A Study of Time as Being according to the Keraakie
People of Southwest Papua New Guinea

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ABSTRACT

The Kerakie people's concepts of time are radically different to Western ones. So as to set a framework for this study the Western theories of time, especially McTaggart's A-series and B-series understandings which divide philosophers into two opposed camps, are considered briefly. Through a study of the Kerakie language, culture and history, this thesis will observe how they have considered the repetitious phenomena of the universe and developed their time concepts. The latter, which are built around the linear flow of events from the future into the present and backwards into the past, will be compared with those of other societies. To the Kerakie, time is chaotic, qualitative, relational and concrete, while their primary concept is that people are time, set out in their biological calendar. Time also is religious: emerging from the past mythological era, which is the basis of the present and the source of the future foretold in dreams. The latter I call 'mystical' time. The Kerakie do not have a word for time but see it as 'being', which leads to a comparison with Heidegger's ideas. Kerakie 'being' is a struggle to survive in the weather extremes of the infertile Trans-Fly savannah. Death is seen by the Kerakie as the end of time: involving the shattering of social relationships, the cessation of human life, and the commencement of the hostile existence of the ghost. Their time concepts are symbolic of and attempts to resolve their struggle with hunger, social disharmony, conflict with the spirit world and the finality of death. Influenced by a radical change in their understanding of future time and driven by dissatisfaction with their life, they have reinterpreted their traditional religion. This has given rise to 'cargo' movements whose history in relation to time is discussed.
# A Study of Time as Being according to the Keraakie People of Southwest Papua New Guinea

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I first heard of the Keraakie people in December 1966 just after I arrived at Suki in the Trans-Fly area of southwest Papua New Guinea. Two pastors (with their families) were being sent by the Evangelical Church of PNG to take up a long-standing request to live and work at Arufi village. During that year the airstrip at that village had been completed and in October 1967 the people of the surrounding area assembled for the opening. I flew in with the opening party and was immediately impressed with the friendliness of the Keraakie people. Through the medium of the English language, the younger men stressed their desire to read and write their own language, so I resolved to learn it and write a literacy course for them. On that initial visit, I began writing up a basic word list in the nambo language, but since I was working at that time at Suki, which is 90 km to the north, I was limited in what I could do about this literacy course. Seeking to increase my knowledge of their language, I visited the Keraakie villages in January 1968, being the first of my regular visits over the next eleven years. In learning this language, I was also able to learn from a number of the Keraakie who had moved to Suki for a three-year leadership training course. The literacy programme, which was written during 1968-69, was snapped up by the younger Keraakie men who then taught themselves to read and write, with the assistance of the Suki pastors and their own literate villagers.

During this period, I read F.E. Williams' classic ethnography on the Keraakie people, Papuans of the Trans-Fly, and this stimulated my interest in their culture. Williams had lived for five short periods at Bebeven village during 1926-32, and much had changed since that time. This surprised and provoked me to compare his research with what I observed many years later. He stressed at that time that their culture was unstable, rapidly changing, and was in an advanced state of disorganization and decadence, an assessment with which I agreed. Their oral history verified that this was normal since they were always adapting their culture...
to meet the changing situation. During this time I also consulted the PNG government archives to check what other information was available about this society in patrol or annual reports and these greatly helped my research.

In response to their invitation, I built a house at Arufe village in 1977 with the help of local villagers, and continued to visit them whenever my work at Suki permitted. With my wife and daughters, I moved into this village in September 1981 to live among them. I received orthographic assistance from linguists Murray and Joan Rule, as I continued to learn and write up the Keraakie language. Numerous people in the Keraakie villages of Arufe, Bebdeven and Gubaav (and also their dialectical neighbours in the villages of Derideri, Pongarki, Bilmavedeen, Taz and Keru) were consulted so as to discover their history and culture. These people were very friendly and free with information regarding their traditional ceremonies and myths, which I noted in my diaries during the six years (1981-1987) we lived at Arufe village. Aniba Bunai of Arufe village (President of the Morehead Local Government Council), who died in 1987, was the main source of Keraakie oral history and culture for my study. Many of the other older men (Zuga Taakwam, Dungaari Goriman and Taaga Yaavus of Bebdeven village; Yeekimu Yokkar, Marat Wekam, Saawi and Nuwira Bevek of Gubaav village; Said Gaavo, Wamboi Yaavus, Mege Waianda, Maraaga and Peter Sarau of Arufe village) also added valuable information as we frequently met together to discuss Keraakie culture.

Being a Christian missionary, I was most concerned about their world view so that I might understand the way they thought, what they regarded of value, their beliefs, and their basic assumptions. Owing to their requests for medical, educational, economic help, assistance was given to the community and the private airstrip at Arufe was developed for use by larger aircraft. The translation of the Gospel of Luke in the Keraakie language was completed in 1983, and this was followed by the translation of six other New Testament books as well as an Old Testament survey. Leaders were trained and those with High School education were sent to the Christian Leaders Training College at Banz for more theological training. We returned to Australia in December 1987, but I have made six short
The villages marked on the map belong to the same language family, while only the Keraake villages are underlined.
CHAPTER 1
KERAAKIE BACKGROUND

Context has a major bearing on the time concepts of the Kerakie people, therefore
this chapter will consider the general background of this Trans-Fly people. The
physical environment and its meteorological patterns will be described, followed by
an assessment of the Kerakie population, their neighbours, their language, their
economics and the history of this non-Austronesian people.

The Trans-Fly (an introduced name since the Kerakie do not have a name for
this whole area) is made up of flat lightly timbered savannah plains which stretch
from the swampy edges of the Fly River in the east and north, west to the Digoel
River in Irian Jaya, and are bounded on the south by the Torres Strait. Among the
plains (fani) can be found infertile areas of acidic soil (bingel) on which only stunted
trees and spiky grass grow. During the north-west monsoons this area receives
between 1,500 to 2,000 mm of rain on average each year and is subject to flooding
(pnana). The Trans-Fly plateau is about ten meters above sea level, with small areas
of rainforest (orang) scattered along the banks of creeks or on occasional higher
ground. The wet season flooding lasts approximately for the first five months of the
year before drying out during the dry season. On the southern side of this plateau,
seven rivers (the Oriomo, Binaturi, Pahoturi, Mai Kussa, Wassi Kussa, Morehead,
and Bensbach) drain into the Torres Strait, while on the eastern and northern sides
four major swamp and creek systems (the Bituri, Boitamgu, Burei, and Suki) flow
into the Fly River.

The Kerakie people live on a narrow sliver of land barely twenty kilometers
wide stretching north and south between the Wassi Kussa and the Fly rivers. The
dominant feature is the Wassi Kussa River which emerges from wet season swamps
in the north and flows southwards into the Torres Strait. In the dry season the water
ceases to flow, leaving the inland creeks as just a string of water holes. As a result,
the tides push salt-water inland as far as Taarkor, near the old village of Sapalam to
the north of Arufe village. When the tide goes out it leaves a narrow channel in the Wassi Kussa, exposing thick muddy banks, which makes it difficult to cross. At the southern end of the Keraakie land there is a rippling effect which has produced a series of ridges and hills around the village of Arufe and to the south of it. In the centre of Keraakie land, a small ridge lies along an east-west line, upon which the villages of Pongarki, Derideri, Bebdeven and Bimadeven lie, being like a watershed backbone for the Trans-Fly. On the northern side of this ridge, beginning at the villages of Gubaav and Bimadeven, thick jungle stretches northward until it eventually meets the Burei and Boitamgu swamps near the Fly River.

The Keraakie use these raised patches of rainforest for gardening yams, cassava, taro, sweet potatoes, sugar cane, bananas and pineapples, and as a result they build their villages near them. Because of overuse of the environment, the villagers frequently move further afield to more fertile land. During the dry season (May till November) the Keraakie harvest their crops and live off their gardens, but frequently have to go great distances to find clean water. In the wet season (December to May), the mosquitoes, march flies and leeches hatch, making life miserable for the Keraakie. At this time they forage widely for nuts, berries, roots, bamboo shoots and other jungle foods, since their gardens are not bearing. The villagers in the northern half of the Keraakie land move to the swamps on the south bank of the Fly River to harvest sago palms and hunt for animals, whereas the southern Keraakie move on to the Wassi Kussa River system to fish and scavenge for shellfish, fruit and nuts. Wallabies, cassowaries, bandicoots, pigs, goannas, snakes and deer are occasionally found in the Trans-Fly, and the Keraakie hunt them with only moderate success. In the rivers, crocodiles, fish, prawns, turtles, shellfish and eels are found and along with the numerous bush and water birds, these make up their diet.

The Keraakie people live in the villages of Arufe, Sapalam, Bebeven and Gubaav east of Morehead, the government headquarters for the Trans-Fly area in the Western Province. The population of these villages, according to the census figures held at the local government council chambers at Morehead in 1993 were: Arufe/Sapalam: 156 persons, Gubaav: 152 persons, Bebeven: 78 persons. These three villages, about whom Williams wrote in his 1936 study called *Papuans of the
Trans-Fly, are part of a larger society involving the villages of Derideri, Pongarki, Mata, Drai, Keru, Garaita, Mibini, Mari, Taz, Yoga and Bimadeven, to which they are linguistically and culturally linked. This society does not have a name, but each dialectical segment has its own name. Some villages are a mixture of two or more segments such as Keru, which has absorbed the Kargar people from old Dorro village. The language of the Keraakie people is a non-Austronesian one, and belongs to the linguistic family of the Morehead River, which K.A. McElhanon and C.L. Voorhoeve called Keraki.\(^1\) The villages closest to the Keraakie (Derideri and Pongarki) speak a similar dialect while villages further away have a lesser correlation, but they understand each other. A comparison between these dialects reveals that the Keraakie people and the Yarne people of Pongarki and Derideri have an 80% linguistic correlation, while the Tentue people of Taz and Mari only have a 50% dialectic correlation with the Keraakie. Because Yarne children are being educated at Arufu and Gubaav schools, they now speak the Keraakie dialect. The peoples of this dialectic family name their language after their differing words for ‘what’.

\[
\begin{array}{|l|l|}
\hline
\text{PEOPLE AND VILLAGES:} & \text{LANGUAGE NAME} \\
\hline
\text{Keraakie (Arufu, Sapelam, Bebeveen, Gubaav):} & \text{nambo (what)} \\
\text{Yarne (Pongarki, Derideri):} & \text{nambo } " \\
\text{Tendeew/Walal (Mata, Garaita, Drai, Mibini):} & \text{nama } " \\
\text{Kargar/Moieuwe (Keru):} & \text{neme } " \\
\text{Ekemer (Bimadeven):} & \text{nen } " \\
\text{Tentue (Taz, Mari):} & \text{ne } " \\
\text{Parb (Yoga):} & \text{le } " \\
\hline
\end{array}
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The earliest oral history contains the memories of migrations from the south, as hinted at in Williams’ recording of the myth of flood, the migration by Iwa and Pala from the north-east and an account by Power of Pongarki village who told of a migration from the north-west.\(^2\) Some of these histories have been incorporated into Keraakie mythology, while others remain separate. Other migrations are hinted at but
there is no certain memory of the actual movement of peoples. An example of this is the origin of the Zirgu clan of Arufe, a group declared to be a late arrival from the Keru or Bimadeven area, but with no one remembering from where they came. The fact that they have a slightly different origin in the mythical stories verifies this deduction.

The major events of the Keraakde oral history were the headhunting raids of the Tegeri (Marind-Anim) of the Meranke area in West Papua, who began raiding the Weezdevenyue people of Mari and the remnants fled inland to Tenzuweviiyu. The next to suffer were the Baro people, who lived on the coast, and the survivors joined the Tenpe people of Moibu village, who were themselves the next victims of the Tegeri, and the remnants fled inland to live with the Yarne people of Derideri village. Another coastal people called the Kandog were attacked and wiped out. At the village of Yoga lived the Bendav people, who suffered so much from the Tegeri raiders that the survivors moved into the jungle on Strachan Island to live at Zo village. At this point the Tegeri moved inland up the Wasti Kussa River and attacked Meet village. One family escaped up this river system and built a new village also named Meet among the Idi people. At Omankate village, the Mazi people were slaughtered by the Tegeri and a handful fled inland to Pongarki village.
The Sen villagers also suffered and hid in the jungle, until the danger was over, and later they linked up with the remnants of the Tentue people. On Jari Island, the Bedinye people lived in Badimandi village, where they were attacked by the Tugeri. During the first attack, these people swam across the river or fled in canoes to live among the Keraakie people. Later they returned to Badimandi, where they were surprised by the Tugeri again and slaughtered. I knew Bereg, the last of the Bedinye people, who died in 1985 in Bimadeven. Between 1889-91, they attacked many villages further east along the coast and on neighbouring islands, but in some cases they were driven off with newly acquired guns. As a result the Tugeri turned their attention to the Wassi Kussa where they caught the small Bedinye tribe the neighbours of the Keraakie people. The survivors moved to live with the Keraakie who were to become the next victims of the Tugeri. Attacks took place on Arufe, Sapolam and Bebedeven, killing a number of people, abducting children, stealing or destroying many sacred items.

The Lieutenant Governor of Papua, William MacGregor, came to investigate and assessed the state of the population:

The tribes of the Wassi Kussa and Mai Kussa districts have been hunted down like wild beasts; communities have been broken up and the people massacred until there is only the merest remnant left. They were living a life of extreme misery and discomfort on account of their dread of the Tugeri. They are in a state of feverish dread.

MacGregor returned year after year, hoping to put an end to this slaughter, until finally he intercepted the Tugeri on 12 May 1896. A major battle took place at Wiyai Sur on the Wassi Kussa River between the police and the Tugeri headhunters, bringing an end to their raids on the Keraakie. After this, the Dutch colonial government established a base at Merauke among the Tugeri in 1906 and their raiding ceased.

Other visitors to the Wassi Kussa River were the Rev. Samuel McFarlane of the London Missionary Society, who had set up a mission station on Murray Island (traditionally named Mer) in the Torres Strait in 1871. In 1875, with Octavius C. Stone, he visited Arufe in the mission boat, the Ellengowan, looking for villages where the mission might place workers. They saw a Keraakie man on the Wassi
Kussa River but when they tried to make contact he fled, causing them to leave gifts to show their good intentions. In 1888, Strode Hall led an exploratory expedition up the Wassi and Mai Kussa river system, and gave those names to them. The Kerakie only called these rivers eergev (river). That year McFarlane instructed the Pacific Island workers on the coast to try and contact the inland peoples with a view to presenting the Christian Gospel. An unconfirmed story about the murder of one of these evangelists is common knowledge among the villagers of the Trans-Fly.

During this era the Kerakie suffered the loss of two men in a headhunting raid by their traditional enemies, the Diblag tribal people. As a result they carried out a payback raid on the village of Yor, killing nine people. The Government reacted quickly and a patrol, lead by Acting Magistrate Jicaj, caught the Kerakie and their allies celebrating at Gembemb village in August 1901. In the punitive attack three men and two women lost their lives. This devastating blow led to the pacification of the Kerakie, and a force of armed police was placed at Tereer village to ensure peace was maintained. After a while the policemen moved to Arufe and then later to Bebeven. In 1914, they left to set up a base at Tonda in order to meet the threat of the Tugeri headhunters on the Morehead River. Government officers occasionally moved through the area and appointed village policemen (mamust) as representatives of the colonial government. In October 1950 the government station was moved to Rouku on the Morehead River. Owing to the construction of an airstrip near Garaiga in 1959, a new station was built there and named Morehead.

One of the early European visitors was a trader named Luff from a plantation at Mabaduan village near Daru. As he moved through the newly opened Trans-Fly area he traded knives, axes, clothes, and so on for cultural artifacts. When he arrived at Bebeven he noticed a large pile of yams on a platform in the middle of the village. Ignorant of what it was, he told the young men that he wanted to buy the yams. The village leaders were not in the village at the time, and the younger men handed over the yams, for which Luff paid with trade items. When the elders of the Bebeven returned they were shocked to find that their sacred yam fertility shrine, called a wolombo, had been desecrated. These yams were offerings to the primeval spirit beings and sacred bull-roarers, for the fertility of the next crop. The elders believed this offensive action resulted in the cursing of their gardens, leaving them infertile.
When F.E. Williams, the Government anthropologist, came in July 1926, he learned of this fertility ritual and asked to see it performed. Makau, the Bebeleven leader, told him that they did not perform that anymore. Williams asked the reason and was told of the desecration of their shrine by the European trader. As he inquired more into the culture, Williams observed that this incident "had given rather a severe set back to Keraakie feasts and ceremonies".11 Seeking to help the depressed people, Williams' attempts to encourage a revival of this fertility ritual were rejected, "when Makau and Gairi told me of the ceremony they declared flatly that they did not wish to perform it again". During Williams' many visits from 1926-32, he considered that their culture was in an advanced degree of disorganization and decadence, with many ceremonies becoming just memories.12

This contact with European explorers, adventurers, traders and Government officers exposed the Keraakie people to many illnesses, which they had never experienced before. Epidemics occurred and were written up in reports so the colonial administration sought to protect the health of the villagers. Patrol officer A.P. Logan carried out a smallpox vaccination programme of the whole area during 1913 and 1914.13 A coughing sickness killed approximately 200 people in the Trans-Fly area in 1919, and venereal diseases increased during this period.

During this era of colonial peace, Mamana from Boigu Island, Mapa and Oasi from Buzi village, Ari and Sawro from Yoga village began to visit the Keraakie villages and teach the Christian Gospel. They also visited Tonda village where they encouraged the villagers to build a church, but because permission had not been sought from the Australian administration, a patrol officer ordered it to be burnt down.14 These evangelists introduced the pattern of an end-of-the-day meeting for prayer and singing and the setting aside the Sunday as a day of rest. These rituals were supervised by prominent men who were appointed as 'deacons'. In 1916 a patrol officer noted that a senior man in the community rang a 'bell' and the people assembled for prayer lasting about five minutes.15 Williams described this tradition during 1926-32.
After being months in Bebeveen village, I once surprised a well-attended 'prayer meeting' at the far end of the village and thus got wind of the thing for the first time. The elderly 'deacon' was one of my pet informants, but he had hitherto revealed no trace of Christian influence. When I pursued the subject with him later he seemed oddly ashamed of it, and at the same time conscious of a certain humour in the situation. And yet, however ignorant the 'deacon' and congregation of Christian teaching, the meetings were conducted with decorum and even earnestness.16

In some villages the ritual was performed most conscientiously and the villagers enforced the Sunday as one of quietness and rest. If anyone was caught working or making a noise, the guilty person was punished with hard work, such as cleaning up the village on the Monday. Suga of Bebeveen voluntarily went down to the coast villages to learn more of this new religion. The acceptance of a nominal form of Christianity was also noted in December 1945 during a visit by missionaries of the Unevangelized Fields Mission to the area. “At quite a few villages, morning and evening prayers were being held by the local village policemen or one of the headmen. The villagers assembled and in a quiet, dignified manner, prayer was offered.”17

In April 1921, the Suki people of Lake Saru attacked the village of Wendeveen (a garden place north of Bimadeven), killing four people and capturing a baby girl for adoption.18 A punitive attack took place on the Suki villages of Neysaku and Idigwagi and a number were killed, before the policemen withdrew. This was the last attack by the Suki headhunters upon the people of this area. During these early years of contact with Westerners, a number of Keraakie were contracted to work on copra plantations in eastern Papua, and a number of these men died from unknown diseases.

Other outsiders, Maraaga Momo and Puka Oala, who were Pacific Island pastors working with the London Missionary Society, arrived and based themselves at Rouku and Wando respectively in 1952.19 Charles and Anita Ellis of the New Guinea Revival Mission also arrived at Arufe in 1952 and established a school, a medical centre and a church. During their leave in 1956, Russell and Virginia Jenkins continued this ministry until the Ellis family returned in 1957. This work did not
continue and the missionaries departed that same year, leaving the service in the hands of Sayd Gaavo of Bebdeven. An improvement to the Keraakie people's diet was the advent of Asian deer, which had been introduced into the Merauke area of Irian Jaya around 1916, and appeared on the Keraakie lands in 1953. In the early and mid-1950s, the Australian Petroleum Company set up a camp at Tareer to explore for oil in the area, providing work for many men. A medical orderly was placed at Arufe to care for the needs of the Keraakie during the 1960s. At the same time a local government council was set up at Morehead, with elected councillors from the whole Trans-Fly. Other oil exploration companies moved through the Trans-Fly in the 1960-70s, becoming a source of work and income for the villagers. Other forms of income during the modern era has been by selling of crocodile skins, road work, and garden produce. Evangelical Church of PNG pastors Tatamasi and Waragiye and their families from Suki began work at Arufe in 1967. This work continued till the end of 1974, when trained Keraakie leaders took over the running of the church. Community schools were established in Arufe in 1975 and Gubaav in 1993. Graham and Elizabeth Martin and their family moved from Suki to Arufe in September 1981 and left in December 1987. They have made six visits to the area since then.

This brief outline of the background of the Keraakie people, their environment, economics, language and history is essential for the understanding of their concepts of time.
ENDNOTES:


3 British New Guinea Annual Reports, 1886-1892. (hereafter referred to as BNGAR.)

4 ibid., 1888-1889.

5 ibid., 1895-1896.

6 ibid., 1913.


9 F.E. Williams, Field Notes, B.431. (hereafter shortened to WFN.)


11 ibid., p. 331.

12 ibid., pp. 11, 85, 106.

13 BNGAR, 1913-1920.

14 Williams, WFN, B.478.

15 BNGAR, 1916.

16 Williams, *PTF*, p. vii.


19 E. Thomas, unpublished paper, “Religious Change among the Trans-Fly People, with Special Reference to the Role of Two Papuan Pastors,” 1976, pp. 4-6.

CHAPTER 2

THESIS PROPOSAL

A large crowd of men assembled at the southern end of the Arufe airstrip and a very interesting meeting occurred on 8 July 1985. Gaindi Sarau of Arufe village presented a new religious movement to gain wealth through the sacrifice of himself. The thinking behind this phenomenon had been promoted over a number of years by himself, other villagers and a few leaders within the Evangelical Church of PNG. On this occasion Gaindi’s ideas failed to receive adequate support, but ‘cargo thinking’ has continued with much discussion and cross-fertilization in the villages of the Trans-Fly area. This event crystallized my research: What are the reasons behind this phenomenon? Is this so-called ‘cargo cult’ just a part of their traditional religion? Or has the impact of the colonial and independence era with its changes in politics, economics, education, and religion caused it? Or is this ‘cargo cult’ the Keraokie’s interpretation of their underlying problems according to their understanding of the modern world? Garry Trompf commented on such new religious movements:

[Mircea] Eliade has raised what is probably the most fundamental of all questions which ought to be raised concerning these cults (and indeed concerning any chiliastic-looking movement in the Third World). It is a question about the understanding of time or if we must say it, the religious understanding of time. In posing what is probably the most generalist of all cargo cult theories, susceptible as it is to the kinds of criticisms already outlined above, his sensitiveness towards the mythological mind has conducted him to what must come to the heart of the issue.

For Eliade the cults are syncretistic, combining both traditional and Christian elements. Since the supportive power of the ancestors had been considered necessary for the success of any ‘economic’ activity, it was not unnatural for Melanesians to believe that European goods derived from the dead, and really belonged to them rather than to the whites.¹

Eliade goes on to say that in Christianity native Melanesians simple rediscovered an old traditional eschatological myth which lay behind their new year feasts and cults. This suggestion does not hold true among the Keraokie but there is certainly a link between past mythological time and a Christian understanding of the future in Gaindi’s ‘cargo cult’.

¹
I am proposing that there is a definite connection between the Keraakie understanding of time and the rise of 'cargo thinking' among them. After observing their society and culture, I became aware of the importance of time and noted that time is being/existence. I also began to suspect that their concepts of time were a complex symbolic system signifying the deep values of their society. Therefore I propose that Keraakie time is a cluster of symbols seeking to address their struggle to survive in an infertile and hostile environment, their social disharmony, their fear of the spirit world, which they believe is constantly attacking them, and their denial of death. This multifaceted state is called yuvug (disorder, disjuncture or chaos). Besides being influenced by their understanding of time, the 'cargo cult' appears to have emerged out of their traditional religious interpretation of the modern economic world and Christianity. A rigorous assessment of this hypothesis will be made through a study of traditional and modern Keraakie concepts of time comparing them with those of other societies.

My perspective on Melanesian concepts of time began when I worked at Suki (1966-79) and continued at Aruie (1981-87). When I returned to Australia in December 1987, I began analyzing in detail my research and have returned six times (1989-99) for further investigations. The evidence that I present from my research was obtained following the methods as set out by Jacob A. Loewen in his article on anthropological investigation in Readings in Missionary Anthropology II, William A. Smalley (ed), and also methods presented in James P. Spradley's books: The Ethnographic Interview and Participant Observation.

The evidence that I present for this proposal must first face the epistemological question raised by the disagreement between the positivist and the post-positivist positions. Since I am from a non-Melanesian culture, my observations can be declared to be biased by my own culture and my own agenda, therefore not be an objective view of the concepts of the Keraakie people. I am aware that I may have been interpreting what I saw from an Australian point of view and may have been expecting my own cultural conclusion. Will I be caught in a hermeneutical circle of interpreting the Keraakie culture but ending up with an interpretation of myself or, as Roy Wagner noted, am I inventing the culture I believe myself to be studying.²
acknowledge that all cultural studies are interpretations and a totally objective study is impossible. Also I realise that, when the Keraakie explained their cultural concepts of time to me (using their linguistic terms), they may have been simplifying and expressing them with a foreigner in mind. So as to test the truth of their information, I compared what was told me with how the Keraakie live. Wagner states that “the study or representation of another culture is no more a ‘description’ of the subject matter than a painting ‘describes’ the thing it depicts. In both cases it is a symbolisation.” Therefore I have generally followed Alfred Gell’s suggestion, that the anthropology of time be studied along a broad front, extending between time economics and geography on one wing, and on the other the symbolic process of ritual, and must include analysis of language and cognition as well. I propose that, by being aware that complete objectivity is impossible, the researcher can still create an accurate interpretation of what is happening in the society, with a minimum of subjective bias.

The theoretical context of this study is on the nature of time. Is it real or an illusion and is it static or moving? Peter Coventry, Roger Highfield and others have jocularly speculated that somewhere in the universe the direction of time may be perceived as flowing backwards as opposed to flowing forward with which Westerners are familiar. They suggest, however, that this is highly improbable and contradicts all the evidence we have that time flows in a single direction. They even declare that “time cannot run backwards.” Now there are many different ways of understanding time: scientific, philosophical, religious, psychological, cultural, etc., so that whatever concept people hold, it is the symbolic creation of those who hold it. Whether people see time as flowing forward or backwards, such a way of understanding is based on differing ways of observing and thinking about the universe around us. Some, such as Martin Hollis, hold that reason has precedence over experience in regard to knowledge, and that there is a right way to think. He suggests that only the rational is real. This raises the question: Is there more than one ‘right’ way to think about time, or is there only one rational way and all people ought to think that way? This is contested in the longstanding debate among philosophers of time over its reality, Coventry and Highfield suggest that many see time as “riddled through and through with contradictions, and it cannot be real”. To
support this understanding they quote Einstein, who proposed in a letter of 21 March 1955 that “the distinction between past, present and future is only an illusion”.⁷ John M.E. McTaggart called these two points of view on the reality of time as A-series and B-series. The former understanding declares that time is dynamic, teased, has a monadic property of past, present and future. The B-series theory declares that time is not dynamic, ‘tenseless’, and involves only earlier, after and simultaneous features.⁸ I propose that the Keraakie people, for their part, see time as real and flowing backwards.

Since the main features of the Keraakie concepts of time are revealed in their language, a study was made of linguistics as it applies to the relationship between a society’s culture and its language. Works by Ferdinand de Saussure, Richard A. Hudson, John Lyons, William A. Foley, Michael A.K. Halliday and others will be considered in this section. This also raises the issue of hermeneutics, so publications on this discipline by Ludwig Wittgenstein and Anthony Thistlethwaite will be analysed. Jack Kaminsky and Quentin Smith set out in their books the relationship between time and linguistics, and these will be studied. There are numerous books that deal with time in a general way, covering such features as the backward flow of time, past, future, and present tense, linear flow of time, cyclical time, duration, points in time, measurement of time, mythical time, social time, relative time and quality time. Among the literature that deal with these areas, those by Bas C. van Fraassen, Paul Fraisse, Julius T. Fraser, Richard Gale, Alfred Gell, Irwin C. Lieb, and D.H. Mellor will be analysed. To the Keraakie, dreams are an interaction with the supernatural world and involves time, so careful attention will be given to the literature on dreams by G. William Dornhoff, Sigmund Freud, Carl G. Jung, Michele Stephen, and Salomon Resnik. I propose that time is ‘being’ to the Keraakie people, and this juxtaposition sounds similar to Martin Heidegger’s understanding, when he states: “dasein (being-there) is time itself”.⁹ But Heidegger’s concept of time in his writings (Being and Time, The Concept of Time, and On Time and Being) is radically different from how the Keraakie see time, yet on occasions appears to be remarkably similar. The end of time to the Keraakie is death, so works by Ruth Aisenberg, Ernest Becker, John M. Fischer, Heidegger, and Robert Kastenbaum that deal with this subject will be given consideration. Time involves continual change so the impact of
social change on Keraakie society and their time concepts will be analysed, with reference to literature by George M. Foster, Anthony Giddens, Piotr Sztompka and Edo Pivcevic. Since the issue of the influence of time on a ‘cargo cult’ will be discussed, the literature covering these phenomena by Kenelm Burridge, Peter Lawrence, John Stelan, Garry W. Trompf, Peter Worsley, Colin Swatridge and many others will be consulted.

The explanation of the problem that I have adopted, involves the study of time as a symbolic system. Clifford Geertz described culture as a semiotic system: “Man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun, I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretative one in search of meaning.”10 The Keraakie seem to see time as a system of signification, like a language that communicates the way they observe life: giving meaning to it, organising and controlling it, and being the means by which they adjust to meet the new issues that they are experiencing. Time indicators and durations appear to be symbols of Keraakie life, so that social being and its interaction with its context is a semiotic system. This comparison with the Keraakie concepts of time, raises the question of the subject matter of their ontology: Is it existential ‘being’, or copulative being? Does ‘being’ exist in time or is it the moment of existence? Therefore I will be considering what the Keraakie mean by time as ‘being’, interpreting it from a semiotic point of view seeking to gain access to their conceptual world and discovering what they regard as reality. In this section the literature consulted includes works by de Saussure, Charles S. Peirce, Mary Douglas, Dan Sperber, Victor Turner, Umberto Eco and Geertz.

The main research works on the Keraakie people of southwestern Papua New Guinea are those by the government anthropologist, Francis Edgar Williams, written during 1926-1932. His classic work on the Keraakie is Papuans of the Trans-Fly, which was compiled from his fieldnotes, to which I was given access by the PNG National Archives. Official government reports occasionally contain short summaries of contacts that patrol officers had with these people and these were also noted. Another work, which partially compares the culture of the Keraakie people with that
of their western neighbours of the Morehead area (1979-1981), is the unpublished doctoral thesis by Mary Ayres called ‘This Side, That Side: Locality and Exogamous Group Definition in the Morehead Area, South Western Papua.’ This was written over the period of 1979-1981. Elizabeth Thomas’s unpublished work on the London Missionary Society’s work in the Morehead area will be considered. Since I am investigating the concepts of time among the Keraakie, comparative studies were made of literature dealing with time in other PNG societies. These include ethnographies written on Alibom society by Meinhard Schuster, on Bun society by Nancy McDowell, on Duna society by Gabriele Stürzenhofecker, on Foi society by James F. Weiner, on Kaluli society by Edward Schieffelin, on Kiwai society by Gunnar Landman, on Maenge society by Michel Panoff, on Trobriand Island society by Bronislaw Malinowski, and on Umeda society by Gell. Many other ethnographies on PNG societies were consulted as well. My unpublished research into the Suki people and Aaramba people, who are the Keraakie people’s northern neighbours, will also be included when comparing different cultural features. Periodically during the study, other well known ethnographies that cover time in non-PNG societies will be quoted as they have a bearing on the understanding of Keraakie concepts.

The significance of this study is suggested, when one considers that all government suggested developmental projects such as cattle herding, chilli growing, and coconut plantations in the Keraakie area have failed. Is it that there are underlying cultural attitudes which have not been taken into account by government departments? It appears that no cultural research was done before any of these proposals were implemented. Therefore the results of this study will be important in educating PNG government officials, medical, educational, developmental, economic and church workers, about the need to gain an understanding of Melanesian cosmology and, in particular, the complex nature of time. This study will be instructional as to the need of careful research before implementing intended programmes.
ENDNOTES:

3 ibid., p. 11.
7 Coventry and Highfield, op. cit., pp. 29-30.
8 Gell, op. cit., pp. 149-155.
CHAPTER 3
THEORY OF TIME

Modern post-structuralist thought has reacted against the proposals of theories of time, preferring to understand time not as abstracted from, but part of, the flow of life. The latter understanding is similar to how the Keraukie see this complex phenomenon. Numerous philosophers of time have studied human societies, the mind and the universe, and have developed various theories about what constitutes time, and these theories need to be addressed to place this thesis in a wide perspective. The profusion of theories regarding time reveals that there is much disagreement over this vigorously debated subject. John Earman and Richard Gale suggest that “time might be too basic to admit of definition”, but all of these philosophers have made some progress in clarifying and deepening our understanding of what time is or is not. Many Western theories of time will be presented in a brief diachronic survey, judiciously selecting those renowned for their view on the matter, and comparing them in passing with similar Keraukie thoughts as an introduction for later analysis.

