt angry inside, in her *pari*, which caused *mundor hali* to sicken and then kill the baby. The community saw the mother as responsible for her baby's death because she did not want to live near her mother-in-law.

Conclusion

As the sorcery ceremonies above illustrate, the concept of *pari* means people have an inner awareness of their own desires and feelings, and becoming *wanbel* requires that people reveal their thoughts and emotions. Because the *pari* is opaque to everyone but God and the ancestors, living humans must deliberately choose to express their *pari* and listen to the *pari* of others if they want to become *wanbel* with each other. This highlights the valued contribution of each person to become *wanbel*. People must choose to state their individual, personal, and unique *pari* in intense social interaction so that the community can work through the collection of diverse and divergent desires of everyone in the meeting so that they can all become *wanbel*. In this way, one can see the notion of personhood inherent in ideas of *pari* and *wanbel*, illustrating that, for the Sam, a person is neither individual nor dividual.

However, as seen in the sorcery ceremonies above, not all the members of the Sam community are constrained by the opacity of *pari*; God and the ancestors know what people are thinking and feeling. This allows them to know things that living people do not know. It also allows them to know if people have thoughts leading toward or away from *wanbel*, and they use their special power to reward *pari* of which they approve and punish *pari* they see as destructive to the community. While God and the ancestors have power to affirm or punish what people hold in their *pari*, *pari hali* (“bad insides”) is also inherently dangerous. Whether by inhibiting *wanbel* of the community, or by figuratively “rotting” within the person, *pari* that is not expressed causes harm to people. The notion of *pari* contributes to understandings of Sam sociality both in its role in obliging people to reveal what they are thinking and feeling, and in how they discuss it when they meet and reconcile. However, after they choose to reveal their *pari*, how do the Sam express it in a way that helps them to become *wanbel*? As will emerge in the next two chapters, the Sam people make their *pari* known to others through both speech (Chapter Five) and behaviour (Chapter Six).

Chapter 5: “Saying sorry”: Speech and *wanbel*

Speech is one of two ways Sam people make known their *pari* (“insides, feelings, dispositions”) so that they can become *wanbel*; the other is behaviour, which I will cover in Chapter 6. The opaque *pari*, as discussed in the previous chapter, can only be known by others if the one whose *pari* it is, reveals it to them. People naturally desire to express *pari beli* (“good insides”) because it affirms *wanbel* with others, which the Sam desire for the good things that will result for the overall population. But they also state their *pari hali* (“bad insides”) because holding it inside can be dangerous: both in the effect on the community when pent-up *pari hali* suddenly explodes in violence, and in the devastation that occurs when spirit beings see *pari hali* and bring misfortune on the community. Thus, when people show each other what they are thinking and feeling, they reduce the chance that their *malanggu* and village will experience misfortune.

This chapter explores the role of speech in *wanbel*. Speech is a key way that people with a *kulik* (“burdensome problem/issue”) collectively express their thoughts and feelings, and is integral to *wanbel mul*. Those present in the meeting are expected to voice their frustrations and anger over an issue, discuss it verbally, and express their agreement later to the people who are present in the *mul*. In this chapter, I interrogate the impact and effect of the words people say in the context of becoming *wanbel*. I first introduce a case study of a ceremony held prior to a grade eight examination by the school community, made up of parents, students, teachers, headmaster, and church leaders, and, also, spirit beings. The case study illustrates who came together to participate in this ceremony, strategies speakers used in their verbal statements to bring about *wanbel*, and some reasons why speech is crucial to becoming *wanbel*.

A grade eight exam mul

Near the end of the 2014 school year, parents, students, and teachers held a *wanbel* ceremony to address their anxiety regarding whether their grade eight students would pass the end-of-year national exam and proceed to grade nine. The Wongbe Primary School serves students from Wongbe, Buan, Boimbe, Jilim, and Kwanji Villages. As this was the first eighth grade class to be held at the Wongbe Primary School, it was important to those connected with the school, especially the students and their parents, that the grade eight students do well. As the headmaster encouraged the students during the ceremony, “You must work with God to fight and win a good reputation. You must win it with God's help, for your parents and community.” However, during the school year the students, parents, teachers and headmaster had experienced several disputes that were still

not settled, and these prevented the school community from being *wanbel*. Fearing their lack of *wanbel* would prevent the students from performing well, the Wongbe Primary School Board held a *wanbel mul* before the grade eight students sat for the exam.

I hiked up to the ceremony in Wongbe Village one afternoon in October with several other men from Buan and Bongu village. As we walked up into the school area, singing coming from a metal-roofed shelter near the headmaster's house, where the Lutheran church pastor was leading the *mul*. This *mul* was a church-run activity because the Lutheran church was the body that encompassed those in the other villages that were involved in school activities (except for a few Revival Centres parents and students who did not attend the ceremony).⁴⁰ The Wongbe Lutheran pastor was leading the assembled group in singing Christian songs in Tok Pisin. The corrugated iron roof, held up by thick, yellow bamboo poles, was decorated with palm fronds and flowers. The event was held on a hill overlooking the school yard, pictured below.

⁴⁰ While I lack space to discuss the differences between the various Christian denominations in the Sam area, one prominent difference that is relevant for this case study is that the Lutheran church does not forbid worshipping with those of other denominations, while the Revival Centres church leaders do. This is an example of a situation in which the beliefs of a church contravene a core requirement of *wanbel*: the necessity to meet to resolve conflict and become *wanbel*. As I mentioned in Chapter One, people in the Sam collective are concerned with knowing which church someone attends, and knowing which church is the "right" one. Like their *malanggu*, church membership has become another group that determines who one must be *wanbel* with, and whom they should not agree with, primarily because of doctrinal differences. In this grade eight *mul*, the Revival Centres church pastor exhorted the congregation to not participate in the meeting because the Lutheran pastors would pray and worship God; since they believe that only the Revival Centres church is the "true" church and Lutheran teaching is heretical, Revival Centres members cannot worship with those of other churches.



Figure 13: Wongbe Primary School administration building and classrooms, with the road leading to the coast

Below is a diagram of the layout of the *wanbel* ceremony:

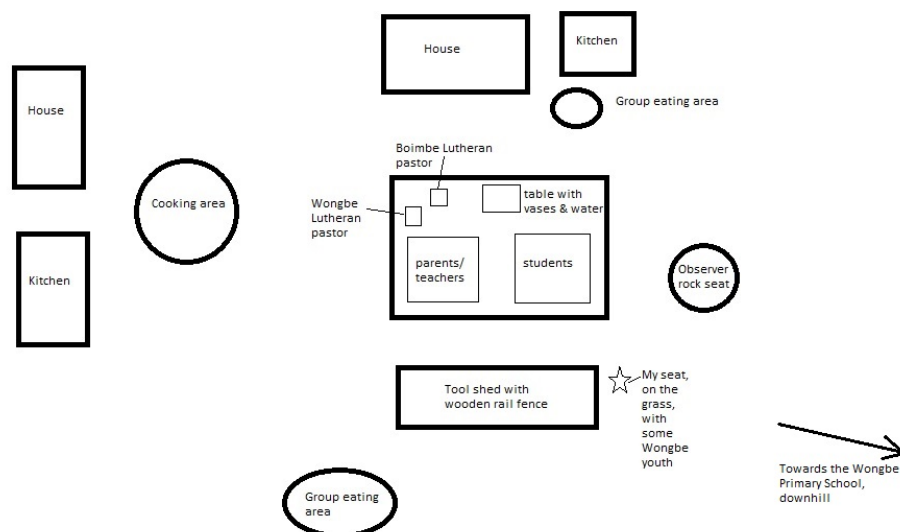


Figure 14: Layout of the Wongbe Primary School *wanbel* ceremony

The audience sat in separate areas on bamboo benches: students sat on the right, parents and teachers on the left, and the two Lutheran pastors sat on white plastic chairs at the front of the audience. The pastor on the left, closer to the audience, was from Wongbe and the one on the right,

at the front, was from Buram, a village northwest of Wongbe, across the Kabeneo River. The Buram parish is in a different language group and Lutheran parish, and Buram children do not attend the Wongbe Elementary School. Therefore, perhaps the Buram pastor was chosen to lead the service because he was less likely to be involved in school disputes. Behind the visiting pastor was a table with two vases of flowers, a loudspeaker, and a jug of water (which, as I discuss below, would be transformed into holy water). Next to the table was a blackboard with the agenda for the meeting.



Figure 15: The visiting pastor at the front of the meeting area

As I sat down, people, accompanied by guitars, were singing a song called “*Long mari mari bilong God*” (“Because of God’s mercy” TP). After several more songs, the visiting Buram pastor led the group in reciting the Apostles’ Creed in Tok Pisin and then he led the various sections of the school community through the process of becoming *wanbel* with God and each other. His sermon explained that God had instituted *wanbel* as the way for people to be reconciled. In the section of the programme devoted to *tok sori* (“sorrow talk” TP), the students, teachers, headmaster, and parents raised difficult issues that had emerged during the school year. After the groups accepted the *tok sori* of others, they ate a meal together to show they were *wanbel* with each other and were then able to face the upcoming exam week with confidence.

The “right people” in a mul

The Sam villagers carefully think about who should be present in a *wanbel* meeting because having the “right” people at the discussion will determine what is discussed, who is compensated, and whether the spirit beings will discern that everyone impacted by the dispute is *wanbel*. If not everyone with *kulik* (“burdensome problem/issue”) is included in the *wanbel* process, the resultant reconciliation is not efficacious. Someone entangled in a conflict will often show they are not won over by the other party’s compensation offer by not appearing at the *mul*. In this way, they register their disapproval while also preventing the others from becoming *wanbel*. *Wanbel* is forestalled because, as one Papua New Guinean leader told me, if the “right people are not in the room,” any agreement among those who attend the *mul* will not reconcile everyone who has *kulik*. For example, the *wanbel* meeting discussed in Chapter Two was postponed several times, until the leader felt that on the third date the “right” people were in attendance.

The “right people” necessary for the grade eight students to do well in their exam consisted of those who had disputes from Buan, Wongbe, Boimbe, Jilim, and Kwanji villages, as well as spirit beings that had the power to have a beneficial influence on the students’ exam performance. Thus, the “community” in this *mul* consisted of the teachers, parents, students, headmaster, pastors, the wife of one of the pastors, ancestors, and God — all who had conflicts with each other and needed to become reconciled before their students would do well on the exam. Unlike other *wanbel* meetings I attended, there was not only one issue to resolve, but many of them. For instance, the students had conflicts with their parents, who forced them to study and attend school every day, and who, along with their *malanggu*, were paying their school fees and wanted to see their investment justified. The teachers had tried to teach the students well, but when they disciplined and marked their homework strictly, their actions sometimes caused the students to have a *kulik*. The pastors appeared to also be disgruntled because they felt the students and parents did not attend church services and help with church activities, indicating that they felt the pastors and God were impotent and unnecessary to their daily lives. The pastor’s wife reprimanded the students and their parents for not respecting her husband, especially because he supported them in prayer.

Each person present at the *mul* had a reason to be disgruntled; they each had grievances which the Sam people see as vital to express. Speaking their own *udud* (“thought”) is seen to be a right of a person, and was a common explanation, accompanied by a shrug, for someone’s comments or actions: *ido udud* (“his/her thought”) was the motivation behind their actions. I experienced this when I asked people to speculate how others felt or thought, which I described in the last chapter.

In discussing the importance of the “right people,” gender plays a large role. As I discussed in Chapter Two, while both women and men who have *kulik* must reveal it to the community, women rarely speak in a *mul*, unless men directly ask them a question. Instead, they sit on the outer edge of the meeting area (as described in Chapter Two), listening to the men and commenting to each other, and men will raise issues and speak for them. However, older women are less hesitant to speak in a meeting; in the grade eight *mul*, the Wongbe pastor’s wife was an elderly lady who strenuously objected to the way people in Wongbe were treating her husband.

Among the men, age and experience plays a role in who speaks and how assertive they are. The most assertive speakers in *wanbel* meetings are adult men, usually mature, married men with families and gardens. They were usually the ones who brought complaints and issues to the village people to discuss in the Monday government meetings. Unmarried men did not often raise issues, but they did comment during *mul*. Those with an education past high school were able to raise issues related to their educational background, for example, a business school graduate who regularly spoke to the Buan villagers in the Monday meetings about the cocoa cooperative he started.

The grade eight ceremony presented a unique challenge to the school community; how could they all become *wanbel* when they had multiple conflicts? In this meeting, the pastor suggested that the speakers could be grouped, and that each group of people, teachers, parents, and so on could choose one person to speak for everyone in their group. This was different from other *wanbel* meetings I had observed, in which people spoke for themselves. It allowed each person to feel they had communicated the essence of their grievance, while also not having to listen to individual complaints which would take a long time. This method of sharing *pari* was unorthodox, at least I had never seen it before, but presumably was acceptable because while everyone had their own *kulik*, they shared similarities with others that allowed people’s statements to represent what others were thinking. Each spokesperson would speak for others, and those not speaking would listen and agree with that person in their *pari*. Those listening would also be reconciled in their *pari*, and their inner feeling of *wanbel* would then be efficacious.

Alongside the challenge of resolving multiple disputes at one meeting, several other aspects of this meeting demanded that the church, instead of the Wongbe village leader, was the right group to host this meeting. As mentioned above, the first is that the students were not from just one *malanggu* or village, but from other neighbouring villages as well: Boimbe, Kwanji, and Jilim. While no village leader could claim to represent the whole group, the Lutheran Church could because it operated in each of their villages. The church was a collective that included everyone in attendance.

Secondly, the Church was involved because it provided access to God's power to help the students obtain an "uncluttered mind" (*udud pong*) that could focus and perform well, and the *xele* ("knowledge") they required to fill out the answers correctly in their exams. Tests in the government school system are dissimilar to the usual Sam way that children learn: not through studying and rote memorisation of facts, but from watching other people in their *malunggu*, usually their parents, as they do an activity, and then attempting it themselves (Hemer, 2013:73; Mead, 2001 [1928]:15-17; B. Schieffelin, 1990). Buan parents demonstrate the skill they want to teach their children, such as how to build houses, plant gardens, hunt animals, wash clothes, care for children, and other functions. After observing their parents, the children mimic the particular skill they want to learn, and the parent observes and guides them. When the child can perform the skill without correction, the parent considers them to have mastered the skill. However, there is *xele* ("knowledge") that cannot be taught, such as that transmitted by the initiation leader and other village men, when they perform the initiations to the boys so that they become *bail* ("strong") and mature men, a state referred to as *suma beli* ("good/mature man"). The initiation expert in Buan learned the ways of initiation from his father, consisting of knowledge of the rituals to transform the boys into capable and strong men: the right paint, oil, leaves, and marks to use to decorate the boys, the instruction necessary to teach them in the initiation house (called the *urum maringbe* ("bush house")), and the types of special food (such as *geme* ("ginger")) they need to eat to become a man. Below is a picture of a group of initiates in Wongbe village.



Figure 16: Wongbe initiates

Like boys undergoing initiation, the students needed supranatural help to pass the school exams. The tests were obstacles that required special assistance to pass, especially if the students' focus had suffered in the previous year due to a lack of *wanbel*. In this meeting, the pastor's prayer before the *tok sori* requested that God help them to think and answer correctly, and to help the students' hands to write the right answers. In discussing how to obtain *ele*, people referred to initiations as one pathway, while school and church offered other ways, and a common view was that following one does not preclude following the others. For example, one Lutheran friend in Buan village told me that while he forbade his son from joining an initiation group in 2014, his son felt it was important to be initiated and to be with his friends, and so he went to the initiation proceedings without his father's permission. When he told me about this, his father did not think that meant that his son could not be a Lutheran; it meant that his son had taken a pathway of which his father did not approve.

God and the Holy Spirit were not the only supranatural beings called upon. Many Sam meetings explicitly or implicitly refer to ancestors and/or spirit beings, as the grade eight exam ceremony illustrates. People participating in Sam *wanbel* meetings know they are interacting with humans as

well as with ancestors and spirit beings, and the ancestors are integral components of *mul*. For example, some *mul*, such as initiations, include the *malanggu's* participation in *mun tuwax* ("clan-owned songs and dances that can be bought and sold in *wanbel* meetings"), which were taught by a person's forefathers, and include ancestral names and knowledge of cooking, hunting and fishing techniques. Another *mul*, called *Histori Dei* ("History Day" TP), is exclusively focussed on determining land boundaries. The meeting attendees, that is, the various parties to the conflict and village leaders and others, take turns to cite their knowledge of successive generations of migrations, exchanges, and battles by their ancestors, proving their connection to the land. In the process of relating knowledge and traditions they learned about and from their forefathers, they remind each other of those individuals and traditions that lie at the core of their identity (cf. the notion of transactive memory, in, for example, Wegner, 1987; Wegner, Erber, & Raymond, 1991). In all these topics, persons who are no longer living, and spirits, continue to play a role in human affairs, and their impact is seen in *wanbel* meetings.

In the school exam *mul*, the pastors explicitly called people to become *wanbel* with God through the prayers, the sermon, and the offering. Firstly, the visiting pastor prayed in Tok Pisin,

We sinners have joined, and we have told you we are sorry. Make all things come up well, make us happy, bless the students, the parents, and the teachers. We put all the students under your hand, bless them and help them. Bless the classroom, desk, school grounds, and the things they use, such as their pens, rulers and exam papers. Make everything holy and easy. We are all truly *wanbel*. Let this water become truly holy. Let the Holy Spirit go into this water, so it can take away sickness, make the area holy, reject any enemy that wants to come, and make the area holy and clean.

In his prayer, he averred that the school collective had become *wanbel* with each other; therefore, the pastor believed God would react by becoming *wanbel* with them as well. This *wanbel* was the basis on which he could ask God to act to help and *blesim* the students ("bless" TP),⁴¹ to stop anything from disrupting or inhibiting the students as they took the examination, and to transform the water, and all it touched, into a substance that contained God's essence and power.

Secondly, in addition to prayers, the sermon placed the present state of conflict between various participants within a context that resembled the conflict mentioned in the Bible, in which God was the one who affirmed that people were reconciled, and blessed them. The sermon described two examples of conflict from the book of Genesis. The first *wanbel* example, between Adam, Eve and God, occurred in the Garden of Eden. "In the Garden of Eden, the first man and woman had easy access to the things they wanted, and life was not hard," he explained. But this idyllic situation

⁴¹ Sam villagers use this Christian concept outside of a church context in a similar way to the Sam word *nyoblo* ("good fortune, blessing").

changed when Satan deceived Eve into sinning. “They were not *wanbel*,” the pastor asserted, calling to mind the school community’s disputes, “This was the first time that people needed healing and reconciliation.” The second example was of Cain killing his brother, Abel, which led to God sending him away from his *malanggu* (“family/clan”). By extension, the congregation also had disrupted this *wanbel* paradigm, and thus needed to stop following *indo udud* (“their [own] thoughts”) and become *wanbel* to conform to God’s pattern for relationships.

Building on these examples, the pastor pointed out that God reacted to disagreements with mercy and did not retaliate in fury. If He had, the pastor noted, He would have killed Adam, Eve, and Cain. Instead, He made a way for them to be reconciled, namely, to say they were sorry for the things they had said or done that offended others and thus repair their relationships. The pastor asserted that these examples demonstrated that God approved of *wanbel*. Therefore, the school community should become *wanbel* now to obtain God’s favour. *Wanbel* with God and with each other would yield good results from all they did. The second lesson from these examples was that being *wanbel* was more important than belonging to a certain denomination, because God loves people and wants to help them regardless of their denomination. This statement was important, since not all of the students or their parents were Lutheran, and they would not want to be reconciled if these people felt excluded. While there was no outward sign that a person would be acceptable to God, God sees into *pari*, as discussed in Chapter Four. Hence, God knows if people are *wanbel* with Him and each other, and this is what motivates him to help them. Concluding, the pastor said, “God prepared us for this day, to make *wanbel* between us and God. His blood made *wanbel* between Adam and Eve, and now we want to be *wanbel* with Him also. If we give ourselves to God, He will be *wanbel* with us.”

Thirdly, the group became *wanbel* with God through giving money to the church. During this time of the service, the assembly showed their devotion and *wanbel* relationship with God by singing Christian hymns and saying a prayer as people gave money. The giving of money was a form of exchange, not unlike the exchange component of other *wanbel* meetings. The pastor asked three young men to play a song during the time of giving tithe, and they played a song called, “*Givim, givim long God*” (“Give, give to God.” TP). As the congregation sang with them, a few people at a time stood and filed out to the aisles. They walked up to the front, where they placed their offering into a plastic bowl, and then went back to their places on the bamboo benches. When the song was finished, the visiting pastor prayed for the offering. In these ways, the pastor and meeting participants identified with their joint bond as Christian believers that would allow them to be reconciled and united.

Speaking for wanbel

While it is crucial to understand who needs to be a part of the *wanbel* process, another essential element of revealing *pari* is using speech to bring about *wanbel*. The Sam people become *wanbel* in turbulent gatherings in which what they share can raise emotions and increase divisions, and thus they use speech strategically to navigate disputes, help people reveal their *pari*, and become *wanbel*. Using speech strategically is important to obtain *wanbel* because, as mentioned in Chapter Three, *wanbel* meetings are dynamic, process-oriented interactions, and depend on the participation of the various parties to reveal how people feel about the issue(s) at hand. Errington and Gewertz (2007:93) discuss the way that this style of social interaction, which they call “commotion” is integral to reconciliation. Meetings in Melanesia lead to a “general orientation toward the creative, open-endedness, and the processually driven” (Besnier, 2004:106). In a *wanbel* meeting, the outcome depends on what each individual says, and the mutual interplay of values results in an improvised outcome (see Gardner, 1983; M. Strathern, 1988:174). Weiner (1983:693) explains that Trobrianders believe that speech lays bare one’s inner thoughts, called *nanola*, which are unknown to others. People who reveal *nanola* in front of the community are said to be speaking “hard words.” This type of speech clarifies the ambiguity that is common in their daily interactions, and helps prevent the possibility of being misinterpreted; for the Trobrianders, it creates a situation that can be dangerous and have lasting violent consequences. Weiner asserts, “Hard words’ once spoken cannot be recalled; apologies do not carry any power to mute their effects” (Weiner, 1983:693). In describing this conversational dynamism, Dalton writes,

Melanesians have ... been found to be creative, dynamic, episodic, improvisatory people who enact and manage “flow”; people who construct, counterpoise, and interpret what is secret and hidden as opposed to what is revealed and manifest, thereby obviating their own conventional constructions, and thus constituting essentially open, self-transforming, processual societies. (Dalton, 2000:290)

The Sam villagers consider what they are trying to accomplish when they speak and use speech strategically. There has been much written about the strategic use of speech in Oceania (see Arno, 1990; Besnier, 1990, 1993a; Brison, 1989, 1992; Duranti, 1990; E. Schieffelin, 1976; Watson-Gegeo, 1986; Watson-Gegeo et al., 1990). Brison notes about Kwanga speeches in meetings, “Casting strategic interpretations of events is also an important part of dispute resolution particularly in relatively egalitarian communities where people must be careful to demonstrate respect for others’ autonomy. ...they strategically redefine recent events in order to accomplish particular goals” (Brison, 1992:19). She discusses situations in which speakers have different agendas which emerge at different times during the meeting. In one meeting she discusses, the conversation ranged from the causes for rains that come too early to who was a better gardener, accusations that Christians

were at fault for untimely rains, naming someone a sorcerer, and renouncing Christian faith (Brison, 1992:106). In the end, there was no resolution to the question of who caused the rains to come too early for some, but, as she argues, “discussion may accomplish many things even if there is no decision and, in fact, if there is some sort of resolution this may be relatively unimportant” (Brison, 1992:21; Myers, 1986).

