THE ART OF KULA:
an analysis of the Vakutan artistic
system and the rituals of Kula.

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Australian National University in May 1984.
Unless otherwise indicated, I certify that all parts of this thesis describe my own original research.
Preface

My interest in Trobriand carved art began in 1975 when I undertook a formal analysis of Massim art at the Australian National University. In the initial stages of my research I established my geographical boundaries as those circumscribing the Massim district (Hamy 1889). Boundaries set delimiting material for analysis incorporated many carved items of material culture available from Australian museums. Accordingly, a sample was collected from various museums: the Queensland Museum in Brisbane, the National Museum of Victoria in Melbourne, the Australian Museum in Sydney, and the Institute of Anatomy in Canberra (Campbell 1976 and 1982). The nature of my analysis was formal in that I proposed to extract the significant design elements contributing to a recognisable Massim 'style'. My purpose was to test whether an analysis could be made at a formal level, devoid of any exegesis from the carvers and the people for whom they carved.

As a starting hypothesis, I suggested that if various art forms originating from a specific area shared a range of visual elements whose structure and orientations made them recognisably homogeneous, there must be some principle of organisation governing the system. Haddon (1893, 1894, and 1895) had identified some of the principal design elements encountered in Massim art (the volute, scroll, zigzag, etc.) but he did not undertake a systematic analysis of the formal organisational principles of the system. Hence, his analysis of the graphic system remained incomplete.

The broad question that I posed was: is it possible for an outsider to not only identify the system, but also to determine organisational principles which sustain it? In order to answer this I submitted a sample of Massim carved art to an analysis designed to extract structural elements. In this way basic elements could be identified and certain rules would emerge concerning their ordering. Design elements are not randomly chosen for visual display in any artistic system. On the contrary, elements are chosen to convey certain information. Therefore the relationship between a design element or a set of interrelated elements and the information they convey is a structured one. Such was my theoretical pre-supposition.
In the final analysis all visible elements were identified and the formal rules of design organisation were suggested (Campbell 1976). The theory upon which the analysis was based, however, could not be tested without questioning the carvers and the people for whom this art is carved. From the formal analysis I had concluded that there was pattern, coherence, a hierarchy of design elements, and structure in their orientation. From this it could be suggested that meaning was encoded in the visual art of the Massim.

Upon completion of this analysis I received a scholarship from the Australian National University which provided funds that enabled me to travel to the Massim to test the validity of my findings and thus assess the value of this kind of formal analysis for the general research into visual communication systems. Since most of the Massim art found in museums was carved in the Trobriand Islands, I decided to undertake my field research there.

I was fortunate to receive support for my research from the Papua New Guinea Museum and Art Gallery in Port Moresby, and particularly from the Director, Mr. Geoffrey Mosuwadoga, himself a Trobriander. Due to his assistance and the interest of his curatorial staff I was able to spend six weeks prior to travelling to the Trobriand Islands inspecting the Trobriand collection held at the Museum. This enabled me to compare it with material seen in Australian museums, and to familiarise myself with more recent carvings. During this period I was also able to work with a modern Trobriand artist, Martin Morububuna, who, through his work, is not only dedicated to his own tradition but also to its careful transformation into painting mediums. His objective is to enable non Trobrianders to appreciate the formal qualities of Trobriand art as well as to understand the symbolic meaning behind the forms.
In October 1976 I flew from Port Moresby to the Trobriand Islands, where I stayed at the Uniting Church Mission at Oiyabia on the main island of Kiriwina. At this point I planned to set up residence at one of two possible villages on Kiriwina, both of which had a reputation for specialising in carvings commonly held in museum collections. As it turned out, however, neither village was suitable. Political tensions were running high at the time and both villages were in areas frequented by tourists. If I were to pursue my project as set out in Canberra and based on nearly a year and a half of initial research, another area had to be found. Two other areas known for their carvings (Kitava Island and Kwaiwbaga village on Kiriwina Island) had recently accommodated anthropologists; I could not expect them to welcome another one. In desperation I hitched a ride on a fishing boat headed for Vakuta Island, a small boomerang shaped island off the southern tip of Kiriwina. My reception there was a warm one, and I was willingly shown carved prowboards for a Kula outrigger canoe. This experience encouraged me, so on the 30th of October I moved to Vakuta.

My task was to investigate the role of the artist and his art in Vakutan society; the technical acquisition and deployment of carving skills; exegesis on style and meaning; the symbolic relationships between form and meaning; and the aesthetic appreciation of the art.

My starting premise was that art belonged to a communication system akin to, but separate from other communication systems. It was obvious that in order for me to begin to grasp what was being communicated in the art system, it would need 'translation' into another language. It was therefore imperative that I learn the vernacular. I devoted the first three months entirely to this project, at the end of which time I was able to converse with reasonable fluency in the Vakutan dialect. My success in this area, however, was in no small part due to the untiring tuition of the Vakutan people and to Mr. Ralph Lawton, who, while compiling a complete grammar of the Kiriwinan language, writing an M.A. thesis
on the Kiriwinan classifier, and working on a translation of the Old Testament, kindly gave me, before I left Canberra, some initial instruction in the Kiriwinan language by outlining the structure of verb and noun phrases, and equipping me with a basic vocabulary.

Once reasonably fluent in the language I was able to pose more direct queries about the meaning, construction, and role of art. During this time I commissioned trained carvers to produce sets of carvings for the Kula canoe: tabuya (canoe prowboard) and lagim (canoe splash-board). Thus I was able not only to record the process of design production through direct observation, but also to discuss with the carvers their work while they were actually carving. This too enabled me to monitor aesthetic comments by others. Comments from non-carvers enabled me to gauge the degree to which general villagers understood the carving process, design elements, and encoded meaning. Further to this, I asked three age grades of school children to draw both lagim and tabuya on paper using coloured pencils. This allowed me to assess the perceptions children had at various ages and their degree of interest in the communication system utilised on carvings for Kula.

I decided to concentrate primarily on the art of Kula for several reasons. Bowls, clubs, combs, etc. were not commonly carved on Vakuta. These items were more often acquired from the carving villages of Kirivina who relied on this trade to supplement the harvest from their gardens. In the past Vakutan master carvers used to carve specific lime spatulae on commission, but these are no longer in demand by the villagers and hence no longer carved. Although I collected detailed information concerning carvings and paintings for the decoration of yam houses these do not hold as much significance to Vakutans as the work produced for Kula. While anybody can execute yam house boards, bowls, combs, etc. it is only the master carver who, it is said, can correctly execute the carvings on Kula outrigger canoes. Prow- and splash-boards for fishing canoes (kewou) were sometimes carved and painted, but this depended upon the inclination of the owner of the canoe who would carve and paint it himself.
if he wanted. Finally, it was not hard to perceive that Kula to the Vakutan community was a pervasive concern affecting many aspects of their daily existence. Hence, preparations for Kula, the myths and traditions concerning Kula, and the rules and practice of Kula itself became integral to the subject of my research.

I am indebted to a number of people for their assistance when I was in need, for their emotional support when I was depressed, and for their intellectual stimulus when I was truly lacking inspiration. In particular, I am perhaps most indebted to Anthony Forge, who not only gave me the chance to pursue a long standing interest but also assisted in the administration of my research and in the intellectual supervision of the course of my analysis, and to Michael Young who likewise offered intellectual inspiration. Michael scrupulously read and commented upon each successive draft. Although he is perhaps most responsible for instilling in me periods of self-doubt he has done so as a close friend and it is to him that I am most grateful. I enjoyed several stimulating conversations with Howard Morphy which helped to formulate the theoretical perspective of this thesis. He too read some of the drafts and the final version of my thesis for which I am indebted.

I am grateful to several people who assisted in the production of this thesis. Many thanks to Louise Johnson for typing the thesis, the departmental secretary, Debbie Douglas who was always willing to help in any way she could, and to Bob Dowey who printed most of the plates. Particular thanks goes to Teddy Ratcliffe for printing the frontispiece.

The immeasurable value to my research contributed by Ralph Lawton has already been mentioned. I would like to include here my thanks to the entire Lawton family for their assistance, advice, and friendship.
While in Papua New Guinea I had occasion to seek the help of others who were always willing to listen to my problems and offer assistance when possible. In particular I would like to thank Ron and Judy Fergie; members of the department of Anthropology and Sociology at the University of Papua New Guinea; Dr. Ron and Patricia May; Rev. Frank Kaniga of the United Church at Oyabia, and the other members of the congregation who gently prepared me for life in the Trobriand Islands. To Jill and Frank Holland I am deeply grateful for their willingness to help me in any way during my residence there.

I am grateful for the financial and administrative assistance provided by The Australian National University, the Institute of Papua New Guinea Studies, the Papua New Guinea government, and the Papua New Guinea Museum and Art Gallery.

A word of thanks to the people of Vakuta seems trivial in respect of the immeasurable debt I owe them for the inevitable intrusions I made into their lives. I cannot hope to fully express my gratitude. The fond memories and the warmth I feel for so many Vakutans is my fortune. It would be nice to think that some measure of this also exists in the hearts of my closest friends: Kunabu, Bomtarasi, Ruguna, Daiyaga, Ineiya, Youwa, Magisibu, Boredoga, Samisoni, Naomi. To Rurupa, Kasanai, and my two 'sisters', Bukuravana and Bagitaria, I offer my warmest thanks for taking the initial plunge and allowing space for me within their family.

The boundless encouragement of my own family together with their unquestioning faith has seen me through many a doubtful moment. Finally, it is to Dr. Paul Ratcliffe, my husband, that I am deeply grateful. Without his loving support, encouragement, and criticism, and without the flexibility which enabled him to follow the professional pursuits of a wife, this thesis would never have eventuated.
Abstract

The Kula continues to be a pervasive institution throughout parts of the Massim district despite Malinowski's prediction 62 years ago that within, 'a generation or two the Kula will become entirely disorganised.' (1922:465). Today, Kula is even expanding beyond the island communities of the Massim to Port Moresby and other urban centres where the exchange of mwari (Kula armshells) and vaiguwa (Kula necklaces) has become a tool in the hands of the politically ambitious urban Trobriand elite.

In this thesis I analyse the meaning of Kula from the perspective of the Vakutan community. To achieve this I take as my starting point the carved and painted boards which decorate the Kula canoe. By analysing the formal elements which are utilised in their construction, together with the system of representation and colour associations, layers of encoded meaning are revealed. I argue that the graphic system communicates meaning at different levels. These levels are separate in that the meanings encoded convey different kinds of information, calling on the observer to switch conceptual frames in order to interpret their meanings. Although the messages encoded in these different levels are distinct, they ultimately interrelate so that an enriched meaning is achieved.

Following the analysis of the graphic system, I argue that the encoded meanings are principally concerned with success in the pursuit of Kula. This, however, is not all that the designs encode. Concepts evoked by the design units also interpenetrate with other spheres of communication, particularly those of Kula. In complementing the analysis of the graphic system with an analysis of the rituals of Kula, the symbolism of Kula transactions, and the meanings conveyed through Kula myths, a spectrum of distinct meanings converge and thereby highlight particular concepts. Ultimately, I demonstrate how this complexity of meaning is related to a male ideology which focuses upon gender relations within the Vakutan community.
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Introduction

The carved art of the Trobriand Islands attracted the interest of some of the earliest Europeans to visit the area. Some of the first 'collectors' were the blackbirders, traders, or whalers who frequented Massim waters in the middle of the 19th century. The first missionaries to the Massim were Italian Marists, who arrived at Woodlark (Murua) Island on the 15th of September 1847 (Affleet 1983). In 1863 a shipment of artifacts from the Seminary of Foreign Missions at St. Calocero arrived in Milan and included objects from the Massim. These were displayed at the Civic Museum in the same year, for which a catalogue was produced detailing each artifact (Afflect nd). The collection was subsequently destroyed during the bombings of 1943. In an unpublished index of specimens held in the British Museum, one artifact is listed as having been collected by Captain Owen Stanley while exploring the Louisiades on HMS Rattlesnake in 1849 (Halls nd). Firth included in his book, *Art and Life in New Guinea* (1936) one item collected by Admiral J. Erskine around 1850 and seven pieces collected prior to 1875 by Admiral Moresby of HMS Basilisk. By 1895 a considerable number of specimens of Massim art, and in particular Trobriand carvings, had found their way to various museums in Britain and Holland, including the British Museum, and the museums of Glasgow, Edinburgh, Cambridge, Dublin, and Leiden. A.C. Haddon made use of these collections in the development of his theories towards an analysis of 'primitive art' (1893, 1894, 1895).

European response to art from the Massim was generally favourable. However, cries of threatened degeneration together with concern for artistic purity inspired many early descriptions of the art (Finsch 1888; Haddon 1893, 1894, 1895). This concern was based upon what was thought to be the inevitable result of European contact and the corresponding production of work for sale to explorers and collectors. A.C. Haddon wrote in 1894:

> Degeneration in artistic excellence is the almost universal result of the influence of the white man... The natives have, by this time, sold a considerable portion of their old and well-carved
objects, and they find that the trader does not insist upon perfection in more modern objects. As far back as 1885, Dr. Finsch found that even shields were made to sell to the white-man. (1894:203)

Much later, Austen wrote of Trobriand art "... most of the stuff I have seen being turned out was cruder and more hastily finished than in the past" (1945:193). More recently (1978) the Kiriwina Lodge proprietor Mr. Ray Hargraves confided to me that there was a "marked decrease in quality within the last four years". Like Haddon some 70 years earlier, he blamed artistic degeneration on undiscriminating buyers.

Although Trobriand art has been held in relatively high esteem by Europeans and a considerable amount of collecting filled many of the world's museums and art galleries, little attention has been given to its place in the culture from which it came. Haddon was the first and the last in over seven decades to publish a serious analysis of art from the Massim. His analysis concentrated primarily on describing several of its formal characteristics and comparing them to those of other artistic traditions found in British New Guinea (1894, 1895). C.G. Seligman was also interested in Massim art, but primarily in the context of the whole material culture; it was another aspect of native life to be catalogued and described (1910). On a few occasions he attempts to adduce the 'magical significance' of specific items (a canoe prowboard ornament in 1909, and in collaboration with Dickson, canoe prow- and splash-boards from the D'Entrecasteaux Islands in 1946). Seligman's success, however, was limited. This was indicative of the prevalent lack of interest in artistic styles as such, owing to an assumption current throughout the first half of the century that art did not carry meaningful information (other than perhaps totemic representations). When names of design elements were given by informants, these were added to the voluminous descriptive inventories of the material culture with little attention being directed to their deeper, symbolic content.

From Malinowski we have many detailed accounts of Trobriand social and cultural life but nowhere does the art, so prolific in the Trobriand Islands, come under his scrutiny. Malinowski's
neglect of the art of these islands, except in the rare instances when he discusses the relationship of art to the economics of tribal life, is redressed somewhat by others' descriptions of Trobriand carvings (Silas 1924; Firth 1936; and Guirt 1963).

A.J. Halls, formerly the Art Officer attached to the Department of Education of Papua and New Guinea prior to 1952, took a personal interest in the formal construction of Trobriand carving. An unpublished, four volume manuscript was deposited with R. Firth in 1952. This included one volume of Hall's analysis of the formal elements and process of design development utilised by Trobriand artists to produce their carvings, and three volumes of detailed drawings of specimens held in various museums in Europe and Australia. It is unfortunate that this material remains unpublished as its value is in its detailed analysis of the formal elements comprising Trobriand carving. The meaning encoded in these elements, however, again escaped analytic attention.

It is only within the last decade that a few scholars have turned their attention to an analysis of the meanings encoded in the design elements of Trobriand art. In his M.Sc. thesis (1978) and in an unpublished paper (nd), P. Glass analysed Trobriand war shields using two lists of design labeling published by Fellows (1898b) and Leach (1954) together with fragments of evidence published by Malinowski, Powell, Fortune, Seligman, Austen, Baldwin, Róheim, etc. Following this analysis, Glass attempts an interpretation of the designs, relating these to a 'code' which uncovers the existence of a 'secret fertility cult' in the Trobriand Islands (nd:27). Unfortunately, Glass had to work from secondary and tertiary sources, compiling all sorts of evidence that might support his argument.

G.G. Scoditti has analysed the 'sign-symbols' carved on Kula canoe prowboards in Kitava (1977). His subsequent interpretations led him to consider that the 'congeries of concepts and symbolic meanings' (1980:77) are a representation of a myth about a culture hero named Monikiniki. According to Scoditti, the designs of canoe prow- and splash-boards represent the mythical adventures and attributes of this hero and is an 'historical interpretation' of
them (1980:78). Although the subject of my analysis is similar to Scoditti's, my interpretations are very different. Whereas Scoditti seems determined to link Kitavan conceptualisations to that of the Greek Hellenistic tradition and other 'high' periods of European art, I am concerned with detailing the relationship of the carvings to Vakutans and their meaning in relation to Kula. Further, Scoditti's analysis focuses only on the meaning of the signified. He does not attempt to delineate the system of signification and the formal components utilised in the operation of the communication system. By placing too much emphasis on meaning Scoditti neglects the formal construction of the system.

Any analysis of an art system, with the aim of determining the meaning encoded within the design elements, is fraught with difficulties. The main ones are 'accuracy' of interpretation and the maintenance of a sufficiently culturally-neutral 'objectivity'. Because there seems no escape from these problems much of the validity of such analyses has been open to question (E.R. Leach 1973; and Sperber 1975). Although it is often not hard to establish that art or design elements are meaningful it is often difficult to demonstrate convincingly how artistic systems encode and communicate meaning and precisely what meanings are encoded.

Many analysts of 'primitive art' have, to a large extent, avoided the dilemma created by questions of how much an outsider can 'know' someone else's art, and thus short circuited critical or dismissive appraisals. The method these analysts have adopted relies on a strictly formal analysis of the design components utilised in an art system. Haddon (1893, 1894, 1895) and Boas (1927) were the first to explore in detail the art of non-European peoples. Both adopted a formal approach to their specialised analysis of artistic form and the origin and development of style. Later, Reichard explored Melanesian wood and tortoiseshell carving (1933) and detailed the elements of design composition and style. In 1939 she published an analysis of Navajo sandpaintings which she discussed in relation to the legends they were associated with. In this work Reichard moved further into the interpretive realm but failed to explore the semantic link between verbal and non-verbal communication systems.
Apart from these, and with the notable exception of Firth (1936), art systems from tribal societies have until recently only engendered the interest of museum and art gallery research. A general split developed between the social anthropology of the university departments and the emphasis on material culture maintained by museums (Forge 1973:xiii). It is only within the last twenty years that 'primitive art' has again captured the interest of academic anthropologists.

With the development of modern linguistics and the increasing sophistication of linguistic analytical models, in particular the transformational grammar of Noam Chomsky (1957 and 1966), a few anthropologists began to turn their attention to non-European art in efforts to construct 'grammars' of design composition and transformation. Examples of this approach to art are Watt's analysis of Nevada Cattle brands (1966 and 1967), an analysis of Nuban body painting by Faris (1972), and Greenburg's formal analysis of form and the organisation of Hopi pottery designs (1975). These analyses mark the initial stages essential to the systematic analysis of art as a non-verbal communication system, in that they establish rules and patterns of design orientation, organisation, transformation and motivation. But they fail to locate the formal characteristics of the system in the semantic 'environment' within which they operate. While demonstrating that their respective art systems were indeed communication systems consisting of 'grammatical' rules analogous to those of language, they failed to take the exercise a step further and provide examples of meaning generated by the formal system. Holm justifies his formal approach to an analysis of northwest coast Indian art by arguing that the semantic content of the design elements are of secondary significance to the form of the art: "... the formal element of the designs very often takes on such importance as to overshadow the symbolic element to a point where the symbolism becomes very obscure" (1965:11).

If the intent is to analyse a system of communication, whether it be ritual, body painting, sand-drawings, hair styles, paintings, carvings, or whatever, it is not enough to unravel the formal characteristics of the system. The symbolic content and the messages
encoded must also come under analytic scrutiny for the total system to be understood. As to the question of meaning in non-European art, few studies have gone beyond the labeling stage in which design elements are merely identified with a linguistic term (for example: Haddon 1893, 1894, 1895; Boas 1927; Bunzel 1929; Reichard 1939; and Mountford 1956). What is lacking is the relationship between the formal structure of the system, the labeling mechanism of the system, the messages encoded in the labels, together with the social context for which the system is created as a unique method of communication.

To date, only three major analyses have emerged with the expressed aim of analysing the relationship between art as a system of communication and the society to which it communicates: Munn's analysis of Walbiri ritual paintings and sand-drawings, Forge's analysis of Abelam flat painting, and Morphy's analysis of Yolngu painting. For the most part, the theoretical basis of these analyses is influenced by a Saussurean concept of the sign and the meaning(s) it encodes. Munn delineates the structure of the Walbiri graphic system by recording the formal elements utilised in several contexts of Walbiri life together with a lexicon of meanings (1962). In this way she set the stage for a later work which looked at the sign system operating in different social contexts (1973a). In her analysis, Munn demonstrates that the symbols are 'multivocal' (1973a:220) in that each of the primary design elements carry multiple, but intrinsically related meanings. Further, the relationship between a symbol's various meanings is opposed to another symbol's meanings, thereby posing a basic polarity. In this way Munn is able to demonstrate further how the total sign system encodes basic Walbiri cosmological principles.

Forge's analysis of Abelam flat painting and architecture (1966, 1970, and 1973) is likewise concerned with delineating major conceptual themes central to the structuring of an Abelam universe. Forge's starting point has been that art 'styles' are systems of communication, but that the meaning conveyed is different from that conveyed by other systems of communication. From this perspective Forge emphasises the unique quality of art as a visual system of
communication, arguing that as such it is worthy of analysis. To this end the question of meaning must become central to any analysis of a visual communication system. Forge warns, however, against any simple acceptance of a one to one relationship between the naming of 'graphic' elements and the meanings encoded (1966:28). "The meaning is not that a painting or carving is a picture or representation of anything in the natural or spirit world, rather it is about the relationship between things" (1973:189). It is the 'about' that not only stimulated the analyses by Forge and Munn, but also inspired Morphy's analysis of North-east Arnhem Land painting.

In his doctoral thesis (1977a) Morphy demonstrated that North-east Arnhem Land art specifically, and Australian Aboriginal art in general, is a system of communication unique and integral to itself. In other words, the art does not function to 'support' meanings encoded in myth and ritual. Morphy argued that some correspondence may indeed exist, but that meaning is encoded in different ways and that art encodes things which are not included in the meanings generated by other systems (1977a:4-5). In criticising analyses of art systems which have in the past either focused only on the formal structure of a specific art, or conversely those which concentrate only on the meanings found in an art system, Morphy sets out to examine the 'structure and operation' of Yolngu art (1977a:3). To this end he explicitly draws upon the method of semiological analysis developed by de Saussure in his Course in General Linguistics, first published in 1916.

My theoretical perspective has been greatly influenced by the Saussurean concept of the sign, and by Roland Barthes' further elaboration of the principles of semiological investigation (1967). While Morphy's debt to de Saussure is more explicit than Munn's and Forge's, the three most significant analyses of visual communication systems all owe much to the development of the 'science of signs'. My own analysis also explores the relationship between the 'signifier' and the 'signified' so as to facilitate an interpretation of the meanings conveyed in Vakutan carving for Kula canoes.
In this thesis my aim is to analyse the system of meaning encoded within the design elements carved on the canoe prow- (tabuya) and splash-boards (lagim) utilised on Kula expeditions. As I consider the formal system of signification an essential part of the communicative process, a major concern is to delineate the design elements chosen to express certain signifieds in the Vakutan natural, social, and conceptual environment and to discuss the form of each element and its relationship to other elements together with the total structure of the boards upon which the design elements are carved. Once the formal system by which meaning is encoded has been introduced, it is then possible to explore the repertoire of signifieds. It is only after issues concerning 'how' the system operates and 'what' the system encodes have been discussed that the total art system as a medium of communication can begin to be understood.

It should be noted that in addressing the carved art of Vakuta as a system of communication I am not intending it to be equated with or dependent upon verbal communication. Following Forge, I maintain that the two systems operate separately, conveying different kinds of information. Indeed, the lines carved into the canoe prowboards form the nexus of a visual communication system which operates independently of any other form of communication. This is not to imply that there are no points of articulation with other communication systems, but that they operate independently while remaining complementary.

Prow- and splash-board carvings are commissioned by men who intend to have a Kula outrigger canoe constructed. The prowboards and the canoe are essential to the pursuit of Kula, which is a consuming passion of all Vakutan men. Kula provides the essential means for men to operate within the political and economic spheres of Vakutan life. To Vakutans, the Kula is of immense sociological value and this is reflected in the meanings encoded on the Kula canoe, prow- and splash-boards. The symbolism encoded in the activities leading up to a Kula expedition, the ritual of Kula
transactions and associated behaviour, as well as the return home of the Kula voyagers all encode a mosaic of information which gives further testimony to the importance of Kula in the lives of Vakutan people.

I have divided the thesis into three sections. Section One outlines the social setting. Contemporary Vakutan life, however, is partly the result of its past and so a brief look backwards in time serves to set Vakuta within an historical context as well as to provide the foundations upon which Vakutan society rests today (Chapter 1). Since the organisation and deployment of Kula activities on Vakuta places men in competitive relationships for the achievement of prestige and influence, Chapter 2 focuses on the political and economic fabric of contemporary Vakuta. This provides insights into the social imperative of Kula for Vakutans. The aim of Chapter 3 is to outline the historical circumstances which affected Trobriand art in general. My objective is to compare the production of carvings for trade with the production of carvings for ritual purposes, as well as to exemplify the unique position of the Vakutan master carvers vis-a-vis other Trobriand artists.

Section Two presents my analysis of the encoded meanings on the carved prow- and splash-boards. To introduce this section I begin with a discussion of the artist on Vakuta: his social position, the rules of etiquette by which his profession is governed, the transmission of magic to prospective artists and their technical training. These are some of the issues covered in Chapter 4. Chapter 5 is devoted to a formal analysis of prow- and splash-board carving, while Chapter 6 identifies the semantic content of the design elements. Chapter 7 focuses on the symbolism of colour and its relationship to the carving system utilised for Kula. The final chapter of this section explores the relationship between the formal construction of the system and the semantic content attached to each design element. The purpose of this is to facilitate a 'coming together' of the two properties of a sign, the signifier and the signified, so as to provide the basis for analysing the extent of the encoded messages and 'how' and 'what' they communicate.
In Section Three the Kula canoe prowboard carvings are placed within the wider context of Kula so that the encoded meanings, elucidated in Section Two, enrich and are enriched by the encoded meanings of preparatory activities to Kula, Kula transactions, magic, body decoration and the entire complement of communicative devices which together give meaning to Kula. This is the task of Chapter 9. It is this relationship, between encoded meanings on the canoe boards and the wider context in which they operate, that provides a perspective on the overall Vakutan conceptual framework. Chapter 10 explores what this conceptual framework might be by drawing upon meanings encoded within the symbolism of the garden, marriage, and conception beliefs. In this way the art of Kula, both in the context of the graphic system and the rituals of Kula, can be seen to encode a pervasive male ideology which contrasts male and female spheres of influence.
Section I
Plate 2.
Vakuta Island.
Chapter 1
From Past to Present

The land

The Trobriand Islands encompass several coral islands located some 200 kilometers north of Milne Bay, at the south-eastern tip of mainland Papua New Guinea. Because as a group these islands did not have a known native name, Sir William MacGregor confirmed the name Trobriand Islands given by the explorer D'Entrecasteaux in honour of his first lieutenant, Denis de Trobriand of the frigate L'Espérance (BNGAR 1890-91:7). There are six inhabited islands in the Trobriand group. The largest of these is Kiriwina (Boyowa), with Kaileuna (Kadawaga), Kitava, Vakuta, Kuyawa and Manuwata Islands following in descending order of size. There are several smaller, uninhabited islets also connected to the group (Figure 1). The islands are thought to have formed the upper, eastern edge of an ancient atoll which in earlier geological time subsided into the Solomon Sea (Allied Geographical Section 1942:33). Today they present the typical profile of low-lying coral islands.

Vakuta Island, shaped like a boomerang, is located some 30 kilometers south of the government station at Losuia on the lagoon shore of Kiriwina Island. The geological composition of the island consists entirely of coral. The general formation of the island follows that of Kiriwina, being raised coral pocketed with caves on the eastern shore and low-lying swampland on the western shore. The southern portion of the 'boomerang' is almost entirely swampland, while in the northern portion the soil is very rich and yields good harvests. The island is approximately 15 kilometers in length and no more than 3½ kilometers at its widest point. Several tidal creeks cut into the island at the centre of the 'boomerang'.

Figure 1
The Trobriand Islands
Contact experience of the Trobriand Islanders

It is difficult to establish a history of European contact for the Trobriand Islands prior to the middle of the 19th century. It is likely that the islanders had seen European crews by the end of the 18th century when whalers began to frequent the islands of eastern New Guinea. In 1782 D'Entrecasteaux sighted and named many of the islands in the area. The trading of yams for iron hoops occurred during the early 19th century according to reports in *Nautical Magazine* (1839:37-9), while blackbirders were known to be in the area in the middle of the 19th century.

It remains uncertain whether the French Marists, who established a mission on Murua (Woodlark) Island from 1847 to 1852, visited the Trobriands. There is, however, some evidence that the Trobriand people knew of the Marists' presence on Murua. The incorporation of the word kutou for knife (from the French couteau) into the languages of the northern Massim is an indication that some awareness of the Marists travelled along time-honoured exchange routes. Other evidence that knowledge of the Marist mission existed in Vakuta came from extended conversations with Vakutans about legends concerning their experience of early contact with Europeans. When discussing the cessation of fighting, the names of 'Babada', or 'Barbari' (Reverend S.B. Fellows), 'Saragigi' (Dr. Bromilow) and 'Perosi' are recalled. It is possible that the man referred to as 'Perosi' was a man called 'Permorosi' by Muruans. It seems that 'Permorosi' was one of the early French Marists whom MacGregor suggests was the man Montrousier (BNGAR 1890-91:6). Whatever the nature of Marist contact with the Trobriand people, whether directly or indirectly, their influence could only have been minimal.

In 1880 two traders, William Whitten and Oscar Soelberg, settled on the north-west of Kiriwina Island to set up a fishing station there (Austen 1936-40:10). This marked the beginning of Trobrianders' direct and extended contact with Europeans, as it was from this time on that many traders, pearlers, and other fortune
hunters settled in the Trobriand Islands. Other contacts prior to government control are reported to have been made by Germans from New Britain who sailed to the Trobriand Islands to buy yams (BNGAR 1890-91:7; and Austen 1936-40:11).

The first contact with the government of British New Guinea was MacGregor's inspection of Kiriwina Island, Kitava Island, Kaileuna Island, and Vakuta Island in August 1891 (BNGAR 1891-92, Appendix A). On this investigatory tour, MacGregor was determined to demonstrate to the 'natives' the power and supreme authority of the government. To this end he sought out and established a hierarchical relationship between himself and the various 'chiefs' he could locate. He gave particular attention to the chief of Omarakana village, Enamakala, playing upon the old man's seemingly 'paramount' authority over the Trobriand people, so as to establish an official relationship between the people of the Trobriand Islands and the British Government. In this first encounter with Trobrianders MacGregor found them 'kind, hospitable, and unsuspicious' (BNGAR 1891-92:6). In his report a rather favourable impression is evident and accords with MacGregor's ambitions for the Papuan natives:

In all probability it will be found that the missionary will make more way and produce a deeper impression in Kiriwina than elsewhere in the possession; and it is not unlikely that these tribes may possess some trace of that religious sentiment which is so conspicuously absent in the Papuan generally. As a mission field it could hardly be surpassed. If some new industry could be introduced which would create something for export, there can be no doubt that Kiriwina would become an important trading centre. (BNGAR 1891-92:7)

MacGregor's report indicates that the initial response by Europeans to the Trobriand people was favourable, and one can only infer that the Trobrianders themselves were also content with the as yet limited intrusion of Europeans into their lives. This is evident in the absence of displays of hostility or fear in the reports of these early encounters.
Sometime before 1894 Whitten discovered pearls in the Trobriand lagoon. This led to a substantial increase in European and 'coloured' traders in the islands, and by 1894 there were some nine to ten traders living permanently on Kiriwina Island (Moreton 1894-95:71). It was also in 1894, on the 27th of August, that Reverend S.B. Fellows of the Wesleyan Methodist Mission in British New Guinea dropped anchor in the Trobriand lagoon and ferried ashore timber, iron, and personal belongings for himself and his wife in preparation for the establishment of a mission. His arrival marked the commencement of a long-term effort to bring Christianity to the Trobriand people. In his diaries he recorded many frustrations and set-backs to his work, belying MacGregor's earlier predictions.

From 1894 the reports by the Resident Magistrate based on Samarai Island often recorded incidents concerning the uncooperative Trobrianders, notably their 'addiction for thieving' (BNGAR 1896-7:21). There were also reports of petty fights, together with a serious challenge to the position of Enamakala which resulted in a war between rival factions on Kiriwina and threats to the lives of Reverend Fellows and the Mission teachers. When the Resident Magistrate arrived on Kiriwina, initial skirmishes provoked the constabulary to fire. The Trobrianders called a halt to their battle in face of the obviously superior weapons of the government.

Towards the end of the 19th century, while C.A.W. Monckton was Resident Magistrate for the Eastern Division, he assessed the 'condition' of the Trobriand people following several years of 'contact with a higher civilization' (Austen 1936-40:11) by way of comment upon Reverend Fellows: "... a fine type of man who, with his equally devoted wife, was endeavouring to stay, with as I could see, little hope of success, the rapid deterioration of the islanders" (1921:75). "Throughout New Guinea", Monckton also noted, "the group was famous for three things: the cowardice of the men, the immorality - or rather I should put it the total unmorality - of the women, and the quality of its yams" (1921:74-75). Together with the 'rapid deterioration of the islanders', which was often blamed upon the 'low-class whites and Asiatics' (Austen 1936-40:11), venereal disease spread rapidly. The disease became so widespread that the Administrator, Captain F.R. Barton, moved to open a hospital on Kiriwina Island in 1905 (Black 1957:233). Dr. R.L. Bellamy was
appointed to the Trobriand Islands and given the powers of an Assistant Resident Magistrate. Bellamy's appointment marked the first permanent government station at Losuia on Kiriwina. When Bellamy arrived there were 12 Europeans living there, "... of whom three women and one man were at the mission station. The remaining eight males were engaged in trading and pearling" (Black 1957:233). In 1936 the Resident Magistrate at Losuia, L. Austen, wrote of the people:

As regards the natives themselves, they can be considered as a most law-abiding lot. They have their squabbles and their jealousies like any other human beings, but for the most part their breaches of the law are of a petty nature, and the A.R.M. and his three native armed constables are quite able to control the 8500 natives in the Group. (1936-40:11)

With the Japanese occupation of Rabaul on the 23rd of January 1942, Trobriand Islanders were drawn into World War II. "On the same day that they [the Japanese] landed at Rabaul they occupied Kavieng, and their aircraft raided the Trobriand Islands ..." (McCarthy 1959:39). Later, Allied troops occupied the Trobriand Islands to set up a front-line to counter a possible Japanese invasion. The troops organised Trobriand labour to help build an airstrip in the north of Kiriwina Island, and introduced to the people army rations of tinned meat, rice, sugar, and other sundries. Trobrianders today still recall the relative generosity of the Americans in comparison to the niggardly attitude of the Australians.

The introduction of cash cropping has largely been unsuccessful in the Trobriand Islands. In 1910 a massive coconut planting program was initiated by Bellamy but this was primarily aimed at improving the islanders' diet rather than for the production of copra (Black 1957:237). Today copra is produced and sold on a small scale by Trobrianders. Fishing is also a means whereby some islanders are able to extract a small, irregular income.

Some men and women leave the islands to settle in urban centres. Here they find employment and are able to sustain a modest living. Strong ties are maintained, however, with relatives on the island.
and much of the latter's source of cash comes from the urban
Trobriand population. In general, the islanders rely primarily
upon the produce of their gardens for subsistence.

Access to the Trobriand Islands today is principally by air,
although transport can sometimes be arranged on BP or STC supply
boats which travel irregularly to the islands. After the war, a
second air strip was built on Kiriwina Island and it is here that
aircraft land to disgorge visitors and returning Trobrianders.
Occasionally, wealthy Americans or New Zealanders sail into the
lagoon aboard yachts, and cruise ships drop anchor off the deeper
waters of northern Kiriwina to allow tourists an evening's
entertainment of erotic dances put on specially to delight the
visitors.

As in the past, access to Vakuta Island remains primarily by
outrigger canoe. Occasionally one can reach the island upon a
government launch, but visits by the government are rare. A few
people on Vakuta Island own outboard motors and attach these to
either a canoe or a dinghy. The use of outboard motors, however,
is sporadic owing to the uncertain availability of fuel and the
difficulty of locating spare parts for defective engines. As today,
poor access to the island in the past made visits by Europeans rare.
Consequently, and in contrast to Kiriwina Island, relatively little
is known of Vakutan history and Vakutan reactions to European
colonisation.

A brief history of Vakuta

Before, there was nothing on Vakuta. Just the
woods. Then my ancestor, Togamolu of the
Susupa dala [Malasi clan] rose from a hole in
the ground. Here, between Oluwala [hamlet]
and Kuweiva [hamlet]. He jumped up from the
hole in the ground and he saw only woods. He
was the only one here, only one man, my ancestor.
Togamolu's sister, Ilumaimaiya, lived in a
hole. During the day she rose from the hole
and at night she returned to the 'stomach'
(olopola) of the earth. One night Togamolu
went fishing and he caught his sister and pulled her to the ground. There she remained.

Lepani's ancestress, Ilubonotu [Lukwaisisiga clan] came to Vakuta from Kilivila [Kiriwina Island] and Togamolu married her. He gave her Kuweiwa hamlet as her village because it was not far from his village, Orodoga, where he rose from the earth. Lepani and I have much land, more than others, because my ancestor was the original man on Vakuta and Lepani's ancestress was his wife.

People came to Vakuta and Togamolu gave them land: Oluwala, Kuweiwa, Osaroru, all the hamlets and villages on the island. He did not demand payment because he was happy to have people to talk, work, and play with. (Ruguna Kuweiwa Hamlet Vakuta village)

Like the origin myths of Kiriwina Island (Malinowski 1922:304, 1932:418-20, 1948:111-126; Weiner 1977:38-42), Vakuta Island too had its founding ancestors emerge from the earth. However, the origin myth of Vakuta, as distinct from Kiriwina, gives a different account of the means by which the island was populated. Whereas Kiriwina Island was populated by emergence from the earth by autochthonous representatives of most of the clans and sub-clans who laid claim to various parts of the island, Vakuta was peopled largely by immigrants. Only one sub-clan (dala) emerged from the Vakutan earth, Ruguna's ancestress and her brother.

From this point, the oral history of Vakuta contracts to focus upon events which are thought to have occurred just prior to contact with Europeans. It is said that for much of Vakuta's history, people from the Lukuba clan were the most powerful people, although some people from the Malasi clan were also influential. Then the 'wars' began sometime before the arrival of the missionaries (one informant felt the need to supply me with exact dates, 1804-1812!). Vakutans often referred to these as the Vakutan wars, which seem to have coincided with the arrival of the first Tabalu Malasi from Kiriwina Island.

Towega's [Tabalu Malasi, Kumvivi hamlet] family came from Kiriwina. He was the first Tabalu on Vakuta. Taibutu's [Tabalu Malasi, Omarakana hamlet] family were the second Tabalu to arrive. They arrived for the beginning of the wars.
Rurupa's [Tabalu Malasi, Oluwala hamlet] family came from Dobu.\textsuperscript{5} They came and started a war against Youwa's [Yagwabu Malasi, Wakwega hamlet] family [apparently, they were the big-men at the time]. Towegai's family helped Youwa's family fight Rurupa's family, but Rurupa's family won. (Artur Kumvivi hamlet Vakuta village)

In this account, Artur describes the order in which different branches of the Tabalu Malasi arrived on Vakuta and the ensuing events which brought about shifts in an apparent struggle for dominance. It is interesting to note that tensions that exist today tend to be associated with the conflicts mentioned in Artur's account. Political alliances today form along the lines recalled in the oral tradition.

Shortly following Tabalu success in gaining a foothold on Vakutan soil, the British New Guinea colonial government appeared. It was this state of affairs that Lt. Governor MacGregor found when he arrived on Vakuta Island.

MacGregor first made contact with the people of Vakuta when travelling to the lagoon villages by whale-boat and thence inland. On the 27th of August 1891 he reached Giribwa village located on the southern-most tip of Kiriwina Island and from there he travelled down the lagoon coast of Vakuta Island to the two villages 'Bokinai' (Okinai) and 'Toula' (Sikweya ?). Upon this first encounter MacGregor records that the Vakutans had for some time been well aware of the government and its policies towards the islanders, having received news of the government from Woodlark Island:

When discussing administrative matters with them they declared they would not fight because they were afraid of the Government. They said they had heard all about the Government from Murua ... and had long been expecting me at Vakuta. (BNGAR 1891-92:6)

On this inaugural visit to Vakuta, MacGregor's impressions compared favourably with those he formed of Kiriwina. He adds, however:

They appeared to me to be of coarser features generally than the Kiriwina people, with round, wide nostrils and a thick nose; and there are not a few genuinely red-haired people, none of
whom were noticed on Kiriwina. This admixture is probably to be traced to the more maritime habits of the Vakuta people. (BNGAR 1891-92:6)

In the following year MacGregor made another survey of Vakuta, this time visiting the larger, inland village of Vakuta. Of this village he wrote:

The principal village ... is of unusually large size. The people appeared to be perfectly peaceful and very friendly, and to give more than ordinary obedience to their chief. Food was very abundant. (BNGAR 1892-93:xiii)

In August 1893 MacGregor again anchored in Vakutan waters and in his report records Vakutans' apparent desire to conform to all that the government wanted:

There I found the chief seated in state on a small platform in the square of his own quarter. We were surrounded by hundreds of resonant thoats. The noise, of a friendly and jubilant character, was dreadful, so great that at last the chief took up a gun and, presenting it at the crowd upside down, put hundreds of them in flight. The chief assured me there had been no fighting or quarrelling in the tribe. He said they wished to have a mission settled there and he promised a site for that purpose. (BNGAR 1893-94:18)

On August 14, 1895 Mr. Andrews of the Wesleyan Methodist Mission arrived on Vakuta Island and began to set up a station (Fellows, nd). Several days after his arrival he sent a report to Reverend Fellows on Kiriwina Island to say that he had been well received and had had no trouble organising labour to build a church and residence for himself and his wife (ibid). By the 12th of June the following year, however, the Andrews left Vakuta due to poor health following several bouts of fever. Fellows subsequently sent various Fijian and Samoan teachers to Vakuta. All had little success, however, due to chronic sickness followed by requests for transfers. By the end of 1899 Fellows attempted to buy more land further inland from the swamp, apparently convinced that proximity to the water was the cause of the recurrent illness of his teachers. In his diary entry of the 10th of
December Fellows vowed not to send any more laymen if he could not obtain the piece of land further inland. It appears that nothing had happened by the time of Fellow's last entry in the diary of October 7, 1900, when he left Kiriwina Island.

Although there is no known date for the recommencement of the mission station on Vakuta, this probably occurred shortly after the Reverend M.K. Gilmour took over the Mission on Kiriwina Island after Fellow's departure. Further documentation of the history of Vakuta is lacking, and one must rely upon records of events on the main island of the Trobriands to shed some light on local developments.

The effect of World War II on Vakutans can only be estimated. Kiriwina Island hosted American and Australian Allied Forces. Although Vakuta was no doubt visited for purposes of reconnaissance, Vakutan village life was probably little affected by the events of the war. Several informants told me that they, or their fathers, had worked for the troops for short periods on Kiriwina. Another informant, however, who had lived as a boy in Giribwa village on the southern tip of Kiriwina Island, told me that his father had harboured a Japanese soldier during part of the war. The fact that people of southern Kiriwina and Vakuta had apparently little allegiance to either side indicates the minimal involvement of the Vakutan people.

Tourism, likewise, has had a marginal effect on Vakutans. This is due mostly to the poor accessibility of the island. Although Vakutans are well aware of events occurring on Kiriwina, and to a certain degree receive indirectly the repercussions experienced by Kiriwinan people in their contacts with the outside world, Vakutans are by and large unaffected by Kiriwina and remain self-consciously distinct from their northern neighbours.

In the mid 1970's Vakutans were encouraged by a local fisheries businessman (of Trobriand Fisheries) to extend their fishing activities and sell the larger part of their catch to him. Freezers
were installed and powered by generators. The businessman made regular trips from Losuia to empty the freezers and pay the fishermen. By January 1978, however, the freezers were no longer working.

During this period, a self-help development movement (Kabisawali) was gaining momentum on Kiriwina Island. This provoked a conservative reaction (Tonenei Kamokwita – TK) by those who sought governmental development and aid. A polarization occurred and alliances were made according to a complexity of traditional and contemporary political interests. Vakutans were strongly opposed to the Kabisawali upstarts and pronounced themselves TK supporters. The Vakutan alliance with the TK opposition was largely influenced by Lepani Watson, the elected chairman of the TK executive in 1974. Lepani Watson is the living descendent of the wife of Togamolu, the first Vakutan according to the origin myth. He is currently (1984) Premier of the Milne Bay Provincial Government.

Settlement and local groupings on Vakuta

In 1891 MacGregor recorded that there were some six villages on Vakuta Island:

... two large villages on the coast – Bokinai and Toula.6 They say there are four other villages on the island ... There are seventy-six houses in Bokina [sic] and about the same number in Toula. (BNGAR 1891-92:6)

On his sketch map accompanying this report, however, there are only three villages indicated: Sikwea, Wokinai, and Vakuta. On the map of the Trobriand Islands published by Seligman (1910: Figure 46) there are five villages recorded on Vakuta Island: Sikei (presumably Sikwea), Vakuta, Wapaia, Kaulaka, and Kwaidagila. Malinowski shows only four villages (1922: Map IV): Osikweya, Okinai, Vakuta, and Kaulaka. In 1936-40, however, Leo Austen recorded only three villages: Okinai, Kaulaka, and Vakuta. On a map made by the Allied Forces in 1942 and based upon government records, Vakuta Island is credited with five villages again. Four of these are the familiar Osikwea, Okinai, Vakuta, and Kaulaka,
but there is the addition of Loriu village (Allied Geographical Section 1942). These inconsistencies lead one to suspect that the Vakutan population was decreasing in the first three decades of this century, but experienced a resurgence in the 1940's. Certainly, Vakutan informants reported to me a considerable decline in the population of Vakuta, pointing to areas around the main village which used to be the location of old hamlets long since disused.

Today there are three villages located on the island: Okinai, Vakuta, and Kaulaka. Another village situated on the southern tip of Kiriwina Island, however, claims political, economic, and social unity with Vakuta. This is Giribwa village. The populations of these villages are variable as there is considerable movement between them for purposes of marriage, because of individuals' changing alliances, and relocations following deaths. Census data collected in 1980 for the South Kiriwina Census Division give some idea of the relative population differences between villages.

<table>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Okinai village</td>
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<td>34</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Kaulaka village</td>
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<tr>
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</table>

Table I. Vakutan census data.

* For my 1977 village census see Table III, p. 28.

The layout of Vakutan villages is very different from that described for northern Kiriwinan villages, resembling more the coastal pattern which has been described as presenting 'quite a chaotic appearance' (Malinowski 1922:55; see also Seligman 1910:662; Powell 1969a:188; and Weiner 1977:33). Of Vakuta village, MacGregor wrote:

The village is a very large one, the houses built in irregular batches to suit the rocky nature of the ground, so that it is not easy to form an idea of the exact number [of houses]; but there are probably 200 to 300.7 (BNGAR 1892-93:9)

Although Vakutan villages may look irregularly arranged, they are in fact very precisely organised into distinct hamlets (Figure 2).
Vakuta village, the largest on the island, is composed of fifteen hamlets, each linked to the others by a vast network of well worn footpaths. Individual hamlets are more or less spatially organised around a central area, some more clearly so than others (for instance, see Giuya and Kumvivi hamlets, Figure 2). While a resident of Vakuta village, I never heard the word baku (central place; see Malinowski 1922:56) used to designate these areas. Instead the name of the hamlet was used to refer to these 'central' spaces. On the outer fringes of each hamlet grow tall edible nut trees called seida (*Terminalia catappa*) which are a cherished delicacy when in season. Coconut and betel-nut palms are also grown on the fringes of hamlets as are mango trees.

The houses, although clustered around a central space, do not necessarily face towards the centre of the hamlet, as shown by the orientation arrows in Figure 2.

Vakuta village is politically divided in half. This division is conceptually associated with the spatial oppositions conveyed by upper/lower (orakaiwa/otenauwa), above/below, and north/south (Figure 2). No hierarchical relationship is implied in this opposition, but both 'spaces' are related to further symbolic associations which are complementary (the conceptual significance of this spatial opposition will be further explored in Chapter 10). In addition to the village being divided by conceptual boundaries, said by informants to demarcate political alliances between past leaders, each hamlet is further associated with one of the four clans (Table II). As this table shows, each hamlet is a distinctly named residential unit with its clan, and more specifically dala (sub-clan) affiliation. Accordingly, each hamlet has in residence a senior male member of the dala who is responsible for the 'foundations' or tumila of dala land based in the hamlet. As the senior male resident on dala land, he has the right to say who may or may not be buried on hamlet land. While all members of the owning dala have a right to be buried within hamlet tumila others must apply for plots and give valuables in payment. These are distributed to other senior members of the dala who may or may not be resident within their dala hamlet. The senior male resident of the owning dala also has the ultimate say in who may reside in the
hamlet and where houses should be built. Again, owning dala members can claim a right to reside in their dala hamlet, while others have to apply to the senior male resident.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hamlet</th>
<th>Hamlet spokesmen</th>
<th>Clan</th>
<th>Dala</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Oluwala</td>
<td>Rurupa</td>
<td>Malasi</td>
<td>Tabalu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Omarakana</td>
<td>Taibutu</td>
<td>Malasi</td>
<td>Tabalu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giuya</td>
<td>Modani</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kuweiwa</td>
<td>Lepani</td>
<td>Lukuba*</td>
<td>Lukwaisisiga*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Osaroru</td>
<td>Ruguna</td>
<td>Malasi</td>
<td>Susupa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kumvivi</td>
<td>Taudoga</td>
<td></td>
<td>Lukulabuta*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yamroiroi</td>
<td>Kaidama</td>
<td></td>
<td>Lukwaisisiga*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wayam</td>
<td>Pilimoni</td>
<td>Malasi*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wanuya</td>
<td>Sam</td>
<td>Malasi</td>
<td>Obukula</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wakwega</td>
<td>Youwa</td>
<td>Malasi</td>
<td>Yagwabu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kabawala</td>
<td>Towegai</td>
<td>Malasi</td>
<td>Tabalu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kogeta</td>
<td>Johanni</td>
<td>Lukwaisisiga*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dimlamala</td>
<td>Dimda</td>
<td>Lukuba</td>
<td>Lobweta</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table II. Vakutan hamlets and their clan associations.