A major concern philosophers have in the debate over time is the tension over the reality or unreality of tense, or between what John McTaggart put forward as the A-series and B-series understanding of time. D.H. Mellor has asserted of this basic disagreement that “distinctions and transitions of tense, between what has been, is and will be past, present and future, divide philosophers into two fundamentally opposed camps.” The A-series understanding of time conceptualizes it as that “series of positions which runs from the far past through the near past to the present, and then from the present through the near future to the far future, or conversely.” This understanding is called ‘temporal becoming’ and sees tense as being real. In the B-series, events are categorised “temporally according to whether they occur before or after one another. Events do not change with respect to this criterion in the way that they do with respect to the criterion of pastness, presentness and futurity.” This understanding sees events in time as having unchanging relationships to other events,
either before, at the same time as, or after another event. Within these two understandings of time there is a variety of positions: time is real to some B-series theorists but not to others, but they agree that tense is not real. They object to the A-series proposal which suggests that time changes from being future, to being present, and then to being past, which they regard as absurd and self-contradictory. They declare that events do not change, therefore tense criteria are incompatible characteristics. Real time involves unchanging events, which are always in the same order and do not rely upon subjective impressions of movement, change and flow. The only unchangeable time characteristics are simultaneousness, beforeness and afterness. As B-series theorists present their objections, one senses that they have an unstated understanding of what constitutes reality. It seems that reality to them is something that is true forever: unchanging, and permanent. But, why can a society’s view of reality not involve a state of tension, which includes change, not a change of events but of people and their way of looking at things? Reality is described as what things are, in contrast to their appearances, which do not exclude change.

The Keraakie, we might say, are A-series theorists, who see time as a state of flux with tense distinctions. In this study, their time-understanding will be considered in relation to their society, which is reality to them. They confess that they are ignorant of the spirit world (geenzen) and are uncertain as to whether it is absolute or not, but to them society is the only absolute. Irwin Lieb also presents a similar view of humanity as reality when he wrote, “The final entities that are in time are individuals”, who on occasions are not alone, but with others form a whole reality. Society is time to the Keraakie, as seen in their biological calendar of individual and social events, growth, comparison of size, changing relationships, and death. The Keraakie use tense to define society’s interaction with the universe, their relationships with one another, with nature (baandman yuam: being of the land), with other societies, with the ‘supernatural’, and these changing realities are ‘being’. The past, which includes all they have experienced, is also a reality to them. They see time flowing backwards from the future into the present, bearing inevitable death which is very real. The present is also real because they are experiencing events now. These features of their time will be dealt with more fully in later chapters, to see whether they accurately describe past, present and future observations.
Among the early Indian writings, time was seen in different ways. It was deified (*inter alia*) in the form of Kala (another name of the god of death) and Krishna Vasudeva, the destroyer, who stated, “Know I am time, that makes the world to perish, when ripe, and bring on them destruction.” Shiva also took the form of the goddess Kali, the personification of time. These ideas of time as the destroyer or bearer of death are similar to those of the Keraakie people. To the traditional Hindu, history is of little value and plays no part in their official scheme of things, because all change is an illusion and Brahman (the universal soul) is the only absolute. The concept of Brahman complicates the Hindu understanding of time by introducing another feature: timelessness. This is eternal changelessness. They reject social mobility, because one is born into a caste and this cannot be changed, being above the effects of history. In the mystical philosophy of the Hindu tradition, the soul or self becomes enmeshed in the time process of reincarnation, which is regarded as cyclical. Robert Zehner summed up this understanding: “Time itself is a revolving wheel returning to the point from which it started.” Although this pattern of reincarnations appears to be cyclical, the fact that the self is supposed to be moving towards absorption into Brahman through bhakti (devotion) indicates that it is also linear. David Pocock, in his research of time among the Gujarat people, noted in contrast that the peasants were indifferent to cyclical time and were more concerned with present time. He sums up his research: “In Indian theories of time-reckoning we found a highly complicated recognition of the opposition”, implying that the repetitive eternal is subject to change in time. Indian philosophers of time seem to hold time in a tension between the static and the dynamic, or one might say between the real (*Brahman*) and the unreal (historical and daily time). The ideas of time represented in the form of a deity or as cyclical are foreign to the traditional Keraakie way of thinking, but as I will show they hold to both a religious mythical time as well as a religious mystical time. In the modern era, however a circular form of time seems to have been introduced to the Keraakie mind and this will be considered in a later chapter.

The Greeks were among the first to leave records of their discussions about time, but in their early writings they did not appear to abstract time out of the
phenomena of nature and human life. Time to them was not an objective concept, as indicated by the Homeric epics, where time is never the subject of a verb, and in Hesiod's *Works and Days*, which, although it is based implicitly on the concept of time, the word time is not used. Before the writings of Aeschylus, time was unimportant for the Greeks. They saw time as the regular alternation of things in the permanent cosmos, such as the occurrence of day and night, but they did not appear to think about it in an abstract way.\(^1\) In the obscure remnants of the writings of Heraclitus of Ephesus (540-475 BCE) an attempt appears to have been made to present an objective analysis of time. He saw the uncreated world like a soul involved in an endless flow from birth to death, with ‘becoming’ as the only reality.\(^2\) Everything is in perpetual change, as indicated in the fragment: “You cannot step twice into the same river.”\(^3\) Fire was to him the primary form of reality, and was always going out and being rekindled in a tension of opposites, revealing a hidden unity in the conflict of opposites. The only unchanging feature of life was change itself, therefore ‘being’ and time are always in a state of flux. Heraclitus' understanding of time would include him in the modern A-series group of philosophers, yet the eternalness of the world in his thought shows that he held a tension of opposites. The Keraakie, too, see life as one of conflict and constant change, which will be analysed later.

The literary understanding of time as an abstract concept appears to have come about under Parmenides (515-445 BCE) from southern Italy, who saw reality as unchangeable, while change, becoming and non-being are imaginary. He argued, therefore, that time cannot pertain to anything that is truly real, but is just an illusion.\(^4\) There is only a perpetual present, while past and future are imaginary. This is seen in his statement; “For if it came into being it is not, nor is it if it is going to be”, which is an attack on Heraclitus' teaching of the normality of change.\(^5\) For Parmenides constancy was real, while for Heraclitus constancy was unreal. Parmenides held to what McTaggart was later to call a B-series understanding of time, so that the debate over the reality of time preveniently occupied the minds of its first philosophers. Yet there is a tension about time in Parmenides' work, as seen in his maxim: “It is indifferent to me whence I begin, for there again shall I return”, which may indicate that he also held to a cyclical view of time, unless he wrote
metaphorically. His understanding of the unchangeability of reality involved the contradiction of the movement of time through a cyclical form. Again, the tension between the changeable and unchangeable nature of time, is found in a philosopher’s writings. The Heracliteans hold that time is changeable, and this is in conflict with Parmenides’ ideas.

The Attic philosopher, Plato (427-347 BCE), saw the physical world as only a derivative or imperfect image of invisible archetypal forms, or laws which exist independently of human thought. He saw these forms as timeless, but manifesting themselves in physical things, having movement according to measurement. He stated in *Timaeus* that the creator “resolved to make a moving image of eternity, and as he set in order the heaven he made this eternal image having a motion according to number, while eternity rested in unity; and this is what we call time.” Time is real, only as it is an image of the final reality. The movement of the sun, moon and other heavenly bodies across the sky according to a time pattern was perceived by him as a necessary factor in reducing chaos to order. To Plato, therefore sensible time is a sequence of ‘nows’ arising, changing and passing away, being inferior to the timeless forms. Becoming is the object of sense-perceived opinion, while changeless being is the object of true knowledge. Plato’s understanding of time involved him in a tension between invisible eternal time and time as movement and change. It is in the writings of Plato that the separation of human reality and representations of time occurs, an understanding which the Heracliteans do not hold. They believe that physical things are real and not an invisible reality behind them, though there may be a spiritual power in them.

Paul Davies contests the claim that Greek philosophers held to an objective understanding of time, and he declares that “the concept of time as an independent existing thing, an entity in its own right, did not emerge until the European medieval age.” Yet time is used as a concept by Plato and other Greek philosophers, while *Chronos*, a theogonical conception, is mentioned by some Greek authors, who may have been influenced by the ideas of Indian and Iranian philosophy that time was a god. Gerald Whitrow claims that “a cardinal factor that caused time to become a concept of primary importance was the spread of Christianity” in the first century AD. This is stressed in John’s Gospel where time is used by Jesus as a God-
organised fact, pregnant with his preordained purposes. This raises the question: Is Davies referring to a ‘concept of time’ as an abstract mathematical parameter? But the Greeks, Romans and other Mediterranean societies named the hours of time, and numbered them. On the other hand, the numbering of years in a universal sequence from the time of the birth of Jesus of Nazareth only became a reality in 525 AD when the years began to be calculated by the Christian church, and even then it took a long time to receive acceptance as a method of measuring time. It appears that Davies is referring to our modern scientific concept, because it is only in the Middle Ages that reliable mechanical clocks were invented to calculate time, and it is from that era that people began to schedule their activities according to time.

Aristotle (384-322 BCE) was the first philosopher to analyse time systematically, and in his writings he incisively sets forth a number of paradoxes concerning it. He proposed that time is present everywhere in a tension of an eternal, imperishable and ungenerated order in the universe, which also involves change and movement. This movement is a perpetual succession or stages of organic growth. Yet time is neither movement nor is it independent of it, according to Aristotle. He was also concerned with the measure of time, as seen in his definition: “For time is just this – number of motion in respect of ‘before’ and ‘after’” so that time is a kind of a number. This seemed to suggest a linear concept of time but Aristotle preferred a cycloidal model, based upon the cyclical or rhythmical nature of the ‘heavenly bodies’, the growth and decay of plants and animals and the round of human affairs. Yet he saw time as being more than motion, because all rest is in time too. Against this teaching on the reality of time, he presented a paradox suggesting that it was unreal, because one cannot see the past or future, and the present is only an instant, and so without duration, therefore no part of time exists. In his search for a solution to this paradox, he declared that what had come into existence must previously have been in the process of coming into existence. This results in another paradox between ‘becoming’ and ‘being’, which the Keraakie also stress in their society. It is this area of the social nature of time in every day life as opposed to abstract time where we will note the greatest difference between Aristotle and the Keraakie’s view of time.
Augustine (354-430), the Christian bishop of Hippo (North Africa), taught that God is Being (the really real) and he gives reality to phenomena through creation, which is temporal, therefore time is a created thing.²⁷ Time was seen by him as complex, with a unity in the present because what is past is in the present memory, and what is in the future we premeditate in the present. Yet "the only time that can be called present is an instant."²⁸ As with Aristotle, Augustine tried to present a concept of time that sought to include the valid points of the two sides of the debate on the reality of tense, seeing it as a concept of the mind yet also a reality created by God. He seemed, like Aristotle, to hold both the reality and unreality of time when he said, "I see time, therefore, as an extension of something sought. But do I really see this or only seem to see it?"²⁹ In his discussion on time, Augustine abstracted it from the reality of human life, even though in a separate discussion, in The City of God, he stressed the importance of the history of human existence. The Keraakie also see time as involving the concept of history (yaam zi: 'being' words or stories), not as a creation but as significant past 'being'.

The Arabian/Persian philosopher, Ibn Sina (980-1037), or Avicenna as he was called by Europeans, saw in 'being' a distinction between essence and existence, between necessary being and possible being. 'Being' is only recognised by reason itself, which shows the influence of Aristotle. What 'being' is in its nature is different from what it is in time. 'Being' among humans is not indispensable because of moments of emergence within its own existence. Time is an act of the mind, being a measure of movement or the modification of an entity.³⁰ Ibn Sina believed that only in the uncaused God is essence and existence one, and he is the first cause. The process of causation as necessary and indispensable, with God as the Necessary Existent is the only reality. The traditional understanding of time among the Keraakie did not present a supernatural being as reality but, like Ibn Sina, held to 'the moment of emergence' or the 'modification of an entity' as time. The difference is that they see these as moments of reality, which Ibn Sina did not.

The noted French philosopher, René Descartes (1596-1650), in his search for certainty, asked the epistemological question, "How do we know time?" He maintained that the distinction between movement and time is one of our inner experience and that time is only a way of thinking. This grew out of his distrust of
the senses which can be "confused" and "sometimes deceive". For him, the fact of thinking was more certain than the reality of the body, thereby divorcing thought from its source and neglecting personal and social consciousness in the material world for the impersonal and rational. His basic assumption was that the human intellect was reliable, could think accurately, and what it discovered was all 'linked together' in a unity of knowledge. Descartes saw self as autonomous from the objective external world, but he overlooked the fact that the way a person thinks about time is influenced by factors such as society at a given time, one's aging body, and the changing world. The way the Keraakie assess time and their conclusions about it indicate that a detached view of time, as Descartes presented, is impossible. They see the body and also society as being central to time.

Isaac Newton (1642-1727), influenced by his teacher Isaac Barrow, thought of time as a reality, which actually exists uninfluenced by 'things', and is part of the eternal order. This time was an "absolute, true, and mathematical time, or itself, and from its own nature, flows equably without relation to anything external, and by another name is called duration," even though it was unobservable by empirical means. It was without beginning and end, stretching from the infinite past to the infinite future. The essence of Newton's absolute time was that it was mathematically accurate, and moved predictably through space. He also noted that people in normal society perceive time through "the relations they bear to sensible objects", and they seek to measure its movements. Newton ignored this irregular form of time and concentrated on his objective absolute time which flows unchangeably. With the modern discoveries of scientific relativity, this absolute concept of time has appeared rather fragile. "It is while trying to understand certain physical paradoxes, particularly the negative results obtained by Michelson, that Einstein abandoned the hypothesis of absolute time and decided that there must be a time peculiar to each system of reference." The Keraakie do not see time as an objective 'thing' but they do see it as essential to society and social existence. They do not see it as something to be measured mathematically, nor do they see it as predictable, because to them nothing is certain and anything is possible.

The German philosopher, Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646-1716), rejected Newton's absolute time on the grounds that the instants of time, without the things
are nothing at all. Apart from the physical world, time is only imaginary, since it is relative to things and events. This conceptualization of the relations between things as time was called Leibniz's relational or relative theory, because he considered time as relative. Even though human beings perceived the flow of time, suggesting the idea of duration, that did not make it real to Leibniz. The idea that time was nothing in itself appears to have come from his belief that substances are self-contained and not influenced by supposed external forces like time or space. Yet he noted another kind of time which was actual and real, metaphysically necessary, and happening through a sufficient reason: "Time and space are of the nature of eternal truths which concern equally the possible and the existing." People do not understand this time through the senses, he suggested, but are aware of it without giving it form, although the senses give us the occasion to become conscious of it. Through this innate idea of time, human beings perceive a sequence of events so that for Leibniz the essential feature of time is succession. The Keraikite also see time as a succession of events which are related to bodies in space, but they do not see a sufficient reason behind it. To them time is without order and not governed by any principle of pre-established harmony as proposed by Leibniz.

Giambattista Vico (1668-1744), who is called the first philosopher of history "tried to make sense of time as a pattern in the collective affairs of man". He rejected the Cartesian conception of metaphysics and time as a mechanical cause and effect, stressing that time is invented by mankind. From this promising start to a social understanding of time he turned to the tradition that time occurs in cycles, seeking to write an overall history of mankind in Scienza Nuova after the style of Augustine. This raises the question: Was Vico recreating the mechanical nature of time which he had earlier rejected? The Keraikite do not see order in history, like Vico did.

Time was seen by the influential German philosopher, Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), as a human construction of reality. He saw time as involving things, which mankind have experienced, having a reality which comes from the mind of the perceiver and self, or "transcendental unity of apperception", who observes, thinks and organises. This was a welcome change of direction in the study of time, connecting it to the whole world of humanity and nature, and also stressing the
agency of human interpretation. Although he rejected Newton’s absolute time as a reality, he saw time as a ‘pure concept of the understanding’, a reality in the natural human mind. He declared that “time is not an empirical conception. For neither coexistence nor succession would be perceived by us if the representation of time did not exist as a foundation a priori.” Kant did not see time as something derived from our observation of the world, but as an innate category of our perceptive apparatus that arranges what it experiences of the raw material of worldly phenomena. Time as a category was seen by him as a universal necessity, seemingly both a form of natural intuition of our internal experience and external senses. Time was also to him a ‘collective singular’, because each person experiences it individually but interprets it according to social constructions. The Keraakie do not propose an a priori time category through which people create time concepts, but they do hold to time as individually experienced social ‘being’. Kant saw history as being worked out according to the plan of nature but the Keraakie would reject this, seeing no ordered progression.

The time understanding of the German philosophical idealist, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831), can be summed up in his statement, “The history of the world, therefore, presents us with a rational process”. All is in a state of developing, being a dialectic in which there is a conflict between a proposition and an opposing one before a synthesis is worked out, which in itself becomes a thesis in a continuing process of conflict and resolution. According to Hegel, everything is interrelated in a complex system or whole, and history is the development of Geist (mind, spirit, reason) toward self-awareness and ultimate wholeness. These are achieved through freedom, reason and knowledge, by a dialectic of rejection of irrationality and retaining what is rational. “Reason is sovereign in the world” presenting us with a rational process in which all reality has its being and substance. Geist is the ultimate reality, the substance of the universe. All concepts are fluid to Hegel, who rejected the ‘timeless’ categories which Kant put forward as the a priori basis of all knowledge. He saw a dialectic between consciousness and knowledge which grow through confrontation and conflict, not by way of mere observation and understanding. Hegel’s understanding of ‘becoming’ involves change but it is not connected with time, with which the Keraakie would disagree. Richard Tarnas sums up Hegel’s understanding of time: “Both nature and history are
ever progressing towards the Absolute: the universal Spirit expresses itself in space as nature; in time as history." The universe is in a process of becoming. Hegel stressed the importance of time, but his time was more of a fantasy than real. He gave time a rational determinism, proposing that it was progressing teleologically towards an absolute fulfillment. Hegel’s vision of time as a becoming in the middle of conflict and contradiction is similar to how the Heraclitean see time, but they do not see it moving towards a final synthesis.

The Marxist influence on anthropology has resulted in a school of thought called ‘historical or cultural materialism’. One of its main ideas concerning time was Marx’s belief that human development was progressive. Marx proposed that history and its processes are influential on society:

Genuine communist activity is necessary in order to supersede real private property. History will produce it, and the development which we already recognise in thought as self-transcending will in reality involve a severe and protracted process. We must consider it an advance, however, that we have previously acquired an awareness of the limited nature and the goal of the historical development and can see beyond it.46

Human understandings of time are determined by material techno-environmental factors, which societies use to organise and manipulate their resources economically. Marx stressed time’s commodification, which is seen in the economic dimension, when people are paid according to time worked. Anthropologists in this school tend to reify historic time so that it has a determining influence upon societies. According to Marx, exploitative relationships within society cause alienation and conflict in a dialectic, which leads to a new synthesis in the evolutionary development of mankind through time towards a ‘utopia’. This theory of the progressive development of society through time and the determining influence of history suggests that human beings are the consequence of external causes. The Heraclitean also see material things, nature and super-nature as having a determining influence upon them, but they do not see history as having a good climax.

The French sociologist, Émile Durkheim (1858-1917) brought to the study of time the important notion that it is a social phenomenon. What it expresses is of a social nature and its contents are the different aspects of social ‘being’. He saw time
as expressed by means of ‘imperfect symbols’, socially derived and interpreted, which influence how people perceive time. Durkheim declared, “It is the rhythm of social life which is at the basis of the category of time,” rejecting the empiricist position that categories like time are deductions from experience.47 This could be seen in the rhythm of repeating rituals, ceremonies and feasts. The Keraakie reject social rites as the basis of their concepts of time because to them they are irregular, can be discarded and/or are replaced by modern ones. They see social rhythm as being grounded in the reality of human birth, growth, reproduction and death. In other words, to the Keraakie, society is time. For Kant, ‘time’ is an a priori, a pure concept of the understanding, whereas for Durkheim it is a ‘collective representation’. Alfred Gell criticised this understanding because it presents society as the creator of time and also as being directed by it.48 Durkheim emphasised that the synchronic approach to the study of society and time was inadequate, maintaining that a diachronic perspective was far more accurate, because everything, including time philosophers, are in time and influenced by it.49 The Keraakie understanding of time agrees with this because they see time as social and all is in a state of change. Their view of time as ‘being’ and society itself may resolve Gell’s dilemma by observing society diachronically.

Henri Bergson (1859-1941), the French philosopher, proposed that reality is an ever-moving and ever-changing flow, the duration of time which could only be grasped by human intuition (“to seize from within”) and not through intellectual analysis.50 All is a constant state of change, being the flow of life itself: the elan vital or creative impulse progressing in an evolutionary way towards a climax, in which process the ‘profound self’ seeks to order and act freely within it. Bergson criticised the mechanical measuring of time in space, which turned an intensive quality into an extensive quantity, replacing time’s dynamic reality with an objective symbol. The intellectual study of time takes an unbounded medium and gives its parts sharp boundaries comparing it to space with length and points. To Bergson, time is dynamic and is best observed in mankind, a position with which the Keraakie would agree.51 In his attempt at rehabilitating time from the hands of the scientists, Bergson tended to give it a mysterious character. The Keraakie traditional way of seeing time had many characteristics that were similar to that of Bergson: a mystical element, an ever-changing stream of events and a lack of desire to quantify it.
Martin Heidegger (1889-1976), the German philosopher, declared that "time has a distinctive function to play in distinguishing the kinds of being."\(^2\) Time is not a series of points to be measured but is a human dimension which is a matter of existence. Life is not objective but lived within the awareness of the past, present and future, in the 'present-at-hand'. For Heidegger, man is a temporal being, for whom Dasein (being there) is the whole of time, involving the past and running ahead of itself to its future in the present. Robert Solomon assessed Heidegger's thought as, "Dasein is temporality. There could be no time except for Dasein."\(^3\) The meaning of time is 'being' and 'being' is time. The Keraakie also hold that time is 'being', but their understanding tends towards a more physical meaning than Heidegger's. He saw a person as temporal, having an existence that is bound into a whole by their past, present and future. Human beings are 'thrown' into this world already dying, being inauthentically gripped by the dread of 'being-towards-death'. Heidegger believed that human existence finds its real meaning in the future as people authentically face the reality of their death. The Keraakie fearfully acknowledge the reality of death, and would reject Heidegger's idea that death is the ultimate possibility when 'being' reaches its potential, for to them death is loss. Heidegger's position of seeing time as transcendental lacks interaction with the realities of this world and does not allow for historical change. Gell describes Heidegger's Being and Time, as "metaphysical prescription, not psychological description, and everything that constitutes normal human experience is condemned from the start as 'inauthentic'."\(^4\) Although Heidegger stressed immersion in life in this world, which the Keraakie also emphasise, his understanding of time does not appear to have achieved it.

The French anthropologist, Claude Lévi-Strauss (1908- ), regarded as the founder of modern structuralism, saw time as social, deriving its properties from social phenomena.\(^5\) Following some of Ferdinand de Saussure's ideas, he stated that there are underlying structures to social phenomena. Mythical time is seen by him as basic symbols which operate in the human mind without people being aware of the fact. Levi-Strauss divided societies into 'cold' and 'hot', saying:
I have suggested elsewhere that the clumsy distinction between ‘peoples without history’ and others could with advantage be replaced by a distinction between what for convenience I called ‘cold’ and ‘hot’ societies.56

The reason for this is that the ‘cold’ societies seek to deny the effects of historical change, making their prior state as permanent as possible. They hold an obstinate fidelity to a past mythical age, conceived as a timeless model: “mythical history thus presents the paradox of being both disjoined from and conjoined with the present.”57 Lévi-Strauss saw the mastering of diachrony through past rituals being enacted in the present, so that all are part of a single synchronous totality. In ritual, the present is suspended and the performers are transported into a mythical time frame. He suggests that the purpose of myths is “the obliteration of time” so that we can “enter into a kind of immortality”.58 The Keraakie live, as Lévi-Strauss states, unaware that their mythology, rituals and concepts of time are a denial of death, but they do see the past as being important in both normal and mythological time. They are also aware that supposedly ‘timeless’ myths are being reinterpreted by story-tellers who tend to change myths and address present issues.

The American anthropologist, Clifford Geertz (1926– ), who was influenced by Max Weber, stressed an interpretative form of anthropology in which culture is viewed as a system of shared symbols and meanings. Culture is a statement by its users about themselves, conferring significance upon their experience, about which he commented:

The analysis of culture comes down therefore not to a heroic “holistic” assault upon “the basic configurations of the culture,” an overarching “order of orders” from which more limited configurations can be seen as mere deductions, but to a searching out of significant symbols, clusters of significant symbols, and clusters of clusters of significant symbols – the material vehicles of perception, emotion, and understanding – and the statement of the underlying regularities of human experience implicit in their formation.59

He saw Balinese time as ‘consociate’, involving past and future generations in a ‘synoptic now’. They seek to detemporalize this time by blunting the biological sense of aging in the irreversible flow of time towards death, the accompanying grieving and the potential impact upon the unborn.60 Balinese ritual calendars are symbolic
structures, which reveal how a people actually see time in the context of their social life, providing layered multiple networks of meaning. They represent the means of knowing the referent of quality time for which they yearn. Geertz claimed that the effect of Balinese symbolic structures of time on the unique perceptions of this people reinforce the society’s structure, goals and aims. A society’s behaviour, language terms, structures and material objects, which are related to time, are all symbolic of their understanding of reality. This way of analysing a society’s symbolic concepts of time is fraught with dangers in that some symbols are obvious to the users, but of other symbols they may be unaware, and the researcher may interpret symbols according to his or her own value system. I propose that the Kerakhie concepts of time to be such a symbolic system; a language portraying the way they perceive social structures, fears, values, goals, life, the world around them, and reality.

Gell, the author of *The Anthropology of Time*, declares that his primary aim in studying time was “to see what is there to be seen”.

1. At the base of his thought is the assumption that there is only one true time: “Time is always one and the same, a dimensional property of our experienced surroundings.”

2. From a scientific point of view, this seems to be true since there is only one physical world but it leaves out the way humanity observes that world. He rejects that there are different societies, “where people experience time in a way that is markedly unlike the way in which we do ourselves.”

3. Yet, how a people experience Gell’s one universal time is governed by how they interpret it from their own cultural assumptions, values and beliefs, whether it be a scientific, Buddhist, economic, ritualistic, social, natural, or any other way. Scientific analysis is only one way of interpreting time, as Christopher Gosden writes, “While western science may be a very technically effective view of the world, it is only one way of seeing things.”

4. Gell suggests that the way to discover what time is “consists of the development of means of representing, dispassionately and critically, the manifold ways in which time becomes salient in human affairs.” This assumes that one can discern ‘the one and the same time’, but from the scientific works of Isaac Newton, Albert Einstein, Stephen Hawking, Paul Davies and Huw Price, whose propositions on time occasionally disagree, one doubts whether humanity will ever come to a united opinion on time. As new discoveries about scientific time are being made, it appears that not all the information on time is
available yet. The moment human beings consider Gell’s ‘one and the same time’ they interpret it from their point of view. This is seen in the way he interprets time: “The idea that the category of time is created for us by the rhythms of social processes is fallacious.” Yet to many societies these processes are time, as this study of the Keraakje people’s time concepts show.

Human societies can be studied from different viewpoints, such as from a structuralist, or materialist or symbolic one, but none give a total picture of what is happening. The researcher soon discovers that all the activities and structures within a single society are interrelated and dynamic, and not an integrated, static whole. Owing to the complexity of human societies, “it is impossible to conceptualize society, except in terms of holistic images”, and yet the scope and scale of social life extends beyond what any one human being can grasp, so this construction of a whole must be imagined. A society is fluid because various features are always changing, as a result of various external and internal factors, so that the members are always adapting to these changes, causing further change. Therefore time concepts influence all aspects of a culture, and likewise are influenced by the features of that culture, as well as external ones. Time is a concept, an idea or meaning associated with certain natural phenomena in the ‘minds’ of members of a society and is not a thing. As an abstract entity in its own right, it is normally named, using a linguistic symbol which is a generic term including all that a society sees as features of time. Time symbols include meanings, which are influenced by the culture, the environment, and the society’s values and experience. But not all societies see time as a rubric. The Keraakje do not name ‘time’ by a distinct linguistic term, and yet time is not unimportant to them. Rather, owing to the centrality of society in their existence, they have a unique way of looking at time as ‘being’.

In conclusion to this brief diachronic study of the works of philosophers who wrote about time, it goes without saying that there are numerous ways of considering time. A number of important theoretical issues have emerged, such as time as an empirical concept, as an a priori feature of the mind, as an event, as movement, as change, as duration, as a sequence of events, as measurement, as before and after an event, as tense, as repetition, as non-repetition, as an absolute, as an underlying
structure, as social features, as ‘being’, and as symbols. When analysing Keräät’s concepts of time, these theoretical matters will all be considered.
ENDNOTES:


5. Gell, op. cit., p. 151.


17. Orme, op. cit., p. 147.


21 Whitrow, op. cit., p. 6.
24 ibid., p. 63.
28 ibid., pp. 266-267.
29 ibid., p. 272.
33 ibid., p. 39.
34 Fraisse, op. cit., p. 287.
36 G.W. Leibniz, “The Leibniz-Clarke Correspondence” in Westphal and Levenson, op. cit., p. 45.
37 Benjamin, op. cit., p. 20.
38 Leibniz in Westphal and Levenson, op. cit., p. 45.
39 Fraser, op. cit., p. 20.
42 Fraser, op. cit., p. 36.
44 ibid., p. 9.
45 Tarnas, op. cit., p. 380.
48 Gell, op. cit., p. 10.
53 Solomon, op. cit., p. 223.
54 Gell, op. cit., pp. 264-265.
57 ibid., pp. 404-406.
60 ibid., pp. 404-406.
61 Gell, op. cit., p. 314.
62 ibid., p. 325.
63 ibid., p. 315.
65 Gell, op. cit., p. 315.
66 ibid., p. 325.
CHAPTER 4

KERAAKIE CONSTRUCTION OF TIME

All societies observe the recursiveness of social, astronomical and natural features around them, and create concepts of time, which may take a great variety of forms. These forms are not ‘things’, rather social constructions, with which Wagner concurs when he wrote, “The whole range of conventional controls, our ‘knowledge’, our literatures of scientific and artistic achievement, our arsenal of productive technique, is a set of devices for the invention of a natural and phenomenal world.”1 Owing to the differing ways that societies observe the world around them and the biased projection of their desires, these constructions could also be said to be the invention of the reality they expect or want to see. The Keraknie people consider the repetitious phenomena of the universe, which are the same raw materials of time and name some of them as temporal features. These linguistic terms are more than acoustic images, because from the options of time-meaning potential, the Kerakkie selected and actualised a semiotic structure, which expresses to them what time is. These are not static, since they are continuing to adopt, create new time symbols, or add new meanings to old ones. This is done because they see time as involving their ongoing interaction with humanity, the spirit world, the world of material things and death. In this study, ‘being’ is the totality of human activities through time in space, and a review will be made of the astronomical, biological, religious, meteorological, economical, fauna, flora and social raw material of time, which the Kerakkie symbolize in linguistic terms. The reason behind this study of their linguistic terms could be said to be the “peeling away at language to find cultural understandings”.2

The Kerakkie have numerous time concepts which will be outlined here briefly dealing with them in detail in later chapters. They observe the regularity of the movement of the astronomical bodies and create various time structures involving them. The sun, moon and stars are used to create time concepts of time covering days, nights, calendars and seasons, which have a quality component. All of these

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astronomical features are linked to the Keraakie mythological era, which is a time concept covering the past origin of everything in nature, society and culture. The powers of this sacred age have an influence upon present daily life and the events of the future, and establish a relationship with individual Keraakie through dreams to inform them of what has just happened, is happening and is about to happen in the future. This mystical relationship is another Keraakie time concept. Overlapping with mythological time is historic time which records in the landscape important events that the Keraakie have experienced. These events of life, include garden work, hunting, fishing, ceremonies, dances, hunger, thirst, sickness, decisions, fighting, war and death, which are seen as flowing backwards from the future into the present. These are the moments of interaction or ‘being’. These events are recorded sequentially by their many verbal past tense forms as they recede into the past. Death, as the end of time, drags them into the past from which there is no return.

The people of the Trans-Fly observe the recursive meteorological features and create a time structure from the major winds: south-east winds and the north-west monsoons, which bring about the main recurring meteorological features in their time concepts. These time features are closely linked to their economic seasons because the monsoons bring heavy rains during the months of December through to April and this period of time is called the wet season. The beginning of the wet season is named ‘growth’, which is descriptive of budding plants in the landscape, and this is followed by the season called ‘weeding’ when they remove grass and weeds from their gardens. The south-east winds begin in May with a fine misty rain introducing a season named after that wind, which is really the beginning of the dry season, which lasts till November. The sun and dry wind mature their garden crops ushering in the ‘harvest’ season. Besides being a time of an abundance of food, it also involves the preparation of new gardens, called ‘felling’ season. After the fallen trees have been burnt, the ‘planting’ season begins and the yams, taro, cassava, and other crops are planted. Then occurs a mini-season called ‘stillness’ or ‘stirring’ which is an intermediate time between the dry and wet season when the prevailing winds cancel each other out or create turbulence.

The Keraakie have also developed a time calendar based on the changes in plant life as numerous trees, bushes, bamboos, bulbs and other plants flower or
produce fruit or shed their leaves at regular times. This flora calendar is a means of
telling when certain foods are available, when certain economic activities should be
undertaken or when certain animals and birds will be eating those fruits. The
movement of birds, fish, reptiles and animals are also noted by the Keraakie who
create a time scheme based on the fauna in the Trans-Fly. The Keraakie have a
biological calendar which notes when individuals are born in a linear sequence
stretching from the oldest to the youngest, so that each individual is a physical
symbol of time. This calendar, which also includes personal and social events, plays
a key role in Keraakie time as well as being the basis of time-oriented political
authority in the community. Because of death, this biological calendar is seen as
constantly changing, therefore they emphasise a time kinship system as part of social
“insurance” to support each other and to perpetuate the life of the community. All of
their time concepts are based on only general patterns, because the Keraakie have
suffered under their irregularity, which they call _puweg_ (disorder and disjunction).
The social group serves as a time symbol of all that the Keraakie count of value:
descent from respected past ancestors, mutual support in the present, and through
procreation and the maintenance of society attain security against a feared future
which ends in death.