People make strategic language choices, including silence or dissimulation, within certain contexts based on socially-agreed upon language ideologies (Besnier, 2009; Brison, 1992; Kroskrity, 2000; Robbins, 2012). Their language choices, or ideology, displays their attitudes, uses, and beliefs towards the use of language in social interaction (see Rumsey, 1990:346). A prominent component of Sam language ideology is that speech acts are a form of social action that can influence people to become *wanbel* or not, for certain ends. For the Sam, speech acts resemble their practice of exchanging material items to become *wanbel*. In speech, as in exchange, items or words are exchanged for certain purposes. Thus, people use language within a space of contestation, where speakers have competing values and motivations. Robbins notes, “...the study of language ideologies can finally bring speech as a domain of communication into the structuralist model of society” (Robbins, 2012:29). Likewise, B. Schieffelin notes, “Talk is not only instrumental, but is also a metaphor for what happens in exchange: Meaning is offered and taken, asked for and given” (B. Schieffelin, 2007:126).

In the grade eight ceremony, the Sam use of strategic speech was evident throughout the *tok sori* statements made by the teachers, parents, students, and the pastor and his wife in the grade eight ceremony. The teachers were the only group that did not follow the pastor’s recommendation to choose only one representative to speak for the rest. They each needed to explain the circumstances under which they had acted in certain ways toward the students, which sometimes had caused students to become upset with them. One teacher admitted that his actions in not grading assignments and papers handed in late had placed him in opposition to the students and the parents. He explained that he could see how his actions, although aligned with school policy, could have made the students and parents feel *bel hevi* (“heavy insides” TP). The teachers also had a dispute with the parents. They accused the parents of not helping with repairing the school buildings on community work days, and not paying school or teacher fees. Another teacher recalled an incident when he had found a paper with no name on it, and the next morning threw the paper on the ground in front of the students in their morning assembly. The students had sat on the ground, refusing to go in, and said they were on *straik* (“strike, refuse to comply” TP). A third teacher accused the students of never coming early to cut the grass in the school yard and told

them that this was a *bel hevi* (“heavy insides” TP) for him. If they did this, he said, their minds would work well (“*tingting bai op*” TP). Their decision to all speak about things they had done that alienated students was strategic in itself — it meant that every student alienated by a teacher in some way would hear a *tok sori* about their situation. Likewise, the students were strategic in not speaking after the first round of *tok sori*. Their silence, indicating that they were not yet *wanbel*, started the teachers off on a new round of *tok sori*. The teachers again remonstrated with the students, insisting that they misunderstood the teachers who had been trying to help them.

Apart from the teachers and students, the host pastor from Wongbe and his wife asserted that they had *kulik*. The Wongbe Lutheran pastor averred that even though the students and their parents gave “zero help” for the church, he had always supported the students in prayer. To show his sincerity, he began to cry. He said mournfully, “My tears now fall. I am very worried. They [the students] see me as a worthless man” (“*pipia man*” TP). He continued that not only did they not help the church, but the students smoked marijuana, drank, and did not work. He protested that instead of “strengthening the darkness” (“*strongim tudak*” TP, a Christian metaphor meaning supporting Satan’s activities/agenda), they should be strengthening their spiritual life. But, despite their actions, he said that he had forgiven (“*fogivim*” TP) them because God commanded it. Moved to speak, the pastor’s wife also stood up and lamented, “Grade eight [students] do not respect (“*soim respect*” TP) for my father [referring to her husband]. You must respect God and you must respect my father. In God's sight, I say this.”

Many of the assertions were similar in the *tok sori* section of the programme. As “sorrow talk” (*tok sori* TP) indicates, people expressed that they were sad that they acted as they did. However, unlike an apology, they did not say they wished they had not acted that way. Speakers generally gave the reasons they acted as they did and why their actions were justified, showed why the other party was also at fault, and then affirmed their *pari beli* (“good insides”). Their common theme was that they had acted according to what they thought was best for the *wanbel* of the group, even though for the short term, their actions caused people to become frustrated and angry. They spoke in a way that illustrated their autonomy and their commitment to the *wanbel* of the students. The act of speaking about inner, unrevealed thoughts and feelings, and expressing one’s commitment to becoming united by expressing *wanbel*, moved the group from a conflictual stance to a place of reconciliation.

In addition to being structured similarly, *tok sori* statements were spoken in a forceful and assertive style of speech called *sam bail* (“strong speech”). Other communities have also been reported to use forceful and dramatic ceremonial speech (see Brenneis & Myers, 1984; Brison, 1992:21-23).

This speech style, which Brison (1992:22) refers to as “haranguing,” conveys, according to Read (1959), a strong personality that is necessary to lead the community. *Sam bail* is a forceful and insistent speech style that I heard people use when they assert their arguments, such as when pastors give sermons in church services and when defendants outline their case in village court meetings. *Sam bail* is characterised by quick and emphatic speech and vivid descriptions. In the grade eight *mul*, both pastors demonstrated *sam bail*, though in different ways. The Wongbe pastor evinced *sam bail* when he chastised the parents and students for their disregard of the church, despite his prayers and concern for them. In his speech, he shed tears because he was showing that he had never stopped praying for them, despite their forgetting what he had done for them. In this way, tears illustrated his *wanbel* with them, to bring into effect their *wanbel* with him. The visiting pastor also spoke in a *sam bail* way by reminding the congregation that they, like Adam and Eve, and Cain, had done something to break *wanbel* with God, and that they needed to be reconciled.

Although *wanbel* meeting speakers use *sam bail*, there is a time in *wanbel* meetings when they change how they are speaking and exhort listeners to be at peace and reconcile. They refer to this second type of speech style as *pari beli sam* (“good insides speech”). Why is it that the Sam villagers do not speak *pari beli sam* all the time in *wanbel* meetings? If their goal is reconciliation, would *pari beli sam* encourage people to reveal their hidden thoughts and feelings and become *wanbel*, while *sam bail*, conversely, would make the conflict worse?

A Songum friend answered these questions, explaining that both *sam bail* and *pari beli sam* are instrumental speech styles in *wanbel* meetings, because both are appropriate at different stages of the *wanbel* process. He told me speakers choose whether to use *sam bail* or *pari beli sam* in a situation based on their view of how ready people are to say what they are thinking and feeling. As discussed in Chapter Four, the Sam people believe that *pari* is like a container, holding a person’s thoughts and feelings. To help people release their inner thoughts, Sam speakers will speak directly in cases where they know that others have dissenting opinions that must be voiced to the community. In order to help people release *agrag* (“anger, hostility”), a person will speak with *sam bail*. On the other hand, *pari beli sam* is used at times when the goal is not to intensify passion but to dampen it and encourage peacemaking. *Pari beli sam* avoids worsening a conflict by encouraging *pari ru* (“cold insides”). *Pari ru* is a visceral description of the feeling of peace and amity, of not being angry or desiring revenge. The opposite, however, is *pari ngaring*, when a person is likely to be so incensed that they will act, perhaps violently, against someone or something.⁴²

⁴² One type of *pari beli sam* is indirect speech, which allows the speaker to give advice without creating a situation in which the listener will be forced to decide whether to comply or resist them. Indirect speech is

Both ways of speaking are important in addressing people's *pari* to become *wanbel*. The speakers use *sam bail* to encourage the sharing of *pari*, and then after everyone has expressed their inner selves, the group use *pari beli sam* to become reconciled. Thus, the Sam villagers say that *wanbel* meetings begin in turmoil and contention, as people share their frustrations and anger, enter a middle stage of listening and beginning to understand the *pari* of the others, and end with becoming *wanbel*, in the denouement. As one Sam friend told me at a *wanbel* meeting,

Our style is first to argue a lot about the problem. We cannot cut this process short. We must let everyone talk about what they are concerned about and let everyone get everything out. It is like driving on a rough road where, at first, the road is rough and stony, and there are many potholes. But you cannot make it smooth right away. You must work through all the rough spots first. After they are all worked through, then you can get to the smooth part and then the *kol tar* ('paved road' TP) is very smooth. If you try to get to the cold tar too quickly, then you will end up getting in trouble later, and your relationship will break down.

The Sam people feel they must clearly say what is in their *pari* to release all their "pressure" (they used the English word) built up from their anger and hostility (discussed in Chapter Four), so that afterwards, they will be able to use *pari beli sam*, and become *pari beli*. By first speaking *sam bail*, *pari beli* will become a possibility. Thus, in the grade eight ceremony, the participants were expected to openly reveal what they were thinking inside; holding back one's true thoughts would not get at the root issue and would allow disharmony to remain, where it would emerge later. Both speech methods—*sam bail* and *pari beli sam*—are necessary speech styles to aid in becoming *wanbel*.

What makes speech efficacious?

As Sam speakers verbally expressed their *pari* and became *wanbel* in the grade eight ceremony, they expected that their *wanbel* would lead to good test scores on the grade eight exam. Their speech played an integral role in becoming *wanbel*, in that they were voicing an authentic representation of what was in their *pari*; yet, people have a concern that what someone says may not be what they are thinking. Hence, village leaders commonly exhort Buan people in village courts and community meetings, saying, "*Abu sam mende!*" ("Tell the true speech!"). What they are asking for is sincerity, the expectation that what one says matches inner thoughts and feelings. Speech that does not reflect *pari* well is called *jager sam* ("deceptive speech"), as opposed to *abu sam* ("true speech"). *Jager sam* are things people say when they are intentionally trying to deceive others. The Sam people have a concern that people tell them *abu sam*, and often a speaker would

very common, and there were quite a few times during my fieldwork when someone would visit me, and we would converse about something which, while seemingly mundane and inconsequential, was actually an indirect suggestion to behaviour they thought I should change.

punctuate their *wanbel* meeting remarks with the statement, “*Abu! Abu toto!*” (“True! Really true!”).

The possibility that a person’s words and thoughts may not match can be seen in other Melanesian groups as well. For example, the Gapun people located in the Sepik region of Papua New Guinea do not expect one’s words and thoughts to match. Kulick relates the experience of someone who lends an object to another, after being asked for it, even though the lender feels inside that he does not want to do so. “His mouth will say, ‘It’s OK, you take it then.’ But his thoughts, that’s something else altogether” (Kulick, 1997 [1992]:48). The reason the villager agrees to lend it to the other person is because not to do so would give him shame. As proof that he did not want to lend it, Kulick’s informant relates that he will talk negatively about the person who borrows it, “In his thoughts he really doesn’t want to give you the thing. No, no way. You’ll take it and leave and later you’ll hear. A mouth will be heard later. Lots of talk will arise about this thing that you’ve borrowed” (Kulick, 1997 [1992]:48). As Marilyn Strathern notes about Hageners, “The interpretation of meaning rests on this dichotomy: do a person’s words come from his *noman* and reveal his true intentions, or are they simply ‘in the mouth?’” (1979:250). In this view, there are two aspects to speech: what a person says and what they think.

However, in some communities, speaking is seen as insufficient to communicate one’s inner thoughts and feelings. For instance, the Urapmin feel that speech is inherently flawed. Even if people want to share their inner thoughts and feelings, communication is unable to reliably carry this information, because “too many things can happen on the way from the heart to the mouth, the Urapmin say, for talk to be trustworthy” (Robbins, 2004a:142). In addition, as Robbins relates, both lying and being wrong are called *weng famul bakamin* (Robbins, 2004a:142). They are seen to both accomplish the same effect, that is, the transmission of misleading information.

The Sam also think of speech as sometimes not reflecting *pari* well, though this is mostly due to the speaker’s intentions (see Robbins, 2012). Sam speakers recognize that sometimes what one says may only be true at a surface level. They refer to statements that do not mean anything substantive, or do not have meaning, as being *antap tasol* (“only at the surface”) or *toktok tasol* (“just talk”) in Tok Pisin, or in Sam, *sam neiya* (“just talk”). They think of speech, when it is mistaken or insincere, to need “straightening” (*gerei*). They use the word *gerei* (“straighten, put right, fix”) for this action of straightening speech, just as they do for the action of sorting through the remains of their old house, some which they will want to use to build a new house. They will *gerei* the jumble of palm leaves, posts, and bamboo wall sections into neat, orderly piles. In the same way, the village leader will mediate between the opposing sides, hearing what they say they are thinking, and he will

patiently sort through their comments and suggest other ideas to consider. *Gerei* is a verbal activity when used in becoming *wanbel*. In Sam, they *gerei* the speech of people who are not *wanbel*. In contrast to the Urapmin, they do distinguish lexically between being in error (*ugel*) and lying (*jager*). But their word for deception, through speech or without it, is *jager*, indicating that regardless of the medium of communication, *jager suma* (“deceivers”) need straightening to relate with others sincerely.

Since a person’s words may not reflect their *pari* and no one can access another’s *pari*, people may doubt whether the community is entirely *wanbel*. However, they are unwilling to voice this doubt openly because it might further engender doubt in people’s minds, thus inhibiting *wanbel* and causing a negative outcome. For example, one afternoon as some Buan friends and I were driving back from a coastal village, black rain clouds were forming upstream in the catch basin of the Kabeneo River. Further up the road, we would have to ford the Kabeneo, which would be difficult or impossible if the river level rose too much. Not wanting to spend the night in the vehicle, we agreed together—we were *pari kujex* (“one insides”)—that the rain would hold off until we could cross the river. However, while still about thirty minutes from the river crossing, large rain drops began to sporadically hit the windscreen. I inwardly began to worry that the rain might indicate that heavier rain was falling further inland, which could lead the river to flood quickly. I happened to wonder out loud whether the men riding in the back of the vehicle would get wet, and the man in the passenger seat replied, “We were *wanbel* that it would not rain. Do not say that! It will ‘break’ our *wanbel*!”

Sincere speech can influence the collective in two powerful ways. In the first, it can create a communal feeling of unity that prepares people for coordinated action (Irvine, 1996; Keane, 2002:85; 2003:410; Robbins, 2012:28-29). As early as Malinowski, anthropologists have posited, “Language, in its primitive function, [is] to be regarded as a mode of action, rather than as a countersign of thought” (Malinowski, 1923:451; see also Watson-Gegeo, 1986:149). As Weiner says, “hard words” reveal inner thoughts that can have “extremely dangerous and ... often violent repercussions” (Weiner, 1983:693). In this view, speech is a form of social action because it accomplishes things in social interaction as well as simply transmitting information. The Sam people view speech as integral to social action as well as a mode of social action: it can influence people to feel united and cooperative and cause good things to happen in and to the community. For instance, I have often observed Sam men prepare for strenuous group activity by fortifying their *pari*, as they say, *pari tinga* (“raise insides”), through speech before attempting a difficult task that requires all their effort. They *pari tinga* by saying that the job is easy, that they have lots of people to accomplish

it, and that they will undoubtedly succeed. Village people *pari tinga* before such efforts as going to play an opposing football team, planting a taro garden, pushing a car out of a pothole, or exhorting people with a bullhorn to attend the community meeting. Pastors invoked a call to unity prior to most prayers I witnessed, calling to the congregation, “*Yumi wanbel na beten!*” (“Let us be *wanbel* and pray!” TP). In this way, the pastor bolstered their feeling of communal agency as God’s united community. The call to unity was palpable in the incident I related in Chapter One, in which the men with me in the vehicle called out “*Yumi wanbel na go!*” (Let us be *wanbel* and go!” TP). Expressions of unity cause the group to feel and act as a cohesive unit.

A second way that speech can affect people is that their verbal statements of being *wanbel* or not is efficacious, transforming the community in good or bad ways (Brison, 1991; Smith, 1994:105; Street, 2014:5, 127). Hence, when the Sam people sincerely say they are *wanbel*, the spirit beings make their statements efficacious, though the Sam do not usually refer to the spirits’ role in such direct ways. Instead, villagers seem to consider the agent behind *wanbel*’s efficacy to be secondary to the process of becoming *wanbel* itself. In most situations, being *wanbel* is the only goal they talk about. However, in some situations, they ask a spirit being for help, and point to the efficacy of those beings when either good or bad things occur. They believe that the ancestors, God, and parents have a special relationship with the community and power to cause good things to happen to them, which is available when humans speak about their *pari* genuinely.

Firstly, the Sam villagers communicate with, and about, their ancestors and God, and this plays a vital role in transforming people’s lives. For example, Chapter Four describes the coconut ceremony, which showed the explicit communication with the ancestors, and their ability to verify whose statements of *pari* were genuine. As is portrayed in that situation, the ancestors are intimately connected with their descendants, and continue to play a role in the life of the living community. This chapter describes the agentive power of God, who listens to authentic speech and helps people in their daily lives, in the grade eight ceremony. As described above, the Buram pastor asked the Holy Spirit to be a *banis* (“fence, protective barrier” TP), a force to guide the students and teachers, that he would use their hands to write the right answers in the exams, to help them to think and answer well, and to give them peace. Another example of God’s perceived power to aid humans is shown in the testimonies of Revival Centres members in their services concerning how God has helped them in their lives. In the part of the service devoted to testimonies, people would often stand up and describe how they had seen God work in their life in the preceding week.

Another powerful agent among the Sam communities are a child’s parents; I was told that parents are a child’s “number two god.” The words a father uses can either cause difficult circumstances or

good ones for his son or daughter. One man cautioned, “If you disobey your father’s instruction, and you steal, or do something else wrong, then you will get sick or die. The sickness will go onto your body.” In another instance, one young Buan man told me that a father’s words can alter the course of a son’s life. He related how his father became angry with him several years before, and spit at and cursed him, saying that soon he would feel he did not fit in the village, and would leave. Soon afterwards, the son felt restless and uncomfortable. He left the village and went to Karkar Island to work for a company. Five years later, his father was sorry that he had said that to him; he assembled the *malanggu*, cooked and ate a meal with them, and they became *wanbel* for the son to come back. At that same time, his son, unaware of what the family had done, began to feel a longing to return to the village. He was sent to Madang to bring back a new tyre, but when he got there, he could not resist quitting his job and going to Buan. When he arrived, he learned that his father was not there; on that same day, as he was travelling down to the village, his father was going in a boat to Karkar to bring him back to the village. The fact that his father’s statement made him leave the village, and that he and his family’s *wanbel* exerted a pull on him five years later, was a demonstration that *wanbel* is effective. He asserted, “[*Wanbel*] is true. The father’s speech has power over the children. What the father says, the children will follow. So too, *wanbel* has power to control people.” For the Sam, spirit beings and parents make speech efficacious.

Conclusion

Sam speakers emphasise the role of oratory and dialogue in the process of becoming *wanbel*. Words contain the unique capacity to assist actors in managing the potential danger of *pari* and becoming *wanbel*. People choose their words carefully because they are speaking not just with living people, but in a context that also includes their ancestors and other spirit beings with the power to affect them in good or bad ways. Three considerations emerge as people speak in public *wanbel* meetings, evident in the case study above: assembling the “right” audience of those who need to become reconciled and can make *wanbel* effective; wording the message to reflect thoughts and feelings in strategic ways that affirm *wanbel* while preserving autonomy; and ensuring that their words have efficacy by expressing *pari* sincerely.

Sam people feel they know what is in someone’s *pari* when they observe what they say. Individuals use language to make their thoughts concrete and embodied, to navigate through the contested space in which others also share their thoughts, and, when the community becomes *wanbel*, to affirm their unity. Public assertions and conversations allow everyone who wishes to disclose their frustration and hurt, to reduce the need for people to guess, hypothesise, or gossip about what others are thinking, to recall and reaffirm ties to their ancestors and spirit beings, and to give a

framework to understand when the community experiences fortune or misfortune. Speech makes *pari* knowable to others, however, behaviour lends it credibility. The next chapter will look at how the Sam people deploy certain behaviour to show they are *wanbel* with others such that their actions align with their words, lending authenticity to their message.

Chapter 6: “Doing sorry”: Behaviour and *wanbel*

The previous chapter explored how the Sam people create and maintain *wanbel* through sharing their *pari* verbally. However, as one Buan man told me, “It is not enough to say sorry. A person also must do sorry.” While language is a powerful way to navigate and negotiate disputes, it is unable to prove that someone is saying what they are actually thinking and feeling in their *pari*. Speech must be paired with *mangau* to both show and confirm that all parties are *wanbel* and give their *pari* to each other, both figuratively and materially. This chapter looks at *mangau* (“actions/behaviour”) that confirm *wanbel* statements by revealing *pari* and embodying communal reconciliation. I argue that the Sam people demonstrate their *wanbel* through reciprocal gift exchange. Through giving and asking others to reciprocate, people feel “equal” and able to be reconciled. Furthermore, they think about becoming *wanbel* as a process of exchange: they “give” their *pari* as well as giving objects, as in the phrase “*pari beli hunjudxum*” (“I will give them good insides”). Thus, the transactional nature of giving *pari* is matched and fulfilled by exchanging physical items, which brings together disputants.

Melanesians use gift exchange and reciprocity in many areas of life.⁴³ Exchange and reciprocity provide ways to influence relationships and to show and create amity, such as between living and dead (Lohmann, 2005), church members (Obst & Tham, 2009; Schram, 2013; Van Heekeren, 2004), relatives (E. Schieffelin, 1976:54-55; Smith, 1994:38-40), and even those who, at least initially, begin their relationship as strangers (McDougall, 2016).