* I was unable to ascertain the dala affiliation of these men.

Generally, the resident senior man's sphere of influence extends only to those matters which concern the land of the hamlet: residence, house building, and burial. The management of a dala's garden land is not necessarily vested in this person, although if he is a man of general influence within the community he will have a great deal to say about the distribution of garden land. Contrary to the obligations of hamlet residents to the hamlet 'manager' described by Weiner for northern Kiriwinan villages (1977:146), Vakutan hamlet residents do not specifically make gardens for hamlet spokesmen. They may, however, make gardens for these men in accordance with other exchange obligations.

Ownership of hamlet land is based upon mythological charters. Although the Vakutan origin myth describes how the original Vakutan man emerged from a hole in the ground of Kuweiwa hamlet and
subsequently gave land to people as they came to the island, each owning dala also has a specific origin myth detailing their ancestors' emergence from holes on hamlet land.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hamlet</th>
<th>Number of Houses</th>
<th>Number of Occupants</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Average Occ/House</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Oluwala</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kuweiwa</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giuya</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kumvivi</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Omarakana</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Osaroru</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yamroiroi</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wayam</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wanuya</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wakwega</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tokwada</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ounasu</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kabawala</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kogeta</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dimlamala</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>84</strong></td>
<td><strong>326</strong></td>
<td><strong>157</strong></td>
<td><strong>169</strong></td>
<td><strong>3.9</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table III. Summary of Vakuta village census: 1977.*

Residence patterns on Vakuta do not follow those prescribed by avunculocal residence rules, which were described by Malinowski (1932) as typical of the Trobriand residence pattern. Instead, people choose where to live according to personal preferences, political expediency, mortuary obligations, etc. Both Powell (1960, 1969a) and Weiner (1977) noted the low frequency of avunculocal residence in contrast to the popularity of other residence preferences. Powell argued that only in cases where a man was likely to inherit the 'ownership' of the village from his mother's brother did he make a definite move to his own village (1960). Otherwise most men were just as likely to choose alternative places of residence (see also Weiner 1977:42). Table IV shows the distribution of men over 20 years of age between the hamlets of Vakuta village in 1977.
Table IV. Hamlet residence of men over 20 years of age in Vakuta village.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Residence</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>own dala hamlet</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>different dala but same clan hamlet</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>father's dala hamlet</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>father's father's dala hamlet</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wife's dala hamlet</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wife's father's dala hamlet</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wife's father's father's dala hamlet</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>step-brother's father's dala hamlet</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>65 men</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of the 65 men over 20 years of age 75% were living in hamlets other than their own dala's hamlet. Of the 16 men living in their own dala hamlet, 11 were senior men of the dala looking after the interests of the dala tumila. Although political and economic expediency often influenced men's decisions concerning possible residence sites, reasons for residence preferences ranged from allegiance to one's own dala hamlet, remaining where one grew up, allegiance to one's wife's family, or following one's friends or relatives around.

Women, on the other hand, primarily live virilocally when married (Table V). Although women, like men, have the right to live in their own dala hamlet, most women do not, in fact, take advantage of this. There is little political or economic incentive for women to reside in their own dala hamlet. Instead, women, if married, live where their husbands choose, and if unmarried where they feel needed (i.e. with mothers, fathers, or sisters) or cared for (i.e. with a daughter).
Table V. Hamlet residence of women over 20 years of age in Vakuta village.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Residence</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>own dala hamlet</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>father's dala/clan hamlet</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>father's father's dala/clan hamlet</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>husband's dala/clan hamlet</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>husband's father's dala/clan hamlet</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>husband's father's father's dala/clan hamlet</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sister's husband's dala/clan hamlet</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>widow living with a married child</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>73</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although Tables IV and V clearly set out the residence patterns for both Vakutan men and women, the neatness inherent in their construction disguises the situation in reality. Also, the range of residence preferences mentioned previously may imply that little ambiguity exists in residence choices. Changing political and economic situations, however, result in a comparatively high level of mobility from one residence to another, particularly for young married and unmarried men. This indicates a considerably more complex rationale for particular hamlet affiliations over others, rather than merely accepting one's own dala hamlet, one's father's dala hamlet, and so on. In a six month period, between my initial census of May 1977 and a second census taken in early December 1977, 16% of the total adult population (over 20 years old) resident in Vakuta village changed hamlets. Of these, there were 14 men and 8 women (3 were married couples) who changed their hamlet residence. Apart from the effects of death, marriage, or divorce in initiating movement between hamlets, men tend to change their place of residence in pursuit of better political and economic possibilities (see Chapter 3).
Effectively then, men change residence allegiance from one 'big-man' to another depending on who in the hamlet or village has more to offer in the way of support to young, ambitious men. Thus, although there is a vague ideology which favours avunculocal residence for men, the figures show a greater tendency for men to choose alternative residence than women, who tend to reside where their husbands choose. However, the complexity of residence choices, particularly for men, is evident in the relatively high degree of mobility between hamlets.

The domestic scene

There are seven main paths which lead away from the village (Figure 2; three others are secondary paths joining the main paths). One path leads north-east to the ocean and a favourite coral grotto where women go to wash their clothes on weekdays. On Sunday afternoons it is reserved for adolescent boys and girls who use it as a favourite meeting place after church. This path also by-passes an area of garden land, which was in a fallow state during my stay. Another path leads eastwards, linking the village to Kaulaka village (and the government school enroute). A third path leads south to the tidal creek where the village's fishing and Kula outrigger canoes are moored, while another links Vakuta village to Okinai and the lagoon to the west. The remaining three paths lead out of the village towards separate garden areas.

Being primarily horticulturalists, and fishermen secondarily, the garden areas for Vakutans are a very important focus of activity on nearly every day of the year. Their year finishes with a yam harvest celebration (kovesa) at the end of the Milamalia 'moon' in mid-September/mid-October. During the next 'moon', Iyakwausi (mid-October/mid-November), the clearing of new garden land begins and with it the commencement of the annual garden cycle. On Vakuta, as elsewhere in the Trobriand Islands, people calculate time by the phases of the moon and the associated activities in the gardens.
When the day's work is finished in the gardens and it is time to return to the village, people meet on the various tracks leading back to the village. On the way many stop to wash the day's grime from their bodies, women congregate in one bend of the tidal creek while men repair to another section.

Quiet by day, the village gradually livens as people return along the tracks. People greet friends and relatives, stopping momentarily to share some bit of gossip about the day's events before continuing along the path to their homes. People rarely return home empty-handed. Firewood is carried in by women and occasionally by men (if they happen to have been working at an opportune place). Groups of girls bring sacks of land crab, mud crab, or crab taken from the coral reefs. The crab is distributed among family and friends for their evening meal. Young men bring in fish for the family and other relations. These may be cooked immediately or smoked. Married women usually enter the village laden with baskets of freshly harvested vegetables or foods gathered from the bush, while married men return at dusk with bush knife and axe slung casually over their shoulders. On occasion a bunch of betel-nut, delicately balanced on the tip of a bush knife is brought home for the family's evening enjoyment.

Smoke rises from various houses as women prepare the evening meal. Young girls fetch water from the tidal creek for cooking. Coconut is scraped and the liquid is squeezed from the flesh and added to the pot of vegetables. Men set and chew betel-nut while talking of the day's activities, planning tomorrow's work and playing with their infants. Young children continue to amuse themselves. They play with their age-mates in immediate hamlets, running off that last burst of energy before the evening meal makes them lethargic and a full stomach gradually entices them to sleep. Young men and women plan their evening rendezvous and prepare for the night's pleasures.

Soon the family sits down together for the evening meal. Much discussion goes on during this meal, as the family talk about the day's activities and relay the continuing saga of recent intrigues, elaborating on the day's collection of gossip. Once the meal has
finished, betel-nut is handed out and tobacco rolled in strips of newspaper. Soon darkness falls. The lights of the houses are lit and the feeble flames of kerosene lamps dimly light the verandahs of the village houses.

Visits are rarely made on rainy evenings. Adults and young children are content to stay by their warm hearths and chat among themselves, telling stories before retiring early to bed. Young men and women are the only ones undaunted by a wet night. Equipped with rain mats, they make their rendezvous. Rainless nights, however, have a different character about them altogether.

On a moonless night the village tracks are filled with swaying kerosene lanterns dimly casting light on the fact of its carrier. The village is alive with people moving from one verandah to another. People confine themselves to the well lit verandahs in preference to the darkness of the village. An occasional squeal of laughter interrupts the evening's discourse as two lampless people collide along one of the village paths. People rarely leave the village to follow paths leading outside the village. Exceptions to this are men going fishing, or youths who organise an ambush on one of the inter-village tracks. Their purpose is to catch and punish a youth from another village who is suspected of coming for an assignation with a girl from their own village (see also Malinowski 1932:223).

If the night is lit by a full moon a wider range of activities is possible. Villagers move away from the houses to the central areas of the hamlets. They gather to sing, either 'traditional' Vakutan songs (wosimoiya), religious, multi-phonal songs introduced by the Fijian Missionaries, church hymns, or string-band music. Other villagers may dance 'traditional' dances, or they may prefer the modern dancing that accompanies string-band music. Still others may sit around a story-teller and listen for hours to his repertoire. After the evening's activities reach a highpoint, the participants gradually dwindle in number as tired men, women and children return to their respective houses and stretch out on their sleeping mats. Young men and women, however, seem not to tire. Eventually though,
they too begin to wander off in couples. A few men may remain on one of the verandahs in the village discussing plans for a coming event or a particular ceremony. Soon they too retire to their sleeping mats and the village lies peacefully asleep until the early crow of the cock warns of the coming dawn and the beginning of another gardening day.
Notes: Chapter 1


2. A seventh inhabited island is Muwa Island. I do not include it here because until a few years ago this island was inhabited by an Australian coconut plantation owner. His workers were generally from the D'Entrecasteaux archipelago. As far as is known this island was never inhabited by Trobriand Islanders. It is now owned by a Trobriand Islander, John Kasaipwalova, who is hoping to develop it as a tourist resort.

3. Malinowski, on the other hand, thought that the name 'Pelosi' referred to Reverend Fellows (1932:233).

4. Ruguna, in telling me the Vakutan origin myth, instils it with contemporary significance by including here a descendent of Ilubonotu, namely Lepani Watson who was a member of the Kiriwinan Local Government and a Member of the House of Assembly from 1964-1972, and Premier of the Milne Bay Provincial Government in 1983-.

5. Although there is no resemblance between Trobriand clans and those found on Dobu, it is common practise to accommodate any newcomer to their clan structure. A stranger is asked for his or her totemic animals to determine which of the four clans and sub-clans he or she belongs to. If clan and sub-clan identity cannot be determined in this manner the palm of the stranger's hand is examined and the clan identity thereby discovered. In 1976 a Dobuan was resident in Vakuta village and it was determined that he 'belonged' to the Lukwaisisiga clan. If Rurupa's family was indeed originally from Dobu, and this is quite possible given the frequent communication between these two communities, it is likely that this type of incorporation took place.
6. In a later report MacGregor says the two coastal villages on Vakuta are 'Sikwea' and 'Wokinai' (BNGAR 1892-93:9). The village name 'Toula' dropped from use entirely after the 1891-92 report. It can be assumed that 'Wokinai' is a respelling of 'Bokinai' found in the 1891-92 report.

7. This must be a gross over-estimate as it would give the village a population of 6-900 people using a calculation of 3 people per house.

8. Malinowski spells it sayda and describes the nut as, 'a spirally coiled up nut, longish and pointed in shape, with somewhat the taste of the hazel-nut.' (1935, Vol. 1:311; see also Fortune 1932:90; in Dobuan it is saido).

9. While Malinowski and Powell focused only upon the village as a political unit, identifying the man in authority in each village as either a chief or headman according to relative status, Weiner, in identifying the hamlet as the socially significant unit, argues that the organisation of each hamlet centres around a 'hamlet manager' (1977:42-43). While in agreement with Weiner in her argument for the hamlet as the principal organisational unit, I prefer not to use the term 'hamlet manager' because within Vakutan hamlets these persons in no way display the managerial role outlined by Weiner for northern Kiriwina, nor do they behave as 'headmen' or 'chiefs'.

10. I do not intend to enter here into the debate over what constitutes dala in the Trobriand Islands (see Malinowski 1932; Powell 1969a; and Weiner 1977). For the purposes of this thesis I retain the conventional association with sub-clan; that is, people who claim to be related according to real or presumed links by blood to a founding ancestress are said to belong to the same dala. Accordingly, a clan is made up of several such dala who claim descent from a fictive ancestress.
11. The Vakutan word for moon is tubukona and is used by Vakutans to correspond to our concept of month. All 'months' are calculated from the full moon.

12. Although some confusion may have existed about the importance of the lunar phases in Trobriand temporal calculations (c.f. Malinowski 1927b:209, and Austen 1939) it seems fairly certain that there can no longer be any doubt. In Malinowski's later publication concerning gardening (1935) it is clear, even if implicit, that the phases of the moon are important markers to the passage of time and particularly to the associated activities in the gardens (see also E.R. Leach 1950, and Damon 1982).
Within recent times, perhaps four to six generations ago, there came down and settled in [Vakuta] a branch of the real Tabalu, the chiefly family of highest rank. But their power here never assumed the proportions even of the small chiefs of Sinaketa. In Vakuta, the typical Papuo-Melanesian system of government by tribal elders - with one more prominent than the others, but not paramount - is in full vigour. (Malinowski 1922:69)

There really are no chiefs on Vakuta. In the past we did not have such a thing. A man was guyau [chief] if he was good at Kula or in his gardens, but he was not always guyau, others were guyau too. We did not have guyau who were guyau because their ancestors were. (Vanisi Guyau Dimlamala hamlet Vakuta village)

The Vakutan economic environment

Subsistence

Typically, the Vakutan economy centres around the yam garden. Yams not only provide the primary means of sustenance, they also act as essential objects of exchange in the complex network of community relations (Malinowski 1932, 1935; Weiner 1977, 1978). There are a wide range of exchange relationships in which one part of the obligation is the giving of yams at harvest time. Yams are given in payment for canoes, rights to the use of canoes (fishing or Kula), payment for house building, yam house construction, carving of boards for any of these three, payment for the use of land, payment for either a live pig or pork, payment for magic, etc. Mortuary obligations can drain a large proportion of a man's harvest. Marriage payments are also made in the form of yams given at harvest as initial 'gifts', interest on 'gifts', and so on. These are very complex and can take several years to finalise. Yams are also given
as pokala, a specific type of exchange which we will encounter later. Prior to colonial and missionary interference, yams were the subject of a major magical system throughout the Trobriands (Malinowski 1935).

Today Vakutans ideally maintain three gardens at any one time. Firstly, there is the 'old garden' (origabu) from which all yams have been harvested during the harvest 'month' (mid-July to mid-August). Villagers rely upon the origabu to provide them with a variety of foods throughout the year. Taro, sweet potato, tapioca, and pumpkin are planted in these gardens. A second garden (kamgwa) is planted as an alternative garden and used to sustain a family when the old garden has been depleted and before new yams are ready for harvesting. As Bomtarasi put it, "All wise gardeners make kamgwa to see them through the months of hunger." (Kuweiwa hamlet, Vakuta village). The third garden (kaimata) is the main garden. It receives the greatest attention during the year. It is in this garden that yams for exchange, seed yams, and yams for domestic use are grown. The Vakutan calendar revolves around the events taking place in the kaimata garden; each lunation marking a new stage in the gardening cycle.

Vakutans refer to the kaimata garden as the 'new' garden (as opposed to the 'old' garden, or origabu which the kaimata will become following harvest). The preparation of this garden for the planting of yams marks the beginning of the Vakutan new year. When the garden is ready, only men's yams are planted. These are the yams which, following harvest, will be men's major exchange commodity. During the weeding season from March onwards, other vegetables, fruit, and women's yams are planted.

Following the harvest of men's yams from mid-July to August, the kaimata becomes the 'old' garden and a new kaimata garden is cleared. On Vakuta a man's exchange garden is the same as his main subsistence garden.
It is difficult to compare the types of gardens on Vakuta with those of northern Kiriwina. Malinowski's distinctions are somewhat difficult to differentiate, particularly those which define 'fields', 'gardens', and 'plots' (see 1935, Vol. 1:58, 87-91). Generally, however, I estimate that Vakutans cultivate in any one season more than one 'field', to use Malinowski's term. Vakutans may set out several 'fields' for the new year's kaimata gardens. Although Malinowski notes that more than one 'field' per village may be cultivated, these are for separate uses, none of which overlap; for example, one kaimata 'field' may be cultivated, while one kaymugwa (Vakutan kamgwa?) 'field' may be cultivated, and so on. On Vakuta, however, a man may have a kaimata 'plot' in the same 'field' as his kamgwa 'plot', or he may have a kaimata 'plot' in a 'field' where others have kamgwa 'plots'. In comparison with parts of Kiriwina, land is not as scarce on Vakuta in relation to the population it supports. Hence there seems to be greater flexibility in the allocation of land to the types of gardens that can be cultivated. Powell (1969b) and Brunton (1975) argued that the higher population density of northern Kiriwina "caused" relations of hierarchy to emerge, resulting in a development of ascribed positions of rank. If this is a valid argument then the absence of rank in Vakutan social relations can be seen to be related to the lower population density and decreased pressure on land.

Further differences in garden utilisation became evident from Weiner's data and the distinctions she makes between subsistence gardens (gubakayeki) and exchange gardens (kaymata and kaymwila, 1977: 137-138). Weiner describes how in northern Kiriwina a family's subsistence garden is quite separate to the garden from which exchange yams are cultivated. As described above, this is not the case for Vakutan garden allocation.

Apart from yams, several varieties of taro, sweet potato, tapioca, breadfruit, sugar cane, along with numerous kinds of plantain and banana are used as food. Pineapple and pumpkin are popular while oranges, grapefruit, corn, and beans are the least favoured of the introduced fruits and vegetables. Yams, however, remain the most
important exchange commodity. Foodstuffs from the bush include various kinds of greens, herbs, nuts, mangos, and edible flowers. These are available seasonally and offer some relief from the unending monotony of the yam diet.

In general, the natural environment is good to the Vakutans, providing them with more than adequate food supplies. In fact, Vakutan harvests are known throughout the Trobriand Islands, and perhaps further afield, as being plentiful. When other areas suffer from poor harvests, Vakutans seem to fare better.

Vakutans are very successful fishermen (Malinowski 1918) and fish are another important exchange item. On average, a family eats fish five days a week. Men do all the fishing, although young, unmarried girls may sometimes help their fathers, particularly if they have no brothers. The techniques used are numerous: various kinds of net fishing, spear fishing, line fishing, poison, and a special method by which fish are grabbed with the hand. Pig, chickens, and other wild birds are also a source of animal protein. Pig flesh is particularly valued as a source of food and as a mark of prestige when given in distributions. It is eaten only on special or ceremonial occasions usually involving elaborate exchanges.

Exchange

The use of exchange to create, define, validate, or challenge interpersonal and intergroup relations is one of the more characteristic features of Vakutan life. Everywhere, and on nearly all levels of interaction, activities associated with various classes of exchange take place. Vakuta is not the only community in the area to be so intrinsically organised according to exchange relationships. In his discourse on 'primitive economics', Malinowski dispelled earlier conceptions of tribal economics, using the Trobriands as an example:

the whole tribal life is permeated by a constant give and take; that every ceremony, every legal and customary act is done to the accompaniment of material gift and counter-gift; that wealth,
given and taken, is one of the main instruments of social organisation, of the power of the chief, of the bonds of kinship, and of relationship in law. (1922:167)

Later, Weiner also emphasised the importance of exchange in Trobriand relationships (1977, 1978; see also Powell 1960, and Uberoi 1971). Although all of the Trobriand Island communities, and indeed other Massim societies, share a similar, almost fanatical preoccupation with exchange, one finds that within each community exchange is used to define relationships differently. For example, while certain Kiriwinan men use exchange to validate their rank, Vakutan men manipulate exchange to achieve status. While Powell argued that men in northern Kiriwina used exchange as a means of competing for higher positions within the hierarchical framework, this applied exclusively to men who were already of ranked status (1960). If an old headman, or 'chief' died, surviving men of equal rank would then manipulate exchange to fill the vacated position. It would appear then, that in northern Kiriwina there is a system of ascribed rank within which ambitious men compete to achieve positions of power. On Vakuta rank is a weak institution. The precise positioning of ranked clans and sub-clans in northern Kiriwina is only vaguely known by Vakutans. Influence, prestige, and status are not ascribed to anyone by virtue of their birth to specific sub-clans. Instead, all Vakutan men have access to these. Exchange is the principal means whereby ambitious men, regardless of their sub-clan affiliations, achieve influence, prestige and status.

For the purpose of facilitating analytical clarity at this point, I distinguish between 'spheres' of internal exchange and 'spheres' of external exchange. In so doing, however, I risk an oversimplification of the data which can lead to a misrepresentation of exchange on Vakuta. Bearing in mind, however, that the distinction is an analytic one which helps in the initial description of exchange, the complexities that actually exist will emerge more clearly further on in the discussion, with the result that the distinctions are ultimately collapsed. To a certain extent Vakutans too make a distinction between exchange between themselves and exchange with outsiders, although to my knowledge, there is no word which succinctly
makes this distinction. Nevertheless, Vakutans note that the overt
behaviours, inherent in exchanges that take place between Vakutans,
are different from the behaviours generated by exchanges between
Vakutans and outsiders. Similarly, Vakutans distinguish between
items they receive through exchanges occurring with other
Vakutans (raw yams, pigs, coconuts, and cooked food) and exchange
items obtained from outsiders (Kula shell valuables, kuvi, ochre,
pots, and other exotics). Nevertheless, these exchanges inter-
penetrate, crossing the boundaries between 'internal' and 'external'
exchange, as I will show later.4

Internal exchange takes many forms. Individual services are
rendered in exchange for food or small items of sundry value.
Examples include gifts given by a man in soliciting a woman's
sexual favours or between husbands and wives. Vakutans warn that
a man, once married, must continue to provide his wife with special
food and small valuables lest she withdraw her sexual services
(see also Malinowski 1922:177, 179). Services of a communal nature
are also part of the exchange network. Whenever communal labour is
required for garden work, canoe or house building, the labourers are
reciprocated immediately by food and refreshment and later by the supply
of labour for other projects.

Other forms of internal exchange occur exclusively between kin.
Examples of these include informal reciprocal relations between
'sisters' and between 'brothers' while more formal exchange
relationships exist between 'sisters' and 'brothers'. The latter
usually involve affines as well (see below). An example of an
internal exchange which occurs between kin is urigubu.5 On Vakuta
urigubu is the gift of the fruits of a betel-nut palm, a betel-
pepper vine, pig, sugar cane, taro, yams, or sweet potato to a man's
sisters, daughters, sister's daughters, or mother. For example, a
man may grow and nurture a particular betel-nut palm. When it
reaches maturity and begins to bear fruit he gives it to the woman
he has chosen, saying, "kam urigubu" (your urigubu). The recipient
of urigubu becomes the 'owner' of the fruit, but not of the tree or
land from which it grows. The giver retains the right of ownership
over the tree and land but he can never take the fruit or harvest
the land which he has given as urigubu. The payment for urigubu is either money or a shell valuable. Concurrent with urigubu is another custom called vaula kaukweda. I was told that whereas urigubu is given to female relatives, men give vaula kaukweda to their sons. The exchange involves the giving of part of a butchered pig to a son who then cooks and eats it. At the following harvest, the recipient of the pork gives baskets of yams to his father in payment.

Another form of exchange occurring between kin is that which establishes a formal relationship between a boy and his father's brother. This exchange relationship exists until the death of either partner. In its barest outline, the exchange involves the boy giving seasonal produce in its raw state to his father's brother and the latter making reciprocal exchanges of valuables and cooked food. It is noteworthy that this exchange complex occurs between people of different generations who have no formal economic responsibility to each other, unlike that between matrilineal kin and the social father. Instead, an economic relationship is artificially stimulated through this exchange. This exchange may also be seen as a mock Kula partnership; a training period in which a boy learns the ways of exchange relationships and the advantages that they provide. The exchanges are between specific partners and involve delayed reciprocity. They are also a means by which young men can acquire actual Kula shell valuables with which they can initiate their Kula career. Although occurring between people on Vakuta, this is an example of where the boundaries between 'internal' and 'external' exchange collapse. One of the principal items featuring in these exchanges are Kula shell valuables obtained in exchange relations with outsiders.

The majority of internal exchange relationships occur between affines. Exchanges that occur at harvest time (Malinowski's urigubu payments, 1922, 1932, 1935), exchanges resulting from 'helping' an affine acquire the necessary exchange objects for major distributions, exchanges involved in boat-building, house and yam house construction, marriage exchanges, and the cycle of
exchanges set off by a death all involve relationships between people linked through marriage. The range of exchanges between affines is daunting. One comes across them along every avenue of ethnographic investigation. Although the grid of internal exchange extending between affines is extremely important within Vakutan society, it is beyond the scope of this thesis to discuss them in detail. Instead I refer the reader to Malinowski (1922, 1932, 1935), Weiner (1977, 1978, 1980), Campbell (ndc).

Trade for Amphlett pots, long yams, ochres, and other exotics occurs beyond the boundaries of Vakuta Island. Generally, these items do not feature in exchanges between Vakutans. Individuals obtain these by travelling to the areas of manufacture and cultivation. This is often accomplished during Kula expeditions. Amphlett pots are sometimes given in marriage exchanges as takola (valuables given from the bridegroom's kin the bride's kin) but more usually these payments include Kula shell valuables, axe-blades, pigs, and nowadays, money.

There is no internal Kula within Vakuta (c.f. Malinowski 1922: Chapter XIX). Vakutans consider Kula relations to be highly volatile, and thus unsuited to the maintenance of social harmony. To engage in Kula relationships with other Vakutans would, they believe, endanger the cohesiveness and (superficial) tranquility of community life. Hence, Kula activity on Vakuta is exclusively undertaken with outsiders. All Vakutan men are expected to participate in Kula. Indeed, Kula shell valuables are an essential item of exchange used in several of the internal exchange cycles. This makes it necessary for men to engage in Kula activities so as to enable them to obtain these exchange commodities.

Vakutans maintain Kula partnerships with men on Kitava Island to the east, with men along the east coast of Fergusson Island, and with men of Tewara, Sanaroa, and Dobu Islands to the south west. They have no Kula partnerships with anyone on Kiriwina Island. Vakutans claimed that (with the exception of Sinaketa) Kiriwinans had only recently achieved access to the Kula network and that owing to their inexperience they were considered inappropriate Kula partners.
A long time ago, before missionaries came, there was a big war in the Trobriand Islands: Kiriwina, Kaileuna, Kitava, Sinaketa, Vakuta, all were fighting each other. Before this war Kiriwina did not Kula, only Sinaketa, Kitava, and Vakuta. After the war, Kiriwinans saw the valuables and wanted to Kula, but only with Sinaketa and some with Kitava. They were afraid to come to Vakuta because they would be killed here. (Kunabu Kuweiwa hamlet Vakuta village)

Mr. Perosi, and Babari Saragigi came from Australia [sic] to the Milne Bay [District]. They visited each island and stopped the fighting. They came to Vakuta, then to Kiriwina. Kiriwina stopped fighting and after that the Kiriwinans began to Kula. (Youwa Wakwega hamlet Vakuta village)

Many years ago the people of Kiriwina did not Kula, only Sinaketa and Vakuta. When the village was clean [no fighting] they began to Kula. Dr. Bromilow was at Dobu, a missionary. He was the first to stop war. After the wars finished Kiriwina started to Kula. (Sulubogi Okinai village; originally from Tewara Island)

These three accounts question the involvement of men from northern Kiriwina Island in Kula prior to the middle to late 19th century. All three independently describe a period of considerable unrest between the different communities of the Trobriand Islands. Once hostilities were stopped by the colonial government and the preaching of the Wesleyan missionaries, certain Kiriwinans obtained safer routes to commence Kula operations.

Vakutans worry explicitly over the explosive nature of Kula partnerships. These are often fraught with deceit and suspicion, particularly as the acquisition of Kula shell valuables is one of the requisites for the achievement of status within the majority of Kula communities throughout the district (Leach and Leach 1983). Vakutan Kula partnerships are generally of short duration, as opportunistic individuals throughout the network increase their positions in the Kula at the expense of their partners (Campbell 1983a; c.f. Malinowski 1922:91). Vakutan men are responsive to
opportunities for enhancing their influence within their own community. For this reason they break up partnerships, set up new Kula routes, or reinstate old relationships. An example follows of the seriousness with which Kitavan and Vakutan men regard Kula. It illustrates also the potential hostility and instability of Kula partnerships.

In October 1977 Kitavan men, on the pretext of attending the Vakutan yam harvest festival, tried to reclaim an armshell given by one of them to a Vakutan who had gone to Kitava on the Kula expedition in May. They claimed that the armshell had been wrongly given to this man, who had successfully persuaded the Kitavan to relinquish it for promises of a superior shell necklace on its way to Vakuta. The Kitavan, subsequently receiving threats of sorcery from his Dobuan and Gawan Kula partners, thought better of his actions and wanted to redress the situation. The Vakutan naturally refused to surrender his armshell. The Kitavans, desperate at the refusal and the consequence of sorcery attack should they not succeed in retrieving the armshell, tried to steal it during the night. The following day, I was lazily sitting with friends awaiting the evening’s festivities when earth-shaking screams shattered the tranquil sounds of village life. This was followed by much shouting and more screams as villagers ran to investigate the trouble. By the time I arrived at the scene dogs were barking and howling, women and children were screaming and crying hysterically, while men stood, frozen with fear not knowing what to do. There was great commotion at the centre of the crowd; spears were being thrown and two Vakutan men were hit, one in the arm, the other in the leg. Then the centre broke and some men ran in pursuit of the Kitavans while others tended the wounded men. The scene was one of complete pandemonium. The Kitavans escaped the village and were later smuggled off the island without the armshell. In the days and nights that followed there was much talk of going to Kitava to fight those responsible for upsetting Vakuta during harvest festivities, when rejoicing and relaxation should prevail. The raids were never undertaken and the rage gradually subsided, although a serious rift remained between those directly involved and their partnerships were not resumed. This incident serves to show just how serious the business of Kula can be on Vakuta.
Vakutans are less explicit about the role Kula plays in the competitiveness of internal relationships. Kula men direct their aggression outwards in Kula activities so as to veil the internal competition for status within their own community. This was deduced by Uberoi from Malinowski's (1922) and Fortune's (1932) descriptions of Kula in Kiriwina and Dobu:

... the rites which punctuate the progress of an overseas expedition serve to mark out the social categories at home, within one district, and progressively loosen up their internal solidarity, so that canoe competes with canoe within the same fleet, and one man against another within the same canoe. (1971:147)

The Vakutān political environment

On Vakuta Island social relations are essentially egalitarian. Internal exchange operates to distribute wealth and is unaffected by the formal hierarchical constraints which impose economic inequalities in northern Kiriwina. Thus in the basic structuring of relationships within the community, Vakuta is much more akin to other Massim societies.

Although Vakutans share with other Trobrianders the labels which identify the different clans and sub-clans, there is no effective ranking system of these groups. It is not by virtue of birth that individuals on Vakuta claim special privileges. Rather, it is by industriousness, the ability to manipulate exchange networks, and the demonstration of merit that individuals achieve status. While Powell (1960) and Weiner (1977) have modified Malinowski's characterisation of ascribed status and rank in northern Kiriwina by demonstrating that men of high rank compete for 'paramount' positions, it is still only from among the high ranks of Kiriwinan society that leaders are drawn. On Vakuta any man has the opportunity for achieving status. Individuals who desire prestige, however, must demonstrate their worth.
There is a man on Vakuta with the title of chief. He is referred to by the government administration at Losuia as the 'chief of Vakuta' and sometimes sits as figurehead at community meetings, although he does not officiate. Other men, particularly those who have achieved status and influence at a given time, orate at length on the matters at hand, while a church councillor officiates.

A measure of this man's standing within the community can be seen in the context of Kula, itself a significant generator of influential men. In May 1977 the men of Vakuta were preparing for a Kula expedition to Kitava Island. Although Rurupa (the chief) had Kula business awaiting him on Kitava, he was not offered a place on any of the boats going there. Being thus overlooked, other Vakutan men of influence demonstrated their disregard for his title. It is a deliberate insult not to invite individual men to accompany the expedition. If he had any authority, he clearly would not have been overlooked. It was on this occasion that I was told that Vakutans did not consider the title of chief to have any relevance to their internal social relations. In effect, then, despite Rurupa's title he has no authority and no power. If he had been a more resourceful individual he would perhaps have been more influential. But he could only achieve influence within the community, in competition with other ambitious men. The circumstances that prevail on Vakuta are not conducive to any one person becoming authoritarian or too powerful.

The network of exchange occurring between Vakutan men operates to equalise their economic position, unlike in northern Kiriwina where privileges accompanying rank ensure that certain men are able to accumulate more and thereby establish inequalities between themselves and others. For Kiriwinans this effectively separates those who are able to maintain their influence and authority from those who cannot. The Kiriwinan elite are able to do this because they have rank and with it the privilege of accumulating wealth with which to give away and be assured of further supplies. On Vakuta this cannot occur. In the absence of an institutional fixing of inequality, the accumulation of wealth on Vakuta is unobstructed; everyone has equal opportunity to acquire and use wealth to his or her own
advantage. The ways in which one can obtain wealth are related to one's labour output. For example, if a man is a good gardener who works hard and has access to good garden magic pokala'd from a senior man, he will be able to harvest wealth in the form of yams. If he works hard at manipulating his Kula routes, he will have wealth in the form of valuables which he can transform into other wealth (Campbell 1983a). Another way in which a man can accumulate wealth is through the fine management of all exchange relationships, ensuring that other peoples' labour is geared to the production of his wealth. Significant exchange relationships are those maintained primarily with affines. An illustration follows of how a man might set in motion processes by which he is able to maximize his ability to acquire wealth.

In one year a man might build a Kula canoe for his sister's husband (kaiyaula). His payment is a very large proportion of his sister's husband's yam harvest (karibudaboda). He might have also transferred a Kula shell valuable to internal exchange by giving it to a man of his dala or clan who has recently married and needs valuables (takola; this is called takwalela pepe'i by Malinowski 1932:76-80) to pay for the wedding gift of raw yams (pepeni; Malinowski's pepe'i) which were given to him by his wife's family. He would then, at harvest, receive a very large proportion of yams given to the groom by his wife's family (vilakuri; spelled vilakuria by Malinowski). Thus in one year he would receive yams from his sister's husband in payment for a canoe, yams from a male kinsman in payment for a valuable, and yams from other exchange obligations. He would also harvest yams from his own garden. This large accumulation of yams he could then reinvest by giving some as seed tubers to his sister(s) (kabisivisi) whose husbands are then obliged to repay them in the form of Kula shell valuables (and nowadays money; takola). One of these valuables would have to be put into Kula to replace the one removed to help pay for the pepeni. The other valuables he could call his kitoum and invest as he wishes. Other yams he might earmark for a female relative rumoured to be nearing marriage (a new pepeni gift). The payment for these would be shell valuables or other 'male' valuables such as pigs, pots, etc. (takola). More yams he could give to an old man who possessed land,
trees (betel-nut or coconut) or a specific form of magic in the hope of eventually acquiring one of these (pokala). This is, of course, a much simplified account of the possibilities and choices available in the management of one's wealth. The example also demonstrates the interpenetrating nature of various exchanges.

While wealth is a measure of one's industriousness as well as the ability to mobilise exchange relationships, it is also important to keep it moving. Wealth is valuable because it can be distributed. This transforms tangible material wealth into debts of one kind or another. Wealth is transformed into alliances of exchange relationships which in turn generates more wealth in returned gifts. If wealth is not distributed widely throughout the community, however, it becomes anti-social hoarding which is not only disdained, but also dangerous in that it is believed to attract the jealousy of sorcerers or witches. Apart from the strong social pressure to distribute one's wealth as soon as possible, there are other 'equalising' mechanisms which encourage its dispersal. If, for example, a man 'comes first' in Kula (acquires a majority of valuables) or receives an excessive amount of skirts or yams in a sagali (distribution), there is an institution in which people appropriate and redistribute the wealth. This is called kwaikwaiya. The sanction is far from pleasant, and its threat deters anyone from a disproportionate accumulation of wealth. Following someone's excessive gain everyone goes at night to the 'lucky' person's hamlet. They seize most of the material wealth from his and his neighbours' houses. If the 'winner' and his unfortunate neighbours want to retrieve their belongings they must redeem them by using other wealth items such as yams, betel-nut, coconut, etc. from their gardens. I was told that everything is removed in this enterprise: pots, pans, pigs, clothes, any valuables, even the bed the hapless householders may have been sleeping on.

A man who is not only able to accumulate wealth for distribution, but also able to open and manage new exchange relationships demonstrates confidence in his ability to plan and manipulate situations as they arise. This is one of the ways he gains esteem.
from fellow Vakutans and becomes a leading man within the community. In contrast to the ascribed position of some men on Kiriwina who are expected to accumulate and display their wealth as a symbol of their position and the inherent powers of that position, Vakutan men compete with one another to achieve status through the distribution of wealth. By giving their wealth away, Vakutans establish support networks which can be used to steady tenuous positions of influence and leadership within the society. Vakutans value the relationships created through the perpetual distribution of wealth. Weiner's analysis of Trobriand exchange (1977, 1978, 1983) demonstrates that exchange relationships created through the distribution of wealth are also valued among the non-ranked population of northern Kiriwina, but these relationships are not concerned with achieving political status as is the case on Vakuta. Rather, exchange relationships in northern Kiriwina serve to recognise the relative status between people already established through birth. On Vakuta, birth merely identifies the group to which an individual belongs and from which he or she receives land. It does not establish an individual's relative status. This must be achieved through the channels opened via exchange.

Exchange binds the entire fabric of Vakutan society, as it does in most Papua New Guinea societies (Forge 1972). On Vakuta wealth and its distribution are not only the means by which individuals achieve status, they are also a mechanism for the continual equalising of men's economic status vis-a-vis other men. In this regard, the distribution of wealth maintains an overt equality between men.

Participation in Kula is a principal means by which men can achieve status within the Vakutan community. Kula not only provides men with the opportunity to demonstrate their skills in wooing external partners and risking the higher stakes of Kula with renowned shells, it also provides men with an essential wealth item for internal exchange. Shell valuables, acting as the currency of Kula, are necessary to many internal exchanges. However, the feeding of shell valuables into internal exchange networks can be disruptive to
the operation of Kula. This is manifest in the inability of men to put back into the external exchange system what was taken out for use in the internal exchange system at a given time (Campbell 1983a). An example will serve to illustrate the typical dilemma.

A man may wish to assist his sister's husband at a specific distribution by giving his brother-in-law a pig. The man who has received the pig (ZH) must repay his wife's brother with a shell valuable. Once received, the shell valuable is designated kitoum by the new owner which signifies that it can be used either for further 'internal' exchange obligations, or it can be readmitted to the 'external' exchange cycle as vaga (a shell that initiates a new Kula route, Campbell 1983a). In this example, the exchange of a pig for a valuable is a closed transaction: pig = valuable. No further transaction is built into this particular internal exchange to enable the pig-receiver to obtain a shell valuable and thus replace the one he took out of the Kula. The ZH's Kula is temporarily disrupted until he can obtain another shell valuable, either through an internal exchange in which he is the recipient or from another external exchange partner.

According to the rules of Kula, a shell valuable must be put back into the circuit if the ZH is to Kula again and, by extension, further enable him to participate in 'internal' exchange. This is where the dilemma lies. A man has to participate in one if he wants to participate fully in the other. However, participation in the 'internal' system temporarily places extra stress on the 'external' system. By transferring a shell from one to another the participant creates a temporary void, in that the wealth he receives from the 'internal' system is not transferable to the 'external' system. Therefore, he will either have to manipulate the 'internal' exchange system so that he receives a shell valuable for other wealth he has given, or he will have to take a shell valuable from another Kula route to repay the source of the purloined shell. In choosing the latter action, however, he creates another debt in the 'external' exchange system, and so it goes on: robbing Peter to pay Paul. Successful participation in
both 'internal' and 'external' exchange requires a fine management of the two as well as an ability to recognise available options in the exchanges and manipulate opportunities when they arise.

On Vakuta, Kula is used as a means by which men compete for power and influence in their local community. The emphasis here is clearly different to the image presented in Trobriand ethnography (Malinowski 1922, 1932, 1935; Powell 1960, 1969a, 1969b; Weiner 1977, 1978, 1979, 1980, and 1983). Vakutan society is based upon an egalitarian ideology. Access to wealth and the achievement of status is available to all men within the community who wish to compete. Exchange between Vakutans facilitates a more equitable distribution of wealth while the absence of rank means that everyone has access to available resources, and permits the full competitive free-for-all of equals at the level of Kula.
Notes:  Chapter 2

1. Pokala refers to a range of wealth items given repeatedly to someone who possesses a particularly desirable magic, land, Kula route, etc., in solicitation of the thing desired.

2. Some men plant a fourth garden, the kuvi or long yam garden. Kuvi (Dioscorea alata) are grown exclusively for display and exchange. Vakutans only eat kuvi when given to them by Kitavans on Kula voyages.

3. There is a distinction made between men's yams and women's yams. Each class can only be cultivated by the respective sexes. Men's yams include mwaiydi, karasamuina, taitulaiviya, udawada (a red yam), taitumwaiya, kwaimwasia, ilumuyema, and kuvi. These are the yams grown for competitive display and for distribution or exchange. Women's yams include taitunonama, sakaiya, taitusolomoni (introduced from the Solomon Islands), taituregai and taitusamoa (introduced from Samoa). These yams are generally grown along the tracks and in the borders of the main gardens, or in the kaimata garden after men's yams have been planted. Women's yams can be harvested at any time and are generally used for family consumption. The main distinction between men's yams and women's yams is that the former are primarily for exchange, while the latter are utilised for feeding a woman's family. When these yams are used for exchange they are cooked and presented on a plate with other cooked vegetables to a particular person for a specific exchange purpose. Men's yams are usually exchanged in a raw state and carry quite different meanings (see Weiner 1977 and 1978 for her complementary interpretation of the significance of men's yams; see also Forge 1972, and Young 1971). Six of the yams listed above are also listed by Malinowski (1935, Vol. 2:100), while Austen (1939:250) names the most common varieties grown on Vakuta.
4. See also Macintyre 1983 where she describes Tubetube exchange networks that have no internal or external boundaries.

5. These are not urigubu payments as Malinowski so meticulously outlined (1922, 1932, 1935). See also Weiner (1977:140) for a re-analysis of urigubu.

6. See also Malinowski 1922:69, 1932:231 and 1948c:121-122 for further discussion on the hostilities which existed between Vakuta and its neighbours. Uberoi (1977:121) makes similar points based upon his analysis of the data provided by Malinowski, Fortune, and others.

7. See Malinowski 1922:69 where he notes the relative ineffectiveness of the Tabalu chief on Vakuta.

8. On many occasions during my fieldwork, public meetings were called but the 'chief' did not attend.
Chapter 3
Craftsmen and Artists

The Trobriand Islands are known for the proficiency of their carvers (Haddon 1893, 1894; Silas 1924, 1926; Austen 1945). Their prolific output has continued unabated since the beginning of the colonial period in the late 19th century. The content of their artistic production, however, has undergone many changes. So too has the position of the artist within Trobriand society experienced transformations.

In this chapter I return to the historical tenor of the first chapter and examine the metamorphosis of Trobriand art following European contact and how this has affected the position of Trobriand carvers. In this way, I will again demonstrate the unique position of Vakutans in relation to their artistic production and the status of the artist.

History of artistic production

In the latter part of the 19th century there were two classes of carver in the Trobriand Islands; those who carved with magic (tokabitam) and those who carved without magic (Kuboma district carvers and tokataraki). The former carved items of ceremonial value (yam house boards, canoe prow- and splash-boards, and particular types of lime spatulae); the latter produced items of utilitarian value (bowls, plates, lime spatulae, lime gourds, combs, clubs, etc.). The distinction between the two corresponds to that once unambiguous contrast made between artist and craftsman in Western society. The appropriateness of these terms in discerning the differences made by Trobrianders will become clearer throughout the discussion. Here it should merely be noted that Trobrianders make similar distinctions between the art of the tokabitam and the craft of the Kuboma district carvers as we do between the work of artists and the craft of artisans. It is also significant that the changing status of the artist in Trobriand society, following
the advent of the artifact industry, is consistent with the difficulty now facing Western society in the use of these terms: i.e. the distinction has become blurred by the inclination of artists to apply their talents to what were once the province of craftsmen and vice versa.

Certain districts within the Trobriand Islands specialised in producing the bulk of artifacts. This specialisation, as Malinowski was at pains to point out (1935, Vol. 1:20-23), cannot be compared to specialisations found in economically complex societies where craftsmen rely on their work to provide an income. Although many of the specialists in the Trobriand Islands were less than self-sufficient, owing to the poorer quality of garden land in the main carving district, they did engage in other subsistence activities. Nevertheless, these craftsmen used the trade of their handicraft to supplement the produce of their gardens.

The district of Kuboma on Kiriwina was the centre for the manufacture of artifacts. The inhabitants of this district were famed throughout the area for their work (Gilmour 1904-5:72; Seligman 1910:529; Malinowski 1922:67, 100 and 1935, Vol. 1:16). Malinowski described Boitalu village and its neighbours as "the wholesale manufacturers of ... objects for export" (1922:67). Prior to embarking on trading and Kula expeditions Kiriwinans, Vakutans, Sinaketans, and Kaduwagans would give food and other valuables to villagers from the Kuboma district in return for their artifacts. These would then be taken overseas as soliciatory gifts to 'soften' the minds of exchange partners (Gilmour 1904-5:72; Malinowski 1922:99; Austen 1945:193; Fortune 1932:207). Articles such as lime spatulae, lime gourds, combs, wooden bowls and dishes, clubs, drums, grass skirts, and baskets were traded for raw materials found only on adjacent, volcanic islands. In this way, Trobriand manufactured goods found their way through the trade networks which linked the island communities of the Massim.
They [the people of Kuboma district] are ... industrialists and craftsmen; and, as in any strict caste system, their high manual ability does not give them rank but rather places them among the despised. This refers especially to the most admirable of all Trobriand craftsmen, the inhabitants of Bwoytalu. This village, which shares with its neighbours of Ba'u the reputation for the highest efficiency in sorcery, can certainly show the best results in carving; it is traditionally cultivated there and both for perfection and quantity of output is unparalleled in the region. From time immemorial its people have been the woodworkers and carvers of eastern New Guinea. And they still turn out wooden platters, hunting- and fishing-spears, staffs, polishing-boards, combs, wooden hammers and bailers in large quantities, and with a degree of geometrical and artistic perfection which any visitor to an ethnographic museum will appreciate. They also excel in plaited fibre work and in certain forms of basketry. During the wet season, when some other communities are busy preparing overseas expeditions, or engaging in festivities and ceremonial distributions, or ... indulging in war, the men of Bwoytalu will day after day sit on one of their large covered platforms rounding, bending, carving and polishing their masterpieces in wood. It is a wholesale manufacture for trade and export. There is no magic whatever connected with their work, but from childhood skill is drilled into every individual, the knowledge of material, ambition and a sense of value. No other community can or tries to compete with them. (Malinowski 1935, Vol. 1:15-16)

It is clear from observations made by Malinowski that the villagers of the Kuboma district, and particularly the people of Boitalu village, maintained a distinctly separate relationship to the rest of Kiriwina. This relationship found ideological expression in a dietary schema distinguishing 'pure' and 'impure' food habits, with Boitalu villagers representing the epitome of all that was loathsome and despicable to other Kiriwinans. Boitalu people were known to eat the unspeakable bush pig and stingaree, foods strictly tabooed to the other people of Kiriwina Island (Malinowski 1922:67, 1932: 420-21). A further isolating mechanism described by Malinowski
was the virtual enforcement of endogamy within the Kuboma district. Other Kiriwinans maintained that no one from other districts would venture to marry the 'stingaree eaters' (1932:385, 420-421). In the Kuboma district most men were schooled in the craft of woodwork from childhood. Consequently, nearly all Kuboma men became practised craftsmen. Their objective was to sell their carvings rather than to work from commission. Men were expected to engage regularly in carving activities. There was no special distinction between carvers and non-carvers. Indeed those who did not carve were an anomaly in the district. These men would probably have had an inferior social position in the same way that poor gardeners in other, essentially gardening districts, attracted ridicule. The carvers of Kuboma worked without magic (see also Malinowski 1935, Vol. 1:16). Individuals were neither magically prepared for their craft, nor were the tools of their trade given magical attention. It was enough to be born into Kuboma district.

Tokabitam carvers

Tokabitam carvers were men who received artistic status by imbibing carving magic (see Chapter 4). Young men who sought artistic renown solicited acclaimed tokabitam carvers to apprentice them so that they could be imbued with carving magic. Only a few tokabitam lived at any one time. Great lengths were taken to maintain the relatively low ratio of artists to non-artists; principal among them was the rule that a master carver could give his magic and training to only one apprentice. This was meant to ensure the elite nature of their profession.