K.A. McElhanon and C.L. Voorhoeve class the Keraakie language as being a
member language of the Central and South New Guinea Phylum.\(^3\) Through this non-
Austronesian language, the Keraakie consider, communicate, discuss and express
time using numerous words for features of time plus a number of verbal
configurations that express the unique way that they see it. The Keraakie call their
language _nambo_, which means “what”. In their mythology the primeval spirit beings
released the various people from the sacred _saakar_ palm and as each came out they
called out “what is it?” and this word became their name.\(^4\) Just as in other societies,
the Keraakie find their identity in their language as the vehicle by which they express
themselves, and the receptacle of what they are as a people. Their verbal interaction
is not just sound but something deeper because they are also expressing a social
solidarity with other users of that language, which non-users can never know. The
Keraakie express their temporality by means of linguistic symbols, which are not just
names but a combination of sound representations, conceptions and symbols, being
their society’s unique cultural phenomena. Language is a cultural semiotic, which
signifies its meanings in the Keraakie people’s daily activities, social structures, relationships, basic assumptions, religious beliefs and rites. This close relationship between language and culture is noted by John Lyons:

The general conclusion to be drawn is that the language of a particular society is an integral part of its culture, and that the lexical distinctions drawn by each language will tend to reflect the culturally important features of objects, institutions and activities in the society in which the language operates.5

Therefore an introduction to the Keraakie language will be undertaken so as to assess the importance of their time terms and structures within their culture, but before we consider the Keraakie linguistic terms for time as being evidence for the way they understand time, Robert S. Brumbaugh’s objection must be addressed. He rejects the importance of language in discerning a society’s concept of time, stating:

The study of language is not a useful route to the understanding of time. The reason is that language manages to cut as well as stretch and bend, and its segments are too arbitrarily detached from the scale to correlate with it.6

He raises an important issue, because if a person approaches a language believing that each word has only one meaning, he or she will be misled. As a foreigner analysing time through the Keraakie language, I have been trying to pin down the meaning of time words, when that is impossible because time is dynamic. Each word does not have an absolute meaning but is polysemous, having many shades of meaning. An example is the Keraakie word raamah, which can mean singing, building, or giving, showing that it is not the word itself that decides the meaning but the users, the receptors, their experience, the cultural and verbal context. Also, if one believes that the meaning of a word is the sum of the parts, one may end up with a wrong understanding. The Keraakie word moingaane is made up of the words for crocodile tooth (moing) and skin (gaane), yet the combination of these two words does not mean ‘crocodile tooth skin’, but a long purple fleshy yam. Another problem, when using linguistic evidence, is the fact that the users may be using the terms in an arbitrary way, so that they cannot be relied upon for absolute meanings. The meaning of each word will have to be supported by evidence from the historical, social, and cultural context. But languages have their ways of defining meanings, and the
Keraakie have numerous grammatical forms, prefixes, suffixes, and infixes, and the influence of these upon linguistic items must be analysed, because all languages are structure-dependent. Ultimately the meaning of a linguistic symbol is not etymological but is discovered in its relation to other words, the genre used, the sentences forming its context, as well as the cultural environment.

Examples of the influences of non-linguistic cultural features upon the meaning of words, which do not appear to have a time connotation, will be considered. All of these symbolic time items represent how the Keraakie understand their interaction with the world around them, conveying meanings that only they (and possibly their dialectical neighbours) fully know. A seemingly timeless item such as yubatbat (a type of bird) is actually time-oriented in the Keraakie mind because it sings its song at the end of the dry season indicating that the time of the big rains are coming. The leaves of the kerta tree are called kerta saan, and when they fall it indicates to the Keraakie that it is time to plant their yams. The Keraakie do not matematize nature but name bush fruit, migrating birds, fish and other things as points in time, so that each has a natural meaning as well as a hidden time meaning. Even the inanimate rock bed of the Dambaaro waterfall near Arufe village has a complex time meaning, having its origin in the mythological time (being a sacred place), having been marked by their ancestors down through history as they sharpened their stone axes, and existing in the present time. The social structure, economics, laws, art forms, kinship systems, and other features of Keraakie culture are all time-oriented in some way, because they are believed to have emerged in the mythological past, may have a special history, be used as features of time, have symbolic meanings, and are changing in the present.

These cultural traditions are expressed by means of their language, which is a time phenomenon in itself. To the Keraakie people, all linguistic items are symbols of things or actions immersed in time, or have a time connotation, or are indicators of time phenomena, or have a time history. The linguistic item taande deve (my father) would appear neutral as regards time but these words have the added unstated personal meaning that the father is alive or dead at this moment in time, depending on the persons involved. Frequently, to the Keraakie, there is a deeper meaning to these linguistic temporal items, because they either communicate, describe, teach,
create emotion, encourage work, control, express a relationship, or inspire religious
daten pending on the context. Their words for 'concept' are emaarah or
aaawaaaraaah, which come from the verbs: bee bee neeman and bee bee
naawaaaraaot (he will think). The audible sounds (or combination of sounds) that
make up the Keraakie language can be symbols of things, events, abstract features,
structures, relationships, and the activities of flora, fauna and humanity forming a
complex semiotic system. They use the word baankaam to refer to a symbol,
meaning the 'reflection of a person in water; the shadow of an object or person;
carving, drawn or photographic image' which signifies reality indicating that they are
aware of the nature of semiotics. They also use waaambenah si (linguistic symbol),
which comes from the word meaning 'hidden or unseen', to name an unseen sound
signifier. The linguistic sound (or written word in the modern era) is a symbol of a
concrete or unseen reality, which they refer to as vivi (reality, flesh, body). Susan
Langer defined symbols as representations of things: "Symbols are not a proxy for
objects, but are vehicles for the conception of objects." It is the conceptions, not the
things, that symbols directly "mean". Besides words being symbols, various
cultural activities are symbolic representations of deep values. Both Langer and
Clifford Geertz suggested that all human behaviour is symbolic action and this
appears to be how the Keraakie see time, language and culture.

Therefore linguistic terms for time are symbols of how the Keraakie see time,
how they feel about time; what they see as the causation of time; what they want time
to be; how they communicate about time among themselves; how time is important
in their economic survival; how they seek to influence and control others; how their
social relationships are influenced by time; and how they express their religious awe
of time. Although languages are important in the way people create a symbolic world
for themselves, the society's concrete world and their interaction with that world is of
equal importance. Therefore the context is vitally important in understanding
linguistic items, since all constructions and terms are oriented to the time-
understanding of the people using them. In spite of what Robert H. Robins wrote
about languages being "almost wholly based on pure or arbitrary convention", laying
special emphasis on their flexibility and adaptability, the members of Keraakie
society do communicate with each other about time through their language, and are
understood. I learnt their language and was often surprised how well they understood my usage of it.

The Keraakie people do not have a generic word for time but use ‘being’ (veam) to also indicate time. Upon their many time words and constructions, they do not superimpose an incorporating concept, because they do not see time as a separate category to life. Life is always time-governed. Heidegger comments on this relationship between time and being, “Dasein (being-there) is time itself” and “being finds its meaning in temporality”.[11] The Keraakie use of ‘being’ as time stresses the close relationship they see in these two categories, an understanding that will be analysed in Chapter 9. Although there is a difference between Heidegger’s and the Keraakie’s understanding of ‘being’ and time, Heidegger suggests that a people’s understanding is greatly influenced by the language they speak. Language is the house of being, and those who think and create with words are the guardian of this home. “Their guardianship accomplishes the manifestation of Being insofar as they bring the manifestation to language and maintain it in language through their speech.”[12] This insight is very similar to the way the Keraakie use their language.

The Keraakie emphasise the importance of language in understanding their concepts of time, because to them the language event is also a moment of ‘being’.

Their linguistic terms will now be studied to observe the importance of time and how it is expressed.

LINGUISTIC TERMS: All of these terms name or describe events or actions and became time-oriented because of the recurring nature of what they represented.

evah: day. This word also means ‘sun’. To the Keraakie this time meaning appears to be the object itself and not an abstract concept. They do not name each day differently so therefore they see each day as having the same essence. There is no difference between singular or plural days in the Keraakie language. The word evah is used in the sentence evah naarmbot, meaning ‘the sun is climbing’, or evah nengeehor, meaning ‘the sun is descending’. In these cases it does not mean anything
but sun, because the sentence never means that the day is climbing or descending. When the Keraakie wish to distinguish between the day and the sun, the term evah boie (day ball) for sun is used. Evah does not mean ‘light’ because in their language light is site. Sunlight on the ground, as distinct from shadows (gar) or night (kwevute), is evah site.

As regards the end of the day, the Keraakie traditional concept is that the sun dies. Wamboi Yuavus of Arufe (14 December 1990), Mege Waianda of Arufe (15 December 1990), Zuga Taawkam of Bebeven (19 December 1990) and Saaqi Bevek of Gubaav (20 December 1990) all said: “Evah bee keuvelindanga: the sun will die.” The stars are also said to die when they disappear. In their thinking it appears that the sun does not come back the next day but a new sun appears. The recursive nature of this event is the basis of this major time concept for the Keraakie.

The Keraakie use the word evah in a symbolic way of the actual period of light during the day when the sun is shining, even if it is covered by clouds. To the Keraakie the day does not include the night, which is different from the day in two ways: The night is dark and dangerous while the day is light because of sunlight, and non-threatening. A.I. Hallowell also noted that the night and day are different temporal units among the Saulteaux people of North America.13

Another form of evah is found in the sentence evah de newere, meaning ‘the day has appeared’. In this sentence the word evah does not mean just any old day but the specific day of an anticipated event, such as a burial ceremony or independence day. When used in this sentence evah does not mean the sunlit section of the English language 24-hour day, but rather a special event.

The Keraakie use evah as a totem. The sun is an important feature in traditional Keraakie mythology representing the Keraakie ancestral mother, named Yumeer, who became the sun and has the secret name Eram.14 It is one of the many totems of the Bangu clan, and if a male Bangu clan member sneezes, he calls out the word evah because, according to the oldest man of Bebeven, Zuga Taawkam, (19 December 1990), this is done as an ejaculatory prayer, remembering the fact that the primeval spirits have left the Keraakie and the latter look back with longing for those days.
Others say that the calling of the name of their totem is intended to reveal to others which section they belong to, so that no forbidden food will be given them. To the Keraakie, the day was named by the primeval spirit beings (geenzeen) as were the totems which hold an important position in mythological time.

The phrase *Mr. Ellisende evah* means 'the days of Mr. Ellis' residence', which raises the question: Is the word *evah* an abstract item for time? Charles Ellis' time period covered approximately three years, from 1953-1956, so it is seen that *evah* includes the nights as well as the day, indicating that *evah* is used in the same abstract way that English speakers use the word time. But the Keraakie never seem to refer to the life of one of their own people as 'the days of Dungaari', so is this usage an adopted idea? Furthermore the Keraakie use *evah* in the sense of a block of innumerable days in the past when referring to the phrase *mah evah* (war days). This is the period of time covering the many years of inter-tribal fighting before pacification by the Australian colonial administration. But when they lived in that period there was no objective understanding of 'war days' because that was normal life and they had nothing with which to compare it. Only in the modern era have the Keraakie been able to name it objectively. The Keraakie do not use *evah* for the period covering numerous days during the wet or dry seasons. Nor do they use it of the mythological time, or of the flow of many days in their calendars. This evidence seems to suggest that the usage of *evah* in this way has been influenced by the use of English by the colonial government officers, businessmen, and missionaries.

The Keraakie have taken up the English word time (written as *taim*) and use it in phrases such as *yana taimaan* (at this/that time). This phrase is equivalent to *yana evahon* (on this/that day). Here *evah* and *taim* are used interchangeably when referring to an incident at a certain time. But the term *taim* is never used for day, during the counting of days indicating that the Keraakie are aware of its abstract understanding. Williams hints about the usage of *taim* during his period of research, suggesting that *taim* was an early adoption by the Keraakie.¹⁷ The common usage of the English word *taim* in the modern Keraakie language appears to indicate that both the term and the abstract meaning have been absorbed. *Evah* appears to have become equivalent to time as an abstract temporal word. *Evah* traditionally did not seem to
have the full meaning of the abstract term time but, through the influence of Europeans, it has taken on an extra meaning.

**kwewe**: night. This word is a noun to mean dark and is also used as an adjective for any dark colour such as black, blue, brown or purple. It is obvious that this temporal term is descriptive, with the blackness of the night giving rise to its name. The Keraakie see the night as the dark part of what the English language calls a 24-hour day. The word *kwete* also includes a qualitative understanding because night-time is considered dangerous when sorcerers, evil spirits, ghosts, adulterers and thieves are active.

The Kaunze people of Memdeven and Tereer villages, who were closely related to the Keraakie, believed that the *geensen* (primeval spirit beings who resided at Kureemgu) gave them the *kwete* (night) totem. The Keraakie thought that if the 'night magic' of the Kaunze people was buried, an eternal night would descend upon the land. Since these people have died out or intermarried with other peoples, these beliefs could not be verified. The northern neighbours, the Aaramba, were also believed to have 'night magic' as well.

**kwev**: date of a visit. This word is an abbreviated form of *kwete* (night). The reason for this could be that the night-time was the time of most dances or ceremonies to which visitors were invited. It indicates the nights the visitors would sleep over.

**ganoso**: today, present, this day. This word is a general term covering any time in the present day and can also mean 'now' without any sense of accuracy upon the moment.

**totar**: now, this instant. One would use *totar* in saying 'I am going now', if one were leaving immediately, but if the point of departure were indefinite, one would use *ganoso*. Another meaning of *totar* is 'new' which seems to indicate that this 'now' instant is the point of change, being different from the previous moment and being a new event. The Keraakie appear to see the world around them never remaining the same, but constantly changing into a new one.
eembrereero (one only), ereero (shortened form): immediately. This word can also mean ‘people acting as one, together, in harmony, or unity’. The word does not mean ‘an action done once’ because the word eembidma is used to indicate that. The meaning of eembrereero involves people doing something immediately in time, or acting as one in harmony. This verifies the proposal that the Kerakie see time and social ‘being’ as linked concepts. Eembrereero could involve the thought that when people agree on a consensus, they act immediately. That action is the moment of ‘being’. The lack of a consensus means that there will be no immediate action. This word also means ‘sharing things as one’ as seen in the following sentence: ‘We were eating food together: yandvem (we) nane (food) tanetaowom (were eating) eembrereero (together)’ This latter word will be considered in later studies as it addresses some of the main Kerakie values of time, ‘being’, harmony and sharing in chapter 11.

hureero: straight away or immediately. This word means only straight, but it is also used in a time sense.

kai: one day away from the present; yesterday or tomorrow. This reveals an egocentric understanding of time, which A. Irving Hallowell also noted among the languages of North American Indians. Some of the Kerakie’s neighbours, such as the Suki people of Eniyawa and Burei Kabi villages use the word enep in the same way meaning tomorrow or yesterday. The Kerakie occasionally use the phrase gano evih for one day before or one day after.

naambat: the third day. This word actually means two days from the present, being the day before yesterday, or the day after tomorrow. Again the Kerakie’s egocentric understanding of time is obvious. Naambat is also used occasionally to mean a long time ago, indicating that anything beyond two days is a long time apart from the present. This fits in with their verbal structure since the past tense form used for events beyond yesterday is also used for distant past events of even ten or a hundred years.

naambtaowa/naambtao: This word is derived from naambat and means ‘after the third day or on the third day.

naambidma: three times in action or time.
sombidma: two times in action or time.
evemidma: one time, one action or time.

yez: year. The Keraakie did not have a linguistic term for year, but now use a derivative of the English word. This covers the period of one wet season and one dry season which the Australian colonial administration and other foreigners regarded as an important time duration. The Keraakie traditionally did not consider these two seasons as two parts of one whole because they were so different and varied in length: the wet season was regarded as a duration when the north-west winds blew and the heavy rains fell, whereas the dry season was a different duration when the winds blew from the south-east and the land became dry. The colonial influence is seen in that the Keraakie have created the word yez yu (year land) meaning many years. Their egocentric understanding of time is noted in the phrase gano yez which they have developed to indicate one year before or after the present moment.

haraare: month (moon). Two elders of Arufe, Taaga Yaarvus and Mege Waianda, declared that the Keraakie did not name the various moons/months, nor did it have any practical meaning as a temporal unit (date). These men were in their sixties, but one older man (Sayd) declared that they originally named June as the dendet haraare. This suggests that there was once some form of naming months as a time indicator which is no longer used. The Keraakie now use the English month names, but the fact that they still use the word haraare for ‘month’ indicates a previous awareness of a recurring time duration covering a moon’s waxing and waning. The various shapes and positions of the moon were noted, especially by the women, who noted the position where the moon rose as a time indicator of their regular menstrual cycle, which points to the understanding of a block of time of a month. Landtman gives evidence for the naming of the months among the Kiwai of the Fly River mouth,18 and Malinowski said that the Trobriand Islanders did the same.19 Panoff observed that the Maenge of New Britain named six lunar months.20 In the modern era, the eucharist is celebrated monthly in the Evangelical Church of PNG, and some call this rite end of meaning ‘end of the month’, indicating an outside influence on church members. As already mentioned the parts of the moon are used as short-term indicators of when events occurred:

tototar (new) san (tooth) haraare is the new moon;
kitong (big) haraare or mbeermbbeer (piece) haraare is the quarter moon;
widmaaro (only one side) haraare is a half moon;
haraare kwamb kwamb (buttocks) is a three-quarters size moon;
tomba (long) haraare or deven (basis, reason, substance) haraare is a full moon.

The moon is an important feature in Keraakie mythology because, according to Williams and all my informants, their mythological ancestor, Keembel, became the moon or was represented by it. Williams said that there was some confusion about this because some said a being called Gufa, Bangi or Wamb Wamb became the moon. The modern Keraakie comment on the mythological Bangi as being bald and this is evidenced by the seemingly bald moon. The appearance of the new moon causes great excitement, which is because the light of the moon brings the good quality of visibility to the darkened and dangerous quality of the night.

wik: week. The Keraakie did not have a term for ‘week’ because a duration of seven days had no meaning in traditional culture, so they have taken up this English word. They use the English names of the days of the week which has been taught and reinforced by the primary and high school teaching schedule, weekend holidays, sports, and the Sunday services of the Christian church. Some of the Keraakie refer to a week or seven days as sabat, being influenced by the Sunday rest, which was their pronunciation of the Sabbath.

sabat: Sunday. This word was introduced by the Christians from Boigu Island and Yoga village on the southern coast, who visited the Keraakie villages in the early years of the twentieth century. From approximately that time till after the Second World War, the Keraakie kept this day as a sacred day, without enforcement by any resident national pastor or foreign missionary. On the sabat, people did no work and made no noise. My informants told me that punishments were administered to those who worked or were noisy on the Sunday. In Keraakie traditional culture, sacred days were only declared when a ritual was to be performed, and this was not kept in a pattern of a yearly, monthly, or weekly event. This introduction of the sabat has created in their minds a new temporal unit, which was kept by the majority of the Keraakie and neighbouring peoples of their own desire and without force.
**besmara:** Saturday. This word means collecting firewood (*bes*) and is a modern creation after the introduction of the Sabbath idea. Since Sunday as a day of rest was propagated, it was necessary for women to go and cut enough firewood on Saturday for Sunday, so this is how it got its name.

**kwevte nandkaa:** midnight. This means the middle of the night. It is not an accurate term and gave only a rough idea of the middle of the night, because they had no unit of measurement such as an hour.

There are a number of words used to describe the period of time of the morning.

**yeegu kwevte:** approximately 4 am when it is still dark.

**maamoi yeegu:** approximately 5 am when the pigs (*maamoi*) are still around.

**yeegu yeegu:** early morning; when either the *ordaga* (bush hen), the *darok* or the *tuprum* birds call before the sun rises. The men often say that they went hunting when the bird called. In the modern era, this has changed to when the village roosters crow. This corresponds to the appearance of the *weerseewer kand* (the star that precedes the morning star—*yeegu kand*).

**yeeguviivit:** approximately 6 am when the morning star appears before the sun rises.

**eerinythwaav:** dawn. The literal meaning of this word is 'the rising place'.

This raises the question: Does the spatial idea also include a time meaning? The Keraakie stress that this word refers to the time when the sun rises, and yet the same word is used to refer to the place after the sun has risen. *Eerinyth* is the actual word for 'dawning' but the Keraakie do not use it and instead use *eerinythwaav* (the place or time of the rising sun), which indicates that *waav* has a time as well as a spatial meaning. The verb that is used for the sun dawning, *evah keneerinyinga*, is not used of any other feature except the rising of the sun and connotes the idea of a time phenomenon. Other words are used for the dawning such as *owihohwaav* meaning the place/time where the sun grows, which comes from the verb *nowihot* (it shall grow).

The Keraakie have a concrete model of the daily movement of the sun, from which to indicate points during the day so that they can accurately declare when things happened. They see the movement of the sun through the day following the
form of the roof of a house. The sun begins to climb and at the point about 10.30-11 am the Keraakie use the same word for purlin (horizontal beam that provides support for roofing rafters): angar angar for this time. The word got (bone), which is a shortened form of evah (day) got (bone), is used for the middle of the day and is also the word used for the ridge pole (got takar: bone that protrudes) of the roof of a house on which the rafters rest. When midday is passed the Keraakie use the phrase widma kaarwve negerngu, meaning the sun ‘is turning the corner’ and beginning to descend. Then when the sun arrives at about 2.30 pm they say angar angar which is the word for the purlin on the other side of the roof. It could be that the sun shone through the holes in the roof at one time, giving rise to this novel ‘clock’.

jeegu: morning, from when the sun rises till approximately 10 am.

angar angar: late morning around 10 to 11 am. This word also means a purlin.

evah got: midday. The words also mean the ridge pole of the house, bone of the day or important part of the day around which all else radiates.

widma kaarwve negerngu: afternoon. This phrase means that the sun has turned the corner into the afternoon. Literally it means ‘turned (negerngu) to the other side (widma kaarwve)’.

angar angar: early afternoon. This also means purlin, and refers to the time around 2.30-3.30 pm.

zite evah: late afternoon. These words literally mean the evening side of the day.

zite: evening. This is between the hours of approximately 5 to 6 pm.

The Keraakie have numerous terms to describe the sunset. The understanding of place/time that is present in the words for sunrise is identical for sunset.

evah owithaav: the place where the sun falls.

evah altoavaav: the place where the sun submerges.

evah aavaaroraavaav: the place where the sun splits off into darkness.

evah iroraavaav: the place where the sun is smashed.

evah eemshaavaav: the place where the sun sits down.

renyah: beginning. This word means the tying of the knot, being a traditional custom of putting knots in a length of string to indicate the number of days before a dance or ritual was to occur. The last knot was the beginning of the event, but the word renyah has come to mean the beginning of anything. The Keraakie do not believe in a
beginning of time since the mythological beings were always there, but there was a
time when humanity and all other things emerged. According to the way the
Keraakie look at time, the mythological time is not renakah but a duration at the
beginning of time.

Do the Keraakie have a beginning of the year? Williams does not give any
indication that they perceived this. On questioning the older Keraakie men, they say
that they did not have the concept of a beginning or end of a year, let alone a duration
of time called a year. The fact that they have adopted the English word year (year)
supports this conclusion. The coastal Kiwi people at the eastern end of the Trans-
Fly area do not have the idea of a year in their thinking, and the Maenge people
of New Britain. The neighbouring Suki people (or, as Williams called them, the
Wiram) use the word gwana (rain or wet season) to indicate one year. But it is
impossible to discern whether this was as a result of Western influence or a
traditional idea. The Keraakie do not take their word for wet season to indicate a
year. Malinowski discovered that among the Trobriand Island people:

There is no general consensus as to when the year really begins; they
have no 'new year' or 'new year's day', nor would such an idea be of
any importance to them, as they have no system of chronology of years
as a sequence.

Similarly the Keraakie do not have a system of counting the years. The idea of the
beginning of a year requires that the durations of time called the wet and dry seasons
would be seen as a whole, but the Keraakie did not see these two seasons as making
up one block of time. The day has a beginning when the sun rises; the wet and dry
seasons begin with a change in the wind; and the other economic seasons start when
the work begins. To Keraakie thinking, there are beginnings to the durations of time
that they value, and they use a number of
verbs and words that indicate beginning, and these are listed below.
bee (it) bee (future indicator) kovangonga (about to): it is at the point of beginning or
about to begin. The Keraakie see a process in time, work, or ceremony, preceded by
thought and preparation. The verb kovangonga indicates the natural fulfillment of
this process, culminating in a beginning action. This verb is used with a verbal infinitive, creating a construction with future intent:

bee (he) elhet (to go) kowangonga (about to/beginning): he is about to go.

bee (he) elhet (to go) novonga: he has begun to go.

yamo (he) bee (future indicator) taavongonga (begin) yee (it): he will begin it. In this transitive form of the verb, the action of starting in time has an initiator.

bee (it) bee (future indicator) kaneerinyinga (begin, start): it will begin. This action does not have an initiator but the beginning occurs of its own accord. The transitive form of the verb is terinyinga: he will begin it. Yerinyihat (to begin) is the infinitive.

The Kerakkie also see that a process has a beginning and an end. This verb is used for the end of an activity, life, or time and is intransitive: bee (it) bee (future indicator) keevonga (finish): it will finish/end (of its own accord). The infinitive is evohat (to finish).

yamo (he) bee (future indicator) tivonga (end) yee (it): he will finish/end it. They also recognise that there may be an initiator to end a job or the event. Wivohat is the infinitive form of this verb.

evo: end. This verbal noun is used in the context of an end of time or work, as well as the end of a track. The last day of the dance is called the evo evahon (on the final day).

bee (it) foioh (end) tam (is): it is finished, he is dead. This word is used for an activity, life or a time. Foioh (end) is commonly used without the verb.

beedi tam: it is finished, or it/that is it, relating to time or work. It appears that beedi was originally made up of two words: bee: it, edi: finish.

eembeembe: he is finished. This word means that a person has ended the work and will not be coming back to work again. It can also be used that a person has finally left the area.

The Kerakkie do not think of the end of time as far as the whole of time is concerned. In their concept of time, days and seasons may end individually but the duration goes on in an endless stream and there is no end of time as such. The day
this process, culminating in a beginning action. This verb is used with a verbal
infinitive, creating a construction with future intent:

bee (he) elheto (go) kovangonga (about to/beginning): he is about to go.
bee (he) elheto (go) novongo: he has begun to go.

yamo (he) bee (future indicator) taavongonga (begin) yee (it): he will begin it. In this
transitive form of the verb, the action of starting in time has an initiator.

bee (it) bee (future indicator) keneerinyinga (begin, start): it will begin. This action
does not have an initiator but the beginning occurs of its own accord. The transitive
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left the area.

The Kerankie do not think of the end of time as far as the whole of time is
concerned. In their concept of time, days and seasons may end individually but the
duration goes on in an endless stream and there is no end of time as such. The day
ends with the sunset and the night ends with the dawn; the dry and wet seasons end
with the change in the wind; and the economic seasons end with the completion of
the work. The real end of time to the Keraakie is in death. They have many verbs to
describe this physical end, which are also time-oriented, focusing on the end of
‘time/being’. For example, the following all mean ‘he will die’:

kar (death) bee (future indicator) yeramgot (die/happen)
bee (he) bee (future indicator) kawaatet (die)
bee (he) bee (future indicator) keuewelndanga (die)
bee (he) kar (death) bee yam (will be)
bee (he) foloh (finish) bee yam
yeende (his) meheh (thinking) bee keevonga (will finish/end)
yeende (his) herge (life) bee keevonga (will finish/end)
yeende (his) aambone (breath) bee keevonga (will finish/end)
yeende (his) aambone (breath) bee kangtor (will leave)
yeende (his) tikav (heart) yao (not) bee negevut (will work)
bee (he) bee kowiyenga (will fall)
bee (he) bee kaavrangonga (will be lost)

Many societies, such as Javanese, Japanese and Polynesian in the Pacific area,
discern a person’s social position from their caste or class. The Keraakie see position
in society as being based on time. They do not count years when discerning a
person’s age, but they have words to indicate the growth in a person’s physical form
and personhood in time. Many of the stages of a person’s growth are indicated by the
actions he or she is doing or is being done to him or her. This list of words cover a
person’s temporal journey and social position in life:

maavet toge: a newborn baby
naawanganah toge: a baby who is orphaned at birth (mother died in labour)
hurheer toge: a baby who has begun to smile
neenzheer toge: a baby who has begun to crawl
sanova toge: a child who has teeth
akamboheer toge: a child who has begun to walk
ziovaheer toge: a child who has begun to talk
nono ffeemhovna toge: a weaned child
eeyereh fandrova toge: pierced ears child
mein fandrova toge: pierced nasal septum child
haakar: a boy
berkereer toge: a youth with soft whiskers
streewer: a male youth (one whose facial skin is hard: harnaat)
merez: a girl
merez dukar: a marriageable girl/spinster
ewagye: an older bachelor (this word has been absorbed from the Suki language)
totar eer: a newly married man
eer damaave eer: a married man (shortened to eer)
totar damaave: a newly married woman
damaave: a married woman
eer kitong: a middle-aged man
euse: a mature woman (euseusa is the plural form)
remdreehereheer eer: a mature man
gwiri: a widow or widower
bolo: an old man, or woman
kaki, wali wali: a grandparent or ancestor
dawen dawen: this word refers to a very old person and seems to come from the word dawet (always there).
waar: completion of life, ripe, or about to die.

nangan: this term for sibling is time-oriented, because it is refers to younger ones irrespective of gender. The plural form of this word is nanganve and can mean cousins or other younger members of the same social section. Bangan is a derivative of this word and means 'your younger sibling' (shortened form of bende nangan).
aane: this word for sibling is time-oriented, because it only refers to older ones irrespective of gender. The plural form is aane or devave (fathers) and includes all elder relatives from the same social section.
savaaraka: a person (orphan, widow, widower) who is left alone at a point in time.

seemiteer: the last child in a family.
reyahman toge: an adopted child. This word appears to come from the word renyah (beginning) and indicates the beginning of a family for a couple who have been forced by infertility to adopt a child.

rarman: this word is used of people born at the same time.

mao: procreate. When a couple are married the Keraakie anticipate, based on past and present experience, that they will have many children in the future. This word is time-oriented and is used frequently as they express their concern for the perpetuation of the community through the process of procreation.

The Keraakie language has a number of temporal prepositions:

- of, aat: to (eg. towards a future day: evahot; towards night: kwevtaat).
- on, aan: on (eg, on a day: evahon; in the night: kwevtaan).

There are numerous other words that have a time meaning:

dumen: always. This word means the habitual way of doing things and the emphasis is on the continuous action. The word for house in the Keraakie language is mango but often they use the term mangodu, which is a combination of mango and dumen meaning one's habitual dwelling place, or where one is in the habit of living.

duet, desut: eternal. This means something was always there. The land to the Keraakie is always there.

dende, tek, tektek, and totra: a long time ago in the past. It has been noticed that naambat is used for three days in the past as well as long ago, but the words mentioned here have the meaning of a longer time in the past. The superlative suffix (vivi) can be added to these words to show an even longer period of time, eg, taande (my) devaande (father's) yerev (father) yara (here) tamaaro (lived, was) dendevevi (a very long time ago). Another form is the word tekaanyu (a long time ago on this land).

dendeveer: this word is used to describe something or a ritual that is very old.

fronde: past, long ago. This word also means 'in front of, before' indicating a spatial understanding of how the past is seen by the observer, as seen in this example: mango (house) fronde (in front of) kaarvveaan (in the area). The word gweevre...
(before the face) is also used to indicate in front of a person or an object in space, but it is not used of time.

_fowa_: future. This word also means 'behind one in time' when referring to people, as seen in the case of 'following': _fowa_ (behind) _waitohat_ (going). It is not used spatially of static things, as seen in that the Keraakie use _zem got kaarrwe_ (backbone side) to indicate something behind a person or an object in space. _Fowa_ points to the Keraakie's spatial understanding of time as seeing the future behind the person. _Fowa taowa_, or the shortened version _fowatao_, means that something will be put aside for later or afterwards.

_kuaka_: close, near. This term means that a person, or thing (like rain or a village), is not far away in space and time.

_yana evahon_: on this or that day.

_yana fowa_: after that (on the future side of this or that event).

_yanomaanzo_: after that, then (past).

_deev_: then. This word is used in either the past or future.

_deev taowa_: afterwards.

_mengar_: quickly. This term indicates fastness in regard to work, movement, and activity, so that indirectly time is also involved.

_mure_: slowly. This word indicates slowness in activity, work, and movement. Time is indirectly involved.

_saam_: when (interrogative). This term can be used with future or past tense forms. The Keraakie language does not have the word for 'when' as a conjunction to indicate a clause in time, but does have the word 'then' (_deev_) to handle this form. An example is: 'When he ate the food he was sick: _Yamo_ (he) _de_ (past tense indicator) _taanet_ (ate) _name_ (food) _harhar tahraat_ (stomach pain) _de_ (past tense indicator) _neewere_ (emerged) _deev_ (then).

_aawate, maavul, fok_: omen. These are time-oriented words because they warn that a bad or painful thing such as death will occur in the near future, indicating that a supernatural power will be involved.

_omaame_: to visit and return on the same day.
**aawaavaaro**: memory, thought, idea, concept. This word comes from the intransitive verb *bee bee naawaavaaro*: he will remember, think, and ponder about the past, present or future. The context will define the time meaning, because it involves the recalling of the past or thinking in the present or projecting into the future.

*bee bee nanawaanen*: he will come later. This verb has a time orientation, indicating a process which will conclude at a future date.

**kwama**: food that was cooked in the past and will be reheated or re-cooked in the future for eating.

*yamo* (she) *bee* (future indicator) *tehunga* (re-cook) *name* (food): she will reheat or re-cook the food in the future.

**metam**: leave it, a temporary break in the work being performed. If the Keraakie wish to indicate that the work is finished they say, *foiho* or *foiho tam*. The unfinished work itself is called *meainkzu*, indicating that it will be finished later in time.

**me yezerengar**: late. This word is being used by some modern Keraakie for late in regard to time but the word originally expressed the meaning that the person concerned is not present, or is away. To the Keraakie a person cannot be late because the right time for a social event is when people are present, and not an abstract concept that sets a mathematical time as the right one. At the end of the 1995 school year at Arufe village, the headmaster and school board set the time for prize-giving at 9 am but it never took place till 5 pm that afternoon when all the villagers had arrived. Time is a social phenomenon and there were no complaints about people being late. Traditionally, when the *aag tarne* and *saawa engah* calendars were used, people could technically have arrived late for a dance or ceremony, but these calendars indicated that when the last leaf or knot was removed, the ceremony or dance began, indicating that they did not indicate lateness. Some Keraakie have taken the English word ‘late: *lait*’ to name this new time understanding.
waasenghat: to wait. This verb in English indicates anticipation in time but in the Kersakie language it only indirectly has this idea. They use the verb *yando* (I) *taasendawoan* (was waiting) *yee* (him): I was waiting for him, which means that the person being waited for is not present. It does not mean that the person concerned is late but anticipation is indicated. This verb *waasenghat* also means to govern, watch, or care, which strengthens the contention that time is not the main meaning. Yet in the modern era, it is used in a time sense in this type of sentence: “*yando* (I) *yee yu* (many years) *taasendawoan* (was waiting) *damaawewat* (for a wife): I waited many years for a wife, which (because of the use of the English word *yee* meaning years) appears to be influenced by foreign ideas.