Communal gift exchanges, for example, among the potlatch ceremonies found among the Tlingit and Haida people groups of North-West America, mean more to the practitioners than fulfilling a practical need to transfer goods (Mauss, 1990 [1954]:3-5ff; Sykes, 2005:3). For these societies, giving is central to interaction between and within communities, and a part of various social domains, such as legal, religious, political, economic, and familial. Giving is a “total social phenomena” (Mauss, 1990 [1954]:1ff) that accomplishes an important process in society: it allows people to give things to discharge societal obligations. As he wrote, “prestations ... are in theory voluntary, disinterested and spontaneous, but are in fact obligatory and interested” (Mauss, 1990 [1954]:1). Mauss questioned why people feel motivated to reciprocate; as he said, “What rule of

⁴³ (See Akin & Robbins, 1999; Biersack, 1982; Carrier, 1998; Gell, 1992; Godelier, 1999; Gregory, 1982; Malinowski, 2014 [1922]; Mauss, 1990 [1954]; Rappaport, 1968; Sahlins, 1965; Sahlins, 1974; B. Schieffelin, 1990; E. Schieffelin, 1976; Sharp, 2016; Smith, 2013:30; A. Strathern, 1971; A. Strathern & Stewart, 2000; M. Strathern, 1988; Thomas, 1991; Von Poser, 2013; Young, 1971a)

legality and self-interest, in societies of a backward or archaic type, compels the gift that has been received to be obligatorily reciprocated? What power resides in the object given that causes its recipient to pay it back?" (Mauss, 1990 [1954]:3). In his comparative analysis of the practices of people in Melanesia, Polynesia, and America, he found that giving, which he calls "service," is one part of a host of other social phenomena that take place, and thus, gifts are given within "the system of total services" (Mauss, 1990 [1954]:5-6). As one example, he cites the Maori concept of *hau*, the "spirit of the thing given" which has an aspect or essence of the original giver, such that an object(s) of equivalent value must be returned to the one who gave first (Mauss, 1990 [1954]:10).

While the Sam also incorporate giving within processes of personhood, relationality, and resolving conflict, the way they give is different from the gift exchange and reciprocity practises of other communities, which vary widely within Papua New Guinea. For example, one form of gift giving is through competitive exchanges between rival social communities, such as the Massim *abutu* and Melpa *moka* ceremonies (A. Strathern, 1971; Young, 1971a). As Young explains about the Massim *abutu* ceremony, food exchanges are competitive, organised, and goal-oriented events with enemies. One Massim man said, "Before we fought with spears, but today we fight with food" (Young, 1971a:189-190). Other large-scale giving is seen in the highlands region, where, in contrast to the Massim *abutu*, Melpa men undertake competitive *moka* activities to gain status and become an important person: a "big man" (A. Strathern, 1971:1). In exchanging these food items, these ceremonies show that one person or group is preeminent, though the ceremonies themselves are distinct. Their reciprocal giving ceremonies are part of how smaller groups of people assemble together to interact as a larger collective.

While the Highlands examples above show that individuals and communities use reciprocity to gain status, another common reason for reciprocity in Melanesia, and which is more prominent in Sam *wanbel* ceremonies, is to strengthen and create relationships. For example, in the *Kula* trade system practised on a cluster of islands in Milne Bay, primarily men trade armbands (*mwali*) in a counter-clockwise direction and necklaces (*soulava*) clockwise (Kuehling, 2005; Macintyre, 1983; Malinowski, 1920, 2014 [1922]; Mauss, 1990 [1954]:20-29). In ceremonies like this, the gifts themselves take on aspects of the giver, and part of the object's value lies in the way it is an embodiment of the relationship they have together (Mauss, 1990 [1954]:21; M. Strathern, 1988). Similarly, the Sam also say that when various disputants have become *wanbel* after a *wanbel* meeting or ceremony they have *pari beli* ("good insides") with each other, however the Sam people do not practice this sort of extensive trading over large distances as with the *Kula*. They focus on

relationship-building with those within the Sam area, that is, among their *malanggu* or between *malanggu*.

I argue the Sam use *wanbel* to address a variety of areas in which they might feel anxiety or distress, such as worries over why someone in the village died, or whether a spirit is trying to communicate something to them. Thus, for example, one reason to increase relatedness that anthropologists discuss is mortuary practices. According to the functionalist interpretation by Hertz (1960 [1907]; cf. Lindenbaum, 2016), people are thereby allowing their dead to move fully into a state in the afterlife and thus maintaining order in their community. According to others (see Lipset & Silverman, 2016), such ceremonies arise within a historical context in which people are trying to resolve the problems death brings up in ways that are bound up with personhood, morality, and reciprocity (Dalton, 2016:60; Lindenbaum, 2016:xii).

Thus, in Papua New Guinea, people often use reciprocity to do much more than simply exchange objects — through the exchange process, as discussed by Mauss (above), they establish and fulfil social relationships by giving objects that contain part of themselves (Akin & Robbins, 1999; E. Schieffelin, 1976:2; Sharp, 2016). Through reciprocity, they are recognising the relationship(s) they are trying to enact or maintain, which can vary depending on their kinship distance with the other person (Sahlins, 1974:196-204). There are three general types of reciprocity: generalised, balanced, and negative reciprocity (Sahlins, 1974:193-196). While generalised reciprocity describes a type of giving in which a gift is essentially altruistic, like hospitality, balanced reciprocity is an exchange in which two or more parties give things to each other at essentially the same time (Sahlins, 1974:193-195). Negative reciprocity occurs when people try to obtain something by not giving in return (Sahlins, 1974:195-196). Sahlins points out the relevance of kinship distance in seeing where these three types of reciprocity occur; people engage in generalised reciprocity within a tight-knit community, while negative reciprocity takes place more often among non-kin (Sahlins, 1974:196-204). While gifts are often given, there are some things that are difficult to exchange with others; they are “imbued with the intrinsic and ineffable identities of their owners which are not easy to give away” (Weiner, 1992:6). Exchange participants have a desire to “keep without giving,” in Weiner’s terms (Weiner, 1992:5). As people engage in reciprocity, they navigate issues of giving to become *wanbel* when such objects often possess value as markers of “cosmological authentication” for them and their families (Weiner, 1992:4). Thus, in reciprocity, participants demonstrate intricate notions of identity and processes of relationality to bring about a benefit for themselves and their loved ones.

Likewise, the Sam people engage in reciprocity to negotiate diverse issues such as the death of a loved one, marriage, birth, growing a bountiful garden, ensuring safe travels, helping children to grow healthy and strong, and excelling in school. At the same time, their desire for *wanbel* is sometimes tempered by a reluctance to give, perhaps arising from a perception of kinship distance with the other person(s) or because the exchange objects themselves may possess aspects of the one who must give them. In this chapter, I will explore how the Sam speakers link their behaviour through giving with the possibility of being and becoming *wanbel*. I will focus on the Sam process of revealing *pari* via their actions (*mangau*), such that both friendly behaviour (*mangau beli*) as well as actions that appear unfriendly and confrontational (*mangau hali*) are integral to the *wanbel* process; how the Sam notion of social interaction, and becoming *wanbel*, is accomplished through the mutual exchange of *pari*; and the way in which behaviour that expresses genuine *wanbel* not only strengthens relationships but also brings about a change in the world.

“Revealing insides” through behaviour

The Sam people indicate their *pari* through behaviour that shows amity, as well as hostility. Both types of actions are important to becoming *wanbel*, and must be fully expressed so that others can interact with and negotiate with them during the *wanbel* process. Actions help people to authenticate what they say during the *wanbel* process, and thus both are necessary. Similarly, Biersack (1982:239-240) relates that among the Paiela, living in the highlands of Papua New Guinea, people demonstrate their friendship with others both verbally and behaviourally. However, until someone actually gives something, the recipient is unsure whether they will do what they have pledged. As she writes, “Pledges are ‘mere words’, possible instruments of deception. Only transactions reveal the true sentiment of the donor” (Biersack, 1982:240).

Likewise, while Sam people use speech to communicate things, they do not place great faith that what someone says is what they are thinking and feeling; rather, they look to the ways in which people demonstrate their inner self through behaviour. Actions that indicate an inner attitude of *wanbel* are called *mangau beli* (“good actions/behaviour”). When people are *wanbel* in their *pari*, they show this in various ways through spontaneous, daily social interaction, and this *wanbel* behaviour is a crucial way that individuals signal and maintain *wanbel* with others. Some of the ways the village people show *wanbel* toward others include laughing, smiling, and greeting people when they visit; being hospitable and giving visitors betelnut, food, and/or water; and being generous and giving what others request (or finding a way to explain why giving that object is not possible). I often experienced *pari beli* when, walking around the village, people would call out to me to sit down on a *baxalu* (“sitting bench”) or their only chair, make time to talk with me, and

offer me water or food. In contrast, *mangau hali* are actions that demonstrate that someone is not yet *wanbel*. A person shows *mangau hali* by acting in ways that indicates their displeasure with someone, such as cutting down some of their cocoa trees or yelling out their grievance in the middle of the village.

As Errington and Gewertz note about Papua New Guinean villages, they are often characterised by a type of sociality they refer to as “commotion.” In this type of sociality, people gauge others based on how well they take part in the life of the village. They measure morality by whether a person accepts someone else as efficacious, as being able to be a productive community member, and possessing the potential to be equal to others (Errington & Gewertz, 2007:93). Their equivalence is mediated through action; primarily through the exchange of food and other objects, which helps to create amity (Burrige, 1995 [1960]:17).

Similarly, for the Sam, the objects that they exchange to become *wanbel*, such as food, bush knives, and pigs, are visible signs that they feel an inner desire to be *wanbel* (see picture below). As they give things to each other, they share their material possessions, which creates a sense of equivalence. They think of this physical act as a picture of what is happening inside them — their giving of the objects symbolises their inner act of “giving their *pari*” to others.



Figure 17: An exchange between *gai* in Buan Village

As discussed earlier, both *mangau beli* and *mangau hali* are appropriate behaviour to lead to *wanbel* — if these actions represent *pari*. In showing *pari*, *mangau* indicates whether people are *wanbel* or not, and, if not, that they need to initiate the process to become *wanbel*. Therefore, while a person may interpret someone else's *mangau beli* as indicating they are *wanbel*, they may later realise that there is a problem remaining to be resolved when someone behaves toward them with *mangau hali*. In this sense, performing *mangau hali* is just as essential to *wanbel* as doing *mangau beli*.

Besides demonstrating a lack of *wanbel*, people feel *mangau hali* is justified because it is compensation for the harm caused by another person. The one with whom they are angry acted against them first, and so *mangau hali* makes both parties experience the same amount of hardship. They reason that if that other person had not created a *kulik* ("burdensome problem/issue") in the first place, they would not need to do *mangau hali* now to make the *kulik* apparent. Thus, acting with *mangau hali* is deemed to be a proper response because it is a counter action to something someone did who made them displeased, as well as showing their lack of *wanbel*. In other words, people feel a responsibility to not frustrate or harm others; if someone acts in a way that does so,

their actions, whether intended or not, undermine their *wanbel* with others, and they are felt to be culpable. While people may do things that make others feel they are not *wanbel*, their inaction can also cause disputes. For instance, I often heard people say that they are upset with someone because *em i no inapim tingting bilong mi* ("He did not fulfil my thought" TP); that is, they did not do or say all that the other person had wanted, which caused them to feel unfulfilled and unhappy. The anger was, therefore, not voluntary but generated through another's actions and behaviour, which demonstrated a lack of respect and affection. Hence, the issue exposes a lack of *wanbel*, and is referred to as *kulik*. When a person "has" *kulik*, they feel burdened and a sense of heaviness. They feel the dispute physically; as one group of interviewees said, "You will feel it [their rejection of you] in your body, you will feel they are not happy with you and will try to think about why they are not *wanbel* with you."

In resolving *kulik* and becoming *wanbel*, both *mangau beli* and *mangau hali* reveal a person's *pari*, indicating whether someone is *wanbel* or not, and pointing out which relationships need to be strengthened. Like *pari beli sam* ("good insides speech") and *sam bail* ("strong speech"), discussed in the previous chapter, *mangau beli* and *mangau hali* also have a role to play in becoming *wanbel*. Thus, in so far as a person's behaviour shows what they are genuinely thinking and feeling inside, even *mangau hali* is helpful in that it allows those around them to realise the depth of their frustration, and to begin to work through why they are upset and how to become *wanbel*. Reconciliation is not achieved by only *mangau beli* or *sam beli*, but through *mangau hali* and *sam hali* as well.

Since both *mangau beli* and *mangau hali* can eventually lead to *wanbel*, the only sorts of behaviour that are inimical to *wanbel* are those that prevent people from clearly expressing their *pari* to others. If people cannot communicate their feelings about a dispute with their speech and behaviour, no one knows that there is *kulik* and, thus, that they need to seek *wanbel*. If the community is unable to learn about issues that are preventing them from becoming *wanbel*, they cannot gauge the nature of their relationships, and further, the opportunity to work through divisive issues. Since *wanbel* is the key to obtaining *gutpela sindaun* ("wellbeing" TP), actions and attitudes that inhibit the *wanbel* process are dangerous to the vitality and future of the wider community.

Besides not explicitly communicating *pari*, people can make reconciliation difficult by being unwilling to share with others, thus being thought of as an *unyi suma* ("greedy man"), or not acknowledging there is an issue that needs to be addressed. If someone refuses to see and hear that they need to become *wanbel* because of a certain issue, they prevent the other party from

initiating the *wanbel* process. I was told, at a meeting at Wongbe Village, that one reason for the use of sorcery was to encourage the sorcery victim to seek to become *wanbel*. The people who felt they had a case against someone would give chickens and money to a sorcerer to sicken or kill someone from the group who had harmed them. When a person began to show signs of being affected by sorcery, their *malanggu* would scrutinise their relationships and anything that could have a bearing on their sickness. Ideally, they would realise the people who they had offended or harmed, and would begin *wanbel* negotiations with them, after which the sorcerer would be told to stop performing sorcery. While sorcery is a complicated issue that cannot be narrowed to only one explanation, the Sam villagers often link it to unresolved conflict, as seen in the example of the coconut ceremony I discussed in Chapter Four.

In contemporary times, substances like alcohol and marijuana prevent village people from being able to fully and genuinely express what they are thinking and feeling (for further discussion of this topic, see Chapter Seven). Thus, while users of these substances say they feel more relaxed and less worried (M. Marshall, 1979:453; cf. E. Schieffelin, 1982:52; Warry, 1982:97), they are also less able to reveal their *pari*, control what they say, and listen to the *pari* that others reveal. One man complained that people who smoked marijuana said, “We are *wanbel*,” but later caused further disputes and trouble. Another interviewee asserted that young people who used marijuana became confused and only acted for themselves (“*long laik bilong ol yet*” TP). Similarly, when people affected by alcohol speak, the community treats what they say as of little consequence because afterwards, when they become sober, they cannot remember or had been in control of what they had said.⁴⁴ One man said, “I will just throw talk... Later (when) I am a normal man and you tell me, I will be confused, and say, ‘I did not say that.’” When people in the village become inebriated and yell out their thoughts, they temporarily do not have *udud pong* (“clarity of thinking, self-awareness and an understanding of others”); they are categorised as *spak* (“inebriated” TP). Villagers believe marijuana and alcohol are inimical to *wanbel* because they affect a person’s inhibitions and increase the chance for conflict.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Several nights, when people became drunk and walked around the village, they came to people’s houses and yelled out to them. I never heard anyone go out to them to try to talk to them and help them calm down. It was as if people did not think their speaking was important enough to notice.

⁴⁵ Drinking is a frequent cause of domestic violence in the Sam area, as in other regions of PNG (D. A. Counts, 1990:243; Eves, 2016; Gibbs, 2016a:332 fn. 6; 2016b:136; M. Marshall, 1993:265; Toft, 1986:12-13). There is also a gender component, as only Sam men drink. This results in a gendered aspect to violence arising in the context of alcohol consumption (Dernbach & Marshall, 2001:30; Eves, 2016).

Kastam and exchange: “Doing wanbel well”

Besides acting with *mangau beli* and *mangau hali* in everyday social interaction, another type of *mangau beli* that is performed by people bound in relational ties is called *kastam* (“customary ways, ceremony” TP). *Kastam*, for the Sam, are those activities and behaviour rooted in shared notions passed down from parents and grandparents of how to behave according to social obligations. Following *kastam* enhances *wanbel*. The Sam people refer to this type of behaviour as *hago mangau* (“our actions/behaviour”). In Buan village, people do not have a word that means a specific set of *kastam* practices; this is similar to the Gogodala of Western Province, who speak generally about “customary ways” with the vernacular term *iniwa ela gi* (Dundon, 2007a:140). Thus, *hago mangau* refers to the things they do and say in *mul*, like negotiating and paying bride payment, or giving a pig to *gai* (“parallel cousin”).

In defining *kastam*, researchers assert that colonialism has influenced local ideas of what it is and why it is important (Foster, 1992; Keesing, 1982; Lindstrom, 1992). Keesing (1982:297) writes about *kastam* as an idea that became important as Pacific nations like Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, and Vanuatu became independent; appealing to *kastam* united the nation and gave people a sense of self-worth and collective identity, though each local customary way of life also existed within it (see also Foster, 1992:284; Lindstrom, 1992). Foster discusses how *kastam* emerged as a reaction to colonialism and “commoditization” (Foster, 1992:285). As he argues, “In Tanga, however, *kastam* only gradually assumed its present meaning by coming to articulate a set of evolving conflicts in everyday practice. These conflicts were and still are rooted in the progressive ‘commoditization’ of Tangan society” (Foster, 1992:285). Christianity also can be difficult to reconcile with *kastam*, though this has been more of an issue in Papua New Guinea than Vanuatu. As Lindstrom writes, “in Vanuatu people have talked away nearly all remnant contradictions between custom and Christianity ... they are now deemed to be almost entirely compatible” (Lindstrom, 1992). However, he avers that “In PNG, ...it is less easy to be a good traditionalist and a good Christian at the same time” (Lindstrom, 1992:9). Agreeing, Foster (1992:286-287) notes that *kastam* in Papua New Guinea is often set in contrast to other activities or institutions, such as *bisnis* (“business” TP) or *lotu* (“church” TP). However, this opposition is not always the case. As Dundon (2007a:141) points out, “expressions of Gogodala customary ways ... seek to encompass business, Christianity, and development within its framework.” Colonialism, capitalism, and Christianity are not the only influences that have affected *kastam*, though they are significant; people have interacted with and been impacted by those around them before the colonial government began (Dundon, 2007a:135; Gewertz, 1983:31; Jolly, 1992:49; Linnekin & Poyer, 1990).

Local notions of “customary ways” (as *kastam* is often translated into English) are frequently discussed and debated in Melanesia (Keesing, 1982; Keesing & Tonkinson, 1982; Lindstrom, 1982, 1992; Miles, 1997:158; Tonkinson, 1982a). For instance, political candidates use *kastam* in Vanuatu to encourage people to support parties or initiatives that they say align with an earlier way of life (Keesing & Tonkinson, 1982; Lindstrom, 1982, 1992; Tonkinson, 1982a, 1982b). As Lindstrom describes, *kastam* is a notion that provides a way to critique and mobilise discussion about social values (Lindstrom, 1992). As he documents in Papua New Guinea, some people debate whether *kastam* is opposed to development and modernisation, Christian beliefs, or as enabling a stereotype of primitivism — of people living in the “Stone Age” (1992:7-14).

In the Sam collective, villagers esteem *kastam* because it allows them to come together and become *wanbel*. Without *kastam*, they would not know how to behave toward each other in a “proper” way, that is, in a way that shows they are *suma beli ne anggli beli* (“good men and good women”). Hence, being good entails behaving according to *kastam*. However, villagers also acknowledge that acting according to *kastam* can prevent them from engaging with development and Christianity in the way they would like. For example, while there are some trade stores in Buan, several have collapsed because the trade store owner felt obligated by *kastam* to give items to people without payment. This practice is referred to as *wantok pasin* (“treating relatives differently from other people” TP). However, the owners of a few stores that have been operating for some years now say that “business is business,” and insist that customers must buy items. One owner told me that now is the “time of money” and differentiated the time now from the time of his parents and grandparents. Regarding Christianity, the three Buan churches have expressed varying evaluations of *kastam*. To take one example, the Lutheran church lay leader condones betelnut chewing and tobacco smoking (both essential elements of *mul*), while the leaders of the Revival Centres and Four Square churches forbid ingesting either of them because this is felt to be antithetical to how they interpret Bible passages concerning taking care of the body. Additionally, some Christians believe communicating with deceased ancestors is acceptable, while others believe this goes against biblical commands.

However, many Sam people hold that “doing *kastam* properly” is integral to being *wanbel*. Hence, when they interact in a way that is seen to promote good relationships, they are said to be performing *mangau beli* (“good actions/behaviour”), and, conversely, if they do not perform the ritual or their role “properly,” they “do bad behaviour” (“*mangau hali yudxm*”). As in other parts of Papua New Guinea, people in Buan village view *kastam* in terms of creating and accessing networks of relational ties (see Gregory, 1982; Robbins, 1998; M. Strathern, 1988; Wagner, 1981 [1975]). For

example, during one *gai* (“parallel cousin”) exchange I observed in Songum, the assembled *malanggu* critiqued past *kastam*, and urged the two *gai* to perform their ceremony properly. An elderly woman chastised the assembly over failures she had seen in previous ceremonies. She warned the people that they needed to give the pig and conduct the *mun tuwax* (“clan-owned songs and dances which can be bought and sold in *wanbel* meetings”) correctly. As she was speaking, another lady ran out and, saying they danced like this, made sweeping motions at the legs of the assembled men on one side of the circle. While people laughed, she then straightened up and said, “Do like this,” in Tok Pisin, and held her stick up like a spear and danced. Soon afterwards, a man stood up and decried that people do not “shake hands” with the other group, but just “take the pig and leave.” Instead of people showing that they were *wanbel* by *sek han* (“shake hands, be reconciled” TP) and cooking food and eating a meal together, this man said that people just focussed on obtaining material objects — not the way the objects allowed them to be reconciled.

People put energy into critiquing and interrogating *kastam* practices because performing *kastam* is necessary for the community to strengthen important relationships, such as between *gai*. The *gai* social bond is important because the *gai* provide essential linkages between *malanggu* and those outside the family. *Kastam* helps to maintain or repair relationships, and is crucial to being *wanbel*. In focusing on relationships, Melanesians “reckon the value of relationships rather than of the individuals who make them up or the larger structures of which they may empirically be a part” (Robbins, 1998:292). Maintaining relationships, as well as creating shared meaning, through *kastam* is central to other Melanesian societies as well (Foster, 1992; Gregory, 1982; Keesing, 1982; Keesing & Tonkinson, 1982; Lindstrom, 2008; Otto, 1992, 2011, 2015; Robbins, 1998; Smith, 1994:31-33; M. Strathern, 1988; Tonkinson, 1982a, 1982b; Wagner, 1981 [1975]). For the Sam, although *kastam* can be contested and used differently by different people (Foster, 1992:284; Lindstrom, 1992:7; Miles, 1997:158), performing *kastam* according to the expectations of at least a majority of the Sam collective is called “doing *wanbel* well” (“*wokim wanbel gut*” TP). “Doing *wanbel* well” describes the Sam value of fulfilling social convention – *inapim tingting bilong ol* (“fill up/fulfil their thoughts” TP) – to become *wanbel* through acting in the “right” way. If someone does not *inapim tingting bilong ol*, then they have not done the *kastam* in a way that brings about *wanbel*.