Men with tokabitam status could be found in villages outside the Kuboma district. These men worked only on commission. They did not have to rely on the sale of their work to supplement their gardens. Like all other Trobrianders, apart from men from Kuboma, they were principally gardeners. Their expertise as carvers of ceremonially significant objects was separate to their gardening activities.
That their profession enhanced their status was obvious. But a proficient tokabitam who could only manage small harvests could never be as prestigious as one who could fill several yam houses. Unlike the Kuboma craftsmen who supplied an internal and external market, men with tokabitam status drew their clientele from within the local community. Tokabitam artists were exclusively commissioned to carve special boards for the yam house and Kula canoe. These were largely inappropriate to the people of other Massim communities, and they attracted no demand from beyond the Trobriand Islands.

In contrast to tokabitam, there were in areas outside the Kuboma district men who carved without magic (tokataraki). From an outsider's perspective these men displayed talent, but they lacked the necessary qualifications to make them artists. Nor could they belong to the same class of carvers as the Kuboma craftsmen because they did not live there. Generally, tokataraki were men who had wished to become tokabitam, and perhaps gone as far as to solicit patronage from a tokabitam; but in this endeavour they had been unsuccessful and they therefore had to be satisfied with tokataraki status if they continued to carve at all.

Tokataraki were sometimes commissioned to carve yam house boards or the prow- and splash-boards of the Kula canoe by clients who did not wish to pay the high fees demanded by tokabitam. Tokataraki were cheaper, but their work was considered less efficacious because they lacked the magic which would provide them with the 'knowledge' held by tokabitam. There were also difficulties experienced by tokataraki trying to carve traditional designs. These were 'owned' by the tokabitam artists who had to be paid for the use of their designs. The options open to a tokataraki carver were to produce entirely innovative work which was for the most part unacceptable to clients seeking efficacious work, or to 'copy' and thus 'steal' the designs of the tokabitam.

The Kuboma district carvers who worked to produce objects of general utilitarian value to supply an internal and an external market are contrasted with the tokabitam artists who were
commissioned to execute items valued only by an internal clientele. Between these are the tokataraki carvers who had no real social mandate to carve at all. The equation of Kuboma district carvers with craftsmen, on the one hand, and tokabitam with artists on the other is confirmed by the relative valuation of the work produced by these two classes of carvers, and their concurrent status within Trobriand society.

While Kuboma boys expected to be trained as a part of their general socialisation into the skills of adult men, young men in other parts of the Trobriand Islands who desired to become carvers received magical preparation followed by intensive periods of technical and esoteric instruction. The value associated with the goods produced in Kuboma district was consonant with their utilitarian and trading value. Carvings produced by tokabitam, on the other hand, were valued because their productions were considered to be intrinsically powerful. Finally, the relationship between the Kuboma craftsman and his buyers involved a singular transaction whereby the item was simply exchanged for foodstuffs. The relationship between a tokabitam and his client, however, involved a long term economic contract in which the client gave valuables before the commencement of carving, foodstuffs during the process of carving, and yams and valuables at the harvest following completion of the work.

The artifact trade

Late in the 19th century Trobriand craftsmen and artists alike found that their work appealed to the European newcomers. The interest Europeans showed had a marked stimulus on the production of carving. As the demand for more carvings increased, particularly in the late 1950's through to the early 1970's, so the artistic community multiplied, and with it the level of production was augmented to satisfy this new and lucrative market. The missions were initially the biggest promoters of Trobriand artifacts and continued to have a significant influence on artifact production until the early 1970's.
At the beginning of this century, the Reverend S.B. Fellows recorded in his diaries and letters to his wife the kinds of carvings produced, mentioning areas which were renowned for the quality of their work, and specifying individual carvers. He encouraged European interest in Trobriand art by giving artifacts to government and church officials on their visits. For example, in his diary entry of November 2, 1895 he recorded: "[Reverend] Field left ... I got him a large stock of curios". The Fellows collection, held by the Australian National Gallery, consists of some 240 items. Among the pieces are a number of model canoes with inscriptions to Fellows and his wife. One such model canoe/bowl reads, "Naboailiga Sallie, Sena Kaiveka Boboaila. A saiki. Sam" (Very beautiful/good Sally, A very big thank you/good wishes. I give you [this carving], Sam). Another model canoe is inscribed on the bottom: "Rev. S.B. Fellows and Mrs. Fellows - landed Kiriwina Aug 28 1894 - left ". Before becoming a Resident Magistrate, C.A.W. Monckton found himself unlucky in 1895 with prospecting and pearl diving. Accordingly, he loaded up his boat with Trobriand artifacts intending to sell them at Samarai (1921:84). The large scale promotion of Trobriand art for European consumption had begun.

It was on Kiriwina Island in the early years of the 20th century that carving production increased significantly along with the Trobrianders' growing awareness of the lucrative returns to be had by selling their carvings to Europeans. As Austen remarked:

... the people of Boitalu realized that there was a ready sale for their manufactures. They therefore produced larger tokwalu pigs, birds and human beings than they had done in the past, when these carvings had been done more as an outlet for their artistic tendencies, and there was no sale for them in the villages. But once they found that the European would buy such articles, they began to create more. They saw that a table was necessary to the European, and that on it curios he had bought were placed. The Boitalu went one step further and made small tables of Melila wood, with a base and a top and two or three tokwalu as table legs. (1945:196)
In the early 1920's Mrs. A.C. Lumley, the wife of a trader living on Kiriwina Island, began to encourage carvers to create items solely for the European market. She instructed the carvers in the making of tables supported by human figures, pot stands, and tables carved from a single piece of wood, and many other designs that would have particular appeal to the European buyer. She also instructed them in the design of articles traditionally made for the indigenous market. Wooden bowls, walking sticks, etc. were redesigned to appeal to European tastes. As well as these innovations, Mrs. Lumley encouraged men outside the Kuboma district to carve. In so doing, she cut across the indigenous boundaries separating carver from non-carver and craftsman from artist.

During the five years (1931-1936) that Resident Magistrate Leo Austen was stationed on Kiriwina Island, carving for commercial purposes continued to develop. Austen wrote:

Nowadays there is a small trade in these curios [wooden tables] which finds a limited local market in Samarai, but as the average 'table' is crudely carved there is little chance of the trade developing. As a matter of fact, it looks as though this side of woodcarving might eventually die out for lack of constant market. (1936-40:20)

Later, however, he described how this development progressed and indicated how he assessed the development of carving in villages not previously involved in this activity, especially the improvement in style and proportions of items such as tables and bowls. He noted for example:

One table has a tokwalu representing a European on his verandah, with one foot resting on the rail, knee bent, chin cupped in hand with elbow supported by knee, and in his eyes the far-away look of the original tokwalu (1945:196).

For a period during World War II the Trobriand Islands were occupied by Allied Forces. It is probable that the Trobriand carvers continued to carve and sell their carvings to the soldiers.
In the 1950's the Kuboma Progress Society was formed for the purposes of marketing their art work to earn money to be allocated for local projects. In 1964 the society was reorganised to act as an unregistered cooperative selling artifacts and copra. Each member bought a $A10 share in the cooperative which enabled it to buy artifacts and thus regularly supply retailers in Port Moresby. A marketing analysis of the Kuboma Progress Society's dealings showed they made $A1,494.30 profit in a 3 year period (Wilson and Menzies 1967:66-67). The society, however, reassessed its position as members compared the gains of the society with those of individual carvers. They found that "one to three months would elapse between shipment and payment, whereas the new tourist trade pays more and in cash" (ibid:67). Therefore the Kuboma Progress Society was terminated.

By the mid-1960's the tourist trade had reached a peak and with it the production of carvings to feed the artifact-hungry tourists. It was in 1962 that regular weekend charter flights began bringing tourists from Port Moresby, and monthly tourists arrived from Lae and Rabaul. Each flight carried some thirty-two passengers. By 1967 visitors were arriving regularly throughout the week. As the tourists arrived they were accosted by Kiriwinans trying to sell their carvings.

There are usually 100-150 people at the airport, about 200 around the hotel and about 50-80 at each of the villages at which the tourists stop when taken on a truck tour of the island.

(Wilson and Menzies 1967:63)

Wilson and Menzies estimated that of a population of 12,000 people on Kiriwina Island alone, some 300-400 (or 10%) of the men were carvers. The main buyers were tourists. It was estimated that in 1966 some $A20,000 worth of carvings were purchased direct from the carvers, while the traders on the island spent $A4,500, the mission $A2,000, and the Kuboma Progress Society some $A700 on carvings. This gave a net annual income of $A27,200, or an average of $A70 per carver. They also calculated that the return for eight hours of carving was slightly more than $A1.00. Even so, when the tourists began to arrive regularly, the hotelier complained that the
prices rose by 100% while the quality diminished. These figures illustrate the extent to which a relatively large proportion of Kiriwinan men became engaged in carving activity. Both artists and craftsmen were thus engaged.

In 1972 the recently completed 'international' hotel on Kiriwina Island burned down. While the ashes were cooling, tourism to the islands went into decline. Accommodation was now reduced to one small expatriate-run guest house. Simultaneously, a local 'independence' movement (Kabisawali) was sweeping through the islands causing deep-rooted division in the society, a division that recalled many traditional and historical resentments (J.W. Leach 1982). Had the disquiet brewing in the Trobriand Islands remained a local matter it might not have affected tourism. However, in 1973 riot police were flown in from the mainland and the Trobriand Islands made international news. The years of the Kabisawali movement further contributed to the decline of tourism, together with a diminishing reputation for hospitality. Tourists complained of a constant badgering to buy carvings whose quality was said to have declined.8

The main changes in the carving industry have occurred on Kiriwina Island where the impact of tourism has been most greatly felt. Firstly, while the Kuboma district had been the principal industrial centre on Kiriwina Island prior to European settlement and the onset of tourism, once other Kiriwinans were encouraged to make money through the production of artifacts many other villages throughout northern Kiriwina began to 'specialise' in the production of specific articles. For example, the village of Okaiboma located on the east coast of Kiriwina Island now specialises in bowls shaped like fish, turtles, and crocodiles, while the villages of Kwaibwaga, north of Omarakana, and Kabwaku, south of Omarakana, specialise in carving walking sticks.

To sustain the demands from the European market an increase in the number of carvers involved in the industry occurred. While at the turn of the century there were two distinct classes of carvers, these have increasingly become less differentiated with the result
that the position of the tokabitam has become devalued. Kuboma district carvers and tokataraki are now commissioned to carve yam house boards, prow- and splash-boards. While this change in the status of artists on Kiriwina is related to a decreased demand for their work within the local community, their relationship to the production of tourist art, the increasing number of non-kabitam carvers, as well as other changes in the industry (for example, the disappearance of suitable wood, namely ebony – Weiner 1982), are also responsible for their devalued status.

The leader of the Kabisawali movement (John Kasaipwalova) recognised the diminishing status of artists in the Trobriands together with a distinct drop in the quality of carvings produced (1975b:6). To arrest this trend, in 1974 Kasaipwalova made plans for a revival of the arts in the Trobriands. Kabisawali supporters began to clear a site near Yalumgwa village (north-east coast of Kiriwina) for a Sopi Arts Centre. It was intended that Trobriand artists could come to the Centre to develop their skills in the graphic arts, drama, creative writing, and music. The Centre was never completed, the plans never realised.

European influence on the carving industry was not felt equally by all carving communities within the Trobriand Islands. Geographical proximity to areas where tourists tended to go affected the degree to which various communities engaged in carving for Europeans. In those communities furthest away professional carvers continued to carve primarily for local consumption, particularly in the carving of canoe boards and yam house decorations.

Carving on Vakuta Island

On Vakuta Island carvers belong to the tokabitam class. There are no craftsmen such as the Kuboma district carvers. Like other communities in the group, Vakutans in the past had to travel to the Kuboma villages to obtain the artifacts taken on Kula voyages for trade and initiatory Kula gifts. There are, however, tokataraki carvers on Vakuta, who either assist the tokabitam on major projects
such as the carving of yam house boards, or who work alone on commission. But if they do take on a commission they are faced with the same dilemma as tokataraki working on Kiriwina Island. Their work is always considered second rate to that of the tokabitam artists.

In the past tokabitam carvers were responsible for maintaining a repertoire of five to six different kinds of lime spatulae designs. They claimed to be the only ones to 'know' how to carve these. The other styles did not belong to the tokabitam repertoire and were carved by the craftsmen of the Kuboma district. Today the tokabitam artists on Vakuta are principally commissioned to do boards for yam house decoration and boards for the Kula outrigger canoe. By far the most important of these are the prow- and splash-boards of the canoe.

The status of a tokabitam is still high within the Vakutan community. They are differentiated from tokataraki carvers by title and by ideology. Vakutans say that whereas a tokataraki carves with his eyes, a tokabitam carver works through his mind. Tokabitam are considered essential members of the community because they have the 'knowledge' which enables them to execute the designs on the boards of a Kula canoe (see Chapter 4). Unlike the tokabitam carvers on Kiriwina, the Vakutan artists had less incentive to become involved in the artifact industry. Cash was not flowing into the community in anything like the volume characteristic of Kiriwinan villages during the 1960's and early 1970's. Instead, they continued to carve the boards for which they received acclaim from within the community. The sharp distinction between artist and craftsman has been retained on Vakuta as artists continued to concentrate on the traditional repertoire. This is primarily due to the comparative isolation of the Vakutan community from events occurring on Kiriwina. Few, if any tourists visited Vakuta Island and the concentration of buyers remained on Kiriwina. In this way, the profession of tokabitam artists has remained intact and their status high on Vakuta.
Notes: Chapter 3

1. Austen spells it *tokatalaki* (1945:194). The distinction Austen makes, however, is between an 'engraver' (*tokabitam*) and a 'handicraftsman' (*tokataraki*; 1945:195). I think that Austen has misunderstood the difference between the two. Vakutans, as well as Kiriwinans I have talked to, said that the difference was due to the magic taken by *minakabitam* which prepares them for the receipt of knowledge.

2. Although 'ceremonial' and 'utilitarian' are my classifications, they correspond to indigenous distinctions between these items and complement a cultural refinement distinguishing *tokabitam* from other carvers.

3. I prefer to use the more recent spelling of this village, Boitalu.

4. Conversely, no one in the Kuboma district had *tokabitam* status.

5. *Tokwalu* (to- = male classifier; -kwalu = image of something) is a general term used by Kiriwinans to refer to carved figures. On Vakuta it has a more specific usage in relation to the graphic forms carved on *lagim* (canoe splash-board). In this context, *tokwalu* identifies the human figure(s) at the top of the *lagim* (see Chapter 6).

6. They were responsible for a report in 1967 concerned with the marketing and production of artifacts in the Sepik area and the Trobriand Islands.

7. Weiner conducted a survey of cash obtained from carvings for a village in northern Kiriwina. She estimated an average of $A62.00 per week (1982:66).
8. In the 1960's through to the 1970's the Local Government Council discussed plans to initiate a system of certification in which carvings could be officially classified as 'good' (Weiner 1982:67), but this never eventuated.

9. Weiner argued that the distinction between artists and craftsmen was maintained:

"... Trobrianders ... never lost sight of what constituted a fine carving. Distinctions were always made between the "real" carvers, i.e. those who had knowledge and magic passed down through generations, and those who "carved for the money". (1982:67)

In relation to peoples aesthetic assessment of carvings, I would agree with Weiner. Trobrianders continue to be articulate about the aesthetics of good carving and are quick to dismiss sloppy and uninspired work. I would argue, however, that the distinction between kabitam artists and other carvers did become blurred, particularly as it was obvious that non-kabitam artists produced equally fine carvings for sale to tourists. The fact that there were, to my knowledge, two carvers from Boitalu village in the 1970's who were commissioned to carve canoe prow- and splash-boards, formally the exclusive repertoire of kabitam artists, also suggests a blurring of the distinctions."
Section II
Plate 3.
Youwa Carving.
In the previous chapter a distinction was drawn between the Kuboma craftsman and the tokabitam artists of the remaining districts. This distinction was based primarily upon the differing quality of 'knowledge' each has access to. While the craftsmen of the Kuboma district are trained at an early age in the practical execution of the special industry for which their villages are famed, they are not believed to need any magic. An apprentice to the class of master carver, however, is given magic which it is thought instils within the recipient a special precondition for the receipt and processing of 'knowledge' which sets a master carver apart from his contemporaries, giving him prestige and social status within his community.

Today within the four villages of the Vakutan community there are seven master carvers. These carvers are principally commissioned to produce the carvings associated with Kula. Occasionally they are also commissioned to carve special classes of lime spatula belonging to the particular repertoire of the master carver as well as yam house decorations. In this chapter the process by which an apprentice becomes a master carver and his role within the Vakutan community will be explored in detail. Firstly, however, it is necessary to discuss the nature and distribution of 'knowledge' in Vakutan society.

I am not using knowledge in the sense that it is something obtainable by anyone possessing suitable mental faculties. Vakutans parcel their knowledge into discrete categories which are accessible only to people possessing certain qualifications. The range of people who can qualify for certain categories of knowledge narrows according to the levels of knowledge in question.
Generally speaking, there are three levels of knowledge or kabitam in Vakuta. Although there are no specific terms which differentiate these levels, they are nevertheless distinct in the minds of Vakutans who assess the relative value in terms of increasing specialisation.

The verb -nukwari corresponds closely to our usage of 'know'. In common usage this verb denotes that the speaker 'knows' that something is a fact or a condition of the situation they are referring to. Another verb, -kateta, refers to a 'sharpening' of the 'knowing' denoted by the verb -nukwari. -Kateta implies an experience more profound than simply knowing something in the -nukwari sense. For example, I may know (-nukwari) that the fruit of a banana plant is generally classified as a banana, but a Vakutan adult would know (-kateta) the range, shape, colour, and growing habits of particular varieties of banana. The first two levels of knowledge are specified by these verbs. The word kabitam is used to differentiate the third level of knowledge.

The first level includes the entire range of activities and behaviour which normal individuals should have mastered by the time they reach adulthood. Some of this knowledge is differentiated by sex. The knowledge of how to plant yams, their growth peculiarities and other matters concerned with the growth of yams is the province of men. Other examples include the knowledge of how to construct a house, and how to thatch roofs with sago fronds. The construction of mats illustrates the process by which female children acquire this knowledge.

Young girls start to learn the technique of mat-making from about the age of seven or eight. Every woman acquires the knowledge of mat construction through the general course of socialisation, while also learning the value of this knowledge to themselves and their families. Women teach the process as a matter of course to younger siblings, daughters, and granddaughters. While constructing mats themselves, older women will encourage young girls to help them, or to make their
own smaller mats. During these sessions the young girls listen to their female relatives discussing designs and dyeing processes. In this way they gradually learn the technology of mat-making through direct observation and experiences.

Similarly, skirt-making is a skill which every woman must master. Skirts are not only essential items of clothing, but also represent women's most important exchange articles. Again, every woman acquires the knowledge of skirt construction through the normal process of socialisation. In skirt-making, and to some extent in mat-making, however, the general knowledge of how to prepare the materials needed, which is transferred across the generations by socialisation, can become more restricted. At this level, knowledge is more controlled by individuals and thus becomes more valuable.

Most people possess their own special body of knowledge to assist them at certain tasks. This knowledge can be in the form of magic or a special technique. Thus, this level of knowledge is marked by the individual ownership of magical spells, charms, and potions, or technical knowledge which is different to that which is commonly held. Such forms as love magic, healing concoctions and magic, birth control potions and spells all belong to the second level of knowledge.

Skirt-making, while an ability acquired by all females in Trobriand society, also extends into the field of personalised knowledge in that certain women will have their own personal magic and technical knowledge to help them produce better skirts than others. They guard this knowledge jealously from their colleagues who are in competition to demonstrate their own personalised knowledge and its effectiveness.

Personalised knowledge, while a commodity held widely throughout the community, affords its owners a degree of prestige which marks them off from others. In the basically egalitarian society of Vakuta, it creates a degree of social differentiation. For example, while immobilised by a swollen leg, I had the opportunity to observe the display of this personalised knowledge and the degree of competition that existed between various members of the community who claimed to own a particularly effective remedy for my ailment.
During my confinement these individuals came separately to administer medications. Each demonstrated a unique style and cure for my swollen leg and each competed with the previous individuals in the effectiveness of their own cure. The woman who administered the last medication prior to the gradual decrease in the size of my leg was publicly acknowledged in conversation and general village gossip to own the most efficacious knowledge in curing swollen legs. Through her personal knowledge she gained temporary prestige. In a subsequent case of swollen limbs she was considered the authority while others attempted to undermine her status by again administering their specific remedies, each confident that he or she owned the most effective knowledge. Those individuals who own particularly valuable knowledge, such as the means of effectively procuring an abortion or a potent love magic may be widely sought and may claim remuneration for their services.

Although this level of knowledge is secretly owned by individuals, nearly every adult has his or her own store of personal knowledge. Personalised knowledge is usually passed down from parent to children or from grandparent to grandchild although it can also move through other relationships. Sometimes the recipient of the knowledge has given a series of gifts (pokala) to solicit this knowledge. This is particularly appropriate if the recipient desires knowledge held by anyone other than his/her parents (e.g. MB, FB). Knowledge transferred from parent to child is usually given as a matter of course, although if there is competition between siblings, pokala would be used to encourage the parent to favour one sibling over another. These arrangements are generally private and between the individuals concerned.

Knowledge belonging to the third level consists of specialised knowledge highly valued by the society. Knowledge of magic systems (such as gardening magic, rain magic, war magic, Kula magic, and fishing magic), myths, astronomy, traditional songs and dances, debumwoya skirt-making (banana leaf skirts), canoe building, and carving fall into this category (c.f. Hutchins nd:3). Because these skills are highly valued in Vakutan society, the knowledge associated with these activities is likewise valued to the extent that those
who have access to this knowledge also receive special status within the community. These individuals are differentiated terminologically and maintain control over the transmission of their knowledge. These individuals are given the title tokabitam or 'man with knowledge'.

Each type of knowledge in this category is distinct and does not necessarily have any relationship with other types of knowledge. The system of garden magic, for example, is self-contained and does not share any components with the system of rain magic. Likewise, a person who owns the system of garden magic does not necessarily own, or even know the system of rain magic (see also Malinowski 1935, Vol. 1:78). He would have to refer to someone who owned rain magic in order to coordinate their respective knowledge. Similarly, someone who owns the knowledge of canoe building does not necessarily own carving knowledge and vice versa. Further, in any one community there may or may not be owners of any of the possible types of knowledge in this category. For example, on Vakuta Island there is only one man who owns the knowledge of rain magic. No one owns a system of garden magic, song and dance knowledge, war magic, or fishing magic. For expertise in these areas of knowledge Vakutans would have to commission somebody who owns this knowledge from another community on Kitava Island, Kiriwina Island, Dobu Island, etc. There are seven men on Vakuta who own carving knowledge, and several others who own canoe building knowledge. These men are often commissioned by northern Kiriwinan villagers to employ their knowledge to build a canoe or to carve the canoe boards.

Whereas the other two levels of knowledge are more or less evenly distributed throughout the community in that acquisition of the first level of knowledge is expected of all fully functioning adults and the second, although private, is widely distributed throughout the community in the expectation that all adults have their personal store of knowledge, the third level of knowledge is limited to only a few known members of the community at any one time. Restricted access to this level of knowledge is maintained principally by those
already in possession of the knowledge for purposes of maintaining their control over the resource. The cost of soliciting access to this knowledge is very high, again insuring a restricted number of those who possess it.

The means whereby initiates receive this knowledge again differentiates it from other knowledge. Those who have succeeded in apprenticing themselves to one who possesses it must undergo a series of initiation rites accompanied by magical spells and substances to make them receptive to the acquisition of the knowledge they seek. Following the completion of these, apprentices are ready for the practical instruction involved.

Whereas knowledge of the first two levels is utilised by individuals to benefit or hinder other individuals, knowledge of the third level is invoked by individuals to affect the community as a whole. Someone who owns the system of garden magic is commissioned to perform the relevant activities for the benefit of the entire community. The person who knows rain magic utilises it for the benefit of the community or withholds it at some cost to the community. The person in charge of fishing magic generally performs his spells for community fishing activities. Although individuals may commission those in possession of specialised knowledge to perform their services for private benefit, this is not the principal function of the owners of this knowledge.

_Kabitam_ identifies the entire body of knowledge which is most highly valued. All of the magic, techniques, technical information, etc. of outrigger canoe construction, for example, is referred to as _kabitam masawa_, the knowledge of Kula canoes. All knowledge which is necessary to the execution of carvings on Kula canoes is called _kabitam ginigini_, the knowledge of carving. Usage of the word _kabitam_ also implies an acquired ability to exercise the knowledge at any given time. This means that anyone who has received special knowledge of the _kabitam_ order is by implication motivated by that knowledge. They are 'called' by the magic to employ their knowledge. In this sense, the _kabitam_ is thought to be a separate power which is not only used by the owner, but which, to some extent, controls the
owner. For example, it is thought that a kabitam carver can become overwhelmed by his knowledge; the internalised kabitam magic compels him to carve. The carver prepares his wood and the kabitam magic guides his hand. When something is said to be kabitam, or the result of kabitam, reference is being made to this power or force of the knowledge which directs its owner to release it. Something produced without kabitam but which may duplicate it exactly (a carving for instance) cannot equal that which is produced with kabitam because the former does not 'come from the mind' of an owner of kabitam. As well as kabitam an apprentice also acquires the magical force related to his or her specific knowledge. Hence, the execution of kabitam always implies the utilisation and unleashing of the associated magic.

The prestige of a person in possession of specific kabitam is not entirely due to his or her specialisation. A prerequisite of becoming an owner of kabitam is the 'clearing' of the initiate's mind. This predisposes him or her for clear, rational thinking on any given issue, although he or she can only claim expertise in the kabitam received. Thus an owner of kabitam is generally respected within his or her community because of the condition which enables kabitam to be received.

Men are the main recipients of kabitam because it is principally those activities that are normally performed by men which fall within the kabitam category: e.g., war magic, fishing magic and canoe construction. Women, however, have their own specialisation on Vakuta which requires kabitam knowledge. This is in the construction of banana leaf skirts (debumwoya), which are a highly valued exchange article in mortuary distributions. Women on occasion are given kabitam of carving, garden magic, etc. by a father or grandparent because there are no suitable boys to apprentice. In these cases the woman does not exercise her knowledge in executing carvings, etc. Instead, she 'holds' the knowledge until a suitable apprentice gives her pokala and she can initiate his magical purification and commence his instruction. As an owner of kabitam she receives the same deference as any male owner of kabitam.
A person who owns kabitam receives acknowledgement of his or her position by being referred to as a tokabitam. This title denotes the person's possession of the specific knowledge owned, as well as his general capacity for being able to think clearly. In relation to carving, a tokabitam ginigini, or master carver, possesses the knowledge of the specific rules and patterns of carving characteristic of Vakutan carvings for Kula canoes. He also knows the animals associated with the artistic tradition that he represents, their kabitam associations and designs, as well as the conventions of being a tokabitam ginigini vis-à-vis other owners of kabitam and the rest of the community.

In the remainder of this chapter I will be looking at the carving profession of Vakuta Island and thus confining the discussion to tokabitam ginigini. The process by which a young man becomes apprenticed to a tokabitam ginigini will be discussed together with the rules of etiquette and specific conventions which influence a master carver's behaviour and his execution of carvings. Firstly, however, it is necessary to differentiate between those who 'carve through their eye', and those who 'carve through their mind'.

The tokabitam ginigini

Talent in the execution of carving is not the exclusive possession of a tokabitam ginigini. Not all of those who can carve possess the essential knowledge to produce kabitam carvings. There are men on Vakuta who demonstrate a good deal of talent in carving yet who do not own any carving knowledge. They are differentiated from those who own carving knowledge by the word tokataraki. This is not only a term of reference, but also refers to the fact that these men can copy, or 'carve with their eyes', but that they do so without knowledge. Minakataraki carvers usually confine their work to the embellishment of lime spatulae, house boards, bowls, and artifacts for the tourist market. Because a tokataraki is copying and not creating, as the master carver is thought to do, he potentially transgresses a basic rule of carving; it is forbidden for anyone to copy, or 'steal' the designs of the master carvers. As master
carvers control the kabitam repertoire, the tokataraki should only execute designs and patterns not used by the tokabitam. This latter course of action, however, is not generally followed because only the designs of the kabitam are accepted by the public to have meaning and thus magical significance. Hence, a tokataraki carver rarely carves Kula outrigger canoe prowboards or any other carvings which tokabitam carvers maintain is their repertoire. On the rare occasion that a tokataraki is commissioned to carve a prowboard by someone who does not want to pay the high fees demanded by the tokabitam, he usually copies the kabitam patterns. He does so, however, at great risk, as the owner of the kabitam has the right to smash the offending board unless the tokataraki makes suitable payment to him as the owner of the designs.

A tokabitam ginigini is able to carve according to culturally accepted criteria: the use of a clean line, deep incisions, and balance are part of the aesthetics of carving. The entire body of knowledge associated with carving is taught by a master carver to a young man who wants to acquire kabitam status rather than becoming a mere tokataraki.

I have made several references to the 'possession' of kabitam. This is quite in keeping with the general understanding of kabitam; it is an ability that one possesses after absorbing the necessary magic. Carving knowledge is a resource which a few men own at any given time. By use of the word 'own' and 'ownership' I intend the meaning to correspond closely to the English usage which denotes control over the use and allocation of that which is owned. Ownership is implied by the term kabitam. A tokabitam owns his knowledge until he dies. An apprentice does not own the knowledge of carving until the master carver who apprenticed him has died. Until then the apprentice only has access to the knowledge.

Ownership of kabitam gives the entire rights of use and distribution to the owner (Campbell 1978). He chooses whether to carve on commission and to whom to give access to his knowledge. If he wishes never to transmit his knowledge, he is entitled to withhold it. Owners of carving knowledge use this resource as a
means of adding to their economic status. A carver of kabitam qualification is regarded as a specialist because of the knowledge he possesses which allows him to produce desirable carvings according to strictly prescribed rules. Not only has the required knowledge been imparted to him, but he has also absorbed the knowledge through drinking the magical potion prepared by his teacher, as we shall see. This potion is believed to contain the essence of carving knowledge, and it is said that once absorbed, the knowledge of kabitam carving will never leave its host provided he observes certain taboos. From the time of absorbing this knowledge a tokabitam is sought by others and he can command the payments due to a specialist when his knowledge is required for the execution of canoe boards or yam-house carvings. It is said that the remuneration a tokabitam could demand in the past was more substantial than it is today. Prior to carving the four boards of a Kula outrigger canoe, a tokabitam would have received a Kula shell valuable to solicit 'his mind'. The quality of this valuable indicated to him the buyer's intention to pay well upon the completion of the boards. While carving, the tokabitam could expect cooked food, betel-nut, and tobacco from the person who has commissioned him to 'keep his mind clear', and hence facilitate the smooth flow of knowledge. The full payment for the completed work would include a pig, Kula shell valuables, and a yam house full of yams at harvest. Today money is part of the payment. A tokabitam can anticipate further economic advantage through aspiring apprentices soliciting his knowledge. This is done through a sequence of gifts, called pokala, given by a potential apprentice to the master carver (see below). A master carver may have several young men giving him pokala in the hopes of being successful in acquiring his knowledge. Only one will succeed in becoming apprenticed, however. The others must be content with the small return for their pokala.

Vakutan carving knowledge is divided into specific styles or schools of carving. These are defined in terms of what magic one drinks. In 1977 there were four separate schools represented on Vakuta: Sopila Kitava, Sopila Kaileuna, Sopila Gawa, and Sopila Vakuta. These represent magic from four geographical areas in the Milne Bay Province. In relation to carving, sopi can be used
to refer to the magic (from a particular area), style, school of carving, and/or the specific representation of kabitam animals (certain designs are specific to particular sopi, or schools).

Although canoe prow- and splash-board carving has definite rules in terms of motifs and their patterning and placement, there are certain areas on a board where the rules allow for the 'signature' of the artist and his particular school. As a result people are able to identify what school a carving comes from and thereby the artist who is (at any given time) the representative of that school. Further to this, a carving is an advertisement of its carver. Specific designs of the school and artist act in much the same way as copyright and patent, lending value to a design because of its uniqueness and quality. To protect each carver's unique design patterning there is a convention that a master carver should give his knowledge to only one apprentice. Serious problems occur if this is not followed. To illustrate the difficulties which may be encountered I include here an incident partly resulting from a carver who disobeyed this convention.

In Vakuta village today there are five men who share the same carving knowledge (Sopila Vakuta). All five were given their knowledge by Tauboda Kilivila, a master carver now dead. Of the five men, three do not carve. They told me that they were not given the full magic and can therefore not be owners. Perhaps in the future, when the other two have died, one of them will claim ownership and commence carving. The two practising carvers, Rurupa and Kaitotu, each claim that he was given the complete magic and thus is the 'true' owner of Sopila Vakuta. As long as neither of them carve a lagim or tabuya there can be no real confrontation.

While I was on Vakuta, I commissioned the two carvers to carve me a lagim and tabuya each. One of my reasons for commissioning two carvers who shared the same sopi was to ascertain whether in fact there was a specific style prescribed for each school. If so, I could expect them to carve exactly the same designs (compare Plates 12 and 13).
Rurupa carved the first set. When he had finished, Kaitotu, who had inadvertently seen the lagim, said that Rurupa had carved wrongly and that he, who had the full sopi, would carve the correct designs of Sopila Vakuta. Kaitotu carved the next set.

When Kaitotu had finished the carvings, Rurupa came to me and loudly proclaimed that Kaitotu had copied and thus stolen his designs and that he would go and break Kaitotu's lagim. Breaking the offensive board is the traditional way an owner would receive justice for the theft of his designs and thus reinstate his ownership. A court case was demanded by Rurupa and Kaitotu so that they could settle the question of ownership in public.

During the court case each proclaimed his ownership of the sopi. The old men, particularly the carvers, were asked to state the conventions of kabitam carving and so help in the arbitration. One well-respected master carver answered, "My 'father' gave me my sopi, and my 'father' and I carved alike. While my 'father' was alive, anything I received in payment for my carving I gave to my 'father' because he was the owner of the sopi. When my 'father' died, the sopi belonged to me". In this statement, the carver was affirming the logic that if Rurupa and Kaitotu had the same sopi, they would carve alike, using the same designs; but that only one can be the owner and the other must therefore pay any commission to him. It was up to the assembled to decide which of the two was the owner. This they did by tracing the geneology of the sopi. It was decided that Rurupa must be the owner of Sopila Vakuta because the magic had been given to Tauboda Kilivila (a Lukuba clan man) by a Malasi man, and that Tauboda Kilivila had therefore rightly returned the magic to a Malasi man, Rurupa.

Kaitotu, however, is also a Malasi man. The difference being that Rurupa belongs to the same dala as the man who gave Tauboda Kilivila the sopi while Kaitotu belongs to a different dala. Kaitotu was given the sopi because Kaitotu's father, Katanegu, was a Lukuba man and belonged to the same dala as Tauboda Kilivila. They were 'brothers' and thus Kaitotu called Tauboda Kilivila 'father'.

Following the court's decision it was privately thought that Kaitotu must have been given the 'true' sopi by Tauboda Kilivila because of the father-son link. However, publicly, and in terms of dala ownership, it was considered that Rurupa had the 'true' sopi according to the social ideology of matrilineal inheritance. It was clear to everyone that Tauboda Kilivila had erred in giving this knowledge to more than one initiate.

Although only one of the five could claim ownership, they were all considered to be tokabitam in that all five had been imbied with the magic. The title of tokabitam ginigini, however, only receives public usage if a tokabitam actually carves. While I was told that the three who did not carve were minakabitam they were not officially minakabitam ginigini. Rurupa and Kaitotu, because they carved, were publicly acknowledged as minakabitam ginigini. Following the court case, however, Kaitotu had to relinquish his carving status and remain a tokabitam without profession until the death of Rurupa.

The acquisition and apprenticeship of carving knowledge

A young boy around the ages of 8 and 10 years old, is either encouraged by his family, or has the desire himself to become a tokabitam in carving. To do so, however, he must receive the magic and formal training necessary for him to accomplish this specialisation. He must be given this by a master carver.

A boy decides which master carver in the village he wants to become apprenticed to and then initiates a pokala exchange relationship with the master carver of his choice.

The return of the boy's exchange goods is delayed by the master carver while the boy continues to lavish gifts of special cooked food, pieces of pig, fish, betel-nut, tobacco, and valuables (if he is able to acquire them) upon him. Throughout this stage of the exchange the boy simply takes the gifts to the master carver and gives it without saying a word and without attracting public attention. Part of the
etiquette of the exchange between a master carver and a potential apprentice prescribes a minimum of communication between them. It is not only considered bad etiquette to say what the gifts are soliciting, but it is also thought to be disadvantageous to the success of the exchange. The master carver may refuse the gifts if it is clear what payment is required. The objective of the potential apprentice is to create a substantial obligation so that the master carver cannot refuse to apprentice him. It may be that there are several young men eagerly competing for the knowledge owned by the master carver, in which case it is essential for each to strive to create the greatest obligation so that the only equitable reciprocation on the part of the master carver is the knowledge he owns. For those who do not succeed in becoming apprenticed, the master carver repays their gifts with a valuable considered by him to be equal to the amount of solicitory gifts.

Once the young man considers he has built up a large enough debt he takes a particularly fine gift to the master carver and finally communicates his desire to become an apprentice under him. If the master carver accepts this final gift the young man becomes apprenticed and the master carver begins to prepare the boy for the receipt of the carving knowledge.

Carving knowledge is generally acquired from two basic sources: a mother's brother or a father. The transmission of kabitam from a MB to a ZS is, according to matrilineal ideology, the correct course to take. The transfer of carving knowledge from father to son is, however, more common (see also Malinowski 1948a:225-226). Indeed, people say that a man will give his ZS only some of the knowledge, reserving the really efficacious formula for his son. This was apparent in the case between Rurupa and Kaitotu given above. Ways of reducing the effectiveness of the magic and thereby affecting the quality of the knowledge are many. For example, a master carver may say only half of the magic, or omit key words considered essential to successful transmission. Further, while a ZS must solicit the knowledge through pokala gifts, it is said that a father will give his son the kabitam freely. A son so favoured, however, is
generally expected to reciprocate his father's 'affection' by making yam gardens for him as well as engaging in other kinds of obligations inherent in a father-son relationship: i.e. fishing, helping with household chores, running errands, and so on.

Once a master carver has chosen an apprentice the young initiate must begin, if he has not done so already, to observe certain food taboos incumbent on anyone wishing to become a tokabitam ginigini. The taboos are concerned with the avoidance of those foods, which, although delicacies, display certain characteristics representing the antithesis of carving aesthetics. For example, an initiate tokabitam of carving cannot eat the head, nor the intestines of fish or pig because of the visual characteristic of these organs. Brains and intestines are curly, knotted, and tight. If an initiate were to eat either of these his mind would likewise become curly, knotted, and tight. His mind would no longer have the ability to remain clean, straight, and untangled so as to allow the free flow of kabitam thought. An initiate cannot eat the tail of a fish because this part of the fish functions to propel it in the water by use of a wagging motion. If an initiate ate the tail of a fish his hand would likewise waggle. He would not be able to hold his carving hand steady so as to produce straight, clean lines. Nor is an initiate allowed to eat the bottom or the surface portion of a pot containing mona, a delicacy of pounded taro, yams, or pumpkin mixed with coconut milk. The substance at the bottom of the pot closest to the heat has a glutinous consistancy. The surface of the mona forms a skin and this also is sticky. If a carver were to eat the pudding from either part his mind would become sticky and tenacious, hampering the free flow of clear thought characteristic of the kabitam.

While the food restrictions are being kept by the young initiate, he is drawn closer and closer to the time when he is given sopi, the magic which will instil in him the essence of carving knowledge. The complete intake of carving sopi ideally has three stages, although two of these stages may be left out today.
Kabitam is internalised by drinking a magical concoction imbued with the essence of the specific knowledge one seeks to learn. The essence of kabitam which is incorporated in this magical substance and absorbed by the initiate enables him to attain the ability and command of the knowledge for his use at any given time, provided specific taboos are not broken which would otherwise destroy the efficacy of the magic. Among its meanings then, kabitam implies a predisposition which enables specific knowledge to be utilised whenever necessary.

The way in which kabitam is imbued is through a specially concocted substance called sopi. The concoction is prepared and given by a person already in possession of the knowledge. Sopi literally means water or liquid, but it also has special usage in reference to specific forms of knowledge. Its use as a means of identifying particular styles or 'schools' of carving has already been noted. The choice of sopi as a term to refer to the magic for knowledge is not entirely haphazard, nor made because of some kind of real likeness between magic and water. The usage of sopi here has connection with major aesthetic attributions of water as these are conceived by Vakutans (as well as Trobriand Islanders and Gawans, Munn 1977). Water has the virtue of free flow which is conceptually unhampered by obstacles. It is likewise desirable for kabitam, or knowledge to flow unhindered in the mind of a wise person. Water is thought to be representative of many Vakutan aesthetic qualities, focusing on such characteristics as clarity, precision, depth, and straightness as opposed to bent or crooked. These are thought to be obstacles to clear thought. The aesthetic quality of sopi will become clearer as the stages of transmission are identified.

The first stage of imparting carving knowledge to an initiate is probably the most important, and most efficacious. This stage must take place for an initiate to become a tokabitam ginigini today; it is the one people refer to when talking about carving sopi.

In the first stage of sopi transmission the master carver crushes betel-nut in a mortar and pestle, or in the betel-nut shell itself, adding the necessary lime and betel-pepper (see also Austen
He grinds the betel-nut mixture until it forms a smooth paste. The mixture resembles liquid (sopi) and has the required bright red colour. The master carver then says magic over the betel-nut, imparting to it certain abilities of aesthetic value, knowledge of the animals and designs of his particular school of sopi, and the free flowing predisposition for knowledge acquisition. This is done quietly, with the betel-nut mixture held close to the mouth of the master carver. When he is satisfied that the substance has been impregnated with the essence of kabitam ginigini, he then paints the magical substance on the initiate. Two marks are put on the forehead, two marks on the chest, two on each shoulder, two on each elbow, and two on each wrist. In this way the magic is placed strategically on those areas essential to a carver's ability to work in the accepted kabitam fashion. The forehead and the chest are the areas where the knowledge is stored and from whence the knowledge, when needed, is to flow smoothly and cleanly. The chest is the centre of a person's desire and emotion. It is also the storehouse for knowledge. The forehead is thought to be linked to the chest. It mediates between the knowledge and desire held in the chest and is the external expression of this. The wrist, elbow, and shoulder are the joints which enable the external expression of that which is stored in the chest. Once these parts are touched magically by the transmitting betel-nut sopi, the initiate is then given the substance to 'drink', or, more exactly, to chew and swallow. In this way, the substance is transmitted from the master carver to the initiate who internalises the knowledge.

There are many rules a carver must observe throughout his career. Most of them have to do with etiquette. The food restrictions are generally lifted after the initiate becomes a fully-fledged carver. Some of the major rules a carver must abide by if he is to retain his knowledge and ability are as follows. One rule, perhaps the most important, governing a carver has been discussed already. It is that he must never copy another carver's designs. There are discernible differences between each carver's rendition of similar designs (although these may escape untutored eyes) and these remain the exclusive property of the carver. Another rule applies to a new
carver carving for his first commission. The person who has commissioned the work must bring cooked or uncooked food, tobacco and betel-nut daily to the carver. This food is called in its exchange form vakapula. A new carver, receiving vakapula for the first time, must not eat any of the cooked food given. He can only eat food given privately to his wife in its raw state and later cooked by her. Nor can he chew any of the betel-nut brought as vakapula. Should he break this rule, he will lose his kabitam and ability to carve. After a carver has completed his first commission, this rule is no longer applied. However, other rules continue to govern his behaviour. If a carver is working and receiving vakapula, other kabitam carvers are forbidden to consume any of his vakapula. As said previously, every day a carver works on a commission the employer must bring vakapula. If the vakapula is brought publicly to the verandah where the carver is working neither he nor his family can consume it. Other people who may be watching or passing are able to eat the vakapula. If, on the other hand, the food goes into the house, the carver and his family eat it. A distinction is made between the public and private receipt of vakapula. All carving must take place in the open, in full public view, so as not to hide the expression of kabitam magic. Kabitam is a public concern. The breaking of any of these rules will, according to convention, result in the loss of kabitam and the concomitant ability to carve.

Once the initiate has 'drunk' the impregnated betel-nut, he has taken in the essence of carving kabitam. That night the initiate will dream and see the animals of his school of carving.

The second stage of imparting carving knowledge takes place at the beach on the 'ocean side' of the island. Here the master carver and young initiate go to the water's edge, where the incoming wave dissipates into foam on the shore line before retreating into the swell again. The master carver scratches a hole in the sand, damming one end so as to retain some of the foaming water (yeluyelu). A branch from a particular tree is placed into the hole with the yeluyelu and magic is spoken over the water and branch. Each school has its own tree which it uses for this
stage. Two are yolalala and katitareka. Yolalala is chosen by one school because the inner tissues are made up of cells which appear perfectly round to the eyes. The quality of perfect roundness is desirable. The katitareka's branches, when held or touched, easily break from the main trunk. It is thought that this characteristic gives the carver an ability to easily see things that are aesthetically acceptable. The connection here is between the ease and rapidity with which the branch breaks and the comparative quickness with which carving knowledge should enter the mind of the initiate. It is thought that he will quickly and easily learn the designs' shapes and forms.

The initiate puts his hand in the yeluyelu and licks the impregnated moisture from his hand thereby partaking of the magical essence of kabitam. The dam is broken and the water rushes back to the sea. This the initiate sees, and he knows the fast and clear line the yeluyelu takes will similarly be implanted in his mind. It is thought that the mind likewise will take on this characteristic and be quick and clear; informants often remarked, "the water is good to look at". That night the initiate will dream of the designs that represent the animals of his school of carving.

The third stage of initiation takes place on the opposite side of the island towards the mangrove swamp near the lagoon (wa pasa). Here resides a special snake called kaisipu who is thought to be a nakabitam (na- is the female classifier, also signifying animals and heavenly bodies). The kaisipu's kabitam is connected to its particularly slippery nature. It is said that if you hold the snake it easily gets away because of its slipperiness. The master carver finds one of its holes in the early morning and waits for its head to emerge. When the snake comes up it is caught and its tail cut. Some of the blood is allowed to drip into a coconut bowl. The blood is then drunk by the initiate and the snake allowed to go its way. Magic spells may or may not be spoken over the blood, depending upon the school of carving. After drinking the blood, a hole is made in the bottom of the bowl and then the bowl is put on a fire to burn.
Should a hole not be made, smoke would be trapped in the bowl and the initiate's mind would not be cleared. That night the initiate again dreams of his designs.

The blood of the kaisipu is thought to contain the very essence of its kabitam. In drinking its blood, the initiate partakes of this essence. In so doing he retains the slippery character of the snake. This quality is said to allow the initiate's head to be cleared, enabling him to learn the designs readily. Informants say that, "the designs slip into his mind and stay there".

Of all the stages, the first is the most essential. It is always performed. Informants disagreed as to whether the second and third stages need take place. It is clear, however, that the first stage is used in the transmission of all kabitam knowledge. To become a tokabitam of any specialisation it is essential to clear the initiate's mind so that the knowledge of the particular specialisation can flow unimpeded. Therefore, much of the magic spoken over the betel-nut substance concerns this clearing of the mind. More specific incantations may be added according to the type of knowledge being imparted.

The symbolism of the three stages can be seen to contrast significant spaces in Vakutan thought and to highlight the importance of water-like substances. Firstly, the yeluyelu of the sea is contrasted with the 'water' of the snake who lives near the lagoon. Both the sea and lagoon represent mediating spaces between land and water, but they are also thought to represent important contrasts. The lagoon is calm (not threatening) while the sea is rough (threatening). Several aspects of Vakutan life highlight this differentiation: fishing on the lagoon requires specific technology and skills while on the sea other skills and technology are needed, fish caught in the lagoon are different from fish caught in the sea, different vegetation is found on the ocean beaches from that found on the shores of the lagoon, and men have to cross seas to engage in Kula while no Kula is undertaken via the lagoon. The betel-nut palm stands in opposition to these,
however, in that it is firmly anchored to land (see Chapter 10 for the role of the tree in Vakutan symbolism).

It is significant that the transmission of magic is via liquid substances. The action of a tokabitam ginigini is said to model the flow of water. Of note, too, are the associations with colour. The white of the yeluyelu contrasts with the red of the kaisipu while the water of betel-nut, being clear or 'white' initially, is transformed into red with the addition of lime (see Chapter 7 for a discussion of colour symbolism).

In outlining all the stages it is possible to appreciate the kinds of qualities that the Vakutans consider desirable for the successful transmission of carving knowledge. The essence of kabitam, which is incorporated in sopi and absorbed by the initiate, enables him to acquire the ability and command of the knowledge. Following this period of ritual preparation the initiate then goes through the process of learning the external aesthetic and technical constituents of knowledge; i.e. the various magical formulae, the correct types of tree to use for particular carvings, drying and seasoning wood, the manner in which lines are carved into wood to give them life and quality of their own, the lore of the specific kabitam animals, and their graphic representations. The master carver's job is now to transmit the technical knowledge necessary for the initiate to be able to handle the wood, and to know the designs. This period could take up to 3 or 4 years during which the initiate listens to and watches the master carver.

In the period between the magical inception of kabitam and the time when the apprentice begins to carve he must learn how to make and repair the tools of his specialisation. Today these consist of several nails (kaiwawaiya). Each has a different end beaten onto them so that one will be straight and the edge will be long to cut long straight lines, one will have a short straight edge to strike short straight lines, one will have a small curved edge to enable the carver to cut small curved lines, and one will have a longer curved edge to cut longer curved lines. A wooden paddle or hammer (kaigilagela) to hit the nail with so as to force it into and along
the wood, and a small hand knife (kipoum) to dig out the lines to make them deep and clean are also part of the carver's toolkit. For shaping, the carver has an axe (kema), and an adze (rigogo). To smooth off the finished carving, each carver uses the skin of a stingray (val) or a special leaf with a hard and rough surface rather like sandpaper.

The initiate is taught the qualities of various wood, where to find the desirable types for canoe prowboards, how to cut the piece from the root-buttress, and how to judge the dimensions required for size and strength. The art of seasoning wood is important to know at this stage. If the wood is not properly seasoned the apprentice may find that half way through carving a canoe prow it splits and he has to begin again.