*bene*: spare moment, opportunity. The normal meaning of this word is ‘hole or gap’ but it is used of time as well as space. The idea is that if there is an opportunity or time in a person’s day or work, he or she will do something. Often the Kersakie use the word *faan bene* (gap in the plain grass) for opportunity.

*bekwa*: having been used in the past, secondhand material or equipment, indirectly indicating time.

*aavrango*: temporary or will not last long; from the verb to lose: *aavrangoat*.

*gano gano*: temporary (such as a temporary house, post or fence).

*gano*: previous or following. This is used for a day, season or year in modern Kersakie life, showing their egocentric understanding of time.

*aavohere*: fullness of time, completion of life. This word comes from the verb *aavohat* meaning to fill, and indicates a plant has reached the end of its life.

Every fruit, or tuber has numerous words to describe the fruit’s growth through time. The coconut (*aog*) is just one of these whose growth through time they note in detail. This list shows these time-oriented words:

*aog taramb*: coconut flower

*aog tikav*: small coconut

*aog kakaramb*: coconut with no flesh
aag kwas kwas: green coconut
aag kaahe: coconut with small flesh
aag wao: ripe or dry coconut

redi: The Keraakie have absorbed the English word ‘ready’ and it means that the person has reached a point in preparation and is about to depart in the present moment. They also have a word sevrenghere, covering this same idea and emerges from the verb bee neevread: he is prepared, which only has an indirect time meaning. kovaaranga: it will appear. This verb can be used of people, things, events, or time features such as for day, or season.

The Keraakie can also use the verb ‘to come’:
y' hakwar bee kovaaranga: the wet season will appear
y' hakwar bee yennam: the wet season shall come

baat: wait. A time-oriented word requesting another to wait a moment in time.

baar: a taro garden nursery. This is a temporary garden planted every year in a swampy place in the dry season until the beginning of the wet season. Then the growing plants are transferred to a more permanent garden, and the baar reverts to what it was before. The word baar has a time orientation, because it is always a dry season garden which always has a future purpose.

kakav: present garden. A Keraakie will place marks (yeewl) on trees in a patch of jungle (orang) indicating a future garden. The hard work of preparing the garden will be done in the dry season, and then the plants and seeds are planted. A kakav is a present reality and from it the gardeners anticipate a harvest in the future at the end of the wet season.

dakbra: a used or past garden. It has accomplished its purpose at the end of the harvesting season, and is now of limited fertility. It continues to produce small amounts of food for another year or two before reverting back to jungle. This garden has accomplished its purpose and the farmer does not rely upon it for food.
eeveet: unripe. This reveals past growth to the present stage, which is inedible, but the Keraakie anticipate that the fruit will ripen. Eeveet is a future-oriented word. Another term used for unripe is tikav (heart, hard).

wao: ripe. This word reveals past growth to this point of ripeness in the present. Now is the time for harvesting and eating. Wao is also used in the sense of 'ripe old age or completion of life'.

kwaaraang: this is a request sent to a moin deveneer eer (sorcerer) asking him to perform sorcery upon another person. This word has a future orientation, desiring the future harming or death of the person named.

yuhseer yaam: A ritual which is performed after a death by the initiated men to protect the society from suffering any more deaths. It is based on an event in the past, performed in the present and having a future goal in mind. The Keraakie have many rituals (yaam) which have a similar future orientation. Another of these is kwarwaraonah yaam which drives away the recently deceased's ghost so that he/she will not attack the community members.

yaam: phenomenon, happening, being, way of being, rite, presence, event, spirit. The meaning of this word depends upon the context, and is used on occasions with a time connotation. This is seen in these sentences and phrases: yaam de novaar (something happened) or ganosoman yaam (present way of being, in the present), frondeunan yaam (way of being in the past) and fowaman yaam (way of being in the future).

geneezeen or ovrohvvaar: These words refer to the past sacred time when all things in the universe emerged. It was also an era when supernatural spirit beings (geneezeen) roamed the earth doing amazing things, being similar to what is called the 'eternal past' or 'dreamtime' by various anthropologists. The spatial nature of ovrohvvaar will be considered in Chapter 6.

TIME INDICATORS IN THE VERBAL SYSTEM:

In their language, the Keraakie people use syntactic tense particles to indicate time sequence in their life. While the Suki people are more concerned with aspect, such as
‘what was happening at the same time and how it was being accomplished?’ in their verbal system, the Keraakie stress the tense relationship between events in their life. William Foley suggested that tense is one of the so-called deictic categories in language, which allow the speaker to locate conceptual events in times and places remote from the here and now of the act of speaking. The Keraakie are assisted by their grammar to accurately designate when events occurred in the immediate past. They address this in a spatial way so that the future in seen as ‘behind them’ and past is seen as ‘in front of them’. Another spatial features in the Keraakie verbal system is the indication of movement towards (infix n, na, nna, ne, nee) and movement away from (infix ng, nga, ngaa, nge, ngee). An example of this is seen in the verb yewelman (he will move), yenawelman (he will move towards), and yengawelman (he will move away). The Keraakie also use various tenses in their verbal systems to indicate the timing of an event, and this will be illustrated by the verb ‘yanet: to eat’ (infinitive), naming them first (1st), second (2nd), third (3rd), forth (4th) and fifth (5th) past tense forms.

1st PAST TENSE: This is used of the immediate past tense of the last ten minutes, as seen in the following example: yando (I) bava (immediate indicator) yanetaan (have eaten) nane (food): I have just eaten food.

2nd PAST TENSE: The only difference between the first and second past tense forms is the use of the words bava and dava. The word dava is not used in any other way within the Keraakie language, and does not mean ‘now or today’. The word for today is ganaso, while hureero (straight away) or eembreereero (only at this one moment) or toto (this instant, now) are also used to indicate immediate action. An example of this form of verb is: yando (I) dava (immediate indicator of today) yanetaan (have eaten) nane (food): I have eaten food (today).

3rd PAST TENSE: This is used of the past tense of the day before. The word de is added to the sentence indicating a past event. An example of this form is: yando (I) de (past tense indicator) tanetaan (ate) nane (food): I ate food yesterday. The word kae (yesterday) can be added to the sentence for emphasis.
4th PAST RELATIVE TENSE: This verb indicates an earlier action in time to another in the past of more than one day ago. Again the word de is used to indicate a past tense event. The meaning is that I ate the food in the distant past before others and an example of this form is: yando (I) de (past indicator) yanetaiyan (ate) nane (food): I ate food (long before others).

5th PAST RELATIVE TENSE: This past action is a later action in time to a preceding one in the past of more than one day ago. The word de is used again as a past tense indicator. An example of this is: yando (I) de (past indicator) yanetaawan (ate) nane (food): I ate food (long ago).

PAST CONTINUOUS ASPECT: The Keraakle distinguish between an event and the continuous action of an event. The other past tense forms are used of events of once only actions, whereas the past continuous aspect can be used to cover any continuous action, irrespective of when it was happening in the past. If the action needs to indicate that the continuous action took place a long time ago, then the adverbs fronde, dende, totra, or teiek can be added. An example of this form is: yando (I) tanetaowen (was eating) nane (food): I was eating food.

INDEFINITE PAST: An example is: yando (I) giya (if) tanetaowan (was eating) yando (I) kanaramongaiymun (would have given you) nane (food): If I had been eating I would have given you food. This form covers all possible indefinite references to past time.

PRESENT TENSE:
yando (I) yanetaan (am eating) nane (food): I am eating food.

PRESENT/FUTURE INDEFINITE OR FUTURE CONDITIONAL:
Examples of these forms are:
yando (I) giya (if) yanetaan (am eating) nane (food) yand (I) yao (not) nowaavtaan (will talk): If I am eating food I will not talk.
yando (I) giya (when) yanetaan (have eaten) yand (I) bee (future indicator) wanggam (go): When I have eaten I will go.
FUTURE TENSE: The Keraakie people have only one form, which covers all future actions. The future tense indicator is the word bee, but in some cases wa is used instead. An example is: yando (1) bee (future indicator) yanetaan (shall eat) nane (food): I shall eat food.

THE SEASONS: Although the Keraakie see meteorological durations as recursive, they do not have an abstract term for ‘season’. Each has a distinct name, because they do not perceive seasonal times as being the same or having the same length of time whenever they happen. In English, we name the rainy period of the year as an imaginary mental construct, called the wet season. The Keraakie do not number the days of the wet season, but just name that period of time after the dominant phenomenon that occurs. The latter naming process is a concrete representation of what they experience and not an abstract concept. This will be fully considered below under Keraakie ‘calendars’.

These are their seasons:

- evah (sun) yu (land): the dry season
- y’hakwar (yu: land, hakwar: wet, sap moisture): the wet season
- worvuartooh (growing): the growth season
- sambaaroh (weeding): the weeding season
- werwer: (wer: south-east wind) the south-east wind season
- aarnoh (eating) yu (land): the eating or harvest season
- ratah (felling) yu (land): the felling of the bush season
- yeh (planting) yu (land): the planting season
- mataar (still): the still season
- ramaanah (stirring): the turbulent season

KERAAKIE CALENDARS:

The Keraakie note repeatable sequences of events in their daily life, but do not name them by a word signifying a time duration with boundaries such as a calendar. These events are seen as appearing one after another in an endless flow, and each event is generally named after a concrete feature that is meaningful to them. The
Kerakkie remember these sequences and form mental calendars covering the seasons, the winds, the activities of animals, and the growth of plants, but rarely will a person recall them perfectly. These more or less form an accurate outline of what occurs in the phenomenal flow of life in the Trans-Fly. Because they indicate essential features in their food supply, they are critically important to the Kerakkie. These seasonal calendars do not have a formal starting point, so I have arbitrarily chosen the felling season, because it is a starting point for their new gardens.

Ratah yu (felling season): When the seed yams in their storage houses begin putting out new shoots, the Kerakkie know that it is time to begin this season. The Kerakkie men go and select land for new gardens, and cut down trees, bushes and grass to be left to dry out before burning. Ratah comes from the verb ratahat: to fell/cut, and the word yu means land. The ratah yu occurs in October, but it is not as though on one day in October, all Kerakkie begin clearing the land for a garden. Some may start in September or others in November, depending on whether something else such as house building, canoe making, roadwork, or crocodile hunting is occupying their time. Normally the great majority of the Trans-Fly people will be clearing land for gardens at this time. The task of burning is not regarded as being separate from the cutting even though many days separate the two activities.

Other signs of this period include:
The kudu (gawri) pigeons lay eggs.
The cassowary chicks hatch.
Many flowers bloom (yeve, kavom, yeror yeror, memb, and harob).
The magpie geese (bowal), brolgas (wera1 & kwaras), and pelicans (watu1) fly in from Australia to eat the water-lily seed pods.
The mambore flowers blossom, followed by the mavoramb flowers.
The hambol and kerta tree leaves fall.

Yeh yu (planting season): This term comes from the word ‘to plant: yeher’ and this time involves the planting of the seed yams. When the hambol and kerta tree leaves begin to fall the Kerakkie know that it is time to plant their yams, and each gardener digs holes in the soil, plants the seed yams with certain leaves (zaar zaar) which are believed to help growth. Other plants such as taro, cassava, sweet potato, banana,
pineapple, sugar cane, and so on are also planted at this time. This season occurs around November and early December, overlapping with the mataar season.

At this time:
The hamboi and kerta trees begin to flower.
The saawa fruit ripens.
The wer (south-east) wind ceases.

Mataar (stillness): When the south-east wind (wer) ceases blowing, a short season of no wind activity occurs, being one of intense heat. This occurs around the end of November or early December, and is the conjunction of the north-west and the south-east winds which seem to cancel each other out. It may alternate with the next small season.

Ramaanah (stirring): As the north-west monsoons grow stronger, the wind shifts from south-east to due south or north. This season is really the confrontation of the north-west and the south-east winds which create turbulence. Another name is kwaramang (dust) domangah (tread on), when the first showers settle the swirling dust.

The red sosusi fruit mature.
The yubatbat bird, the kewerkewar bird, and the kerfatfat bird call, indicating that the monsoon rains are coming.

Y'akwar (wet season): The wet season begins when the north-west monsoons (mbolmbol) commence blowing, and this season can also be known by that wind’s name. The word is made up of two words yu (land) and hakwar (moisture, tree sap, and the blood of insects). Y'akwar indicates the time when the land is wet, or when the sap is rising up the trees as it does in the wet season. This season is a most difficult time for the Keraakie and is colloquially called the zeeruh (hunger) since during this time food supplies are scarce. They have to scavenge in the bush for nuts, fruits, roots, and bamboo shoots. The position on the horizon of the rising of the sun shifts northwards during the wet season, so the Keraakie declare that the sun is hungry and is being drawn northwards towards where the sago palms grow. The
latter only grow in large numbers in the northern half of Keraakie land and, with the coming of the wet season rains, the creeks have enough water to process the palm’s pith for sago. At this time, the northern Keraakie leave their villages, move north to the banks of the Fly River to harvest these palms. This season occurs approximately from December to May.

The gwemgweem (march flies), gwain (mosquitoes), yonder (sand flies), and monz (leeches) multiply, making life for the Keraakie very unpleasant. Therefore the wet season has a qualitative meaning of being painful and hungry. The kewarkewar bird builds its nest and lays its eggs.

Worvaartah (growing season): Following the first rains at the beginning of the wet season, the new shoots appear in the gardens and across the whole landscape. This word comes from the verb kovarange: they will appear. This time is also called boie evah (fruiting days), which comes from the Keraakie word boie which means fruit.

The crocodiles lay eggs.
Fences for the gardens are built to protect the growing plants from wild pigs, wallabies, and deer.
Bamboo shoots become ready for eating.
The kavom and mambore fruit ripen.
Some fish swim upstream to lay eggs.
The white pigeons (site memek) migrate to Australia.
The gambolyam, yeron yeron, karab, memb, and yeev fruit ripen.
Prawns (seeyev) and fish eggs hatch.
The samb flowers appear.
The magpie geese (bowai), brolgas (werai & kwaras), and pelicans (waika) fly back to Australia.

Sambaarab (weeding season): Because of the rains, the grass has grown in the gardens so the Keraakie begin weeding so that the growth of the yams will not be hindered. This happens around March.

The sarawaga fruit ripen.
The *adodo* flowers blossom and the *yengeng* tree flowers appear.
The *welang* and *kwitratra* birds call, indicating to the Kerakie that the dry season is about to begin.
The bamboo plants (*knozon, gweggwen*) reach their maximum height, which is the time of greatest hunger. At this point the wet season is truly called the *zeeruh* (hunger).

Evah *yu* (dry season): This lasts from May to November. It is named from the words meaning sun (*evah*) and land (*yu*), indicating that these are the days when the sun is shining on the land. This time is qualified as being good because it includes the season of harvesting, when there is an abundance of yams and other foods. It is also the time for social intercourse: visiting, feasting, dancing, rituals, and so on. The Kerakie are conscious that the position of the rising sun shifts southwards on the eastern horizon during the dry season, so they say that the sun is hungry for *edom* fruit, since this is when the Kerakie eat them.

*Werwer* (south-east wind season): This wind (*wer*) is the reason for the name of this season and it occurs approximately in May-June. This is the first part of the dry season and the *wer* continues to blow till November. This wind is often accompanied by fine misty rain (*nu selset*), which is also given the name ‘grey hair’ (*kurut*) because the fine rain on their hair gives it a seemingly gray tinge. After this misty beginning a few more showers fall and are called *werat werat*. This season means that the gardens will not be receiving any more heavy rain and the yam tubers will begin ripening.

The leaves of the yams (*none*) begin to dry out indicating the ripening of the tubers. The *bendeen* fruit appears.

*Aarnoh *yu* (harvest season): The leaves of the yam plants die, indicating that the yams have reached the full extent of their growth. So the season for harvesting has arrived, and the work of levering up the tubers begin. The Kerakie will thrust a *yaaka* (traditional spade) under the ripe clusters of yams to lever them upwards. The name of this season comes from an old word for eating: *yamovem* (they) *be* (future
indicator) naarnotaam (will eat): they will eat. This season covers approximately June to August.

The white pigeon (site memek) re-appears.
The samb fruit ripens.
The fish come down the river to the sea.
The magpie goose, brolga, pelican and duck fly into the Trans-Fly from Australia.
The warar warar and adodo fruit ripen.
The hawks, wana and inafick, lay their eggs.
The mbermbet flowers bloom.
The edom and yengeng fruit ripens.
The cassowaries (neergem/gukwe/cuye) lay their eggs.

The yams in the storage houses start putting forth their tendrils, which is a sign for preparation work to begin on a new garden. The felling season recurs and the Keraakie pattern of gardening continues in its endless flow.

ASTRONOMICAL CALENDAR:

During the flow of time the sun, the moon and the stars are noted as changing their positions during the year and the Keraakie have worked out a calendar which follows that sequence of change. Malinowski commented that the Trobriand Islanders do not use stars as a means of measuring time, and the Keraakie do not measure time with them either, but they do see them as time indicators. Very early in the morning, the Keraakie know that the sun is about to rise by the appearance of the star called worseweer kand, which is followed by yeegu kand (morning star/Venus). After the sun has set, the evening star called kai kanaango (Venus) appears. It seems that the Keraakie realize that the morning and the evening stars are one and the same because the name of the evening star means ‘come back tomorrow’. Sometimes the evening star is called karata yue (the back or rear side of the land). These stars are seen as time indicators.

* BEGINNING OF THE WET SEASON: Three stars called feneebend (Orion) are present in the wet season but fade away at harvest time. According to the storytellers
among the Keraakie older men, these three central stars are three men (Sarau, Taaga and Wamboi). They are spearing fish (other stars in this cluster) which are swimming around their canoe. This fits in with the time of the activity of spearing fish who swim upstream during the wet season.

* The Pleiades star group which appears at this time is called merez merez (girls), being the daughters of the three men in feneebend. Their names are Guma, Yeti and Yeeyu.

* During the wet season the sun rises in a more northerly position, and it is said that it does this because it is hungry for the sago which grows well on the northern end of Keraakie land.

* The constellations, called the merez merez and feneebend, fade away at the end of the wet season, being indicators that the south-east wind is coming, and that the yam harvest is about to begin.

* BEGINNING OF THE DRY SEASON: The Centaurus star called bereer yeevi deveeneer (the one who puts a tabu on the bereer tree) appears at the beginning of the dry season and disappears at the end of the felling season.

* During the dry season the sun rises in a more southerly position and it is said that the sun hungers for the adom fruit which ripens in the southern half of the Keraakie region.

* The four stars on the southern side of the sky, called the yemaanz (Southern Cross), vanish at the end of the dry season and the Keraakie say, “Yemaanz has given us these yams to plant and we have done our work, so they have departed.” These stars have a mythological history. They were supposed to be bush bees which settled on the primeval being’s hand and he brushed them off and flung them into the sky.

* A red star called besa (Antares) on the western side of the horizon also vanishes at the end of the dry season.
Astronomical bodies are believed to influence the weather so the rainmakers name some of their sacred stones after the stars (besa, yamaanz, merez merez, and feneebend) and also one after the sun and another after the moon.

Since these stars (according to Williams) were declared to be the work of the primeval beings who threw kaazan (type of bamboo) or, according to the modern Keraakie, nidedekwa (tree fruit) into the sky to become stars, the astronomical bodies are believed to be powerful phenomena. It appears that traditionally the Keraakie had a calendar of stars but present generations are ignorant of it and only remember the time and mythological stories of a few of them.

**AAG TARNE AND SAAWA ENGAH CALENDARS:**

When planning a social event, the Keraakie create an invitation which could be called a calendar. There are two of these: the *aag tarne* and the *saawa engah* calendars. The *aag tarne* is the word for a coconut palm frond, and during the negotiations for a social event, the host takes a frond and cuts it to a certain size. The number of leaves on the palm frond indicate the days between the present one and that of the future social event. Each leaf on the frond indicates a day. This frond is then split making two equal ‘calendars’, one for the visitors and one for the host. Each day a leaf is torn off so that when only one or two are left the visitors would set out to arrive at the social event at the right time. Williams called this calendar in his field notes *tarav tarav* (reply, answer, pay), which is not the name used in the modern era. This calendar was only a short term one and barely lasted a month.

The *saawa engah* (vine string) calendar is similar to the *aag tarne* one. Two pieces of string were made at the same time with the same number of knots, which indicate the days before the coming dance, ritual or social event. Each day a knot was undone so that when only two knots remained, the visitors would depart for the social event. The host village would also be doing the same, untying the knots on their *saawa* calendar and preparing food for their guests. The last knot is called the *renyag* (knot or beginning) which meant the beginning of the social event. This calendar is time-oriented in that it is the countdown towards a climax in time after a set number of days.
From this study of Keraakie words, we note that they observed the activities of the astronomical features of the sun, day, moon, night, and stars, and created various types of time which were adapted to their life. The alternating of the north-west and south-east winds were most noticeable in the Trans-Fly and these have led to the development of a seasonal calendar, which was further expanded to include the economical seasons as well as the regular changing features of the flora and fauna. Because of their struggle to survive in the Trans-Fly, they observed the birth, growth and death of people creating a number of biological calendars to help them exist in their harsh environment. Their religious ideas were given a time orientation, by declaring their origin in a mythological time. As they faced the uncertainty of death, dreams were declared to be communications of the primeval spirit beings warning them of the immediate past, present and future. This became a mystical time. In the middle of these numerous time creations, the Keraakie have sought to establish a social calendar. But, because of death, this attempt at regulating social activity has ended in disorder. To all of these observed time features, the Keraakie have given linguistic terms. Although some words in their language could be declared to be timeless, I would suggest that they are not. They all have an unstated time component, which the Keraakie know, because in some way all events involve people interacting in time and space. Besides words, all their verbs indicate the time of an action either by syntactic particles or by verbal structure. In this study of the construction of time, the numerous calendars are seen to be very important features in the Keraakie concepts of time, because they are essential for food and survival. These features will be considered in the next chapter so as to ascertain the type of time they present.
ENDNOTES:

4. ibid., pp. 54-55.
15. ibid., p. 331.

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21 Williams, PTF, pp. 296-302, 314.

22 Landman, op. cit., p. 54.

23 Panoff, op. cit., p. 444.

24 Malinowski, op. cit., p. 211.

25 Foley, op. cit., p. 38.

26 ibid., p. 204.

27 Williams, WFN, B.433.

28 Malinowski, loc. cit., p. 205.

29 Williams, WFN, B.110, 417.
CHAPTER 5

CHARACTERISTICS OF KERAAKIE TIME

Having observed the linguistic items and how the Keraakie construct their concepts of time, consideration will now be given to the various characteristics of their multifaceted understanding of time. It is obvious that they perceive time in many different ways: as event, duration, sequence, cycle, oscillation, measurable, concrete, movement, linear, backward flowing, irreversible, quality, relative, relational, egocentric, and as holistic. Time, as experienced by the Keraakie as a community and as individuals, is very hard to fit into a tight structure, because it is complex and its various features occasionally conflict or overlap with one another. During the course of this analysis we will also be examining specifically relevant interpretations of time in theoretical, especially anthropological, literature which throw light on the Keraakie understanding of time.

Joanne Wagner studied the Enga people of PNG and summed up their time concepts, stating, "In Papua New Guinea the time orientation is event in nature".¹ As one considers Keraakie linguistic terms, one notes time words such as sunrise and sunset which emphasise eventness. What is a time event? It may be defined as an occurrence that becomes a social time indicator, or it may be the beginning or end of a time duration, or it may be one of a series of points in a sequence in time. All time events will be related to other events or durations in a socially accepted time structure. This is seen in that events are often stated as referring to other events or durations in a time relationship of being either before (fronde), or after (fowa), or simultaneously with (eembreeero). Examples of this relationship between differing events is seen in the following sentences:

He shot a wallaby before sunset; yamo (he) de (past indicator) yenaamand (shot) waraar (wallaby) irorahvaav (sunset) fronde (before).
He shot a wallaby at sunset; yamo (he) de (past indicator) yenaamand (shot) waraar (wallaby) irorahvaav (at sunset).
He shot a wallaby after sunset; yamo (he) de (past indicator) yenaamand (shot) waraar (wallaby) irorahvaav (sunset) fowa (after).
The time event mentioned above could be called *nuamah* (the shooting). In other cases time is indicated by the words for ‘sunset’ or the adverbs ‘before or after’. Besides these everyday occurrences there are numerous events, taking place in society, the individual’s life, or in nature, which are used as time indicators. The exploration of an oil company, an election, or the construction of a wharf are remembered as reference times for other community events. Social events often overlap with the individual’s life cycle, such as a baby’s naming, the piercing of the ears and nose, initiation, marriage, the birth of babies, and funeral rites, and these become key points in time. Natural events such as a flood, a bush fire, a drought, or an eclipse also serve as concrete points in time to which other events are linked. Time is a purpose-oriented concept created out of the relationship between events, durations, and people within society to give their life structure or a reference point.

Events are related to other events in time, but Anthropologist Edward Schieffelin, seemed to disagree with this understanding, when he assessed the time events of the Kaluli people of Mt. Bosavi. He stated that “an event stands, not in a temporal continuum, but in isolation, and other events at temporal distances are referred to it.” Keraokie society holds to a temporal continuum because no person or event stands in alone. This continuum flows from the unknown future into the experience of the present and then into the remembered past. It is marked by numerous events, which only become visible in the present and are later remembered by their place of occurrence in the landscape of the Trans-Fly. This flow is seen by the Keraokie as being without order, therefore they form a mental map of ‘time/being’ in which all events are linked to other time events and durations in this endless flow so that they can make sense of their world. This relationship between events help create time concepts in the Keraokie mind so as to organize this chaotic flow of life, to promote social wellbeing and to give each individual personal identity. However time events are not abstract but qualitative, because each has individual and social time meanings, depending upon the persons involved and how the events were experienced.

Concerning events, Alfred Gell declared that “having a date is an intrinsic property of events”, an essential attribute of event-hood. On the other hand,
Keraakie events do not have abstract dates, because their system is not numerical, but social and phenomenal. An example of one of the Keraakie dating systems was seen in the action of Anila Bunai, the now deceased President of the Morehead Local Government Council. One of his sons was born in September 1975, the year of independence, so he was named with the English word Memory, to remind the community of that momentous event. This child is the living date of that important event. There are other names that have a historical connotation, such as children named after policemen who lived in the area for a while: Gaindi and Maraaga. Other children have been named after foreign Christian workers: Tatamasi, Girbezi and Bugase, who worked in the area at particular times. In these cases, ‘datehood’ is people, with no concern for numerical accuracy. The size of the individual in society is an important reference point to which the Keraakie note the timing of the event.

An example was stated by Maraaga Sanau: ‘When I was a child the American plane crashed at Trakote: “yand (I) toge (child) kwamaaro (was being) American plane nowiye (fell) Trakote sarvaavaan (on the place of Trakote).’ As the speaker spoke, he indicated with his hand to a point on his thigh as to how big he was at the time. The Lockheed Lightning fighter bomber crashed during World War II near Arufe in 1944. On another occasion, when asking questions about the time of a certain headhunting raid, an old woman named Naani told me it occurred when she was a girl. Then she clenched her fist and held it against her chest to indicate her breast size, which suggested that she was only about 12 or 13 years old at the time. The event is linked to the size of the speaker at that time, which constitutes a concrete dating system. The listener is expected to do a mental comparison of the present size of the person to what they indicate so as to understand what time interval is being indicated. This method of time calculation will be referred to as their biological calendar and be discussed more in chapter 9. To the Keraakie mind, events have their own social and natural phenomena dating system.

Gell declares that “events are the changes that happen to things, bringing about new states of affairs, but events themselves do not change.” The Keraakie word totar (this instant, now) reveals this understanding because they see the event as producing a new state at the point of happening. They also perceive that events cannot be undone after they have occurred such as a death, the extraction of a tooth, and the cutting down of a tree. On the other hand, they hold that events may be
durations and therefore can change. The making of a canoe is an event, which can be begun and altered, as the villager so desires. After the tree has been felled and the design of the canoe is being cut, a flaw in the timber might appear. As a result the canoe-maker may alter his design. When he launches the canoe he may find the half-finished canoe to be heavier on one side, so he has to adze off more wood on that side to balance it up. The completed construction of the canoe is an event, yet it may involve many different events in a duration, covering many changes. A completed event cannot be changed, but it may have included many changes during the process and goes on causing more changes afterwards. The event of a death in a family is such a case. When Aniba Bunai of Arufe died in 1987, his unmarried eldest son assumed the headship of the family and became the caretaker of the family land. Immediately Taaga Yaavus claimed part of that land and tension between the two families developed. The Kerakkie see past events as having an impact on the present as well as the future.

Leibniz defined time as events occurring in order of succession.\(^5\) This definition considers time in a global way, and events do occur in a succession. Yet time involves more than a succession of events. This definition overlooks the fact that an event may be totally new to a particular society, as the Kerakkie discovered with the invasion of Europeans in September 1875 and the attack of the Suki upon them in April 1921. As far as the Kerakkie were concerned, these events were not preceded by other events, because the Kerakkie had not known nor provoked these peoples. On the other hand, time may also include a seemingly eventless period and the Kerakkie declare: ‘nothing is happening’: bee (it) yaamovna (nothing) yaam (is). Many a hunting trip deteriorated into one of these eventless durations, as I discovered on numerous occasions. However when a death occurs in society, the Kerakkie believe that it was caused by sorcery, so an enquiry is immediately conducted into the preceding events. An example of this occurred when Koag Paatra of Arufe eloped with Wewi Zuga of Behdeuen during February to April 1985. The girl’s family became indignant and many public meetings were held to condemn Koag’s behaviour. In the middle of these strained relations, Koag’s aged grandmother died and his father’s yams were eaten by wild pigs. Koag’s family angrily blamed Wewi’s family for using sorcery to kill the old lady and send pigs to
eat the yams. In their mind the events of death and the destruction of their yams were preceded by the event of sorcery, which emerged from the event of anger.

Errol Harris asked about historic time: is it simply a haphazard series of events or has it any recognisable direction? The Keraakie see history as events without direction, accidental, haphazard and chaotic and are not part of an abstract time or numerical structure. Yet they also see human involvement because some historical events were deliberate actions by human beings, while all are interpretations of what happened. Therefore Harris’ comment, that “an historical event, therefore, is never simply an external physical or biological change, but always a conscious and rational action; and to know what it is, or was, one must know how the agent was thinking”, is partially true according to the Keraakie understanding. However they also see the involvement of supernatural forces in these events, because no event is ever purely accidental according to their cultural interpretation. They believe that events are effected by geenseen (primeval spirit beings), ninyi (ghosts, spirits) for (innate power), or moin, ove, gaama (sorcery). They see hidden forces (spirit and human) at work in all events and analyse them to discover who or what was involved. As a result, they do not see historic events as having overall direction, because they may have been manipulated by human or supernatural beings. History is made up of people events – what happened to people, or what people did, as well as how Keraakie society interprets these events, but some events are longer in duration than others.

In their phenomenal calendar, the Keraakie also note events as occurring in conjunction with durations: the beginning or end of a day, a night, the cycle of the moon, the life of the individual, a visit, a journey, the blowing of one of the winds and the economic seasons. Their time durations begin as events: sunrise, sunset, a birth, or a change of the wind. The period of time known as the wet season begins when the north-west wind starts to blow and finishes when it ceases. These events have blurred edges which could be seen as small durations in themselves. The north-west wind starts, stops and then starts again at the beginning of the wet season, and this is called ‘stillness’ and ‘stirring’. A similar process may occur at the beginning of other seasons. The dry season begins when the south-east wind starts to blow and ends when it stops. When the green leaves of the yam plants change colour to yellow,
the Keraakie know that the harvest season has begun. This duration will cease when the last yam has been placed in the yam storage house. The Keraakie will mark the trees around their new yam garden, but the ratah yu (clearing season) will not begin until the event of the felling of the first tree, and will continue till the last felled tree has been burnt. The planting season begins when the ground is dug up to receive the seed yams and will finish when the planting work is done. They do not see each as a succession of moments but as one continuous duration. These lengths of time are of phenomenological durations, and not abstract ones like weeks, months and years.

Each of these seasonal durations have different properties, and the Keraakie do not name them with a generic term season. When considering the linguistic terms used for the Keraakie seasons, the word yu seems to be used as an abstract word for season, since it appears in the phrases for five of the seasons. This does not appear the case because it means ‘land or earth’, which is seen in the word yare which originally meant landowner but now means owner, being a derivative of the word yu. The word yutar means ‘no one is in residence’, and is made up of the Keraakie words yu (land) and kar (dead): the place is lifeless. This usage of yu reveals the concrete nature of their understanding of the seasons, because they are concerned about how seasons affect the land, since their survival depends on its produce. Yet in the modern era the term yu is used in yez yu (many years) suggesting that it has developed a time meaning and not just a spatial one. The main seasonal durations are: the wet, the new growth, the weeding, the south-east wind, the dry, the harvesting, the clearing, and the planting. These are not abstract blocks of time but durations linked to a natural feature (such as the wind), or economic activity, (such as the weeding), which are important in discerning why one season differs from another. As the Keraakie observe the meteorological features they note a time system, which contains a symmetrical relationship of alternating winds. The economic year is divided into two parts: the wet and the dry. The wet season is always recognised by the feature of the heavy rain brought by the north-west wind, whose blowing is identical with the duration of the wet season. The dry season is recognised by the shining sun during which time the wind blows from the south-east.

As well as being descriptive of what is happening, these durations serve as reference points in time as a means of dating, for example: ‘Said died in the south-east wind season’: Sayid kar (dead) de (past tense indicator) yaruaaro (state of being)
werwaan (in the south-east wind season). Or the arrival of the first Evangelical Church of PNG evangelist was stated thus: ‘Tatamasi arrived in the wet season’: Tatamasi de (past indicator) novaariang (appeared) y’halwaran (in the wet season). The durations of the day and night have different characteristics, as do other periods of time.