The Sam people have many types of *kastam* events in which different kinds and amounts of objects are exchanged and which are initiated in a variety of *mul*, such as marrying two people, buying land or a clan song and dance, and burying a family member. A prominent *kastam* ceremony that occurs often in the Sam area is *gai* exchange, in which a person shows respect and appreciation for their

gai (“parallel cousin”). While some *mul* are often aimed at one goal, they can also accomplish several things at once. At a *mul* in Buan, I was told that the purpose of the ceremony was to remember their social duty and bond to each other as *gai*. However, I learned during the meal after the ceremony that they also finished paying for a *mun tuwax* bought from the other *gai*’s clan in the previous generation. After their fathers were unable to conclude the exchange earlier, the debt passed on to their children. In this example, one side gave a pig, taro, betelnut, pots, bowls and other objects, while the other gave a pig and other food. Both sides needed to give something to each other, so that both sides felt *wanbel*. As a participant told me, “They eat pig and we too eat pig; they spit *xa* (“betelnut”) and we, too, spit *xa*.”

The *gai* exchange, and other *mul*, are ways Sam speakers create and maintain *wanbel*, which, beyond showing respect for kin, are important in that they bring about the beneficial aspects inherent to being *wanbel*. The night of the *gai* ceremony I mentioned above, I was outside filling water buckets to carry to our house, and I peered through the dusk and saw one of the *gai* walking nearby. I asked him what the *gai* ceremony meant to him. He shared with me,

I feel happy after this *kastam*. I am happy because I know that [cousin’s name] is *wanbel* with me. I know that I will not have problems, and good things will happen to me. I was *wanbel* with [cousin’s name], and he is now *wanbel* with me, and my chickens will not die or get lost, and I will be happy. That is why I am happy.

In *mul*, people “show their insides” by giving gifts that have value. Objects have an inherent value such that exchanging them shows that a person feels *wanbel* toward others. Substitutes used by Revival Centres of PNG members, like mandarins and peanuts, lack the narcotic effect present in tobacco and betelnut in *kastam* events. For those who can chew betelnut and smoke tobacco, these narcotics are an inherent aspect of *mul*.

Thus, exchanges among the Sam community involve objects that have an inherent value, like animals, garden produce, pots, knives, mattresses, and money. The Sam villagers admire store-bought items for their usefulness and durability, but they acknowledge that these items are mass produced and do not reflect the essence of the giver as animals and garden food do, which the giver laboured to cultivate and nurture. Thus, animals and garden produce have a different, personal quality in exchange ceremonies. In exchanging objects and eating together, people feel all the parties have sacrificed to give and receive something valuable, and their conflict is settled. Exchanging food demonstrates a person’s desire to be *wanbel*, since food is connected to enhancing and preserving life and it is also an attempt to ensure wellbeing in the future. In addition, since growing food and caring for animals takes care and effort, not only of one person but that person’s

malanggu, giving food demonstrates a host of relational values and ways that *wanbel* is enacted and embodied.

Additionally, animals and garden produce are special exchange items in that they are partible. For instance, as one Sam man told me, "I cannot give something that belongs to another man. I must give something that belongs to me, something I worked hard for, my bones hurt for. That is what I must give to another, like I myself, like my very insides." As Strathern asserts about the partible nature of gifts, "Persons or things may be transferred as 'standing for' (in our terms) parts of persons. ... As parts, then, these objects create mediated relations" (M. Strathern, 1988:178). She continues,

Hafted axes and shell valuables do not simply depict human beings but depict the relationships between persons. The 'elbow' of the ax represents the vital turning point in a person's relations with the father's kin; the strands and colors of red shell necklaces not only refer to their procreative powers but to the relationship between maternal images of corporation and paternal images of individuation. To state that these wealth objects are 'personifications' is not to set them against 'objectifications', for that implies an unwarranted double participation in the equation between subjects and persons, and the separation of subjects from objects, promoted by commodity fetishism. Objects are created not in contradistinction to persons but out of persons. (M. Strathern, 1988:171)

People give and receive objects as extensions of themselves. After the exchange, these valued objects contain value because of the relationships they have created or will create in future exchanges.

In addition, food is valued for its role as an exchange item and through its embodiment of *wanbel* in the meal consumed by all parties after their *wanbel*, which is different than how they use *xa* ("betelnut") and *kas* ("tobacco"). Betelnut and tobacco are exchanged and chewed or smoked when people sit together to discuss an important issue or when Sam people meet and converse, such as meeting each other on the trail. If one person lacks one of them, the other will share what he has with him. In giving these substances, they give substances that are part of themselves since they grew and harvested the betelnut or tobacco. The consuming of these substances results in a pleasurable and relaxed feeling. Betelnut and tobacco help facilitate and enhance discussions. A Buan friend told me that there had to be betelnut at every *mul* so that conversation was relaxed and friendly, to ease tensions and help the participants become *wanbel* (see M. Marshall, 1979:453; Zimmerman, 1982:262). Unlike food, which is exchanged at the end of a *mul*, both men and women consume and exchange betelnut during it.

Negotiations over what each side will give the other are based on several factors. One is the nature of the exchange. In community *wanbel* meetings, rather than village courts, the village leaders

mediate between the parties to decide what is appropriate to give to compensate the other side. They pass offers between both sides until finally both parties are satisfied. At an agreed-upon time, the parties exchange an equal number of objects: *bol alak* for *bol alak* (“pig with teeth”), pot for pot, and so on. However, if the exchange is in the context of a village court case, then the purpose of the *wanbel* meeting is to compensate someone, to make things “fair” in a local context. There are two levels of courts: courts held outside the village and those held within it. Courts outside the village are not seen as *mul*; they have different processes by which the magistrate reaches a decision. However, courts in the village, while they are similar to the courts in Madang in that their decision is binding and enforceable by local police, they are similar to *mul* in that they are decided by a local person who adjudicates the case like a *mul* — complete with exchanges, *sek han*, and betelnut. Therefore, in a village court case, the magistrate sets the amount one side compensates the other, with the goal of making the sentence match how much the victim has lost. A former Buan magistrate told me that he tried to balance the actions of both sides and allocate the correct amount of compensation, to make the decision fair. Although fairness is a subjective judgement, if the magistrate can decide the verdict in a way that both sides see as “fair,” the various parties to the crime would be *wanbel* again and less likely to appeal the decision. Some cases, such as adultery and divorce, are more difficult to resolve than other types of cases, but regardless, those who need to compensate the other party are given a period of time to collect the payment. At that time, the parties meet again, and the magistrate watches as the payment is given to the victim(s), who *sek han*, and proclaim that they are *wanbel*.

Another factor that the Sam villagers consider when evaluating an exchange is the context and the purpose of the exchange. For example, in bride wealth payment ceremonies, as briefly discussed above, the family of the man to be married gives the bride’s family the objects they have negotiated, like pigs, money, pots, plates, food, and other household items. In return, the woman’s family gives the woman to the groom’s clan, and hence gives them her ability to garden and raise children.⁴⁶ I was told that the bride’s family also gives some items to the bride so that she is not totally dependent on her husband’s family for household things she needs such as a mattress, bush knife, pots, and plates.

In mortuary rituals, showing the *malanggu’s pari* through *kastam* is woven throughout the mortuary event, which is called *unduman* (“burial and mourning practices”). The *malanggu* living

⁴⁶ The Sam villages are patrilineal, and thus, according to *kastam*, the woman should go to live with her husband’s family. This is not always the case, however, and this can cause *kulik*, as the example I cited in Chapter Four concerning the couple’s baby who died.

with the person who died is responsible to gather food to cook and betelnut for those who will come to mourn, build the coffin, lay the body on a *limbum* (bark from the *areca* palm) mat inside a house for viewing and mourning, dig the hole at the cemetery, and cover over the coffin. In these practices, the *gai* ("parallel cousin") takes a lead role in their fulfilment, and he receives the gifts others bring, referred to as *las pe* ("last pay" TP). The *malanggu* who live in other houses show *kastam* to the deceased woman's husband and children by looking sombre and unkempt ("*yamu*"), and bringing food and gifts to give to the deceased person's *gai*.

People tell stories about the person who died, wail, and stay awake during the night to "protect the body" (*suma gobul xumarayax*) and "watch" (*xoxyax*), a practice which the Rawa, southwest of the Sam area, also perform (see Dalton, 2016:63-66). They observe the corpse for signs that indicate the person died from sorcery. For example, as is the case for the Rawa, fireflies can be the manifestation of the spirit of a deceased Sam ancestor, but although Rawa people do not see them as harmful, the Sam believe that if one is observed flying near the place where the person died, it is their "reflection/spirit" (*unun*) seeking the murderer(s) to take revenge on them (cf. Dalton, 2016:69). During this time of *unduman* ("burial and mourning practices"), they show deference and sorrow toward the dead person because, although the person's body is inanimate, their spirit (*unun*) is nearby and aware. During this time, if the person has died from causes that are clearly not linked with sorcery, the *unun* will not be vengeful, but may still manifest their presence by touching or breathing in a person's face, and people may feel their presence by getting goose bumps ("*xo minjiri*") and feel afraid. Thus, besides protecting their relative's body, living people aim to make the spirit of the deceased person happy, as they say, *amamasim bodi* ("make the body happy" TP). Besides showing that they miss the person and care for him or her, they also try to show that the entire *malanggu* is united in this feeling of *pari beli* toward him or her. If they do not do this, the dead person's spirit might get angry, and retaliate against people by causing sickness or death.

The *malanggu* show their *pari beli* to the deceased person in various ways. They assemble to protect and be with the deceased, and also to share a meal together just after burying the body. While the women are expected to prepare the meal, the men are supposed to build the coffin, carry the body in the coffin to the gravesite, dig the hole, bury the coffin, and plant *sisiri* ("cordyline bush") around the grave. Everyone comes back from the cemetery, and eats the meal the *malanggu* women have prepared, and then depart for their houses. In one funeral, held a week after I arrived in Buan, the process took only two days and one night, as opposed to the three-day mourning rites practiced by Lutheran Church members. I was told that the husband and his deceased wife were both Revival Centres of PNG members, and the husband deviated from *kastam* and decided to hold

a shorter mourning period because he felt the *kastam*'s longer mourning period incorporated spirits in a way that was contrary to the teachings of the Bible.

In these examples of *kastam*-based exchange, it might appear that they are set and established, but amounts and ways of exchange are negotiated and often contested; as Lindstrom shows, *kastam* is debatable (Lindstrom, 1992:7-14; cf. Miles, 1997:158). For example, when the schools at Wongbe and Bongu needed to raise funds for school building projects, they decided to encourage people to give money in two reciprocal fundraising exchange ceremonies at Wongbe first and at Bongu later. In the first exchange, the Bongu school children and parents came to the Wongbe schoolground, and after traditional dances and speeches highlighting their mutual dependence on each other, school children from both schools walked up to the front, where men waited under a shade shelter, and handed them their money. Their fundraising resembled a *mul*, in that both sides exchanged something of value. While the fundraising committee held the same fundraiser at the Bongu School the next week, fewer people from Wongbe participated and the Bongu School received less money than they had given earlier. This led to the collapse of further fundraising efforts between the two schools. Court cases also are sites where *kastam* is malleable. In one case, a young woman proclaimed in public that a young man in the village had raped her, and the accused young man took her to court because he was upset that the woman had damaged his reputation. Initially, the magistrate was unable to find a judgment that seemed "fair," and he decided on, in his words, a "shortcut." His alternative was to order both to apologise to the other, shake hands, and be *wanbel*, and neither side would get compensation. This was an unusual decision, since both sides had claimed they had been harmed, but both sides agreed with this decision, and the matter was quickly settled.

These descriptions of *mul* illustrate that giving and negotiation, often a part of *kastam*, show and affirm relational ties through exchange. Giving brings someone into relationship with someone else, and is therefore how people not currently *wanbel* with others in the community become *wanbel*, sharing in the good things that will result from the community's *wanbel*. In addition, exchanging objects like pigs and money require the assistance of the entire *malanggu*, and this binds them to the terms of the *wanbel* agreement as well as those directly involved. Likewise, those who refuse to partake in the process are perceived as refusing to engage in the social life of the community; in one informant's words, "*sapos ol i lus tingting long mipela, mipela tu bai lus tingting long ol*" ("if they forget us, we also will forget them" TP). Buan people say that people who cut themselves off from the *malanggu* will later regret their actions when they need land for gardening or help building a house.

“Giving good insides”: Restoring equivalence, creating amity

Exchange offers a way for the Sam people to make their inner disposition visible; Sam social interaction takes place as people engage in the mutual exchange of *pari*, which they recognise as a form of gift exchange. Through everyday acts which demonstrate *pari beli hunjudxum* (“I will give them good insides”), people maintain and strengthen good relationships. In Sam, people feel *pari beli* (“good insides”) when they give things to each other. Giving food and other things are common ways to show amity in many other areas in Melanesia as well (E. Schieffelin, 1976:47-48; Smith, 1994:164-168; 2013:30; Von Poser, 2013). Von Poser examines how the Bosmun people in the Sepik area of PNG give and receive food to show a friendly disposition toward someone else, such that they want to give something to show their emotional bond, not simply for political or economic reasons (Von Poser, 2013:10). Mageo (2011:76) calls the informal giving of food out of an emotional or empathetic attachment “enacted empathy.” The Sam villagers also mention that they feel “sorry” for others (“*ol i sori long ol*” TP), which causes them to give things to them. But while they seem to be motivated by *pari beli* toward the other person, as wanting to meet their expressed need, they also see this empathy as something that the other person should share, and as a result, will feel obligated to reciprocate later. In other words, their giving is motivated by an empathy which those they give to should share and want to reciprocate.

People also “enact empathy” by visiting and spending time with others. This “intense sociality”, to use Young’s phrase (1971a:34-35), is reflected in various ways, but one aspect of “giving one’s insides” is visiting and spending time with others, and increasing opportunities to cross paths and spend time together in “active participation” in each other’s lives (Errington & Gewertz, 2007:93). As well as showing that the visitor values the host family and is *wanbel* with them, the host family is given the opportunity to speak and behave in ways that show their *pari beli* toward the visitor. If someone does not visit others, the community will question why he or she does not want to be sociable and they will assume that they do not want to be *wanbel*.

Gifts also embody memories of relationships which, when given in a *mul*, affirm relationships which demonstrate *wanbel* that includes the other members of the community. Exchange in a *mul* gives people the opportunity to demonstrate to each other, and their *malanggu*, that they are reconciled. For example, I realised that I had an obligation to show my *pari beli* toward my *was papa* (literally, “watch father” TP) when he asked me for a solar light (a small unit with a built-in solar panel, light, and battery), and that he wanted me to give it to him in a *mul*. He clarified that I should give him the light in front of other village people and publicly announce that I was giving it to him to show that I remembered and was thankful for the aid he and his family had given us when we first came

to Buan. To be sure, I had been giving him and his family various things through the time over the previous ten years, but he wanted something larger and more visible that others could see that would signify our enduring relationship. In his view, time had not lessened our debt to him and his family, and we had an obligation to give him something in a way that others in the community could see and know it belonged to him. In echoes of Mauss's statement on the obligatory nature of exchange (Mauss, 1990 [1954]:1), my *was papa* averred that I had a continuing obligation toward him that flowed on from his gifts and assistance to me earlier. Thus, this request was like the *kastam* exchanges I observed occurring often in the village, for example, at *gai* exchanges. While the solar light was an object, in giving it to my *was papa*, it would become, more importantly, an expression of an ongoing relationship with deep ties back through history that continue into the future, even after one or both of us dies, since those who are dead are still aware and involved in exchange with the living.

As in other places in Papua New Guinea, Sam men and women see amity as being restored when they participate in exchange, which not only brings an equivalence of material items, but also a relational equivalence (Burrige, 1995 [1960]:17; Errington & Gewertz, 2007:93). As Burrige writes,

Amity is itself most significantly manifested in the idea of equivalence: in the idea that individuals are in a state of moral equality, one human being, as a whole, being neither morally worse nor morally better than another... In action, equivalence and therefore amity, finds primary expression in formal exchanges of foodstuffs, whether they are between individuals, or groups of households. (Burrige, 1995 [1960]:17)

The desire for a sense of equivalence, and its frustration with the coming of wealthy foreigners into Papua New Guinea, is a compelling rationale for the beginning and continuance of cargo cults and other organised efforts (Burrige, 1995 [1960]; Errington & Gewertz, 2004, 2007; Macintyre, 2010; Tabani, 2013; Tabani & Abong, 2013).

Using behaviour to become *wanbel*, such as by exchanging objects to become reconciled, Sam villagers seek to regain equivalence, and hence, the sense that the individuals or groups involved in the exchange share a similar value. The Sam people talk about equivalence in two ways: in Tok Pisin, they say that people have *namba* ("worth, social value" TP) and, in Sam, men and women that are respected are called *suma ne anggli beli* ("good/mature men and women").⁴⁷ Villagers who are *beli* ("good") fulfil their obligations in their *malanggu*; they are not selfish or lazy. Being equivalent, they are ideally equal in terms of their ability to be efficacious co-agents in their community's future

⁴⁷ Perhaps the term "*namba*" originated in the time of the colonial government, when the Australian patrol officer assigned authority and leadership roles to people in the village (Robbins, 2004a:79-80).

(Errington & Gewertz, 2007:93; M. Strathern, 1992). Practically, while people are equal in worth, they have different capabilities and roles in the community: some men are better speakers or leaders than other men, some may obtain jobs in Madang, or vary in other ways. Women may also differ from men in their role in exchanges, in cultivating, carrying, and cooking the food used in exchanges, while men publicly represent the *malanggu* to the assembly. Yet, both men and women are important to their *malanggu* and have equivalence of worth; they have *namba* and are *suma ne anggli beli*. Differences are not seen to make people intrinsically worth less than others. Instead, people feel unequal to others when they observe that someone is not *wanbel* and willing to share with them. In this context, gift exchange allows people to “rebalance” their relationships with people with whom they feel a lack of parity.

Being equal leads to a community in which no one has transgressed on the property or freedom of others, or shirked their relational obligations. As interviewees explained to me, a *suma beli* is a person who does not act according to his or her own desires, but considers the need of their *malanggu*. In contrast, some act “like wild pigs” (“*olsem wel pik*” TP) by only doing what benefits them personally. For example, as one village leader told me, they might “kill something, a good animal, but hide it and eat it alone.” They would eat it and not think of their *malanggu*. Thus, actions of an *unyi suma* (“greedy man”) promote inequality and leads to conflict. However, if people in the village behave in a way that considers the needs of their *malanggu*, they will not have any disagreements or disputes, and the village will be wholly *wanbel* and united in their *pari*. As in other Melanesian societies, the Sam believe that being *wanbel* is a “moral stance,” in which no one feels encroached upon or slighted by others. Thus, creating and maintaining *wanbel* is a moral imperative that will lead to approval by the ancestors and spirit beings, who will bring them prosperity and wellbeing as a result (Brison, 1991:326; Errington, 1974; Robbins, 2004a:14; Tuzin, 1980:139-141).

Exchange, and other behaviours that enhance positive relationships, are vital to the Sam idea of *wanbel*, not simply in terms of becoming equivalent in the present moment, but also in obtaining future benefits, including such things as healthy children, bountiful harvests, happy and supportive relationships, and government help in maintaining roads. The Sam have two ways of talking about their desired future: in Sam, *beli sixa* (“be well”), and, in Tok Pisin, *gutpela sindaun* (“wellbeing” TP). These two terms connote a time when living will be easier and happier, relationships will be harmonious, and they will experience a good life. *Beli sixa* and *gutpela sindaun* are demonstrated in the entirety of life. Gibbs defines *gutpela sindaun* as,

fulfilment in every aspect of life, be it health, success, fertility, respect, honour, or influence over others. Ultimately it is the absence of such negative forces in life as sickness, death, defeat,

infertility, or poverty... It is the evident possession of abundant life and effective living showing itself in harmonious relationships. (Gibbs, 2010:39-40)

Similarly, Sam speakers believe that, by being continuously *wanbel*, they will experience a monumental change in their lives characterised by prosperity and ease, an absence of pain and harm, and good relationships.

When various parties in the village hold a *mul* to become *wanbel*, their reconciliation accomplishes two things: it creates *pari beli* among those who are present, and their commitment to become *wanbel*, as shown through their gifts, creates the expectation that they will continue to be *pari beli*. When the associated parties begin an exchange and commit to give something to the other party, they demonstrate their trust that the other parties will fulfil what they said they would do. Their mutual dependence on each other, expressed through their continual giving and re-giving, signifies an expectation that the exchange will allow them to be *wanbel* in the future, and perhaps result in a continuous *wanbel* that allows them to “be well” (*beli sixa*).

Conclusion

In exploring the role of behaviour in becoming *wanbel*, this chapter discusses how the Sam people authenticate their statements of *pari*, and create an equivalence of personal and communal worth by showing and giving *pari* to each other. Hence, behaviour (*mangau*) is a key way that people become reconciled. Through relating in *mul*, in interactions called “commotions” (Errington & Gewertz, 2007:93), people express both *mangau beli* and *mangau hali* in the process of becoming *wanbel*. Whether one is showing that one is *wanbel* with someone or the opposite, they must be genuine in how they express what they are thinking and feeling to have an efficacious influence. When their speech and behaviour send the same message, they are seen to be sincerely presenting their *pari* to the people in the *mul* (see also Keane, 2002; Schram, 2013:32).

Sam villagers interact together in *wanbel* meetings in order to restore equivalence among disputant parties. Being seen as equal allows the collective to demonstrate and express *wanbel* to each other which is both moral and beneficial. Even though they expect that disagreements will arise, they are committed to resolving them through the *wanbel* process. As one interviewee said, “*Wanbel* must arise,” since only this will permit the community to experience prosperity and other benefits. *Wanbel* is felt to be increasingly elusive, however, in the contemporary experience of capitalism, modernity, and Christianity. In the next chapter, I consider how the Sam people preserve and become *wanbel* in this shifting context, which presents unique challenges for them as they try to maintain equivalence and obtain *gutpela sindaun*.