Throughout this period emphasis is put upon the learning of the designs: their character, form, placement, and patterning. The apprentice must learn the animals represented by the designs and the reasons why certain of the animals are considered to be kabitam. He will also learn which animal designs are important and which must always be represented in particular places.

The young apprentice will be told the rules of conduct expected of a tokabitam ginigini: the things he can do as well as the things he cannot do. This period is one of teaching. The apprentice must learn the technique, the designs, and the conventions of the system he has been initiated into.

The young initiate does not begin to carve in earnest for between 3 and 4 years after receiving magic. In the interval the initiate gains aesthetic and practical instruction in his chosen specialisation. When the master carver considers that the initiate is ready to apply all that he has learned he directs the boy to begin carving.

The prescribed procedure is that the apprentice carves a succession of six splash-boards (lagim) and six prowboards (tabuya). The boards are not life-size, but of reduced scale to give the young carver experience with carving in wood and in making the necessary designs.
The carving process should take place inside the house (this process is called kavasaku), in contrast to carving in the open by a tokabitam ginigini. During this work the master carver inspects the carving. He looks for the correct design patterning and positioning, making sure that each area of the board has the correct designs represented. The master carver also checks that the lines are straight, clear, and deep. He looks for the character of the line to make sure that the lines convey animation and 'spring'. During these inspections the master carver also instructs the boy. He shows where certain lines should be deeper, where a particular design should go, why a section has been chipped because he tried to fit too many lines into too small a space, and so on. Following the completion of each board, the master carver gives the young carver criticism and instructs him to burn the board and try again on a new board. Informants said that six boards of each the lagim and tabuya are carved by the initiate and burned. When the master carver inspects the seventh completed board he finds it perfect, and tells the young carver that he is now a tokabitam ginigini and that he can commence to carve in earnest. His period of initiation and instruction is over, and his pokala has been repaid.

Sopi is an instrument understood by Vakutans to be a means of infusing certain qualities into a young person. To be a tokabitam ginigini a man must have had specific qualities 'added' to his person. This is done through sopi. The ability to carve in the kabitam style is thought to be largely derived from a clear and open mind from which knowledge is able to flow. This uninhibited flow allows for successful transmission of the other qualities necessary to make a carver a tokabitam. The connection between the mediators of sopi (crushed betel-nut, fast flowing ocean water rushing up and down the beach, and the slippery smoothness of the snake) and their desired effect is obvious. All three mediators are believed to impart their essences, qualities of free flow, smoothness, and clarity, into the mind of the initiate. Once this is achieved, other important qualities and abilities become increasingly possible. For example, the simplicity of designs, lines, and colour arrangement are qualities obtainable only through the clearing of the mind through sopi. The quickness and clarity
of designs coming to the hand of the carver are also dependent upon a clear and freely flowing mind. The ability to recall the designs from the repertoire as well as the urge to refine and perfect the designs, are all characteristics of a carver who has imbibed the essence of *sopi*, and so has become a *tokabitam ginigini*. 
Notes: Chapter 4


2. To- is the male noun classifier. Women can also be given the title for knowledge in which case the to- is replaced by na- (nakabitam).


4. Public garden magic today is controlled by the church. To all intents and purposes Yaubada (God) is the community's garden magician par excellence.

5. Weiner 1977 was the first to call attention to the importance of women's wealth in mortuary distributions on Kiriwina Island. In contrast to Kiriwina, however, Vakutan women do not make banana leaf bundles. It is only the skirts which are used as women's wealth in mortuary distributions (Campbell ndc).

6. These phrases are terms of speech directly translated from informants and exactly represent the differences between a master carver and a carver: "I gini ginisa minakabitam o nanosi, taga minakataraki omatala wala gini ginisa" ("They carve, the men of kabitam with their minds, but the men who copy only carve with their eyes").

7. Mina- is the classifier which is used to refer to people in general; minakabitam for example, means the 'people of the kabitam profession'.

8. There is to my knowledge no specific, single word in the Vakutan dialect which refers to the 'ownership' of knowledge. Other words implying 'ownership' are toli- and kitoum. It is not
linguistically acceptable to say tolikabitam or toliginigini. Tolikabitam, or owner of kabitam is redundant because kabitam already implies ownership. Toliginigini, while linguistically acceptable, has a different meaning to that I wish to convey. It means 'the owner of a carving' and would be used to refer to the person who has commissioned a tokabitam ginigini to create a carving. Kitoum denotes that an object is owned. This particularly refers to Kula valuables that have become detached from Kula routes. Kitoum distinguishes those valuables that are owned by a man from those which are committed to routes and thus to other men. A man can do as he likes with a kitoum, but he should not change the route of other valuables.

9. Occasionally a master carver will transgress this rule and give his knowledge to more than one apprentice. This is against kabitam conventions and inevitably causes conflict, as will be described below.

10. The -la suffix is used here to indicate that the magic (school) belongs to these areas; i.e. 'Sopila Gawa' means literally the 'magic of Gawa'. The use of sopi without the suffix is also used and carries the same meaning: Sopi Gawa, etc. My thanks to Ralph Lawton for pointing this out to me.

11. For arguments concerning the role of the father in Trobriand society and the conflict between 'father love' and 'avuncular authority' see Malinowski 1927a, 1927c, 1932; Fortes 1957; Needham 1962; Sider 1967; Weiner 1977.

12. Spells are spoken over the substance intended to carry the magic to the recipient. When this is done the person speaking does so with his or her mouth close to the substance so that the words are not only said, but breathed into the magical concoction.

13. The forehead and chest represent separate storage areas for knowledge which are qualitatively different. This is discussed in detail in Chapter 8.
14. The 'ocean side' of the island (olumata) is distinguished by Vakutans from its opposite, the 'lagoon side' (wa pasa). This distinction has symbolic significance which is discussed in Chapter 9.
... if someone makes an image of something he has experienced, he can choose how much of the shape he wishes to include ... When a person who has been asked what a winding staircase looks like describes with his finger a rising spiral, he is not giving the outline but the characteristic main axis, actually non-existent in the object. Thus the shape of an object is depicted by the spatial features that are considered essential. (Arnheim 1974:47-48)

Our perception of the environment around us is conditioned by the way we see it which in turn is measured by our knowledge of what we see. This knowledge is socially constructed for us and is conditioned culturally. The artist makes his/her reproduction of 'reality' identifiable by conforming to a shared cultural perception extant in a particular society.¹

An analysis of the forms utilised in an artistic system is valuable in providing insights into the perception a people have of their environment. In Vakutan carved art for example, the egret (*Egretta alba*) is regularly represented by a single form which exaggerates a long curved beak and an elongated head.² When asked why they choose to represent an egret rather than another bird, the reply was, "*naminabwoita tagisa*" ("she is beautiful we see"). In this rather simple reply the complexity of meaning is veiled. It is not only the beautiful curve of the beak and neck that is important, the form also encodes other information about the importance of the head and mouth (beak) as a body part to isolate, and the relationship of the form itself to other conceptual codes (see Chapter 8). The significance of form is that it can communicate meaning.
Form is important to any analysis of art because it helps us to identify styles. A particular artistic style can be isolated from others through visibly discernable differences in the shape, contour, emphasis, depth, and so on, of lines. For example, there is a marked difference between the utilisation of the line by northwest coast American Indians and that used by Massim artists. While both styles utilise curvilinear form to encode meaning, Massim artists tend to interlock lines so as to form spirals, volutes, etc. while northwest coast American Indians prefer to isolate their lines into separate design units: curves within curves and circles within circles.

Within the Massim area itself there are a series of substyles that can be differentiated on the basis of formal characteristics. Each becomes more specific, narrowing the range of people for whom the substyle is relevant. The Massim style incorporates different substyles, each unique to the Trobriand Islands, the Marshall Bennett Islands, the Amphlett Islands, and so on. Further differentiation can be identified within these groups. Indeed, such differentiation is made by the people themselves on the basis of often very minor formal differences between the art of each area. Taking the Trobriand Islands as an example, people may differentiate between substyles from different districts. Thus Trobriand people can identify the 'Kuboma district style', the 'Kitavan style', and the 'Vakutan style' of design utilisation. Finally, within these districts, separate substyles identify different 'schools' (sopi) and the individual carvers who represent these. Therefore, within the Massim style we can differentiate between discrete substyles which become increasingly specific to different groups of people. Although there is generally a shared system of form between these discrete areas, which ultimately makes them all identifiable as the Massim style, the encoding of meaning within this shared system of forms may not, likewise, be shared. Apparently similar systems may have very different meanings encoded in them even when used in different contexts within the same society (c.f.
Munn's contrast between women's sand drawings and men's guruwari
designs). My concern in this analysis is not so much with
stylistic differentiation for its own sake, but the way in which
form reflects particular ways of encoding meaning, and it is to
this end that my analysis of the Vakutan style is directed.

Form also evokes aesthetic appraisal of a work. Vakutans are
particularly concerned about the appearance of line, with
emphasis upon its complexity which should not be too fussy. If
the overall 'feeling' of the designs is too fussy, Vakutans say
it is 'tangled' (nguwenigwe), or it is 'confused' or 'cluttered'
(pitupitu⁴). When the separate forms are in a correct
relationship to each other and not over-crowded by too many lines
Vakutans say the effect is katuvi (clean cut), the lines are
cleanly cut and strong. Other aesthetic judgements are concerned
with the 'tension' of a line; it must not be too tight nor too
loose, but must give the correct amount of 'spring' to the lines
(Narubutal 1975, 1979). Lines should always be simple and clear,
yet bold. The aesthetic quality of the form line is an important
marker of good kabitam carving (see also Beier 1974). When a
work is completed the quality of a carving (and by implication,
the quality of a carver's magic) is judged by these criteria.
The more significant details informally discussed and judged by
the public are the quality of line construction, and inclusion
and correct arrangement of representational elements, as well as
the correct 'paths' for the colours.

In the following I am restricting my analysis of form to that
which occurs on the carvings made specifically for Kula. These,
of course, include the prowboard and the splash-board, as well
as the forms carved and painted along the sides of the outrigger
canoe (Figure 3).

In the Massim area there are two styles of outrigger canoe.
These are distinguished by Vakutans as the masawa and the nagega.
The masawa is thought to have originated from Dobu, while the
Figure 3. Vakutan Masawa
nagega is said to come from Murua. Vakutans claim that they once constructed the nagega style of outrigger canoe but decided that the masawa suited them better and so began to make these only. The nagega is a much larger and heavier canoe while the masawa is smaller and lighter (Haddon and Hornell 1938). Both styles of outrigger canoe, however, utilise only one outrigger. As a result they have neither a fixed bow, nor a fixed stern. To enable the outrigger canoe to remain afloat, the outrigger must be placed towards the wind. Hence, the bow and stern of these outrigger canoes changes according to the direction of the wind, along with the sail which is also moved from one end to the other as a result of the position of the outrigger. This means that the two ends of an outrigger canoe must function as both a bow and a stern.

There are four boards, or two sets of lagim (splash-board) and tabuya (prowboard) carved for each masawa. Vakutans distinguish the two sets linguistically. The set which is placed on the end of the canoe with the outrigger on its left is called dogina while the set placed on the end of the canoe with the outrigger on its right is called the uuna. These sets are distinguished further according to the directions they are conceptually linked to. The dogina is said to 'go to Dobu first' (that is the dogina is thought to look towards Dobu), while the uuna looks towards Kitava. This distinction is connected to the actual wind directions considered important to make a voyage in either direction. That is, when the south-westerly winds are blowing it is considered the best time to sail to Kitava Island, in which case, the uuna is facing the direction in which the fleet is heading while the dogina is facing the direction in which they came; generally in the direction of Dobu. When they wish to sail to Dobu, they wait until the north-westerly winds blow, in which case the dogina end faces Dobu. This distinction between the direction of Dobu and the direction of Kitava, however, has further significance which is related to the relative difficulty of engaging in a Kula expedition to Dobu as opposed to Kitava.
Kula with Dobu is fraught with dangers and difficulties, hence, Vakutans place much more emphasis on the dogina end; the dogina carries the magic of Kula and is always the end to land first at any destination, regardless of the actual end that proceeded during the voyage.

Each set is visually distinguishable from the other. This is accomplished by the physically larger loop of the lagim which is positioned on the side of the outrigger (Figure 4).

![Figure 4. Visual distinction between a dogina lagim and an uuna lagim.](image)

The tabuya dogina and uuna are physically distinguished by the occurrence of perforations along the bottom of the uuna and the absence of these in the dogina as well as a change in the line of the 'nose' for each tabuya (Figure 5). In the case of an uuna tabuya there is less room for design placement. The artist is constrained by the structure of the section which only allows his personal creativity to be worked around these apertures. On the
**Dogina tabuya** this is not a problem as no openings are made in the board. The entire surface is free for design embellishment and each artist has his own preferences for form and animal representations.

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![Figure 5. Visual distinction between a dogina tabuya and an uuna tabuya.](image)

The utilisation of forms is also a means of distinguishing the sets, particularly for the **tabuya**. This will be discussed in detail throughout the analysis of forms used in Vakutan carvings for Kula.

Finally, the lagim and **tabuya** are internally composed of distinct sections (Figure 6). This division is also a descriptive device used by Vakutan carvers and facilitates descriptive and analytical convenience. When carving and talking about the designs, the carvers distinguished the areas within the boards by using body part names.
Figure 6. Sectional divisions of tabuya and lagim showing body-part associations. See also Plates 7 and 12.

Note: Sections for uma tabuya are the same as above. Uuna lagim sections are the same as dogina lagim above except that the larger lobe (section 3) is on the left.
Once the carver has selected the tree and cut from it four pieces, he carries these roughly shaped boards back to the village where he further shapes the pieces to closely resemble two lagim and two tabuya. Following this, a finer planing smooths the boards and shapes them more precisely into the desired outlines. Throughout this process the boards are left in the shade to dry out the wood slowly. When the boards are finely adzed and planed into shape the carver is ready to begin cutting the designs onto the boards.

Each carver works in his own way. However, there is a general order in which the boards are carved. For the lagim, section 1 is first divided from the rest of the board and the basic outline of the central designs in this section are then carved. Following this, the lines dividing section 2 from section 4 and section 3 from section 4 are cut. In this way the sections are clearly distinguished. The details within each section are then given attention. For the tabuya, carvers generally carve out section 1, digging out the perforation between sections 1 and 2. Following this, either section 3 or 4 may be carved but again, major sections are first differentiated after which the internal details of sections are carved. Section 5 on the tabuya is always completed last. Some designs may be carved at the same time on both sides. In other words, a carver may work on the central design in section 3 of a tabuya, turning the board over during the operation to complete the design on both sides before going on to another design.

The forms used in Kula art

There are three kinds, or types of forms used in Kula art. I have distinguished these as category A, category B, and category C. This differentiation is based upon the structural distinctiveness between the forms in their spatial orientation. Some forms appear to be the principal boundary markers between
sections. Indeed, they seem to be the primary design units which define the sections. Other forms are contained within these principal forms, while still others appear around and between the first kind of design form. Prior to a discussion of this structural differentiation, the forms are introduced together with the category they fit into. The sections in which various forms occur are referred to regularly, therefore Figure 6 should be consulted.

Category A includes those forms which are generally the main designs of the sections in which they occur. There are five distinct forms, each having three or more variations (Figure 7).

The A1 forms are distinguished by their orientation and axis on the boards. Form A1.1 is differentiated from the other two, similar forms by an elongation of one end. This design form occurs only on section 2 of the tabuya; indeed, it constitutes the boundaries of section 2. Form A1.2 encloses the upper portion of the lagim, containing two directionally opposing forms (A4):

![Diagram of A1.1 and A1.2 forms]

This form has no name or label but it probably has the most important structural function on the lagim. It binds, or holds together the entire lagim. It creates the 'tension', or the 'spring' in the overall feel of the lagim. These are aesthetic terms often discussed among 'critics' (Narubutal 1975, 1979; Beier 1974; and Mosuwadoga 1978).
Figure 7. Category A forms.
When the lagim is decorated with white cowrie shells, attached along the entire length of this form, its shape is heavily emphasised. Form A1.2 contains within it other forms (A3.1, A5, and C6). Form A1.3, like A1.1, is open at the top (opposite to form A3.2). When this form occurs, it is placed in section 4 of the lagim and contains circles (B1.2 or B1.3) within it.

There are three variations within the general form A2. All variations of this form are based upon a volute; one end almost forms into a coil while the other is left uncoiled or straight. The distinctions between the variations are based upon the relationship of the coiled end to the whole form: the kind of 'tail', or stem, whether it is curved or straight, and the orientation of the specific forms on the boards. Form A2.1 outlines section 1 of the tabuya. Form A2.2 also occurs on the tabuya in section 5 of the una tabuya with the coiled end upwards. It is never carved on the dogina tabuya. This form may also be carved in section 4 of the lagim depending upon the carver's 'school' or personal attempts at innovation (compare Plates 12, 13, 14 and 15). Form A2.3 is placed on the outrigger side of the lagim (section 5). It is not always carved. Whether it is included or not depends upon the carver and his inclinations.

Form A3 is related to form A2 except that the end that remains uncoiled on A2 forms is coiled in A3 forms. The coil, however, is in the opposite direction from the other coil in the design. Hence, the form more or less resembles the letter S in our alphabet. The distinctions made in this analysis between the various manifestations of this basic form are again based upon the differing relationship between the coils of each form and their diverse orientation. Form A3.1 is linked to create a 'chain' around the basic outline made by form A1.2 on the lagim (section 1). Form A3.2 is also located in section 1 of the lagim. It is distinguished from A3.1 by the differing tension of its two coils; one coil is tight while the other remains
loose. This form is placed at the end of the chain incorporating form A3.1 and visually occupies the centre of the upper lagim. Form A3.2 makes a break in the 'chain', thus emphasising form A5.2 in the centre of the lagim. Form A3.3, like A3.1 and A3.2, is situated at the top of the lagim in association with section 1. It is, however, located outside this section and placed on top of form A1.2. This form is not usually carved on Vakuta because it is a Kitavan innovation. Form A3.4 has tightly coiled ends, closely resembling a link in a chain. The coils actually meet the bar that joins them. This convergence creates two inner circles. The form has no specific location as it often occurs at the ends of various forms in category A. Form A3.5 is featured in section 5 of the dogina tabuya and is part of the design complex which identifies the dogina from the uuna tabuya. It is similar to form A3.2 in that one of the coils is larger than the other. The two forms have a different orientation, however, as well as a differing board association. Form A3.2 is placed on a horizontal axis while form A3.5 is vertically oriented.

Form A4 comprises complementary forms rather than variations. The forms are all associated with two sections on the lagim: sections 2 and 3. Unlike the forms of A2 this form contains the coil at virtual right angles to the stem. The stem gives no indication that it may end in a coil. The complementary forms (A4.1-1 and A4.1-2) are differentiated according to the section in which they occur: section 2 or 3. The distinction is in the differential endings of the coil. One ending is only associated with section 2, while the other distinguishes section 3. Both, however, complement the basic form of A4.

Form A5 is similar to form A4 in that the stems, each with a coil at the top, are joined at the bottom. Form A5.1 occurs in section 4 of the lagim. However, it is a specific design which belongs to the Kitavan school, hence it is only included by a
carver who owns Sopila Kitava (Plate 16). Form A5.2 is utilised in various configurations to outline the basic shape of the human figure always featured in section 1 of the lagim.

Category A forms occupy the upper carved level on the boards. They are 'painted' in white by means of incisions (category B forms) carved along the length of the forms. These forms are highlighted by repeating them in red (see Plates 7 and 12).

Category B includes those forms which are usually located within the boundaries of category A forms. They are not restricted to sections or boards. Instead, they occur anywhere. There are four basic forms, each having two or more variations (Figure 8).

Form B1 is the circle. The variations of this basic form include a single circle (B1.1), a double circle (B1.2), and a triple circle (B1.3). The single circle is always white and either occurs against a black background within category C forms, or the form is located in a white background in association with A forms. In this position the white on white design stands out because of the carved line encircling form B1.1. Lime is used as the white paint on Vakuta Island. As it dries out it becomes powdery because the bonding agent consists primarily of oil and water. At this stage its cohesion to the surface of the wood is not very strong, hence the natural colour of the wood is dominant. Carvers get around this tendency of the white paint by carving deep incisions (category B forms) into the designated white areas (primarily composed of category A forms). These incisions are said to 'hold the lime paint' and thus retain a semblance of white after the majority of the paint has washed away. The effect is that these forms, deeply etched into the A forms, stand out as very white against the natural colour of the wood (see Plates 7 and 12). In this way form B1.1 is visually effective as a white on white design. Form B1.2 has two colours; the outer circle is white while the inner circle is black.
Figure 8. Category B forms.
Its placement is more restricted than Bl.1 as it occurs only in section 4 of the lagim in the Kitavan school. The triple circle (B1.3) is also more restricted than Bl.1, occurring only in section 4 of the lagim and section 4 of an uuna tabuya. The outer circle is white, the middle circle is red, and the inner circle is black. Cross-sections of the Bl forms may help in their differentiation:

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{cross-section of} \\
\text{B1.1} \\
\bigcirc \\
\end{array}
\begin{array}{c}
\text{cross-section of} \\
\text{B1.2} \\
\bigcirc
\end{array}
\begin{array}{c}
\text{cross-section of} \\
\text{B1.3} \\
\bigcirc
\end{array}
\]

Form B2 incorporates the half circle. Variations of this form are based upon an open half circle (B2.1), a less open half circle (B2.2), and an elongated, closed half circle (B2.3). Forms B2 occur only within category A forms and visually intensify the forms they are associated with. In accordance with this, these forms tend to occur in repeating sequences, emphasising the curved lines of other forms. For example:

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{Form B3 has basically two variations. Within these} \\
\text{variations, however, there are further elaborations (Figure 8).} \\
The form is based on a bar which can have curved-in or curved-out} \\
\text{ends, can be straight or bent to fit into the category A forms,} \\
or can have a circle (Bl.1) attached to it (B3.2).}
\end{array}
\]
Form B4 is based upon a triangular form and has two variations which are differentiated by the presence of a 'tail' on form B4.2. These forms again occur within the boundaries of category A forms. B4.2, however, is also associated with the sides of the canoe where the form is strung together in a line (see Figure 3).

Category C comprises forms which are located between and around category A forms. These forms are all associated with the colour black (two are also represented in red). There are ten distinct forms within this category, none of which have variations, except for those unspecified differences in form associated with individual carvers (Figure 9).

Form C1 is carved only on the dogina tabuya. That is, according to the rules of kabitam this form must be represented in section 5 of all dogina tabuya. It is, however, sometimes carved on uuna tabuya as a matter of individual artistic preference. But it is imperative that this form be carved on the dogina tabuya in accordance with kabitam convention.

Form C2 is found on the top rim of the dug-out log, immediately below where the first longitudinal board is attached (Figure 3). This form is repeated along the entire length of the hull. When the boat is in the water the placement of this form is so that it skims just along the water's surface. When in a continuous line along the hull the form is alternatively painted black-red-black-red along a white background.

Form C3 is carved only in section 3 on all tabuya. The form takes on various stylistic modifications according to individual carver's interpretations and design implementation which is governed by the amount of space available on each tabuya. The basic form, however, is always present. The form is always painted black and often has white circles (form Bl.1) to set off the rather large area of black covered by this form.
Figure 9. Category C forms.
Figure 9 contd.
Form C4 is often found in section 4 of the lagim. Its presence depends upon the choice of design complex an artist makes in accordance with his school of carving. Again, the colour associated with this form is invariably black.

Form C5 likewise occurs on lagim in section 4 depending upon a carver's choice of other forms to place in this section. Its colour is always black.

Form C6 is carved and coloured in alternating red and black in section 1 of the lagim. It may also appear in section 4 of the lagim and in various sections of the tabuya in conjunction with forms from category A. If so, the colour association is only black.

Forms C7, C8, and C9 primarily occur in section 4 of the lagim. Sometimes these also occur in section 5 of the lagim, but their presence here depends upon the carver's design complex for this section. Black is always the colour given to these forms. On occasion form C7 is repeated thus:

Again, however, this repetition is dependent upon the category A forms used.

Form C10, although visually similar to form C9, is carved only on the tabuya in section 5. As with the other forms in this category the colour associated with this form is black. It occurs between/below category A forms chosen to be utilised.

At various points on the lagim and tabuya there are perforations through the boards. Many of these are structurally important, particularly for the binding of the lagim to the canoe's prow, holes for attaching white cowrie shells for decoration, and holes used for
identifying a dogina from uuna tabuya. I was told that the holes are, for practical reasons, essential to the boards as they allow the waves to pass through rather than smash upon the face of the boards, thus guarding against potential breakage. All but one set of perforations, however, correspond to the forms actually incised on the boards as designs. Forms B1.1, C6, C7, and C8 are carved straight through the board. On the lagim these occur primarily in section 1 where form C6 runs along the inner edge of the area outlined by form A3.1. These perforations are used to tie the white cowrie shells to the top of the lagim. The perforations around forms A5.1 and 2 are always carved in the top-centre of section 1, and cannot be said to conform to any of the designs. These spaces are not consistent between boards because the spatial relationship between the other forms in this area varies according to the carver's spacing of the elements.

Sections 2 and 3 of the lagim also have perforations. Both sections have a hole against the body of the board where the lagim is lashed to the canoe prow. This hole is called kosobu and corresponds to form C8. Section 2 has a new shape in its centre where the red lines turn in on themselves to meet the black lines. The form which is perforated through the board is created thus:

\[ \text{Diagram} \]

In section 3 the perforations in the centre of the section correspond to form B1.1 except that they are not conceived as white (a perforation is conceived as black). This is in accordance with the physical placement of black forms generally; they are the most deeply incised forms (see below).

The tabuya also has perforations occurring in sections 1, 2, and 4. The perforation associated with section 1 is in fact between it and section 2. It is usually the first thing to be cut and shaped on the tabuya apart from the board's outer shaping. Each school has
different conventions on how large this perforation should be. Section 2 has the 'tear-drop' form also found in section 2 of the lagim as well as a perforation corresponding to form C6. Section 2 has a small circular hole towards the back end. Perforations in section 4 of the tabuya identify the board as an uuna tabuya. Dogina tabuya have no perforations in this section. Depending upon what design complex a carver chooses to incorporate in this section the perforation may correspond to form Bl.1, C6, C7, C8, etc. Those forms in the C category from C5 onwards may all be made depending upon other forms utilised.

Perforations are not given any special linguistic marker. They are simply referred to as holes (pwanana) and are principally conceived as structural aids in the wear and tear of the boards, as well as handy spaces to which decorations can be attached.

The shape of the boards themselves corresponds closely to form A4 identified above. The lagim can be seen as a folded out tabuya. If we can visualise the tabuya placed upon its end and we open it out along the top, it falls open to form a shape similar in outline to a lagim. The design complex utilised on the tabuya, however, is not related to that carved on the lagim. The lagim does have an informal line running from top to bottom along the centre, one side essentially mirroring the other as if it were opened outwards along a central axis (c.f. Plates 12-16). Vakutans do not talk this way about the boards, however. Indeed, they are usually at great pains to demonstrate their differentiation as well as the differences between the two sides of the lagim. It is interesting though that there are strong visual similarities.

The significance of the formal categories

In the above, the formal components utilised by tokabitam carvers to produce Kula art were presented. In their presentation the forms were grouped into three categories. One of the levels of distinction built into the system of design differentiation is that between positive and negative forms. In other words, the execution of
some forms appear to outline other forms. The discussions with carvers on construction, utilisation and orientation of forms supports the basic distinction made here between positive and negative forms.

Category A forms I have chosen to call 'versatile'. These forms primarily generate other forms. They are the positive images on the boards. These forms can be described as versatile because there is a greater range of variations possible from the basic forms discussed above. These forms carry the greatest density of the meanings in the system. The meanings associated with the forms varies depending upon their position on the boards. The relationship of these forms to the forms of the other two categories is primary. The versatile forms not only generate the forms in category C, they also restrict the occurrence of forms in category B.

An appropriate descriptive term for category B forms is 'restricted'. These forms occur within the restricted boundaries outlined by the versatile forms. The only exception to this is form B1.1 which does occur outside the versatile forms. Its occurrence, however, is inside the category C forms, hence form B1.1 remains restricted within other forms. None of these forms are contained within each other. Instead they either emphasise others of this group or intensify the versatile forms within which they are restricted.

Category C forms I call 'fixed' forms. The execution of these forms is largely dependent upon the versatile forms used. The fixed forms can be seen as the negative images on the boards. They occur around and between the versatile forms, and are generated by them. This does not, however, necessarily decrease their significance. Indeed, forms C1, C2, and C3 are very important from the perspective of the meanings they communicate. These forms are the only ones of the fixed group which are given 'animal' names (see Chapter 6). There are no variations to any of these forms apart from individual carvers' specific styles.
The distinction between the versatile and fixed, or positive and negative forms is also supported by the depth of incisions made in the execution of them. A carved board has four levels, or three differential incisions. Firstly, there is, of course, the surface and it is this level which is occupied by the versatile A forms. Secondly, there is a deep, but narrow incision made within the versatile form's boundaries said to be made so as to hold the lime 'plant'. This level belongs to the restricted B forms. The third level is carved on a slant, which could be argued to form a transition between the white, first level, and the next level which is black. This third level is always painted red and generally echoes and intensifies the white versatile forms located on the surface. The fourth level is deeper than the second level and much broader. The breadth of this level corresponds to the fixed forms of category C. These four levels can be shown in cross-section so that the varying relationships can be perceived:

![Diagram of four levels](image)

The perforations could be considered as a fourth differential of incision, as they are a deepening of some B and C forms.

These differentially carved levels correspond to the colour patterning of the boards. Colour plays an important part in visual communication within Vakutan society. Throughout the discussion
of form it has been impossible to entirely isolate form from colour; indeed form and colour are closely associated by Vakutans. Further, there is a general correspondence between the differentiation of colour and the differentiation of form categories. The versatile forms are by and large white and further emphasised in red. The fixed forms are all black, while the restricted forms are mostly associated with white, being contained within white versatile forms. As colour evokes considerable semantic reference, I will devote an entire chapter to a discussion of the use and meaning of colour (Chapter 7).

While the forms utilised in the carving of Kula outrigger canoes' prowboards and splash-boards have been isolated, the meaning associated with the various forms has not been examined. It is this layer of information which will be examined in the following chapter.
Notes: Chapter 5

1. Clearly, artists do not always adhere to cultural conventions. Indeed, in the history of European art it can be argued that artistic styles change through the breaking of conventions by artists and following that by the gradual acceptance of the public. The public is extremely conservative, however, needing a good deal of time and help to readjust to changed conventions of 'seeing' reality.

2. In fact the egret has a long beak which is not curved. It is significant that Vakutans conceptualise the egret with a long curved beak, encoding in this conceptualisation other information. This is discussed in Chapter 8.

3. Style is also identified by differing means of breaking up space, colour patterning, etc.

4. Nugwenigwe is also a noun used to differentiate weeds from other plants. The actual meaning of pitupitu refers to something that is chipped or full of holes or lesions. The use of the word pitupitu in describing a carving with too many confused forms identifies the effect of such a condition which is said to 'break-up' the 'clarity' and 'smooth flow' of forms otherwise meant to be interrelated.

5. The dogina end is sometimes referred to as the dobuana in reference to the direction in which the outrigger canoe goes when sailing to Dobu Island.

6. Plates 14 and 15 show lagim carved by Gigimwa of Kaulaka village. He also carves with Sopila Kitava magic. His designs, however, are quite different to Youwa's. Youwa carves in the 'traditional' Kitavan school. Gigimwa was once accused of 'stealing' Youwa's designs and his boards were broken. He told me that he had stopped carving until
one night he dreamt of new 'animals'. He commenced carving again with his totally innovative designs and is now considered to be one of the best carvers. Although he was formally given magic for the Kitavan school, he has created a new design complex which will become incorporated into a new school if he decides to formally pass it on. He was, at the time of my fieldwork, preparing his son for the receipt of magic and tokabitam ginigini knowledge.
Chapter 6

The Repertoire of Kabitam 'Animals': a representational analysis

In this chapter I will be examining the repertoire of representations and meanings which are attached to the forms examined in Chapter 5.

The repertoire consists of several kinds of birds, a mollusc, a shellfish, an insect, two mammals, a variety of plants, the moon, and an assortment of mythical creatures. The designs, however, are not merely representations of the things they share a name with. Certainly there is, in most cases, an iconic component to the relationship between a kabitam design and the named animal it is associated with. However, rather than representing the animal as an end in itself, the system encodes attributes of the animal that are relevant to the system of meaning associated with the Kula. It is certain characteristics of the animal that are encoded, not the animal as a whole. This system elaborates upon the relevant characteristics so as to convey qualities of motion, aesthetics, and concepts related to success in Kula. Some forms, however, have no iconic relationship with their namesakes in the natural environment. The relationship between the forms and these birds, mammals, and mythical creatures is schematic. Their importance to the system is related to specific symbolic associations which will be examined in this and the remaining chapters.

All members of the kabitam repertoire are linguistically classified as animals, even though certain counterparts in the natural world such as plants and wood have different noun classifications. Classifying the entire repertoire as animals separates them from their counterparts in the natural environment. All forms and colours on the boards and canoe take the noun classifier -na-. In everyday speech, the classifier -na- is used to identify all animals. Of further interest, however, is the usage of the -na- classifier to refer to all women. This usage of -na- is thus significant not only from the perspective of a 'wild versus domesticated' framework (an important dichotomy in the sphere of Kula which will be analysed at
length in Chapters 9 and 10) but also because of the implicit reference to women. While the design elements are talked about by using the noun *mauna*, which generally means animal, the incorporation of the *-na-* classifier to specify the 'animalness' of these elements strategically recalls the classification of women, as opposed to men. The reference to women on the boards, the association with women while sailing on Kula expeditions, as well as the symbolic relationship women have to the actual Kula transactions will become increasingly apparent during the course of this thesis.

The *kabitam* 'animals' are chosen because they are thought to impart certain beneficial features to the enterprise concerned with the success of Kula. Their powers are considered beneficent as long as they are constrained within the boundaries of the boards. Magic is the constraining force and this is effected by the utterance of various spells by either the carver, or the owner of the canoe depending upon who knows the magic. The 'animals', however, also have a negative side. Should the outrigger canoe be capsized or shipwrecked it is thought that the magic which constrains the 'animals' breaks and the 'animals' are released to enact their malignant role. Together with the flying witches, *mulukwausa*, who are also believed to rush to the scene of an endangered craft, the 'animals' feed on the flesh and internal organs of Kula men. During this feast the 'animals' are explicitly equated with the flying witches who, according to belief, are women. Another noun used to refer to the flying witches is *vivila* which is the generic term for women. Vakutans use this word more often than *mulukwausa* because the latter reference is thought to draw the attention of these dreaded women and so they use a euphemism and refer to women in general. Flying witches represent the very essence of all that is feared and potentially uncontrollable in the feminine gender. These points will be discussed in Chapters 9 and 10.

There are several ways of referring to designs apart from as animal representations. Another way of referring to the *kabitam* components is by using the second form possessive. There are three forms of possessive address in the Trobriand language, each denoting
degrees of closeness to ego. The first possessive form is used to indicate inalienability (-la, 3rd person singular possessive suffix). Nouns that come under this form are body parts and kin. The second possessive form refers to items which are in some circumstances alienable but in others inalienable (kala, 3rd person singular). For instance, food comes into this category. Before food is ingested it is alienable, once eaten however, the food becomes a part of the person and therefore inalienable. Implements associated with food and nourishment, decoration, and clothing are denoted by this possessive form. While the second form possessive retains a certain degree of intimacy with ego, the third form possessive loses all intimacy and is ultimately alienable (la, 3rd person singular). Items that take the third possessive form are houses, land, spears, gardens, yams earmarked for exchange, etc. It is important to note that the use of these possessive forms is entirely contextural. I may give someone my yams (3rd possessive form, ula taitu) in an exchange. The recipient refers to his yams using the 2nd possessive form: kala taitu. If he then decides to cook them and give them to someone, maybe even back to me, he uses the 3rd form possessive and the recipient uses the 2nd.

The design components are grouped in the second possessive category with food, cooking utensils, body decoration, and clothing. Their association with body decoration and clothing is not surprising given that at one level the designs are thought of as decorations, or clothing of the lagim, tabuya, and masawa. Indeed, the lagim and tabuya take on the kala possessive form when spoken of in relation to the masawa: "Kala lagim e tabuya makaina masawa" ("Its [the canoe's] lagim and tabuya [of] that Kula outrigger canoe"). The owner of the canoe, however, uses the 3rd form possessive in reference to the lagim and tabuya; they do not decorate or 'clothe' the owner they decorate the canoe.

Although the association with body decoration and clothing is obvious, there is also a relationship to food implied which is not entirely haphazard. If a masawa is endangered, resulting in a shipwreck or a capsized boat, the magic which restrained and controlled the 'animals' so that they were beneficent to the success
of the Kula sailing is released and the uncontrolled and destructive 'wild animals' eat the human crew. In other words, the human members of the masawa become food for the kabitam repertoire. As Youwa put it:

\[
\text{Kasi kawelu matausina usagelu.}
\]

Their food those men the crew.

Thus, when talking about the forms and the 'animals' or colour associations by use of the second possessive form kala or kasi (3rd person plural) reference is to the decorative aspect of the designs while a relationship to food is implicit.

The use of body—part terminology is another way in which Vakutans refer to the shape on the lagim, tabuya and masawa. The purpose of this terminology is to isolate and thereby emphasise the various parts of the 'animals' that are important conveyers of meaning.

The body—parts are listed below together with a discussion as to why certain body—parts are chosen. All possible body—parts are not utilised. The selection of certain parts is always related to the meaning to be conveyed.

The head (dabila) and 'mind' (nanoula) are body—parts commonly referred to by Vakutans when discussing the kabitam 'animals'. The dabila is located in the forepart of the head roughly corresponding to the brain while nanoula is centred in the upper chest. These two areas of the body are conceptually contrasted by Vakutans. The dabila is where human thought and intelligence generates the first and second levels of knowledge discussed in Chapter 4. The chest, or nanoula is where creativity, wisdom, and knowledge of the kabitam order exists. The relationship between these two will be extensively discussed in Chapter 8.

Teeth (kudila) are another body—part frequently referred to. Teeth are conceptually attributed with the ability to capture and grip prey. This behaviour is especially useful on Kula expeditions.
where shell valuables may be more elusive than one would like. The beak (kabulu) of a bird, and mouth (wadila) in general, are also important as capturers of prey.

Vision is necessary for perception and knowledge, or wisdom is made possible through sight, therefore the eye (matila) is an important body-part. The eye is also considered to be the seat of all desire, particularly sexual desire, which is not without meaning in Kula as well as in other contexts.

Kaiyau, the throat, is where taste and memory of taste is situated. When someone is hungry for something special, in Vakutan thought it is the throat that desires. Again, this has reference to the desire for Kula shell valuables, especially the large and famous ones. The desire to embark on Kula expeditions is expressed in terms of the throat wanting to make Kula. The throat is also thought to be a long, tubular organ resembling the vagina. The length and straightness of the throat is talked about as a desirable attribute. There is some notion that the throat and vagina are connected in women. One version of Trobriand conception beliefs has it that the spirit child enters the head of a woman and from there travels to her womb via the throat. There the foetus grows. When it has reached full size it enters the narrow passage of the vagina and from there is born (see also Malinowski 1927c, and 1932:148). Normanby Islanders believe that a young girl is initiated into witchcraft by her mother or grandmother who swallow the child and emit her again through the vagina (Røheim 1948:280-281). In The Sexual Life of the Savages, Malinowski cites the belief that "the throat is a long passage like the wila (cunnus) and the two attract each other. A man who has a beautiful voice will like women very much and they will like him." (1932:478).

Face (migila) is often used to refer to the entire surface of the boards. The features of a face communicate inner feelings. Faces can be beautiful. If a man is lucky enough to have a beautiful face, he will also be able to attract women and shell
valuables. It is important for the face of the lagim to be beautiful so that it too will attract the attention of Kula partners who will then want to 'throw away' their shell valuables.

Finally, arms (yamila) and wings (pinipanela) are an important body-part for motion and thus find representation on the boards. In discussing the 'body-parts' of the boards themselves, the face, the arms/wings, the chest/mind, and the head are used. The face, for example, refers to the entire carved surface of the lagim and tabuya. The arms/wings areas are positioned in the two lobes (sections 2 and 3) on either side of the lagim, while the chest/mind is located in the centre of section 4 of the lagim. The head of the lagim is, not surprisingly, located in central section 1.

In the remainder of this chapter members of the kabitam repertoire will be looked at in detail in conjunction with their interpretations.

**Structural terminology**

Some of the 'animals' in the kabitam repertoire are important in the spatial and structural organisation of the boards. These 'animals' delineate whole areas on the boards and contain within their boundaries other 'animals'. There are three 'animals' who perform this task: beba, doka, and tubuniwola.

The beba (butterfly) is located on either side of the lagim:

![Diagram of beba]

Beba corresponds with the entire area of sections 2 and 3. While this is referred to as beba, other 'animals' reside within the beba
area. This area is named beba by Vakutans because they value the characteristic flight of butterflies. Vakutans say that the butterfly flies effortlessly upon the currents of the wind and it is this ability which they hope the outrigger canoe will emulate. The structural form of these two sections is said to correspond to the wings (pinipanela) of the butterfly. One informant expressed an opinion that the form of the butterfly on the lagim looked like the outline of antenae (gogosu) on its natural counterpart:

Although the relationship between the butterfly's wings and the 'wings' of the lagim is of primary significance in that flight, particularly that of the butterfly, is an attribute which is of major concern to a Kula crew, the relationship of the form to the antenae of a butterfly is also relevant. The antenae are considered an important part of the butterfly's flying apparatus as well as instrumental to its intelligence (particularly in relation to flight). Further, the shape of the antenae is reminiscent of one of the main forms in the system: A4. Hence it is not surprising that a butterfly's antenae is also related to the delineation of sections 2 and 3 on the lagim.

The butterfly is thought to have mastered the knowledge of flying technique and ability. This is because it seems to flutter effortlessly through the air. This characteristic is considered desirable for the outrigger canoe to enable it to float above the heavy waves of the ocean. When a masawa is so far ahead of the others that it is just a speck in the far distance, the Vakutans will say, "Bogwa imila beba", or "already the canoe has the face of/has become a butterfly". By this, Vakutans are equating the masawa with the small yet effortlessly flying butterfly.

The doka is another 'animal' which is important to the spatial and structural organisation of the lagim and tabuya. Carvers use this 'animal' form to divide space, particularly on the lagim. Haddon
(1893, 1894, and 1895) called this design (and that of the buribwari) a representation of a frigate bird because of the curved beak. The frigate bird is not represented in the kabitam repertoire. This design is part of the cultural system used for the carvings on Kula canoes and has no counterpart in nature.

The main doka is placed at the top of the lagim (section 1) on either side of the human figure:

![Diagram](image)

Other doka occur elsewhere as extensions of the principal doka. One is found in sections 2 and 3 of the lagim:

![Diagram](image)
The kabitam carvers incise the number 1 doka (section 1) before any other design. It is said that it marks out the 'route' (keda) for the other designs, acting as a standard of measure in laying out the main spatial division of the lagim. Once carved, the lines dividing sections 2 and 3 from section 4 can be struck down the length of the lagim:

"If the doka is carved correctly then the rest of the 'animals' will be correct. If not, the lagim will be ruined" (Ruguna, Kuweiwa hamlet, Vakuta village). This statement, like many others by carvers and ordinary members of the Vakutan community emphasise the importance of the doka to the structure of the lagim. One master carver told me that, "If a person can carve his [doka's] eyes, mouth, and other features then people will say he is a real tokabitam, if not, then he is not a real carver" (Youwa, Wakwega hamlet, Vakuta village). In this respect the doka governs space and the 'domains' of the other 'animals'.

The doka is also represented on the tabuya. The main doka resides at the head of section 2:
The doka does not have any counterpart in the natural world; it is an imaginary 'animal'. Some informants said that the doka is a flying 'animal' with the head of a bird and the body of a snake. Others said it lives at sea, and still others claimed the doka is really human, but a human that can fly:

Manana \text{tomota makawala yokwa e}
\text{This animal [is] people like you and}
\text{yaegu, taga bilola e biyoyouwa.}
\text{I, but it will walk and it will fly.}

(Ruguna, Kuweiwa hamlet, Vakuta village)

All agree, however, that the doka is exceedingly wise. One carver (Youwa) pointed out a pun in the word; the verb to think, -doki, is morphologically similar to the noun doka. In this respect the doka is related to the carvers who possess knowledge. Conceptually, the doka and the carver go hand in hand to produce the correct carving of the tokabitam ginigini. The carver utilises the doka, an 'animal' considered exceedingly wise, to organise the design components into the prescribed system which signifies the knowledge of kabitam.

The other 'animal' which functions to organise space is 'the body of the moon', tubuniwola. The term refers to the rounded 'head' of the tabuya:
The form of the moon has aesthetic value which focuses upon its smooth roundness. The moon is an important navigational instrument to a Kula expedition. It is also important for its role in the temporal organisation of the garden cycle.

The beba, doka, and tubuniwola are terms that isolate important structural spaces in kabitam carving. The areas delineated by these terms contain many of the other kabitam 'animals' and are not necessarily designs in themselves. They emphasise, however, important aesthetic and conceptual forms which exist in the natural world. Although the three are not conceptualised as single designs, they are thought to carry the designs that are placed within their boundaries. For example, the beba is not a distinct design unit found within sections 2 or 3. It demarcates section 2 and 3 and contains within it the appropriate 'animals' for these sections. Likewise, the tubuniwola are not specific designs. Instead they define the structural form within which the other 'animals' are placed.

Animal and plant terminology

The animal and plant terminology comprises the most extensive range of components in the repertoire. As members of the kabitam repertoire their purpose is to extend the 'valuable' characteristics associated with these particular animals to the success of the Kula expedition. I present the 'animals' alphabetically according to their vernacular names so as to avoid imposing at this stage a hierarchical structure on the repertoire. The importance of one 'animal' over another is a contextual matter. In Chapter 8 I attempt to examine the relative significance of the 'animals' within their various contexts.

The boi, or egret (Egretta alba) occurs repeatedly on the boards. On the lagim the egret is found in section 1 on either side of the human figure and shares the same form as doka. Indeed, boi is the second name for doka. The egret is also found in sections 2 and 3.
directly below the doka/boi of section 1. Its long neck and curved beak form the whole of sections 2 and 3 (Plates 12-16). On the tabuya, the boi is again synonymous with the doka in section 2. The boi, together with the human figure, are the 'animal' captains of the masawa. These two are thought to instruct all the other 'animals' to eat the human crew should the latter capsize or in any other way endanger the masawa.

The egret is itself considered a 'wise' animal (nakabitam) in its natural habitat. Vakutans see the egret standing still in the shallows waiting for the right moment to strike for fish. They think the egret has its own magic (kaimwasila - magic that involves parts of plants or trees for its success; see Chapter 9 for discussion) and when its fishing is poor, the egret goes into the woods to perform its magic. Once performed the egret returns to the lagoon and proceeds to catch fish with as much precision as before.

The buribwari (osprey, Malinowski's 'fish-hawk') is magic personified, unlike the boi/doka who must rely upon the performance of its magic so as to succeed in fishing. The relationship between the buribwari on the one hand, and the boi/doka on the other symbolises an important distinction between wisdom which is not attainable (represented by the buribwari) and wisdom which is attainable by human actors (represented by the boi/doka). This distinction is elaborated in Chapter 8.

The osprey is an invariable and extremely important member of the repertoire, always occurring in section 1 of the tabuya.
It is carved on both the dogina and uuna tabuya, but its most important position is on the dogina tabuya. The dogina end of a masawa conceptually 'goes to Dobu first'; "people in Dobu see the dogina buribwari first and are afraid because of its power" (a common Vakutan sentiment amongst Kula men). When landing the masawa, it must be turned around so that the dogina end with the buribwari lands first and is seen first.

In many respects the buribwari is thought to be the tabuya (see also Malinowski 1935, Vol. 2:301). With it rests the success of the Kula expedition in procuring the most Kula shell valuables. Vakutans say, "When Dobuans see the buribwari they will want to throw their Kula shell valuables at the crew because his magic is so strong". When placing the dogina tabuya into position on the prow of the outrigger canoe a small packet of herbs (kaimwasila), which have had magic spoken into them, is placed under the nose of the buribwari. Although the packet is hidden, the crew are reassured by the knowledge of its presence. The magic of kaimwasila is said to act upon the minds of the Kula hosts, magically persuading them to give up their shell valuables easily (for further discussion of kaimwasila magic see Chapter 9).

The osprey receives this special attention because it is thought to be extraordinarily 'wise'. It sits at the tops of trees watching the movement of the water below. Suddenly it strikes, swooping down without hesitation or deviation to a seemingly inconspicuous spot on the surface of the water. It strikes quickly to grab its fish; "The buribwari always catches its prey, it does not simply strike here and there hoping to take a fish. That is why the buribwari always lands first in Kula because it will never fail to get all the vaiguwa and mwari [Kula shell valuables]. The Kitavans and Dobuans will see the buribwari and throw away the vaiguwa and mwari."

Youwa, Wakwega hamlet, Vakuta village). Malinowski in Argonauts of the Western Pacific lists a spell for the tabuya in which the osprey is invoked:

Moruborogu, Mosilava'u!
Fish-hawk, fall on thy prey, catch it.
My prow-board, O fish-hawk, fall on thy prey, catch it.
I shall Kula, I shall rob my Kula ... (1922:343)
Unlike the boi and the buribwari, the dodoleta is believed to be less important to the success or failure of the Kula expedition, yet this 'animal' appears more frequently on the boards. The dodoleta is often used to refer to all the carving within the boundaries of white forms. However, in its narrower sense it refers to sequences of curved lines:

![Curved Lines Diagram](image1)

The purpose of the dodoleta is simply to 'hold' the lime in place so that when the paint dries and turns into a powdery substance, the dodoleta carvings within the white lines holds the powder, thus retaining the colour scheme.