A major duration mentioned by the Keraakie is the block of time before the existence of human beings, called the geenzeen (mythological era). Although this period of time was marked by numerous supernaturally empowered events, which are different to the way things exist now, it is not devoid of historical dimensions, containing a diachronically flowing sequence of events. These myths, which Malinowski called charters, reminders of obligations, and pointers of morals, have undoubtedly been important for moulding the mores of a community. They are told in a narrative form which the Keraakie regard as covering one duration of time. Because of the pastness of this sacred age, one would expect that they would refer to it as occurring ‘hundreds of years ago’ in the distant past, but they do not. They always refer to it being a couple of generations preceding the present one, and keeping equidistant from it. The mythological era is also referred to as the ‘doing, happening’ (owolwaay): a duration of sacred events resulting in all that exists in the present world.

Friedrich Kümmler stressed the importance of the “duration of life” because “organic existence is involved to a much greater degree than is inorganic in the stream of time and must be in a state of constant transformations and renewal in order to persist within it.” The Keraakie see the duration of human life within society as being of prime importance in their time concepts and as the basis of their biological and social ‘calendars’. These durations are mental constructions to overcome hunger, maintain their physical bodies and the survival of the body corporate, which they call vivi (reality, body and social grouping). Most of their effort and time is occupied in gardening, hunting, fishing and gathering food for the perpetuation of their social community. The Kauenze people of Memdeven and Tareer villages, who were once neighbours to the Keraakie have ceased to exist and the remnants have been absorbed into other groups. This is a major tragedy to the Keraakie because the Kauenze vivi (social reality) is vivima (non-existent, empty and
meaningless), being an unthinkable disaster since ‘time/being’ has ended for that society. All time is seen by the Keraakie as seeking to perpetuate ‘being’ and maintain the continuance of their community in an everlasting duration.

Other durations have been named by the Keraakie, such as the mak evah (war days or pre-colonial era of inter-tribal fighting), maino (peace), markai or site gaane evah (the colonial or white skin era), and the modern independence time. The Keraakie note the duration of significant individuals who lived in the Trans-Fly, such as the colonial officers (eg, David Wren) and missionaries (eg, Charles Ellis, Russell Jenkins, and Ttamasi of Iebi). The time of their residences is noted as a reference duration, stating that certain events occurred in that period. An example is the case of the man who said that the work on the Arufe airstrip was begun in ‘the days of David Wren’: Wrenende evahon. Since the older listeners have a rough idea of the time of Wren’s residence as Assistant District Commissioner at Morehead government station (1965-1970), they would know when the event occurred. Another man said that ‘Asian deer entered the Arufe area during the time of Ellis’: Rusa de novanriend Ellisende evahon. These personalities do not, however, provide a universal time reference because later generations do not know the persons concerned. This fact indicates that some Keraakie time durations are not permanent and will change as generations die and are replaced by new ones. The Keraakie do not see time as being stable, rather, these durations are examples of the normal state of disorder and impermanence.

Nancy McDowell presents a slightly different understanding of durational time in her study of the Bun people of the Sepik River area of PNG. She suggests that they see time as being made up of distinct episodes. Each block of time is a steady state, which can only be changed into another block of time by a catastrophic event, and not one of gradual change. “An episodic view of change and the past is one of relative changelessness; changes occur only as a result of events of radical or monumental impact.”10 The Ilahita Arapesh people on the Sepik also hold a similar understanding of time. The Keraakie do not see time durations in this way, because they have continually suffered catastrophic events, such as droughts, floods, bushfires, wild pig devastations of their gardens, fights, murders and epidemics.
They have never mentioned a steady state which did not include misfortune. That is ‘normal’ life to them.

The time of an event is not accurately stated as being on a certain day and at a certain hour, but only referred to generally as occurring in a certain duration. Traditionally the Keraakie did not have a duration of a year, but they did have the durations of the north-west monsoons and another duration of the south-east wind season. The Keraakie see these seasons as continuing one after another in an endless sequence and they do not believe that time can be accurately stated. The use of these well-known durations as references for timing events gave rise to time abstractions of social and natural history in the mind of the Keraakie. The listeners have a mental picture of the past they remember, and the events being stated are fitted by them into this abstraction. This is subjective and cannot be stated accurately in minutes or hours. Although they use their past tense verbal system to note events as they happen, the continuous past aspect form of the verb will be used when referring to a duration. An example is seen in this statement: ‘Men were planting their yams in the planting season’: eerem (men) teheetaowat (were planting) yevenzu (their) nane (yams) yeh yuam (in the planting season). Introduced abstract durations of a year, month, week, hour do not change in length but the Kerakie seasonal durations do. The duration of the dry season lasts only as long as the south-east wind blows, and the wet season only as long as north-west wind blows. The dry season in 1982 lasted nine months according to modern time measurement, but in 1983 it lasted only six months. On other occasions they have declared that there was no dry season because it rained on and off during that duration. This irregularity in seasonal durations causes the Kerakie to disregard accuracy in their understanding of time.

Whitrow wrote in considering the question of duration, “we are now confronted with the further problems of determining a satisfactory unit of measurement and of constructing a significant scale of time.” Aristotle’s theory of time declared that it is measurable, involving measurement by socially accepted units of time, but no units of measurements were used in the traditional Keraakie durations. When a term such as the ratah yu (clearing season) was mentioned, the image conjured was not one of about twenty-eight days or four weeks, but of hard work clearing a section of jungle which would have been measured at about 50
metres by 100 metres. The word for that season intimated a concrete picture of work and was not measured with a certain number of conventional Western time units. Only in the modern era do the Keraakie use such units of time to measure durations. Traditionally they used the day or night to measure small durations, but only up to three. This measurement of short durations is noted in their use of a limited number of linguistic items, such as today: ganoso; tomorrow/yesterday: kai, and two days in the past or in the future: naambat. The Keraakie also use a limited number of numerals: one: eembru, two: somboi, three: naambi, with the time unit of day or night to indicate lengths of time. Francis Williams mentioned in his field notes a counting system using parts of the body, such as the fingers of one hand, then the fingers of the other hand. The number eleven was the forearm (dlkav dlkav), twelve was the elbow (dengwa), thirteen was the upper arm (tevi), fourteen was the shoulder (mimu) and fifteen was the chest or heart (tikav). This is no longer in use and has been replaced by the Western numerical system, but the Keraakie have a another numerical system based on counting yams in groups of six, which is still in use today. Williams mentioned that this system was adopted from the people west of the Morehead River, but his version differs from the modern one, which is shown below:

- six yams is an eembru for = 6
- six eembru for make up one ferta eembru = 36
- six ferta make up one taromba = 216
- six tarumba make up one daameno = 1,296
- six daameno make up one werameka = 7,776
- six werameka make up one wiwi = 46,656
- six wiwi make up one meemee wiin = 279,936

Although the potential was there, the Keraakie did not use this system to measure time or other objects.

J.R. Lucas commented that the Western practice of measuring time was to seek a certain sort of objectivity, so as to maintain the accuracy of one’s statements and avoid error. The Keraakie see time more subjectively, and they estimate it on the basis of what they have seen and experienced socially and not by an abstract numerical system. Their time events are measured by their biological calendar, which places all the members of the community in a line according to their order of birth. Some events are listed as having occurred about the time of someone’s birthday,
which is a static form of measurement. Other events involve comparison of the size of the speaker at the time of the event, expecting the listeners to make a mental calculation as to how long the interval of growth would be to the present moment. Since they traditionally did not have a unit of a year, the listener’s own experience of growth in society formed the basis of understanding the time duration to which he or she was being referred. Each person’s position in the Keraakie biological calendar indicated that he or she was a static unit in a sequence as well as a growing unit of time within society. When someone mentioned that a certain event occurred when he was ‘such and such’ a height, the listener could only make a rough measurement of the time involved. Numerical accuracy in time was traditionally unimportant to the Keraakie.

Another pattern of measurement is used by referring to the corresponding movement of the sun during the day. A Keraakie, who was about to undertake a journey, would point to a place in the sky and declare that he would arrive at his destination when the sun had reached that point in its daily journey across the sky. This form of measurement is based on the regular movement of the sun. The use of natural phenomena as a means of indicating a measurement in time, instead of measuring by a clock, is also seen when the Keraakie says that they will go hunting at ‘pig morning’; maamol (pig) yeegu (morning), which is approximately 5 am when the pigs are still roaming around and have not retired into the jungle, or the hunter may say that he will go hunting at ‘bird call’. This indicates that the person concerned will rise while it is still dark when either the darok, ordaga or tuprum birds call. These natural phenomena become ‘units’ of measurement in the Keraakie mind.

Another pattern of measurement used among the Keraakie is based on binary opposites. This is seen in their weighing an object as being either heavy (karta) or light (owa), of measuring speed as being either fast (mengar) or slow (mure), and of measuring distance as being either close (kaaka) or far away (naiya). This same pattern is applied to time so that they say an event occurred a long time ago in the past (dende, fronde, totra, tek) or is close to occurring in the future (kaaka). It must be noted that these words, like dende, can refer to events two days ago as well as many years ago, therefore there will be some lack of accuracy in its usage. But this
measurement of time, weight, speed, or distance can be defined more accurately by using *vivi* (superlative suffix), which has the meaning of the English word ‘very’. The object was *karavivi* (very heavy) or *ovavivi* (very light); movement was *mengarvivi* (very fast) or *murevivi* (very slow); distance was *natiavivi* (very far away) or *kaakavivi* (very close). In time the event occurred a very long time ago, *denddevivi* while *kokavivi* means very close in the future. When referring to an event that just happened a short while ago, they would use the immediate past tense verbal indicator to give the accuracy needed: *bava* (up to five minutes ago) or *dava* (during this day). This pattern reveals that in their verbal forms, the Keraakie are more concerned about accuracy in immediate past time than accuracy in the distant past or future time.

Christopher Gosden comments on the matter of measurement: “The time of human experience is not purely successive and defies measurement.” The actual duration experienced is what marks time to the Keraakie, and not the measurement of it. This is seen in that the timing of an important ceremony does not depend on the exact day (or hour), but when the participants are ready. The Keraakie traditionally used coconut leaf calendars or string calendars (as noted in chapter 4) to propose the timing of an event. The actual performance of an event is the key feature and not its timing in relation to an external mathematical measuring system. Edward T. Hall noted this among the Pueblo Indians of the U.S.A.: “Events begin when the time is ripe and no sooner”. The Sunday morning church service begins when people assemble and not at a specified hour. Although the concept of having an event that forms a co-ordinate for the whole of their traditional time concepts is foreign, the Keraakie have absorbed the Western pattern of numbering years from the event of Christ’s birth. This influence has caused the naming and numbering of hours, days, months and years, so that now events have dates: **independence Day, Christmas Day, New Year’s Day** which are celebrated. In spite of this influence over ninety years, numerical dates are still not important to the Keraakie because they are not meaningful in their social world. They do not use their traditional numerical system to measure time except in the case of very short durations, but continue to measure by comparison to social and natural phenomena. In short the Keraakie are concerned about concrete physical time, and not an abstract numerical one.
Michael Kearney maintained that, "Time as a concept is not so directly tied to objects", but the Kerakuie see time as being closely tied to objects, places, images of space, people, human and natural activities. Kearney seems to be considering time in an abstract way, whereas the people of the Trans-Fly see time more concretely. They tend to name events and durations in time from the perceptions of their senses as opposed to mental constructions projected upon nature and society. The Kerakuie appear to create their time concepts in the majority of cases from experience, the work being done, the event or duration occurring, association with an object, an activity, a place or a relationship. This is seen pre-eminently in that they name their agricultural and meteorological seasons after concrete features. The wet season is y'hyakwar, which is made up of the word yu meaning land and the word hakwar meaning moist, an apt description of the landscape during the wet season. Yet there may be other meanings too since the word hakwar can also mean 'insect blood' and the wet season is the time when insects multiply in their millions. Another meaning for hakwar is 'tree sap', because in the wet season the sap rises up the tree trunks behind the bark so that it can easily be stripped off for making walls for houses. All three of these possible meanings for the time duration of the wet season is based upon a concrete indicator.

The word that the Kerakuie use for the new growth season (wovvaarooh) comes from the verb 'to bud, blossom, grow' (bee bee norwaarhot: it will grow). Here again they use a concrete term describing the activity of the plants putting forth new buds, blossoms, or shoots in this time duration. The following agricultural season is the weeding season (sambaarav), which is the verbal noun of the verb 'to weed or to pull plants out'. An example is 'I will remove the weeds from the garden': yando (I) kakavaan (in the garden) bee (future indicator) yaasotaan (pull out) keerveer (grass). In this case the work of the women removing the weeds and grass from their gardens is the concrete activity that marks this time period. The dry season is named after the most prominent feature of that duration – abundant sunlight. The word evah (sun) is combined with yu (land) describing the dry season as ‘the sunny land’. The opening segment of the dry season is called werver, which is named after the south-east wind whose name is wer. The concrete change of the wind from north-west to south-east is the event that gives its name to this period of time. The harvesting season is called the aarnoh yu, which means literally ‘eating land’. The concrete nature of this
phrase is seen in that it uses the word for land (yu) with the verbal noun of the verb to taste/eat: 'I will taste/eat yams': yando (I) bee (future indicator) kaurnomgaan (eat) nane (yam). In the final part of the dry season, the ratah yu occurs, which means 'the clearing of the land'. The verbal noun ratah comes from the verb to cut down trees and bushes and is seen in this sentence, 'I will clear the jungle': yando (I) orang (bush) bee (future indicator) yartaanaan (clear), which is the concrete activity that happens in this time period. After the clearing season, the yeh yu occurs. This phrase means the planting of the land, and is made up of yu (land), and the verbal noun yeh of the verb to plant: 'I will plant a yam': yando (I) nane (yam) bee (future indicator) yeetaaan (plant). This term describes the economic activity that the Keraakie are doing at that time. The duration of time called mataar (stillness) describes exactly what happens at this time because it is oppressively still and hot. It appears that during this short block of time the north-west monsoons cancel out the south-east wind so that no wind blows. Sometimes it is called the ramaanaah, which means 'stirring', and this is when the two winds swirl as they meet. The seasons are the main features in the Keraakie phenomenal calendar, which notes a sequence or duration of concrete phenomena covering natural economical and meteorological activities.

An example of an event that is time to the Keraakie is the falling of the hamboi saaan (leaves of the hamboi tree). This term is not just a time indicator of deciduousness but a symbolic temporal term indicating that it is time to begin planting. The simple statement that these tree leaves are falling has an unstated meaning of 'time to plant yams'. This time is also the time to burn patches of the grasslands (kwarr kwarr saav) so that when the rains fall, new shoots will immediately appear. These are greatly desired by wallabies so the men hide near these burnt patches in order to shoot them. The phrase kwarr kwarr saav comes from the words kwarrwaar: big wallaby and sarwaar: place. In the jungle of the Trans-Fly, as the bush fruit and nuts ripen in succession, they become concrete points in their phenomenal calendar. The Keraakie will go from tree to tree knowing where food can be obtained, but this time pattern has a greater meaning. The migratory birds and animals of this area also eat the same fruit, therefore the hunters will know where and when they can hunt them. At the end of the dry season, the magpie geese migrate from Australia and the men go hunting for them on the southern or northern
swamps. Other birds and crocodiles lay their eggs at this time, therefore the Keraakie know that this is the time to add eggs to their menu. They also extract sago from sago palms in the wet season, and leave the pith in a pile as bait. A small palm frond shelter is made nearby as an ambush and the sago-maker returns at dusk to wait. The wild bush pigs will pick up the pungent odor of the sago pith and will come that night to feast on it. If the hunter can put up with the millions of biting mosquitoes, he will attempt to shoot at least one of the pigs. So the time of sago-making is also the time for shooting pigs. When the moon is full wallabies love to play together in the moonlight and they flatten areas of grass in the process. Knowing this, the Keraakie men will scour the grasslands for these playing areas and then come back at night to shoot the wallabies. A full moon is the time for a wallaby steak. The majority of these concrete time indicators have to do with food and their struggle for survival.

There are many concrete events, objects or activities within Keraakie culture which are named as time. One of these is the word for opportunity is bene which is also the same word for a hole or gap. An example of its use is seen in the sentence: ‘If I have time to help I will come’: yando (I) bene (hole) weuterhat (to help) giya (if) tingongaan, (see) yand (I) bee (will) wannam (come). This reveals the spatial way that the Keraakie see time. The word for sun is also used for the temporal term ‘day’ since that length of time is dominated by the sun and its light. The word kwevte means dark in colour and is a temporal term for ‘night’, being a concrete description of the night’s main feature. With the introduction of Sunday as a day of rest, the Keraakie named the Saturday as besmaara which means ‘the collecting of firewood’. This was the practical task of the day before because cutting firewood was forbidden on Sunday. The time before dawn is called pig morning, because pigs are still feeding and this is the last time hunters will find them in the open. As soon as the sun rises the pigs will go back to the jungle.

The Keraakie word for past is fonde, which also means ‘in front of’, and it indicates that they see past events as concrete phenomena, because sites where the events occurred lie before them in the landscape. As one moves through the Trans-Fly, the Keraakie keep up a running commentary about past events, citing trees, marks, holes, creeks, and so on, as visual evidence of the events that occurred there. The word for future is fowa, which is the same as the word for ‘behind’, indicating
that they imagine future events as unseen and therefore behind them. They seem to regard present or past events as real because they have been seen or experienced as concrete events, while future ones are unreal because they have not been seen or experienced. When discussing past events, their verbal system allows them to state accurately when they occurred over the last two days, using five past tense forms, while the future has only one verbal form. This understanding of future events is born out by the way the Keraakie live: they do not generally plan for future events but only act when necessity demands it. Accommodation for visitors is only arranged when they arrive. Clothes, sleeping basket and the name for a new baby is only sought after its birth.

Another feature of the Keraakie people’s concrete understanding of time is seen in their use of the word vaav meaning ‘a place’, being an abbreviated form of sarwaav. Examples of its usage are: eemsuhvaav (sitting place, chair), zuzuwaav (rubbish dump), aamuhvaav (washing place), unengahvaav (meeting place), aarengahvaav (hunting place), and naamahvaav (killing place). The term vaav is also used as a time indicator, as seen in one of their most important concepts of time: The term ovrohvaav means ‘the time of the happening’ by the mythological beings. The word ovroh (happening) is the verbal noun of the intransitive verb, ‘it will occur, happen’ (bee bee novrot). The word used for the place of the appearing of the mythological creatures is geenseenwaav or boiwaav (mythological place) and not ovrohvaav. In this case, even though they see space and time as closely related the Keraakie do not confuse the two.

There are numerous other time terms which also have this spatial content. The words for dawn are eerinyehvaav (the rising time or place), and owihvaav, which means the growing time or place. The words for sunset are irorahvaav (the smashing time or place), aalohvaav (the submerging time or place), auvaarorahehvaav (the splitting off time or place), and owiyehvaav (the falling time or place). The word vaav as used in eerinyihvaav has the literal meaning of ‘the rising place’ but some Keraakie stress that this word refers to the time when the sun rises. The same word is used to refer to the place after the sun has risen denoting that eerinyihvaav has a time as well as a spatial meaning. This use of vaav for time and space is also seen in the term fotohvaav, which comes from the verb fotoh tam meaning ‘it is completed or
finished", and refers to an activity as well as time. This word can mean the end of an action, the end of the road, or the end of a time. In these cases the Keraakie indicate a concrete understanding of time, which is closely linked to space.

Besides concrete terms for time, the Keraakie also name analogous things as time such as the existence of the visible sun and the time it represents as it progresses across the sky. The time span is given the same name as the concrete object, which in this example is evah. Other concrete time terms are derivatives of the original ones such as midday (evah got) which is a combination of the sun, the day and the analogy of a house’s ridge beam (got). The latter point in time is derived from the daily movement of the sun across the sky which the Keraakie name in the shape of a house. There is an analogy between ‘time’ and daily ‘being’ in the Keraakie mind.

Again we find this concrete idea in the Keraakie description of the growth of a child (toge) through time, using words that describe the activities at the various stages of a child’s life. This is seen in the times hurheer toge (a child that smiles), neemheer toge (a child that crawls), sawova toge (a child with teeth), akamboheer toge (a child who is walking), zovaveer toge (a child who has begun to talk), nono feemhovna toge (a child who has stopped drinking from the breast), eeyereh fanhrova toge (a child whose ears have been pierced), and mein fanhrova toge (a child whose nose has been pierced). The time phrases describe precisely the stage of the child’s development. But the Keraakie also use words for other time stages in human biological growth, which do not concretely describe human activities, such as streesweer (youth), merze (girl), eer (man), damaave (woman), and so on. More will be said on this feature under the concept of aging.

Augustine asked, “What, then, is time? I know well enough what it is, provided that nobody ask me; but if I am asked what it is and try to explain, I am baffled.” Time is no simple concept, being one of the most complex and abstract concepts in human thought. Robert S. Brumbaugh, in his study of time said, “I want to show that there is no specialised discipline which has an adequate treatment of time, but that the nature of time is a philosophical problem.” Therefore it appears that when the Keraakie pondered time, they were likewise perplexed and sought for answers to time in the concrete world around them. They hence decided to name time
by what they could see, feel, and hear as a society. Jean Piaget, when writing about
the child's conception of time, noted that time and space form an inseparable whole
and the Keraakie have a similar interpretation as seen in the linguistic evidence.
Time, to them, is 'being' in space. Piaget commented:

Space is not just a simple 'container'. It is the totality of the relationships
between the bodies we perceive or imagine, or rather, the totality of the
relationships we use to endow these bodies with a structure. Space is
above all a system of concrete operations, inseparable from the
experiences to which they give rise and which they transform.²⁰

The Keraakie note carefully the concrete material (natural, social, economical,
meteorological, and astronomical) that they experience and the order in which they
occur, placing them in unnamed sequences. They call a sequence *fowa waitoh yaam*
(the way of following behind), meaning events that follow one after another. An
example of such a sequence in Keraakie time is the duration of the dry season in
which there is a series of events that has a distinct order. The appearance of the
south-east wind brings with it misty rain. This is followed by the harvest season,
which consists of digging up the ripe yams, cleaning and counting them to be placed
in the yam storage houses. Then comes the time of visiting, ceremonies and other
social activities, during which the Keraakie enjoy eating their yams. When the seed
yams begin to sprout and put out runners, the Keraakie select a new section of jungle,
cut it down and let it dry out before burning it. This is the felling season. When
certain tree leaves fall, the villagers begin cleaning the garden site and planting their
seed yams in holes they dig as they go. This is the planting season, which may
overlap with the oppressively hot still season. Change soon occurs as the winds gust
from many directions in a stirring motion. Eventually the north-west wind will grow
stronger and the rains of the wet season will fall, bringing an end to the sequence of
events in the dry season. This is just one of the many sequences that make up the
Keraakie understanding of time. Leibniz considered that one of the essential features
of time was succession, and the Keraakie would also agree.

This raises the question: Are sequences in time cause and effect? In some cases
the people of the Trans-Fly note cause and effect but at times they see these actions
in a different way. Mellor suggested that "changes are events" and the Keraakie
agree, but not all events are changes and this is how they see their time sequences.²¹
The south-east wind causes a change in the growing yams, drying them so that they ripen, and although the harvest season is influenced by this factor it is not caused by it. They declare that their magic rituals achieved the growth. Because of hunger some villagers harvest some of their yams before the south-east wind arrives. Others may be working on local government projects such as road-making or bridge-building, so their harvest season will be delayed. Likewise the sprouting of the seed yams influences the Keraakie to commence clearing land for their next crop, but the clearing season is not its temporal descendant. It depends on whether they have time available because they may have a contract to build a wharf or medical building and the clearing season may be delayed. When certain tree leaves fall, the majority of the people of the Trans-Fly will begin planting their seed yams, but it is not a direct cause. Many a man has been doing so well hunting crocodiles to sell their skins, that he will put off his planting season until the monsoon rains makes it impossible to hunt. When the wet season rain falls, one would expect the Keraakie to see it as caused by the north-west wind which brought in the heavy dark clouds, but they say that it is preceded by the rainmaker's rituals, which cause the mythological animals to splash around in the water bath in the sky, causing rain to fall. These events are linked together by the Keraakie in a general ordered time sequence: leaves fall, yams are planted, magic performed, wind blows, clouds appear and rain falls. This general order in nature is named in their calendars, but they do not necessarily follow it. Nor do they always expect it will occur. They declare that there is no order in cause and effect or time.

Mellor proposed that "chronological aging is not in reality a sequence of events", which may be true scientifically correct because the human body is only changing imperceptibly. However the Keraakie name various points in human aging, seeing them as events. The physical features of human growth in childhood, such as the emergence of teeth, walking, talking, and weaning have already been noted. When young men begin to develop muscularity, the older men take them away for initiation into manhood. These ritual events and homosexual activities were believed to actually cause further growth. Menstruation is the time-sequential event for females indicating growth into womanhood, but some girls were actually married before they reached this event. Normally marriage occurs in the early teens for a girl (merez), and when she reaches late teens she will be called a spinster (merez
dukar). On marriage a girl becomes a woman and the youth becomes a man. Age has nothing to do with these sequential time points, because it is the social ritual of marriage which accomplishes the change. A man is called a youth irrespective of his age. But in the modern era, the Keraakie have absorbed the Suki term for a middle-aged youth (ewagiye) to overcome this anomaly. As married men grow more mature they are called ‘big man’ (kitong eer) while maturing women are called eusa. When old age sets in, both old men and women are called bolo, a state to be followed by another age called dawan dawan (been around an eternity) or wao (ripe, dried out, complete). As seen from the usage of these terms, the Keraakie see chronological aging as a sequence of time events.

There are many features in the Keraakie way of life that seem to indicate that their time understanding has a cyclical characteristic, such as the cycle of the migrations of birds and fish, of the movement of the sun, moon and stars, of garden production, of the seasons and of the menstrual cycle are just some of these constantly recurring features. When asked about this the Keraakie declare that they have no certainty that the wet or dry season will come unless special magic is made to bring them about. They do not perceive of the seasons in the abstract concept of the circle but of a continual flow of similar events one after another. Schieffelin studied the Kaluli people, who live about 250 km to the north-east of the Keraakie, and discovered that their “sense of season does not imply a strong sense of cyclicity”, and the Keraakie feel the same. Many have interpreted the natural rhythm of seasons among the Australian Aborigines as indicating a cyclical time, but Tony Swain commented, “I do not believe they share the ‘cycle’ interpretation”. My conclusion concerning the Keraakie seasonal calendar is the same.

The Keraakie note the repetition of the setting and rising sun event, but they do not call it a cycle. The cyclic movement of the earth around the sun is not seen by them as a regular cycle because they say that the sun rises, transverses the sky and then dies, never to come back again. In December 1990, Wamboi Yaavus and Mege Waianda of Arufe, Taakwam of Bebdeven and Saawi of Gubaav all stated individually that, “The sun will die”: evah (sun) bee (future indicator) kawedindanga (die). The word that they use for repetition is weikor (or shortened to wet), which can be used of physical, mental, religious or time activity, but it is not used of the sun
rising. Nor do they say ‘the sun will come back’: evah (sun) bee (future indicator) nanaangot (come back). The sun is believed to die and so they refer to it as being smashed (irorahvaw), which indicates that it does not return at sunrise. Patrol Officer Leo Austen noted a similar understanding among the Yende people of the upper Pahoturi river east of the Keraakie. The Keraakie do not see these repetitions as being the same, because according to their phenomenological calendar they flow one after another in a general sequence. In their language they always use the same words for day and night, indicating that they regard them as having characteristics which are identical in the next rising sun. They may use the same name in their language indicating that each day is similar to the one before it, but in their assessment of the phenomenon they state that it is never the same. They do not have a new word for every different day. This belief in the death of the sun is a contradiction of their mythology, which says that the sun is a representation of the primeval mother, Yumeer, who is being eternally chased across the sky day after day by the primeval father, Keembel, who is represented by the moon. This indicates that they do see the sun and moon as moving in a ‘daily cycle’ of a kind. In the Keraakie philosophy of time one finds this tension of contradictions and this will be considered further.

The Keraakie have the word naawarendra, which means ‘going around in a circle’, but it is never used to describe the repetition of the seasons or the movement of the sun, moon and stars. Its meaning becomes clearer when one understands that naawarendra is the transitive form of the intransitive verb ‘to wander’: naarend, which can be used of a person wandering aimlessly in the bush. The emphasis of naawarendra is upon an object or an area around which the subject wanders. It does not have the primary idea of a circular movement, because it can mean ‘moving around an object’ in any geometrical form, such as a square or diamond. Yet the geometrical figure of a circle is drawn in diagrams and is described by the Keraakie word aawarendrah, meaning a circle around an area or object. The word sev is used to name a circular material object, such as a ring or circular fishing net, but it is not used of a cycle. Time is not cyclical to the Keraakie but an endless linear flow of events from the future to the past. They name the stars and moon with the same names as the last ones indicating repetition but they say these time features may appear repetitive, but to them this appearance of regularity is relative. To them, time
is not a regular thing but a disordered flow in life, dominated by death. This raises the question: If they do not see the repetition of the wet and dry seasons, and so on, as cyclical, do they see them as an oscillation?

Edmund Leach suggested that “time process is an oscillation between opposites” in the thinking of ‘primitive’ peoples. The Kerakie way of life has numerous features which suggest their time has an oscillating character. These are the tides, the equinoxes, the winds, and some other imprecise time features, which will be studied to ascertain whether they see time as having a pendulum-like movement. The Kerakie use the word *otmaame* to describe an oscillating action, referring to a person going to another village and returning on the same day. This term is never used of features like the oscillating winds and the movement of the sun. Another kind of oscillation is the exchange arrangement in a Kerakie marriage, when a man hands his sister over to another man in marriage and receives the recipient’s sister. They use numerous words (*taambre, ogaambenah, otraarah* and *ovaanah*) for this oscillating action within the marriage exchange system, but they are not used of time. Retributive logic in Melanesian culture, which involves revenge attacks against another village or social group, could give rise to the idea of oscillation. The Kerakie use the word *taraav* for revenge action but it is never used of time. These linguistic terms reveal that they are aware of the movement of oscillation, but do they use them of time?

In the Trans-Fly, the tide comes up the Wassi Kussa River, raising the level of the river sometimes as high as three metres, and then goes out in a pendulous-like pattern. The rising tide is called *raiah* while the falling tide is called *aandoah*. These two events or durations, which normally occur in a regular oscillating pattern during the day and night, give the impression that the Kerakie could see them as such a pattern of time, but this is not how they see these features. On occasions the tide fails to occur in a regular pattern, as it did on 13 August 1984 when the tide began to rise, then after a while it began to go out, before beginning to rise in over the space of two hours. This irregular action of the tide was mentioned to the Arufe villagers, who said that it was normal for tides to be irregular. The reason for this is that the Wassi Kussa river flows into the Torres Strait, which is the confluence of the Pacific and the Indian oceans making tides unstable. Cyclonic weather in this area also
influences the size of the tides. The Keraakie observe a pattern of oscillation in the tides, but do not name them as events in the flow of time.

Another oscillating activity, which is time-oriented, is the equinoxes, when the sun moves towards the north and then moves back in a southerly direction. The Keraakie say that it moves towards the south when it is hungering for edom fruit and then moves north when it is hungering for sago. They do not see this activity of the sun like the swing of a pendulum but as a sequence in the flow of time, which may be because the equinoxes do not occur at the same points of the ecliptic every year. It is only a general order. The oscillating flow of the wind from the south-east, alternating with the north-west wind, is a major time feature in the Trans-Fly, but the Keraakie do not see them as constituting an oscillating model of time. In spite of the fact that these two winds follow a regular pattern the Keraakie see them as irregular, because the north-west monsoons can blow from any direction in the west. What the Keraakie remember most about the north-west wind is the intermittent and devastating gusts which can unroof houses, blow down trees and may only last for five to ten minutes. When the dry changes to the wet season, these two winds can swirl in from any direction or even stop blowing in the ‘still’ season. It seems to be that the Keraakie take greater note of the irregularities than the regular patterns. Originally they did not have a concept of the year but only saw the winds as blowing irregularly in a flowing sequence in the Keraakie phenomenal calendar.

John J.C. Smart observed that human beings believe that time moves and flows, but that these feelings arises out of metaphysical confusion and are merely an illusion.28 D.C. Williams supports this understanding:

Over and above the sheer spread of events, with their several qualities, along the time axis, which is analogous enough to the spread of space, there is something extra, something active and dynamic, which is often and perhaps best described as ‘passage’. This something extra I think is a myth: not one of those myths which foreshadow a difficult truth in a metaphorical way, but one which is fundamentally false, deceiving us about the facts, and blocking our understanding of them.29

Stephen Hawking noted the movement of time and listed three forms of it. He described the thermodynamic arrow of time as "the increase of disorder or entropy
with time is one example of what is called an arrow of time, something that distinguishes the past from the future, giving a direction to time. The Kerakie likewise believe in the increase of disorder. Then Hawking listed the psychological arrow of time when we feel time passing in that we remember the past but not the future. The Kerakie hold to the reality of the past and reject the reality of the future, seeing it as imagination which cannot be accurately forecast. Hawking's third form is the cosmological arrow of time in which the universe is expanding rather than contracting. He summarised his findings on the passage of time:

The laws of science do not distinguish between the forward and backward directions of time. However, there are at least three arrows of time that do distinguish the past from the future.

Paul Davies wrote about the movement of time indicating that it is not as clear cut an issue as Smart and Williams propose:

The overwhelming impression of a flowing, moving time, perhaps acquired through a mental 'back door', is a very deep mystery. Is it connected with quantum processes in the brain? Does it reflect an objectively real quantity of time 'out there' in the world of material objects that we have simply overlooked? Or will the flow of time be proved to be entirely a mental construct?

What is the movement of time? Does time actually move? Is it the event or the subject that moves? Is it like Heraclitus' river-of-time bearing numerous events along as it flows, or is it just events on the bank being observed from the moving flow of time? Is the movement of time an imagination of the human mind, or is it the projection of the idea of time upon three dimensional space, thus giving the illusion of movement over distance? Is time static? D.C. Williams defines motion in time as "being at different times in different places. True motion then is motion at once in time and space."