Chapter 7: *Wanbel* in the time of money

Before, *wanbel* was the same. Now we are in one system, but before was a different system. Before, the ancestors *harim tok* ("heard and obeyed what someone said" TP) and followed *lo* ("commands, taboos" TP) strictly. They did not have lots of *wanbel*. They were really peaceful. They did not have fights or arguments. In our system now, lots of *wanbel* happens. We make many problems. We go to another's bush and then get taken to court. After we become *wanbel*, I go again. We do lots of *wanbel*. Before, our ancestors followed *lo*. If I went into someone's garden, they could kill me. When Jesus came down to ground, this *lo* finished, and there was mercy. Now, if I go over there, the man [owner of the garden] will be angry, but later he will have mercy on me and let me go. If I go to another person's bush, they take me to court, we become *wanbel*, and still I will go back again.

(Mikel, 6 April 2014, Buan village)

As this quote (above) suggests, Sam villagers draw a distinction between the present time — which they characterise as the "time of money" — and that of previous generations, lawful and "peaceful" times. In the time of the ancestors, *wanbel* was not as common or necessary as now, an era which they describe as being fraught with division and conflict. Many feel that they must navigate and mediate *wanbel* and *kulik* ("burdensome problem/issue") in ways that differ significantly from those of their ancestors; this has led to feelings of frustration and discontentedness. I argue that this uneasiness arises because the context within which *wanbel* takes place is changing as people interact increasingly with key ideals and concepts associated with modernity, Christianity, and capitalism. These conceptual frameworks, while markedly different from notions that existed in the pre-colonial history, have become more and more a part of Sam life and have a significant impact on the notion and practice of *wanbel*. Thus, while Sam speakers still affirm the need to be *wanbel*, they are finding that conflict is more common and has different causes than in earlier times. The quote by Mikel illustrates the common response to my questions regarding whether they or their ancestors experienced more *wanbel*. Initially, I thought that being "*wanbel* more than before" was a positive outcome; however, I realised I had misinterpreted their words. People talked about being forced to follow the *wanbel* process more often because disputes were increasingly common. This heightened frequency of *wanbel* negotiations had become tiring for the community, especially the village leaders, and they felt that the constant lack of *wanbel* denied them health and happiness. The more they sought *wanbel*, the less they were able to feel the beneficial effects of *wanbel*.

This chapter explores the Sam notion and practice of becoming *wanbel* in this time of money and increased conflict and disagreement, a context that differs markedly from that of their ancestors. I begin by narrating some of the stories and experiences village people told me about new challenges that have arisen and how they navigate them. These narratives present three categories of

obstacles to being *wanbel*. First, there are some difficulties that hinder becoming *wanbel*, which can be managed but not eliminated, such as the desire for money and independence. The second challenge to becoming *wanbel* is differing desires for a better future. Thirdly, *wanbel* itself has been changed in fundamental ways, which makes reconciliation, in certain situations, problematic and increasingly difficult to negotiate. Finally in the chapter, I consider how the Sam struggle to be *wanbel* in the time of money. Thus, they navigate a tension between needing to be *wanbel* to obtain *gutpela sindaun*, and the reality that *wanbel* brings together people, concepts, practices, and institutions that are based on widely variant ideas of *wanbel* and its continuing value.

Narratives of unfulfillment

The interviews I conducted in the Sam villages focussed on *wanbel*, but the people I spoke to often expressed the feeling that their lives were somehow, fundamentally, different and less fulfilling than what their forebears experienced. They feel something has changed between then and now, such that they must work harder and are unable to live a “good life.” They told me many stories illustrating their lack of fulfilment, which highlight the challenges faced by their parents and grandparents and the ones that they experience today.

When Buan interviewees talked about their dissatisfaction with the present, they often mentioned a longing for the days of their grandparents. In those days, they told me, gardens were much more productive and required less work. Their parents gardened an area a quarter of the size of the current gardens and harvested twice as much as they do today. As my village father told me,

Before, we were under the blessing of God, but now that has changed. Our ancestors used a stone ax, and would cut one tree alone, and plant just a small garden, and that would feed them for one year. Why? Now the metal ax has arrived, and it is sharper than the stone ax and with it we can do lots more work. But we must clear many more trees and make a big garden, or several gardens, to feed our family. Even with these new things, we must work harder than before. Our ancestors used this stone ax. This has been around for a long time. They used it for cutting trees and the smaller branches for the interior house posts, and women too used it for their work. But now, no one knows how to make these.

As he noted, there are things that people now have forgotten or have never learned about life in the earlier times. In the quote above, people forgot how to make the stone ax head when they began using steel ones: their forgetting was tied to the transition to a new way of life.

As institutions, corporations, and governments throughout Melanesia have become increasingly more visible and involved in local life, the communities they engage with have often experienced new benefits and opportunities. However, like the Sam, communities often feel dislocated from a former, familiar time, and dissatisfied when they cannot access the things these corporations and

governments offer (see Akin & Robbins, 1999; Bamford, 2007; Besnier, 2004, 2011; Dorothy Counts, 1972; Errington & Gewertz, 2004, 2005; Foster, 2002, 2005a; Gewertz & Errington, 1996; Josephides, 2008; Knauft, 2002b; LiPuma, 2000; McDougall, 2016:43-53; Patterson & Macintyre, 2011b; Robbins & Wardlow, 2005; M. Strathern, 2009). Describing the impact that outside influences can have on people, Knauft asserts, “In post-colonial circumstances, forms of knowledge and value compete; epistemic disjunctures are palpable, and subjectivity and agency become especially complex” (Knauft, 1997:242).

However, as people engage with these influences, they take on and embody aspects of each, and it is difficult to see where the global ends and the local begins (Dundon, 2011; Foster, 2005b:173; Jolly, 2005:138). As Jolly (2005:138) notes,

where is the horizon that separates the foreign and the indigenous, and who can successfully claim to make foreign powers indigenous or to “make the global local”? The boundaries of the foreign and the indigenous are fluid and contested—especially between genders and generations. Moreover, such contests are configured in part by the differences between localities.

People differ in how they incorporate various influences into daily life, which then are transformed from “foreign” in an abstract form to “indigenous” when part of a local context. For example, Jolly shows that Christianity, while initially a foreign influence like “money, computers, notions of democracy, and human rights,” becomes “most thoroughly indigenised” and “inherently local, as fundamental to the Pacific way and as foundational to the imagination of most Pacific nations” (Jolly, 2005:139-140). Dundon relates the fluidity of these encounters in her discussion of Gogodala pastors who transformed the message and practice of Christianity into one that was meaningful to Gogodala listeners. As she states, “the Gogodala pastors were instrumental in the development of a certain kind of Papuan Christian, one modelled closely on their own gendered practices, embodied experiences, and *ela gi*-lifestyle or ‘way of life.’” (Dundon, 2016:233). Thus, while Christianity and modernity are not part of the local way of life at first, they become incorporated into what people think and how they behave within the local situation.

The different expressions and transformations of modernity in Papua New Guinea are driven by local concerns and situations. In these locally-driven conversations, people characterise and reflect modernity in ways that yield “multiple modernities,” not a single, unified phenomenon (Besnier, 2011:9; Kamali, 2007; Patterson & Macintyre, 2011a:1; Robbins & Wardlow, 2005; Sutcliffe, 2011:34-35). Gewertz and Errington identify this as “a localized process of unfolding and competing strategies and rhetorics, a process more of an ongoing shift than an abrupt and absolute transformation, one in which important parameters concerning personal and collective identity

have been in flux” (1996:477). This contested process of negotiating their own identity and who they are as a community also involves interacting with new ideas to create notions of what is valuable and relevant in their local context. Elsewhere, Errington and Gewertz note, “As Chambri were, both individually and collectively, trying to ascertain what traditions to preserve, transform, or abandon, the meanings of both modernity and traditional culture as major and explicit reference points were themselves being negotiated and mutually affected” (Errington & Gewertz, 1996:114). To take just one example from Songum village, while the Sam churches urge their congregants to refrain from practicing benevolent sorcery and instead trust God, some people believe the rituals of their ancestors are important for their wellbeing. One Songum man, caught between these options, animatedly told me as he stood and paced, waving his arms, that the church prevented him from practicing a special ritual to make his garden grow better, and now his gardens were not producing well. He asserted, “We are suffering!”

New burdens that hinder wanbel

When I talked with Sam people about their lives, they often mentioned new *kulik* they were experiencing that made *wanbel* difficult. Sometimes the *kulik* they talked about was something that their ancestors experienced, but there were also *kulik* that arose due to more recent innovations and ideas. These more recent *kulik* fell into three dynamics: the desire for money, the rising independence of individuals, and the proliferation of things that divide the *malanggu*.

Firstly, money is a potential source of conflict that can inhibit *wanbel*. Money has been a part of Sam life for many years. My village uncle often told me about Buan men who worked on plantations along the coast. The New Guinea Company was based for a time at Bogadjim (northeast of Buan), and other plantations were started in the later part of the 1800s (Hannemann, 1944:55-56). But in addition to being a part of *wanbel* ceremonies and exchanges, money is more and more seen as something that individuals earn, in contrast to something that groups cooperate to produce. In addition, the ability of some to earn more than others leads to a sense that they are worth more. A phrase I heard often in Buan was, “we are in the time of money.” Sometimes people contrasted the practice of giving food and animals in exchange ceremonies with giving money. As one man said, “Now is the time of money, but before, they did not give that. [Before, they gave...] a pig or chicken, and would shake hands while the *asa gadi* (“ancestor head”) watched.

Having an education allows a person to avail themselves of the money-earning opportunities in Madang and gives a person prestige if they can use their education to increase their wellbeing. For example, a young man who went to high school and then to business school now runs a cocoa

cooperative that buys wet cocoa beans from the growers in the Sam area, dries them in his fermentary, and then sells the dry beans in Madang. He is young, and in earlier times, would have less prestige than older men, however, because he has an education and business knowledge and contacts, he behaves like a village leader when he speaks in community meetings and holds “shareholder” meetings for the cocoa cooperative. In contrast, there are also many young men and women who have trouble finding paid work in Madang. Those who graduate from high school after grade ten or twelve receive their grades, or a twelfth grade certificate, but then find that this is not enough to guarantee them work. Back in the village, they refer to their certificate as *skul pepa nating* (“a useless school paper” TP), and grade ten school leavers are nicknamed *gred ten nating* (“grade ten nothing” TP) (Troolin, 2013:286). They studied hard to gain an education, but now see no gain from their years of schooling. They are faced with the undesirable prospect of returning to the village to garden and grow cash crops like those who were not able to attend school at all. As Derek, a young grade ten graduate said,

Truly, we have a big worry with us, as we go around. Now in this time, we see the workmen, the public servants going around, okay, inside my thoughts are messed up. I was supposed to become this kind of man, but just because of a problem with the school fee and I am [in the village]... A big thing is that we must have money. Now in this time, we live and survive with money. Although I work and sweat so that I eat [garden] food, I must have money to buy myself something to wear. This kind of thinking dominates us.

High school leavers also feel *sem* (“shame” TP) that they are not able to make money and send some of it back to their *malanggu*, who had paid their school fees for so long. After receiving the community’s gifts and expectations for many years, the students hoped to engage in reciprocity as persons who could give, not just request, objects in reciprocity. Their concerns dominated their thoughts, and they felt hopeless. Responding to my question of how the other grade ten and twelve graduates felt about their future, Derek said, “I have been thinking a lot about this, and it has been affecting me. True, it looks like there is hope, but there is no money. [There is a] school fee problem.”

During the interviews and conversations about the inability to access development and money, many Sam people concluded that their ability to earn money was limited. This sense of dissatisfaction with development has come about in the last few decades, as they see and compare increasingly disparate living conditions. As one man I interviewed in Buan village said,

Before, when the ancestors were here, they did not know about or have any way for change or development to come ... and so they had a good living situation. They were living the way they had always lived. But now, in the time of money, money has come, and we are thinking of development. Changes came through the white man, and came to us now, and we need development.

In this “time of money,” Sam villagers have been exposed to alternate ways of life, and they desire to follow them. However, they feel unable to alter their living situation to match their desires and they resent that those groups that they think have power, the village and government leaders, take no action.

When people feel they are inferior or disadvantaged compared to others, they often try to use the *wanbel* process to regain equivalence. However, if they are unable to achieve balance that way, they may try alternative methods, such as crime or sorcery. People may turn to crime to relieve their feeling of inferiority or inequity by showing they can obtain what they desire; they assert their ability to take advantage of opportunities by exerting control over someone else or their possessions. As Gewertz and Errington (1996:482) note,

In 1987, when we had last discussed law and order problems with Chambri (and other Sepiks), we thought their analysis made more sense in indigenous terms because it focused on the capacity to effect social relationships. Many of them had already begun to recognize that the commensurate differences permitted by traditional egalitarianism were being threatened by the incommensurate differences of modern forms of hierarchy, including class (see Gewertz & Errington, 1991). They therefore spoke of “jealousy” and of the “anger” that resulted from it. They argued that youthful criminals wished through theft and often through violence “to bring those who had more than they down to their level.” These criminals, in other words, knew they could not otherwise achieve even potential parity with those who, by virtue of their good jobs, nice clothes, and fancy cars, regarded them as lacking social efficacy or significance.

Another method of becoming equal with someone else who seems superior is through sorcery (discussed in Chapter Three). As Humble notes, quoting his Papua New Guinean interlocutors, “when somebody nearby or a neighbour is having an improvement in their standard of living, people will feel inferior. This is when they try to look for *sanguma* or *puripuri* sorcery in order to kill the person,” and, “the sorcerers, because of their jealousy, put a spell on others to eliminate those who have a huge potential of becoming rich and wealthy in their community” (Humble, 2013:5). When people conclude that they are unable to achieve what they want, they may turn to crime or sorcery to relieve feelings of “jealousy” and “anger.”

A second category that has played a role in feeling unfulfilled is what a single man I interviewed in Jimpinden called “independence.” He asserted,

Now, us here, us young men, we got independence, and – *wanbel* was broken. Now we stand up individually (“*wanwan*” TP). Before, the ancestors did not stand up individually; they behaved properly. When we got independence [from Australia], it was like we each got independence. Now, if I kill something, a good animal, I hide it and eat it [alone]. I do not think of another. You are my brother, but I will eat it and not think of you.

Previously, people lived and worked together closely. They sang and danced together, but now, each *malanggu* holds their own *mun tuwax* (“clan-owned songs and dances that can be bought and

sold in *wanbel* meetings”) separate from the others. In the past, if someone killed an animal in the rainforest, they would bring it back and share the meat with their *malanggu*. Additionally, during the colonial government era, all the men would obey the *kukurai* (“colonial government-chosen village leader” TP) and, before that time, the *asa gadi* (“ancestor head”). In the time of the ancestors, the *asa gadi* organised the people in the clan to work together as a group. One time he might tell the men to attack another village. Another day, he might tell everyone to go to the garden to harvest taro, or to go to the sago swamp and make sago flour. People would do what he said; if someone complained or ignored him, he would order the *malanggu* to go to his house and ask him why he disobeyed the leader. They would persuade him with words or force to do what the leader expected of him.

In contrast, now people have a sense that it is good to help their family, but they do not feel obligated to obey the village leader like their ancestors obeyed the *asa gadi*. People in Buan village decide for themselves whether they want to come together with the others at the community meetings on Mondays, and whether they will do the work assigned by the village leader. I often heard people comment on how few people came to the community meetings and complain that they were acting *long laik bilong ol* (“according to their wishes [and not the community’s]” TP). This is not to say that everyone feels working together is unimportant — there are often a few representatives from each *malanggu* present at community meetings.

When people see or hear stories of violence and lawlessness, which they perceive is on the rise, they decry the spirit of independence that allows people the freedom to act in these ways. They say, “living now is very rough.” Sam speakers frequently complain that lawlessness is increasing, and the government fails to provide the discipline to restrain criminals. A common complaint is that criminals do not receive decisive retribution quickly, but now their accusers have to take the time to send word to the Ileg policeman to take the person to court, or they have to arrange to have a *wanbel* meeting with him. Then, the magistrate only fines him money, or demands he exchange something with the victim(s). Rarely do the police take someone into custody or send police units to the offender’s village to make an example of them. In past generations, however, the respondents’ grandfathers fought with bows and arrows, killing anyone who came into their land. There was no discussion over wrong-doing. They solved the problem of trespassing much more quickly than at present, though it led to retaliation later. But the men I talked with seemed to prefer prompt and decisive conflict resolution, which, due to the severity and suddenness of the decision, would lead people to carefully reconsider what they planned to do.

One sees the community's concern with selfishness in how the leaders condemn it in meetings. For example, church leaders preach on the dangers of selfishness and speak against it in their notices at the end of services. In one such moral comment, the pastor gave a homily on the importance of sharing. His source text was Hebrews 13:2, which discusses showing hospitality to strangers because sometimes angels masquerade as people (*Buk Baibel: The Bible in Tok Pisin*, 1989). God is not pleased if we do not give food to others, the pastor went on to explain. He asserted, "If you cook some rice and eat it in your house, and someone comes, God is watching to see what you will do. It might be an angel, sent to test whether you will share your food." This corresponds to other comments I have heard, such as "If you are greedy and hold something back for yourself, then you close the door to God's blessing." That is, being selfish stops God from sending benefits because the person who behaves in this way is not *wanbel* with his or her fellow community member(s).

Acting as an individual is also one reason people gave me for why trade stores end up closing a few months after they open. They begin as a "project" with start-up money from the trade store owner's *malanggu*, ostensibly to provide a way for the villagers to buy goods locally. During its operation, the store owner must be *wanbel* both with himself and his *malanggu*, or the store will encounter a difficulty and close. Thus, if the owner is not *wanbel* with himself, for example if he decides he wants to spend his time doing something else, or feels it does not satisfy him, he will close. Similarly, if the others who gave him start-up money or who are helping him manage the store get upset with him, they will not want to give him more money to keep the store running or keep helping him, and it will close. I heard two common reasons for stores closing: if the owner takes all the profit and gives none of it to his *malanggu*, or if customers ask to pay later but never do. In both cases, *wanbel* is broken. This is seen as stealing, because the owner is keeping the money for himself. In the words of one interviewee,

If I misuse the money belonging to others, and I steal it, then the trade store will be nothing. It will break [cease operation]. It is the money belonging to all of us. And if you take this money from the ground, ya, you take it and you make a business — that is the money of the fathers, and there will not be *wanbel*. Some of us will say, "Ah, he stole this money and he did not give it to us. He himself took it and he used it. It is the money of all of us. There will be burdened insides.

In stating that the money was from the "ground," the speaker (above) was both referring to the actual way it was earned, through selling produce from the ground, as well as the money's origin in the *malanggu*. The *malanggu* is closely tied to the ground, and each *malanggu* has a story that is tied to the land which they take care of and use. The ground and the story is synonymous with the *malanggu*. Thus, one result of being "independent," according to a man from Jimpinden, is that they ignore their tie to their *malanggu* and do not behave respectfully and generously toward

others. In ignoring this tie to the land, the person is cutting themselves off from their source of strength as member of a *malanggu* with spirit animals and ancestors.

The third type of dynamic that influences people's sense of fulfilment are things that they feel divide the community. Although there are many things that may do this, I will focus on three that I heard often: differing beliefs and practices of church denominations, interaction with logging companies, and the consumption of alcohol. Church members often debated the doctrinal differences of the churches in the Sam area that affected relationships. For example, several Lutherans told me that they felt the newer church denominations were too strict in prohibiting infant baptism and chewing betelnut. While Lutherans do not see them as wrong, people in the Revival and Four Square churches insist that their church doctrine and guidelines are clear that these activities are not permissible. Therefore, when Lutherans are not permitted to join one of the other churches unless they are baptised again as an adult or these other church leaders cast aspersion on their Lutheran baptism, they feel inferior and *wanbel* is broken. As people affirm or deny rules and standards of conduct, they often cast doubt on whether those in other churches are really Christians, which offends them and causes divisions in the village.

Local villagers have engaged extensively with logging companies, and three times have signed contracts with the companies to clear hard wood timber from their land. There have been several different companies operating in the Sam area since 2002, and while they started by paying "*wanbel* money" to begin negotiations, and then royalty money to take out logs, agreements with them have all collapsed. The Sam people believe the companies should use some of the timber they cut to construct clinics and school buildings and they should try to have a minimal impact on the environment (see also McDougall, 2016:50). Their perceived greediness and inability to speak Tok Pisin, not to mention Sam, has led to frequent breakdowns in relationships. Thus, in all three cases, after the company repaired the road from the Raicoast Highway to Buan and up to Wongbe and transported logs down to the coast for six months to several years, local young men stood in the middle of the road with bush knives and blocked the vehicles from going back up into the rainforest. Disputes not only arose between the logging company and local people, but also amongst Sam people over land boundaries which would determine who should receive royalties for timber extraction. When I was in the village conducting fieldwork, there was a succession of court cases to extract money from the previous logging company, as well as cases between *malanggu* over who owned the land on which the company had already paid royalties to log.

The consumption of alcohol is not a new phenomenon in the Sam area, but the way it is used has changed in recent times. Alcohol has been present in the Sam area from the time of the ancestors

who brewed an alcoholic beverage called *yawa* ("fermented banana alcohol" TP), but the process could only produce a small amount and this limited the amount people could consume. At that time, people drank *yawa* in the rainforest in small groups. At present, both teen and adult men drink beer at social gatherings and celebrations (see also Grossman, 1982:65-67; M. Marshall, 1982a:9; Sexton, 1982:110-112; Warry, 1982). Drinking alcohol has expanded rapidly in the rural as well as urban areas since 1977, when the national government passed the responsibility for liquor licensing onto the provinces (M. Marshall, 1982b:25). The Sam people buy beer in Madang, which is easy to transport when the logging road is maintained, but difficult when the road to those villages is not driveable. In recent years, the road has been well-maintained by logging companies, and so beer has been plentiful and a common beverage in village celebrations. Men commonly drink to become drunk, as I observed in my fieldwork, and as several researchers have noted in other places in Papua New Guinea (Darrouzet, 1982:302; Zimmerman, 1982:314).⁴⁸

Drinking carries a cost, not only in the money used to purchase it, but also because it can lead to social conflict and is a primary way that men assert their masculinity and power. As MacIntyre asserts,

the costs of alcohol use in PNG are great. On Lihir, men earning wages at the mine spent more than half their wages on beer-and in community meetings in Mt. Hagen, Lae, Rabaul, and Port Moresby women repeatedly testified to the ways that beer consumption contributed to family poverty. Beer is implicated in the majority of trauma cases in hospitals, especially those resulting from assault or motor vehicle accidents, and causes numerous illnesses in drinkers (Sinha, Sengupta and Purohit 1981; Marshall 1988; Posanau 1994; Watters and Dyke 1996; Ponifasio, Poki and Watters 2001). But its most negative social effect is in the way that beer is associated with the exercise of male power and the use of force-both legitimate and illegitimate. (Macintyre, 2008:190)

I frequently heard people at ceremonial exchanges and community events, both before and afterward, complaining about drunk men "disturbing *wanbel*." Disturbing *wanbel* came about most vividly in the way it often led to fighting and carousing, though wives also became upset that their husbands spent their money on beer. For example, during my fieldwork, the Wongbe school board held a ceremony at the end of the school year. A Boimbe man, who had been drinking, threw a stick toward a group of people and hit a Wongbe child in the arms of his mother. The woman's clan relatives were also there, and they were drunk, too. A fight erupted between Boimbe and Wongbe men, and then spread to a fight between *malanggu* in the same language group. This interrupted the cooking and sitting down to eat of the *wanbel* meal together, which was to take place after all

⁴⁸ Frequently, when I asked about drinking in the village, my interlocutor would volunteer his or her opinion that expatriates seem to not get drunk (Zimmerman, 1982:302). As several village men told me, "White men know how to drink a little bit. We drink to excess, we go over [the limit] (*mipela save dring ova TP*)."

the other parts of the ceremony. The next day, a friend of mine in Buan told me she was upset because, in all the fighting, the final meal that was to end the school celebrations, called a school closing, never took place. She walked back to Buan hungry. She said that this had happened twice before at Wongbe school closings. "*Oi i no fit long holim skul klosing* ("They are not capable of having a school closing." TP)," she complained.