Dodoleta in the natural world refers to a particular tree with fleshy foliage. Although it is said that the tree and the design only share the same name, the tree, or its leaf, does have a semantic link to Kula. A favourite pastime of children is to make a sail of the leaf and hold it to the wind. Held thus the leaf "sails very quickly across the sea" (Isaac, Kitava Island). A masawa which has caught the wind in full sail invokes praise from Kula men; "Oh dodoleta" they cry, referring to the children's leaf, which likewise takes to the wind with great speed:

![Leaf Diagram](image2)
Part of the carving magic given to an initiate invokes the action of carving, or digging out (ginigini) the dodoleta designs; they must be deep and clean.

The duduwa, a small, round and light green snail which lives in the gardens, shares its name with a member of the kabitam repertoire because its shape is considered perfectly round. This garden snail is thought to be 'wise', and thus welcomed to the kabitam repertoire, because of the form of its shell and not because of any inherent wisdom in the mollusc itself. This is carved on the lagim of Kitavan sopi in section 4 (Plate 16) and sometimes in section 3 of the uuna tabuya.

Another 'animal', although not considered inherently wise but who nevertheless is said to have attracted the attention of minakabitam, is the ginareu, a small hermit crab living on the reef sands. When these crabs walk across the sand their legs leave little drawings which, it is said, moved the minakabitam to repeat these lines in their carvings:

The ginareu design is carved within the white forms to help hold the lime, together with the dodoleta. The ginareu design is also used to emphasise certain curved lines. Illustrated below is the adaptation of the hermit crab's 'footprints' in carving:
Kaidada is another 'animal' carved exclusively within white forms. Kaidada also refers to any horizontal piece of wood. The purpose of the kaidada design is again to hold the lime and thus retain the white pigment against the black and red pigments on either side:

Specific reference to kaidada is to the front boards of a yam house platform upon which people hoist themselves for relaxation. This board, together with the kamkokola posts, is removed at the death of the yam house owner and given to the senior man of the deceased's dala. These boards are meant to represent the deceased and to remind his kin and others of the deceased's name and his place in society. Although the actual things incorporated by the noun kaidada in the natural world are not animal (indeed, the noun classifier used to refer to these is -kai- which includes all tree/wood-like objects) their membership within the kabitam repertoire transforms their classification into animal by use of the classifier -na-. This provides a good example of the corporate identity of all design forms into the -na- (animal/female) classification.

The kapaiyauwa, which refers to a horseshoe bat (Hipposideros diadema?) is one of the more important 'animals' in the repertoire. Its importance on the boards is closely related to the significance Vakutans place upon the mammal. Firstly, people describe the perfect blackness of this bat which is considered an aesthetic quality unparalleled in the natural world. Secondly, horseshoe bats demonstrate a particularly desirable flight pattern which Vakutans claim is exactly the way the Kula outrigger canoe should perform on the open sea. At dusk bats flit about the village demonstrating great speed and agility. They gracefully dart about the darkening sky, evading all attempts at capture. This characteristic is for obvious reasons desirable behaviour for the masawa on a Kula
expedition. As exemplified by the kapaiyauwa, Vakutans want their masawa to dart easily and speedily over the waves, avoiding all the dangers lurking below and above. One informant added that the kapaiyauwa is very light, much lighter than the fruit bat for instance. He said that it was for this reason that it was chosen to be a member of the kabitam 'crew'; to give lightness to the masawa.

The kapaiyauwa can feature on the lagim. Its place on the lagim, however, depends upon the school of the carver and corresponds with rules of sopi ownership. When carved it is placed in the central area of section 4 and is always in black. An example of an adaptation of a design from the real animal is exemplified by the kapaiyauwa on the lagim. "The ancestors chose the kapaiyauwa because its chest looked good" (Youwa, Wakwega hamlet, Vakuta village; Plate 16):

I made a drawing (A) while sitting with Youwa discussing his bat design. He looked at my drawing and said, "Bogwa mokwita. Batagisa manana (A), biyoyouwa e dabala biorakina. Taga, manawena (B) bataginigini." ("Already it is true. We will see this animal (A), it will fly and its head is above its body. But, this animal [pointing to B] we will carve"). The drawing (A) corresponds to the view of a bat from below, the most usual vantage point. The
mammal's chest, black against the twilight, is bared when its wings are spread in flight. The drawing on the left depicts, in simple form, what a bat looks like from below. The drawing on the right is how a Vakutan carver 'transforms' the real form into kabitam graphic form. Youwa noted how the head is distorted and brought down to fit into the structure formed by the exaggerated wings in his carving.

The kapaiyauwa, in a different form, is always carved on the tabuya and features in section 3:

In this schematic representation the wings, head, and tail are depicted from a side-on perspective. Although the design is not actually carved over the top of the tabuya and onto the other side, it gives the appearance of 'falling' down the other side. This form is the only one in the corpus that gives the feeling of being unfinished at the top of the tabuya, and lacks the curvilinear flow 'felt' in the other forms.
The *karawa*, or fern, is represented by a curved form which recalls the line of a new fern frond:

When it is utilised on a board, it receives the colour red only. This 'animal', however, belongs to a particular *sopi* (Sopila Kaileuna) and cannot feature on boards carved by artists of other *sopi*. The design itself gets its inspiration from the gentle curve of the frond which, I was told, motivated *minakabitam* to incorporate the form into their repertoire.

"The minutoula is not an animal that we can see, it does not fly, swim, or walk. It is only a name" (Kunabu, Kuweiwa hamlet, Vakuta village). Vakutans insist that the ancestors created the design and called it *minutoula*. The word could mean 'the people of Vakuta who go first'.

The design is primarily associated with the side of an outrigger canoe. It is carved along the entire length of the canoe (Figure 3):

While the *minutoula* always features along the side of the canoe, it sometimes embellishes section 5 of the *uuna tabuya*: 
Here the Y form delineates the top while an extra curved line articulates from it and swings down to make a C form:

The snake, mwata, is another member of the kabitam repertoire. The snake is depicted in many forms on the lagim. If it is incorporated into a carving, it is only carved in section 5.

The snake is associated with power, particularly the power of shedding old skin for new, attractive and 'young' skin. In some of the Kula related myths, heros shed their old skin for new skin and in that way attract the Kula shell valuables to themselves. The snake is also associated with beauty magic. Beauty magic and the ability to regenerate are very important in Vakutan thought (Chapters 9 and 10). The snake is considered to be of the kabitam order because of its smooth and slippery quality. In the past young initiates drank the blood of a certain snake so as to acquire this desirable quality (Chapter 4).

The papa is another imaginary 'animal'. It is said to 'belong' in the ocean, but no one could say any more about its characteristics. The word is also a noun for wall. The papa design is found running along the length of the outrigger canoe. Its colour alternates black and red on white (Figure 3):
The sawila, or sandpiper is only carved on the top of lagim. It belongs exclusively to the Kitavan sopi (Sopila Kitava; Plate 6). It is a fairly recent innovation, having begun within living memory (Scoditti 1977). The Vakutans do not know why Kitavan minakabitam chose to carve the sawila. They say only that it is a 'lucky animal'.

Taregesi are shellfish which attach themselves to the trunk of a sago palm. In the past, women collected the shell to split leaves for skirt-making. Carvers said that the design called taregesi is reminiscent of the formation made by these shellfish as they are lined up along a sago palm trunk. The design is located within the white forms and embellishes other major designs/'animals'.

The tokwalu represents humanity. He stands for all men, women, and children. This design is always placed in the middle of section 1 between the two boi/doka. Sometimes he is represented by only one human figure, sometimes by two. There is no significance in the number of figures carved. It is entirely up to the carver as to whether he carves one or two tokwalu.
The word comprises two morphemes: to- and -kwalu. To is a noun classifier for the male gender when a sex distinction is required between male and female. To also incorporates all human beings regardless of sex and age when a distinction between human and non-human is needed. Kwalu is a transformation of kwabu, or 'image'. Idiomatically, tokwalu refers to something which is an image of something else: a reflection, for instance.

Although the tokwalu stands for humanity, and carries in its word structure a male classifier (-to-), when referred to without use of the noun, the classifier -na- is invoked. For instance, a grammatically acceptable sentence would be;

Manana tokwalu, iyamata usagelu.
That [female/animal] tokwalu, it looks after the crew.

In this sentence there is an inherent contradiction in the corresponding words manana, which specifies that the tokwalu is, in this context, a female/non-human thing, and the word tokwalu which carries in it a male/human specification. Indeed, as this analysis develops it will become apparent that the relationship between male and female is a central theme in Kula and the art which is produced to facilitate successful Kula. Here I wish only to demonstrate the complexity of information operating within the system of Kula art, leaving to Chapter 8 the disentanglement of these complexities.
Another 'animal' in the repertoire is the ubwara. It is described as perfectly round and is signified schematically by three concentric circles:

![ubwara](image)

Ubwara shares its name with an uncultivated yam which grows in the gardens and surrounding forest. It is not generally eaten because of its bitter flavour. However, it is considered good for the soil and is often left in the garden plots to grow alongside the cultivated yams, although it receives no attention whatsoever. It is the internal property of this yam which is considered aesthetically appealing and thus receives artistic expression. In cross-section it is said to be composed of perfect concentric circles. Malinowski describes the yam as consisting of 'long white tubers' (1935, Vol. 2:154).

This form corresponds to what Narubutal (1975) names susawiwi which is carved on Kiriwinan lagim. Vakutans do not include susawiwi within their repertoire. The iconic relationship between the form and susawiwi, on the one hand, and ubwara (or duduwa), on the other, however, appears to be similarly conceived in both systems. It is the shape of the 'animal' which inspires Trobriand aesthetics: roundness with an internal order consisting of a spiral (as in the case of the snails) or concentric circles (as in the case of the wild yam). This example illustrates the level at which the labelling system operates. It is not that the Vakutans (or Kiriwinans) are concerned to represent a wild yam or garden snail. Rather, they are concerned with a particular attribute of it. It does not matter whether they call a circular form a snail, or wild yam. It does matter, however, that what they do label the form encodes specific conceptual information. In this context, the wild yam or snail must have the necessary characteristics. The representational system is a
cultural construct. Vakutans are not representing things in the natural world. The relationship between the signified and the signifier is a conceptual one.

The final 'animal' that regularly occurs in the design repertoire is the weku: another imaginary one. Although some people claim to have heard it, no one has ever seen it. People disagreed over the kind of animal it is. Some said the weku is a small black bird who lives in the forest, while others asserted that it lived at sea and was a fish. All remarked upon its beautiful voice which beckons listeners to find it (see also Scoditti 1977). I was told that no one had ever succeeded. The 'animal' is represented in the kabitam repertoire as a complex design in black, red, and white. Its prime position is in section 5 of the dogina tabuya where it must be carved:

This completes the list of the major 'animals' which are the most frequent members of the kabitam repertoire. There are, however, other 'animals' which sometimes feature on the boards but only as casual attributions, revealing a degree of flexibility in the representational system. Individual carvers will occasionally add to the above set of 'animals' when pointing out design configurations on their own carvings within section 4 of the lagim. It is significant that it is this section that is the main area in which individual creativity is allowed expression. This area is the 'chest' of the lagim and it is here that knowledge and creativity
are housed. Other sections on both the lagim and tabuya are more restricted in the choice of the kabitam designs available. The set introduced above is the one most commonly agreed upon by the carvers on Vakuta today. These 'animals' are said to have an important function in the search for Kula shells. Of particular interest, however, is the fact that these 'animals' are semantically linked with feminity through the use of the -na- classifier. This is the more interesting as women are not allowed on masawa because they are thought to endanger the boat and crew when traversing the open sea. In a sense, then, feminity is a stowaway on the masawa, disguised in the form of kabitam 'animals'.

The way in which natural phenomenon are selected and finally incorporated into a graphic system to convey specific information is inherently complex. There is no a priori relationship between the natural and graphic 'animal'. In a system such as this, features of the 'animals' are selected, isolated, compared, and finally combined to create a system of meaning which though built from the natural order is independent of it. In this way, the graphic system is culturally specific, in the sense that someone not socialised into Vakutan culture could not begin to interpret the meanings encoded in the graphic system with recourse only to their names. More detailed investigation is required.
1. Lawton has argued extensively that the -na- classifier signifying female humans and the -na- classifier signifying all non-humans are of differing semantic domains and that these do not overlap (1980). Lawton would argue that the -na- classification used to refer to the kabitam forms and colours belongs to the animal and not the human female semantic domain. However, if the -na- classifier does formally refer to different semantic domains it remains the case that in actual speech the sounds are the same and thus it can also be argued that there is some relationship, even if it is only homophonous.

When identifying sex in animals, females are implicit within the -na- classification; manana bunukwa means implicitly 'that [female] pig unless the context demands a differentiation between sexes. If this is required, a male is simply identified as 'its husband' (la mwala). Hence, in speech it might be said: "manana bunukwa lema toya manawena bunukwa la mwala" ("this pig came with that pig, its husband"). Occasionally, when it is necessary to emphasise the sex of animals the female can be stressed by use of the noun vivila which means woman (or women). The male, however, remains classified as a 'husband' in this context and is not given the noun tau used to designate a human male. Moreover, when the -na- classifier is applied to animals in its generic sense, it refers to all animals regardless of sex. When referring to a specific animal, however, its unmarked meaning is female. To specify maleness an additional noun is employed: 'its husband'. Our usage of the word man or mankind, although a reversal in its specification, is similar to the Trobriand usage of -na- in that the unmarked meaning of mankind is male.

Although Lawton's insistence that -na- - animal and -na- - human female belong to different semantic domains may be well founded, I would argue that these need not be unrelated.
2. Another noun used to refer to flying witches is nayoyouwa (or nayouwa); na- is the female classifier which specifies the root -yoyouwa which means 'to fly'. Thus a literal translation is 'female fliers'.

3. A morphological breakdown of this word inspires this translation. Tubukona is the noun used to refer to the moon. Wowola means (its) body with the first possessive form suffix -la attached. Woula is the generic form referring to the body. Thus, I translate tubuniwola is 'the body of the moon'.

4. Malinowski has translated buribwari as 'fish-hawk' which is another word for osprey. I prefer to use the term 'osprey' as it is the more common name for this bird amongst ornithologists.

5. Chief Narubutal, from northern Kiriwina, calls the snails represented on Kiriwinan boards susawi (1975). The forms Narubutal associates with susawi, however, correspond to the forms Vakutans call ubwara.

6. The Vakutan dialect has a whole set of prefixes which denote the direction of peoples relative to Vakutans. Using Vakuta as the central point, a Vakutan speaker can refer to other peoples by including in his grammatical construction information identifying the relevant direction in which 'those' people reside:

```
mina Kiriwina
\--------\--------
mila Kitava, Gawa, Iwa, Muyuwa, etc.
mila Dobu, Gumasila, etc.
```
It is interesting to note that Vakutans make a change in the prefix according to the direction of Kula partners (in the case of Kiriwina, it shares the same term that is used for Dobu, etc. because Vakutans have no Kula relationships with Kiriwinans and therefore no need to differentiate them). As concerns the word minutoula, I suggest that minu- is connected to milu (people of Vakuta) because the choice of an a or u ending creates a semantic change in the word, while the change from -1- to -n- is a usual dialectic shift in the Trobriands (Kiriwinans usually use -1- where Sinaketans use -n-, and where Vakutans use -r-). In other words, if minutoula were minatoula the word would be more likely to be connected to the Dobuan directional prefix, not because they share the same structural form but because of their hypothetically shared ending, -a. The ending, however, is -u. Sometimes in Vakutan speech an -1- is used instead of an -n-, or vice versa, so that the word is more euphonious within its linguistic environment. Therefore milu- is changed to minu- in the word minutoula because it sounds better than stumbling over two -1-s and conforms to conventions in Vakutan speech. -Toula means for someone to 'go first' (kutoula - you go first, before me). The noun minutoula then could mean 'the people of Vakuta who go first'.

7. The Vakutan term for snake is kaiuna. The Kabitam snake, however, receives its name from the Dobuan generic term for snake.


9. People sometimes harvest these wild yams in times of hunger when cultivated produce is not available. Vakutans say they only look for ubwara if the yam harvest was a poor one due to drought.
Chapter 7
The Kabitam Colours

The use of colour by kabitam carvers in the execution of carvings for Kula canoes is a further medium by which meaning is conveyed. In one sense colour is the most important aspect of the carvings. The bold patterning of white, black, and red gives a visual impact to the boards not achieved by the incisions. It is not so much the neatness with which the Vakutans apply the paint that is of major concern, but the correct patterning of colours which is considered vital to the impact and ultimate influence the boards may have.\(^1\) In this respect, the carving underneath the paint is insignificant.\(^2\) In fact, when it comes time to paint the boards Vakutans are completely uninterested in the obliterated designs painstakingly made by the carver. European paint is often used today and its density effectively covers the detailed incisions made to hold the traditional lime paint. It is revealing, however, that when the carvers were asked why they still carved out the lines to hold the white paint when European paint adequately adhered to the surface, they replied that the incisions were still necessary to hold the paint. Hence, while the carved lines are said to be insignificant when it comes time to apply paint, carvers' insistence on meticulously carving these lines belies their words. From other contexts it is quite clear that the carving process itself is important in imparting the power of the message into the boards. In other words, the wood has gained the power of the encoded meanings by being carved with the designs of the graphic system.

A board is not considered finished and ready for its job until the paint has been applied. Before any Kula expedition, existing boards must be freshly painted otherwise their impact is thought to be reduced. Paint is often taken on an expedition so as to renew any parts of the boards or boat that have had paint washed off in the out-going trip. This is done before the return home. The painting of the lagim, tabuya, and masawa is of semantic significance. Vakutans point to and name kala kaimalaka (red), kala kaivau (black),
and kala kaipwaka (white). Note the kala possessive (2nd form, 3rd person singular) used here to direct attention to 'its' (the lagim's, tabuya's, egret's, butterfly's, etc.) red, black, or white. In this way, Vakutans separate colour and the meanings carried through this medium from the formal and representational levels at which the design components operate.

**Colour terminology**

It can be argued that there are only three basic colour terms in the Trobriand language. This places Trobriand Islanders at the lower end of a scale developed by Berlin and Kay (1969) which measures languages, and by implication, cultures according to the acquisition of colour terminology. This model, however, does not incorporate words describing the density or gloss, for example, of the colour which many societies with supposedly primitive colour recognition have elaborated beyond European standards. Hence, Berlin and Kay's model is of limited value.³

Although many societies utilise only a few colour terms according to the criteria established by Berlin and Kay, their languages employ several other words which denote the quality of these colours, often allowing for the inclusion of extra colours not specified by exclusive colour terms within the basic distinctions. Indeed, the Stratherns (1971) as well as Jones' and Meehan's (1978) analyses argue that the incorporation of terms which isolate various properties of colour are far more important than terms which isolate colours from one another.

The Trobriand language uses three basic colour terms as well as several other terms which denote saturation, gloss, pigment, and hue. The three basic colours are black (bwabwau), white (pupwakau), and red (bweyani). Bwabwau and pupwakau are not monomorphemic and a breakdown of the terms into morphemes reveals the nouns denoting objects which epitomise the colour. Bwau is the noun used to refer to black rain clouds, while pwaka signifies a species of coral which is baked and then crushed to form white lime used as paint. This
lime, when crushed, is also used as one of the essential ingredients to betel-nut chewing. Only bweyani seems to be monomorphemic and does not, to my knowledge, have any other meaning than the denotation of red.4

Digadegila is another colour term used on Vakuta and generally identifies yellow objects. On occasion it is also used to refer to green, and sometimes brown if it should contain some yellow in it. Unlike the other three colour terms, however, digadegila is in its primary meaning a noun denoting the crest of the sulphur-crested cockatoo (Cacatua galerita). The word is also morphologically linked in this context to the noun dagila which means feather. Further, digadegila differs from the other three colour terms in that it has not become a standardised term for yellow. People know what is denoted when used as a colour term, because it refers to the sulphur crest of the cockatoo. It is not, however, a conventionalised colour term. There are other words such as unripe/ripe (geguda/matua), raw/cooked (genata/menu) which can equally be utilised to describe yellow, green, and brown objects. The use of these, however, not only evokes the colour but also the texture and consistency of objects referred to. For example, the use of genata to refer to colour is an extension of its use to refer to raw things thought of as hard and dense, and conceptualised as green even if their actual colour is otherwise. Use of the words genata (raw) and geguda (unripe) implies a colour association with green, while things that are mwexenogué (ripe) or menu (cooked) are conceptualised as yellow together with the textural attribution of soft and mushy. A corpse is sometimes referred to as mwexenogué in reference to its colour, which is conceptualised as yellow, and to its consistency which is also thought to be soft and mushy.5 An unripe yam is described as geguda (unripe) and conceptually likened to green and hard objects although it is not, in fact, green. When yams mature (matua) they are described as mwexenogué (ripe) in which case yellow and soft attributions are invoked even though a mature yam is neither yellow or soft. Briefly then, the use of terms which refer to ripe/unripe, and cooked/raw states implies conceptual categories which link colour and texture (Table VI).
Table VI. Conceptual categories implied by unripe/raw and ripe/cooked.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Colour</th>
<th>Consistency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>unripe/raw</td>
<td>green</td>
<td>hard, dense</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ripe/cooked</td>
<td>yellow</td>
<td>soft, dispersed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(or orange and red)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The colours used on the canoe and the prow- and splash-board carvings are red, black, and white. The colour terms not only identify these colours, they also refer to the saturation levels. For example, blue (for which there is no term) is classified with black (bwabwau) but Vakutans put a condition on this classification by saying, "pikekita bwabwau" ("a little bit black") because, they say, blue does not achieve a full intensity of saturation comparable to black. Vakutans value the intensity, or full saturation of colour, and it is this condition which they strive to reproduce in paint and dyes. There are several ways in which Vakutans describe the saturation of these colours. When, for example, red is of a desired saturation it is said to be 'sharp', or kakata (kata): "sena kakata bweyani" ("it is a very sharp red"). In this way Vakutans are referring to the perfection, as they see it, of the colour and its proximity to the desired saturation level. If the saturation level does not meet with approval, people will say that it is either without colour (bulebula), or it has too much colour and is therefore black (bwabwau). This raises an ambiguity in the evaluation of black. Black, while primarily conveying negative values, can be positively valued when it is of the desired saturation. At this level of distinction two other descriptive terms need introduction. These are concerned with the gloss, or brightness (sigala) as opposed to the dullness (dudubila) of colour. If a colour becomes too saturated it likewise becomes so black that it loses its sheen. The colour is blurred and thus dark or dull. In this state it is described as dudubila. Colour with too little saturation is likened to water and described as bulebula. However, colours which retain the correct amount of saturation
remain 'sharp' (kata) and 'glossy' (sigala). Black which is too dark loses its sheen (sigala) and 'sharpness' (kakata), becoming dull and blurred (dudubila). Black which has the right amount of saturation receives positive evaluation and is described as very 'sharp'.

Pigment terminology

In the context of painting, white, black, and red are given other terms which are derived from the pigments used to produce these colours. While these pigment terms are synonymous with the colour terms in the context of carvings, they are not in other contexts. For instance, kala kaimalaka is synonymous with bweyani in describing the colour red on a carving. It is not, however, appropriate to refer to someone's betel-reddened mouth by saying kala kaimalaka. Instead, bweyani is used; "sena bweyani wadola e kudula" ("very red are his/her mouth and teeth") is an acceptable phrase. When talking about colour on the prow- and splash-boards Vakutans use pigment terms.

Pigment terms are derived directly from the nouns which signify the matter from which the pigments are extracted (Table VII).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pigment source</th>
<th>Colour</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>malaka</td>
<td>bweyani (red)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>noku</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pwaka</td>
<td>pupwakau (white)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lilau</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vaau</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>budakola</td>
<td>bwabwau (black)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pwanasi</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table VII. Pigment terms and sources.
Vakutans have two sources for red pigments, **malaka** and **noku**. **Malaka** is the red ochre obtained from the D'Entrecasteaux Islands. Red pigment is also obtained from a particular plant (**Bixa orellana**) growing locally whose seeds, when crushed, produce a red pigment suitable for use as paint. This plant is also known as **malaka**. **Noku** is a root used to produce a red pigment suitable for dyeing the fibres of banana and coconut leaves for skirt making. **Noku** is used by women while **malaka** is used by men as the source for their red dye.

There are two sources from which white pigment is obtained. **Pwaka** refers to a species of coral suitable for rendering into lime and is used also for betel-nut chewing. When water is added to the lime a white pigment is produced which is used for face-painting (**soba**) and for filling incisions on carvings. **Lilau** is a white, sticky clay substance said to be collected from the foot of the reefs on the ocean floor. This pigment is used to paint yam house boards and is said to smell very strongly of decaying fish. The pigment is considered dangerous because its smell is thought to attract flying witches. It is valued, however, because of its density.

Finally, there are three pigment terms for black. These are **vau**, **budakola**, and **pwanasi**. **Vau** is the name of the ink which is projected from the squid (**suwoiya**) or octopus (**kwita**). The ink is highly valued as a pigment for the painting of canoe prowboards. When asked why the squid and octopus were so valued when other sources of black pigment are more easily obtainable, the characteristic behaviour of the squid and octopus was recounted several times by different informants: "they are very wise, and can go forward or backward with ease". This has particular implications for Kula outrigger canoes which also go backwards or forwards without turning around. Although the black pigment obtained from the squid or octopus is highly valued, so much so that the black lines on the boards are named after this pigment, the more common source of black pigment is **budakola**. A mixture of charred coconut and coconut oil makes this dense paint. **Pokiyou** refers to the ashes and charcoal of a wood fire. These are scraped and mixed with water or oil to form a black pigment called
pwanasi. Pwanasi is used for face-paint, for body-paint during mourning, and for use on the fontanelle of a baby's head to protect the infant from disease and weakness.

As mentioned earlier, the pigment terms used in the context of canoe, prow- and splash-board carvings are kala kaimalaka ('its red pigment'), kala kaipwaka ('its white pigment'), and kala kaivau ('its black pigment'). When naming the forms detailed by the colours these terms are invoked. The use of this form of reference is of interest because the linguistic construction of these terms implies other associations.

The -malaka, -vau, and -pwaka segments of the terms simply refer to the names of the pigments. The kai- prefix is a classifier specifying trees, tree-like shapes, wood in a tree-like shape, etc. For example, a pen, although not made of wood, receives the classifier -kai- in the phrase 'makaina penna' ('that tree-like pen'). On the other hand, while a boat receives the classifier -kai-, a wooden table does not. The latter's shape being so odd and inconsistent warrants inclusion in a category specified by the classifier -kwai-, whereas the boat, not only made of wood, but also retaining a tree-like shape, remains within the -kai- classification. The design components on the lagim and tabuya certainly do not all have a tree-like appearance yet all receive -kai- specification in the pigment term. A relevant question here concerns the significance of the use of kai- in the terms kaimalaka, kaipwaka, and kaivau. The morphology of the tree is used as an important symbol of major themes in Vakutan cosmological thinking. In this respect it is also relevant to the symbolism of Kula and the related art. The ends of a tree, the bole and tip, are classified according to a female/male opposition (uuna/dogina respectively). This opposition, as signified by the opposing ends of a tree, is used in the various contexts of Kula to express fundamental issues concerning gender relationships in Vakutan society. In the remaining three chapters this will become increasingly clear as we return again and again to the symbolic significance of the opposing ends of a tree. It seems plausible that the kai- segment
in the colour terminology of the Kula carvings is connected to the symbolism of a tree. To my knowledge this classifier is not used in any other contexts in which pigment terms are used.

**Application of paint**

Before paint is applied to the canoe and its prowboards, magic is spoken into the paint. Once the paint has been mixed to the desired saturation a man who owns paint magic, usually a master carver, holds the mixture close to his mouth so that the magic contained in the breath relaying his words is imbued into the paint. All three colours receive this attention. The spells for each colour, however, differ in their content as each colour has different associations to be evoked by the magic. While images of purity such as new born babies, and the white egret are part of the spell for white paint, sexual imagery including notions of desire and attraction are evoked in the spell for red paint. The magic for black paint includes imagery of malevolent powers such as those possessed by flying witches and sorcerers. The different spells for each colour, however, have in common the invocation of certain qualities. These include the adhesiveness of the paint to the boards so that the colour does not wash away before the desired effect has been made upon the hosts to a visiting Kula party, as well as a brilliance and shine to the paint which should give the colours their 'sharp' edge and thus ensure partners' adoration.

While Vakutans and Kiriwinans perform magic over all three colours, Gawans seem only to bespell the red paint. Munn, in contrasting her Gawan material with Malinowski's data from the Trobriands, argues that red is the 'power' colour in Gawan evaluation and colour symbolism because it is the colour 'with the strongest sexual connotations' (1977:49, fn 26). In contrast, Malinowski claimed that black was the most important colour in Trobriand colour symbolism (1922:140). For Vakutans both red and black are 'power' colours. But the 'power' evoked by each is substantially different. Neither of these colours has supreme importance over the other except in the specific contexts in which the diversity of 'power' conveyed
between them is predominant. For example, in contexts where the power of physical attraction predominates (symbolised by red), black receives less attention and becomes subordinate. However, when the power of knowledge gained through the process of maturity and experience is paramount (symbolised by black), red receives peripheral attention (see below).

Each colour has its specific placement on the boards and canoe. No deviation from this pattern is tolerated particularly as the application of colour complements the forms covering the surface of the boards (Plates 7 and 12). In this way colour is superimposed on form; colour does not overlap or cut across the major carved forms, although it may obliterate others.⁶

As was discussed in the previous chapter, there are several levels, or layers carved on the lagim and tabuya. These correspond to the application of the three colours. While I argued that there were five levels on the boards, ranging from the surface to the perforations with three incised levels between, we can talk of only three levels in the context of colour. The first (surface) and the last (perforations) levels described in Chapter 5 are subsumed within two of the colours: white and black.

White is applied to the surface and first shallow incision:

\[
\text{white} \quad \begin{array}{c}
\text{white} \\
\end{array}
\]

Indeed, the shallow incisions made within the surface level designs are carved so as to 'hold' the white paint. Red is applied to the carved indentation which is made on a slant linking the white to the black levels:

\[
\text{red} \quad \begin{array}{c}
\text{red} \\
\end{array}
\]

Black paint is applied to the deepest level on the boards:

\[
\text{black} \quad \begin{array}{c}
\text{black} \\
\end{array}
\]

The perforations made in the boards are also conceived as black.
In the application of the three colours they are set against each other as contrasts. Each colour physically occupies differing spaces on the boards. This spatial differentiation is complementary to other contexts in which colour symbolically represents the physiological life cycle of organisms according to a Vakutan conceptualisation of this process. The meanings of many Vakutan dichotomies derive from a preoccupation with the temporal movement between birth, death, and rebirth. Such conceptual oppositions as raw/cooked, immature/mature, underground/above ground, and so on are ultimately meaningful from the perspective of a life cycle model. The meaning of some Vakutan oppositions can partially be glossed according to a western dichotomy which contrasts nature and culture. However, a nature versus culture interpretation can only be of limited use given its ethnocentric origins (M. Strathern 1980).

White is associated with the initial stage of the process, epitomised most succinctly by a newborn child who is said to be 'clean' and 'pure', in the sense that a baby has not yet accumulated a life experience to make it 'contaminated'. It is significant that white is applied to the surface of the boards, as this space is the one least worked; the surface is already there, unmoulded, as it were, by the carvers' hands. The colour red symbolises the gradual process of maturing: from being newborn and 'clean' to being mature and 'unclean'. It is significant that red graduates from the white forms to the deeply set black forms on an angle between these, expressing the gradual process of physical (and social) growth to maturity. Black, occupying the deepest set spaces, is correspondingly the most worked. Much effort goes into the gouging, shaping, and finishing of these spaces. They are the most worked of the three surfaces. This has relevance to the symbolism of black in general which corresponds to physical age, and social maturity. In short, the white tends to 'emerge' from the more deliberate carving of the red and black forms. In their application to the boards, the physical relationship of the three colours echoes Vakutan conceptions of the life cycle. In this, organisms pass
through a developmental process from being new, clean, and uncontaminated to becoming old, unclean, and decayed through an accumulation of contamination.

**Colour symbolism**

In many societies colour receives much attention. Symbolic associations are often given expression in colour. Whereas in some societies colours primarily represent bodily functions such as breastmilk, semen, blood, excrement, etc. the part played by colour in the evocation of meaning and the contrasting of various relationships in Vakutan thought is concerned overwhelmingly with stages of the life cycle: birth, youth, and age or death. The trajectory of the life cycle is not lineal in Vakutan conception. As elsewhere in the Trobriand Islands, Vakutans believe in the reincarnation of the dead through rebirth (Malinowski 1926b, 1932, 1948a:216-220, 1948c:126-138; Weiner 1977). This cyclical association of the colour triad is also reflected in the movement of the sun and moon. White is associated with day, black is associated with night, while red represents the transitions between them: day to night, and night to day (white to red to black to red to white ...).

Unlike other symbolic systems where colour features as an index to a set of biological states, white in Vakutan conception does not symbolise bodily secretions such as breastmilk and semen (Turner 1967). Rather, the meaning conveyed by white incorporates states of newness, or a kind of purity which only new things can have. White is associated with cleanliness, both physical and metaphoric. When things are white as opposed to black or red they are clean, new, and uncontaminated by dirt. Further, when things are 'clean' they are in the open (public), and thus are not dangeroud (day as opposed to night). For example, a white mwari (Kula arm shell) is considered clean and uncontaminated both physically and metaphorically. Its clean and 'glossy forehead' shows no record of use and it is thus considered uncontaminated by death resulting from competing desires to possess it. This is a reference to its lack
of 'history', in the Vakutan sense that a white mwari has not yet accumulated incidents which have involved the jealousies, desires, manipulations and death of men. It is said that with increasing age a mwari becomes coloured as it begins to accumulate its 'history'. Mwari with 'histories' are considered to be dangerous in that they cause death and competition for them. A white mwari, although undesirable to a Kula man in search of prestige and fame, is desirable from the perspective of a guaranteed safety in its handling. As it becomes more experienced in the hands of Kula men and begins to colour from being handled many times, its status changes and it becomes a more dangerous shell to acquire (Campbell 1983).

This theme is carried into other spheres of Vakutan social life. The whiteness attributed to a woman in her first pregnancy (igavau; see also Malinowski 1932:179-196) and to all newly born babies again symbolises newness and cleanliness in that they have not yet begun the process whereby they gain life experiences. A woman becomes socially recognised across generations through her biological productivity. At one level, this is a woman's prime social value. Until she has given birth for the first time, a woman is not an active generator of social 'history' except for her position within her matrilineal heritage. With her first offspring she begets her role in the continuation of social 'history', from which generations later she will be recalled as a generator of dala (sub-clan) solidarity. During a woman's first pregnancy several ceremonies are performed in which the colour white predominates (Malinowski 1932:179-196; Tambiah 1968:203). The emphasis is on making her as white as the infant she is carrying. This is symbolically equating her newness (in pregnancy) and her first birth with the infant who is itself a new being. Following a woman's first pregnancy she subsequently enters into the generation of her own 'history' and that of her offspring. Together they form a unique branch of the sub-clan. In the ceremonies performed during her first pregnancy she becomes symbolically clean and uncontaminated, in reference to the fact that until a woman begins to regenerate offspring into dala from a pool of baloma she has not yet produced persons who are
potential causes of distraction, contention, diversion, and competition. A newborn baby is fundamental to the symbolism of white. Not only is it physically 'white' at birth, but it also conceptually represents all that is symbolically evoked by the colour white. A newborn baby has no 'history'. In its newborn state it is innocent of the impurities generated by growth and the gradual accumulation of experiences which may be fraught with jealousies, contention, and competition.

Although white is presented in the above as a positive value, it sometimes assumes a negative connotation. The Kula armshell offers a good example. While the white mwari is considered pure, free of 'historical' contamination and all that implies, it remains low in value and unsought by experienced Kula participants. The ambiguity accruing from the evaluation of white stems from the undesirability generated by its positive, ahistorical associations. While people with light skin are more desirable as partners, because the 'whiteness' of their skin is said to be a sign of their 'safe' character. They are less likely to attract the jealousies of others; people with darker skins excite greater sexual response than light skin and are therefore more erotic. Darker skins are associated with danger and the excitement this affords, both in dreams and in reality. White, although pure, uncontaminated, and evoking feelings of security, does not necessarily evoke desirability.

Conceptually, white is not a permanent state. One must change from white to the other colours. To avert the accumulation of life experiences and consequent contamination is impossible. From birth the child gradually darkens in colour, becoming 'redder' upon entering youth. On Vakuta there are no age grades or initiation ceremonies based upon successive age stages. When a child becomes sexually active he or she can no longer be considered a child (gwadi). Sexually active adolescents instead become nakubukwabuya (female youth) or toulatile (male youth). Red is the colour associated with sexual attractiveness and excitement (see also Tambiah 1968 and Munn 1977). Red is used to symbolically represent
attraction and sexual desire. It is the colour which represents sexually active youth. The very red mouth of a nakubukwabuya or a toulatile produced by the continuous chewing of betel-nut is seen in the context of sexuality. Young unmarried women who are sexually available wear very short red skirts to attract partners. The abundance of red in these skirts advertises their willingness to accept small gifts initiatory to sexual adventure. Contrary to the attire of young unmarried girls, married women, except at certain ceremonial occasions where their attractiveness and sexuality is allowed expression, wear only drab coloured skirts at knee length. A red skirt would not be worn by a married woman on non-ceremonial occasions unless she were deliberately advertising her desire to redirect her sexual favours outside marriage. During the final stages of the mortuary cycle when women come to the foreground of the public arena and display their wealth and social position vis-à-vis other women (Campbell ndc; Weiner 1977), married and unmarried women alike dress in the attire of a young, sexually active adolescent girl in the prime of her sexual attractiveness. Very short dress skirts full of red colour, reddened mouths, red hibiscus flowers, and mature betel-nut (although a very bright yellow in reality, are conceptualised as red because of their narcotic strength), combine in the attire of these women who are displaying their wealth and social position as well as their sexual powers of attraction. A widow, at the end of her mourning restrictions during which she wore the black mourning pigments and went unbathed, is ritually cleansed and given a new red skirt cut short to symbolise her regained 'youth' and her license to participate in the competition for sexual partners.

In the classification of shell valuables red is the colour associated with the highest ranking and most desirable pieces. Although the redness of the mwari and the redness of the vaiguwa (Kula necklace) are measurements of quite different criteria at one level (Campbell 1983b), the consensus is that all shell valuables should be red, thus symbolising sexual desire. Mwari are described as male while vaiguwa are thought of as female. When a successful Kula keda (path) is operating the vaga (opening
transaction/attracter) and kudu (closing transaction/attracted) are described as married (Campbell 1983a). During their 'marriage' the redness (high rank) of one is continually attracting the redness (high rank) of the other, and between them, they are attracting others onto their path (keda). When the 'marriage' is broken, it is conceptually attributed to one of the shell valuable's attraction to another's redness. In this respect there is a conflation between high rank and sexual desirability in the classification of Kula shell valuables. When shells of either the armshell or necklace type begin in Kula circulation they are conceptually white. As they gain 'history' and desirability they also gain rank which is conceptually linked with the acquisition of red. This is particularly true of the highest ranking mwarikau. It seems that conidae, once they have had the epidermis removed, begin to form red striations or patina on the shell surface as it ages through handling. These striations are called ureri. New, non-striated shells entering into the classification system are placed into categories at the lower end of the hierarchy. As they age and develop red striations, they are revalued into the upper ranks as their desirability increases. Although spondylus shells do not 'gain' colour as they age, they do occur in variations of colour ranging from white-pink to a reddish-brown. The red shells are the most valued shells and reach the higher ranks of the classification system with an accumulation of exchange history.

Youth is an invigorating time of life in Vakutan conception. In youth one has a special power: the power of sexuality and sexual attractiveness. This is a very important value to all Vakutans. In many of the Kula myths old men are unable to attract Kula shell valuables to themselves until they shed their wrinkled, blackened skin for glossy red skin (Fortune 1963; Malinowski 1922, 1948:126-128; Young 1983a); making their sexuality again compelling so that the Kula shell valuables are 'thrown' their way by stunned and adoring Kula partners. However, as with the ambiguity in the contextual value of white, red too is incomplete. It is the old men of the myths who, having achieved the knowledge of how to shed their blackened skins, always get the best shell valuables even though
their sons' skins are red with youth. While youth displays the power of attraction due to physical beauty on the skin, which is ideologically a shiny red, mature men have the advantage of experience as well as the means by which knowledge is acquired and internalised. Weiner makes a similar point to this:

Each infant only becomes a social being as it claims ties with others beyond dala identity ... In life this process continues as the locus of power shifts through time from the power of one's physical self - the power of youth - to objects external to one's self. After marriage, the display of objects becomes more important and denotes a wider range of relationships than did the display of self. As one ages, one's own private individual power, such as knowledge of magic and land ..., grows inside one's body. (1977:225-226)

Munn also found similar distinctions between surface/youth and 'interiorized'/age as these were connected by Gawans to the symbolism of the canoe:

Whereas youths can impart vitality and light to the surface of the canoe, because the surfaces of their own bodies are "beautiful", a senior man can animate the canoe through verbal spells and associated operations, knowledge of which is thought to be stored inside the body. This interiorized knowledge gives the prowboards their exteriorized mobile attachments. In this respect we may note that it is senior men, not the young, who have influence in kula exchange, and perform the main kula spells. Just as their power derives from interiorized sources, so it extends further out in space than the power of the young. (1977:50)

Hence, while youth are admired for their external beauty which they 'wear on their skin' (a common form of praise amongst Vakutans) they nevertheless lack the experience and accumulated internalisation of power which marks the 'skin of maturity'.

Red is conceptually a transient colour between white and black. This is particularly expressed in the colour patterning on the outrigger canoe and its decorative boards. Generally there are no specific forms identified with red. Red colour is placed on lines which emphasise the white forms. The only exception to the predominance of white and black distinctive forms is the form called
karawa, or 'fern frond'. It is not an essential design. It only occurs in section 4 of the lagim or section 5 of the uuna tabuya and both areas are relatively unrestricted in design content. When this form does occur, however, it is always painted red. It is significant that where red has a specific connection to a unique form its representation is of the young fern frond which is said to be beautiful to look at: "It stands up straight all on its own showing its beauty. It is uncurled, but not yet weeping. It is at the height of strength".8

All three colours have ambiguous evaluations. While white and red, on the one hand symbolically evoke positive values, on the other they show negative valuation. Black, likewise, carries symbolic ambiguity. In some contexts black is associated with negative aspects of age, disease, and death, while in others it is positively valued for its representation of maturity, the possession of knowledge and the power associated with knowledge. The nature of these ambiguities needs some attention before an appreciation of the intricate interrelationship between the colours can be achieved.

Negative associations symbolically represented by black include impurity, disease, decay, and death. In the symbolism of Kula shell necklaces, black shells are associated with impurities and disease. The darker spondylus shell necklaces are said to be black and dull. They lack the lustre and gloss of the red discs which are the most highly valued (Campbell 1983b). Although the discs of an undesirable necklace are not in fact black but a ruddy-red, it is significant that they are said to be 'black' by discerning Kula men. It is thought that the original spondylus shell, from which the discs were formed, was somehow impure. It is said that the process of natural development in the shell somehow went askew, making it 'sick' and 'diseased', thus turning the shell from red to 'black'. This has particular reference to human disease and illness. Disease is thought to be caused by black blood that accumulates within the body. Bloodletting is practised extensively to release this impure and dangerous blood.
The association of black with disease is also made in the context of yams. Bwabwau, or black is a condition which describes a diseased yam, as opposed to a 'white', healthy yam (Malinowski 1935, Vol. 2:102). This distinction differentiates the internal condition of the tuber: healthy or diseased. Black, however, in the context of yams has a degree of ambiguity. 'Black' is also used to describe a mature yam ready for harvest. Malinowski reports a ceremony performed prior to harvest in which tum magic is performed to make all the tubers 'black' or ripe (1935, Vol. 1:168, 170-171):

The same word 'black' we have met in other contexts ... as 'bad', 'diseased' taytu [yam] as against pupwaka'u, 'white', 'good', 'healthy' taytu. In the one case the adjective refers to the surface of the taytu, in the other to its inside. (1935, Vol. 2:171)

This contrast between surface/black and internal/black finds expression in other contexts. Old people are said to have black skins. Before the ability to slough old, blackened skin for new glossy 'white' skin was lost, according to myth, it is believed that old people could, while bathing, remove their old skins and thus be rejuvenated again (Malinowski 1948c:127). In this context a connection between the 'blackened' skin of mature yams and the blackened skin of old people is evident. The internal condition of mature yams and mature people remains 'white', 'good', and 'healthy' underneath the black skin which can be removed. To be 'black' internally, however, is a different matter.

Black that accumulates internally causes disease, illness, and death. Sorcerers (bwagau) and witches (mulukwausi) are said to be black inside because their knowledge is black and knowledge is stored internally. The knowledge of those people who practise the black arts is one of the more common and effective means of causing illness and death. Hence, it is not surprising that it should be associated with black. Both sorcerers and witches practise at night; moonless nights being the most dangerous to the community because of the density of darkness which attracts these dangers. Widowed persons are also strongly associated with death because of
their closeness to the deceased. During mourning the widow/er remains smeared with black symbolising their closeness with death. Widowed people, however, are not 'black' internally, it is only their skins which are contaminated. The cleansing ceremony at the end of this particular mortuary sequence symbolically 'sloughs' the blackened skin of the widow/er, making it 'white', 'clean', 'desirable', and above all, 'new'.

Finally, black carries the weight of contamination and is, for this reason, highly dangerous. Old people are said to have become contaminated and thus blackened through an accumulation of personal histories riddled with associations with death, lies, contention, jealousies, etc. Because of their experiences the aged are targets for reprisals from sorcery or witchcraft, although they themselves may not be attacked by sorcerers or witches. While attacks are often made because of jealousy or outstanding disputes among old people, it is believed that witches particularly take as their victims surrogates. The offender is thought to suffer more by the innocent death of a child or wife/husband because of his/her deeds.

While it is obvious that black symbolises various negative conditions, it also implies a positive evaluation from a different perspective. While it is undesirable to lose one's youth, and the red, glossy appearance of this physiologically attractive stage of development, the accumulation of age together with a dulling and darkening of one's skin, also implies one's social maturity. People who are conceptually of darker hues, have also acquired knowledge, magic, and social status during the process of their maturing. Hence, although old people lack the power of sexual attraction inherent in youthful bodies, they have gained the experience and knowledge to outwit the younger generation as well as the magic to compel others to be attracted to them rather than to the 'beauty' of youth. This stage of social, as well as physical development, while being negatively valued on the one hand, is highly valued on the other for the accumulation of powers that go with maturity. Finally, although darkened skin heralds the eventual loss of life
because the power to rejuvenate was lost, death, according to
tradition, is the pre-requisite for entry to life on Tuma where
one's powers of attraction and sexuality are restored (Malinowski
1948a:149-274).
Notes: Chapter 7

1. Narubutal, in his brief article discussing the qualities of carvings held in the Papua New Guinea Art Gallery and Museum collection, described one lagim as being carved by a man who 'broke all the rules'. In particular, the 'paths' were not carved properly and, "... if an attempt were made to apply paint to this carving it would soon be discovered that it could not work. The artist has failed to create the proper paths that keep the white, red, and black paint apart." (1975:4).

2. Munn also argues for the specific primacy of colour patterning on Gawan canoe prows (1977:48-49). Indeed, there is a good deal of convergence between Gawan and Vakutan symbolic, conceptual, and aesthetic ideology.

3. See Jones and Meehan (1978), and Strathern and Strathern (1971) for their detailed analyses of colour terminology which includes hue, density, gloss, etc., and the significance of these to colour symbolism. See also Bulmer 1967; Conklin 1955; and Gell 1975.

4. In many languages the term for blood can often be associated with the term denoting red. In the Vakutan language the word for blood is buyai- and does not appear to have any semantic relationship to bweyani. Indeed, when asked, informants declined to make any association between blood and the colour red. Instead, white or black were the colours chosen as being most representative of the colour of blood.

5. In fact, a corpse becomes stiff and rigid before decomposing but Vakutans, when evoking the condition mwenogu, are referring to the loss of muscle tone in the body and the absence of healthy vigour otherwise present in live bodies.
6. The formal analysis of Northwest Coast Indian Art made by Holm demonstrates that their three colours, black, red, and blue-green are consistent with a hierarchy of form utilisation. Black is associated with 'primary formlines', red with 'secondary formlines', and blue-green with 'tertiary formlines' (1965:26-35).

7. According to Malinowski (and others following him) the mwari was female and the vaiguwa its male partner. The shape of the shell valuables would seem to reinforce this supposition. However, it is interesting to note that information from Vakuta and the lagoon area of Kiriwina points to the opposite being the case. The reasons given for this by informants are firstly that the mwari is generally worn by men and the vaiguwa by women; secondly that the relative ease of exchange of valuables reflects everyday relationships between men and women. For example, obtaining a mwari was likened to the day to day distribution of betel-nut between men; whereas obtaining the vaiguwa was likened to the far more difficult procedure of soliciting sex from women. It was easier to obtain mwari from Kitava than vaiguwa from Dobu. On Tubetube the male-female association of the shells corresponds to Malinowski's assertion (Macintyre 1983), while on Gawa and Muyuw the association is the same as Vakutan classification (Munn 1983:290-291, 306; and Damon 1978:85 fn).

8. This characterisation was made independently by Youwa of Wakwega hamlet, Ruguna and Kunabu of Kuweiwa hamlet, Vakuta village.
In preceding chapters the meaning communicated by Kula art remained in the background while more formal details concerning design construction and general aspects of colour symbolism were examined. My analysis concentrated upon the details of components used: form, representation, and colour association. I argued in Chapter 5 that the forms utilised on lagim and tabuya had significance for the overall meaning and communicative value of the carvings. In order to tease out this significance, a detailed analysis of the range of forms was necessary. Thus each form was isolated and viewed as a separate entity.

In Chapter 6 I discussed the representational meanings of the elements isolated in Chapter 5. With a discussion of the use of colour and the symbolic 'boundaries' associated within and between colours in Chapter 7, I completed an introduction of the various ways in which meaning is conveyed in the carved art associated with Kula. In the present Chapter I intend to integrate the separate discussions of Chapters 5, 6, and 7 so that a more comprehensive understanding of the graphic system may emerge.