The Kerakie conclude that time concepts are not just abstractions from the physical world, but are closely linked to human 'being' in it. They see time as 'being'; a subjectively grasped interaction between themselves and the world. This 'being' is multi-individual, and involves the social experience of the present instant as well as an anticipation of the future and memories of the past in the moment of
'being'. W. Barrett, following Heidegger, noted time as a temporal spread, including a "future-present-past as a unifying synthesis". The Keraakie see time as moving in many contradictory ways which ultimately resolves itself in time as social 'being'. This involves previous and successive 'being', human growth (both individual and social), society under the serial impact of nature and the spirit world, experiencing constant change over time in technology, economics, politics, laws, linguistics, art forms, religion, groups, kinship, and health care. Barrett concluded that "the flow of time, as we intend it, is ontological." Society is time: people are always changing and never static.

In facing the problem of the flow, passage, or movement of time, the Keraakie deal with it in many ways. They note movement and social change in their biological calendar, which is the placement of all the members of the community in a time line according to their order of birth. With each new birth the community grows and with each death it becomes smaller. One's birth becomes a time indicator. Each individual is a dividing point in the linear calendar of society, splitting it into those who are born before and after another member, referring to those born before as taande fromdeman (the one before or older than me) or taande fowaman (the one behind or younger than me). This also sets a time pattern of social control with the older having authority over the younger. This calendar is not just a series of static reference points but operates in parallel with human growth as each member changes from childhood to adulthood to old age in the various statuses of life. As noted at the beginning of this chapter, some events involve a comparison of the size of the speaker at the time of the event, expecting the listeners to make a mental calculation as to how long the interval of growth would be to the present moment. Each person's birth position in the Keraakie biological calendar indicates that he or she is an unchanging mark in time, but his or her size or status has potential for change and is a time-indicator within society. This calendar is not just made up of individuals but is a social one as each person is part of the community and dependent upon others.

These movements in the life of the individual also have an impact on members of the family as well as other members of the community. The marriage of a couple becomes a time indicator in the biological calendar and the birth of children will create new ones, and these social events will have a future influence upon the whole
of the community. People are subject to the flow of natural features in their individual and social life, so that society is a dynamic time indicator. Irwin Lieb comments on the passage of time as seen in human life, which agrees with the Keraakie way of seeing it:

Time and individuals constitute the present by being together in a certain way. There are two other ways in which they are together; these constitute the present and the past. But the past is no less real than the present. It consists of time and of what was present in individuals, but it consists of them as they have been transformed. As the future becomes present, time also acts. Its activity is called 'passing'. Time is made to pass partly because of what individuals do, and individuals are made to act partly because of passing time. The actions of each calls for the action of the other; neither can act alone.36

The Keraakie see time events as occurring in a linear sequence, moving out of the unknown and invisible future into the visible present. Events are noted as occurring at certain points in the landscape, which results in their being remembered as they seemingly move on into the past. This linear nature of time is a major characteristic in their thinking. Elizabeth C. Traugott concluded that "the basic spatial image for both tense and sequencing is a horizontal line",37 and the Keraakie think the same. The word for 'line' is huree, which can also mean 'straight or immediately'. In this section, an analysis will be made of the various ways they see time in a linear form.

The linear relations between natural phenomena within the Trans-Fly are important to the Keraakie. In the B-series view of time, events are related through declaring them either before or after the event, and this understanding is seen in the Keraakie construction of their phenomenal calendar: one tree blossoms before another, or one bird migrates after another, or one fruit ripens before another, all in a never-ending flow. This is carefully noted and the sequence of relationships in time form the basis of a calendar which is important to their survival. These time relations are between independent events but they are related to each other in a linear phenomenal flow.

In their verbal system, the Keraakie refer to events in a linear time sequence. When they observe the north-west wind blowing and the dark clouds assembling on the horizon, they use the future tense in saying nu bee navaamand (rain shall fall).
As the rain falls they use the present tense *nu navaamand* (rain is falling). When the storm has just passed by they will use the past tense form of the verb and say *nu bava navaamand* (rain has just fallen). Later that day they will use the next past tense form of the verb and say, *nu dava navaamand* (rain has fallen today). The next day the Keraakie will use the past tense form of the verb and say *nu de kavaamand* (the rain fell yesterday). When two or more days have passed they will use the past tense form of the verb and say *nu de navaamdam*. (rain fell two or more days ago). If the rain was the first storm of the wet season then they would use the past tense form of the verb and say *nu navaamdai* (rain fell first/before later rain two or more days ago). In this case we note how Keraakie use their verbal system to describe the linear sequence of time regarding the precipitation of rain. This system indicates the time distance between the speaker and the event, describing the occurrence of the event in a five-step sequence backwards into the distant past, giving the impression that the event is moving away from the speaker. It is this use of space and time that gives the impression of movement. Events are referred to by some philosophers as having a reality only at the point of occurrence, but the Keraakie see events as also having a reality at any one of the five past tense segments of time. They refer to past and future events from the dynamic present. They do not see future events as having a reality, whereas past events do have substance and this is are reinforced through the evidence of remembered sites on the landscape. Mellor refers to these tense changes as "the psychological reality behind the myth of passing time."³³⁸

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This linear understanding of time means that time has being spatialised by the Keraakie: an event always occurs in time and space and these two features can never be separated. This is seen in the usage of the word *kaaka* for closeness in time and space. We have already noted the use of the suffix *vaav* as a spatial and temporal term in relation to sunrise, sunset, end of a piece of land, or time, as seen in

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mythological time. The Keraakie see the mystery of space and time and contend, like Aristotle, that time is not independent of movement. The day, which is named after the sun, is seen by them as one of their important time/space units. Although the day does not move, the sun travels across the sky, being the ‘hand’ on the ‘clock’ of Keraakie time. When a person wishes to state the time when he or she will arrive at a certain place, he or she points to the position that the moving sun will be in the sky at that time. This is based on past experience, which has taught them that the sun is a reliable indicator of motion in time and space. When referring to the movement of the sun before sunrise, the Keraakie declare, ‘The day/sun is coming’: evah bee yennam, or during the day they say that the sun is walking/moving (naarend) or going (yanggam). The day is indivisibly linked to the sun and is seen as a duration made up of numerous points of the movement of the sun, which are not measured mathematically in hours, but are named after concrete features. The day is described in a linear sequence by these terms: ‘darkness before the sunlight appears, pigs roaming before the faint light of the sun appears, the first light of the rising sun appears and the birds call, just before dawn, the rising of the sun, morning, midnight, noon, mid-afternoon, sunset, the light of the setting sun is fading, night and the middle of the night. An event that occurred in the morning does not move and is always mentioned as having happened at the same point in the morning in an unchangeable relation to events before and after. But the description of the event in relation to the speaker will always be told from the speaker’s point of view after the event. Depending on the time he or she is speaking, the event will always be described, using different past tense verbs, as though it were moving away from the speaker.

Time is not static to the Keraakie, because the continuous alternation of day to night to day forms a repetitious pattern which indicates movement. This sequential movement of event after event, as well as physical growth or change through an event, does not seem to convince the Keraakie that time is static. The day is one of their important time units, and daily events are always in a state of becoming. This same pattern is noted when the wet season follows the dry season, and so on, indicating sequential change. The idea that time is static and only has a relationship with events ‘earlier than’, or ‘later than’, or ‘simultaneous with’, does not satisfy the Keraakie when they observe the world constantly changing around them. In their
phenomenal calendars, the features of growth, concerning new leaves, flowers, fruit, bamboo shoots, birds building nests, laying eggs and migrating, are time indicators or durations that occur in a moving sequence in an endless flow over innumerable days. In their biological calendar they see continuous change in their social and individual life. As these features occur one after another, they are seen as movement or growth, and to the Keraakie these phenomenological features constitute time.

Mellor has declared that “The flow of time is relatively straightforward. It turns out to be in reality no more than an accumulation of successive memories.” This assessment is not totally satisfying to the Keraakie, because they point to the impact of painful past events, which made them what they are. This is seen in their history of migration, settlement in the Trans-Fly, conflict with the previous residents, and invasions by the Tugeri and European peoples as recorded in the first chapter. These are not just present memories but events in which people lost their lives, families were altered and their nomadic culture was changed to an agricultural one. Traditionally the ritual of initiation transformed a youth into a man, and this is not just a memory, because it opened the door for his marriage, which then continues to have a social impact through his children. In the modern era, past education at school is more than a memory, because it has opened the door for some Keraakie like Guma and Elena Maraaga of Arufe to be trained as nurses. A person may have been cursed by sorcery in the past but it is not just a memory because the resultant sickness may be happening in the present and bring about death in the future. This understanding that the past is not just a memory is also seen in one of their words for dawn is ‘the growing moment or place’ (owilohwaav). The sunrise is not just a memory but the first concrete event in the sun’s progress through the day which will reach fulfillment when it sets. The moving sun is indivisible from the time concept of the day which is full of other time events. The events of yesterday had an impact upon them in the past, continues to influence their present and will make an impression on the Keraakie community in the future. To the Keraakie, an event is not just a past memory but part of a process that can impact on their lives in the present and future.

The Keraakie see time as a sequence of events flowing endlessly out of the future into the present and then into the past. Time is not just an invisible flow behind the events, bringing them into the present, because to them the events and the
movement are indivisible. Daytime to them is a unity, consisting of the moving sun, its light, people, the environment, which are all involved in the events of daily "being". So, therefore nature and society, which goes on producing and experiencing events, are a unity constituting time. This concept of daytime depends on them as a society which observes and names these events. The event is time to the Keraakie, which even in itself is a process involving emergence, taking time to happen, activity and cessation. The flow of events is endless to Keraakie society, beginning with the activity of the sacred time and not having an end, except in the individual person's experience of death or in the demise of a society. Keith Seddon rejects this idea of an endless flow of time as a vicious regress:

The flow of the river of time cannot be conceived at all unless we introduce a second-order time against which the flow can be measured. If we introduce a second-order time, to be consistent we must picture this new time on the model of a flowing river, and if we do this, the same problem arises in that the movement of flotsam down this second river can be conceived only if we supply still another time in which it occurs.\(^{40}\)

But does the flow of events have to be measured by or compared with an abstract time flow? The Keraakie do not think so, simply naming time by its physical or spiritual reality.

They point to the inevitable flow of people towards death for which philosophical arguments do not provide a satisfactory answer. Although they reject the idea that death is the natural experience of all people, their world view convinces them that all suffer it at the hands of the spirit world. To them, death may be caused by fights, accidents, childbirth, sickness, but they are only the weapons of the primeval spirit beings working through sorcery, ghosts, and innate spirit power. Death, which is the antithesis of life, cannot be avoided and goes on causing much sorrow, disruption and revenge killings. Therefore the Keraakie see themselves as suffering cumulatively under the events of time which emerge from the invisible malicious spirit world into the present, eventually resulting in death. D.C. Williams suggests that "we can dispense with all those dim non-factual categories which have so bedeviled our race: the potential, the subsistent, and the influential, the noumenal, the numinous, and the non-natural."\(^{41}\) The Keraakie do not accept this position, perceiving that there is more than the natural world of physical events.
In the Keraakie language the words for past and future form an asymmetrical pair and have a definite spatial as well as temporal understanding: which indicate that the Keraakie see the future as behind them and the past as being in front of them.

\textit{fowa} : future, behind me, back, after

\textit{fronde} : past, in front of me, before

This spatial understanding of tenses is a common feature in many languages of this area, such as the neighbouring Suki, who use \textit{gware} for future and behind, and \textit{nupu} for in front of and past. The Gogodala people of the eastern bank of the Fly River use \textit{wapiki} for future and behind, and \textit{sosok} for past and in front of. When discussing this with educated Keraakie speakers in January 1994, they were ashamed of their traditional way of looking at time. The future was declared to be unseen, therefore behind the speaker, while the past was visible in the indicators of the concrete landscape in front of them. This static spatial understanding of time, as being blocks of past and future events meeting at the instant of the present, seems contradictory to their moving concept of time of events progressing from the future through the present and into the past. Yet the Keraakie hold these two understandings of time in tension.

Traugott mentions these two directions of time, noting the English language's use of both, such as, 'in the years ahead' (forward direction of time flow) and 'in the following years' (backward direction of time flow). The two views seem to depend on the observer: either passively waiting for unseen events to become reality, or actively moving forward into the future time. In the backward flow of time the speaker visualises the past in front of him or her, while in the forward flow of time the speaker sees events in the past behind him or her.

Traugott established two schemata to describe them:

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textbf{Moving time :} Past = in front \hspace{1cm} Future = behind
  \item \textbf{Moving ego :} Past = behind \hspace{1cm} Future = in front
\end{itemize}

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These linguistic terms, used in describing time, indicate that the Keraakie see events as flowing from the future backwards into the past, and do not see themselves as moving forward into the future. They are always in the present, passively experiencing daily events, or actively grasping them. But this raises the question: does Keraakie culture indicate this backward progression in time to the past?

When the Keraakie tell a story such as yaam zi (history) and karmai zi (myths), the narrative line flows from the oldest event (which is in the distant past) towards the latest event in the past, which is the climax. The story does not flow backwards from the climax to the beginning. Schieffelin noted among the Papuan Kahu people of Mt. Bosavi that when enquiring into their history, they told it in a backward pattern from the present moment to the most distant past, each event being related as a completed segment before they told the one that occurred before it.

To them [the Kaluli] an incident and its resolution forms a closed sequence more than a part of a larger situation of hostility, and they do not see any necessity to proceed beyond that sequence in explaining.\textsuperscript{43} This backward progression of segments towards the initial cause among the Kaluli, also occurs among the Keraakie after a death. They carry out an investigation of the past activities, movements and relationships of the deceased, so as to ascertain who had a motive and may have been involved in working sorcery upon the victim.\textsuperscript{44} In May 1981 a middle-aged man, Seemi Taakwam of Bebeven, died and his brothers immediately began considering each of his past relationships, activities and movements, believing that a sorcerer had cursed him. They isolated a previous argument with the witchdoctor, which they believed was the most likely catalyst for the sorcery attack that killed him. As a result the execution of the sorcerer was planned, but did not occur because of inhibiting circumstances.

John S. Mbiti noted a backward moving time in the mind of the Akamba and neighbouring peoples of East Africa, suggesting it was widespread in Africa:

Time as a succession or simultaneity of events moves not forward but backwards. People look more to the past for the orientation of their being to anything that might yet come into human history. For them History does not move towards any goal yet in the future: rather, it points to the roots of their existence, such as the origin of their world, the creation of
man, the formation of their customs and traditions, and the coming into being of their whole structure of society.\textsuperscript{45}

The evidence upon which he bases this understanding is namely the superiority of myth, which is foundational to their society, to past history. He finds virtually no future dimension of time and no myths about the future. The past verbal tenses indicate to him that there is a backward flow of time among the Akamba people. He says that the period of time named \textit{mikuti} which included the near future, present and immediate past, “is the most meaningful time period of the individual (and the community)”. The events of the human rhythm of life move from the \textit{mikuti} to the \textit{tene} (or past).\textsuperscript{46} The Kerankaie people hold a similar understanding.

Kofi A. Opoku, in writing about the Akan people of West Africa, disagreed with Mbiti and others, saying that they had misinterpreted African concepts of time: “Mbiti’s own writing has helped to crystallise the distortions.” Opoku’s study reveals a complex understanding of ‘many-time-ness’ among the African Akan people, which suggests a more cyclical understanding of time and does not show any backwards-flowing characteristic. Yet Opoku does not critically analyse Mbiti’s findings nor give evidence from the Akamba people’s concept of time to show why he disagrees with him. It could be that the Akamba and the Akan peoples just have different concepts of time.\textsuperscript{47}

Stephen Hawking states that a backward concept of time is an impossibility:

There is a big difference between the forward and backward directions of real time in ordinary life. Imagine a cup of water falling off a table and breaking into pieces on the floor. If you take a film of this, you can easily tell whether it is being run forward or backward. If you run it backward you will see the pieces suddenly gather themselves together off the floor and jump back to form a whole cup on the table.\textsuperscript{48}

In Hawking’s example, the oldest moment is the falling from the table and the latest is the smashing on the floor, which seems to indicate a forward flow in time, but his understanding seems to involve an assumption that only the event is time, and a backward time concept is the undoing of past events. This is not how the Kerankaie see backward time. To them the cup falls off the table at one moment in time and then that moment is followed by the smashing of the cup on the floor in the next
moment. The Keraakie see this event in time as a completed segment and irreversible, just as Hawking does. They do not see backward time as a re-running of events, in which the broken cup is restored to what it was before. They believe in the idea behind the second law of thermodynamics, which Hawking sums up as: "In any closed system disorder, or entropy, always increases with time."9 The opinion of the Keraakie is that the events in time cause disorder in increasing measure in the present. These events flow out of the unexperienced realm of time into the experiencing present and then lie before mankind as experienced past events, for example in a broken cup. Time is the flow of events, including the relationship between events, and not just the events themselves; time is like a flooded river, tearing trees and other things away from the banks causing chaos as it flows, and the debris in the current are the events of time flowing towards them in the present.

Leach concluded about the notion of time-flow in human life: "We are aware that all living things are born, grow old and die, and that this is an irreversible process."59 This inevitability is "psychologically very unpleasant", he concluded, and therefore gives rise to religious dogma that denies this flow of time towards death. On top of this experience of time, Leach suggested a second observation, "the notion of repetition", which may be a reaction to the irreversibility of time. He suggested that, "we lump these two experiences together and describe them by the one name, time, because we would like to believe that in some mystical way birth and death are really the same thing."51 This is scientifically impossible, but many religious beliefs such as reincarnation, resurrection and the ritualised manipulation of time appear to seek to recreate life out of death. An example is given by Alfred Gell regarding the Umeda rituals of the Sepik River of PNG which are performed to "regenerate their world in real time".52

There is no mention by the modern Keraakie and F.E. Williams about social renewal or life recreation ceremonies, but he did mention obsolete rituals which appear to have been performed to reconstitute their gardening power.53 The Keraakie observe the natural and social world but do not find anything that can reverse the process of aging and death. The passage of time cannot be changed, and they know that once an event has happened it cannot be undone. Some Keraakie mention the snake which 'dies', leaving its skin behind and emerging in a new one as a
contradiction to the finality of death. Others reject this belief in the rejuvenation of a snake since they have seen snakes removing their old skin and other snakes that died and did not come back to life. Some point to the emergence of grubs in the rotting snake as being evidence of the snake's ability to come back to life in the form of baby 'snakes', but others argue that they have found grubs in rotting wallabies. This discussion among the Keraakie reveals that some seek to reject the irreversibility of time, because of the undesirable fact of death. The future is feared but the memories of past joyous gatherings gives the past a non-threatening good quality, which involves some form of denial of past hunger, suffering and grief. The qualitative characteristics of Keraakie time concepts will now be considered.

In many societies around the world, certain months, days or hours are seen as being different from the preceding or succeeding one, revealing a qualitative orientation. After observing Keraakie linguistic terms, one notes that there is also a quality characteristic within their time understanding. When Clifford Geertz studied the time concepts of the Balinese people (Indonesia), he noted a complex system of two calendars: one based on the sun and moon, while the other is based on a cycle of socially named days. This qualitative time "consists of ten different cycles of day-names". The names in each cycle are different and the cycles run concurrently, resulting in the intersecting of various days which are classified on a value basis: "They tell you what kind of time it is." In other words, "there are good and bad days on which to build a house, launch a business enterprise, change residence, go on a trip, harvest crops, sharpen cock spurs, hold a puppet show or start a war or conclude a peace." To the Balinese, their calendars prophesy whether a day is auspicious for a particular event.

The Keraakie have projected upon their mythological time a sacred quality in which creatures, persons and things have supernatural characteristics. Williams commented about this era, "the Originator and his associates of the gainjan [genzeen] time are regarded with feelings of genuine awe." This is true of the other societies of the Trans-Fly, such as the Rouku, Suki and Aaramba. In daily life, the Melanesian societies of this area do not see time as having the characteristic of quality as seen among the Balinese or Mayan peoples. Sasha Josephides noted in the time understanding of the Boroi people of the Sepik River (PNG), that the pre-
European time was seen as bad and the modern era is good.\textsuperscript{58} This emphasis arises out of a comparison of the time of endemic tribal warfare with the relative peace of the colonial period, but this is an opinion which varies with individuals as some opine the previous era over the modern one. The Keraakie see the pre-colonial war era as bad (since they were the victims), the colonial time as good, and the independent period as corrupt and lacking in justice. Each individual brings his or her own opinion as to the quality of time as seen in the birth of a baby as a time of happiness while the time of death is one of sadness and grief. The Western world sees time as something of value, to be used and not wasted, and since workers are paid by the hour worker ‘time is money’. The Keraakie do not see time in this way, but interpret the quality of time through what is of supreme value.

The Keraakie do not regard all their time concepts as being of the same quality. The day time is held to be good because they can see what is happening, but the night is believed to be threatening, because the latter time is when the evil spirits come out of hiding, as well as this is usually the time when adultery, rape, theft or sorcery occurs. When the sun sets, people close their house windows, to keep sorcerers from casting spells through them. Also at that time, every Keraakie household lights a fire to enlighten the interior of the house for their protection from the various spirit beings, which are supposed to be active in the dark. Light is supposed to keep them away. Because of their fear of spirits, the Keraakie light tree bark or dry coconut palm frond torches so that they can see in the dark. This belief is supported by the evidence supplied by F.E. Williams of three cases of ghost attacks which all occurred at night.\textsuperscript{59} In August 1969, I was in Gubaav and did not want a fire burning in the room where I was sleeping. The men with me were fearful of the ghost of a man named Moigam, who had just died, so they moved into a neighbouring room to sleep with a fire burning beside them. To the Keraakie the night between the old and new moon is one of the most dreaded times. The first person to see the new moon would call out joyfully because feared things would be exposed by the moonlight. During this time between the moons, they traditionally chanted a song, ‘\textit{wirodamana sirodamana}’, to the stars pleading for them to come out. When the stars began to shine, the Keraakie would all call out the word \textit{sikovarwaie}. The meaning of these words are unknown to the modern Keraakie.
At night, the Keraakie men used to play sacred flutes and bull-roarers, which were believed to be spirit beings, to deceive the women and children. These men moved around the edge of the village swinging the sacred bull-roarers in the dark, while the women and children hid fearfully in their houses. The Keraakie bull-roarer is attached by a long piece of cord to a tree sapling and swung high then low so that the roaring noise would alternate from a great height and then close to the ground. During this performance, other men climbed the coconut palms and placed mud on the fronds. In the morning the men showed the women and children the mud on the coconut fronds, saying that it was left there by the huge, noisy spirits. Murray Melbin comments on this same attitude in many others societies: “The night time has been noted also as a place of evil”. This is seen in traditional English thought, where the night was the domain of evil creatures, such as vampires and werewolves, and people could be struck down with lunacy, which was named after Luna, the old Roman goddess of the moon.

In the Keraakie mind, the dry and wet seasons are at opposite ends of the quality scale. The dry season is the time for harvesting their yam crop after which the Keraakie rejoice in an abundance of food. This is also the time for enjoying social events, such as rituals, dancing and visitation of friends. In contrast they dread the wet season because the rains, which helps the growth of their crops, can also flood and destroy them and leave the Keraakie hungry. The wet season also means the hatching of march flies, sandflies and mosquitoes with their painful bites, which make life unbearable. To keep these insects at bay, the Keraakie sleep with smoky fire burning on either side of them and on occasions have accidentally burnt themselves when they rolled over. Also leeches multiply during this season making life miserable, but the worst quality about the wet season was the hunger that develops as the Keraakie eat the remainder of their yam harvest and had no more food left. During the wet season they scavenge in the jungles for nuts, fruit, wild tubers and bamboo shoots to survive. This means moving far away from their villages south down the Wassi Kussa River or north onto the Fly River. Many declare that this diet of bamboo shoots, berries and leaves in the wet season was never satisfying. Therefore the Keraakie see the dry season as having a quality of goodness as opposed to the wet season’s quality of pain.
Although the Keraakie see time as having quality, their traditional understanding of time quality does not involve events having a right or a wrong time as seen in other cultures. Nor does it involve a sacred or profane understanding of time. Nevertheless in Keraakie society, a good time, such the yam harvest, could change immediately if a father or mother died, revealing time’s relativity. This feature of relativity will now be considered.

The Keraakie tend to see time in a concrete way, but one notices from their linguistic terms that they also see time as constantly changing, complex, multifaceted and relative. This is similar to how Barbara Adam saw time, “There is no single time, only a multitude of times which interpenetrate and permeate our daily lives.” Gell rejects this understanding, declaring that there is only one time, in spite of the numerous contexts and cultures:

Time can be studied in many different cultural and ethnographic contexts, and can be understood with the aid of many different analytical frameworks, while simultaneously maintaining that time is always one and the same, a familiar dimensional property of our experienced surroundings.

It appears that Gell believes that time can be studied dispassionately and critically, so as to conclude with a time separate from the processes of time. All humanity experience the same raw material of time, but all will interpret that experience from their own basic assumptions, of which one is modern Western science. There may be only one scientific time (which is doubtful), but there will always be numerous other ‘scientific’ interpretations of time. The Keraakie see time being influenced by innumerable factors: the spirit world, society, quality of life or death, events, duration, movement, rhythm, relationships, sequence, and so on, so that it is not a stable category. Events can be momentary or of long duration, not to mention their irregularity in the chaotic world around them. Kearney says the same about the Ixtepeji people of Mexico, who do not appear to have an image of evenly flowing processes “but rather one in which the flow of time is erratic.”

To the Keraakie all time is governed by the mysterious world of the supernatural: mythological time, mystical time, sorcery, magic, spirit beings and the
end of time in death. Taaga Yaavas of Arufe declared on 25 December 1990 that by his magic he could control the timing of the wet or dry season and make them come earlier or later. He would place his sacred nikav stones on the ground and then plant cassowary feathers on the side from which he wanted the wind to blow. If the wet season was wanted, then he would place the feathers on the north-west side. When enough rain had fallen the stones would be returned to their platform. When he wanted the dry wind to blow and “harden their yams”, then he would place the stones back on the ground with the feathers on the south-east side. According to the Keraakie, the meteorological seasons are relative because they are subject to the magic of their and other people’s rainmakers.

On my second visit to the village of Arufe in January 1968, Goiri (a rainmaker) publicly declared that he had performed his rainmaking ritual and that the clouds on the horizon were his rain. Slowly the clouds drew closer and passed without dropping any rain, so I made a record of public gossip concerning the effectiveness and regularity of rainmaking efforts at Arufe during 1981-85. In some cases rain did fall after the rituals had been performed but in the majority of cases rain did not occur. Even though there have been many failures in making rain the community persists believing in the rainmaker’s power, while also declaring that the general pattern of the seasons does not operate by absolute laws. Besides the relative nature of the timing of the wet or dry season the Keraakie say that each season is not a set length in time. They do not count the days or months during the seasons but they are aware that the seasons are never the same in length. On 12 December 1990 three middle-aged Keraakie men (Marat Wekum, Mote and Mege Waianda) declared that the seasons were irregular and sometimes failed to come. They went on to say that, a wet season failed to come over the 1972-73 period. I was in the area at the time and experienced the rain so I do not agree with their statement. The reason for this point of view was that in 1972 there was a very severe dry season and its severity may have caused the Keraakie to believe that there was no wet season. There was indeed a wet season at the beginning of 1973, which was recorded meteorologically as well as remembered for the huge plagues of mosquitos that hatched after the coming of the rain. On 3 December 1995, I was told by some Keraakie men that there had been no dry season that year. After consulting other people, they said that intermittent rain
did fall from June to October, but there was a dry season nevertheless. This relative
nature of the Keraakie people’s understanding of time is also seen in the fact that
from the beginning of the wet season in November 1981 to the beginning of the next
wet season in January 1983, fourteen months passed. Then only nine months passed
before the next wet season began in October 1983. The Keraakie did not count the
months but noted the falling leaves at the end of November 1982, which herald the
wet season, and yet no rain fell for over another month. To the Keraakie, time and
everything else is marked by disjuncture.

Ayres observed in Williams’ fieldnotes that the Keraakie have a way of
lengthening the day. A long day is called a kitong evah (big day) and is believed to
be longer than other days, evidenced by it being very hot. This was supposed to be
done by pulling up some grass and tying it in a knot. Then this grass was placed in
the fork of a tree with a black termite mound on top.65 The modern Keraakie are
ignorant of this activity, but they said that all one had to do was reverse the process
of the rainmaking and the sun would shine. Williams observed the reversal of
rainmaking magic, which is called a sun-making ritual. He said, “While sun magic or
anti-rain-magic is practised by all and sundry, their efforts are likely to be of no avail
until they have bought off the real rain-makers.”66 He also commented upon the use
of a sun magic water bamboo decorated with white cockatoo feathers, which a man
named Wengu had under his house in the early 1930s. It was supposed to drive away
rain and cause the sun to shine.

The modern Keraakie believe that if the day is very hot, they could cut a
special bush, speak to it and then throw it at the sun. This magical ritual would cause
the sun to move quickly to its sunset. They also had a sorcery ritual by which they
would cut a length of grass and hold it up in a circle around the sun, telling the sun to
stand still over another village. This would lengthen the day, making it
uncomfortably hot and causing suffering to their enemies. These actions were
explained by Marat Wekum of Gubaav, and Mege and Mote Waianda of Arufe on 13
December 1990. The Keraakie believe that time can be manipulated.
One of the totems of the closely related Kaunze people of Tareer and Membdeven villages was the night, and they were supposed to have a magic ‘night bag’ which controlled the length of the night. If the contents of this bag were buried then it “would bring down a long night which would not terminate until they were restored to their proper place.” It is also publicly rumoured that at a place called Udumkan near the village of Bimadeven another magic ‘night bag’ was supposed to exist. If it was moved eternal night would cover the earth. To the north-west of the Keraakie, the Aaramba people built a magic house to produce the night. If one of the Aaramba died, they would retaliate against their neighbours, whom they believed to be responsible for the sorcery, by performing a magic ritual to cause a period of long nights. On hearing of a death among the Aaramba people in the 1960s, Megi Walanda of Arufe said the Keraakie people stockpiled wood for their fires, food supplies, and lay vines from their houses to their toilet places, so that they would not get lost on the way in the coming darkness. To the Keraakie the night was never of regular length but could be short or last a long time.

Another reason for this relative understanding of time is the fact that time is a social phenomenon, and is subject to the interpretation and control of the community. An example of this occurred on 7 December 1995 in Arufe. The primary school held a prize-giving feast to end the year’s educational programme, and Headmaster Saduwa publicly declared that the villagers were to commence cooking the food early in the morning at around 7am so as to be ready by 9am. The medical work in the Aid Post began at 8am and because of the large number of parents and visitors present for the feast, it did not finish till 11.30am. The hunters had gone out the night before and did not arrive back at the village till 9am. After butchering and cooking the meat, the feast began around midday. Within the Keraakie community, times for events have always been people-oriented, and even in the modern world that is still how they operate. The right time to begin is when the people are ready, indicating that starting times are relative. When society acts that is the correct timing of events since time is ‘being’. But time kinship and the events of the life cycle: birth, initiation, marriage, and death, are held to be unchanging and not relative. Society is the closest thing to absolute time among the Keraakie and mathematical forms of
time do not dictate to society when events should occur. A society decides what time is, according to its cosmology as Gell states:

Cultural temporal relatives consist of differential sets of contingent beliefs, held by different cultures and subcultures, as to the historical facticity and anticipated possibilities of the world.  

To sum up the Keraakie relative understanding of time, all time is irregular, and in no way do they see time as accurate or an absolute phenomenon. Time is social, based on natural and social phenomena, not on clocks, mathematics, government yearly time schedules, or Western calendars. The Keraakie do not believe in absolute laws of nature, but feel that all time indicators or durations can be lengthened, or shortened or stopped by ritual magic power. All time is subject the intervention of the supernatural world or to human manipulation of it. The background to this relativity is the belief that the world is disordered and even though they see some form of regularity in the seasons, day and night, it is not absolute to them. Although the Keraakie seem to perceive time as being relative, the relations between themselves, traditional and Western time is one of tension, indicating that their concepts are strongly held. In this next segment a study of relational time among the Keraakie will be examined.

Lieb criticized “the idea, that time is only a name for certain kinds of relations and comparisons between occurrences - the relational theory of time - [It] is not clear enough, full enough, or even true enough to be an acceptable general theory of time.”79 To the Keraakie, time points, durations and simultaneous events, or a sequence of events are relationally orientated to themselves, other time concepts and to concrete features that stand for time. The relational concept of time is very important, because in their world relationships are foundational for survival covering every area of their life. But Keraakie relational time is only meaningful within their society, language and culture, and neighbouring societies, who think similarly, may misunderstand what is being indicated. Foreigners, who do not live in their culture, can never understand these time relationships.

The Keraakie language does not have a generic term for ‘relationship’. Yet they do have numerous individual terms to describe relationships between family
members, in-laws, and other community members. They also have a verb to describe
good relationships between people, naawaarintaam: ‘We relate well to each other or
we live harmoniously together’. Since relationship is foundational to all Melanesian
societies, why do they not have a linguistic term for relationship? It may be that it is
so basic that they do not see the need for such a term. The Keraakie have many
kinship terms and each of them accurately describes the relationships between
people. Western culture measures time accurately in mathematical terms, while the
Keraakie stress accuracy in relationships. Some of these relationships are time-
oriented such as aane (elder sibling or relative of the same social section) or nangan
(younger sibling or relative of the same social segment). It appears that gender is less
important in Keraakie relationship terms than time.

Another of these time relationships is what could be called synonymous
relations. Those who are born at the same time in Keraakie society form a special
kinship relationship, called rarman. In various African cultures, such as the Nuer and
Masai, these are called age sets, but the Keraakie see them in a different way to the
Africans. In African society these age sets may form a political grouping but in the
Trans-Fly they do not. The rarman is a time-kinship system whose members’
children cannot inter-marry lest they commit incest. When two males are born at the
same time, they develop a close friendship and depend upon each other in building,
hunting, gardening, food gathering and canoe-making. Edward E. Evans-Pritchard
says about the Nuer that “time is considered as relations between activities”, which is
similar to Keraakie relational time. When two men garden together over a long
period of time a special brother-like relationship develops so that on death, if there
are no heirs, one can claim the other’s land.

The relationship between an activity and an event is a common time reference
point in Keraakie conversation. I once asked a Keraakie man when his brother was
married, and he replied, “My brother was married when I was building a house”:
yand (I) mango (house) tereemetaowan (was building) taande (my) nangan (younger
brother) damaavi (wife) yeegrut (married). To his fellow villagers the time indicated
is known since they remembered the house being built. On 26 December 1990, I
asked a man named Timothy Tekam of Arufe about the time of the visit of a certain
American, and he replied, “In the felling of the trees season (ratah yuaar).” The seasonal activity is the synonymous reference point, as to when the event occurred.