Drinking to excess is seen as such a divisive issue that people are starting to take it into account when they plan social gatherings. This issue was discussed in the details of a *gai* exchange in Songum that I observed. As the two *gai* and their respective *malanggu* chewed betelnut at the end of the ceremony, one of them asked my friend, who was the local government leader, to prevent drunk people from disturbing the upcoming *mun tuwax* ("clan-owned songs and dances which can be bought and sold in *wanbel* meetings"). As my friend relayed to me, the man stood up and said, "...we all have to watch what the *gai* does in the morning. And we cannot allow drunk men to enter the area when the custom is still going..." He wanted the *kastam* ("customary ways, ceremony" TP) activity to proceed without hindrance from people who were drunk. He continued, "I want *kastam* to be *kastam*. *Kastam* cannot be disturbed by anything else." People who are intoxicated could prevent the *kastam* from being completed, thus ruining the *wanbel* exchange (see also Warry, 1982:99). These three challenges to *wanbel*, money, independence, and emergence of divisive issues, have caused increasing times of conflict.

Ever-distant desires

Wanbel is also changing in terms of what people hope their *wanbel* will achieve. They mention that there are more things to purchase in town than in the time of their ancestors, and they have many improvements they want to see come about in their *malanggu* and village. As their desires have increased, they face difficulties in coming to a consensus over what will increase their wellbeing. Wellbeing and the "good life" have been discussed in anthropology (Fischer, 2014; Gregory & Altman, 2018; Hirsch, 2008; Jiménez, 2008; Matthews & Iquierdo, 2009; Matthews & Izquierdo, 2009; Thin, 2008). As Thin argues, anthropology is well-placed to consider the question of wellbeing through its ethnographic methods and the extended time anthropologists spend among host communities (Thin, 2008:135). People, like the Sam, routinely discuss whether they feel they have the good life, and their conclusion could be based on several different criteria. As Eräsaari (2018:11) notes about Fiji,

The 'good life' is an equivocal idea. It is routinely evoked in reference to one's material circumstances and abstract ideals, to signify future hopes ('I want the good life') and to critique a faulty present ('not a life worth living'). It also acts as a stamp of approval on present

achievement ('this is the good life') and as an evaluation of a past life ('she lived a good life'). Therefore, to talk of the good life is to pick a viewpoint from among a range of possibilities.

Likewise, wellbeing is a common topic in Sam village debates concerning the quality of their life and whether their fathers had a "good life."

In particular, Sam people think about wellbeing in terms of an idealised and imagined future they call *gutpela sindaun* ("wellbeing" TP) (see Gibbs, 2010:39; Mantovani, 1984:5, 201). This Tok Pisin phrase refers to an imagined state of communal contentment and fruitfulness. *Gutpela sindaun* is a communal state of wellness; it refers to the fullness of life a family or village will experience together. While different communities may have the same or similar definitions of *gutpela sindaun* based on what they feel will benefit them communally, their individual narratives of the values behind the term frequently differ. Sam villagers often define *gutpela sindaun* as linked with obtaining development, which would lead to having money.

But "development" is an equivocal concept. West discusses the values that were a part of a development project in the Gimi area, which formed a compelling imaginary of the future that differed between individuals (West, 2006). As she writes,

Gimi are constantly striving for the future – an imagined future of development that is either the hybrid modern-village that older people dream about, a place with health care, schools, and services; or the new-village that younger people dream about, a place that is urban. These imagined villages of the future are also made by dreams, ideas, and desires. (West, 2006:215-216)

She posits that the Gimi exhibited generational differences in what people desired for the future. Underlying discussions about "development" were expectations and understandings that were the substance of these imagined futures (Crapanzano, 2010 [2004]; West, 2006).

Likewise, the Sam people desire "development," a complex term that refers to money, material possessions, access to resources, and imagined pleasant and happy living conditions. In this view, "development" is anything that increases their standard of living. The imaginaries that Sam individuals hold are composed of a confluence of their own concerns, experiences, and values, as well as those of others, and even modernist narratives. They gauge a development project by how well it will raise their standard of living and bring *gutpela sindaun*, and feel disappointed when they are unable to achieve the high goals for which they aim, such as owning a hydroelectric generator to bring power to each house, receiving government or aid organisation grants to start a small business, or gaining employment in a company. Many Sam people feel that development is out of their reach.

Not only does development seem difficult to access, but how they conceive of “development” varies over time as their “horizon” changes (Crapanzano, 2010 [2004]; West, 2006). A “horizon,” according to Crapanzano, is an imagined and desired future state that a person wants to see come to pass, but if it is verbalised, it becomes fixed (Crapanzano, 2010 [2004]:2). In this static state, the horizon is unable to change to adapt to a changing world, but Crapanzano (2010 [2004]:2) says that when a person states what lies beyond their horizon, a new horizon emerges. Horizons are intimately linked with perception. As he writes (2010 [2004]:2), “...we construct, wittingly or unwittingly, horizons that determine what we experience and how we interpret what we experience (if, indeed, we can ever separate experience from interpretation).”

Likewise, definitions of *gutpela sindaun* change over time, as people hope for, and then obtain their “horizon,” after which they form a new horizon. West writes about the changing horizons in the Gimi project that led them to be dissatisfied with the project even though the Research and Conservation Foundation of PNG (RCF) fulfilled three of their requests: helping the government provide school teachers, providing a clean village water supply, and creating a scholarship fund for children to continue to attend school after grade six. But they had not fulfilled all of the requests, and West writes that, “When I returned to Maimafu in 2002...I was surprised to find that most of the men in the village were still complaining about the work that the RCF has done there” (West, 2006:114). I observed a similar reaction in Buan when World Vision came to install a gravity fed water supply for Buan village. They informed the community that they were willing to donate the cement, piping, and taps, but they only had enough pipe to bring water to half the village — the part of the village closest to the spring. They said that if the community wanted water to go to the whole village, they should buy more pipe. The leaders agreed that this was not a problem: those not near a tap could walk to the closest one. Later, when they saw how the people near the taps were able to easily get water whenever they wanted, those on the lower end of the village complained and the water supply was regularly disrupted as people cut the pipe. When no one had water near their house, everyone agreed that simply having taps on the same level as the village was sufficient; when taps were installed which left out half of the village, it made some feel unequal, and caused jealousy. These examples demonstrate the role imaginaries play in envisioning one’s future, as well as the difficulties Sam individuals face in becoming *wanbel* on a single vision of *gutpela sindaun*.

Like the Gimi, people in Buan define *gutpela sindaun* according to their generation and gender. For example, the young men held a vision of having electricity to power their radios and energetically tried to set up a hydroelectric generator system. Many older men yearned for a calmer village

context which had less disputes to resolve, and two of them moved their families away from the village centre to avoid being inadvertently drawn into rows. Young women that I talked with felt constrained to help their mother with the family's needs, like weeding, washing clothes, and minding younger siblings, instead of running around like the young boys or going to school. Older women wanted to be able to use the money they earned by selling market food to purchase things the family needed, instead of their husband's desire for things they wanted but the family did not need. Hence, while people all wanted *gutpela sindaun*, and while they affirmed that this came about through being *wanbel*, they have different criteria.

Although individuals hold different ideas of what *gutpela sindaun* is like, they all agree that any initiative under discussion must *karim kaikai* ("produce food/benefits" TP). As discussed in Chapter Two, *kaikai* ("food" TP) is a physical substance that nourishes a person's body and keeps them alive, and likewise, they see development as an embodied, concrete activity which meets physical needs. In discussions about how to encourage development, a common phrase they state is, "This thought/plan will bring results." ("*Dispela tingting bai karim kaikai.*" TP) Often, people ridicule a plan, saying that it will not yield *kaikai*. What will or will not *karim kaikai* is a vital question the Sam villagers face, and the criteria they use to discern whether they have *gutpela sindaun*.

The most obvious proof that development is yielding *kaikai* is if it brings money. Money is often linked with development in Sam discourse. As a Buan man said,

Before when the *ancestors* were here, they did not have another thought or option about how change could come, or development, or all this and so they had a good living situation. They lived their own way. But now, in the time of money, money came, and we are thinking of development. Changes came through the white man, and came to us now, and we need development. If we do not have road access, communication access, we are not happy. We do not have *wanbel*.

The government is a frequent target of frustration because while they seem to have the capacity to initiate development projects in other places, they do not have a strong presence in the village. Buan villagers have observed development in town: the electricity enjoyed by town dwellers (generated by hydroelectric generators from Yonki Dam in the Eastern Highlands), the bridges that lie between the village and Madang (funded by AusAID grants), and the freezers and air conditioning in Madang stores (imported from China and Australia). Although they have seen these things, they do not know how they came about, and how they could acquire them. However, the evidence of development at the village level is more basic and sporadic. The government maintains the Wongbe Primary school (which requires that the parents to pay school fees, though few children find subsequent employment, and teachers are occasionally absent) and the Buan Aid Post (which is often short of medicine or lacking an Aid Post Orderly).

However, while they have some aspects of development, they do not see themselves as “developed,” perhaps partly because these local development initiatives are not on the scale of other development projects they see elsewhere, and thus do not seem to impact their wellbeing in a meaningful way. Reacting to the lack of substantial change in their lives, my interlocutors often said that the politicians have forgotten them, the Member of Parliament was not friendly toward them because he was not from the Sam area, or the money that should be available to pay for their development is gone because of corruption or the *wantok pasin* (“treating relatives differently from other people,” TP). Their development was unequal to that of other villages, which led them to feel jealous and frustrated. In one interview, the interviewee said,

Now, money has come, and we need a way to get health service and education. But this did not come about, so we complain and are angry. And too, we are angry with the leaders. They do not do anything, and we are angry with them and are not *wanbel* with them.

In his view, the government’s unwillingness to start a development project in the Sam area illustrates their lack of *wanbel* with the village people.

Transforming wanbel

Aside from problems in becoming *wanbel* and in forming a single, united vision of *gutpela sindaun*, *wanbel* itself has been influenced by modernity in two ways: by expanding the number and types of collectives that can be *wanbel*, and by changing how people become *wanbel*. Firstly, with increasing contact with institutions and people in town and other villages, Sam speakers seek to be *wanbel* as they engage with them. Now, people interact with a greater variety of groups than their ancestors, who only tried to be *wanbel* with their *malanggu* and wider Sam community. During my interviews, people explained that the phenomena of *wanbel* existed before explorers, the Lutheran church and the plantations settled in the area around the end of the 19th century. Then, the Sam people tried to maintain good relationships and concord within their *malanggu* but not with other *malanggu*. They were perpetually hostile and opposed toward people in other *malanggu*. If someone walked into another *malanggu*’s area, they could not hope to talk with those who lived there; they would be attacked, and if killed, a cycle of surprise attacks and/or open warfare would ensue. According to Buan men who could remember their grandfather’s recollections of his visit, Mikloucho-Maclay was the first explorer with white skin to interact amiably with people in the Astrolabe bay in the 1880s.⁴⁹ They credit him with being the first person to demonstrate *wanbel* outside the *malanggu* (Troolin, 2015). Reportedly, he did this by living peaceably near Bongu Village, and by walking to other villages, even visiting people who did not know him or ask him to

⁴⁹ A variant of his last name is Miklouho (Webster, 1984).

come (Mikloucho-Maclay, 1975:31-34, 37-39; Troolin, 2015:26; Webster, 1984:60-61). In one village visit that he recorded in his diary (1975:31-34), Maclay said he walked into a village where a group of men were standing (he presumed the women and children were hiding), one of whom shot several arrows that missed him, and another who thrust a spear at his head, retracting it before it made contact. Maclay felt threatened, but reasoned that if they wanted to kill him, they could do it whether he was standing or lying down. Being tired, he lay on a coconut mat in the shade of a tree and went to sleep. When he woke, he found that a few men were sitting nearby chewing betelnut, and he rose and left the village. Examples like this, according to Tui's descendent whom I interviewed in Bongu, showed people the possibility of relating to Maclay, and to each other, without hostility.

In addition, people from outside the Bongu area overcame their feelings of fear of the Bongu people to travel into their area to visit him (Mikloucho-Maclay, 1975:36, 40-41, 44-45, 53-54; Troolin, 2015:27). When their visit to the Bongu area did not result in either side being attacked, they began to form relationships with each other. According to the descendent of Tui Ondu, the first Bongu person to initiate a relationship with Maclay, Maclay brought new things and ideas to show the local people (including Russian words, like *gugurus* ("corn") and *sabor* ("axe"), similar to *topor* in Russian). But Maclay's main legacy was demonstrating a spirit of friendship and how to live together peacefully (Troolin, 2015:26).

When Maclay left, he told people that others would come after him, and within a decade, representatives of the Lutheran church and the New Guinea Company coconut plantations came and began to interact with people in Astrolabe Bay region (Hannemann, 1944:55-56; Mikloucho-Maclay, 1975:312-315, 323-324). Dr. Finsch, of the the New Guinea Company, arrived in 1884 and built on the goodwill and friendship that Maclay had initiated. After telling the people that he was the "brother" of Maclay, he was welcomed into the Astrolabe Bay area and began to operate a plantation (Mikloucho-Maclay, 1975:312-315). The local people welcomed Finsch and his companions into their area and showed *wanbel* to them, thus demonstrating that they had learned how to be *wanbel* with others, even those from outside of their area with different beliefs, practices, and concerns.

The Sam openness to others persists to the present. One example I have heard about is close relationships between students from different regions of Madang in the same year in high school, who form relationships they call "*brata*" ("brother" TP). Another is a school fundraising activity that the Bongu and Wongbe schools hosted, in which parents from one school gave funds to the other school, and the other parents reciprocated a few weeks later. These examples are just a few of the

ways that Sam speakers demonstrate that they have a network of relationships outside of their *malunggu*.

The second transformation in *wanbel* is in how people become reconciled. This can be seen in changes in how people exchange things in *wanbel* meetings, in how they reveal their *pari* through speech, and in the increasing involvement of the state in settling questions that previously were decided through the *wanbel* process. The first transformation is that people are turning to monetary ways to show *pari beli*, instead of through giving objects in a *mul*. In this “time of money,” people are increasingly trying to obtain money, and they use money in their exchanges, which formerly would take place in a *mul*. They refer to monetary transactions as *bisnis* (“business” TP). In *bisnis*, people exchange money for services, and they contrast *bisnis* with the reciprocal exchange that take place in *wanbel mul*. For example, many trade stores in Buan now require that customers purchase items with money; formerly, those in the same *malunggu* could ask for a *dinau* (“loan” TP) or take what they wanted because of a previous *wanbel* exchange. In another case, a few Wongbe Primary School Board members offered to pay me to go to town to pick up school robes. They brought money and did not ask me to do it for free or in exchange for something else. They explained that, “*Ka i no save ron nating*” (“The car does not run on nothing.” TP), to explain why they should pay me. The Sam people also reimburse people according to whether the work or commodity is understood as *bisnis* or helping another. Thus, they differentiate between compensating someone who helps someone else versus “business” groups who contract out their labour for hire. In the case of the first, a group will help someone plant a garden or build a house, and in return, the one helped gives *boyo* (“a thank-you gift given in exchange for work”), which is a gift of appreciation like a meal, betelnut, or tobacco. An example of the second category is business groups, like the women’s betelnut group that started as a group of women who worked, travelled, and sold betelnut together to purchase things for their families. Another example is a group of young men who banded together to do gardening jobs in order to buy football (soccer) gear.

How do people know when to give *boyo* or money? An interviewee explained that,

If you have a fermentary and you have a bunch of dried beans and you need someone to carry them to the beach, then you can ask people to carry beans for you. Later you will cook a meal for them with meat. This makes them *wanbel*. If you have money, you can buy rice and cook that also. If you are a business group, then the owner will ask you if you want to get money or a meal. Here we look at the situation and we try to understand what the man wants. If it is a business group, you must hire it with money. We say that ‘business is business.’ If it is individuals, then you cook a *wanbel* meal. Before, this was an important way, and the only way, to show your appreciation. Now, using money is big in our life. So now if it is a business group, we give money, and if it is individuals, we cook a meal.

As this quote shows, business groups desire money, and not *boyo*; the expected repayment of one's labour is changing, and Sam speakers are cognizant of that fact. They say "business is business" to refer to the way that a business operates, and thus to explain how to operate in a business arena, as opposed to their father's way of cooking a meal to give *boyo* to friends or family.

As well as changing the concept that reciprocity leads to *wanbel* through exchange, some people use speech to deceive others instead of revealing their genuine feelings in their *pari*. There have been several instances when Sam men and women have been deceived by people in Madang. These are people with whom the Sam people expect are revealing their true *pari*, and yet who do not intend to become *wanbel*. This tends to not happen in the village, as everyone knows each other well and has recourse to the *wanbel* process. But outside the village, not knowing someone's face can occasionally lead to dishonest business practices. I was told about several cases when Sam people were swindled. In one example (described in footnote 18), a Buan man, responding to a newspaper advertisement, had sent money to the address given, and waited in vain for the large sum that it had promised him. Such swindlers have even come to Buan. A few years ago, a village friend was defrauded by men who came to Buan and were selling shares in a company they said would be a good investment, only to leave and never be heard from again.

In another instance of deception in Madang, a village leader on a trip to town to purchase goods for his trade store, experienced that people can say one thing but mean another. A young man approached him, acting like he worked at the store. The Buan man said to him, "My child, I would like to get these things." The young man said, "Oh, okay, okay, come. Go here, get a tray and come. Where is the money? There it is, come, I will go with you." He acted like he was a friend, and the Buan man gave him 200 kina. The young man went with him, pushing the trolley and putting into it whatever the Buan man indicated. When he had everything on the cart, the young man told him, "Okay, you take this and stand over there. I will go and get something, and I will come and we will put them on the counter." The Buan man wheeled the trolley to the side and waited, until he realised after a while that the young man had left. He went searching for the man but could not find him. The man telling this story said in apparent disgust,

It is not that you give the money to them and go inside. The money must be on your skin, until you put all the things onto the counter. ... That (other) man was happy and had already left. He pretended he was a man who worked in the store. He thought of this technique at his house – planned it and came, and it worked. He was happy, and the big man *pilim nogut* ("felt bad" TP).

The storyteller explained that the problem was that the swindler was from another place. If he was from this village, the leader would know the him, and the young man would experience the harm

that comes from ruining *wanbel*. Therefore, the young man would fear what might happen after he mistreated the village leader and would come and apologise either before or after he suffered misfortune. In the words of the man telling me this story, he would say, "I am wrong. I took your little bit of toea, and I behaved like this. Now you have burdened insides toward me, and I met with trouble ("*hevi*" (TP)), so be *wanbel* with me." But in this case, there was no way to find him and initiate the *wanbel* process if the swindler encountered a problem because that young man was from a different language group. Ascertaining whether someone is accurately representing their *pari* is not possible when the people interacting with each other come from different places and do not know each other, which is the usual situation when doing business in Madang.

The third transformation in the *wanbel* process is in the state government's involvement in community conflicts and regulation, which weakens or, in some cases, offers an alternative to *wanbel*. While the Sam villages have some autonomy within their domain, such as, for example, being able to decide whether to hold a market in the village or to allow a timber company to come and cut timber on one's clan's land, the state is in control in matters having to do with interactions outside of the Sam area. Thus, any timber company must have a licence to operate within Papua New Guinea, and all cocoa fermentaries must have licences to legally process cocoa beans. The state has assumed the power to authenticate village institutions.

However, even within the village, the state has authority to decide disputes that were formerly addressed by becoming *wanbel*. For instance, my friend, a former magistrate, said that both the state's Welfare Department and the community's *wanbel* process can address cases of adultery. But the first legally separates people through divorce, while the second restores broken relationships. Many people feel that the *wanbel* process is the better way to handle social issues because, while neither system can mend a couple like before their separation, exchange and restoring equivalence allows them to try to become *pari beli*. As my friend explained, "In the village ... I must do it [adjudicate] well to make peace come. I do not want to leave you like this and you will go and the other one too has burdened insides ("*bel hevi*" TP), and next time you will go and fight in the bush or kill yourselves. So, I must make it fair." But, he noted, thinking about another case when a woman ran away with another man to live in a different village, staying in the village is the key that allows his judgements to work; leaving the village precludes it. He noted regretfully, "The people who did this ... they are not in this village. If they were in the village, then I would hold their case and I would see what kind of peace I would try to set. ... If those two, came, I know I could solve it. I could give them *pari xosolox* ("calm insides")."

Likewise, the land court decisions in Madang are often contested because while they aim to resolve the issue, they cannot address the lack of *wanbel* between the disputants. One example I heard of occurred when clans in Buan and Songum began to argue over who owned land that the current timber company had been logging in 2012-2013, and therefore who should receive the royalty payments. The land court judge had rendered a verdict, which then was being contested by the clan who had lost, and who also brought a suit against the timber company for failing to do due diligence and give the royalty payments to them, the rightful owners of the land in question. The land court is perceived to have less authority than the police, and often the one who loses the case in a land court will still be *pari hali* (“bad insides”) and will contest the decision, and in the meantime, the community will be divided, with all the ensuing fear of possible violence. In contrast, some land disputes were resolved while I was in the village through an alternative, *wanbel*-oriented meeting called “History Day,” in which both sides laid out their ancestral claim to the disputed land.⁵⁰ The claim hinged on one’s ability to link one’s relatives to the land by telling stories of when their ancestors moved there and their various experiences since then. The assembled men, with the assistance of a moderator, listened to and judged the claims, and the group decided who was right. This method can settle land disputes because process is out in front of the community, who then take responsibility for adjudicating and remembering who proved their longest connection to the land in question.