The nature of Vakutan symbolism

The encoded meanings found in the carved art utilised in Kula are multi-dimensional. That is, meaning is not merely transmitted through the labels attached to a simple design form. The forms worked into the carved surface of the prow- and splash-boards receive further encoding of meaning by their organisation in relation to other forms, specific orientations, colour associations, and the multi-referential content of various representational components.

Visual symbolism is not structured to convey meaning in the way of a simple sentence made up of specific grammatical units. Meaning is built up by layer upon layer of associations which not only
cross-reference each other, but also project associations into the wider cultural framework, thus enriching the possibilities for interpretation. These possibilities and the range of associations refer to a specific set of referents in the wider context from which meaning is sought. It is the relationship between these wider associations which helps to define the conceptual order of a Vakutan world view. For example, the placement of form A3.2 in the central area of section 1 of a lagim marks a guideline for the formal patterning of other forms. It also implies a hierarchical relationship with reference to the placement of other forms (Chapter 5). When Vakutans attach to this form the representational component identified as a boi (egret), a new set of references are created which are concerned with this particular bird, its natural behaviour, and its cultural significance. The form, however, is not a passive receptacle of this new set of references. The form itself qualifies the representational component by the delineation of the boi's head, detailing its eye and beak. With the addition of colour, new referential associations are also generated.

The extent to which people are able to interpret the communicative elements on the boards varies. While a few go to some lengths to intellectualise the messages carved into the boards, others provide more limited interpretations. In general, however, most people only partially understand what is communicated by the design elements, focussing attention upon specific elements or sections. The connections between all elements and design units remain by and large unsought. Not all Vakutans know what is encoded by the design elements.

One exercise I undertook was to ask grade 3 (age 10-12 years) and grade 5 (age 12-14 years) school children to draw both a lagim and a tabuya, and to include in the drawings as much detail as possible. One of my aims was to assess the ways in which children perceive the formal properties that make up the lagim and tabuya. As regards the tabuya, none of the grade 3 children were able to reproduce the internal designs, while only two of the grade 5 children could make a reasonable attempt. The others, like their younger companions, filled the space within the general outline with a free use of forms. These correspond with the forms generally incorporated by all the
children within section 4 of the lagim. Section 4 of the lagim received the greatest and most detailed elaboration by all fifty-six children. The human figure in section 1 was always included. The remainder of section 1 and sections 2 and 3, however, were either left blank or received extensions of the designs drawn in section 4. This exercise demonstrated that those areas on the boards which are strictly patterned with specific forms, section 1, 2, and 3 on the lagim (none of the children incorporated section 5) and all the sections on the tabuya, are not perceived as clearly by school-aged children as section 4 where the carver is allowed a freer expression and combination of form. It also demonstrated that although they were unable to name the representations they were able to see that there are formal divisions on the boards which separate discrete sections.

Exegeses identifying and connecting representation, form, and colour are available for those villagers who ask. Solicited information, however, is not given at once. Bits of information are given casually and often imprecisely, so that one is obliged to equire at frequent intervals. In this way meaning is synthesised layer by layer, allowing considerable time for reflection and assimilation. For this process to be successful, however, cultural competence is an obvious prerequisite. For young people just learning about Vakutan natural history and indigenous taxonomy this task is all the more onerous. For them the interpretation and gradual decoding of the carvings is concurrent with their assimilation of other cultural knowledge. Mature people are at an advantage with their wider experience. Nevertheless, only a few Vakutans have pursued at length the relationship between form, representation, colour association, and meaning on the Kula outrigger canoe's prow- and splash-boards.

We may expect that minakabitam are most knowledgeable about the depth of meanings they carve into the boards. This is not necessarily the case, however. The majority of Vakutan carvers could verbalise only a limited range of representational elements. Generally they knew only the surface interpretations and were not interested in extrapolating these any further. One carver used only colour terminology to identify design elements. He was unwilling to give
me representational labels because, as he said, he was uncertain of them. Of the non-carvers there were several people, principally men, who were able to give considerable exegesis for the range of meanings encoded on the carved boards, while others showed little knowledge. Many individuals were only concerned that the boards were carved and painted correctly. It was presumed that, this being the case, the messages encoded would then be powerful enough to compel Dobuans and Kitavans to give up Kula shell valuables.

This chapter is divided into two parts to enable an exploration of the multi-dimensional meaning of the art carved for Kula. In the first part I will discuss each section of the tabuya and lagim in turn, taking into consideration orientation, the utilisation of form, delineation of representations, and the colour associations. In this way each section will be shown to contain unique information which encodes a specific range of meaning. In the second part of the chapter I will look at the units as inter-linked sets, forming a composition of meaning. It is my intention that this and the succeeding chapters gradually 'peel back' the layers of meaning so as to reveal the depth of what is encoded in the carved art and the ritual and preparatory activities of Kula.

Part I An analysis of lagim and tabuya sections

Tabuya – see Figure 10a and b, page 190.

Section 1

Section 1 of the tabuya contains specific reference to the osprey (buribwari, form A2.1). All other forms in this section are related to the body-parts of this bird of prey (B2.1 and B3.1). The tiny hermit crab (ginareu, form B2.1) is used to emphasise the eye and is also carved along the neck of the buribwari to hold the white pigment (Plates 7-11). The fact that this animal lives on the ocean beach is significant. The ocean beach is contrasted with the lagoon beach at several levels of differentiation, one of which associates the ocean beach with the transition between domesticated space (land and lagoon) and wild, uncontrolled space (the open sea). The significance of
kaidada (form B3.1) in section 1 concerns its association with 'coming first'. This is related to the competition between Vakutan men to 'come first' in Kula by attaining the most valuables. At a more abstract level, the association of the kamkokola and kaidada with a dead person has relevance to the promotion of men as individuals through Kula activity (see Chapters 9 and 10).

The importance of section 1 on the dogina tabuya and the animal represented has already been discussed at length in Chapter 6. To reiterate briefly, the osprey or buribwari is considered one of the most important animals represented on the carvings. This fish-eating bird personifies qualities highly valued on Vakuta: it 'works' with precision; it 'knows' the necessary behaviour for its livelihood; it strikes only at the right time. In this way it always succeeds in catching its prey. To Vakutans the buribwari embodies the magic of success. Although the buribwari is also represented on the uma tabuya, its place on the dogina tabuya is the most significant. Emphasis is continually placed on the temporal and spatial position of the dogina tabuya with reference to buribwari. It always 'goes first'; it is the first board placed on the masawa, it lands first on the beach, it is conceived as the first thing that the hosts see upon the arrival of the Kula crew, and, if the magic works, the buribwari will make it possible for the crew, in competition with the other crews of the fleet and individuals in competition with other individuals, to 'come first' in the successful acquisition of Kula valuables.

It is no coincidence that the dogina tabuya, the board which is thought to embody the essence of the buribwari, is ritually anointed on the ocean beach, Kadabomato, prior to its insertion on the canoe (Chapter 9). The osprey is known to sit in the tops of trees (the dogina of the tree) along the ocean beach waiting for the right moment to fall upon its prey. The ocean beach is a transitional space between the opposing elements, land and sea. This tripartite relationship is conceptual rather than actual. People neither leave nor enter the land from the sea via the ocean beach, hence it is not a transitional space relevant to coming and going. Rather, the ocean
beach represents a mediation between two opposing conceptual realms. The significance of this relationship will be discussed in greater detail in Chapters 9 and 10.

Section 2

The central theme of section 2 on the tabuya is the head and all that this body-part signifies. According to Vakutan conceptualisation the head is the part of the body which generates wisdom, knowledge and intelligence. The head is counterpoised with the stomach/chest (nanoula), which is thought to generate emotion, belief, and volition.

Intelligence is signified by the doka (form A3.4) and reinforced by the hermit crab design (B2.1). As in section 1, the body-parts represented are all connected to the head (i.e. eye, beak, and neck). One carver said, "We carve the doka because it thinks, we carve its head. The rest of it [the form] is like a snake" (Youwa, Wakwega hamlet, Vakuta village). Even forms B2.1 and B3.1 become doka when combined around an 'eye' design thus: \[ \text{(O)} \]. This configuration of line is often called doka when connected to a doka 'head'. Unlike the head representation of the buribwari which is thought to specify a particular kind of wisdom embodied only in the osprey and is a model of what Vakutan men would like to achieve, the doka head represents achievable human intelligence and human rational knowledge. Whereas the buribwari's wisdom is sustained by magic which is internalised, human intelligence is achieved by an active mind. There is a semantic difference here between wisdom on the one hand, and intelligence on the other.

Vakutans believe that the buribwari's sagacious behaviour is sustained by his embodied knowledge and experience. The buribwari is beyond failure because he embodies the magic of perpetual success. The knowledge thought to be possessed by the buribwari, together with his perceived success, is the ultimate goal of Vakutan men. Vakutan men try to achieve this level of knowledge and wisdom through internalising kabitam magic. The substance of this magic is said to impart absolute knowledge to its recipient. Theoretically then, as with the buribwari, a tokabitam carver does not need to 'think' about
the designs and forms he will carve on the prowboards. Because of the magic, and the wisdom it imparts, a carver is said to be compelled to pick up his tools, allowing the designs, patterning and form to 'flow' from his mind through his hand and eye. The knowledge is thought of as spilling forth. In reality, however, a tokabitam does make mistakes. It can also be observed that some are better than others in the execution of their carvings. At times a carver finds that the inspiration and 'knowledge' does not 'flow' readily, and so he must resort to magic in an effort to regain the 'flow'. After chewing magically prepared betel-nut, the carver returns to his work. The buribwari, however, never needs to regain faltering knowledge. The buribwari is, according to belief, knowledge personified.

While men rarely achieve the wisdom of the buribwari they can reach a certain level of intelligence and this is represented by the doka. The word doka is morphologically similar to the verb -doki, to think. The relationship between the noun doka and the verb -doki was pointed out to me by one informant when I asked him about the meaning of the word. Men can think and assimilate experience and knowledge for future use. A man can think out the ways by which he can attract a woman, make a successful garden, or persuade a Kula partner to give up a shell valuable. A man can rationally calculate the effect of specific behaviour and modify it accordingly so as to achieve the thing desired. Whereas man, as he is represented by the doka, must think and thereby employ all the knowledge gleaned through experience before he acts to achieve specific goals, the ideal, as represented by the buribwari, need not think but simply acts as a response to internalised knowledge or wisdom. This is the subtle yet significant difference between the encoded messages of section 1 and section 2 on the tabuya.

Doka is not a real animal. It is a concept which is given special classification in accordance with the other animals associated with kabitam.
The forms (B2.1 and B3.1) which occur within the central area of section 2 are to hold the lime. No doubt this is the practical function of these forms, but the choice of certain forms and the representations associated with them are not made at random. There is some relationship between these seemingly peripheral forms and the symbolic content within which they are placed. For example, the hermit crab (form B2.1) is not only an animal which inhabits the transitional space between land and sea, it is also a carnivorous scavenger, feeding upon decaying corpses; a characteristic shared with the greatly feared flying witches.

Section 3

The animal that is represented in section 3 is the kapaiyauwa or bat. An outsider looking at this section on the tabuya may find it hard to identify the representation of a bat. A Vakutan, however, would have less difficulty (Plates 7-11). These differences in the perception of design representation stem from different expectations from the schema. Different schematic forms are used by diverse conceptual frameworks to convey varied cultural ideologies. Within a Vakutan conceptual framework the schematic representation of a bat (that is, the abstraction of its 'real' form into a 'meaningful' form) elucidates its value according to an indigenous ideology. On the tabuya it is the head, wings, and tail which are given schematic representation. To begin to understand the meaning of this design we must ask ourselves what value these particular body-parts possess.

As is the buribwari, the bat is thought to be exceedingly wise. This is exemplified by its nocturnal flight. Other animals can fly, but they are aided by the light of day. They can see where they are going, whereas the bat is thought to know. It could be argued that there are other nocturnal animals which fly in the dark, but these do not compare to the agility of the kapaiyauwa. Mageaweda, or the flying fox (Pteropus conspicillatus?) is disdained for its heavy, lumbering flight as well as its appetite for fruit which it 'steals' from the gardens. The owl, too, is a heavy flier, demonstrating much less agility than the bat.
Although the insectivorous bat is classified with birds, insects, and other animals that fly, this bat is recognized as having special skills. It has exceptional agility in flight, it bears and suckles live young, and it prefers night rather than the day to pursue its hunting activity.

The colour of the kapaiyauwa is another quality much admired by Vakutans. Vakutan colour aesthetics focuses upon 'strong' colour. This does not simply mean that the saturation of a colour gives it its 'strength'. 'Strength' is also perceived in a spatially dominant colour. An area of colour cannot, however, be too large. It must always be in correct proportion to the surrounding colour and forms. Nevertheless, when a colour is in perfect harmony within its graphic environment yet is allowed a relatively larger space, the aesthetic appreciation of the colour is always remarked upon by observers.

The black of the kapaiyauwa design also conveys meaning. Whereas the buribwari carries the magic and associations of success in Kula, the black of the kapaiyauwa could be said to represent malevolent magic: the magic that older men possess, and the magic of sorcery, bulubwalata. A comparison of the colour scheme of sections 1 and 3 shows that section 1 only contains the colours white and red whereas section 3 is predominantly black (Plate 7).

I argued in Chapter 7 that red is the colour of youth, a colour that is 'visible' on the surface (skin) of youth. Black, on the other hand, is symbolically expressive of age. Older men, during the process of maturation, accumulate and monopolise magic which affects society at large. This magic can be invoked for benevolent or malevolent purposes. For example, the magic of imparting speed to your canoe also decreases the speed of others: making your yam garden more fertile decreases the fertility of others. Knowing magic which is thought to affect rain, drought, winds, and other elements can be used to ill effect. Sorcery is yet another magic controlled by older men. Men only acquire this kind of magic by also gaining age and social maturity which, at the same time, necessitates the loss of 'glossy red' from their young bodies. The loss of visual beauty and its associated power heralds the onset of
a condition which enables the accumulation of internalised power, ageing. In the form of knowledge, experience, 'history', and magic (other than love and beauty magic) older men lay claim to sources of power not available to young men. All of this is represented by the colour black. The black of the kapaiyauwa, an animal sometimes employed by sorcerers to administer their magic, is carved on the tabuya in section 3 to represent the more malevolent role of magic carried in Kula. Its position in section 3, behind the buribwari and doka, helps to diffuse the full impact of associations with bulubwalata (black magic) and thus avoid arousing recriminatory attacks by their hosts. It is carved behind the buribwari who is 'seen' first by the hosts to a Kula expedition, tucked under the 'glossy' white and red of the magic of attraction.

The other forms in this section are related to the bat in that they not only provide details of the body, such as the eye (B1.1), but also reinforce other body-part designs (B2.1 and B3.1). Of particular note is the eye (form B1.1) carved in the main part (head) of the bat design. The eye is emphasised by curvilinear triangles thus:

\[ \text{Diagram of eye design} \]

While this is commonly said to be the bat's eye, it is alternatively referred to as its teeth. Eyes are the route by which experience and information are gained by the mind (intelligence) and the chest (emotion), while teeth evoke notions of securing, fastening, or clinching. These body-parts, together with speech and surface beauty, are essential elements to successful Kula.

Section 4

This section is distinct from the others because within it carvers are allowed a greater latitude for their creative initiative. Whereas in other sections the forms and their representational contents must occur in prescribed patterns, the focus of section 4 is on the creative ability of each carver. While symbolic associations are generally tied to various forms, in the context of section 4 these become
disassociated so that the carver is relatively free to arrange the forms in his own way (c.f. Plates 7-11). Further, the purpose of this section is to differentiate the uuna from the dogina and this is primarily done by structural alterations to the boards (see Chapter 5).

Of particular note in section 4 is the area immediately below the head of the buribwari in section 1 on the dogina tabuya:

![Diagram of the area](image)

This area is always painted black and usually contains a circle (form B1.1) picked out in white. This area is simply referred to as kala kaivau or 'its black pigment', and the white circle is its eye (malata vau or 'eye of the black'). The association is, I think, with age and the systems of magic that are controlled by older men. Although I was told that the magical bundle of herbs placed under the 'nose' of the dogina tabuya is associated with the buribwari, I think it no coincidence that it is also just below the black area of section 4, an unambiguous marker of the dogina tabuya. Other forms which may feature in this section include forms A2.1, A3.5, many of the B forms, as well as forms C6 and C7.

Section 5

As with section 4, section 5 of the tabuya is an area which distinguishes the dogina from the uuna tabuya. Section 5, however, is not as unambiguous a marker as section 4. Whereas the distinguishing features of section 4 are in the shaping of the section, in section 5 the difference is in the design. On the dogina tabuya form C1 must be placed in section 5. The corresponding section on the uuna tabuya, however, has freer associations,
depending upon the preferences of the artist. Often form Cl is also carved in section 5 of the uuna tabuya but it carries less significance here than in its place on the dogina tabuya.

Although section 5 contains several heterogeneous forms, the entire complex of designs carved on the dogina tabuya is perceived by Vakutans as one unit. Form Cl can be analysed as being, in a formal sense, made up of several distinct forms (distinct in that some of the forms have separate values in other contexts). Within the context of section 5 of the dogina tabuya, however, the value of these separate elements is combined to form a specific unit (Cl).

The principal theme incorporates the weku (mythical animal). Except for category B forms, which characteristically illuminate the 'white' areas of the design, the forms carved here must occur on the dogina tabuya. Featured centrally is the black form, Cl. This form is elaborated by the surrounding red and white, while another white form (A3.4) is added to the end. The entire complex is illustrated below:

Much has already been said about the animal representations of the B forms and the same applies to their representation in section 5. These designs are conceived as belonging to the white forms of category A. Their animal representations again relate to the specific design characteristics which these animals display: i.e. roundness, bilateral half-circles, straight wood, etc. The other two forms, however, do not occur in any other part of the Kula carvings and are specifically confined to this section of the dogina tabuya.
There is no animal association for form Cl. When asked, people would generally say that it is only kala kaivau or "its black pigment". Occasionally kala kwaisaru (its burnt coconut husk) would be given as the form's name, but I think this refers more to the pigment made from charred fibres of the coconut husk, which when mixed with oil makes a black paint. This paint mixture is also used for face paint (soba), a cosmetic for beautifying the face (see Malinowski 1932:250). In the past burnt coconut husk fibre, the flesh of young coconuts and coconut oil were mixed and the pigment painted on a baby's fontanelle to protect it from the dampness (numila) and wind (yagila). These were thought to be potentially dangerous to a baby's head, making the child crazy or 'soft-headed'. The rounded end of the form is called 'its nose' (kabulula) which in some contexts is a euphemism for penis (kwila). The colour associated with form Cl is invariably black, although the design is echoed by the surrounding red and white 'layers'. It is to the black, however, that Vakutans point when discussing the design. The black contains the aesthetic appeal of this design.

A mythological animal (form A3.4) is represented at the far end of the tabuya. This animal is called weku and is most often described as a small black bird. Several informants claimed that this animal really exists and that they had actually heard it calling in the bush. It always succeeds in disappearing, however, whenever one finally stumbles upon the place from which the call was thought to have emanated. The weku has thus remained unseen by anyone. Its 'work' is unknown and the ancestors' reasons for choosing it for representation in the kabitam repertoire is a mystery to contemporary commentators. Because of the scanty information concerning this animal, only a rudimentary interpretation can be attempted of its symbolic significance. Although the animal is said to live at sea (in which case it could either be a 'fish' or a 'bird'), its 'song' is heard in the forest whence people venture in the hopes of catching a glimpse of it. There is either a contradiction here concerning the habitat of the animal or its realm is inclusive of sky, sea, trees, and/or forest ground. It may be significant that its 'voice' is not only 'heard' but also entices its listener to seek it out.
A voice, if beautiful according to Vakutan standards, is associated with eroticism and the enticement of one of the opposite sex. Malinowski records, "As the natives put it: "The throat is a long passage like the wilå (cunnus) and the two attract each other. A man who has a beautiful voice will like women very much and they will like him"." (1932:478). When asked what was important about weku, nearly all informants were ambiguous about its habitat, 'work', and colour, yet all spoke of the attraction of its voice. It would seem that the significance of the weku and its place within the kabitam repertoire stems from its voice. The quality and effect it has of attracting people to it is a desirable characteristic to be utilised by Kula men (see also Scoditti 1977).

The colour patterning of section 5 is also relevant to understanding the encoded meaning. Black is the innermost colour both two- and three-dimensionally (the black area is carved deeper into the wood than the surrounding red). Red pigment is applied between the white and black spaces to an area which is carved deeper than the white yet not as deep as the black space. White is the surface colour, the colour with which people begin life. The colour patterning in section 5 seems to be in accordance with Vakutan conceptions of the temporal passage of things: from new to old, unripe to mature, innocence to corruption, uncontrolled to controlled (see Chapter 7).

The uuna tabuya can have the kwaisaru/weku design complex in section 5 or it can have other designs (Plates 10 and 11). The choice of motif depends upon the individual carver. If the kwaisaru/weku designs are not included on the uuna tabuya the most usual forms found on Vakutan boards are A2.2 (minutoula) or A3.4 (doka).

In summary, the tabuya features several representations that are concerned with success (buribwari), flight (kapaiyauwa), effective magic (kapaiyauwa and buribwari), the power of attraction (weku), and wisdom (buribwari and doka). Other elements which reinforce these major themes include representations from spatial oppositions (land versus sea), and individual fame (kaidada).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Form</th>
<th>Colour</th>
<th>Body-part</th>
<th>Animal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A1.1</td>
<td>white with red repetition</td>
<td>neck</td>
<td>doka</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A2.1</td>
<td>white with red repetition</td>
<td>head, beak, and neck</td>
<td>buribwari</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A2.2</td>
<td>white with red repetition</td>
<td>wings</td>
<td>minutoula</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A3.4</td>
<td>white</td>
<td>head, beak, eye</td>
<td>boi/doka</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A3.5</td>
<td>white</td>
<td></td>
<td>weku</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B1.1</td>
<td>white</td>
<td>eye</td>
<td>duduwa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B1.3</td>
<td>white, red, and black</td>
<td></td>
<td>duduwa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B2.1</td>
<td>white</td>
<td></td>
<td>ginareu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B2.2</td>
<td>white</td>
<td></td>
<td>dodoleta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B3.1</td>
<td>white</td>
<td></td>
<td>kaidada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C1</td>
<td>black</td>
<td>nose (penis)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| C3    | black                    | head, wings, teeth, tail, chest | kapaiya
| C6    | black                    |                             |         |
| C7    | black                    |                             |         |
| C10   | black                    |                             |         |

Figure 10a. Tabuya section.

Figure 10b. Form, representation, colour, and body-part terminology of the tabuya.
Lagim - see Figure 11a and b, page 199.

Section 1

Section 1 of the lagim is contained within form A1.2. The elements that are contained within this form appear to be numerous (Plates 12-16). They are in fact limited, and are arranged according to specific orientations. A single 'scroll' unit is linked to form a 'chain' thus: \\

These are found curved around the two lobes:

The background form that emerges on either side of the 'scroll' is C6. Along the outer ring these are usually coloured red, while the inner ring, which is in fact carved through (leaving holes) is conceptually 'black'. Labels attached to form C6 are kala kaivau (its black pigment), and kala kaimalaka (its red pigment). The main function of this area is the provision of a structure to fasten rows of buna shells (ovula ovum) onto the lagim (Plate 6).

The most important animals in section 1 are the boi/doka (form A3.2), doka (form A3.4), and the tokwalu figure (A5). These are located in the central area of section 1 and, indeed, are the visual focus of the entire board. The tokwalu bridges the gap between section 2 and 3, complementing the tension created by the restricting form A1.2 (Chapter 5). Associated with this area are the head, eye, and beak (mouth) of the boi. Under this animal's beak is the doka (form A3.4). While the buribwari is the principal animal of the tabuya, it is the boi together with the tokwalu who assume the principal position on the lagim. There is a difference, however, between the derived 'power' of these two animals. Whereas the buribwari stands perched alone on the tabuya, the boi is always associated with doka on the lagim.
The boi is considered a wise animal, but unlike the buribwari, it needs to recharge its 'wisdom' through the use of magic. "It strikes wisely and gets its fish. When the boi misses, it goes into the forest and performs its kaimwasila magic." It then returns to the water and resumes fishing" (a recurring statement from informants). In this regard, the boi is likened to men. Men also have to perform magic in order to succeed at their work. A tokabitam has to resort to 'refresher' magic if, when carving, he finds it hard for the design to 'flow' from his mind through his hands. Like the boi, a carver thus afflicted goes off to the forest and prepares a particular kaimwasila. He then swallows it and returns to the village to resume his work. The conceptual likeness between the boi and mankind is given symbolic persuasion by their close proximity on the lagim; both inhabit the upper, central space of the lagim in section 1. The positions of 'mankind' and the boi are bolstered by the close proximity of the doka design; the form which signifies wise thought. In a kind of ironic twist, the representations of the boi and 'mankind' are given special magic by the human captain or carver to destroy the crew should they prove fallible and endanger the outrigger canoe (see Chapter 9).

The tokwalu figure represents humanity and is associated with the 'head' of the lagim. Informants would sometimes discuss the lagim according to body-parts, pointing to the 'tokwalu in the head' of the lagim. It is tempting to make an association here, based on the reference of this area to 'the head', with the reincarnation of baloma as waiwaiya (foetus) from the Island of the Dead (Tuma). One version of native belief was that the waiwaiya entered the vagina via the head of the prospective mother. Blood then rushed to the head and upon this the foetus was carried to the womb where it developed (Malinowski 1932:149). As regards the tokwalu, it is possible that at one level the figure represents a reincarnated ancestor at the head of a dala woman waiting to be carried to the womb. Since much of the symbolism of Kula is concerned with men engaged in the reproduction of male wealth through their relationships with male partners, it would not be altogether surprising if the representation of the tokwalu, at the 'head' of the lagim, communicated these notions (see Chapters 9 and 10).
Although the forms of section 1 are often unseen owing to the decoration of buna shells, they must be there. The theme of section 1 is connected to the human mind and the process of thinking which, not being infallible, must be reinforced by magic. Mankind in various mythological events lost many of his previous powers, powers such as rejuvenation (Malinowski 1922:307-311 and 322-326; also Young 1983:383-394), and the knowledge of how to make a canoe fly (Malinowski 1922:311-321). Trobriand Islanders recall in myth how these capacities were lost through human error. It seems then that section 1 of the lagim recollects these 'mistakes' in Vakutan mythological memory. In this sense mankind remains innocent and vulnerable (white), devoid of the heroics of the mythological past which saw men rejuvenate, make their canoes fly, and acquire all the wealth (red) of others. Jealousies growing out of this (black) resulted in the death of the 'wise' and the subsequent loss of their knowledge. White is the predominant colour of section 1 with a mere hint of red and black to balance the section both visually and semantically.

Sections 2 and 3

Sections 2 and 3 of the lagim, although visually differentiated, are motivated by the same basic form. These two sections are both composed by an external line with internal elaborations which are all based upon the simple 'volute'. The internal signification focuses upon the boi, again the dominant animal, while other designs take their cue from it:
This design is also called doka. We recall from section 1 that the boi and doka are associated in design placement and that conceptually the boi (and humanity) relies upon the doka (thought) for its 'power' to succeed at whatever goal it sets itself. Although all other forms have individual labels, in sections 2 and 3 they tend to take on the name of the main design; in this case, that of the boi/doka. 10

The designs of these sections are all associated with the head, eye, and beak. This again reflects the value Vakutans place on this region of the body. It is the face which is the visual focus of beauty and the key to potential power in the sense that others cannot refuse that which is desired by a beautiful face. It is said that beauty stuns, and in this way succeeds in attracting wealth, fame, and immortality. Another important part of the head region are the eyes. Eyes are the seat of desire as well as the means by which one enchant's one's partners. The mouth controls the magic one possesses. Words must always be spoken if mwasila magic (as opposed to kaimwasila which relies on vegetable matter) is to be effective. Before a man dies he instructs his relatives to gag his mouth to stop the magic from coming out, thereby avoiding possible harm to the living. 11 The head is the container of all acquired knowledge and the place where kabitan wisdom is formulated. 12

Although these two sections are visually very different, they are, upon close examination, conceptually identical. The visual differentiation is created by the different treatment of the central portion of the design (compare Frontispiece and Plates 12-16). In section 2, the design orientation retains the upper level white design together with the series of forms which regularly feature here (category B forms). Section 3, on the other hand, replaces the white with a black form (reminiscent of form C7). This completely alters the visual impact of these two sections. As has been described for other large blocks of black pigment (tabuya sections 3 and 5), section 3 of the lagim provides an aesthetically pleasing design while at the same time making a semantic connection with the colour black:
As well as the internal structuring and design patterning, the circumscribing form itself has meaning. The entire form is called beba, or butterfly. The larger lobe is called beba kaiveka - 'the big butterfly', the smaller lobe beba kaikekita - 'the small butterfly'. With the butterfly in mind, informants would talk about these sections in terms of the lagim's 'wings', or 'arms'. Like the flight of the bat, butterfly aerodynamics are a desirable characteristic which the canoe should attempt to emulate. The lightness of the butterfly is also important (see kaygagabile spell in Malinowski 1922:130).

Section 4

Section 4 of the lagim is unlike all other sections of the outrigger canoe carvings. There are no fixed design representations, nor any rules of design patterning. Although there is a set corpus of forms available for use by kabitam carvers in section 4, within certain constraints these can be organised in any way which suits the individual artist. Of course each carver organises the forms in such a way as to fit into patterns which accord with Vakutan aesthetics in general, but these are much less rigid than the patterns that must appear in other sections. When an observer looks at various lagim, he or she will see that carvings' surfaces appear different from each other. This is due to the variations of section 4. The eye tends to ignore similarity and concentrates on the differences between carvings. This is in keeping with ideas of individual identity and the Trobriand perception that no one 'looks' like anyone else (c.f. Malinowski 1932:173-178). When one carver
challenges another for 'copying' his style the discussion and comparison between 'stolen' designs is centred upon section 4 only. Because all other sections on the tabuya and lagim are conceived according to standardised rules of design patterning and animal representation, these areas are not even brought into the argument as 'evidence' for the theft of one's designs.

In section 4, the variation in animal representation is considerable. Carvers tend to group forms schematically to represent animals they wish to carve. On the other hand, forms may be patterned to conform to how an individual carver has been taught to organise design units. Nevertheless, there is generally some degree of variation from an instructor's patterns. Further, a carver may label the patterns he carves in section 4 differently on separate occasions. In other cases, carvers cannot or do not want to label their designs, in which case they are simply referred to by their pigment terms. Usually the animals chosen as labels are birds and fish (or creatures associated with water, such as frogs).

Another interesting variation from the other sections is in the body-parts represented. Although heads, eyes, mouth, and so on, continue to be represented, the most significant body-part of section 4 is the chest. Indeed, the area of the lagim occupied by section 4 is commonly referred to as the 'chest of the lagim'. The chest is an important part of the body in that it is where the emotional centre of consciousness is located. Within the 'chest' of the lagim the chests of specified animals also occur.

It will be noticed that unlike other sections, the largest proportion of category C forms can be found in section 4. This is because there is greater freedom to utilise space in various ways, placing category A forms into varying configurations and allowing category C forms to emerge. Again, it is significant that category C forms occur more frequently in the 'chest' of the lagim. Previously it was noted that large areas of black are 'good' to look at, offering a degree of balance to the predominance of white forms. It should also be recalled that the colour black is conceptually associated with men past their physical prime, those who have lost
the surface beauty but who are nevertheless strong, influential, and in control of power through the magic acquired during the passage from physical beauty in youth to social maturity in age. Section 4 of the lagim represents the kabitam carver who, past his youth, possesses the magic of carving. Section 4 identifies the tokabitam who carved it.

In conclusion, section 4 has a major role to play on the kabitam carvings. Firstly, it is important in identifying particular 'schools' of carving knowledge as well as the individual creativity of specific carvers. Creativity, although conforming to acceptable parameters of design application, is a further mark of an individual carver's more potent internalised carving magic as it compares to other kabitam carvers. As with the aesthetic value of dense black, here too the 'density' of internalised magic, signified by a carver's ability to balance creative innovation while at the same time retaining acceptable relationships between forms, is valued and respected.

Section 5

Section 5 is not an essential part of the Kula carving complex and is often excluded. The choice of whether to include section 5 of the lagim is entirely left to the carver. If a carver decides to incorporate it, however, there are two ways in which it should be oriented.

One 'style' of incorporating section 5 uses a relatively realistic representation of a snake either consuming a bird or, more simply, left on its own. On occasion, the 'snake' was identified as a gecko or other type of lizard. This distinction, however, does little to alter the semantic intention. Most reptiles are conceptually classified as animals that inhabit domains under as well as on top of the ground (see also Malinowski 1927a:110 regarding 'animals of the below'). This conceptualisation is related to the origin myths prevalent in the area as well as to beliefs in ancestral spirits residing underground (Tuma) who periodically return to terrestrial haunts on certain occasions and
for reincarnation. It is significant that reptiles, particularly snakes, periodically shed their skins. This act is thought to represent a snake's reincarnation. It is also of interest to note that the reptile in the carving is usually in the process of consuming a bird, a creature 'of the above' (Malinowski 1927a:110).

The second choice of design content for section 5 is the 'little butterfly', beba nakekita. This is incorporated into form A1.2 which is a repetition of the outline of section 1. On the 'little butterfly' the form is repeated in red, then black. The 'fern frond' (form A2.2) creates visual cohesion as two of them meet in the centre, curving around then under and finally ending in the doka pattern (form A3.4, see Plate 8). In this section several visually related volute forms are carved. There is also a degree of semantic parallel between the various volute forms. Flight and speed together with knowledge and creative thought are the main themes of this section. This section contains in microcosm the most important elements to successful Kula.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Form</th>
<th>Colour</th>
<th>Body-part</th>
<th>Animal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A1.2</td>
<td>white with red repetition</td>
<td>mouth</td>
<td>karawa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A1.3</td>
<td>white with red repetition</td>
<td>head/eye and beak</td>
<td>dodoleta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A2.2</td>
<td>white with red repetition</td>
<td>head/body eye and beak</td>
<td>boi/doka</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A3.1</td>
<td>white</td>
<td>head with eye and beak</td>
<td>sawila</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A3.2</td>
<td>white with red repetition</td>
<td>head, neck, and beak - wing/arm</td>
<td>doka</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A3.3</td>
<td>white</td>
<td>entire body</td>
<td>beba, boi/doka</td>
</tr>
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<td>white</td>
<td>eye</td>
<td>tokwali</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A4</td>
<td>white, red, and black</td>
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<td>duduwa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A5</td>
<td>white, red and black</td>
<td></td>
<td>ubwara</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B1.1</td>
<td>white</td>
<td></td>
<td>ginareu</td>
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<tr>
<td>B1.2</td>
<td>white and red</td>
<td></td>
<td>dodoleta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B1.3</td>
<td>white, red and black</td>
<td></td>
<td>kaidada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B2.1</td>
<td>white</td>
<td>head/eye</td>
<td>boi, doka, or weku</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B2.2</td>
<td>white</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B3.1</td>
<td>white</td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C9</td>
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</table>

Figure 11a. Lagim sections.

Figure 11b. Form, representation, colour, and body-part terminology of the lagim.
Part II  The meaning of the kabitam carvings

In the preceding pages the range of encoded messages within each section has been discussed. My intention was to peel back semantic layers so as to reveal further meanings encoded within the carved surfaces of the boards. Although individual elements have meaning and these can be represented in isolation, the significance of these meanings must finally be understood in the context of the interrelated sections which comprise a tabuya and a lagim. In Chapters 5, 6, and 7 form, representation, and colour were isolated so as to aid in the presentation of the basic framework within which various meanings and relationships are encoded. In so doing, however, the continuity and integration of a wider range of encoded meaning was compromised. In this chapter I have attempted to redress this by discussing the various elements in conjunction with their orientation within the environments delineated by the sections. It now remains to take an even broader perspective so that a clearer view of the relationship between the elements emerges.

The repertoire is composed of a variety of visual components (form and colour) which are ordered variously according to structural principles of design organisation: dimension (deepest, middle, surface), sections, and repetitions. The corpus of forms, however, is finite. The limitations are prescribed by Vakutan principles for generating form which must ultimately comply with a Vakutan style. The forms, however, do not exist in isolation. Most of them have associations. These are generally derived from the familiar animals and plants within the Vakutan environment. The range of possible animals or plants to represent, however, is virtually infinite. Thus we have a finite corpus of forms to which are attached labels derived from an almost infinite number of animals and plants. Questions arising from this dichotomy are, what is the relationship between a form and the animal chosen to define it, and, are the animals simply labels for the forms or can it be demonstrated that there is a symbolic relationship between the two? It is to these questions that I now turn.
There are three kinds of design units used in Kula carvings (I refer here, and subsequently, to the combination of form, animal, colour, and body-part as a design unit). The distinction is based upon a differing complexity of meaning and partially corresponds to the three divisions of form outlined in Chapter 5 (i.e. versatile, restricted, and fixed).

The first type of design unit is based upon a highly motivated relationship between the form, its animal association, colour, and body-part representation. These design units communicate multiple layers of information, triggering the complex cross-referencing mechanisms of the receivers who are socialised to be able to interpret, or make 'meaningful' the encoded messages. The animals associated with these forms suggest particular kinds of information which in turn communicates further layers of symbolic meaning. The identification of an animal and its association with a form is but one step towards understanding richer layers of symbolic content.

Examples of these kinds of design units are the boi/doka, buribwari, kapaiyauwa, weku, and tokwalu. While the majority of forms associated with these representations are from category A (the versatile forms), two are not. Kapaiyauwa and weku are associated with forms from category C (the fixed forms).

Much has already been said about the multiple meanings encoded in these design units. In the succeeding chapters, too, further levels of meaning will be discussed as we dig deeper into the various conceptualisations Vakutans make. In anticipation, a brief exposition of one of these design units will serve to illustrate here the sense in which I mean that these design units represent multiple layers of information.

The representation of a bat in section 3 of the tabuya calls to a Vakutan mind (whether conscious or unconscious) the following basic characteristics: it possesses admirable flight capabilities, it is a creature of the night, and it bears live young. But why should these be of value for inclusion in the kabitam repertoire?
In the flying canoe myth of Kitava, first reported by Malinowski (1922:311-321) and similar to two texts I recorded on Vakuta, men lose the ability to make their canoes fly by the inopportune slaying of the only man who knew the magic. It is obvious from the myth and from contemporary accounts, both in magic and in deed, that Vakutans consider a truly successful canoe in Kula is one which is capable of flight. If a canoe were able to fly it would not only be possible to avoid the inherent dangers of the sea, but it would also arrive at its destination before other canoes. Following the murder of their brother the sisters flew away in anger, the inference being that they possessed the knowledge of flight as well as their brother, and so took it with them when they departed. Thus while men lost the ability to make their canoes fly, women did not. Belief in flying witches is still prevalent in the Massim area. Vakutans believe that they continue to plague the night skies both over land and sea. Although inherently malevolent, the flying witch provides a model for the Kula outrigger canoes. In magic, men call upon the canoes to 'bind their skirts and fly' (see also Malinowski 1922:132, 138), a clear association with flying witches. The canoes are also decorated with pandanus streamers, in imitation of the paraphernalia carried by the flying witch on her nightly escapades (Malinowski 1922:215-217). Ambivalence is apparent in that the flying witch, while in possession of an attribute much desired by men for their canoes and which in myth was once almost theirs but was lost by an untimely fratricide, is also the agent of a much-feared death.

This ambivalence is in part resolved by the representation of a bat on the Kula prowboards. The bat symbolically enlists the powers of the flying witch for they are semantically related. One of the main reasons for choosing the bat over other nocturnal flying creatures is that it bears live young like human females. The attribute that separates ordinary women from witches is flight, and this similarly distinguishes the bat from other flying 'animals'. Both witch and bat are associated with the colour black. The bat, then, is a 'visual euphemism' for the flying witch.
The schematisation of the bat (rather than a more iconic representation) leaves open the symbolic relationship between its representation on the tabuya and the flying witches. To 'actually' represent the flying witch and call the design unit mulukwusa would be a dangerously provocative act, so Vakutans have built into the carving system a means of bypassing potential danger by schematically signifying the bat.

The second type of design unit consists of forms that show an iconic relationship to their animal signifieds. This relationship, however, does not seem to go beyond that of a relatively simple iconic or metonymic relationship between the form and a specific aspect of the animal. For example, the repetition of form B2.1 is said to be the 'footprints' of the hermit crab. The form's motivation is aesthetically linked to this small crab's mark in the sand as it scuttles about. Although certain characteristics of these animals' behaviour may be relevant to a broader interpretation of the system, the relative depth of meaning is limited when compared to the first type of design unit. Other forms which belong to this type of design unit are:

- duduwa (garden snail)  
- ubwara (wild yam)  
- dodoleta (leaf of a shrub)  
- kaidada (wood)  
- boi, doka, weku (egret, mythological animal)  
- taregesi (shell fish)  
- dodoleta (leaf of a shrub)

With the exception of form A3.1, the others all belong to the restricted (B) group. It is significant that these design units not only occupy the space determined by white forms (A), but also that the animals represented by these forms have limited symbolic import. In discussions concerning the significance of the animals and their 'work' (a value placed on the animal according to
Vakutan ideology), they were said to be insignificant in relation to the 'work' of other animals occurring on the lagim and tabuya. They are there merely to 'hold the lime', and thus their purpose is to emphasise the significance of the white forms, and the latter's relationship to the black and red forms. The choices made by kabitam carvers who favoured certain animals, were based not on the actual 'work' of the animals (with respect to their 'wisdom') but on the physical forms or the marks they make. The choice of an animal, therefore, was primarily based upon aesthetic considerations. The relationship between the form and its animal is iconic in that the form bears some physical resemblance to its animal association. In conclusion, these forms are generated by other design units which have a more direct role to play in the communication of specific information.

The third kind of design unit generally includes those forms which have no animal or body-part term of their own. On the few occasions when a carver would assign these forms an animal label, together with its relevant body-part, the form would take on the associations of those design units within the immediate environment. It was clear that nearly all of these design units were given secondary roles in the communication process. With the exception of forms C1 - C3, their importance is derived from their close proximity to other design units which are more 'informative'. A further, perhaps more telling indication of their role in the system, is that these forms are by and large 'created' by the execution of other design units. Further, these forms are generally referred to by their colour term. Examples of this kind of design unit are forms C4 - C10. The importance of their role in the system is aesthetic. These design units provide a balance of form and colour, throwing more communicative design units into relief.

The spatial organisation of design units incorporated into sections on the lagim and tabuya is ordered in such a way as to provide yet another means of interpreting the meaning of the boards. It may be noted at this point that the boards present a visual 'split image' when the entire design surface is examined. I have
already mentioned that it is a social faux pas to draw attention to the physical likeness between people; it is also unacceptable to indicate likenesses between boards. To make comparisons between boards not only implies that a tokabitam has 'copied' another's board designs (Chapter 4), but also calls into question the 'power' of the board's animal crew to attract Kula shell valuables in competition with other boards' 'powers'.

The fact that there is a wide variety of ways in which the design units, their sectional orientation, and the boards themselves can be interpreted is itself significant. The multiplicity of encoded messages and the different levels at which these messages convey meaning are facilitated by means of a relatively small number of elements. The range of meanings conveyed by the colour arrangement on the boards elicits certain kinds of interpretational responses different, yet ultimately related to the meanings inherent in the animal significations. Concerning the animal repertoire, it is not necessarily the details of each animal which are significant, but rather specific characteristics such as flight, colour, form, and inherent wisdom (as this is perceived by Vakutans). The animals are more or less tools which uncover a superficial layer of encoded meaning. They provide an initial reference to the multiple layers of meaning. The kapaiyauwa (bat) indirectly refers to the flying witch; the kaidada (wood) suggests man's immortality in the form of renown and fame; the doka represents human thought; the boi (egret) encompasses the most significant shape in the symbolic system, evoking a tree idiom which defines the place of male and female in Vakutan conceptual ordering (see Chapter 10); the buribwari embodies male values while also providing further reference to the tree idiom; the karawa (fern frond), though a minor design unit, is also related to the tree idiom; and the snake has reference to the subterranean abode of the ancestors from whence humanity initially came and is periodically regenerated. While the symbolic content of some design units is relatively straightforward in that the iconic relationship between form, animal, colour, and body-part requires relatively fewer layers to uncover for meaning to emerge, other design units seem to contain a depth of symbolic
reference which, when compared to other spheres of Vakutan social and cultural existence, can be seen to encode conceptual ideologies. This I will attempt to demonstrate in the following chapters. Prior to this, however, we must return to the prow- and splash-boards and place them in the utilitarian context for which they are carved.

The encoded meaning of the Kula prow- and splash-boards is primarily concerned with the representation of desired characteristics which are seen in the natural world to be 'successful'. The animals used for representation on the boards are enlisted for the success of a Kula expedition: for its success in negotiating the dangerous open sea, and for its success in wooing Kula partners and bringing home the shell valuables. With the multiplicity of representations on the prow- and splash-boards, with special beauty magic, and with magic to protect the canoe from possible dangers encountered at sea, the Kula expedition is guaranteed success — that is, as long as the magic is more powerful than anyone else's and is powerful enough to distract or deter the dreaded 'women'.
Notes: Chapter 8

1. Bomatu is the name for the south-east winds which may well have a semantic relationship to the name of the beach, Kadbamato. These winds blow along the beach. I make the distinction between the ocean beach and the lagoon beach because this distinction is made by Vakutans themselves, both linguistically and conceptually.

2. It is the black areas of this section that Vakutans always point out and discuss spontaneously. From their discussions it is clear that the main impact of this section is the black area, even though red and white also feature here.

3. I do not wish to imply here that anyone other than Vakutans can 'read' the messages encoded on the prowboards in the same way as Vakutans. Although there is some evidence that similar kinds of symbolic associations occur between Massim societies (c.f. Seligman and Dickson 1946; Scoditti 1975, 1977, and 1980; and Munn 1977), there are also obvious divergencies. From the perspective of Vakuta, it is enough that Vakutans think their messages are so powerful as to affect their partners' behaviour, even though the latter may not be able to interpret them in the same way as Vakutans.

4. It could be of course, a combination of both fish and bird.

5. In the discussion of the sectional breakdown of the lagim I will work from the sections of a dogina lagim. It should be noted that the uuna lagim is the same except that sections 2 and 3 are reversed. Their content, however, remains the same as the corresponding sections on the dogina lagim.

6. An alternative colour scheme is to interchange the outer ring red-black-red-black. It is said, however, that the outer ring scheme should all be in red, its complement being the 'black' (perforations) of the inner ring.
7. **Kaimwasila** magic involves the use of vegetable matter as the main agent to gain that which is desired. Substances are combined, spoken over, and swallowed.

8. Sometimes there are two *tokwalu* figures in which case one is male and the other female. There does not seem to be any significance attached to the use of two figures rather than one. It is simply a choice made by the carver, depending largely upon the space he has to fill. There are never more than two figures, however. If there is only one figure, it is usually unsexed. Regardless of whether any sex is attached to the figure(s), it is referred to by use of the female-animal classifier *-na*.

9. G. Roheim and F.E. Williams independently interpreted the human figure on the top of *lagim* from the D'Entrecasteaux Islands as a representation of a 'baby' (*wame'a* on Ferguson Island), or a 'newly-born child' (*guama* on Normanby Island). These interpretations were subsequently compared and analysed by Seligman and Dickson (1946).

10. One carver labelled the spatially central bird design *miludoga*, a mythical 'animal'. It should be noted that this design unit is the same as that of section 1 on the *tabuya* which features the *buribwari*. I was told that some carvers call the *buribwari* design on the *tabuya*, *miludoga* or *muluveka* (sea eagle) but that it should be called *buribwari* as conceptually this is the most significant bird to Vakutans. This same carver also calls the section 1 bird on the *tabuya* *miludoga*. Judging from the range of information given me by informants I do not think that any significance should be attached to the label of this design in section 2 of the *lagim*. It need only be noted that there is some variation in label and form attachment. What is important, however, is the predominance of the *boi/doka* label to these design areas by most informants willing to offer
labels at all. Narubutal refers to form A3.3 as 'minodoga' in his commentary on lagim held by the Papua New Guinea Public Museum and Art Gallery (1975). Vakutans call this form sawila.

11. It is said that Taduwasi of Kaulaka village owns many kinds of magic: for war, rain, sorcery, gardens, and carving. In 1977 Taduwasi was an old man. His major concern at that time was that when he died people should remember to gag his mouth tightly and lay his corpse face down so that none of his magic would escape him, and thereby endanger the survivors (c.f. Weiner 1977:69).

12. Scoditti also notes the significance of the head image for Kitavans (1977).

13. Malinowski found that Trobrianders refused to recognise physical likenesses between matrilinage kinsmen while they commented openly upon such similarities between a man and his children. This particularly perplexed Malinowski because of their denial of physiological paternity. Vakutans told me, however, that one should not point out the physical likeness of a child to either of his parents. Although it is considered intolerable to point out physical similarities between matrilinage kin it is also impolite to point out likenesses between children and their fathers. It was stressed that people were born different and that they were given different 'names' (upon which to build personal renown). They considered this to be very important and quite unacceptable to be physically identified with someone else. It should be remembered that for a time in one's life, it is thought that one's physical appearance is potentially a source of power and can be advantageous in accruing useful alliances. The difference between Kiriwinans' willingness to accept some degree of individual likeness to others and Vakutans' unwillingness to accept any at all may again demonstrate the degree to which Vakutans value a more egalitarian milieu.
14. Note the use of the classifier na- in this case which invokes a connection to animal or female classification rather than to wooden objects (which would be the implication if the kai-classifier were used). Kai- is used, however, when reference is being made to the butterfly structure of sections 2 and 3. In this case a connection is being made to the physiological structure of a butterfly and the form utilised to delineate these two sections.

15. Tambiah, in a recent paper (1983) similarly argued that flying witches and the flying canoe myth are symbolically connected. Tambiah's efforts to link this relationship to Trobriand cosmology, though similar to my own aim, suggest quite different conclusions to mine concerning male and female roles as they fit into a cosmological order. These will be discussed at length in the following chapter.