Another Keraakie way of noting time is by a referential relationship, in which an event is related to the domicile of a certain person such as the headmaster of a school, government officer or missionary. The Malaysian Rusa deer was introduced into Irian Jaya by the Dutch colonial administration during the First World War (1914-18) and moved eastwards into the Trans-Fly. To my question as to when this animal appeared, Awati of Arufe said, “When Ellis was here a deer appeared”: Ellis yana (here) tamaaro (was being) rusa (deer) novariang (appeared). Another notable person in the area was David Wren, the senior government officer at Morehead (1966-69), who made a tractor available for building the airstrip at Arufe. One man said in a discussion, “I was in jail during Wren’s time”: Wrenenoe evahon (in the days of Wren) yand (I) dibura (jail) kenden (in) kwamaaro (was being). The Keraakie have an understanding of when an event occurred in time by its relationship to the presence of well-known people, whose time of residence is a reference point.

As can be seen then, the Keraakie compare people, features, durations or events in many different ways, so as to create a multifaceted relational frame for time. They call this activity weeveengu, meaning the bringing of two or more things together for comparison, revealing how they see time in a relational way. Some of these relational times in their phenomenal calendar are symbiotic. An example is the dependence of wild pigs and cassowaries on bush fruits, which these creatures will come and eat when they pick up the ripe scent. So the Keraakie set up ambushes in leaf houses near the base of these trees so as to shoot them. They humourously declare that the trees bear fruit so they might eat meat. During the dry season the creeks dry out and the animals and birds will be dependent upon the permanent waterholes for water, so the Keraakie wait in ambush at these places. This symbiotic time relationship involves two different events that are dependent on each other and occur at roughly the same time.

When a Keraakie hunter is moving through the savannah grasslands, he will break off a branch and place it on the track in a specific way. This branch is called a yeevi, meaning a sign or mark or symbol, and its placement is done according to
certain rules which signify meaning only to fellow Kernakie. It indicates to other hunters the direction the hunter is going and the state of the leaves will indicate approximately how long ago he passed by. The dryness of the leaves is a time indicator which can only be learnt through experience. If the event is recent, then the second hunter will know not to hunt in that area as the animals will be very nervous and alert. If the leaves are over two days old then the hunter knows that he can proceed because the scent of the previous hunters will have dissipated in that area. Therefore the relationship between the branch, its position and condition is a symbol of the hunter's time and direction. In all of the relational forms of Kernakie time one notices certain features that appear egocentric, and this will be considered in the next paragraph.

The Kernakie word for tomorrow and yesterday is kai, which really means one day before or after the present, from which the speaker is speaking, showing its egocentric nature. The Kernakie also use the word naambat to indicate an event two days before or two days after the present moment. The word gano is used to mean something before or after the present event, such as gano evah: one day before or one after. In the modern era the Kernakie now use gano with the introduced word yez (year) to indicate one year in the past or one year in the future. This egocentric characteristic reveals that the Kernakie traditionally did not calculate time against an external abstract or mathematical grid but subjectively against themselves. The biological calendar is egocentric, because in Kernakie society every person can list all those born before him or her, calling them frondeman (belonging to the past), and all those born after him or her, calling them fowaman (belonging to the future). Each individual is the centre of his or her social calendar looking ahead to those who were older than him or her, and looking over his or her shoulder at those who were younger. This same egocentricity is seen in their extended family where the generation is divided either into older siblings (aane) or younger siblings (nangan) around the person concerned. Each individual is a political divide, based on time, between the respected frondeman eer (those born before, past people) from fowaman eer (those born after, future people) within his or her generation. This egocentric way of seeing things also occurs in describing accurately by the Kernakie verbal system the events of daily life for twelve hours on either side of the present moment. They
use the present verb form with necessary tense indicators for future and the two immediate past, as seen in the following example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>future</th>
<th>present</th>
<th>immediate past</th>
<th>immediate past</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>yando bee yanetaan</em>, <em>yando yanetaan</em>,</td>
<td><em>yando bava yanetaan</em>,</td>
<td><em>yando dava yanetaan</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(I will eat)</td>
<td>(I am eating)</td>
<td>(I have just eaten)</td>
<td>(I have eaten today)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This egocentric pattern is also seen in the kinship term for grandfather and grandchild which is *kaaki*. As far as the Keraakie are concerned, this egocentric title means that the person is at least two generation removed in time from the person naming them.

| *kaaki* (grandparent) | ego | *kaaki* (grandchild) |

In reality egocentric time is sociocentric because time is a social creation describing and governing the activities of society, as Emile Durkheim concluded: “It is the rhythm of social life which is at the basis of the category of time”.72 The Keraakie economic seasons involve social collaboration as extended family members work together on their large yam, cassava and taro gardens, providing an example of the rhythm of social life being an important basis for their concept of time. Even the seasonal durations, that describe meteorological features such as the wet and dry, are social events because the whole community is involved in coinciding economic or religious activities. In the wet season, Keraakie society is scouring the jungle and rivers gathering food, while in the dry they are enjoying their yams and each other’s company. All of these activities constitute time, as Gell comments, “For pre-technological people, the passage of time and the carrying out of a regular sequence of productive tasks and social activities cannot be disassociated from one another.”73

Durkheim saw this social rhythm as including ceremonies, feasts and other community activities, similar to which Geertz noted in the Balinese time concepts.74 The Keraakie have various feasts and ceremonies but they declare that they do not follow a set order or time schedule. This is seen in the once-off affines (in laws) pig feast. After a girl has been exchanged in marriage, her husband is expected to catch
a piglet (or cassowary chick) which his wife feeds until it is fully grown. It is not payment for his bride but a gift made out of gratitude to his wife’s brothers. This activity depends upon the man’s capturing the creature and when his affines are ready to have a feast. The latter does not follow a regular pattern as seen in the feast given by Ziniki and Zapari of Arufe on 26 December 1983 to her brothers, about seventeen years after their marriage. On 12 December 1993, two such pig-giving ceremonies occurred, Masoya and Gima of Gubaev gave a pig to Zapari eleven years after their marriage, while Wawa and Tau of Garaita gave a pig to Awasi of Arufe barely twelve months after their marriage. All of these gifts occurred in December because food to feed the pigs was running out and the wet season was about to begin. This latter fact of hunger meant that the animal was greatly appreciated by the brothers.

In the social event of the initiation of youths into adulthood, one would expect that this rite would have a time orientation, such as at the advent of pubic hair. Williams declared that this is not so, and from his description of the initiation ceremony he observed, the boys were of widely differing ages. The modern Kerakkie men say that initiation ceremonies only occur when there are enough youths available to make it worthwhile, and does not happen according to a regular time pattern or at a certain age indicator. When the Kerakkie were consulted about the regularity of their various social activities, such as dancing or harvest feasts, they said, “Yaweg.” (irregular, that there was no governing time schedule.) They are performed when the urge comes upon them.

Durkheim described calendars as expressing “the rhythm of collective activities, while at the same time its function is to assure their regularity.” Kerakkie social events are irregular because of the harsh realities of an unreliable supply of food in the Trans-Fly, so therefore they do not follow a pattern. The coconut palm frond and string calendars are not intended to ensure the regularity of the yearly social pattern but only the actual social event. Since the invited have an identical calendar this is the Kerakkie way to guarantee the guests will arrive on time. The events in the Kerakkie phenomenal and biological calendars are seen by them as reference points in the sequence of life, so as to ascertain when certain economic activities should be performed. Nature may be the foundation of collective
representations, such as time in some societies, but this is not always the case among the Keraakie. I would suggest that, to them, the main calendars serve to note sources of food and so assure survival, and not to regulate social activities.

As has already been stated, the Keraakie see the various time features as being good while others are bad; both are socially agreed quality projections. The people have determined over a long period of time what time features concerned them most and which should be named in their language. There could be no coordination of activities within Keraakie society unless their time concepts had been socially agreed upon. The various concepts of mythological, mystical, historical, and economic times have been named by them because of their significance within their world view and social activities. Mythological time gives identity to Keraakie society and authority to its structures, therefore it is of supreme importance. Verbal structures in their language have also been constructed as part of a socially created symbolic system with an emphasis on tense. However there are deeper meanings in the Keraakie concepts of time, because they are symbolic expressions of their way of looking at the whole of their existence. Durkheim summed up the social nature of signs, such as time:

They not only come from society, but the things which they express are of a social nature. Not only is it society which has founded them, but their contents are the different aspects of the social being.\(^{27}\)

Durkheim rejected the idea that human senses can be used to create a time representation of the world. The constituent elements of categories like time was proposed by him to emerge from social life, is learned through enculturation, taken from its rhythm, is a symbol and a substratum of it, and forms a synthesis sui generis of social consciousness.\(^{78}\) Through these socially derived ideas, human beings create a picture of 'the real world' for themselves. Gell criticised Durkheim's understanding saying that it indicates that collective representations of time “are both derived from society and also dictate to society”.\(^{79}\) Maurice Bloch also rejected this belief in the social determination of knowledge when he wrote, “If we believe in the social determination of concepts, as all the writers mentioned so far tacitly or explicitly do, this leaves the actors with no language to talk about their society and so change it, since they can only talk within it.”\(^{80}\) It appears that both Gell and Bloch are assuming
that “the social determination of concepts” involves a static understanding of thinking, language, and concepts within society, which does not allow for the change of history. Innovation within societies has always occurred, and this indicates that all societies have means by which they evaluate and change their language, concepts, values, structures and beliefs. Although Williams noted the stress on the unchanging nature of Keraakie structures and beliefs that emerged from the mythological era, he observed that these were not rigidly upheld in daily life. Because only Keraakie society lives this culture, it is only they who decide what parts of their culture to retain or neglect, and their history of cultural change reveal that their culture does not control them. Changes seem to have occurred through either negative dissatisfaction, eventlessness, personal desire, outside influence, and modernization, and this can be noted from the numerous changes in their language, cultural way of doing things, mythology, totem groupings, and their marriage arrangements. The simple fact that their language contains the words for acceptance and rejection, indicates that they can agree or disagree with their own cultural values. The presence of laws and sanctions against certain actions reveals that these are based on past transgressions. They have many words that indicate change and here are some examples:

he will change it: yamo (he) bee (it) fonatai (different) bee (will) tiyetunga (make).

it will change by itself: bee (it) fonatai (different) bee (will) kaamdonga (become).

it will change: bee (it) fonatai (different) bee (will) yam (be).

The way that Keraakie society sees time has never been static. The old men refer to their ancestral migrations from the north-west, south and from the east, which reveals a past nomadic way of life and not a settled agrarian one. The change to the latter resulted in the time calendars of the economic seasons, flora, and fauna, which are bound to the environment of the Trans-Fly. This has been noted by other researchers.

Leach supports Durkheim’s rejection of time as an induction from experience by saying, “The idea of Time, like the idea of God, is one of those categories which we find necessary because we are social animals rather than because of anything empirical in our objective experience of the world.” Although the Keraakie see the
importance of society in the formation of time, the majority of their time terms are seemingly derived from experience. The various seasons are all named after what they physically experienced: the dry season was named after the sun shining on their land; and the harvest season was named after the activity of raising and eating their yams; the ‘felling’ season is named after the work of clearing the bush as the Keraakie prepare for their next garden. Although these time terms are inductions from experience they are also social terms because Keraakie society agreed on the naming.

Geertz commented on the debate over the two major analytical concepts of culture and social structure, and links them to time as either being shadows caste by the organisation of society on the hard surfaces of history, or either a soul of history, that is a deduction from social interaction. Or it could be, as Kant proposed, an innate a priori category of the individual human mind. The Keraakie do not have a generic word for time, which indicates that they do not see time as an absolute or objective fact. Time as an innate category of the mind seems to find no supporting evidence from Keraakie cultural concepts. Even though their time features indicate the influence of experience, there are some features that are named in an abstract way. Therefore experience is not the only factor behind their time concepts. The Keraakie as a society see the need to name points, sequence, durations, the flow, the past, the present and the future in time, all of which indicate that the social origin of time fits in more with the way that they use time. Time is not seen as a separate category but as an indivisible and essential part of social ‘being’. Their time has partially emerged from their experience of the demands for survival, the need for communicating their experience, the rhythm of nature and the need for expressing their history, desires, values, beliefs and identity. Time is symbolic of Keraakie social ‘being’. Leonardo Mercado noted the centrality of society to time, declaring:

Time for the Melanesian is not an absolute because his community takes the centre stage. What has meaning to him and to his community has relevance in time. What is outside humanity is in chaos.

This conclusion of the unique social nature of time is rejected by both Howe and Bloch because it seems to indicate that there are different types of time, when they believe that we all live in one world there is only one experience of time. What
these two philosophers seem to overlook is that different societies may perceive time in different ways. The Aaramba, Suki and Gogodala people of this area hold a similar understanding of time as the Keraakie. Bloch declares that if people had different concepts of time, they would not be able to communicate with each other. Communication processes between differing people are difficult, with language being just one of the major barriers. This does not preclude people from communicating because human beings have much in common. If they have the desire to interact they will make allowances for others’ differences. When the colonial era began the Keraakie had no idea what the patrol officers were talking about when they mentioned time as a numerical thing (clock time), as a commodity to be lost and gained, working by the hour, and the terms for year, week, month, minute, second, and so on. When the Torres Strait Islanders introduced the idea of one day in seven being sacred, this was totally new to the Keraakie. They did not even count days like this, yet they readily absorbed these foreign ideas into their way of life. Through interpretation and adjustment based on a desire to learn from the Australians, the Keraakie soon began to understand these concepts of time. Yet the colonial authorities never understood Keraakie concepts of time, because they had no desire to learn or understand them.

Gosden has argued that “Time is not an abstract entity, but a quality of human involvement with the world: we do not pass through time, time passes through us.” This is very similar to how the Keraakie see time, because their social life is reflected in their time expressions. Also to them reality is society, as seen in their word *vivi* which means ‘a group of people, body, reality and essence’. Bunai Aniba wrote in a letter: “Bangu body is my true clan”: *Bangu vivi* (corporate body) *taande* (my) *gangovivi* (true social section) *yam* (is). And he went on to say “Arufe body is my community”: *Arufeman vivi* (corporate body) *taande* (my) *haamba* (village community) *yam* (is). Durkheim’s suggestion that time is a collective representation, a substratum of social being, a synthesis *sui generis* of social consciousness, only finds partial support from my research into Keraakie concepts of time. Barbara Adam’s comment on time adds emphasis to the importance of the context in understanding the social nature of their time:
The experience of time is integral to human existence. The way we perceive and conceptualise that experience, however, varies with cultures and historical periods. That is to say, the meanings and values attributed to time are fundamentally context-dependent.

Keraakie society exists in the Trans-Fly, therefore they are influenced by it. The social nature of time is a notable characteristic of their thinking, but it also involves all of their interaction with their environment and other people. The term *yaam* means ‘way of being, being, event, presence, and spirit’ and I propose it means ‘time’ as well. The Keraakie name time’s many facets with symbols, but ultimately represent it all as ‘being’: a symbol of how they experience life and its disjuncture. This concept of time as ‘being’ appears to be similar to Heidegger’s ideas in his book *Being and Time*, which will be considered in Chapter 9.

To understand how a people’s concepts of time emerged, it is very important to know their context. The Keraakie are holistic in their understanding of life in the Trans-Fly and their use of *yaam* for many of these things hints at this assumption. The Keraakie see every creature, plant or thing in the physical world of the Trans-Fly influencing other things in some way, and not having an independent existence. Even the various domains of kinship, economics, art forms, politics, and so on, are never divided into categories by the Keraakie but are holistic in their mind, just being differing expressions of social ‘being’. Likewise they have no category of time but see all their time features as being an indivisible part of existence: *yaam*. Even the contradictory things in their existence form a whole. Hegel’s ideas of the conflict between differing things, forming a whole, is a feature that also the Keraakie perceive. Certain of their time features are held in tension, being at times in conflict. Examples of this are seen in that the events of time are flowing backwards, while at the same time they hold a view that mythological time is always shifting with them, being only two generations preceding the present one. The past mythological time and the future mystical time, both of which emerge from the *geenzeen* spirit world, are opposed to each other in that the former is non-threatening, while the latter is dangerous. Another time feature which contradicts this fear of the future is their anticipation that they will marry and have children, who will grow in the future. The difference of the male and female in all creatures form a whole in the birth of progeny. The Keraakie declare that everything is in a state of disorder but they see a
general pattern of yearly events, such as the numerous different seasons and name each by the same name each year. This conflict is a natural part of their life, as seen in the tension between the wet season being one of hunger and not thirst, and the dry season, being one of abundance yet also one of thirst. The rain of the time concept named wet season contrasts with the dryness of the time concept called dry season, but they balance each other in a whole. One causes the growth of the yams, while the other ripens them, so that they have one purpose.

The individual is different from other individuals in the group but they combine in one community to make up the whole. The Keraakie often declare that without the others the individual is nothing. Even though society may disagree with the individual, the latter never loses his or her individual right to influence the whole. This conflict within society seems to undermine their desire for wholeness. Is it the lack of social unity that causes them to proclaim the unity of all things? Harris observed that “every whole is a unity of differences”, and with this the Keraakie would agree.38 Although they acknowledge that there appears to be an order such as the sequence of winds, seasons, and the regularity of day and night, they do not hold to Harris’ explanation of wholeness being “dominated by a principle of order”. Hegel’s dialectic of conflict between a proposition and an opposing one, resulting in a synthesis, is something similar to Keraakie understanding. They declare that society strives for a general pattern of order in the middle of disorder: one of conflict, being a tension of regularity and irregularity in a whole.

The Keraakie live in an infertile tract of land, which they never named as a whole, but Europeans have called it the Trans-Fly. Section by section, the Keraakie named each piece of land but feared moving beyond it into hostile territory. In this inhospitable environment they have adapted by means of a large range of strategies so that they see everything in terms of the survival of society. The past has taught them in which soils gardens can be planted and at what time to plant. When gardening is impossible because of drought and flood, they have learned by bitter experience which natural food supplies are available in the grasslands, jungle and waterways. The life cycle of every animal, fish, insect, bird, shellfish or reptile is known, so that they can be harvested to provide food for survival. They know the food potential of every plant – leaf, root, nut, berry, and bark. Some foods are made
long-lasting through fermentation and special cooking processes. The key to their survival in the Trans-Fly is their adaptation to the environment through their knowledge of the time sequence of the economic, phenomenological, and sociological calendars.

Ayres stressed the importance of the land because "the events of the myths are imprinted or transformed into the fixed atemporal perpetual reality of the landscape." The historic past is also referred to by the concrete marks and indicators on the landscape, and she never ceased to be amazed with the Morehead people's "ability to recall, to the square meter, the precise location where an event occurred." The land and the landscape link the past sacred time, the past historical time and the present time together in a dynamic time concept which is more than food, sleep and things- oriented. I suggest that this emphasis on the concrete occurs because of the Keraakie life of struggling to survive, and their concepts of time are also a search for meaning and identity. As they see, hear, and touch the physical world around them, they also see time in a relationship to these features. This close link of time and space in the terms of vauv (place/time) and yu (land/time) indicates this relationship. There is also their mystical dream time, which is a prophetic time, and not purely involved in the concrete struggle for survival. Some of these dreams involved the concrete task of obtaining food, but ultimately they are an attempt to distance themselves from the end of time in death. As the Keraakie live their life in the Trans-Fly, many of their concepts appear to be empirical ones, but there are others which are spiritual or symbolic. Considering their struggle to survive in the Trans-Fly, these abstractions are never independent of their context or content. Their eyes see the objects and events in space but only as a part of a greater whole, which is more than material things and activities. The invisible mythological time, the events of historical time, past time, social time, and mystical time are part of their culture as well, so that the Keraakie point to the concrete indicators in space as evidence of their experience of these times and symbols of time/being's reality. Harris also noted this holistic understanding of time:

Time, we have said, is a texture of structural relations, an order of sequence, of events occurring in succession, related in earlier and later. But such an order is a form of whole, which as such cannot be confined to any one of its own elements, or to any particular group of them. No
event, and no group of events taken simply as a collection, can constitute or be identical with the whole; for any such group must be ordered by the structural principle of the whole if it is to constitute either whole or part. 91

In conclusion, the Keraakie name individual features of time and categorised them under the term raak which means ‘being, way of being’. In the modern era they have adopted the English term ‘time’ and even adapted their own term evah to name time as a whole. This foreign understanding of time includes the objectifying of time and its measurement by hours, days, week, months and years. This new understanding is different to traditional Keraakie time since it does not involve society and their other multifaceted forms of time. They feel it is unsatisfactory, so continue to hold their traditional time concepts in tension with the modern ones. To the traditional Keraakie, everything is in time, is influenced by time and is a time-indicator within the unity of ‘being’. This will be studied fully in Chapter 9.

The Keraakie also see time as events flowing from a quality-oriented future into the present, then into a quality-oriented 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th and mythological past tense times. Enveloping the future, present and immediate past tense times is a dream-oriented time that I shall call mythical time because it involves a mystical relationship with the primeval spirit beings. This movement of time is presented in the following diagram:

![Keraakie Time Understanding Diagram]

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91
ENDNOTES:

12. F.E. Williams, Field Notes B.203. (hereafter shortened to as WFN.)
22 ibid., p. 148.
23 Williams, *PTF*, p. 146.
24 Schieffelin, op. cit., p. 141.
31 ibid., p. 160.
35 ibid., p. 372.
38 Mellor, op. cit., p. 80.
39 ibid., p. 10.
40 Seddon, op. cit., p. 16.
43 Schieffelin, op. cit., p. 142.

132
48 Hawking, op. cit., p. 152.
49 ibid., p. 153.
50 Leach, op. cit., p. 222.
51 ibid., p. 227.
52 Gell, op. cit., p. 52.
55 ibid., p. 393.
56 ibid., p. 396.
57 F.E. Williams, *PTF*, p. 298.
62 Gell, op. cit., p. 315.
63 Kearney, op. cit., p. 105.
64 Record of gossip on rain making among the Keraakie (1981-85):
2 November 1981 - Taaga Yaavus said that there would be no rain until he placed the rainmaking *nu kwoki* (bottle, gourds or containers) upon the ground and performed his rainmaking rituals. That night rain fell without his having been at work.
10 December 1982 - Taaga declared that, when his daughter Rita came home from high school, he would make rain, but it did not occur until 2 January 1983.
13 October 1983 - The community was angry with Taaga over an early wet season. He denied that he was the cause, but they said, “The rain is coming from Goni (the mythological rainmaking source situated to the south-east of Arufe from where he claimed his power), so it is yours.”

August 1984 - Taaga threw his rainmaking charms into the river, under the influence of a visiting Solomon Island evangelist. The community was worried that there would be no more rain for their gardens. Social pressure was brought to bear upon him, so he bought other rainmaking charms from Zimi of Pongarki and recommenced work.

28 December 1984 - Because of very heavy rain the community was upset with Taaga, so a community leader, Mote Wainada, lifted the rainmaking gourds up off the ground and placed them on a platform.

January 1985 - The heavy rain continued and the whole community was very angry. Taaga could not do anything about it because he was trapped on the south coast at Taz village by the floods his rainmaking was supposed to have created. Koag Paatra of Arufe went and smashed one of Taaga’s rainmaking containers.

31 January 1985 - Anger in the local community over the heavy rains comes to a climax and a woman named Tare hit Taaga’s brother (Wamboi Yaavus) across the neck with a stick.

14 February 1985 - Because of continuing heavy rain, the community moved the whole rainmaking shrine to Bebeven and the rain ceased. The rainmaker was still trapped on the south coast because of flooding.

March 1985 - Taaga Yaavus warned that there would now be no more rain because the shrine had been removed. Rain fell again a few days later.

22 April 1985 - Great distress developed among the Keraakie over the continued heavy rain, and community leaders sent a complaint to the police at Morehead that someone was making rain in an irresponsible way.


66 F.E. Williams, PTF, pp. 319, 322.
67 ibid., p. 101.
68 Oral testimony by Aniba Bunai (September, 1983).
69 Gell, op. cit., p. 55.
70 Lieb, op. cit., p. 20.
73 Gell, op. cit., p. 17.
74 Geertz, op. cit., pp. 394-395.
75 F.E. Williams, PTF, pp. 187-188.
76 Durkheim, op. cit., p. 23.
77 ibid., p. 488.
79 Gell, op. cit., p. 4.
81 F.E. Williams, PTF, pp. 65, 378.
82 Leach, op. cit., pp. 223.
83 Geertz, op. cit., p. 361.
86 Gosden, op. cit., p. 1.
87 Adam, op. cit., p. 29.
89 Ayres, op. cit., pp. 48-49.
90 ibid., p. 174.
91 Harris, op. cit., p. 87.
CHAPTER 6

KERAAKIE MYTHOLOGICAL TIME

What Claude Lévi-Strauss has called the ‘eternal past’, 1 Mircea Eliade named ‘sacred time’, 2 and the Keraakie name the geenzeen (era of the primeval spirit beings) will be considered in this chapter. This mythological time will be assessed, in comparison with others’ evaluations of similar sacred histories. The era under discussion covers the beginning of time as the Keraakie know it, which they also call the ovrohvaav (the doing). Eliade states, “The myth relates a sacred history, that is, a primordial event that took place at the beginning of time.” 3 This study proposes that mythological time is foundational to Keraakie culture and indicates basic belief structures.

The word geenzeen means ‘the era of the beginning, awesome, or primeval spirit beings.’ Francis Williams commented that this word means worthy of comparison with the things that existed in the supernatural era, when men and creatures were greater than they are today. 4 Besides this mythological meaning, the word geenzeen is occasionally heard in Keraakie villages describing something that is bigger than normal, such as a very large crocodile or yam. This indicates that they saw their ‘sacred time’ as an age when things were bigger, better and more powerful than they are today.

The time called ovrohvaav, is the era when all things came into existence. They do not refer to this mythological time as renyah (beginning), or waavroh (creation), or ovaarah (appearing). This verbal noun, ovrohvaav, comes from the intransitive verb: bee bee novrot (it will be doing/ working/ achieving/ producing/ happening) whose transitive form is yando bee yaavrotaan bee (I shall do it). This indicates that an outside force or being did not do the doing. The Keraakie perceive the geenzeen era more as a happening, an event and not creation; nature (baandman yaam: ‘being’ of the land/world) and culture (hambaman yaam: ‘being’ of the village) came into being at this time of their own volition. The verbal form to describe this mythological ‘doing’ is rokar novrotai (things happened), using the oldest past tense form of the verb, which means that this occurrence was earlier in time than others. The sentence, geenzeenam
bee de yaaurotaam (the spirit being created it) is never used of the activity of the mythological age.

The use of the word ovrohvaav raises a question concerning the suffix vaav (which is an abbreviated form of the word sarvaav) and means ‘place’. Since, in this case, the word ovroh (doing) takes the spatial suffix, does ovrohvaav mean the ‘doing place’ where things came into existence? The normal usage of vaav is found in such words as:

| Sago place: bivaa | Sleeping place: kamahvaav |
| Washing place: amahuvaav | Standing place: ungahvaav |
| Meeting place: umengahvaav | Hunting place: aarengahvaav |

In the minds of the traditional Keraakie, vaav in ovrohvaav does not appear to mean place, because the place of the appearing of the mythological creatures is called a geenzetenvaav or boiv or boivvaav (sacred site) and not ovrohvaav.

One finds time terms making use of the suffix vaav, such as eerinyehvaav (dawn) and evah aangohvaav (sunset), which should indicate that the meaning of these concepts is spatial. Eerinyehvaav should be the place where the sun rises, but the Keraakie say it also means the time of the rising of the sun. The phrase evah aangohvaav literally means the place where the sun returns to its original state, but the Keraakie say that it also means the time of the setting of the sun. They know that the sun never rises (nor sets) at the same place since the spot where the sun and the horizon meet is always changing. There seems to be an overlapping of time and space in Keraakie thinking, which has been noted by many researchers in other cultures. Time perception is influenced in many ways by how a society observes space, and in addition the measuring of time makes use of space. The term vaav seems to have a spatial meaning as well as a temporal one to the Keraakie. Ovrohvaav means ‘the time of the appearing of the mythological beings' or ‘when the sacred events occurred’. Yet Yokaar Gavai of Gubaa and Embain Yaavus of Arufe (both educated young married men) stated that vaav means place and not time. Is it that they can clearly see these categorical divisions which the older and more traditional people cannot see because to
them things, people and space are time? It appears that the dividing line between space and time is very hazy to the traditional Keraakie but not to the modern young men who have been influenced by Western educational systems with their emphasis upon abstract conceptions of time.

The word *foioh*, which means the end, makes use of the spatial suffix *vaav* in *foiohvaav*. It means the end in time, the completion of an action and the end of a track. The Keraakie include these two meanings in their use of this word. Since *ovrhvaav* is referring to happenings, *vaav* could have the idea of an event or events. This thought would fit in with what Tony Swain discovered about Australian Aboriginal ‘Dreamtime or the Dreaming’, as being ‘abiding events’. This term *vaav* is also used by itself to mean male succession, heir, position in the kinship line. After the birth of my third daughter in September 1983, I told the Keraakie men that I was not going to have any more children. One man asked, “Who will take your position/place (*vaav*)? You must have a male to follow you.” In this example, the spatial word *vaav* takes on a social meaning. In conclusion, it appears that there is great flexibility in the use of the suffix, *vaav*, because the traditional Keraakie use it as a noun of action, space, time, and also in a social context.

There are a variety of attitudes towards mythological time among the Keraakie. It is very important to the traditionally minded men, who declared in numerous discussions that the events of the sacred age tell the source of all peoples, foods, names, languages, creatures and things. It was an event (or events) that happened in the past, and past tense verbs are used to describe it. It is not seen as happening in a combined past and present time such as ‘everywhen,’ as Australian Aboriginal ‘Dreamtime’ is presented by William E.H. Stanner and Adolphus P. Elkin. The mythological age occurred in the past, is never repeated in the present and always remains just a couple of generations ago. The Keraakie call these myths *karmai tii* and regard these events as having actually happened, and not just human creations. Williams supports this observation, declaring:

A mythology which means something real to them. It is not always easy to determining to what extent natives actually believe the tales they tell of the
past; but with these Keraki I am inclined to infer from the seriousness with which they treat them that they represent for the most part are true beliefs.\textsuperscript{8}

The Kerakkie see them as different to \textit{yaam zi} (history) and to \textit{ninyi zi}, which are stories told in a mythological genre but do not have the authority of \textit{karmai zi}. When myths are told, the Kerakkie men expect their listeners to be greatly impressed by them. Williams noted that the \textit{karmai zi} produce "feelings of genuine awe",\textsuperscript{9} because they tell of preternatural events, which are foundational to them as a society. They are pregnant with symbolic meaning. The word for symbol is \textit{baanbaam zi} (which means literally 'a reflection word') and the Kerakkie say that the verbal myths are powerful reflections of real beliefs, values and basic assumptions. Edward Schieffelin wrote of the mythological understanding of the Kaluli (Southern Highlands Province) as involving a "shadow or reflection" world of people corresponding to the real.\textsuperscript{10} The Kerakkie do not believe that there is an unseen world, which is a reflection of their visible one. During his study of these people, Williams declared that in their religion, "it is their mythology, the object of an apparently real faith and intense interest, that provides the motive force".\textsuperscript{11}

Contemporary Kerakkie view their sacred past time as being more powerful than the present. They believe that men and women of that era were physically bigger, which Williams noted when writing of the \textit{geenzeen} era, "Men and creatures were greater than they are today".\textsuperscript{12} The Kerakkie often complain about their struggle to find food but say that it was abundant in the \textit{ovrohvaa}. Williams wrote in 1933, "Pig and cassowary are fairly plentiful, but the principle game on the Morehead is the wallaby."\textsuperscript{13} This is not so today, because the introduction of the shotgun has drastically reduced the number of animals and birds available for the hunters to catch. Hunters can hunt all day without seeing a reptile or animal, making hunger for protein common. Also with the growth in population (owing to modern health care and the cessation of inter-tribal warfare), their gardening land is being overworked and producing smaller crops of tubers and fruits. The more settled nature of life in the modern era means that trees immediately around the village have been cut down for gardening and firewood. Therefore women have to go further away from the village to collect firewood, making life harder. This is most noticeable at the village of Keru. When I first visited this village in January 1968 it was surrounded by jungle. But when I visited it in 1983 there
was not a tree to be seen for a kilometer from the village. The land around Arufe is similar.

In the modern era, Keraakie mythology has become public knowledge but before the 1980s only initiated men were allowed to hear the mythological stories, so the storytellers would stop speaking when a woman or child walked by. If the uninitiated overheard any of the *karmai si*, the Keraakie believed disaster would occur. Through their spokesman, Gima Moigam, the men of Gubaav, Bebdeven and Arufe told me on 5 July 1986 that they truly believed that a giant snake would descend from the sky if the myths or sacred objects were revealed. This snake would dig a hole with its tail and water would emerge to flood the earth, drowning all life on the earth. This prophecy of doom differs only slightly from the one Williams was told: "the wrath of the Sky-Beings as evinced especially by a tremendous deluge of rain." The people of this district told anthropologist Mary Ayres that, if they divulged the secrets, a hole would open up and swallow the people, or if they secretly visited the sacred site of Kureemgu they would break out in sores. It appears that if the myths are unofficially revealed to the uninitiated there is a threat of punishment, but the men of each era had their own version of what was going to happen. To the Keraakie myths were sacred, secret, authoritative, empowering, and retribution would be exacted if they were treated with disrespect.

Many have declared the mythological age to be timeless, such as Lévi-Strauss who described it as being an "eternal past" or "a past conceived as a timeless model". When the myths are told, daily time is suspended and the speaker and listeners enter into a different world. Mythological time is not understood in terms of history, but it is the 'historicising' of the values, beliefs and assumptions of a society in narrative forms. The latter stories are not governed by the normal meteorological, astrological, biological, economical and social indicators of time. Yet, the ethos of that era is different to what followed it and also to life in the present. An example of this is seen in the Keraakie myths, where events occur or people exist before their official appearance. This contradiction is illustrated by Williams when he says, "Kambel [Keembel] according to this story, finds the animals already at Kuramangu [Kureemgu]; whereas later it appears that the animals themselves derive from the *sakr*
[saakar] palm". In regard to Keembel's wife, Yumeer, she is "a Bangu woman of the Kaunj tribe" yet the Kaunj people are not 'present' at this point and only emerge from the saakar palm at a later 'time' in the myth: "Her existence is simply taken for granted." In the incident of the first killing of Gufa, the latter flees "to his maternal uncle in the Kaunj tribe" who was present before the emergence of the Kaunj people from the saakar palm. In the mythological era of the Keraakie, normal sequence in time is suspended.