According to the participants involved in the cases above involving deception, adultery, and land disputes, controversies are resolved most fully when the various parties become *wanbel*, but this is not always possible when one or more of the disputants do not live in the same community and if they will not be negatively impacted by the lack of *wanbel*. Thus, although the land courts are relatively weak institutions to resolve conflict (Dinnen, 2006:401), they offer a way to address conflict when the *wanbel* process will not or cannot be followed. There is a place for both institutions in Papua New Guinea, though the challenge remains over how to integrate the “rule of law” with locally-followed ways of bringing justice and resolving hostility (Dinnen, 2006:402; Scaglione, 2004:88). The Sam villagers are grappling with the role of *wanbel* in their dealings and influences from Madang, not only in the area of justice, but in many other domains as well, and in the process, reshaping their ideas of *wanbel* and how (and if) it can be achieved.

⁵⁰ I explain this type of *wanbel* meeting in Chapter Three.

Equivalence and inequality: Reconciling wanbel and modernity

While changes in perceptions and practices have changed over time, as discussed above, people hold to three core beliefs about *wanbel* that equivalence makes *wanbel* possible and inequality makes it difficult if not impossible; that success in *wanbel* demands that disputants share and resolve *kulik* in the same context of understanding and with shared goals for resolution; and that *wanbel* can “straighten” every *kulik*, even those that may seem intractable.

Firstly, prominent in these narratives of unfulfillment is that people have a desire to create amity through equivalence. Being equivalent, or having the potential to be equivalent, is an ideal of *wanbel*. People seek equivalence, though they do not necessarily obtain it in practice. But village people find it more problematic to become *wanbel* when those impacted by the *kulik* are vastly unequal. As Gewertz and Errington (1991:56; 1996:482) assert, people in past generations were roughly comparable in terms of possessions, but now, some have much greater wealth than village people who subsist on gardening and cash cropping. They go on to state that the Chambri people in the Sepik region of Papua New Guinea were roughly equal in terms of the food they harvested and possessions they owned. In their terms, the Chambri “existed within a regional system of commensurate differences” (Gewertz & Errington, 1991:56). However, they often encountered tourists visiting their area, and tourists had wealth and possessions that the Chambri could not easily emulate; the difference between the villagers and the tourists was incommensurate (Gewertz & Errington, 1991:56). Silverman also notes the widening disparity between what people have that cannot be ameliorated by dialogue and exchange in the village, saying, “No totemic debates can level these hierarchical relationships. Like it or not, Eastern Iatmul must now accept a widening vision of moral personhood that entails indelible disparity” (Silverman, 2005:96).

Incommensurate differences are detrimental to feeling *wanbel* with others. As Burrige (1995 [1960]:17) asserts about the Tangu in Madang,

Amity is itself most significantly manifested in the idea of equivalence: in the idea that individuals are in a state of moral equality, one human being, as a whole, being neither morally worse nor morally better than another. Amity is a function of equivalence: through equivalence the most perfect kind of amity may be found. In action, equivalence and therefore amity, finds primary expression in formal exchanges of foodstuffs, whether they are between individuals, or groups of households.

When two or more people are not equivalent, it indicates that one is morally superior to the other(s), which precludes the ideal of *wanbel*. In recent years, people are increasingly distinguished by wealth, which was not common in previous generations. As Gewertz and Errington posit, “the commensurate differences permitted by traditional egalitarianism were being threatened by the

incommensurate differences of modern forms of hierarchy, including class, [and people]... spoke of "jealousy" and of the "anger" that resulted from it" (1996:482). Likewise, Sam high school students (above) noted the incommensurate differences they feel exist that caused them to feel high levels of anxiety and jealousy. They felt unable to restore equivalence with others who paid their school fees, and also feel unable to become the same as those they saw who could earn money to buy the things they desired.

The second basis of *wanbel* centres on the fact that *kulik* brings together people who jointly are impacted by it, and feel motivated to repair the broken relationship. If two or more parties are impacted differently by *kulik*, they bring different perspectives and levels of motivation to offer concessions to resolve it. When the participants reside in the same village and share similar socioeconomic constraints and opportunities, they both need to become *wanbel* in order to be well. In a sense, their desires to resolve the issue are commensurate. If, however, like in the case of the land dispute between Songum and Buan, one or more parties are either at a higher level or have different goals than to become *wanbel*, they do not equally feel the burden to become *wanbel* and may not hold the same idea of how to resolve the burden.

Another illustration from the Eastern Highlands area of PNG illustrates that people from different contexts can have opposed views of *kulik*, even though they hold a similar goal. West discusses how conservationists and the local Gimi people both agreed to work together to create a wildlife management area around Crater Mountain, but they each held divergent views of the *kulik* they were trying to resolve:

From the beginning of the conservation-as-development project at Crater Mountain, conservation was explained to villagers in terms of slowing and stasis – regulating overhunting, setting aside areas of their forests – and in terms of governmentality – creating conservation-related bureaucracy, writing laws. Gimi in turn demonstrated, through their participation in what they thought were exchange-based relationships and transactions with outsiders, that their understanding of development was movement and progress toward a future in which they had the necessary social relationships to help them access the goods and services they want and need. There is an inherent contradiction here. In order to achieve conservation as conservation practitioners see it, one cannot have development as Gimi see it. (West, 2006:216-217)

The two groups had different "imaginaries" of the future, that is, differences in what "development" included, which of course can change as the local communities see and desire different things, e.g. the advent of mobile phones which have been widely accepted in PNG in a relatively short time (Watson, 2011; West, 2006:112). West goes on to note, "These discourses and the materiality they engender create particular imaginaries of what it means to be 'developed'" (West, 2006:112).

While people within a village can hold divergent ideas of what “development” means, outside organisations can often have very different ideas of whether they will even subscribe to the imperative to be *wanbel*. In the Sam area, for example, there are two outside groups that appear to bring “development” but which resist being incorporated into the *wanbel* framework, namely, churches and logging companies. All three Buan churches claim allegiance to God, and each interpret how to be devoted to God in their own way, with their own guidelines for behaviour. The Revival Centres church has fifty guidelines which they follow to please God; these guidelines focus on holiness and separating oneself from people who ascribe to other denominations or religions.⁵¹ While the pastor and lay leaders exhort the members to be *wanbel* with other members, and often share a meal together after Sunday services, they urge them to not participate in activities which are not aligned with their church doctrine, such as worshipping or holding outreach services with those of other churches. This denomination uses doctrine to evaluate and judge those in other church denominations or non-Christians; they cannot worship with those who do not meet with approval, and their desire to obey God’s commands as they interpret them in the Bible overrules the concern to maintain *wanbel* with non-Revival Centres members. In contrast, the Lutheran church also has guidelines for behaviour that they find in the Bible; they do not codify additional ones. They are more accepting of those of other denominations than the Revival Centres church, and place *wanbel* with God and other people as of more importance than maintaining good relationships among themselves. Hence, the Grade Eight *mul* is an example of the way that Lutherans promote *wanbel* even among those who might be of different churches.

Likewise, logging companies and local people both sign the contract to log in a certain area, but the loggers aim to maximise their profit, and the *malanggu* wants to build a relationship with them such that they will behave in a *wanbel* way. When a logging company wants to log a certain area, they first give the *malanggu* that looks after that parcel of land a small amount of money called *amamas pe* (literally “happiness payment”), and when the negotiations are complete and the contract is signed, they periodically give the *malanggu* leaders royalties for the right to log in that area. In this way, the company operates according to the Sam notion of *bisnis*, and the *malanggu* being compensated is *pari beli*. However, Buan men have forced all three logging companies to leave. In all these cases, the other *malanggu* of the village also want some benefit from the logging company, and since their *wanbel* that the loggers come is thought to have brought about this

⁵¹ The guidelines are commands against certain behaviour, each followed by its supporting Bible passage. For example, guideline fourteen states that members who *tok baksait* (“gossip” TP) about the church and its doctrine will have to go to the pastor to be counselled, and they support this injunction with 2 Cor. 11:10 and Philippians 2:17. *Tok baksait* was a significant concern, and was mentioned in four guidelines.

“development,” they think the company should reciprocate their *wanbel* and act to benefit the village. For example, although the latest contract did not mention things like giving timber to construct Wongbe school buildings or upgrading the Buan Aid Post, local people asked the company to donate them, reasoning that they would try to help with these sorts of needs if they were *wanbel*. When the company were unwilling to do what local people wanted, the village young men blocked the road so the company trucks could not retrieve the cut logs, and made them leave their area. Although both the company and *malanggu* met later, the *mul* was unsuccessful for several reasons: the parties could not communicate freely but had to use an interpreter because the Sam leaders did not speak English and the company representatives did not speak Sam or Tok Pisin, and the company insisted that a contract is binding, while the Sam people felt that *wanbel* was open to renegotiation. When they could not agree on a solution, the company vacated the area, leaving logs up in the hills where they had fallen. The company’s policy of increasing profits instead of giving timber to the Sam villages, which would lead to *wanbel*, illustrates that these groups are each focussing on different desires. In summary, the company wants amity, but resists being forced into acting to become equivalent and to taking on the Sam people’s wish to be *wanbel* within the *wanbel* framework.

Therefore, in contrast to “outside” organisations, people within the Sam villages have generally the same perspective on what *kulik* is and how to become reconciled, though they make this decision after much debate. When village people become *wanbel*, it is about issues that they all know about, which they learn from living and sharing in the concerns and context of the local area. In this sense, the concerns and context about which people become *wanbel* are local concerns, and the process is conducted *in situ*. Those who do not live in the same region will probably not know the issues people are dealing with or have the same drive to resolve the dispute in a way that leads to reconciliation between the disputing parties. *Wanbel* takes place between people who share an understanding of what *kulik* is and how it can be resolved.

The third basis of *wanbel* is that forming relationships and becoming reconciled with each other is the only way to be and live well. The Sam people navigate the opportunities and dangers that their “local modernity” holds for them through creating and strengthening relationships through the *wanbel* process, even though their experiences of modernity have influenced *wanbel* over time. Similarly, other Pacific Islanders also want “to establish a range of relationships with agents and agencies deemed foreign. Relationship is the key term; the transformative engagement of the foreign by the domestic is above all oriented toward generating a productive and reciprocal

relationship” (Foster, 2005b:167). For the Sam, forming relationships is the core of what it means to become *wanbel*, and is central to how they make decisions and pursue goals.

They uphold the need to have good relationships with others even though they face difficulties in becoming and remaining *wanbel* that force them to reshape how and why they become *wanbel*. For instance, I was told that now, especially, in this time of money, children must know about and follow the *wanbel* process. As one father in Buan told me,

From the ancestors to the fathers, and to us too, people talked about *wanbel*. [B]efore, in their time, they did not travel around much; they just stayed around the family. But with us, changes have come to our children. We must talk more about *wanbel* now, because the children travel around to Bongu and town. Drug use has increased, and there are more raskols (“criminals” TP) than before. There is a trend to use drugs and *yawa* (“fermented banana alcohol” TP), and so we talk strong about *wanbel* and it comes up often. Many afternoons, mornings, sometimes we sit down and talk, in the *malanggu* we must sit down and talk a lot to the children.

As they encounter new ideas and situations, Sam parents intentionally teach their children that they need to relate with others in terms of *wanbel* to have a good life.

There are a variety of views about becoming *wanbel*, which I have discussed and analysed in this thesis, and Sam speakers continue to evaluate the most appropriate and effective processes for them to obtain the good life. For example, in community discussions after the Buan leader was deceived by a young man posing as a store worker in Madang, one man commented that he should not have given money to someone he did not know. He advised that people need to act in certain ways with townspeople. In such discussions, they navigate local ways of reasoning about an issue or experience, of a type called “symbolics” (Knauft, 2011:105; Lipset, 2011:90-91). As Lipset and Knauft write, the behaviour of men and women now is not separate from how they behaved in previous times. People have “at a minimum two alternative, local ‘Symbolics’ in Melanesian societies such as the Murik—the one made up of pre-state institutions and the other consisting of modernity— which together give rise to unpredictable, complicated chains of signification” (Knauft, 2011:105). This does not replace one symbolic with another, but squeezes between them, creating a liminal space. As Lipset argues,

When money replaced ‘skirts’, the relationship between people and masks remained relatively stable. The masks did not become governed by relations between people in a state of independence from each other. Nor had the ethical position of the subject suddenly become secularised. Outer life did not suddenly become de-spiritualised. Nor had inner life suddenly become spiritualised. The masks of the Gaingiin Society had rather moved the subject into a neither/nor—not quite one, not quite the other—world between the Murik and post-colonial Symbolics (Lipset, 2011:90-91).

Likewise, the Sam people live in a context which includes people with different symbolics. They want to be *wanbel* and it is crucial to obtain *gutpela sindaun*, but their *wanbel* depends not only on

relationships with others within their villages, but also with those outside their village. Thus, while villagers try to become *wanbel* amongst the *malanggu*, their relationships with people and institutions outside of the *malanggu* are more complicated because both must subscribe to the importance of *wanbel* and share the *wanbel* framework in order to create and remain *wanbel*. The “outsiders” must agree to be *wanbel*, which carries with it both rights and obligations with which they are not familiar and must learn from the local people. While *wanbel* has been fundamentally altered by Christianity and modernity to include being *wanbel* with those outside the Sam, those outside the Sam collective are least equipped to be *wanbel* with them. While the Sam understanding of *wanbel* has changed, they continue to pursue a complex and often problematic quest to become *wanbel* with others in their context.

Conclusion

This chapter explores how people become *wanbel* in the “time of money.” While it is an exciting time, as villagers see many opportunities to obtain the “good life,” they also express many stories of “unfulfillment.” They point to numerous obstacles to being *wanbel* now, such as challenges that hinder reaching *wanbel*, differing desires and goals that make *wanbel* elusive, and the way that *wanbel* itself has changed over time. Prominent in sources of conflict and discord is the belief that *wanbel* can be formed with people outside of their *malanggu*. While this allows them to create relationships that can be beneficial, such as mutual aid and friendships between those of other villages, they can also be problematic when various parties do not hold similar ideas of *wanbel*’s core components: that parties to the dispute must be potentially equivalent, *kulik* are shared and equally motivate the disputants to seek *wanbel*, and the goal of *wanbel* is a joint imperative that must be pursued.

However, during this era in which people feel cut off from development and unable to fulfil their desires to have *gutpela sindaun*, *wanbel* has emerged as the quintessential method of critiquing and navigating diverse social imaginaries. *Wanbel* is, for the Sam, a process of navigating conflict together, while, in contrast, those outside their community with whom they wish to become in concord with are not necessarily bound to the need to be *wanbel*. In this sense, *wanbel* describes a way for local people to navigate “translocal connection and disconnection” (Foster, 2005b:176). The Sam people, in upholding their value of *wanbel* within a changing context, are navigating and transforming notions of how to be *wanbel* and what they hope to obtain from being *wanbel*.

Chapter 8: Conclusion

In the previous chapters, I have argued that *wanbel*, as it is woven through social interactions and conceptions of personhood, relationality, conflict, and agency, gives the Sam people a way to transform their community's wellbeing. I posit that the Sam notion of *wanbel* is suited to creating and maintaining relationships, but as people use it to forge relationships with people previously outside of the Sam, their understanding and practice of *wanbel* is changing in ways that make reaching or sustaining *wanbel* a challenge.

In taking *wanbel* as a lens to view Sam social relations, I have explored how people in the village interrelate these themes in reconciling and exerting agency in order to obtain a desirable future. As the previous chapters illustrate, people become *wanbel* with each other through a process of realising that a *kulik* ("burdensome problem/issue") exists and by making it known to those impacted by it. If one of the parties to the dispute refuses to acknowledge their role in creating the issue, the other party strives to make it clear to them through forceful means, which can include sorcery. When they are all willing to reveal their *pari*, they work through mediators to tell the others what they will give to become *wanbel*, and eventually come to a consensus. Then, in a *wanbel* meeting, they state their *wanbel* and authenticate their speech with behaviour, through the exchange of physical objects of value and the shaking of hands. The exchange represents the way each person "gives" their *pari*; the material object symbolises the *pari beli* ("good insides") within each person. After a *kulik* is settled, the immediate grievance is seen to be dealt with, though it may resurface if there are additional underlying issues that people have not mentioned or mediated — or people have not really revealed their *pari* and become *wanbel*.

Sam speakers see the process as cyclical, as they are thrust into a conflict, work to become *wanbel*, and later are entangled in another dispute. When a new conflict arises, the disputants begin to work through the steps of the *wanbel* cycle with the assistance of the village leaders and others in the community, who may be mediators in several concurrent problematic situations. The "commotion" style of social interaction (Errington & Gewertz, 2007:93), in which people energetically and dynamically process conflict together, offers both a way to strengthen relationships and navigate and critique modernist influences. Through *wanbel*, people "compel each other into active participation in each other's pasts, presents, and futures" (Errington & Gewertz, 2007:93). They expect that others with whom they are *wanbel* will act with their welfare in mind, for instance, and complain about those who do not behave in this way: "*Em i no inapim*

tingting bilong mi." ("He did not fulfil/complete my thoughts (of what he should do)." TP). In giving people a way to contest the actions of others, the *wanbel* process allows them to contest and defend themselves, and redress issues of perceived injustice, both between village people, spirit beings, and with those from outside the group. In this sense, *wanbel*, as I have described it among the Sam, is at least a partial example of what Foster calls for: "methods of study that produce new maps of translocal connection and disconnection" (Foster, 2005b:176). It is also a way for the Sam communities to theorise about social interactions, such as whether they are becoming *wanbel* in the right way and if *wanbel* is necessary and sufficient to provide what the community desires (Schram, 2015:317). The *wanbel* process is a comprehensive and robust way to deal with conflict, and the Sam people believe pursuing *wanbel* is a principle that allows them to deal with and resolve any issue, and is the only way for them to live together and experience a good life. In talking about *wanbel*, they prioritise its ability to create and maintain good relationships, affirm the interplay of dialogue and exchange in bringing about reconciliation, and believe the efficacy of *wanbel* or its absence as confirmed in either the resulting benefits or misfortune.

At the same time, the previous chapter describes the Sam feeling that becoming and remaining *wanbel* is more problematic now, in the "time of money," than in the days of their ancestors ("*taim bipo*" TP). They point to various reasons for this shift: including changes in how people think about and use *wanbel* now and in earlier times, referred to as *kastam* ("customary ways, ceremony" TP), as they imagine it from parents and grandparents' recollections. Individuals have fluid conceptualisations of *kastam*, and imbue the term with the meaning that matches their needs in their context. Likewise, ideas about *wanbel* are also in flux. The incipient shifts in views of *wanbel* can be traced to the impact of those outside the Sam area from the time of the earliest explorer onward, when they began to widen the scope of *wanbel* to include becoming *wanbel* with outsiders. As people have become *wanbel* with more people, the way they practice *wanbel* has changed to include those others in the process as well. However, while this has allowed Sam individuals to begin to participate (or dream of participating) in the good things they observe in Madang and other places, if the "outsiders" do not care to be included in the *wanbel* process, or do not understand the way to become *wanbel* and what their duties and rights are, then they will not be able to participate in a way that satisfies the Sam. In other words, the steps people follow to alter their relationship from "enemy" to "friend" through the *wanbel* process is a transformative encounter, but it ceases to be transformative if they do not follow the same process and share the same level of commitment to be *wanbel*. While the Sam people meet problems becoming *wanbel* with those outside their community, they also have increasing difficulties becoming *wanbel* amongst themselves. Therefore, those I talked with in the Sam villages expressed that they had an

increasing sense of dissatisfaction with their attempts to relate both inside and outside of their village communities.

Core elements of wanbel

From the preceding analysis, I conclude that *wanbel*, as it was initially applied within *malanggu* (“family/clan”) in pre-colonial times and later enlarged to include others, has three integral elements that are vital to bringing about reconciliation. If any of these three are missing in a social interaction, *wanbel* between people is inhibited. The first is that *wanbel* is a direct and intimate process of relationship-building, to the extent that people interact face-to-face. In other words, people interacting face-to-face have much in common (though as I have shown they may have differing ideas about how to become *wanbel* and what *gutpela sindaun* looks like), and they demonstrate this by requiring that disputants travel to the same area to hold the *wanbel* meeting. The assumption is that when people are together, they share much of the background necessary to communicate effectively. Being near to each other ensures that they are focussed on resolving the same dispute. For instance, they may already know who is involved in a certain dispute, having lived and worked with them. They are more likely to have comparable understandings of the types of things that cause *kulik* because they live in the area and try to obtain food, shelter, and money in similar ways. They know that people must reveal their *pari*, and they can use opacity strategically in *wanbel* meetings. When people speak in *wanbel* meetings, they use metaphors and other figurative language that they know others understand, and when they behave in ways designed to bring about *wanbel*, they can assume that their counterpart understands what they mean to accomplish. In sum, living in the same area allows people to relate better and potentially negotiate a state of *wanbel*.

Their proximity also enables them to observe and to be observed; specifically, when people become *wanbel*, they see the other disputants, give the exchange items directly to them, and shake hands to show themselves and the wider community that they are in concord. While people can feel united with each other if they live in different areas, they must first establish *wanbel* together in one place. Additionally, if they are separated, they must continue to do things for each other that maintain their close relationship. Being *wanbel* is demonstrated by the things a person says and does, and if they cannot act toward each other in this way, the primary way of demonstrating *wanbel* is curtailed. This continual consideration of others is central to actively evaluating and maintaining a strong social network.

In contrast, people who come from outside the area have to learn how to interact meaningfully with those in the village when it comes to *wanbel*. For example, one day, after living in Buan for only a short time, I was inviting people to ride with me in my vehicle to Madang town. Many people had climbed into the vehicle with their food to sell at market, and the vehicle was full. When I turned regretfully to a man who wanted to go, he said, “*Devit, mi no wanbel*” (“David, I am not *wanbel*” TP). At that time, I thought he meant that he was unhappy, but resigned to the fact that he could not come with me. Instead, he meant that, by not being *wanbel* with me, he was actively allowing his lack of *wanbel* to affect me on this trip. As described in earlier chapters, his *pari hali* (“bad insides”) could have attracted *mundor hali* (“harmful spirit, wind”). He was fully aware that his statement was efficacious; I was not. Thus, I did not react to his statement as he expected, namely, by trying to find some way to either fit him on the vehicle or doing something else to make him *pari beli*.