16. Form B3.2 is said to represent the boi, doka, and weku depending upon which white form it is incorporated within. The boi, doka, weku are given prominence in the symbolic encoding of meaning. Form B3.2 does not receive such importance, however. Its role in the system is to emphasise the main design unit within which it occurs. In this way, form B3.2 takes on different names according to which white form it is incorporated within. It is for this reason that form B3.2 is included in category B.
Section III
Plate 4. Masawa in sail.
Chapter 9
The Rituals of Kula

When, on a trading expedition or as a visiting party, a fleet of native canoes appears in the offing, with their triangular sails like butterfly wings scattered over the water ..., with the harmonious calls of conch shells blown in unison, the effect is unforgettable. When the canoes then approach, and you see them rocking in the blue water in all the splendour of their fresh white, red, and black paint, with their finely designed prowboards, and clanking array of large, white cowrie shells ... you understand well the admiring love which results in all this care bestowed by the native on the decoration of his canoe. (Malinowski 1922:108)

The making of a masawa

There are several activities men engage in following the selection of a tree for a new Kula outrigger canoe. Generally, these are concerned with making the tree and future canoe light. When a tree is selected men place a shell valuable at its base. This valuable is called ulaula or sosula and is given to the tokwai who are thought to inhabit trees (c.f. Malinowski 1922:126-128). After a suitable period has elapsed (several hours to one day) the valuable is reclaimed, the tree cut, and the bark removed. On the following day the men go into the forest to cut duku (bibudumasi duku), a strong creeper which Vakutans use to pull the log into the village. The creeper is tied to both ends of the log, the uuna and dogina. When this has been accomplished the man at the uuna end shouts at the tokwai:

Tokwai you go to that tree over there and stay leave our tree, our canoe Wagela kasailova Wagela kamanamwana Wagela uvalaku.

He then strikes the end of the log to expel the tokwai. Now the man at the dogina end shouts:
Mulukwasi you go to Kadimwata
[a mountain in the D'Entrecasteaux
archipelago].
You disappear.
You throw away our canoe.
Wagela Kula
Wagela kasailova
Wagela kamnamwana
Wagela uvalaku.

With these words he strikes the dogina end. This rite is performed to make the log light so that its journey to the village is made easier (c.f. Malinowski 1922:129-130). It is also, however, the first opportunity to secure the canoe as an artifact of men. They are claiming it from the wild so that they can transform it into a cultural object to be used by men in the pursuit of male wealth and renown.

The significance of invoking characteristics of lightness is twofold. Firstly, it is thought necessary to lighten the tree in order to carry it to the manufacturing site. Secondly, the conversion from heavy to light has symbolic significance. Men entreat heaviness to depart the tree, so that as a canoe it will be light and able to perform well on the open seas. At a more general level the Vakutan conceptual framework incorporates a double opposition of the form land → sea::heavy → light. Hence, land is associated with weight, stability, and anchoring while sea is associated with qualities of lightness and mobility (see also Munn 1977:41). By magically removing the heaviness of a tree men symbolically detach the tree's previous association with land to a new one with the sea. Further, the ultimate desire is to make the hollowed log so light that it will 'fly'. Two spells recorded by Malinowski make reference to lightening the canoe so that it flies. The first is used in order to lighten the tree so that it can be easily pulled to the village, the second is chanted while the creeper used to pull the log is ritually cut. In both these spells reference is made to the Kudayuri canoe in the Kitavan myth of the flying canoe (1922:311-321).1
It was noted in Chapter 6 and the previous chapter that much of
the symbolism pertaining to certain animals refers to their ability
to fly and to the imagery of easy and effective flight (butterfly
and bat). Much of the ritual surrounding the construction of a Kula
outrigger canoe likewise alludes to the desirability of flight and
attempts to imbue the new canoe with this ability.

The shaping of the tree into a canoe is of obvious functional
value. It also has symbolic significance. The shaping of the tree
is symbolic of a transformation from natural matter to cultural
artifact, heavy to light. The log, while undergoing structural
transformation, also undergoes a spatial transformation from forest
to village. Once hollowed it goes to the beach for construction and
finally, when completed, it goes to sea. This movement through
space echoes the change in status of the log. While it is anchored
to the earth, the tree is considered to be in an uncontrolled,
undomesticated state. When it is moved to the village the log is
transformed into a controlled, cultural artifact. On the beach the
new canoe receives its decorations, paint, and beauty magic. At
this stage of its development the log has been completely
transformed into a cultural 'persona', and at this stage the
outrigger canoe receives its name. Now it is ready to be launched
onto the open sea. As a cultural artifact it is specifically
designed to traverse dangerous space. The open sea is dangerous to
men because it is wild and uncontrollable. Elements associated with
the open sea which men fear display unpredictable behaviour which
cannot always be controlled by men. Munn notes the significance of
similar spatial and status transformations of Gawan canoes. On
Gawa, however, the log is not taken into the village to be shaped.
Instead it is roughly hewn in the 'wooded cliffs' and from there
taken to the beach (1977:41).

Once the body of the dug-out canoe has been shaped in the
village, it is ready to be further transformed into an ocean-going
canoe (masawa) rather than a simple fishing outrigger canoe (kewou).
For an ocean-going masawa, gunwale planks are attached to the sides
of the dug-out log. These are lashed together by use of the
especially strong vine from the weyugwa creeper (Malinowski spells it wayugo, 1922:137). The outrigger is prepared and attached to a platform which is joined to the side of the canoe. The basic assembly of the canoe at this stage takes place at the water's edge.²

The beach marks a transition between land and sea. While land is associated with women and regeneration, the sea is associated with men (see Chapter 10, and also Munn's analysis of Gawan spatial symbolism, 1977:39-52). It is via the sea that men pursue the articles of wealth which are primarily controlled by them. This wealth enables men to achieve immortality for their names. On the other hand, women are conceptually associated with land. Both women and land are credited with fertility and regeneration. The beach represents the mediation between the two opposing spheres identified with men and women. It is on the beach, or in the shallow waters which rhythmically lap the beach, that women are thought to conceive. It is here that spirit children, having travelled across open sea from Tuma, crawl into the womb. The beach is also the place where men perform their beauty or love magic prior to a Kula expedition and where, on the return home, they wash and arrange their wealth which they have seduced from their Kula partners. Male and female influences meet on the transitional space of the beach. It was on the beach, according to mythology, that love magic had its origins through the incestuous liaison of brother and sister (Malinowski 1932:456-459). It is significant, too, that a woman in her first pregnancy is ritually bathed in the shallow waters of the shore (Malinowski 1932:185-186). Similarly, a newly constructed Kula outrigger canoe is ritually bathed in the same shallow water (Malinowski 1922:135). Both acts symbolically impart beauty to a woman and to a masawa.

An important ceremony takes place during this stage of the construction of a Kula outrigger canoe which involves the ritual insertion of the four carved boards. Until the boards are inserted into the prows of the canoe, they remain with the master carver in the village. Prior to insertion, the dogina tabuya is taken to the
ocean beach and ritually bathed by the master carver. While he washes the tabuya, gently rubbing it with charmed leaves, he recites a spell imparting to the board qualities of speed and lightness and, more importantly, the power of attraction. Thunder and lightning are said to accompany the spoken magic, thus informing villagers that the master carver is ritually bathing the dogina tabuya. On a day following, all four boards are ceremonially carried to the beach and put into place on the prows of the masawa. The boards are carried in strict order upon the shoulders of four men; the dogina tabuya leads, followed by the dogina lagim, the uuna tabuya and finally the uuna lagim. While being carried from the village to the beach the leader shouts, "Tabuyoo", followed by the others answering, "Ooooyo". Arriving at the masawa, the line led by the dogina tabuya encircles the masawa from the uuna end, passing to the right side of the canoe and progressing counter-clockwise around it. Then standing on the left of the dogina prow (with the outrigger on the left) the dogina tabuya is knocked into place together with a charmed bundle of sulumwoya (mint bush) leaves. These are a necessary ingredient in all love magic. This is placed under the 'nose' of the buribwari design (see also Malinowski 1922:134-135). The bundle is kaimwasila magic and is meant to affect the minds of partners. Once the dogina tabuya is in place, the other boards are similarly knocked into position without, however, a magical bundle of leaves.

Although Malinowski discussed at length the magic system of mwasila employed exclusively in Kula (1922:102, 147, 334-349; and 1932) he made no mention of another form of Kula magic called kaimwasila. Vakutans make a distinction between these. Mwasila refers to spoken incantations which impart powers of attraction and persuasion to objects associated with the body, such as face paint, oil, body decorations, combs, etc. Mwasila is thought to act upon the bodies of the practitioners, making them beautiful, glossy, healthy, and irresistible. Mythical heroes with particularly potent mwasila were Kasibwaibwaireta (Malinowski 1922:322-324; Young 1983:383-394) and Tokosikuna (Malinowski 1922:307-311). Mwasila
magic, then, is a personal beauty magic used to attract lovers and exchange partners. I was told that another use of the word mwasila is to refer to someone who has a smiling, happy face.

Kaimwasila, on the other hand, is magic that is contained within specially selected and charmed vegetable matter. The potency of this magic is said to affect the minds of partners, making them 'soft' and easily 'turned'. Most of the magic ascribed to the mwasila system of Kula magic by Malinowski is, according to Vakutans, kaimwasila in that the desired effect is to change the minds of others rather than to alter one's own body. Malinowski wrote of mwasila:

This system consists in numerous rites and spells, all of which act directly on the mind ... of one's partner, and make him soft, unsteady in mind, and eager to give Kula gifts. (1920b:100)

According to the Vakutan distinction between kaimwasila and mwasila, the only magic of the latter category described by Malinowski is the actual beauty magic performed by the crew on the beach of Sarubwoyna prior to landing on the Dobuan shores:

The main aim of these spells is ... to make the man beautiful, attractive, and irresistible to his Kula partner. In the myths we saw how an old, ugly and ungainly man becomes transformed by his magic into a radiant and charming youth. Now this mythical episode is nothing else but an exaggerated version of what happens every time, when the mwasila of beauty is spoken on Sarubwoyna beach or on other similar points of approach. (1922:335-336)

A third form of magic associated with Kula and the attraction of women is kaributu. This is spoken magic and is said to have the effect of intensifying the speaker's beauty so much as to make the bodies of everyone who sees him shake:

Kalayam bukukaributu,
If you will (perform) kaributu
bukuvalapula wowola bitatatuva
you will go inside his body it (he) will shake
e magila yokwa wala.
and he wants you only.
Kaributu also refers to the giving of a solicitory gift in the hope of acquiring an especially fine valuable (see also Malinowski 1922:99, 354, 358).

Mwasila and kaimwasila are represented through symbolic inference by two of the kabitam animals carved on the prowboards. It will be recalled from Chapter 8 that the osprey (buribwari) personifies mwasila while the egret (boi) is thought to have access to particularly effective kaimwasila.

Although Malinowski describes the magical rite associated with the placement of the tabuya on the prow of the canoe as mwasila, Vakutans say that it is kaimwasila because the magic is contained within charmed leaves and its desired effect is to soften the minds of the hosts. By 'blinding' them with the beauty of their masawa, the crew's intention is to focus their host's eyes only on their outrigger canoe, and thereby eclipse the others.

Finally, it is significant that the dogina tabuya is singled out for special treatment. It has previously been noted that the dogina tabuya is considered the most important of the four prowboards, and of particular importance is the buribwari or osprey from the kabitam repertoire. According to Vakutan conceptions, the buribwari symbolises the power of men in attracting any beholders be they Kula partners or women. This principle is extended to the aim of men to attract Kula partners so as to acquire shell valuables (see Malinowski 1922:343). The buribwari represents a Vakutan man's ideal of always 'catching his prey'. It has already been noted that the osprey is thought to embody mwasila, the magic of beauty and hence the assured ability to catch prey. The egret (boi/doka), second to the osprey, is thought to have access to the specific magic of attraction embodied in kaimwasila. Only men know and use mwasila and kaimwasila magic. If a woman wants to attract a particular man she must ask a mother's father or a father's father (a man in the tabu- category) to perform personal magic on her behalf. This ability gives men a special power over women who, although credited with considerable say over which of their suitors
they choose as sexual partners, are otherwise helpless in countering the effects of love magic. It is not surprising then that the symbol of this male ideal, the osprey, receives ritual attention in the placement of the boards on the Kula outrigger canoe.

Before the newly transformed canoe can make a public debut it must be painted and have shells attached to its lagim, prow, and outrigger platform (Figure 3, Frontispiece, as well as Plates 4 and 6). The prow at both ends is carved and painted. Forms utilised on both ends are the same and include forms A2.3, A3.4, B1.1, B2.1-3 and B3.1). Vakutans do not give these forms names, preferring to refer to them by their colour terms. The dogina end is called pusa Dobu while the uuna end is called pusa Gawa. Form C2 is carved along the upper rim of the hull and painted alternately red and black on a strip of white background. This form is called papa, or 'wall'. The actual hull is painted black except for both prow ends which are painted white instead. The gunwales are painted red. Colour aesthetics are extremely important to Vakutans. They wince at the wrong combinations of the three colours as if the visual affront were a physical blow.

While men attend to the task of painting, others attach the buna (ovula ovum) shells. These are sometimes secured along section 1 of the lagim in a double or triple row (Plate 6). The preference for shells attached to the lagim is more common among Kitavans than Vakutans but Vakutans do sometimes follow suit. Buna shells are always, however, attached to the prow of the canoe (see Frontispiece, Figure 3, as well as Plates 4 and 6). The shells are attached in such a way as to resemble a mouth; a double row meets in the middle while the free ends splay outwards (Frontispiece). Vakutans call the placement of these shells the 'mouth of the canoe' and to make it more authentic they paint the middle red, saying, "it chews betel-nut". It is no coincidence that betel-nut is the primary medium through which magic is internalised. The significance of the 'reddened mouth' of the canoe is related to its role in the process of attracting and seducing Kula partners. The
mouth and teeth are used metaphorically to imply success; the mouth speaks eloquently as well as makes magical utterances into betel-nut, while teeth 'bite' or secure the shell valuables.

Soon the completed canoe will be ready for its maiden Kula voyage. Prior to this, however, the new masawa must be shown to the community. When the construction and decoration have been completed the crew break the wall which previously hid the masawa from public gaze. Once it comes into the public eye it must demonstrate its speed and strength against other masawa. A race (tasasoria) is called:

Batagisesa la peuri, batagisesa wila.
We will see its strength, we will see its penis.

The race is conducted by means of paddling rather than sailing (c.f. Malinowski 1922:148 where he describes the race). Malinowski claimed that the tasasoria was not a competitive race on Kiriwina Island, arguing that the chief's canoe would always be allowed to win. For Vakutans, however, it is a competitive race. Each crew is eager to demonstrate the superior quality of their canoe and, by implication, of their own strength. The winning crew of the race, however, must accept the consequences. On a night following the race, villagers go to the crew's houses and take away anything that is removable (bikwaiyasi).

Departure of a Kula expedition

Prior to the departure of a fleet of sea-going outrigger canoes, the owner (toliwaga) of each masawa makes an offering (kalavabusi) to male baloma. This offering consists of betel-nut, bananas, and/or coconut. The aim is to entreat the baloma to remain at home rather than accompany the crew on the expedition. The presence of baloma on the masawa is thought to make it heavy and thus adversely affect the performance of the canoe in rough seas. Baloma are, by definition, strongly connected to the earth. It is underground that they reside following death. It is significant that root crops are
not made as offerings to the baloma on this occasion, and that fruit from the tops of trees are only considered suitable. We have a host of associations which, when compared, present distinct oppositions:

- female
- earth
- root crop
- regeneration (baloma)
- anchoring
- heavy

- male
- sky
- tree crop
- immortality (Kula)
- mobile
- light

(These associations will be elaborated in the remainder of this chapter and in Chapter 10.)

Finally the fleet is off and heading for its destination, spurred on by the knowledge that Kula shell valuables await. To Vakutans the sea poses many threats to the success of a Kula expedition. Of particular note are the moving stones, or vineylida in the language of the northern Massim and nuakekepakai in the south (Malinowski 1922:235; Röheim 1948:286). The shark and other malevolent creatures of the sea also pose threats to the crew (Malinowski 1922:244-245; Röheim 1948:287). Threats from above emanate primarily from flying witches and a black cloud, sine matanoginogi (Malinowski 1922:235; Röheim 1948:286). The most dangerous of these are the flying witches because these malevolent beings can influence and control all other dangers of the sea.

Sine matanoginogi, according to Röheim (1948:286), is the patron of all witches in Normanby belief. Indeed, the noun sine refers to a woman from a specific place (sine Dobu, sine Duau, etc.). In many of the D'Entrecasteaux languages sine also occurs as part of adjectives denoting feminine beauty or otherwise (sinebwoina means a beautiful woman or sinegeyogeyoi refers to an ugly one in Dobuan). The moving stones are also associated with witches and feminine qualities of weight and anchoring. Malinowski notes the connection of vineylida with women through a morphological analysis of the word, "vine - female, lida - coral stone" (1922:235). Women on Vakuta have symbolic association with stones. Stones symbolise fertility and the perpetual reproduction of the sub-clan. The prime
medium for this association is the hearth stone. Hearth stones are given to a woman by her husband's mother a year or so after marriage. They symbolise nurturing. In marriage one woman (the husband's mother) transfers her role as nurturer of a member of her sub-clan (son) to another woman (son's wife). Following marriage, a woman begins to reproduce and nurture new members to her sub-clan. This again is symbolised by hearth stones, which have connotations of anchoring dala to land. Another example of stones used as anchoring devices are binabina stones, basaltic stones imported from the D'Entrecasteaux. They are used in yam houses and in gardens to 'anchor' or weigh down the yam crops. In this sense the stones are thought to hold down and make 'heavy' fertility. If fertility were to lighten, Vakutans fear that it would dissipate.7

The vineylida stones are not feared by Vakutans so much for their habit of jumping out of the sea and holding fast to a canoe, although this poses an obvious threat on the open seas. This characteristic, however, is merely a manifestation of a greater fear. The anxiety caused by these 'moving stones' stems from their mobility. Unlike normal stones, mobile ones demonstrate unexpected and therefore unpredictable and uncontrollable behaviour. Similarly, women who habitually take to the night skies and fly are feared because they are unanchored to land. They 'shed' their weight, becoming light and able to fly. It is the unpredictable that is disturbing and which is the basis of fear. Both vineylida and flying witches represent a reversal of the established order. Stones that are characterised by their weight and ability to anchor become dangerous when mobile. It is interesting that vineylida are thought to be inhabited by flying witches (c.f. Malinowski 1922:235; Rōheim 1948:287). This notion combines the relevant associations of each so that an opposition can be made:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>women</th>
<th>mulukwausi</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>stones</td>
<td>vineylida</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>anchored</td>
<td>mobile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>controlled sexuality</td>
<td>uncontrolled sexuality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>predictable</td>
<td>unpredictable</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Apart from the external dangers which lurk on the open seas men also carry with them the seeds of their own destruction. These are harboured by the canoe and animals on the carved prowboards. It will be recalled from Chapters 6 and 8 that certain animals are magically restrained from feasting upon the human crew. Should the human crew endanger the canoe and its occupants resulting in a shipwreck, the restraint on the tokwalu and boi/doka breaks and they order the rest of the animals of the repertoire to turn on the human crew and 'eat' them. Hence, the threat of being eaten comes not only from flying witches, but also from the animal crew carved on the boards. In the face of these inherent dangers, however, men continue their quest for shell valuables, embarking upon their voyages armed with magic to help them along their course. Shortly after setting sail the winds are called to fill the sails and thus speed them along to their destination. It is desirable for the canoe to take on the characteristic of the butterfly, lightly speeding ahead just over the tops of the waves.

Finally the dangers of the open sea are left behind as the fleet prepares to beach the outrigger canoes upon arrival at their destination. Conch shells are blown announcing to the hosts the imminent landing of the Vakutan Kula fleet. Before landing, however, each masawa is turned so that the dogina buribwari 'sees' land first and is 'seen' first by the hosts. The dogina end of the masawa 'pierces' the land as it is thrust onto the beach of the host community. The Vakutans have arrived.

The landing of the dogina end is significant. The dogina symbolises aspects of masculine ideology. It represents a behavioural ideal which Vakutan men seek to emulate. Conversely, the uuna end of the masawa represents feminine characteristics. Before being cut down and dragged into the village to be prepared for shaping, a tree is firmly attached to the soil. It is anchored to land. Once cut down the tree ceases to be anchored and is on its way to becoming fully mobile. It is from this point on that the dogina receives primary attention with a focus on behavioural attributes concerning mobility. The previous association to land,
however, is retained in the reference to that end of the canoe which was once anchored as *uuna*. But this end is of secondary importance. It represents immobility. Women are conceptualised as anchored like the *uuna* end of a tree. In turning the canoe (if the *uuna* end happened to have 'led' the way because of the direction of the wind) so that the *dogina* end beaches first, the hosts are presented with symbols of Vakutan men's powers of mobility, seduction, and success as the prow is thrust forth to 'pierce' the land of their hosts. Munn describes a somewhat different gender scheme for Gawan Kula canoes. Initially, while still anchored to the ground and while undergoing transformation, a Gawan canoe carries female associations. A canoe's feminine attributes are gradually shed as it moves from 'static' to 'mobile', or from female associations to male associations in its transformation into a mobile, detachable Gawan construction (1977). Vakutan canoes, on the other hand, embody both male and female associations. Indeed, Vakutan's conceptualisation of a tree incorporates both sexes: the top (*dogina*) is the male part of a tree while the bottom (*uuna*) is the female. Although a tree (undomesticated) can be transformed into a canoe (cultural artifact) it cannot be disassociated from its parts. The relationship between the two parts, however, is changed in the transformation. While the tree is anchored to land it is the *uuna*, or female part which is the most important. It is the *uuna* which not only nurtures the tree as a whole, but also anchors it to one place. When the tree has been cut down and transformed into a canoe the *dogina* becomes the more important part in terms of the canoe's success in its transformed status.

Of further significance is the association of the *dogina* end of the masawa with the prominent *buribwari*, carved on the *dogina* tabuya, and the magical bundle of *kaimwasila* under its 'nose'. It will be remembered that the *buribwari* represents basic male ideals. This also reinforces male associations with the *dogina*. Buribwari are seen to sit at the tops of trees (*dogina*) watching for their prey and from there they strike. This same image bears a direct relationship to the aim of doing Kula. In Kula, a man who possesses very strong *mwasila* magic (as it is embodied by the *buribwari*),
should be able to attract and acquire all the highly ranked shell valuables in the same way that the buribwari 'attracts' (through mwasila magic) his prey and then catches it.

Before the crew move into their hosts' villages and commence the business of Kula, preparations of beautification are undertaken on the beach (see also Malinowski 1922:334-349). Betel-nut, tobacco, and other small gifts are charmed so as to positively influence the minds of the partners. The hosts' wives also must be influenced so that they do not place adverse pressure on their husbands in decisions concerning the route of the shell valuables (see also Malinowski 1922:361). The preparations that take place on the beach before going into the villages resemble closely the preparations made by men prior to a festive occasion when their full beauty is 'worn on the skin' so as to attract the available young women. The magic of beautification for Kula (mwasila) is the same used in love magic. Vanoi, the late paramount chief of northern Kiriwina, was recently quoted as saying, "Remember, a Kula shell is like a young girl; she looks over every man until she decides which one she likes best. One man is chosen and the others are sent away." (Weiner 1977:218). In the preparations on the beach, each individual is trying to make himself more beautiful and attractive than his companions. He wants to be the chosen partner and thus attract the shells. As a back-up, an individual might use kaimwasila magic on specific objects intended as gifts to potential partners, or on articles of personal adornment to be worn so as to 'turn' the mind of the hosts. When every man has made himself beautiful and ready to seduce his hosts, the party begins to move to the villages where their hosts await them.

If a new masawa has made its maiden voyage, its crew make a ceremonial advance into villages where Kula partners live. The advance is overtly aggressive. The principal symbol of the ceremonial advance is the 'punting pole' to which a pandanus streamer (bisila) is attached. The name of the pole in this context is kaibisila, and the advance itself is referred to as bibisilasi ("they will engage in bisila display"). Gilmour refers to this
activity without naming it (1904-5:72). The advance involves members of the crew aggressively running at partners' houses shouting, "Get ready your pigs, kill them and we will eat. Get ready your yams and long yams, throw them to us. Get ready your armshells and give them to us. This is your bisila". A 'spear' is thrust into the sides of a house with the pandanus leaves (bisila) left to dangle outside. This marks the house and reminds its occupants of their obligation to the new canoe and its crew.10

The bisila symbolises speed and mobility. A charmed bisila is tied to the top of the mast while others are attached along the boom of the masawa. Malinowski records a spell chanted over bisila which invokes qualities of speed, the strength to break through physical obstacles, and flight. By way of comment he writes:

> There is a definite association in the minds of the natives between the pandanus streamers and the speed of the canoe. The decorative effect of the floating strips of pale, glittering, yellow is indeed wonderful, when the speed of the canoe makes them flutter in the wind. Like small banners of some stiff, golden fabric they envelope the sail and rigging with light, colour and movement.

The pandanus streamer, and especially their trembling, are a definite characteristic of Trobriand culture. In some of their dances, the natives use long, bleached ribbons of pandanus while they dance. To do this well is one of the main achievements of a brilliant artist. On many festive occasions the bisila are tied to houses on poles for decoration. They are thrust into armlets and belts as personal ornaments. The vaygu'a (valuables) when prepared for the Kula, are decorated with strips of bisila. In the Kula a chief will send to some distant partner a bisila streamer over which a special spell has been recited, and this will make the partner eager to bestow valuables on the sender. (1922:216-217)

The bisila also recalls the flying canoe of the Kudayuri myth in the Wayugo spell (Malinowski 1922:137-138) as well as recalling flying witches themselves:

> The flying witches are supposed to use pandanus streamers in order to acquire speed and levitation in their nightly flights through the air. (Malinowski 1922:217)
The bisila ceremony on a Kula expedition further reinforces the image of male aggression against other communities, asserting the superiority of one group over another. I was told that bisila recalls the threat of war which existed between communities in the past and the role that Kula played in smoothing over latent hostility. Far from being ignorant of the functional implications of Kula, Vakutan men themselves brought this aspect of Kula to my attention (c.f. Malinowski 1922:83). The spears thrust through the walls of partners' houses and the war chants of the crew as they move from village to village evokes the memory of a time when war was a real threat.

Finally, the bisila ceremony represents male sexual vigour. Men leave their own homes and land, detaching themselves from the heaviness of the land, and sail across the open sea acquiring qualities of mobility, lightness and fluidity. Arriving at the shores of their Kula partners' land they pierce the beaches with the dogina tabuya, laden with its male symbolism and the magical powers of attraction and seduction. Their partners, meanwhile, remain attached to the land with their womenfolk. These men do not go to the beaches to welcome their overseas visitors. Instead they remain in the villages and gardens, sending young men and women to take food and refreshment to the voyagers. Before going to the villages to seek out their partners, men make themselves beautiful and anoint their skins with oils and perfumes charmed to seduce those who await them in the villages. Accordingly, the male hosts are unequivocally equated with women, while the visitors embody ideal qualities of maleness. The latters' task is to enter the villages to attract and seduce partners. Gifts are charmed and given to partners in the same way that men charm and present women with gifts in attempts to solicit a night of sexual dalliance. A woman, although empowered with a good deal of choice in her decisions as to whom amongst her admirers she will accept, is nevertheless thought to be a passive recipient of solicitations. Similarly, the hosts, for their part, have to be wooed and cajoled into giving up the valuables in their
possession. During Kula, unmarried women of the hosts' villages enter into sexual relationships with the visitors. Malinowski writes:

It was considered right, and sanctioned by custom, that the local girls should sleep with the visitors. (1932:220)

Usually when a man receives his partner from overseas he is entrenched within his house alongside his wife. While she is engaged in preparing food, her husband enters into small talk with his visiting partner. In the context of Kula, this juxtaposition symbolises the role of the host as that of a 'female' who, although granted the final decision, waits to be solicited and finally seduced into giving up 'her' shell valuables. This same representation of visitor as male and host as female is the subject of a much-loved legend, Imdeduya. The hero, Yolina, travels from the Dobuan area by canoe in search of a beautiful girl, Imdeduya, whose fame has spread through the islands. He makes stops at each island and village enroute and in each one he is invited to come ashore to enjoy the sexual favours of an important man's daughter. He always refuses, however, giving instead gifts and then sailing on singing a chorus:

Imdeduyo, Imdeduyo
Imdeduyo, Imdeduye
Make a place for me,
I will lie down.
I am Yolina
Tossed by the waves.
My body is tired, but
I will go every day
I will go every night
Imdeduyo, Imdeduye.

Yolina finally arrives at his destination, Muyuwa (Woodlark Island), where Imdeduya, who has dreamt of him, awaits. They marry and he sets up house in his wife's father's village. Yolina is given gardens so that he can provide for Imdeduya and their son. One day Yolina goes fishing. Imdeduya goes to the garden and commits adultery with a former lover. Her son witnesses the incident and tells his father who packs his belongings and together with his son pushes the canoe out to sea. Imdeduya entreats them to return but
Yolina is so resentful he refuses to do so, and to show his anger and disappointment he breaks their son's neck on the side of the canoe and tosses the body into the sea. Yolina sails back home to the D'Entrecasteaux.

In this legend the symbolic relationship between visitor and visited is clearly set out. Yolina, a male imbued with the power of mobility, sets sail across the seas in search of a beautiful woman. He detaches himself from his land and journeys until he reaches the land of Imdeduya. A reference to the strength of Yolina's kaimwasila magic, which is apparent by Imdeduya's knowledge of his imminent arrival, 'turns' Imdeduya's mind towards him. Upon landing, Yolina gives her parents all of the valuables in his canoe. Thus wooed, Imdeduya is his. But, as she is so beautiful and therefore desired by others, as well as being inherently fickle, she transfers her favours to another partner. Yolina's reaction is to break all ties with her, tossing the broken emblem of their relationship into the sea.

Although the simple plot is a love story about the attraction of a beautiful woman, the parallel between success in attracting women and success in Kula is implicit. This theme is further exemplified by another myth about a man named Tokosikuna, who is so ugly that he was unable to marry because of his inability to attract women. Tokosikuna, however, journeys far away in search of a flute, returning with it together with a particular magic which enables him to change his appearance (mwasila) so that he becomes a beautiful young man. After this he succeeds in attracting all the women and Kula shell valuables (Malinowski 1922:307-311). Again, there is an obvious correlation between women, Kula partners and Kula shell valuables, for in their jealous attempts to rid themselves of this enviable male, the men of his village organise a Kula expedition giving Tokosikuna a boat with a hole in it. Not only does he succeed in sailing from island to island, he also manages to acquire all the Kula shell valuables!
Further evidence that the hosts are associated with feminine characteristics is found in several Kitavan spells which, according to Scoditti, belong to fragments of a Monikiniki mwasila magic. Of particular note is a translation of a fragment given to Scoditti by Togenuwa of Okabulula village in 1974:

0 men who are desired with corollas of flowers
gently recumbent!

0 men who are desired, with corollas of flowers
recumbent!

With your faces painted black
with black faces

With the pretty basket of woven leaves
I shall tremble in excitement

I shall stimulate myself, the two of us will stimulate each other and, entwined, will be a single body

I don't hear
the man with the turgid red lips

I don't hear
the men who are desired!

I hear monikiniki
the sweet memory of the mountain
the mountain of fire
my mountain
the mountain that trembles
the mountain that flies!
(1980:100-101)

In Scoditti's rather free translation of a Kitavan spell there are obvious references to sexual embraces between the Kula partners. The speaker describes how he is blinded by his partner's beauty and unable to 'see' the faces of other potential partners (owing to their kaributu and mwasila magic).

The entire process of preparing oneself, charming solictory gifts, going to the villages where partners wait, and then, in the verbal discourse peculiar to Kula, seducing one's partners into giving up their possessions parallels men's behaviour in wooing and the seduction of women. In Kula, however, the actors are all male.
Their roles alternate according to which group of men, at any given time, are in possession of the shell valuables and which group sets sail for the purpose of attracting and seducing partners.

The activities leading up to the transference of shell valuables are not the only ones laden with meaning. The transactions themselves are also symbolic. Until the point when the visitors seek out their partners, the Kula men revel in their personal beauty and powers of attraction and seduction. Masculine splendour is reinforced and activities which demonstrate the ideology of male behaviour are the prime focus. When finally in face to face dialogue with their partners, however, Vakutans are forced to recognise their vulnerability. The seduction of Kula partners, and women, is not so easily achieved. It takes more than external splendour (mwasila) and internal powers (kaimwasila) to persuade a partner to hand over that which is desired. If a man's initial impact upon his partner does not succeed in securing what the spells claim, the visitor must fall back upon his oratorical abilities in an effort to bring about the desired outcome.

The verbal exchange between partners can go through several stages before a valuable is transferred, each stage becoming less amiable and more insistent. The first stage is the initial encounter between partners. The visitor may merely walk by his partner's house when the latter throws the valuable at his feet. Although this is the way it should be (according to myth and the content of the spells), this immediate and public transference of a valuable precludes much of the challenge and intrigue normally provided by Kula. Intrigue is much preferred by experienced Kula man as it allows them to demonstrate their skills in the art of persuasive argument peculiar to Kula. With the immediate transference of a Kula shell valuable the recipient has only the effectiveness of his magic to brag about in the evenings when sitting with his companions before a fire. It is, however, better for his social and political reputation to be able to moan about the hardness of a partner, and finally to boast about the methods by which he was able to persuade him to give up the valuables.
The verbal discourse between partners may consist only of the pleasantries of two friends meeting after a time of separation, with the consumption of betel-nut and tobacco brought by the visitor before the shells are shown and handed over. On other occasions it becomes obvious that this small talk will not soften a partner, who might even deny that he has any 'Kula' for his guest. At this stage the guest might accuse his partner of evasion and demand to see the valuables. The host may only have been prevaricating and may now bring the shells out for his guest to admire. Discussion of past and future routes (keda, see Campbell 1983a) is an important part of a transaction. If a transaction does not occur at this stage, however, the guest is in for hard bargaining. The host may begin delaying tactics, such as commencing a meal with his guest, which the latter declines to eat. The host may go to cut down some young coconuts for his guest to drink. This too is refused. He may go to get some betel-nut, or to borrow tobacco, all of which are refused as a method of eliciting sympathy from the host and his family to encourage eventual surrender of the valuables. A verbal tactic used by the guest when negotiations become difficult is to boast of planned routes for the shells and the successful acquisition of other desired shells. In this way a man can excite the desire of his 'hard' partner by dropping the names of various famous shells that are in the hands of partners on the other side. This may or may not be the truth, and one's partner will be aware of possible deceit. Nevertheless, this method does sometimes prove successful in loosening a 'tight' host's hold over desirable shells.

After some time, and even days of this kind of behaviour, if no headway is gained a man may employ a further strategy to acquire the shell by verbal abuse. At the commencement of this stage the guest accuses his host partner of lying, stealing, upsetting everyone's Kula, and so on. Finally a threat is made which implies that if the host does not Kula with his guest on this occasion, he will end up only gardening because no one will engage in Kula with an unfair and stingy partner, when the guest makes his host's hardness known to others.
The ultimate defeat occurs when the host does not even show up to receive his guest, preferring instead to remain in his gardens or to take up temporary residence elsewhere while his guest partner returns day after day to his house. This, of course, represents an insult for which there is no immediate redress. The guest in this case never gets a chance to perform his skills at 'seducing' a partner and thus is not even able to boast of his efforts. The partnership inevitably is terminated, the host changing the route of the shell while the guest seeks revenge by accomplishing the acquisition of a shell intended for the former partner's Kula, or by sorcery to bring about the man's death.

The actual transacting involved in the acquisition of shell valuables resembles more closely the day to day struggle of men to achieve success in attaining political, economic, social, and sexual status than the ideology represents. In order to achieve these in his lifetime, a man must know how to manipulate situations to his benefit as they arise, and to be able to maintain a degree of control so as to remain influential during the perpetual shuffling of personalities in and out of the social limelight. It is in the work involved in the transactions of Kula that men are forced to face the reality of how difficult it is to achieve and maintain social status. The contrast between the ideology, as it is encoded in the symbolism of Kula, and the actual behaviour of the hosts is profound.

When the seduction of a man has been accomplished and the two men enter into an exchange relationship through which shell valuables are passed, Vakutans say that a 'marriage' has been contracted. Although modelled upon a male/female relationship, a Kula partnership represents a union between men. Kula facilitates the detachment of men from their roles as sons, siblings' sons, brothers, mothers' brothers, and husbands; in other words, relationships that bind men to women. Thus it allows men to form unions directly with other men which are not mediated by women. Further, the inheritance of Kula partners is reckoned through the
male line rather than that through a woman. One of my informants, in demonstrating why he Kula'd with a particular person from Dobu, said,

Anton and I Kula together because our fathers Kula'd together. Fathers give all their knowledge of Kula to their sons and very little to their sister's sons. It is better for sons of men who were good Kula partners to Kula together because their knowledge is already worked out between them. (Kunabu Kuweiva hamlet Vakuta)

The aim of this 'marriage' is not only to initiate relationships between men in which women have no part, but also to reproduce male wealth which remains the sole property of men. Further, the wealth that cements a Kula 'marriage' is notionally the means by which men achieve immortality for their names. Thus, through the combined efforts of men, their personal status and immortality can be accomplished.

The analogy of marriage which illustrates the kind of relationship entered into by Kula men is also extended to the shell valuables. When a 'marriage' between two men has been accomplished a shell is transferred and sent through a set of partners to 'attract' and 'seduce' another shell. If the initial shell is famous a specific companion shell is identified and all efforts are made to secure it. If the initial shell is not so famous it is simply released to attract any, unnamed shell of equal or better quality. When the two 'meet', that is, when one is successfully 'seduced' and becomes part of the keda (route), a 'marriage' is said to be achieved (see also Malinowski 1922:356-357). During the 'marriage' between the shells, other shells are 'attracted' to the partnership, thus increasing the flow of shells handled by the men who constitute the keda. Shells attracted to the keda are sometimes referred to as 'children' produced by the 'marriage' between the 'parent' shells. When a keda ends, a 'divorce' is said to have occurred. Thus, the relationship between shells is not only conceptualised as constituting 'marriages', in much the same way as
a man and a woman are married, they are also generative in that they reproduce through their 'marriage' other shells which are considered offspring. Whereas women reproduce people who are born into social categories differentiated by women, shells 'reproduce' shells which remain separate, or outside those categories. Indeed, shells are 'born' into categories which are generated and controlled by men.

In detaching themselves from land and relationships with women, men embark on Kula expeditions to seduce other men and form partnerships with them so as to facilitate a flow of shell valuables which generate male wealth and ultimately individual renown. At the end of an expedition, however, men must load their canoes, turn sail, and head for home.

The return journey and re-emergence into the Vakutan social world

Following the finalisation of Kula transactions, the boats are loaded, goodbyes made, and sails hoisted. Vakutans set sail for their journey home, to their roles as men which within a matrilineal society are ordered and defined by their relationships to women.

The return journey involves the crossing of physically dangerous seas, full of malevolent agents. When safely close to home the men stop on a beach to wash, admire, count, and display the valuables acquired during their transactions of the previous days. They catch fish and a small, 'private' ceremonial feast is consumed while they laugh and joke about the encounters made while engaged in Kula. In this way men enjoy the remaining moments of their heightened identity, symbolised by the buribwari, as men who have swooped and made their 'kill', accomplishing the seduction of their partners. This is done before having to resume the identities awaiting them on their return to the Vakutan villages.

Before returning the voyagers to their womenfolk, however, I wish to digress here with the tale of a return voyage which ended in a shipwreck. The text was recorded by Malinowski.
The canoe sails fast; the wind rises; big waves come; the wind booms, du-du-du-du ...
The sails flutter; the lamina (outrigger) rises high! All the usagelu [crew] crouch on the lamina. I speak magic to calm the wind. The big spell of the Sim-sim. They know all about yavata (North-Westerley Monsoon wind). They live in the eye of the yavata. The wind abates not, not a little bit. It booms, it gains strength, it booms loud du-du-du-du-du. All the usagelu are afraid. The mulukwausi scream, u-u, u-u, u-u, u; their voices are heard in the wind. With the wind they scream and come flying. The veva (sheet rope) is torn from the hands of the tokabinaveva. The sail flutters freely in the wind; it is torn away. It flies far into the sea; it falls on the waters. The waves break over the canoe. I stand up. I take the binabina stones; I recite the kayga'u over them, the giyotanawa, the spell of the Underneath. The short spell, the very strong spell. I throw the stones into the deep. They weigh down the sharks, the vineylida; they close the Gaping Depth. The fish cannot see us. I stand up, I take my lime pot; I break it. The lime I throw into the wind. It wraps us up in mist. Such a mist that no one can see us. The mulukwausi lose sight of us. We hear them shout near by. They shout u-u, u-u, u-u, u. The sharks, the bonubonu, the soka do not see us; the water is turbid. The canoe is swamped, the water is in it. It drifts heavily, the waves break over us. We break the yatotuwa (the sticks joining the float to the platform). The lamina (outrigger float) is severed; we jump from the waga [canoe]; we catch hold of the lamina. On the lamina we drift. I utter the great Kaytaria spell; the big fish iraviyaka comes. It lifts us. It takes the lamina on its back, and carries us. We drift, we drift, we drift.

We approach a shore; the iraviyaka brings us there, the iraviyaka puts us on the shallows. I take a stout pole, I lift it off; I speak a spell. The iraviyaka turns back to the deep sea.

We are all on the dayagu (fringing reef). We stand in water. The water is cold, we all shiver with cold. We do not go ashore. We are afraid of the mulukwausi. They follow us ashore. They wait for us ashore. I take a dakuna (piece of coral stone), I say a spell over it. I throw the stone on the beach; it makes a big thud; good; the mulukwausi are not there. We go ashore. Another time, I throw a stone, we hear
nothing: mulukwausi are on the beach; they catch it; we hear nothing. We remain on the dayaga. I take some leyya (ginger). I spit it at the beach. I throw another stone. The mulukwausi do not see it. It falls down; we hear it. We go ashore; we sit on the sand in a row. We sit in one row, one man near another, as on the lamina (in the same order as they drifted on the lamina). I make a charm over the comb; all the usagelu comb their hair; they tease their hair a long time. They are very cold; we do not make the fire. First, I put order on the beach; I take the piece of leyya, I spit it over the beach. One time, when the leyya is finished, I take some kasita leaves (the beach is always full of these). I put them on the shore, I put a stone on them, uttering a spell - afterwards, we make fire.

At day time, we don't go to the village; the mulukwausi would follow us. After dark, we go. Like on the lamina, we march in the same order, over a libu plant. I efface our traces. I put the libu on our track; I put the weeds together. I make the path confused. I say a charm to the spider, that he might make a cobweb. I say a charm to the bush-hen, that she might turn up the soil.

We go to the village. We enter the village, we pass the main place. No one sees us; we are in mist, we are invisible. We enter the house of my veyola (maternal kinsman), he medicates some leyya; he spits (magically) on all of us. The mulukwausi smell us; they smell the salt water on our skins. They come to the house, the house trembles. A big wind shakes the house, we hear big thuds against the house. The owner of the house medicates the leyya and spits over us; they cannot see us. A big fire is made in the house; plenty of smoke fills the house. The leyya and the smoke blind their eyes. Five days we sit in smoke, our skin smells of smoke; our hair smells of smoke; the mulukwausi cannot smell us. Then I medicate some water and coconut, the usagelu wash and anoint themselves. They leave the house, they sit on the kaukweda (spot before the house). The owner of the house chases them away. "Go, go to your wife;" we all go, we return to our houses. (1922:256-258)
In this tale it is evident that men, faced with the possibility of a shipwreck, do not fear the prospect of drowning as much as death by some other malevolent means. This is in the form of attacks from fish, the animals of the prowboard carvings, and flying witches who follow the 'smell' of unsuccessful men. Likewise, it is apparent that individual women who habitually use their powers of flight and take to the night sky are not the only ones feared by the shipwrecked crew. It seems that all women are a potential source of fear. In the retelling of the story, the commentator relates how the men, having survived the dangers of the sea, have still to 'hide' from the witches who are thought to have followed them onto the beach. We are told that the shipwrecked men cannot go to the village because the witches might follow them there. They wait until the next night to steal their way into the village, preferring to go to a house of a maternal uncle of the toliwaga rather than their own house where their wives and mothers wait. It is not until the smell of salt water on their skins has been smoked away and replaced by the smell of ginger and coconut oil that the men are 'chased' back to their wives. It might seem odd that the men did not go to the safety of their own homes and wives before the smell of the sea was removed from their bodies. In explanation, I suggest that this purposeful delay in returning to their womenfolk is related to a fear that all women are potential witches and therefore dangerous to men. This is especially so when the latter, having been shipwrecked, smell of the sea.

I put the possibility that all women are potential witches, if not actual mulukwauzi to a number of male informants. Many denied the suggestion outright. A few, however, hesitated before squashing the notion. They acknowledged the possibility that all women, if they wanted to, could be flying witches at night while leaving their bodies asleep on the sleeping mats. These same men, however, denied that their own wives, sisters, mothers, and daughters fell into this category, pointing to 'other' village women who were known to be so inclined.
That all women have the potential for becoming witches is suggested by Seligman in his description of witches from Bartle Bay on the mainland:

At Celaria the 'sending' was called labuni. Labuni exist within women and can be commanded by any woman who has had children. (1910:640)

Closer to the Trobriands, Röheim discusses the witchcraft beliefs of Normanby Islanders:

The people of Normanby Island say that the sorcerers' ... way is the fathers' and the witches' way is that of the mothers. It is therefore correct to say in a sense that potentially every man is a [sorcerer] and every woman a [witch]. (1948:279)

Because few women professed to be witches, however, Röheim decided that there were more male sorcerers than there were female witches. Nevertheless, the possibility that every woman will initiate her potentiality remains, thus causing men anxiety.

Vakutan men believe that the biggest threat to their success in manning the masawa across open seas is from flying witches. Not only are these women able to fly, they are also able to detach themselves from land thus changing from a state of being anchored to that of being mobile. This enables the witch to enter the wild and dangerous sphere which men claim as their domain and across which men have been able to traverse aboard their specially constructed masawa. As all women are potentially able to become mobile through flight, they conceptually represent a threat to the endeavours of men to achieve personal immortality.

The meaning of Kula

Kula to Vakutans is about men's powers of attraction and seduction. Men engage in Kula activities primarily for political and economic expediency (Campbell 1983a). While opportunities for achieving influence within Vakutan society encourage men to acquire shell valuables, economic responsibilities necessitate some level
of participation in Kula (Campbell ndc). In order to acquire these items men must demonstrate personal abilities that accord with the ideal qualities of male identity as these are symbolised by the buribwari and boi/doka.

Kula plays a significant role in balancing two perspectives within a Vakutan cosmological framework. Kula provides a means for conceptual differentiation between individual male identity and the corporate identity sociologically defined by women. Whereas individual women through their reproductive power are guaranteed the immortality of their names by the very principle which deems that their fertility reproduces each generation of dala blood, men are given no such assurances. Instead, men must rely upon their powers of attraction and seduction to achieve personal renown and the immortality of their own names. Kula provides the opportunity for each man to establish and build upon his own individual identity separate from the corporate group identity defined by dala blood. Thus in Kula, men free themselves to compete as individuals in the political and economic spheres of social interaction (Uberoi 1971:146-147, 159; Weiner 1977:232). The competition is not only between men of different clans, but also between individuals of a single clan. In other words, Kula allows individual men to compete with each other regardless of the constraints of social groupings (see also Uberoi 1971:135).

Through the successful operation of Kula relationships each man has the opportunity to achieve immortality through the renown of his name. In this endeavour, however, men often experience failure which is ultimately blamed on women in the guise of flying witches.

Although Vakutan women believe in the mulukwauisi, these flying women represent no real threat to the ambitions of women. Indeed, women use men's fear and anxiety over flying witches as a tool for political and economic leverage. Those women who behave in a dominant and self-assured way inevitably receive respect from men in their day to day relations. Suspected mulukwauisi are given a greater degree of attention in issues concerning village matters.
Rarely are they refused any of their demands. When I enquired why some men would marry such dangerous women I was told that as long as a mulukwausi's husband behaved according to his wife's wishes she would offer him protection from other witches. In effect men would say, "mulukwausis' husbands take the coward's way out by marrying such women".

Once a man succeeds in seducing a male partner and a formal 'marriage' is contracted, men use a model of reproduction and regeneration to validate their Kula partnerships. Men beget 'offspring' in the form of male wealth which in turn establishes social relationships ('marriages') outside the Vakutan community. One of the purposes of these 'marriages' is to establish the immortality of a man's name. The shell 'offspring' of these 'marriages' are the means by which the immortality of men's names is achieved. This model is based upon the ideology of matriliny as it is understood within Vakuta. Through marriage, women's fertility is anchored. Once married, women begin to reproduce offspring who are the regeneration of dala blood. A woman's own children immortalise her name as a symbol of dala identity. Thus women, through their own reproductive power, are able to achieve immortality for their names. Men also have an opportunity to immortalise their names by being successful operators of Kula shell valuables and partnerships.

In Kula, men are able to accumulate fame through the circulation of their wealth along individually created paths (Campbell 1983a). One of the main forces motivating men to enter the competition is the acquisition of fame and renown abroad, which enhances their position at home (Munn 1977:50, 1983; Damon 1980; Weiner 1983). Even after a man's death, his fame ideally continues to circulate through Kula, thus extending his name beyond the duration of his lifetime. Uberoi correctly emphasised in his analysis that the shell valuables exchanged through Kula always passed between dala rather than within them in internal relations. Kula shell valuables are items of male wealth and as such are identified with individual men. They are not used "as the emblems of a corporate solidarity"
(Uberoi 1971:135; see also Weiner 1983). Whereas land, trees, canoes and other wealth items are passed to brothers or sister's sons at a man's death, Kula shell valuables are usually given to a man's own sons. Kula shell valuables are identified with a man's personal achievements during his lifetime and symbolise these after his death. Finally, the circulation of male wealth establishes social relationships between different communities whereas women are restricted to maintaining the social continuity of Vakutan society. While women actually regenerate society, men act out their own regeneration by invoking their powers of attraction and seduction in the pursuit of Kula and the renown it affords.
Notes: Chapter 9

1. Others have noted the significance of this myth in Trobriand conceptions: Uberoi 1961:77-79; Scoditti 1980:97; and Tambiah 1983.