The second element inherent in the notion of *wanbel* is that people can become *wanbel* only if they accept what being *wanbel* requires of them. While the Sam community is intensely relational and they believe that their *wanbel* is performative to bring about wellbeing, they also sometimes act individually (Hemer, 2013:88-91; Lipuma, 1998; 2000, 130-132; Macintyre, 1995:30; M. Strathern, 1988:13; Wardlow, 2005). Theoretically, villagers can choose not to be *wanbel*, though it would be disastrous for the community. This is why even just the threat of not pursuing *wanbel* is potent. I encountered one case in which my Buan interlocutors felt that some in Songum were using their discord as a way to coerce them into giving more goods than proposed initially in compensation for previous injuries they had caused. Thus, people expect other villagers to desire to maintain *wanbel* and to live by the *wanbel* ethos.

The Sam people carry this same expectation in their interactions with those coming from outside the village, though the villagers are often disappointed because “outsiders” do not know about or value *wanbel* in the same way as they do. “Outsiders” are often committed to different practices and beliefs, and most of them do not live in the village. When they start to relate with village people, they may sometimes choose to be *wanbel* initially, like when the logging company gives clan leaders “*wanbel* money” to sit down and negotiate a logging agreement with them, or when churches enter the village and hold revival services. But later, they often step out of a *wanbel* framework and invoke the need to interact according to a different conceptual framework, like maximising profit or claiming exclusive allegiance to God. At other times, organisations do not understand, or care to learn, what *wanbel* means. Often they decide to interact according to business policies, which are antithetical to an ethos based on *wanbel*. If others do not align their idea of reconciliation, speech,

and behaviour with the notion of *wanbel*, the extent of their misunderstanding may not become apparent until one side decides it is not possible to continue to interact, as has happened with the Sam men forcing out three logging companies during the last 15 years, and the continuing irritation that some church-goers have with the different doctrines of those in other denominations.

A third element of *wanbel*, and that which makes able to reconcile people, is that they believe in the efficacy of *wanbel*. Sam speakers are confident that being *wanbel* brings good things to their community, and a lack of *wanbel* brings misfortune. Therefore, they frequently attempt to relate with each other, including spirit beings, as well as people from Madang and other places in PNG by pulling them in to *wanbel* relationships. As Foster has asserted, people in the Pacific seek “to establish a range of relationships with agents and agencies deemed foreign. Relationship is the key term; the transformative engagement of the foreign by the domestic is above all oriented toward generating a productive and reciprocal relationship” (Foster, 2005b:167). Hence, different *malanggu* in Buan village host multiple *wanbel* ceremonies and meetings nearly every week, and interviewees unanimously averred that *wanbel* is still the best and only way for them to build relationships and engage with people — even though becoming *wanbel* is more difficult with those who do not hold to a *wanbel* ethos. It is through commotions, the “sociality predicated upon ongoing and self-assertive engagements” (Errington & Gewertz, 2007:93), that they navigate relationships with people holding different ways of viewing the world. This includes Sam people who are trying to initiate “business” or “development,” who may have multiple overlapping concepts and practices that sometimes reinforce, or alter, practices and/or values they learned from their parents. Sam villagers are immersed in a fluid “local modernity,” in which they navigate differing values they learned from their parents as well as behaviours and attitudes they experience in Madang and other places outside the village. Hence, people affirm the importance of *kastam* while also working hard to integrate into the cash economy by pursuing education, which will, they hope, lead to employment.

However, modernity, as it is expressed locally within the village context, has affected Sam notions of *wanbel*. They believe the increase in social problems results from changes in *wanbel*. One primary shift is in the exposure to new things that people desire, which began at the time of first contact with foreigners. Indeed, elderly men in Buan, who are well-versed in local Sam history, assert that the practice of *wanbel* between different groups started when Mikloucho-Maclay gave some salt and red cloth to the Bongu people. In interviews, people mimed the way Maclay held out salt in his palm, and tasted it. They told how the local people eventually came closer to him, and finally, touched the salt and tasted it themselves. As one Buan man said,

Before, with our ancestors, they did not practice *wanbel*, but revenge. ... *Wanbel* came with the white man. Salt made it that we are *wanbel* now. They tasted the salt, and said, "Oh, this is a really good thing the white man brought. Come, come, come. You cannot run away." Then everyone came together. ... This is what the white man did for us Papua New Guineans. Thus, *wanbel* started.

While others insist that *wanbel* within the malanggu was practiced before Maclay, which explains why they have Sam terms for this notion, this quote illustrates that Maclay played a role in extending the notion in a broader sense, to include those outside the malanggu. Maclay's account also narrates how he first gave objects to the local people, and, afterwards, the Bongu people reciprocated (Mikloucho-Maclay, 1975:18-21).

Similarly, for the Sam, the influence of modernity and capitalism in the current "time of money" is not eroding the desire to be *wanbel*, but instead altering the way people become *wanbel* and what they think *wanbel* should accomplish. One area in particular which is experiencing significant transformation concerns how people obtain equivalence with others. So, while *wanbel* is still held to be the way to *gutpela sindaun*, the Sam people are searching for ways to get the things they see others possess, like water projects, airstrips, laptops and solar panels, because this shows they too have *namba* ("worth, social value" TP). A perennial question is what initiatives would "*karim kaikai*" ("produce food/benefits" TP); that is, what project will bring the most substantial benefit, thus meriting their cooperation. Thus, they endorse efforts that bring substantial change to their community, like the logging companies (which maintain the dirt road to the Raicoast Highway), Buan Aid Post, and Wongbe Community School. However, ultimately, they seek more than material objects; at a deeper level, they are seeking a parity with those around them that they feel is lacking (Errington & Gewertz, 2004:8-9, 24-27ff; 2007:93-94ff). They try to remedy this perceived disparity by becoming *wanbel* with the people they encounter in personal and transformative ways, thus creating networks of relationships that they believe will be efficacious in obtaining *gutpela sindaun* ("wellbeing" TP).

Revisiting the anonymous letter

In many ways, the letter I received during my fieldwork (described in Chapter Two) was an invaluable opportunity for me to learn about *wanbel*. As I relate in Chapter Two, I thought on first reading it that someone was significantly upset with us, and the note could eventually result in us having to leave the village. I knew that Buan men had forced others to leave the Sam area, such as the three timber companies that used to work in the Sam area who were expelled because they did not fulfil the desires of the villagers. But after talking with some village friends, I realised that the letter was the first step to initiating the process of becoming *wanbel*. The letter, and all that came

from it, provided a window through which I began to enter the research process as a participant as well as a researcher, and it taught me to rely more fully on village people to help me understand how to navigate the *wanbel* process to attempt to resolve the dispute. Thus, not only did the letter present a way for me to develop amity with whomever wrote the letter, but it also helped me understand *wanbel* and how and why Sam people pursue it.

The letter and the events that followed transformed my understanding of *wanbel*, and how I studied it, in four ways. Firstly, I gained an experiential knowledge into how the *wanbel* process operates on an affective level. I had not experienced previously the emotional catharsis that results from ameliorating conflict through the *wanbel* process, as people moved emotionally from feeling “burdened” to feeling “free,” and bonding more deeply with each other. In addition, I learned that showing one’s feelings is vital to overcoming the opacity that prevents *wanbel*. Throughout my interviews and observations of *wanbel* events, emotions were easily evident: anger, frustration, boredom, and excitement. As I observed this in the *wanbel* meeting about the letter, I realised that my interviews and other data on *wanbel* was replete with times when people displayed their emotions to try to induce others to become *wanbel* with them. If someone had a great stake in the conflict, they demonstrated strong emotions. However, if the issue did not resonate with someone, they did not feel a strong motivation to reveal what they were thinking and feeling. This insight helped me to realise that showing strong emotions would help me to convey to villagers that I cared deeply about an issue.

Secondly, the anonymous letter initiated a “commotion” centred on becoming *wanbel* as a community around the question of whether the language development project would *karim kaikai* (“produce food/benefits” TP). As I relayed in Chapter Two, some of the Sam men were unimpressed with the outcomes of the language development project. Chapter Seven delves further into what many people in the Sam villages desire. The meeting was ultimately a public referendum on the utility of our language development initiative, raising questions about whether its outcomes were substantial and valued, and what they could expect from us as neither truly “outsiders” nor people born in the village. We could see that people were highly motivated to see how we would respond to questions people raised by the fact that the participants came from all three Sam villages; a wide cross-section of the Sam population wanted to discuss the utility of our language development work. In the research data I collected, those “commotions” that involved many people indicated the importance of the issue, but *wanbel* meetings that incorporated only a few people would only bring about the *wanbel* of those few participants and was vital only to a few individuals. Therefore, in the letter’s *wanbel* meeting, I realised that many Sam speakers wanted to discuss the utility of

language development and our role in the community, and felt these were important topics. That is, instead of feeling that the large number of people who came to the discussion came to criticise us, I took comfort that this indicated that they felt that our role, and, I hoped, their language, was important to them.

Thirdly, as I engaged with them to become *wanbel*, I learned about the many decisions the Sam people must make about being *wanbel* in this “time of money.” The *wanbel* meeting showed me the tensions they face as they engage with each other and with those coming from “outside,” as they strive to obtain *gutpela sindaun*. Although the people participating in the *wanbel* process often had notions that differed from each other, they navigated these issues through the *wanbel* framework, which tied together issues of personhood, managing relationships, and personal and communal agency. I realised that the *wanbel* meeting I took part in demonstrated the multiple and overlapping concerns and desires of the group, made up of young and old, men and women, from different *malanggu* and villages. I had unknowingly created a platform for people, usually restricted to speaking within their own clan or other subgroup, to bring their questions and comments before other collectives, not just my wife and me. Instead of simply being a way for people to criticise me, as I had feared, this meeting showed the overlapping and sometimes conflicting desires present, but perhaps not expressed, among Sam speakers. When it seemed that those at the meeting could not all find a simple resolution to these diverse ideas, the moderator closed the meeting and those of us who could, became *wanbel*.

Finally, through this meeting, I realised that *wanbel* offers an inherently hopeful and future-oriented view of living in a collective. As long as people are willing to talk and negotiate – to engage in the *wanbel* process – it shows that they think *wanbel* is possible, and they have in mind the benefits that they and their community will gain. The *wanbel* meeting about the letter illustrates that the Sam people have differing ideas of what results might come from being *wanbel* with us: some thought that the dictionaries we were writing were helpful, while others thought that the translation we were helping produce of the Bible would guide them in their daily lives. There were many who did not see the value of language development, and who wanted our help with writing grant proposals to gain outside funding from NGOs. When the meeting finished, we were not united around a single vision of how my wife and I could help the community, and yet, we were still willing to dialogue and find ways to help each other. Although we did not have unity on what specific goals to pursue, we were *wanbel* with the idea of wanting to help each other. The meeting concluded by agreeing that we would keep talking about the future. In any situation in which Sam speakers express their *wanbel* and seal it with action, they believe their embodiment of *wanbel* will, in itself,

bring about beneficial change for the future. This hopefulness, while perhaps unrealised in the present, is an ontological stance that leads the Sam people to try new initiatives, make new social connections, and continue to practice and promulgate the ideal of *wanbel* in daily social interactions.

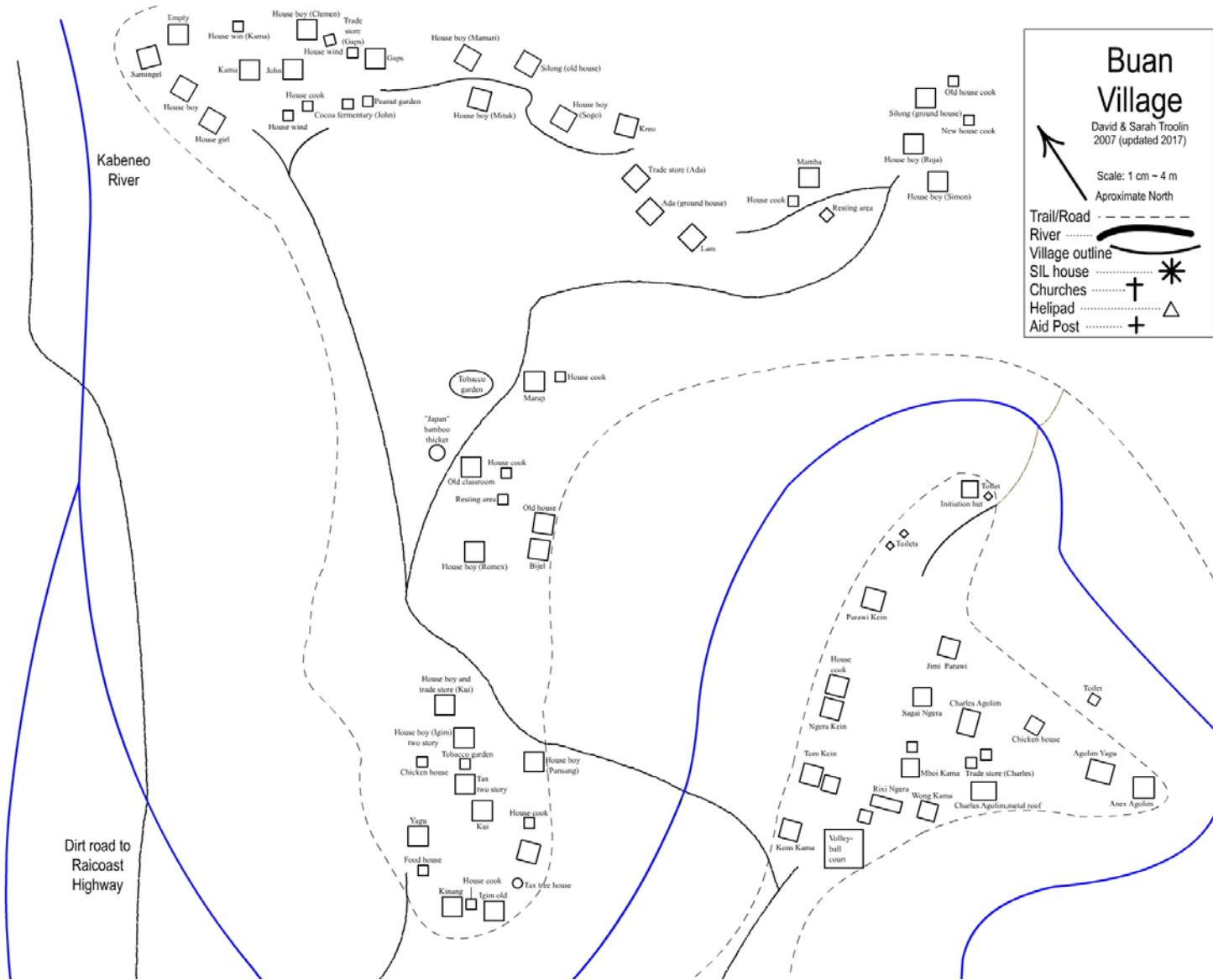
Future wanbel

My wife and I hope to return to work among the Sam people if they desire, helping them use an alphabet suited to their language in ways that they deem important. We have not been back to Buan for several years now, though I have been in communication with them via email and mobile phone. Several have told me that the road to Buan village has deteriorated due to lack of use. Now, when villagers want to travel to Madang to sell their cash crops and market produce, they must carry them on their backs through the Kabeneo River and meet a PMV on the opposite bank. They do not have daily PMV service. A Buan or Wongbe traveller must contact a PMV and ask them to come. I have heard that our *was papa's* (literally, "watch father" TP) two brothers have now died. Perhaps due to these two deaths, several *malanggu* have now created a new issue that needs to be resolved: discovering whose descendent was the first to settle on the land currently occupied by Buan and Wongbe, including the land on which our house and the Wongbe Primary School resides. Three people are contending to be in authority of that land. I was told the issue is not about who controls the land under our house, but under the school – whoever can demonstrate their stronger connection to that land, through a *History Dei* event, will receive payment by the Education Department.

In all these developments, I am not sure whether people still hold a desire for our assistance. From my research, I realise that I cannot gauge from a distance whether many of the Sam people are still *wanbel* with me and the benefits they perceive I can help them obtain. I will not know their thoughts about language development until I return to the Sam area and can talk to them in person. My brief discussions with village friends, mentioned in the previous paragraph, show that their context is fluid; it is likely that their desires and concerns have shifted. We will not know what they are thinking, and they will not know our inner state, unless we meet and reveal our thoughts and feelings through speech and behaviour. I expect that we will reveal these inner states to each other through commotions and trying to resolve our differing ideas through *pari beli sam* ("good insides speech") and *pari beli mangau* ("good insides behaviour"). Ultimately, while *wanbel* is the preeminent goal for the Sam villagers, they are caught in a tension in which creating and maintaining amity is not their only consideration, which makes *wanbel* often difficult to achieve in practice. *Wanbel* seems transitory to them, dependent on the fluid situation and desires and needs

of others. My Sam friends compared *wanbel* to the “wind” and a “bird.” Though unpredictable, *wanbel* is desirable because it makes working and living together frictionless, like “oil,” and “makes good things happen, like a magnet.” Ultimately, they balance their own needs and the needs of the multiple collectives of which they are a part within a turbulent and dynamic landscape of shifting values and priorities to try to bring about *wanbel* to ultimately obtain *gutpela sindaun*.

Appendix 1: Buan Village Map 2017



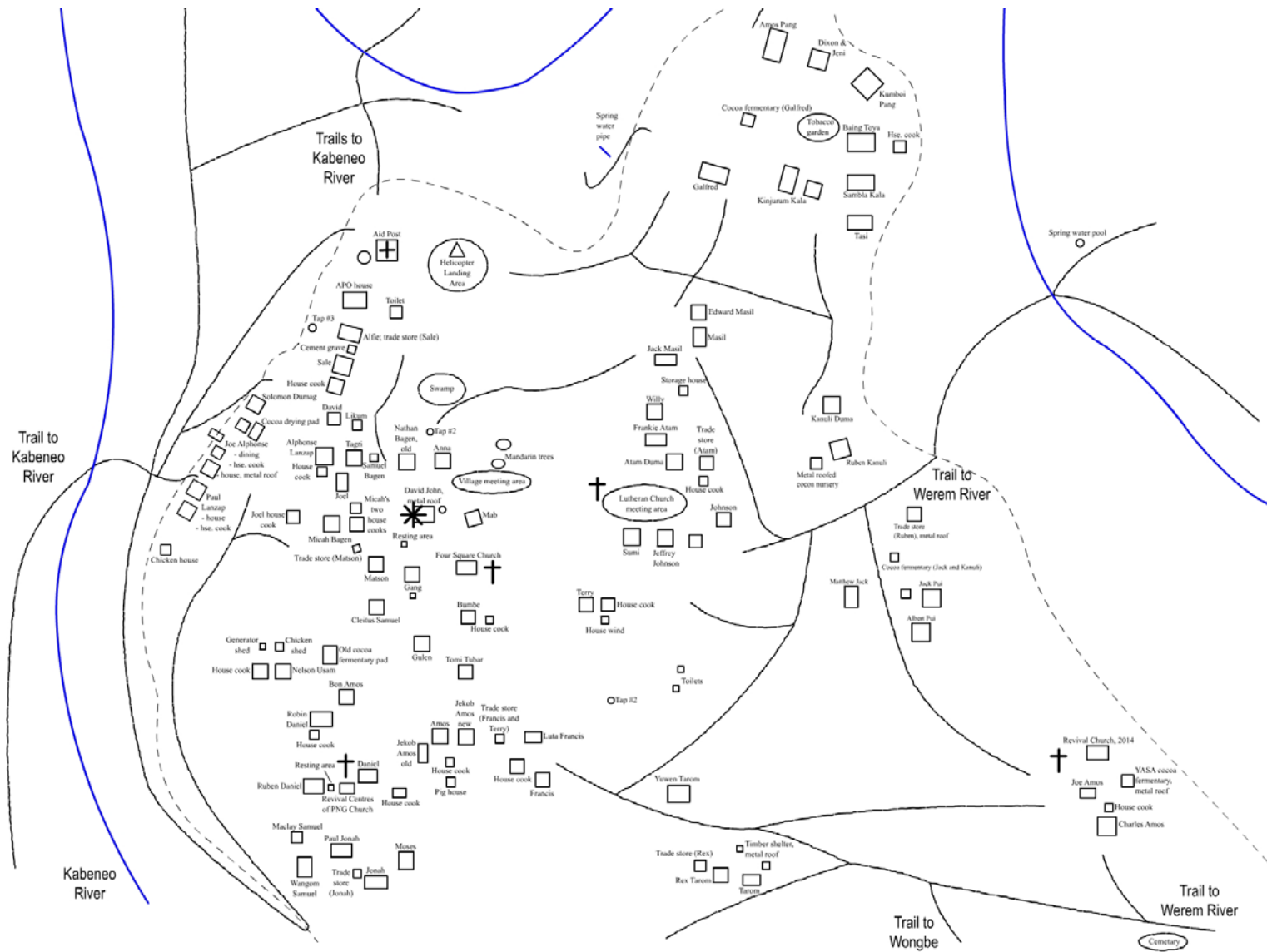


Figure 18: Buan Village

Appendix 2: Sam Metaphors

Sam Phrase	Literal Meaning	Figurative Meaning
<i>alak kandondong</i>	teeth chatter	have chills
<i>alak kulu hedxm</i>	eat back teeth	to be worried
<i>angi huyax</i>	sound/sensation give	tune something (musical)
<i>barge xiliyai</i>	big hand	generous
<i>barge kanangge</i>	little hand	stingy
<i>barge bail</i>	strong hand	powerful
<i>barge kwaxengo</i>	sweet hand	good cook
<i>barge xilongai</i>	long hand	powerful person
<i>dodamug kumog huyudxm</i>	give your whole body	commit
<i>gadi bail</i>	strong head	determined leader, stubborn
<i>gadi jajanasix</i>	big head	opinionated, conceited
<i>gadi kanangge</i>	small head	not the main leader
<i>gadi moi hobox</i>	to open head hair	hair stand up, to be scared
<i>gusxe sam</i>	play talk	joke, riddle
<i>kweb kumog huyudxm</i>	give your whole stomach	wholehearted
<i>mob suma</i>	mouth men	group's speaker
<i>nyam jigli</i>	eye cucumber	gound, "eye gunk"
<i>nyam kulu</i>	eye source	eye socket
<i>nyam per</i>	put an eye (on)	open an eye
<i>nyam rix</i>	eye come out	to be cross
<i>nyam yag</i>	eye water	tears
<i>pari bulya</i>	turn insides	change your mind
<i>pari tinga</i>	stand up insides	challenge, inspire
<i>pari taxas</i>	hit insides	praise
<i>pari taxa hes</i>	hit eat insides	wise, knowledgeable
<i>udud kumog huyudxm</i>	give your whole thoughts	focus, pay attention
<i>udud bul huyixam</i>	give turn thoughts	change someone's mind
<i>umam kundung</i>	long fish	tall man
<i>xo minjiri</i>	skin ants	good bumps

Figure 19: Sam metaphors

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