2. The 'water's edge' can be conceptualised as the 'beach' and thus a transitional stage between land and sea. However, the 'water's edge' for the four villages of Vakuta are different (see Figure 1 and Plate 2). Giribwa village is surrounded by water on all but one side, as the site of the village is the beach on the southern most tip of Kiriwina Island. Okinai village is situated on the lagoon beach and so people there construct their Kula canoes both in 'village' and 'beach'. Kaulaka village is close to the ocean side of the island, and villagers construct their masawa on the beach. Vakuta villagers, having access to the lagoon and thus the open sea via a tidal creek, construct their Kula outrigger canoes at the point where the tidal creek widens very near to the south-western part of the village (see Figure 2 and Plate 2).

3. An etymological breakdown of the word explicitly conveys the content of this magic. Kai- is a classifier used to specify nouns referring to a tree-like substance or structure, and thus includes in its reference vegetable matter used in magic. -Mwasila relates to the spoken form of beauty or attraction magic. Mwasila, with the accent on the second syllable, means shame: kam mwasila - your shame. The same unit, but differentiated phonetically by stressing the first syllable, mwasila, refers to spoken magic.

4. Etymologically this word can be broken into two components, kari- and -butu. Kari- is a form of the 2nd form possessive kala- (third person singular) which specifies articles of body adornment that are semi-alienable. -Butu is a component of words which refers to sound, noise, and to fame, or renown:
i.e. butula - its/his/her fame, mwaributu - a class of armshell second in the hierarchy which specifically refers to the acquisition of fame and renown (Campbell 1983b).

5. Contrary to this, Malinowski writes that both men and women perform 'love magic' (1932). It is not, however, made clear whether both sexes have direct access to it. Malinowski is even more obscure when he writes, "Although girls are said to practise [love] magic, it is more usual for the men to take the initiative" (1932:307). Vakutans assured me that only men can perform this magic, reminding me that this is an important magic also used in Kula to attract partners and shell valuables.

6. The association between women and weight or anchoring will be discussed at length in the next chapter. Other examples of women's association with immobility, weight, and anchoring from the Massim come from Dobu (Fortune 1932), Goodenough Island (Young 1983a), Sabarl Island (Battaglia 1980), and Gawa (Munn 1977).


8. There are many magical spells documented by Malinowski (1922) which engender the canoe with the qualities of lightness and flight epitomised by the butterfly. Examples of these are found in the 'kaygagabile spell' where the incantation runs:

    ... I lash you, O tree; the tree flies; the tree becomes like a breath of wind; the tree becomes like a butterfly; ...

    (1922:130)

and in the 'ligogu spell':

    ... I shall make thee fly, O canoe, I shall make thee jump! We shall fly like butterflies, like wind; we shall disappear in mist, we shall vanish.

    (1922:132)
9. In circumstances when there are no new canoes, each man goes individually into the villages where his Kula partners wait or to the houses where a particularly fine shell valuable is known to be held. In the case of a new canoe, the crew go through all the villages first as a distinct body representing the new canoe.

10. Young describes a similar activity carried out by Kalauna villagers of Goodenough Island who make expeditions to neighbouring villages to 'ask for food' (1983b). The manner in which they do this, however, has aggressive overtones, similar to those displayed by Vakutans on bisila advances; "The 'aggressors' simulate a war-party in dress, paint and demeanour when they visit another village to ask for food." (1983b:408).

11. A version of this legend was recorded by J.W. Leach (1981), the text of which closely resembles that which I recorded.

12. As the majority of transactions are between men already party to a 'marriage', not every transaction of shells results in the inception of a 'marriage'. A new 'marriage' occurs when a new partnership is cemented by the transfer of shells and the commencement of a new keda (see Campbell 1983a and 1983b; Munn 1983; Damon 1983; and Macintyre 1983b).

13. The pattern of inheritance discussed here can be compared to other parts of the Massim where Kula is prominent. Seligman noted for Tubetube that:

A man's landed property, that is to say his share in the clan garden land and any land in the bush that he might have cleared and planted during his lifetime, would be equally divided among his sisters' children ... 

... A dead man's house, if he were living in his own hamlet at the time of his death, would pass to one of his brothers or sisters or sisters' children ...
As regards inheritance two categories of personal property must be recognized. A man's drums, lime pots, lime spatulae and canoe or canoes would ... always pass to his sisters' children ... [or] his maternal uncle would take his canoe and other property ... and only after the death of the maternal uncle would the property revert to the dead man's own brothers and sisters. The second class includes such valuable property as armshells and sapisapi necklaces ... which would in part go to a man's own children ... (1910:522-523)
The dogina end of the masawa is also called buribwari because this bird is very sharp [sena kakata]. It does not fool around and so always gets its fish, never missing. That is why the buribwari always lands first in Kula, because it will always get all the vaiguwa and mwari. The Kitavans and Dobuans will see the buribwari and throw away their shell valuables, they want the masawa to win by getting the most valuables.

Men are buribwari, they are like the dogina [top] of the tree. Women are like the uuna [bole] of the tree. If a man wants a woman he walks around because he is like the dogina. A woman is like the uuna, she sits on the ground and peels yams and cooks. A man will see which woman he wants while walking around and he will catch her, like the buribwari catches his fish.

The buribwari sits at the top of the tree and then falls. He plunges into the water and when he re-emerges he has his fish. He never simply strikes here and there. He always catches his fish and so a man is like the buribwari and when he catches the woman he wants, he will hold her.

A woman is uuna, like the roots of a tree. She stays in one place and gives birth. While the tree is growing she gives the rules. Once the tree has grown, her sons then rule her, they are dogina and she just sits and gives birth and peels and cooks food. The uuna of the masawa is woman and the dogina is man. That is the way [kedal]. (Youwa Wakwega hamlet Vakuta village)

In Youwa's statement, he highlights some of the main images I have tried to illustrate in the preceding chapters: the image of the buribwari as a dominant male symbol, the relationship between the tree and masawa, and the ideology of success in Kula as it is embodied in the buribwari and dogina. Youwa takes the imagery further, however, and offers some insights into the relationship between men and women, and how this, echoed in the growth of a tree, transforms in time and space.
It should be noted, however, that these characterisations are given by a Vakutan man. That many of his insights are shared by other Vakutan men became evident to me through the course of my fieldwork, from the way in which men talked about various subjects like the buribwari, the dogina end of the masawa in its opposition to the uuna, the rituals and magic of Kula, male and female spheres of influence, and the implicitly male perspectives on many other aspects of Vakutan life. Youwa simply put their perspectives into a single, concise statement which set out the 'way things are'. The perspective of men, however, is not necessarily an accurate reflection of how things are in reality. Indeed, real experiences are forever contradicting this ideology. Paramount among them are the difficulties experienced in Kula transactions noted in the previous chapter. Nevertheless, it is worth pursuing the ideological perspective of men, as conveyed by Youwa, because it uses images and symbols relevant to Kula and extends them so as to illustrate cosmological issues concerning the relationship between men and women. In following Youwa's lead then, we can take a closer look at other aspects of Vakutan life by exploring the wider implications of the tree metaphor. Not only is it a vehicle for the expression of dominant messages in Kula symbolism, it is also a means by which the relationships between men and women find symbolic expression.

The tree/canoe is a composite symbol encoding on the vertical (tree) and horizontal (canoe) planes, characteristics which differentiate male and female spheres of influence according to a male ideology. While anchored to the ground, a tree represents on a vertical plane the spatial distinction between earth and sky. When detached and made into a canoe it represents on a horizontal plane the distinction between land and sea, as it is transformed from an object of the land to one of the sea. Encoded within these distinctions is a differentiation between men and women.
Women of the earth, men of the sky

In comparing women to the base or foundation of a tree, I suggest that Youwa was expressing men's desire to have women essentially immobile and anchored so that their sexuality and fertility can, to some extent, be controlled by men. Examples of women who are not controlled by men are the sexually rampant kaytalugi women (Malinowski 1932:356-358), female baloma who sexually assault men upon their arrival in Tuma (Malinowski 1948a: 159), and the flying witches who pose a constant threat to men in their endeavours to acquire the items of male wealth. Indeed, I argued in the previous chapter that all women are considered by men to be potential flying witches. In likening women to the uuna of a tree men are expressing a need to counter a perceived tendency in women to be dangerous to men. This is achieved through the attribution of images which anchor women to land.

On the other hand, men characterise themselves as analogous to the tops of trees. These 'touch' the sky. Here also live birds, particularly the buribwari who represents the essence of knowledge, mobility, and success. Likewise, men see themselves as essentially mobile, and because of this able successfully to acquire male wealth in the form of shell valuables. These objects of male desire assist Vakutan men in achieving status within their own community and an immortality for their names throughout the Kula exchange community. However, in realising these goals men must somehow anchor women to the earth so that they are not a threat to men in the 'sky'.

In myth there are several symbolic associations equating earth and women. In the creation myths typical of the area brothers and sisters emerged from holes in the ground. The siblings emerged from a single 'hole' which then became the property of their descendants. By implication the 'hole' in the earth is equated to their mother's birth canal since siblings, by definition, are born from the same mother. The emergence of a brother/sister sibling set supports the dogma of matriliny and safeguards dala claims to land.
The birth of Tudava, a Trobraind culture hero, also suggests a symbolic equation between women and earth. In the myth Tudava's mother, Bolutukwa (also named Mitigis according to Malinowski 1927c and 1932:155) lay sleeping in a grotto. Dripping water from a stalactyte (kaibua) "pierces her hymen, penetrates the vagina and thus "opens her" ..." (Malinowski 1932:359). Tudava emerged from the hole thus 'opened' by the dripping fluid from the stalactyte. It is significant that Bolutukwa was 'lying' on the ground. The water dripping from above eventually pierced Bolutukwa/earth below, making a 'hole' from which Tudava was born.

In the origin myth of Vakuta (Chapter 1) Togamolu's sister was able to return through the hole, from which she and her brother had emerged, to the underground domain where she continued to sleep. Togamolu, on the other hand, once he had emerged, was unable to do this. In this myth brother and sister maintain different connections to the earth: the sister retains her connection to the earth while her brother is irrevocably severed from it. It is significant that the means by which Togamolu finally secured his sister above ground was by fishing. He catches his sister and pulls her above ground in much the same way as a buribwari snatches his fish from under the water.

In Youwa's statement he mentions that women, like the uuna of a tree, 'sit on the ground'. This is, indeed, what women do. According to Vakutan etiquette, only women sit with their buttocks on the ground. It is considered inappropriate for men to sit on the ground. Instead, men squat without touching the soil. Again, women make physical contact with the earth while men avoid doing so (see also Malinowski 1935, Vol. 1:101).

Associations which symbolise women and land, and men and sky are found in the context of the garden. Here too there are several explicit references to women and their fertility. In many spells uttered by garden magicians in the past there were references to securing the 'fertility' of the soil. Characteristics of female fertility were used both in the paraphernalia of the magic and in
the text of the spells. The garden magician asked the 'belly' of the garden to 'swell as with child' in his spells. The corners of the garden plots are called nunula, 'its breast' or 'its breastmilk' (Malinowski 1935, Vol. 1:100 and Vol. 2:140).

While communal planting of yams is undertaken by men they engage in chants (vinavina). Malinowski recorded one of these which contains obvious references to female sexuality:

"Boginai ... is recently deflowered ... But your vulva, Bomigawaga ... over there at the corner of the fence, has for long time had a considerable circumference." (1935, Vol. 1:135-136)

By way of comment, Malinowski adds:

The obscene allusions in this spell are connected with the planting; the deeper the soil is broken up at the planting-spot, and the more thoroughly it is worked, the better will grow the [yam]. (1935, Vol. 1:136)

Garden soil has to have its fertility infused annually so that men can plant their seed yams in the 'belly of the garden' where they will regenerate. Only men plant yams. For this activity men gather in one garden at a time and plant the yams communally. Using long, stout digging sticks men break up the soil into small mounds, thrusting their poles deeply into the ground. It is during this activity that the chant recalling Bomigawaga's large orifice is recited. After the soil has been broken up, it is mounded and a seed yam is inserted into the side of the mound.

After the yams have been planted men again gather in the gardens to ritually 'plant' large poles (kavatam) for the vines to cling to when growing. When this has been done the gardens are festooned with erect poles stuck deep into the earth (Plate 5). Now they await the rains which 'feed' and nurture the soil. The magic for rain is controlled by men. Rain, an element from the sky, symbolises male sexuality and its penetrative role in preparing the fertility of the garden. Raindrops (semen) fall, striking the earth to penetrate deep into the soil and thus mold the growing yams in the 'womb' of the garden. The erect poles (penis) facilitate the piercing rain's journey into the earth (women).
Plate 5. Kavatam poles 'planted' in the soil.

In the context of the garden then, I suggest that men prepare and thereby restore the fertility of the soil. Planting and other specifically male activities in the garden represent symbolic intercourse with the land by means of male and female symbols. Men are preparing the fertility of the garden in the same way that they prepare the fertility of women.

The imagery of 'opening' the soil with a stout digging stick, making the hole large and soft thereby preparing the necessary conditions for fertility, the poles permanently thrust into the
garden soil, together with the hitting and penetrating fluid of raindrops accords well with Trobriand beliefs concerning the role of the male in preparing the fertility of women. Prior to this, however, men must anchor women's fertility. This they do through marriage.

Unmarried women enjoy a considerable degree of sexual freedom. They sleep with many different unmarried men. In this way they remain free of the responsibilities which weigh down their married sisters. Nor do unmarried women worry about conception. It is thought that a woman cannot conceive as long as she sleeps with different men. People say that a woman is only in danger of becoming pregnant when she repeatedly sleeps with one man. This behaviour is tantamount to marriage. Following marriage a woman is said to become 'heavy'; she is anchored to one man who prepares her for conception. The anchoring to one man marks the onset of a woman's fecundity. Hearthstones given at marriage represent the anchoring of a woman's sexuality; this is a precursor to a woman's fertility.

According to Malinowski (1927c and 1932) it is thought that women do not conceive through the fertilising agent of men. Instead, a man 'opens up' a woman through intercourse, thereby making it possible for a spirit child to enter her womb (c.f. Malinowski 1927c:31-44, 1932:154; Austen 1934-35:105; Powell 1968:603). Once 'opened up' repeated intercourse is thought to check the menstrual flow of the woman, again causing the necessary condition preliminary to pregnancy (Austen 1934-35:103-105). Once 'blocked', conception has been accomplished. The father's role is then to nurture the growth of the foetus by continued sexual intercourse. In this way seminal fluid is considered necessary to the growth of the child (Malinowski 1932:176-177; Austen 1934-35:112; Weiner 1977:122-123; see also E.R. Leach 1966, 1967a; and Rentoul 1931, 1932). Returning to the imagery of the garden, poles are equated with the penis which continually 'copulate' with the garden and thus nurture and mould the growth of yams. Rain, as a nurturing agent, assists the growing yams in the 'belly' of the garden. The rain acts as the moulding fluid transferred symbolically to the soil through the kavatam poles thrust deeply into the soil.
The connection between rain, 'opening up' a woman, and thus preparing the necessary condition for pregnancy to occur is further illustrated by a Vakutan myth which, "...describes how an ancestress of one of the sub-clans exposed her body to falling rain, and thus mechanically lost her virginity." (Malinowski 1927c:50-51; see also Barton 1917). This also recalls the manner in which Bolutukwa conceived Tudava by means of a dripping stalactyte.

While Youwa explicitly equates the buribwari with men, and I have already argued this in the context of the encoded meanings carved on the prowboard (Chapter 8), there is yet another context in which this connection can be made. This is in the implicit association between women and fish, which contrasts with men and buribwari.

Fish are symbolically connected to women. Fish are used in many contexts to symbolise women's sexuality and fertility. One of the preparatory activities described by Malinowski for the imbuing of fertility into the soil of the new gardens requires men to catch fish and ritually offer them to the garden magician (1935, Vol. 1:93-96). The magician selects some of the fish to put on the hearthstones in his house. I have already mentioned the symbolism of the hearthstone, noting its role in the weighing down, or anchoring of a woman's sexuality following marriage. With her sexuality weighed down, a woman is then prepared for fertility, in the same way that the garden's fertility is likewise weighed down by the combination of hearthstone and fish in these inaugural rites.

Fish are used in other contexts in which the community needs to re-establish order. Immediately following a death men, who are not among the deceased's clansmen, go to the lagoon and ocean to catch as many fish as possible. The catch is taken to the senior man of the deceased's dala. He distributes the fish amongst his clansmen. The objective is to free the entire village from restrictions (borabora) on normal village activities which are incurred after a death (Campbell ndc). Symbolically, the harvested fish represent an assurance to the
deceased's clan of its continued fertility. This assurance comes from the people (affines) who are responsible for the preparation of the deceased's clanswomen's fertility through marriage.

It is men alone who are responsible for catching fish. By implication it is men who are responsible for 'catching' women's fertility. The role of men in human reproduction, then, is to anchor through marriage and to prepare through continued intercourse the fertility of women. During the periodic run of sardines off the ocean coast of Vakuta Island many of these symbols are highlighted. Following the initial appearance of sardines, women, newly married men, and men whose wives are pregnant are forbidden to go near any location where the fish have been sighted, or are likely to go. The fact that these fish only run in large numbers illustrates to Vakutans their inherent fecundity. It is thought that the smell of human fertility, carried by women, and lingering on men who are intimately associated with women at the time when the fish appear, would frighten the shoals of fish away. Not only do men monopolise the netting of these fish, but only men have access to the ocean beaches during the time when these fish abound.

In the magic used to assist in shark fishing from Kaibola village off the north coast of Kiriwina, unmarried female baloma are asked to assist men in their endeavours to catch sharks. In a magical rite the magician again places fish on hearthstones:

The performer puts small parcels of the cooked fish ... and some betel nut on one of the three stones ... which are placed round a fireplace ... There he utters the following formula ... "Eat your ula'ula [offering of fish], 0 unmarried women, Inene'i," etc. (all these are personal names of female baloma). (Malinowski 1948a:207)

In this rite women are again associated with fish.

A further context in which associations between fish and female fertility are found is in the myth of love magic as it was recorded by Malinowski (1932:452-474). Towards the end of the myth, following the discovery of the entwined bodies of the brother and sister by the
man from Iwa Island, he returns to Iwa taking the sulumwoya sprig. In giving the magic to the youth of Iwa he tells them of the rules governing the effective use of the magic. In this there is frequent mention of fish. For example:

The water of this magic is Bokaraywata ... the youth of our village only should come and bathe in it. But a fish caught in these waters is taboo to them ... When such a fish is caught in the nets, they should cut off its tail, then the old people might eat it ...

When they come and bathe in the Bokaraywata and then return to the beach, they make a hole in the sand and say some magic. Later on in their sleep they dream of the fish. They dream that the fish spring (out of the sea) and come into that pool. Nose to nose the fish swim. If there is only one fish they would throw it out into the sea. When there are two, one female, one male, the youth would wash in this water. Going to the village, he would get hold of a woman and sleep with her. He would go on sleeping with her and make arrangements with her family so that they might marry ...

(1932:458)

While some of this text is self-explanatory, in need of comment are two separate directives given in respect of the handling of any fish found in the pool. The prohibition on eating fish found in the pool safeguards young people's sexual freedom from being anchored too soon. The myth clearly makes an association between physical contact with fish and marriage. It is suggested that bathing in the water when two fish swim 'nose to nose' anoints one's skin with their sexuality. This is thought to empower a man with the magic of attraction so that he cannot fail to seduce a woman, 'capture' her and make her his wife, thereby anchoring her sexuality. Upon marriage sexuality is controlled and channelled towards reproduction.

Perhaps the most direct association between fish and fertility is found in conception beliefs. According to the Trobriand doctrine concerning conception, it is said that fertilisation usually takes place in the shallow waters of the surrounding reefs:

To receive the waiwaia [spirit child] whilst in the water seems to be the most usual way of becoming pregnant. Often whilst bathing a woman will feel that something has touched
her, or even hurt her. She will say, "A fish has bitten me." In fact, it was the waiwaiata entering or being inserted into her. (Malinowski 1948a:218)

It is not that fish are the agents by which women are impregnated; indeed, this is decidedly not the case. Rather, fish represent fertility and are used metaphorically to refer to it (i.e. to gardens as well as to women). Thus, when a woman exclaims that "a fish has bitten her" she is alluding to the activation of her fertility; she has conceived and the reincarnating baloma, in its foetal phase, is being nurtured internally.

It makes good sense that in a matrilineal society symbols associated with those members who reproduce the social units should reflect anchoring or immobility. Each dala relies upon the process of recycling through women. Women's sexuality and fertility, therefore, find symbolic representation in various idioms which associate women with weight, heaviness, immobility, and anchoring.

Women of the land, men of the sea

In the foregoing, several examples were given to illustrate the extent to which men's ideological characterisation, likening women to earth and men to sky, is found in various symbolic contexts. This is further elaborated in the imagery which contrasts immobility with mobility. Again, this is explicit in Youwa's reference to women who, being like the bole of the tree, are anchored, and to men who, like the top of the tree, are mobile. For the purpose of contrasting immobility and mobility, however, let us transform the tree into a canoe.

The canoe remains conceptually identified with the tree that it once was by the retention of terms which recall its two ends. The uuna end retains its association with Vakutan earth and women, while the dogina end represents the ability of Vakutan men to become detached from Vakutan earth/women. As Youwa makes explicit, the dogina is also associated with the buribwari, which, while perched
on the **dogina** of a tree attracts and then acquires its prey, and is likewise perched at the head of the **dogina** end of a **masawa**, awaiting the capture of Kula shell valuables.

The prerogative of men to embark on overseas voyages to distant islands in search of shell valuables is the ultimate symbolic representation of their ability to detach themselves from their own island. This detachment from Vakuta is not only a physical one but also represents a symbolic detachment from group identity in **dala** as well as the attachments men have with other **dala** through marriage.

In Trobriand social organisation women are the focal points of diverse social units (**dala** and clan). In this context women are paramount. Men, however, make it possible for women's fertility to be activated. Although there is complementarity between the sexes in their roles as generators of society, it remains the case that names of women are immortalised while men's are not. In land litigation and claims of ownership to knowledge, property, etc., the names of female ancestors are recalled. In relation to beliefs in the cyclicity of life women are essential to the reincarnation of human beings. As Weiner has powerfully argued:

Trobriand women control immortality through the recapitulation of **dala** identity. Thus women's power over cosmic (ahistorical) time is singularly within their own domain ... Men ... cannot enter into the ahistorical domain of women, in which the continuity of **dala** identity is recapitulated through unmarked time; nor can men reclaim **dala** names lent to others; nor can men alone secure the indigenous reconstitution of **dala** hamlet and garden lands. From this view, Trobriand women participate on both the social and cosmic planes, but men are limited to the social. Even on the social plane, women are an integral part of control and power. Man can only control objects and persons which remain totally within a generational perspective of social time and space. Men, therefore, remain destined to seek their measure of immortality through perpetuating individual (as opposed to **dala**) identity.  

(1977:231-232)
There is no organisational means by which a man's claim to immortality is guaranteed. Men are simply reincarnated. In contrast, women's names are remembered, their renown ensured because it is through women that the immortality of dala is achieved.

It is of interest to note at this point that at birth children are given at least two names; one by the mother which is a dala name, the other by the father which is not necessarily a name from the father's dala (see also Weiner 1977:126). On Vakuta the father's name is used more regularly than the mother's. The name given by the mother, however, is inalienable and considered the 'real' name of a dala member. The differentiation of the two names and their different usage in social contexts supports my argument. A woman regenerates individuals into a corporate identity by recycling the dala's baloma and dala names. A father, on the other hand, does not confer his children's group identity. He is responsible for moulding the reincarnating baloma's features into a distinct individual while the mother is responsible for transferring group identity through blood. The different names represent the complementary inputs contributed by a child's mother and father to its identity. The use of the name given by a father throughout one's life is indicative of an individual's attempt to build upon personal renown. This is true of both girls and boys.

It is important for men in Vakutan society to have mobility, to have the means to detach themselves from a context in which women are the most valued members of society in their role as generators of dala identity and the vehicles through which men, in the end, rely for their social reincarnation. In this context there is no room for the establishment of a man's renown beyond his own lifetime.

On transforming a tree into a canoe, however, men are creating a vehicle by which they achieve mobility and upon which they search for the items which will help them create immortality. In Kula, men capitalise on their powers of beauty, attraction, persuasiveness, and magic to build upon their own name and thus, if successful, achieve fame, renown, and ultimate immortality.
The *dogina* of the tree represents the mobility of men, their ability to detach themselves from women-created *dala* and build upon personal renown. This achievement is represented by the *buribwari*:

*Manana buribwari naveka, yagala bogwa orakaiwa. Titolela lakarewaga.*

"The *buribwari* is a very big 'animal'. Already its name is above. By itself it makes the rules". (Ruguna Kuweiwa hamlet Vakuta village)

The more realistic representation of the egret on the other hand, symbolises the continual efforts of men to detach themselves from the land. It will be recalled that the egret must periodically renew its magic of attraction by returning to the woods (land). Like men, the egret never fully succeeds in absolute detachment from land. Men have always to return home and sublimate their mobile quest for personal renown. It is true that at one level men return home from Kula parading their success so as to enhance their status within the community. This is an important function of Kula on Vakuta. But status is only temporarily enjoyed and does not circumscribe their immutable identity and obligations to *dala* membership. The fact that men never do achieve total detachment from group identity as represented by the *buribwari*, is explained by beliefs in extenuating influences which further impede men's achievement of personal renown. These beliefs see women transformed into the highly dangerous witches who have achieved the very things men perpetually strive for.

Flying witches are enabled by their means of locomotion to invade the spheres ideally controlled by men. They detach themselves from land and invade the sky over the sea. Access to the skies through flight was lost by men and achieved (or retained) by women in the myth of the flying canoe. As witches, moreover, women are anti-social because they defy the anchored fertility necessary to the principle of matrilineal descent. If women become detached, there would be no one to regenerate society and act as the vehicle through which *baloma* are reincarnated. Women's reproductive powers are accordingly highly dangerous if not anchored: flying witches
represent uncontrolled feminine power. Flying witches also represent the greatest danger to men because they can, by invading the spheres of men, destroy the process by which men seek their personal immortality. Therefore, in their ideology men need to anchor women.

Setting sail on a Kula expedition effectively marks a symbolic detachment of the individual from his social persona which is normally embedded in the identity of dala membership, clan membership, and extra-dala affiliations. When on Kula business, a man is symbolically released from this identity. In Kula a man acts as an individual in pursuit of his own personal ambitions. These remain, of course, grounded within the aims and goals as they are valued by the community to which he must, in the end, return. But in Kula, he is released from the obligations and duties owed by him to his group. For instance, in attempts to attract particular valuables, clansmen compete with brothers; their individual beauty is personified and enhanced. It is personal magic which is jealously guarded (mwasila and kaimwasila). Singh Uberoi first suggested this aspect of Kula:

An examination of the social situations at these rituals reveals that the rites which punctuate the progress of an overseas expedition serve to mark out the social categories operative at home, within one district, and progressively loosen up their internal solidarity, so that canoe competes with canoe within the same fleet, and one man against another within the same canoe ... For the kula has two prongs: ... [and it suspends] the political identity between two fellow tribesmen. (1971:146-147)

Kula is therefore the occasion on which men are able to detach themselves from the identity given them through their association with women. Kula is a vehicle for the realisation of men's mobility (at sea) in contrast to the immobility (on land) of Vakutan women.

The foregoing argument outlining the boundaries between male and female symbolic spheres can be illustrated in a diagram which maps the spatial orientation of the sexes according to male ideology (Figure 12).
By comparing certain characterisations, we can further delimit these spheres in order to contrast the symbolic associations of male and female realms respectively:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>top of tree</td>
<td>base of tree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sky</td>
<td>earth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sea</td>
<td>land</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>above</td>
<td>below</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mobile</td>
<td>anchored</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>individual identity</td>
<td>corporate identity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>infertile</td>
<td>fertile</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Whereas in the domestic sphere a man's identity is rigidly bound to a specific corporate group and is controlled by the regenerative power of women, in Kula a man becomes detached from the time he sets sail on a canoe to cross the open seas. In Kula a man works for himself, drawing upon all his available resources in an attempt to build upon his own name. A man's individual renown, however, is extremely fragile. Ultimately a man's name is sustained through his control over other men, many of whom he has no face to face contact with but who are nevertheless pursuing their own goals and ambitions. The shells that carry a man's name have, if they are to generate his immortality, to pass through the hands of other men who are likewise engaged. At every stage around the circuit the fragility of a man's name is highlighted with the loss of the shells that carry it. In attempting to extricate their personal names from a corporate identity defined by women, men enlist symbols of male success. These symbols, in their various contexts, represent goals men try to achieve so as to succeed in the acquisition of status and renown. Although the symbolism of the ritual activities of Kula conveys messages concerning its value, it is the canoe, together with its elaborately carved and painted boards, which silently transmit the force of these symbols. Several of the design units on the boards (ginareu, ubwara, kiadada, weku, etc.), as well as the designation of one end as uuna and the other as dogina, recall the boundaries which mark spatial transformations from spheres of female influence to spheres of male power. Vakutan concepts of cyclicity, the movement in time from birth to death and thence to rebirth, are incorporated into colour symbolism and the imagery of particular body parts. Further, concepts of success, beauty, flight, and knowledge are incorporated into the kabitam repertoire. Finally, Kula is concerned with the achievement of mobility and the search for individuals' personal renown.

Matrilineal values require that women should be heavy and motionless; male ideology requires that their fertility be anchored by men. Men, however, are not bound by this regenerative role: they are merely members of the particular groups defined by women.
Men, therefore, must escape the submergence of their personally-created renown through mobility. The canoe represents this endeavour on the horizontal plane and is symbolically as well as quite literally the vehicle by which men experience their mobility.

According to this ideology, while the tree is anchored, matrilineal values prevail. Women 'give the rules'. As the tree grows, men gradually take control and transform the tree into a canoe. This affords men the detachment they require so as to facilitate their mobility. On the sea and in Kula the 'rules' of men prevail. Here corporate group identity is thrown overboard while men pursue the emblems which will carry their personal renown. Corporate group identity, however, in the form of flying witches, pursues and threatens to reclaim the personal renown men attempt to build when detached from Vakuta Island.

In its former state, the canoe represents a mediation between earth and sky. When transformed it represents a mediation between land and sea. The uuma end of the tree and canoe represents the essence of women's fertility, and hence matrilineal values. These are the anchoring force of Vakutan society. It is to the land of their birth that men must return from Kula adventures. Their corporate group identities can never be lost or wholly discarded. In Kula, however, men search for and augment personal renown. By enlisting symbols which embody powers of attraction, magic, and persuasion men seek to enhance their own individual talents.
1. At this point in the narrative one might question the informant's knowledge of the behaviour of a fish-eating bird of prey for it is surely unusual for such birds to actually dive into the water and risk getting its plumage wet and waterlogged. Some European studies refer, however, to the spectacular 'plunge' that the osprey makes as it goes for its prey. For example: "Best identified by hunting habits: systematically quarters water at heights from 15-50 m; hovers, plunges, entering feet first with spectacular splash" (Pizzey 1981:76).

2. Malinowski draws attention to the metaphorical usage of the parts of trees in several places; on each occasion the analogy is made with different phenomena (1922:433; 1935, Vol. 2:92). Elsewhere he wrote:

   In many subjects they distinguish these three elements: the u'ula [uuna], the tapwana, and the matala. The image is derived from a tree or a pillar or a spear: u'ula — in its literal sense the foot of the tree, the base, the foundation — has come, by extension, to mean cause, origin, source of strength; tapwana, the middle part of the trunk, also means the trunk itself, the main body of any elongated object, the length of a road; matala — originally eye, or point (as in a spear) and sometimes replaced by the word dogina or dabwana, the tip of a tree or the top of any high object — stands for the highest part, or, in more abstract metaphor, the final word, the highest expression. (1932:143)

There are two points concerning the words u'ula and dogina that need mention here. Firstly, Malinowski's use of u'ula is a dialectic preference. In the Vakutan dialect the -l- is often dropped and replaced by a -n-, making uuna. There are no glottal stops in Vakutan speech. Secondly, Malinowski is not consistent in his usage of dogina, matala, or dabwana. In 1922 (p. 433) he used dogina as the common reference to the tip of a tree, commenting that dabwana ('top' or 'head')
is sometimes used instead. Matala is not mentioned here. Later, in 1935 (Vol. 2:92) he wrote that dabwana refers to the 'head' while dogina refers to the 'tip'. Again matala is not referred to at all. According to my observations, Vakutans rarely use dabwana and matala, although they are sometimes substituted. Dogina is by far the more common term in use today.

3. Karisalem refers to the action of planting the seed yam in the side of the mound (pulu).

4. See also Barton 1917:109 for confirmation by Bellamy of the symbolic associations of rain.

5. Today Vakutans acknowledge what was taught to them by missionaries, government personnel and doctors concerning the fertilising agency of seminal fluid. At a certain level, however, their traditional belief is adhered to so that justification of matriliny and the regeneration of baloma into dala is maintained. To them the coexistence of substantially different beliefs is not a problem as long as they remain separate.
Plate 6.
Moored Masawa.
Conclusion: A Composite System of Communication

Although this thesis has been principally concerned with an analysis of the meanings encoded in the graphic system carved on the canoe prow- and splash-boards, my ultimate aim has been to place this within the wider social and cultural context. Prior to embarking on a Kula expedition, Vakutan men take great care in applying a fresh coat of paint to the canoe and its boards. Likewise, shell decorations are cleaned, polished, and finally attached to the top of the lagim and to the prow of the canoe. Only after the boards have been placed in position on the masawa do the encoded meanings become fused with the dynamics of Kula. Only after these essential preparations have been accomplished is the fleet ready to set sail. The prow- and splash-boards are an intrinsic part of the rituals of Kula and are considered by Vakutan men to be integral to their endeavour to attract Kula partners and acquire Kula shell valuables.

As an opening premiss I argued that Vakutan artists do not randomly carve forms onto the surface of the boards. Forms are carved into the wood in precise patterns executed by the skilled hand of the tokabitam artist. The predictable nature of these patterns enables us to speak of a Vakutan style which is a variant of a Trobriand and, ultimately, a Massim style. The forms have a purpose and a meaning which imparts to those who have the knowledge, and therefore the right to reproduce them, a special status within the society.

The nature of the communication system worked into the carved boards is multi-dimensional; meaning is encoded on the boards at different levels of signification. Through the precise delineation of form, a labelling scheme which identifies body-parts and 'animal' representations, and the application of colour, Vakutans have devised a complex system which communicates particular ideas. In employing the word level to describe the system, I do not wish to imply a relationship of hierarchy. Indeed, the system is not characterised
by the dominance of one mode of encoding meaning over others. Each
level is distinct, encoding meaning independently of the others.
Ultimately, however, these levels are inter-connected so that compre­
ensive concepts and ideologies can be communicated. An analogy which
illustrates the particular way in which I use the term level is that
of an archaeologist who, digging deeper into a site, discovers a
multitude of data at each stratigraphic level which further illuminates
what has already been uncovered. Similarly, uncovering the separate
levels at which meaning is encoded enriches those that have already
been uncovered.

In Section 2 of the thesis, my objective was to introduce these
levels and to demonstrate the kinds of information conveyed by each.
Graphic forms are combined in meaningful ways to convey certain
kinds of information: for example, the relationship of continuous
curvilinear forms to forms which are essentially self-contained, the
relationship between curvilinear forms to angular forms, and so on.
The formal properties of a graphic system reflect the way in which a
people 'see' aspects of the world around them. For example, the
predominance of volute and scroll patterns over more angular
configurations indicates particular aesthetic preferences in Vakutan
visual codes. The volute which delineates sections 2 and 3 on the
lagim recalls the tree; the base is anchored to the canoe prow
while the top is curved to represent mobility and the ability to
become detached. The use of form also enables space to be broken
up in a meaningful way. Body-part terminology, on the other hand,
encodes separate conceptual information. Vakutans use body-part
terminology as a referential system through which they attach
meaning to form and the spaces broken up by form. The values
Vakutans attribute to certain body-parts are transferred to the
boards. Yet another way in which meaning is encoded is by means of
the representation of natural species. By labelling a form buribwari,
for example, certain outstanding characteristics attributed to this
bird are encoded onto the form which the label identifies. In the
representational system forms are labelled according to an iconic or
schematic relationship between the signifier and that which is
signified. The colour symbolism of the art evokes further
interpretations and is centrally concerned with Vakutan experience,
as well as beliefs about transformations that take place in the
human life cycle. In combining the different meanings conveyed by these diverse modes of encoding information, broader conceptual issues emerge which compel further investigations in a wider context.

The graphic system employed by Vakutans on the canoe prow- and splash-boards is a cultural construct. Forms do not necessarily look like, nor are they necessarily intended to resemble the natural species with which they are associated. The 'work' ascribed to the 'animals' of the kabitam repertoire is not a realistic characterisation of the natural behaviour of the named animals. Rather, the behavioural attributes of the kabitam 'animals' are themselves elaborate conceptualisations which reflect the ambitions of Vakutan men and the means by which they set out to achieve them. The representational system merely offers a superficial interpretation of the forms, identifying them simply by name. From there, exegesis develops so that cultural characterisations can be explored and a new kind of 'animal' emerges. The relationship between the signifier and the signified is not merely one between natural phenomena and their representation, be it iconic or schematic. In the case of the Vakutan graphic system the signified is a conceptualisation that incorporates into the animals' 'work' specific ideologies which together encode the presumptive success of Kula and what it means to Vakutan men. In applying the various conceptualised representations one is able to build upon levels of interpretation so that the encoded meaning is elucidated.

The graphic system does not exist in isolation. Unlike Western concepts of art which view art as something that can exist for its own sake, in most other societies art is created for specific contexts, and to fulfil particular functions. Taken out of its context, much of the value of what art communicates is lost, the story half told. The kabitam repertoire, in its entirety, has a job to do, and it is for this purpose that the designs are carved into the boards. Their job is to assist men in the acquisition of shell valuables and thereby achieve success in the pursuit of status and renown. It is in this context that interpretations of the graphic system are enriched. By looking at the meanings of the various rituals associated with Kula, including the preparation of the canoe, the
voyage to distant islands, the transactions between partners, and
the rituals of returning home, the value of the encoded meanings
on the prow- and splash-boards is further elucidated.

The art of Kula is a dynamic medium of communication. The art
of the Kula and the associated systems of meaning are on a wider
basis integrated with systems of communication found in other
spheres of social experience. Rituals connected to the garden as
well as those employed in fishing, in marriage, conception and
childbirth encode information that has significance for basic
Vakutan ideologies. While each system of communication operates
independently of others, all are interlinked to complement and
enrich the meanings of each. In this way themes which are concerned
with basic Vakutan ideologies receive endless elaboration and
permutation. In seeking the meanings encoded within each medium
of communication we begin to understand the complexity with which
ideologies are constructed and reinforced. We cannot hope to
understand what the graphic system utilised on canoe prow- and
splash-boards means without also seeking to understand the art
of doing Kula. Likewise, the rituals of Kula, the transactions,
and the fears associated with the Kula enterprise can only be
fully understood when the meanings encoded in the graphic art have
also been discovered. The relationship these meanings have in
the wider social context must also be explored before we can begin
to appreciate the significance of the buribwari/boi, and uuna/
dogina to Vakutans. The art of Kula is not merely reducible to
relationships between the individual signifiers and signifieds,
nor to ideal and experienced aspects of behaviour between Kula
partners. The art of Kula is about Vakutan society as a whole,
reflecting in particular the ideological relationships between men
and women on Vakuta Island.
Plate 9. Gigimwa's dogina tabuya, Sopila Kitava.
Plate 10. Gigima'a's uuma tabuya, Sopila Kitava.
Plate 11. Youwa's uma tabuya, Sopila Kitava.
Plate 12. Rurupa's uuna lagim Sopila-Wakuta.
Plate 15. Gigimwa's dogina lagim, Sopila Kitava.
Plate 16. Youwa's uuna lagim, Sopila Kitava.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>baloma</td>
<td>Spirits of the dead.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>beba</td>
<td>Butterfly. Also the name given to part of the <em>lagim</em> (see Chapter 6).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bisila</td>
<td>Pandanus streamers attached to the sail and boom of canoes. Also the name of a ceremonial advance (<em>bibisilasi</em> - they will engage in <em>bisila</em> display) on Kula partners when a new canoe has made its maiden voyage.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>boi</td>
<td>Egret. Also the name given to one of the forms in the <em>kabitam</em> repertoire.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>borabora</td>
<td>Restrictions on noise, dance, laughter, etc. placed on a community immediately following a death.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>budakola</td>
<td>A mixture of charred coconut flesh and coconut oil which is used as black pigment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bulubula</td>
<td>Colourless.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bulubwalata</td>
<td>The magic of sorcery and evil magic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>buribwari</td>
<td>Osprey. Also the name given to a form in the <em>kabitam</em> repertoire.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bwabwau</td>
<td>Black.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bwagau</td>
<td>Sorcerer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bwau</td>
<td>Rain clouds.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bweyani</td>
<td>Red.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dabila</td>
<td>Head.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dala</td>
<td>Sub-clan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>debumwoya</td>
<td>Banana leaf skirt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>digadegila</td>
<td>Sulphur crest of the cockatoo. Also sometimes used to refer to green, brown or yellow colours.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dodoleta</td>
<td>Forms on canoe boards carved to hold the white pigment (see Chapters 5 and 6). Also a particular tree.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
dogina  The top of a tree. Also refers to the 'male' end of a canoe.

doka  Mythical animal, related to thought (-doki is the verb stem meaning 'to think'; see also Chapter 6). Also a name given to a form in the kabitam repertoire.

dudubila  Dark or dull.

duduwa  Small, light green garden snail. Also a name given to a form in the kabitam repertoire.

duku  A strong creeper used to pull heavy loads.

geguda  Unripe.

genata  Raw.

ginareu  Hermit crab. Also a name given to a form in the kabitam repertoire.

gogosu  Antennae of insects.

gwadi  Child.

igavau  First pregnancy.

kabisivisi  Giving seed yams to a man's sister(s).

kabitam  A high order of knowledge achieved through magic and training.

kabitam ginigini  The knowledge of carving.

kabulu  Beak.

-kai-  Noun classifier for tree, or wood-like objects.

kaíbua  Stalactite.

kaídada  A horizontal piece of wood, referring particularly to the front boards of a yam house platform.

kaígiligela  Wooden paddle or hammer used to hit the kaiwawaiya and thus cut a line into wood.

kaimalaka  Pigment produced by red ochre or the dye extracted from Bixa orellana.

kaimata  New garden cleared and planted with seed yams following harvest festivities.
<p>| <strong>kaimwasila</strong> | Magic that involves the use of parts of particular plants or trees. When mixed together these become powerful. It is believed to act on the minds of others. |
| <strong>kaisipu</strong> | A particular snake who resides in mangrove and swampland. It is a significant part of the magic of kabitam. |
| <strong>kaiwawaiya</strong> | Sharp tools, today nails, used in carving lines into the surface of wood. |
| <strong>kaiyau</strong> | Throat. |
| <strong>kaiyaula</strong> | An exchange relationship between a man and his wife's brother which involves the building of a Kula canoe for the former. |
| <strong>kalavabusi</strong> | An offering of betel-nut, coconuts, and bananas to male baloma, entreat ing them to remain at home rather than accompany a Kula expedition. |
| <strong>kamgwa</strong> | A small second garden cultivated as a back-up source of food when the origabu becomes depleted and the new garden is not yet ready for harvest. |
| <strong>kamkokola</strong> | The upright supports of a yam house roof which are removed upon the death of the yam house owner and kept as remembrances. |
| <strong>kapaiyauwa</strong> | Horseshoe bat. Also a name given to a form in the kabitam repertoire. |
| <strong>karawa</strong> | Fern frond. Also a name given to a form in the kabitam repertoire. |
| <strong>karibudaboda</strong> | Payment of yams at harvest for the building of a Kula canoe. |
| <strong>karisalem</strong> | Action of planting a seed yam in the side of the prepared mound. |
| <strong>-kateta</strong> | To be sharp, as a knife. Carvings may also be called 'sharp' if they have been finely carved. |
| <strong>kavasaku</strong> | The carving of an initiates' first boards inside his house. |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>kavatam</td>
<td>Poles inserted into the earth as supports for the yam vines.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kaytalugi</td>
<td>A 'race' of women believed to inhabit a distant island who have insatiable sexual appetites.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>keda</td>
<td>Route, path.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kema</td>
<td>Axe.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kewou</td>
<td>Fishing canoe.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kipoum</td>
<td>Small hand knife used to dig out carved lines.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kitoum</td>
<td>A term which distinguishes the personal ownership of valuables from non-ownership. This is used particularly in relation to Kula shell valuables.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kosobu</td>
<td>Holes carved through the bottom of the lagim's loops through which ropes are passed so as to secure the lagim to the prow of the canoe.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kovesa</td>
<td>Yam harvest festival.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kudila</td>
<td>Teeth.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kudu-</td>
<td>Possessive form for teeth. Also the closing transaction to a Kula path.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kuvi</td>
<td>Long yams (Dioscorea alata).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-kwai-</td>
<td>Noun classifier distinguishing all round or amorphous objects.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kwaikwaiya</td>
<td>An institution whereby people raid the household of someone who 'comes first' in Kula, yam competitions, boat races, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kwila</td>
<td>Penis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kwita</td>
<td>Octopus.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lagim</td>
<td>Splash-board on the Kula outrigger canoe.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lilau</td>
<td>White clay taken from the foot of the reefs to use as white pigment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mageaweda</td>
<td>Flying fox.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>masawa</td>
<td>Kula outrigger canoe.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
matila  Eyes.
matua  Ripe.
menu  Cooked.
migila  Face.
miludoga  Name given to specific designs carved on the lagim, tabuya, and steering paddle.
minakabitam  People who possess valuable knowledge of the kabitam order.
minutoula  Name given to a specific form utilised in the kabitam repertoire and associated by Vakutans with a mythical 'animal'.
mulukwausi  Flying witches.
muluveka  Sea-eagle.
mwari  Kula armshell
mwarikau  Highest ranking classification for armshells.
mwata  Dobuan generic term for snake.
mwenogu  Mature.
-na-  Noun classifier referring to women, all non-humans, and heavenly bodies.
nagega  Style of Kula outrigger canoe used by people of Iwa, Gawa, and Muruwa.
nakubukwabuya  Female youth.
nanoula  'Mind', located in the chest/stomach.
nugwenigwe  Grass, weeds. Also used as an aesthetic term to describe something too confused and cluttered with too many lines.
-nukwari  To know.
numila  Dew.
nunula  Breast or breastmilk.
olumata  The name given to the ocean side of the island.
orakaiwa  Above.
origabu The old garden, declared after yams have been harvested from it. It continues to yield other foodstuffs in the second year of its cultivation.

otenauwa Below.

papa Wall. Also the name of an 'animal' in the kabitam repertoire.

pepeni A gift of raw yams given by a bride's kin to the bridegroom's kin immediately following marriage.

pinipanela Wings.

pitupitu A description of something that is chipped and full of dents or lesions.

pokala A noun describing a gift of wealth items given in solicitation of magic, land, Kula routes, etc.

pokiyou Ashes.

pulu Mound in which a seed yam is inserted.

pupwakau White.

pwaka Lime baked from coral.

pwanana Hole.

pwanasi Mixture of water or oil with charred coconut husk and ashes used for black pigment. It was used particularly for putting on a baby's fontanelle and for face paint.

rigogo Adze.

sagali Ceremonial distribution.

sawila Sandpiper. Also a name given to a form in the kabitam repertoire.

sigala Brightness.

soba Face paint.

sopi Water, or liquid. Also the term applied to magical concoctions.

sopila School of carving.
sosula  Gift of a shell valuable offered to tokwai to appease them.
sulumwoya  Scented leaves from the mint bush used as body decoration and in magical concoctions.
tabuya  Prowboard on the Kula outrigger canoe.
takola  A marriage gift of male valuables given by the bridegroom's kin in payment for the raw yams given by the bride's kin.
taregesi  A kind of shellfish which attaches itself to sago palms. Also a name given to a form in the kabitam repertoire.
tasasoria  Ceremonial race of Kula canoes.
tau  Man.
-to-  Noun classifier specifying all human males. Also used to specify all humans in a context which compares humans with non-humans.
tokabitam  A man who has received the magic and technical instruction to make him 'knowledgeable' and in possession of a specific 'knowledge'.
tokataraki  An uninitiated carver who has no specific carving knowledge.
tokwai  A sprite thought to inhabit trees, stumps, and boulders. They are thought to occasionally cause harm to human beings in the form of bites, swellings, etc.
tokwalu  The name given to the figure(s) at the top, centre of the lagim. The figure(s) is said to represent humanity. The word is also used in contexts where an image of something is being referred to.
toliwaga  Owner of a canoe.
toulatile  Male youth.
tubukona  Moon, the Vakutan 'month'.
tubuniwola  Body of the moon.
tumila     Foundations, hamlet land.
ubwara     Wild yam. Also the name of a form in the kabitam repertoire.
ulaula     Gift of a shell valuable offered to tokwai to appease them.
ureri      Striations that occur on conus shells once the epidermis has been removed.
urigubu    Gift of fruits of a tree or produce from a garden given by a man to any one of his female relatives.
uuna       Base or bole of a tree, also 'female' end of a canoe.
vaga       Opening transaction to a Kula path.
vaiguwa    Kula shell necklace.
vakapula    Payment in the form of cooked and uncooked food, tobacco, and betel-nut for work rendered.
vau        Squid. The ink is used as black pigment.
vaula kaukweda Gift of uncooked pig flesh to a man's son(s).
vilakuri    Return payment of takola in the form of raw yams given by the bride's kin at the harvest following the marriage.
vivila     Women.
wadila      Mouth.
waiwaia     Reincarnated spirit child.
wa pasa     The name given to the lagoon side of the island.
weku       A mythical 'animal' carved in the kabitam repertoire.
weyugwa    A creeper used to lash gunwale planks to the dug-out canoe.
yagila     Wind.
yamila     Arms.
yeluyelu

The white water which follows the crash and retreat of a wave.
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