There are unexplained gaps in the mythological stories, such as no account of how the primeval family came into being, because the father figure Keembel, simply was there in the beginning. His wife, Yumeer, and son, Gufa, exist and there is no episode covering their marriage or the son's birth. This is not questioned nor does it cause any concern to the Keraakie. The events of Gufa's incestuous relationship with Yumeer and Keembel's revenge, which led to the disintegration of the primeval family, are un questioned facts to the Keraakie. Williams wrote, "it is impossible to arrange the episodes of Keraki [Keraakie] mythology in a perfectly logical sequence." The latter are just eternal features of the geenzen era, revealing time logic of a non-rational kind. Hints by the Keraakie men, indicate that these gaps may be covered by myths, which they do not reveal to foreigners or unintiated Keraakie.

The mythological age and the names of the primeval spirit beings are diligently remembered whereas most Keraakie cannot remember their grandparents' names. This may have been caused by their fear the ghosts of the dead and they are very reluctant to even mention their names. Also with the painful passing of their parents and grandparents, they overcome their grief by destroying their graves; an action called 'the forgetting of the dead'. Therefore, as expected, the Keraakie do not keep genealogies. Thought they frequently discuss the past, the mythological past is a more important part of present conversation. A. Irving Hallowell noted this same thing among the Saulteaux people of Canada saying:

Once we enter the mythological world of Saulteaux belief, temporal concepts actually lose most, if not all, chronological significance. Such spiritual entities, in fact, are actually more 'real' than distant human ancestors no longer remembered. Events that are believed to have taken place 'long ago' are not systematically correlated with each other in any
well-defined temporal schema. They are discrete happenings, often unconnected and sometimes contradictory. Yet the past and the present are part of a whole because they are bound together by the persistence and contemporary reality of mythological characters not even now grown old.\textsuperscript{23}

Although many anthropologists hold that myths portray a timeless past, and the Keraakie myths seem to fit into this pattern, there is a contradiction because they contain time sequences. The latter is seen in the opening myth of the slaying of the Bedinye man. In this story Keembel killed the Bedinye man, whose origin is not explained. Then he ate him (thinking that he was a wallaby) and after a night’s sleep found out that he had killed a man. These events show that in this timeless myth there are time factors such as daytime followed by night and then morning in a temporal sequence. The event of killing is followed by the event of eating and then sleeping. But then the supposed timelessness of mythology can not be presented any other way than time-oriented everyday language. They are narratives, which indicate time sequences. Besides the time-structure of this myth, Williams commented on the disagreement over whether this myth comes first or later in the Keraakie ‘canon’ of mythology. In every case of expounding of the myths I heard, ‘The Slaying of the Bedinye’ was always placed first, showing a time understanding.\textsuperscript{24} The same feature of time sequence in the mythological narratives are seen in the myth of ‘The Saakar Palm and the People’.\textsuperscript{25} Also in the sacred story of ‘The Bringing of Fire’ there is a similar sequence in time,\textsuperscript{26} as is the case in the sequence in the supposed ‘timeless’ karmai zi of ‘The Flood’.\textsuperscript{27}

In the myth called ‘The Beginning of Sodomy’ there is a process of growth which indicates a time sequence.\textsuperscript{28} Succession in time is also seen in the myth of ‘The Sacred Pipe’ when the wallaby’s tail is cut off, planted and then grows into a bamboo clump, from which the Keraakie sacred pipes are cut and fashioned.\textsuperscript{29} Another example of sequential time, when it is supposed to be suspended, occurs in the mythological time of the sacred story of ‘The Pig’.\textsuperscript{30} In the karmai zi, ‘Guňa, the Cassowary and the Dog’ we again find a time sequence.\textsuperscript{31} The final and most important myth, ‘Guňa’s Incest’, also contains this pattern of a series of events in a sequence. Guňa observed his mother’s nakedness and then committed incest with her before departing. Later, Keembel the father approached Yumeer and noticed the evidence of sexual intercourse, so hid to see what is going on. Guňa returned and committed incest again. Keembel let him depart,
after which he accused his wife of infidelity. Then at a later point in time, Keembel cooked a poisonous taro and gave it to Gufa, who eventually died. In the myth the dog then accused Keembel of murder, who angrily took away the dog's power of speech because of his accusation. Again we note a time sequence when Gufa came back to life, went to his maternal uncle, who sent him back to Keembel. The latter planned a more effective revenge by digging a hole and covering it with a large leaf. After placing food on the leaf, Keembel deceived Gufa who he sat on it. The leaf collapsed and Gufa died by falling into the hole, where he was buried.32

All of these stories are individual units within themselves and are not linked by sequence to another, yet the myth of Bedinye is always told first. To the Keraakie the myths form a whole 'canon' with a beginning and an end. Each of these myths individually came to a climax in the narrative and also as a whole the 'canon' come to a conclusion in time when the geenseen family disintegrated: Gufa was murdered, Yumeer fled and Keembel followed her. Because the myths all move towards a climax, it definitely shows that the Keraakie do think in sequential linear way in time.33 This mythological family is the common link in the majority of the myths. In what is supposed to comprise a supernatural timeless era, there is a flow of time which parallels everyday time. The Keraakie hold these two times in balance - the suspension of historical time as against the 'moments' of sacred events ticking over in a sequence. This amounts to a thesis of timelessness and an antithesis of a natural time flowing in an irreversible process, within suspended time. There is no synthesis, except to say that these two features are in permanent contradiction in Keraakie mythological time, which is not homogeneous, but is made up of these two opposite forms of time.

No one knows how long ago the sacred era occurred, in regards to time, but Ayres' studies of Trans-Fly people revealed that "there is no doubt in people's minds of the relative recentness of the events of the mythological age".34 The Keraakie hold the opinion that the ovrohvaav existed just before the time of their kaaki (grandparents). It is important to note that the word kaaki is also used of ancestors (irrespective of how long ago they lived), as well as their grandparents. Another word, kaakikaakiaave (the era of the ancestors or grandfathers) is occasionally used of the mythological age. Kaaki is also used of their totems, which emerged in this sacred time.35 The Keraakie do not refer to a
length of time (e.g. 200 years) separating the ovohwaav and the historical or remembered past in the Keraakie's thinking. The mythological sacred time and the beginning of historical time is hazy in their understanding. Yet the mythological age always remains just a couple of generations ago, and Edward Evans-Pritchard discovered the same among the Nuer of the Sudan: "The distance between the beginning of the world and the present day, remains an unalterable distance."36

To describe the relationship of mythological time to history, including past, present and future time in the mind of the Keraakie, I will use the following diagram:

* mythological time  historical time  past time  present  future.

The events of the mythological time may be in an era before the present but they never lose their contemporary influence on the Keraakie, since the land, the people, the animals, and so on, are all products of the sacred age. The permanent presentness of the myths is seen by the Keraakie in that Keembel, who is represented by the moon, is always chasing Yumeer, who is represented by the sun.37 The sacred site at Kureemgnu, the social groups and their totems, such as the inafiak and wana hawks, are a concrete reality in the present. Approach to this site is through a clump of bamboos, and it is believed that if one treads on the leaves, death will follow. The power of that past era is believed to be dangerously present. Saawi Bevek of Gubaav, the leader of the Kureemgnu cult, related on 12 December 1987, that the society's leaders used this bamboo clump in official executions. People who had offended them had their excreta placed where two of the bamboo poles touched. It was believed that as the wind blew on the poles, then they would move back and forth, and then the condemned person would be crushed by the powers of the sacred bamboo. By the time the excreta had disintegrated the condemned person would be dead. The Keraakie lived in real fear of these bamboos and only approached the boiv (sacred site) when they were on authorised religious business. In the performance of the periodic rituals, the events of that 'sacred time' are remembered in the present. The Keraakie men tell of seeing some of the geenzeen creatures in the jungle, therefore they believe that the past mythological era is also present.
The mythological age was unquestioned in traditional Keraakie society, and was *evaalovivi* (ultimate truth) to them. The men frequently point to the sacred time as containing the answers to the meaning of nature and culture. Most questions about life, food, water, fire, death, and so on, find their answer in the Kureemgu myths. One old man (Koag) said, “You have your Jesus, we have Kureemgu.” All things find their origin in the sacred time of the ‘happening’ (*owrohwaav*).

As already mentioned the majority of Keraakie men declare that mythological time or the *geenzeen* era is authoritative. There is only one textual account of events of the mythological time and that was recorded over the period of 1928-32 by Williams in *Papuans of the Trans-Fly*. This set of written myths was checked by Mary Ayres in 1981 with one of the oldest men of the Keraakie, Yeekimu of Gubaav, and he agreed with them.  But the *karmai zi* (myths) are not written down by the Keraakie themselves, so they are open to change, because of human forgetfulness and new interpretations. These textual accounts are not authoritative to the Keraakie, because there are many sets of oral myths, which poses the question about, which oral version is authoritative. Williams noted various versions of the myths and I have heard others, too. It is only the oral ones, as proclaimed by the present tribal elders, which are authoritative. As the older men, who were the keepers of the myths, die, there have been changes for the time being in the content of many of these myths because the middle-aged and younger men want to adapt them to the modern world. Ayres noted this same feature when recording the myths of the people west of the Morehead River.

Ayres stressed the importance of the sacred sites in giving the oral myths authority. She wrote:

> The events of the myths are imprinted or transformed into the fixed, atemporal perpetual reality of the landscape.\(^40\)
> The physical world of the land and landscape is an apprehended meaningful order which is the objectification of mythological-historical reality.

The sacred sites of Kureemgu, and other places where the *geenzeen* spirits lived, are in the mind of the Keraakie concrete evidence of the mythological time’s authority. This is
a similar understanding to that of the Australian Aborigines. These sites, which the Keraakie call bolv, were the traditionally objective expression of their mythology according to the testimony of most elderly males. But this is not so today, because some educated Keraakie question traditional mythological authority. Some now see alternative authorities in the secular governing structures based at Morehead, Daru, and Port Moresby as well as that of the Evangelical Church of PNG at Tari.

The mythological time is of great importance to the traditional Keraakie. This causes one to ask, Does Keraakie sacred time reflect only past issues or does it also reflect present or future ones? When the Keraakie are asked this question they reply that myths refer to past events, and do not have a future meaning. On studying Williams' collection of Keraakie myths, it is obvious that they do not speak about the future. Among the Suki, who live 90 kilometers to the north of the Keraakie, they have a prophecy about the future, whereas the Keraakie do not have such a feature. Their mythology told during initiation has a present function of establishing social identity as well as opening up the future to the young men with entry into adulthood with the possibility of future marriage and responsibilities within the community. This making present of the past myths ensures the future of Keraakie society and its traditional religion.

To the traditional Keraakie, the sacred era still has a present influence in that it tells of the source of all things around them, as seen in Williams' account concerning the origin of people, creatures and garden produce:

The [saakar] palm falls in a westerly direction (or in another version, towards the sea) and Kambel [Keembel] bends his ear to listen to the murmuring inside it. Then he proceeds to split off the bark by stages from the top to the bottom, and as he does so there swarm out, first the Gambadi and Semariji and after them the more distant tribes of the Keraki [Keraakie], until finally, from the butt, there emerges the Keraki [Keraakie] Proper. The origin of the animals is accounted for by the mythological statement that when the sakr [saakar] palm fell its fronds scattered and became snakes, birds, fishes, wallabies, and so on. Gufa next sooled the dog Natekari on to the cassowary, and after a long pursuit it brought the bird down and tore it to pieces. Natekari has been vomiting after his surfeit, and to his astonishment wherever the dog has done so there have sprung up yams, taitu [special
type of yam] and taro, bananas, and all the other good vegetables to which
the Kerakie are accustomed.

The origin of the sun, moon, stars, clouds, thunder, rainbow, rain, water, rivers,
sea, fire, magic, sacred objects, musical instruments, social activities of dancing,
dressing up with feathers, singing and ritual are found in the sacred time according to
their myths.44 Place, people and village names are said to be handed down from the
sacred beings of the mythological era. On 19 December 1990 in Bebeven, I was told
that the term markai (white person, ghosts or important person) came from the
geenzeen. This word is an introduction from the Kiwai people at the mouth of the Fly
River, showing that when new things enter their life, they are all linked to the geenzeen
era. Ayres noted in her research this influence of the mythological time upon the
present in the Trans-Fly area: “Through the activities of the mythological beings,
people came where they are today, with the customs and language they have today”.
45 The Europeans, their motor bikes and helicopters are all given a place in the
modernized mythology.

The beings of that mythological age are not confined to that time because they
have been seen among the Kerakie in the near past or living memory time and do
venture into the present. Williams declared, “The enormous snake Bugai or the
crocodile Wargar, both of which are supposed to haunt the bush and creeks of the
present day. They are called gainjan because they are beyond comparison larger than
the natural species: they are in fact relics of the gainjan [geenzeen] time.”46 On 16
October 1983 an Arufe villager named Awasi declared that the goanna geenzeen had
that day attacked a woman named Sosem and caused her to go into convulsions. This
was not the attack of an enormous goanna but a ‘spirit’ goanna from the geenzeen era.
I observed her physical problem but not the spirit being that was claimed to be causing
the problem. Numerous others have spoken to me of sightings and attacks by
supernatural creatures, which they have experienced.

In the Kerakie understanding of mythological time there exists a tension
between the fact of its having occurred long ago and the fact that it still has a strong
influence in the present. Ayres declares, “the mythological age was a creative,
formative time of events which have passed, irrevocably finished, never to re-occur.”47
Most Keraakie would agree with this, yet there is more to it than that. This is not just a matter of a present order fixed in meaning by the past reality of the mythological time, because they fear that the fearful creatures of the past sacred age may appear in the present. Irrespective of the fruitless visit on 8 January 1986 to Kureengu, where they did not see the geenzen, some postulate that these beings are still around somewhere. Others say that the idea of spirit beings was only a creation in the mind of their ancestors, and they do not believe in their existence.

Eliade tells of numerous societies where the mythological events are remembered and repeated in a ritualised form every year. This raises the question, did this happen among the people of the Trans-Fly? The idea of an annual ceremony is foreign to the Keraakie's understanding of time, because they do not hold to a block of time called a 'year'. According to the testimony of the Keraakie elders, the mythological stories were only repeated in full during the ritual when the young men were initiated. This was not a yearly occurrence but happened when there were enough young men available to receive initiation. Williams noted this in 1926-30 saying, "when a number of boys within the tribe are seen to be pubescent, its villages will combine to initiate them." When he visited Kureengu, it was over-grown and did not appear to have been visited for a good many years. In the ceremony of initiation when the myths were re-told, there was no re-enactment of the felling of the saakar palm or other mythological features. The myths were presented only in a ritualized oral way, but this appears to have ceased in the present era. The elders declared that the last time Kureengu was used for an initiation ceremony was in the 1950s, and since 1986, it has become a garden site.

Wendy Flannery wrote about Melanesian mythology, "Some myths in some societies, are regarded as being somehow efficacious in the renewal of the world and of society. This is particularly true of myths, which have to do with the fertility and well-being of humans, animals and plants." Future time is involved in this understanding, but the Keraakie do not have a yearly ritual of the renewal of society, their gardens and the world based on the myths. But they did have sacred ceremonies to promote the fertility of their gardens as seen in the neglected wolomongo Yam shine. One garden fertility magic ceremony is loosely based on the myth of 'The Origin of the Bull-
Roarer’. In this ritual they placed cooked fish between a woman’s legs. Later they snatched it away from her and cut the fish up with a bull-roarer. These pieces of fish are rubbed on the hands of the men, so that in planting their yams, the latter will grow well. This action appears to be based on Keembel snatching the bull-roarer away from Yumeer’s vagina. But the bull-roarers do not seem to be used as garden fertility objects in the karmai zi. I suggest that the Keraakie performed this ritual, imitating the snatching of the bull-roarer, seeking to obtain the fertility power of females for the benefit of their gardens. Therefore in this one myth the sacred time seems to be linked to the future renewal of the fertility of their gardens.

But sodomy was another fertility rite; being practised by the Keraakie men and believed to cause physical growth in the young men. This practice appears to find its authority in the myth ‘The Beginning of Sodomy’ when Keembel had homosexual relations with Gufa, his son. He rubbed semen on Gufa’s body to assist growth. The practice, of rubbing semen on yams before they are planted to help growth, is practiced by the neighbouring Arumba people of Kiriwa. Some sections of this society believe their ancestors came from the sacred site at Kureemgu. On 27 June 1984 at a meeting of about 100 Keraakie men at Yengiyevite, just to the north of Gubaav, Nuwira Bevek gave an outline of Keraakie sodomy practices and said that they had come to an end in the modern era. Others spoke and said that this activity must not be revealed to the women lest the men suffer shame. Nuwira then stated that the Keraakie people came into being through male homosexual activity. At this point other senior men objected to his revealing their ancestor’s secrets and Nuwira did not go any further at that time. It appears that there may be other myths, which uninitiated foreigners were not allowed to hear or have been forgotten. Hints of them appear in Williams fieldnotes, where Keembel brushed bees off his hand and they became the stars called yemaam (Southern Cross). Since these stars are supposed to be the giver of yams, fertility rites or myths may be linked to these fragments.

Does the Kureemgu mythological time have a structure? The Keraakie linguistic system is a complex structure, so therefore there is a great probability of a structure in their mythology, which is another genre. Claude Lévi-Strauss states that “the purpose of myth is to provide a logical model capable of overcoming a contradiction.”

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Mythology, he suggests, reveals an underlying logic, which is universal to all mankind, being a semiotic structure. When comparing Keraakie myths, one notes an emphasis upon three things. In the geenzen family there are three members: Keembel, Yumeer and Gufa.\(^5\) The myth of ‘The Saakar Pith and Raising of the Sky’ mentions that three things were made with the pith: clouds, sacred nikav rainmaking stones, and the stars.\(^5\) Again in the myth of ‘The Bringing of the Fire’ three lizards are sent to fetch the fire from the islands near Boigu.\(^5\) There are also three angry outbursts in the myth of ‘Gufa’s incest’ when Keembel kills his son twice and takes away the voice of the geenzen dog, named Natakari.\(^5\) Ayres, in her studies of the mythology of the Trans-Fly, tells the story of Ndemban (Keembel) cutting the growing Ndumbor (Gufa) with a bull-roarer into three pieces. The legs descended into the earth, his head ascended into the sky and the trunk stayed at ground level.\(^5\) This three areas - of under the ground, on the surface and above in the sky - form a possible symbolic structure. In Keraakie mythology one notes movement from under the ground to ground level and then into the sky, which is a three level structure.

The ‘under the ground’ section is firstly noted, when Keembel hears a sound coming from the base of a saakar palm. The cause of the noise are homban ants (whose nest is always under the ground) and human beings inside the trunk of the palm. He cuts it down and releases them.\(^6\) Another example is the geenzen animals who go down into the earth under the severm palm on the island of Kind to bring up fire, while later a dog finds water under the ground at nearby Zavadene.\(^6\) More examples are noted such as the Bediny man’s thigh-bone (got) which caused a type of bamboo (called bediny-got) to grow out of the ground. Keembel cut off a wallaby’s tail and after planting it, another type of bamboo called kaazan grew out of the soil at Kurcecgou.\(^6\)

On the other hand there are a number of myths in which events only occur at ground level without any reference to things under the ground or above the ground. The ‘Origin of the Bull-roarer’, ‘The Beginning of Sodomy’, and ‘Gufa, the Cassowary and the Dog’ are some of the myths which tell of the involvement of geenzen spirit beings in various activities on the surface of the land.\(^6\)
Then there are many myths connected with the skies or which end with the characters departing into the air. 'The Ascent of Wambwamb' described the rising of this spirit being into the skies. In the myth of the 'Saakar Pith and Raising of the Sky', Keembel used pith and bamboo to form two objects (clouds, stars) in the skies. Some of the stars are given names and some are spirit beings. The three stars of Orion's belt, which the Kerakkie call *feneebend*, are beings and are named Sarau, Wambui and Taaga. Then with the same pith Keembel made magical *nikav* stones, which, since they come from the same source as the clouds, rainmakers use them to extract rain. Linked to this myth is the story of the coconuts, which grew under the ground. Keembel "thrust them into the air with a pole, since then they have grown at the top of coconut palms". In 'The Kurumggu Animals' myth, one version has the animals being carried aloft in the hollowed out *saakar* palm trunk, while in the myth of 'The Pig', it departs into the sky where it causes thunder by tearing the husks from coconuts, and 'The Python' myth tells of the formation of the rainbow in the sky. In 'Gufa's Incest', the primeval being, Gufa, is buried in a hole by his father but he rises into the sky as a spirit bird and heads off in a southerly direction. The Kerakkie myths end with Yumeer rising into the sky as the sun and Keembel rising up as the moon to chase her. Yet the sun and moon may just be representatives of these two spirit beings.\(^4\)

Another feature of this movement up into the sky is seen in the word *foiohwaav*. Guma Maraaga, a nurse of Arufe, spoke to me on 11 December 1990, saying that this word meant the end of an event and the final resting-place of something. She then went on to say that it also had the meaning of being placed up high and not on the ground. *Foiohwaav* is made up of the two words, 'finished' (*foioh*) and 'place/time'(*waav*), giving an insight into their mythological teaching that all things end in the sky. There appears to be a structure in some of the Kerakkie myths of a releasing from confinement under the earth, to the freedom of life above ground, to an eventual rising into the skies.

Fredrik Barth notes a similar structure in the myths of the Baktaman people of the Western Highlands of PNG who "have a particular way of thinking about space. They think of it in a vertical way: below ground - above ground - sky".\(^5\) This understanding that things find their source in the ground is seen in the Kerakkie tradition that springs were the work of spirit beings pushing up the water from underground. Garry Trompf suggests a different understanding. "It is more characteristic of Melanesian worldviews..."
that a given group’s cosmos is spatially confined and somewhat horizontally conceived”, but he goes on to mention the belief in a sky god of the Rouku people of the Trans-Fly, which is identical to the Keraakie viewpoint. Generally the life of the Keraakie is confined to the horizontal, but their Kureemgu beliefs reveal this movement from under the ground to the surface and then into the sky. In such diversity of cultures, as are found in Melanesia, it is common to find many different points of view.

In spite of this apparent literary structure of things emerging from under the ground to the level ground and then proceeding above the ground, the Keraakie say that this understanding is foreign to them. They declare there is no order (yaweg) irrespective of the structured economic seasons, weather patterns, and winds. The social structure of three social sections in two moieties as presented by Williams is said to be artificial because there are many more social sections than were officially admitted. The modern Keraakie say that the social structure was in the minds of the political leaders of the 1920-30s and was projected upon the villagers. And even these are only loose groupings, since kinship can be more than one of descent, involving factors of desire, time and space, as will be seen in chapter 9. This emic understanding of a lack of order may have arisen out of the struggle to live in their hostile environment, where they have to be adaptable and flexible because survival is of supreme importance. The Keraakie do not see underlying structures in their myths. Dan Sperber commented critically “Lévi-Strauss, in Mythologiques, performs an artificial mental experiment” in which he proposed a ‘structure’ and then academically dissected myths in order to find it. This activity tends to depend upon the researcher’s mental gymnastics, which could be cognitive imperialism. An etic understanding reads a ‘structure’ into the myth without letting the people, their language, their activities, their thinking, and their culture decide if it is there. Yet on the other hand, these researchers declare that it is a subconscious structure of which the story tellers may be unaware and this could be true of the Keraakie. As far as educated Guma Maraaga was concerned there is a hidden structure in the myths; the emergence of things from below the earth, the activity of things on the surface of the earth, the movement of things upwards into the realm above the earth, but then she could have been influenced by Christian teaching.
The traditional Keraakie, frustrated by their struggle to survive in the Trans-Fly and their poverty, have a definite desire to return to the power and wealth of the mythological age, which they enunciate in terms of rising above their problems. In this way they may be revealing an awareness of this three-tiered structure of being under the ground, living on ground level and rising into the skies. But when they talk about it they say that the wealth is under the ground which does not fit the structure. Also they say that mythological creatures may still be roaming around at ground level which again contradicts the supposed structure. Although traditional Keraakie held a holistic understanding of the mythological past subsumed in the present, they also see a tension because the powerful mythological past as opposed to a powerless present. The difference between mythological time and the present is also highlighted by the fact that they say the former only happened a couple of generations ago and is always equidistant from the present. This could be stated as though the sacred age is close by physically and in time, but the Keraakie say there is a radical difference between them. So it is not just the etic researcher who sees a tension between the flow of everyday time and the block of mythological events in which time is supernatural and supposedly unchanging.

In the 1990s, the once secret myths seem to have been reduced to the level of public stories. In Arufe and Gubaav primary schools, the myths are taught to uninitiated male and female children with the aid of booklets produced by the educated Keraakie themselves. Mythological time previously stressed Keraakie identity by keeping sacred knowledge secret, but in the modern era it is proclaiming their identity in a public way so that foreign teachers and others may know their unique mythological origins.

When a comparison is made of the myths given to Williams in 1926-31 with the modern ones, we note that many minor as well as major changes have been made in eight out of the seventeen. Some of these changes are deliberate attempts to account for features of the modern world such as planes, motor bikes and white people. But other changes seem to have been caused by the neglect of certain features, the death of keepers of those myths or the absorption of new ideas. In some cases there were two or three versions of the myths recorded by Williams, which may indicate different origins.
There also seems to have been political involvement by authoritative elders: the rejecting of some myths and the accepting of an official version.68

On the other hand it appears that the Keraakie of today have neglected the era of the sacred time, centred on Kureemgu with its rituals and myths. Individuals sometimes perform these rituals and expound the myths but the majority of Keraakie society has rejected this practice as being irrelevant in the modern age. Political power resides in the House of Assembly at Port Moresby, and its public service which is seen in the police, teachers, army, and minor officials employed in the local government council at Morehead. Knowledge of the Kureemgu mythology does not give them any power in this modern political system. Also it has not met their present desire for and need of money in the modern consumer world. Some have accepted Christianity, but the majority have opted for materialism mixed with a syncretistic belief in the geenzeen spirit beings and Christianity. The 'absolute' of the sacred time still exercises an influence over traditionalists but it seems to be growing less and less. The mythological time has not produced the equality, political power and material wealth they want, so most of the Keraakie people are seeking to meet their desires by whatever sources are available. It is as Gilbert Lewis wrote about change among the Sepik River people in the modern era, "they are adapting to a different world and its demands".69

The Keraakie people say that life is one of chaos within nature, within society, between people, within the spirit world and within themselves individually as they face death. This concept of entropy is also found among the Huli people and many Western Highland's societies.70 Because they are subject to constant conflict and change, it appears that mythological time is a symbolic expression in an attempt to deal with disjuncture. Myths were regarded as being very important and a true recording of what happened in the era of the geenzeen beings. Everything of value came from the mythological era, such as kinship relationships, totems, religious objects, language, ritual, land and food. This mythological time was stable, seemingly permanent and uninfluenced by the events of man's constantly changing world. The myths told of immutable things and were an ideal foundation on which to build Keraakie society. As Lévi-Strauss said about myths "the antiquity is conceived as absolute, for it goes back to the origin of the world."71 But is this understanding true? A number of modern authors
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disagree with this position, declaring that there is no general property, nor function of myths. I believe that Keraakie mythology served a major psychological purpose in helping the Keraakie overcome the trauma of their migrations and settlement in the Trans-Fly. Kureemgu gave them a visible and concrete site to attach their beliefs and provide stability in the middle of disjuncture. One does not know the state of the Keraakie mythology when they arrived at Kureemgu, but since change is a constant, one suspects that it was in a flexible state. Yet at that time, these myths served as a foundation for their society as they faced the uncertainties of life in the Trans-Fly.

Keraakie myths are narratives about traditional beliefs concerning their origins, basic values, and assumptions. They are also flexible in that they incorporate features of the contemporary world. On the other hand they are social statements that symbolize their identity, and give security as the Keraakie struggle with an inhospitable environment, social disharmony, sickness, antagonistic spirit beings and death. These narratives are multivalent symbols, which address whatever situation in which the Keraakie find themselves.
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Oral history of migrations and mythological origins of the Keraakile people.
ENDNOTES:


3 ibid., p. 95.


8 Williams, *PTF*, p. 292.

9 ibid., p. 298.


12 ibid., p. 295.

13 ibid., p. 221.

14 ibid., pp. 297-298.

15 M. Ayres, op. cit., pp. 317, 324.

16 Lévi-Strauss, op. cit., p. 236.

17 Williams, *PTF*, p. 299.

18 ibid., pp. 296-301, 308.

19 ibid., p. 313.

20 ibid., pp. 299, 308.

21 ibid., p. 298.

22 ibid., p. 308.

24 Williams, *PTF*, pp. 298-299.
25 ibid., p. 300.
26 ibid., pp. 302-304.
27 ibid., pp. 305-306.
28 ibid., pp. 308-309.
29 ibid., p. 309.
30 ibid., p. 310.
31 ibid., pp. 311-312.
32 ibid., pp. 312-314.
33 ibid., p. 314.
34 Ayres, op.cit., p. 46.
35 Williams, *PTF*, p. 86.
37 Williams, *PTF*, pp. 302, 314
38 Ayres, op.cit., p. 321.
39 ibid., pp. 53-57.
40 ibid., p. 48.
41 ibid., p. 345.
43 Williams, *PTF*, pp. 300, 309, 312.
44 ibid., pp. 292-314.
45 Ayres, op.cit., p. 125.
46 Williams, *PTF*, p. 295.
47 Ayres, op.cit., p. 48.
48 Eliade, op.cit., pp. 77-85.
52 ibid., pp. 308-309.
Keraakie mythological time also incorporates the structure of a category generating its own antithesis, a contradiction which Lévi-Strauss mentioned in his studies in mythology. (Lévi-Strauss, *La Geste d’Asdiwal*, Annuaire de l’E.P.H.E. (Sciences Religieuses) 1958-59, Paris, quoted in E.R. Leach (ed.) *The Structural Study of Myth and Totemism*, London: Tavistock, 1967, pp. 1-48.) In the myth of the ‘The Saakar Palm and the Peoples’, weak, death-dominated human time emerged from the powerful era of the eternal *geenzeen* beings. (Williams, *PTF*, op. cit., pp. 299-301.) Non-threatening sacred time produced its own opposition, fearful time which eventually results in the destruction of time. In the myths of ‘The Flood’ and ‘The Bringing of Fire’, the opposites of fire and water came from the same island off the south coast. (Williams, *PTF*, op. cit., pp. 302-305.) These opposites also appear in nature when rain, which produces life-giving growth, also produces flooding and the destruction of their crops. The dry season with its warmth matures their food crops but also dries out their water supplies and the countryside allowing bush fires which can destroy their yam storage houses. The Pongarki villagers can never forget the dry season of 1993, when ten of their yam houses were burnt in a bushfire. The opposition of male and female is not explained in the Keraakie myths that Williams recorded, but on 26 June 1984 Nuwira Moiyam of Gubauv explained the emergence of females as the secret symbolic meaning of the ‘Origin of the Bull-Roarer’ myth. Yumeer was originally a male but became pregnant through anal intercourse with Keembel. Yumeer’s penis, which became the first bull-roarer, was pulled out by the red parrot (*kavara* - this is the same word for the inside of the vagina), releasing the first menstrual blood. (Williams, *PTF*, op. cit., pp. 307-308.) Van Baal also noted the similarity of the bull-roarer to the human penis among the Tugeri or Marind-anim people, who often raided the Keraakie. (J. van Baal, *Dem: Description and Analysis of Marind-anim Culture*, The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1966, pp. 268-269, 479.) Gufa was a child born of homosexual intercourse. Because of the possibility of male pregnancy, all young men had to swallow lime before they were ritually sodomized. (Williams, *PTF*, pp. 201-203.) In the myth of ‘Gufa, the Cassowary, and the Dog’, repugnant vomit becomes welcome food plants – “yams, *taitu* and taro, bananas and
all the other good vegetables to which the Keraki are accustomed". (Williams, _PTF_, op. cit., pp. 311-312.) In the final myth of ‘Gufa’s Incest’, life came out of death when Gufa returned to life after Keembel murdered him. Chaos emerged out of the order of the mythological era, when in the later half of this final myth the primeval _geenzeen_ family disintegrated. Gufa was murdered the second time and the possibility of life out of death was lost, conveying Keraakie hopelessness that is seen in many areas of their life. (Williams, _PTF_, op. cit., pp. 312-314.) In these myths one notes this structure of oppositions emerging from themselves.

55 Williams, _PTF_, pp. 296-297.
56 ibid., p. 304.
57 ibid., pp. 302-304.
58 ibid., p. 313.
59 Ayres, op. cit., pp. 82-83.
60 Williams, _PTF_, p. 300.
61 ibid., pp. 302-305.
62 ibid., pp. 299, 309.
63 ibid., pp. 307-312.
64 ibid., pp. 301-314.
68 A comparison of the Kureemgu myths as told to F.E. Williams and their modern versions as told to me on January 9th 1983 in Arufe village, by a large group of middle aged and older men will now be set out.

“Keembel and Gufa, his son, lived separately from Yumeer, the wife and mother respectively. But Keembel would secretly go back to copulate with his wife, which was never fully satisfying. Gufa noticed his father’s periodic disappearances and one day followed him. So when his father had slept with Yumeer and departed, Gufa
approached her. She rejected his advances so he raped her. But this did not satisfy him so he put grass inside her vagina. Gufa returned to Keembel but did not mention what had happened. The next time Keembel went to Yumer he had an enjoyable experience and asked her the reason for this. Yumeer told him what Gufa had done. So in anger Keembel worked sorcery (moin, gama, ove) on his son. The latter died but then came back to life. He returned to Keembel who then secretly planned to kill his son again. This time, on a bush track, he dug a deep hole which he covered up with big taro leaves. Then he returned to the house and told Gufa to carry a load of yams along this track. When Keembel came to the covered up hole he stepped over the leaves and Gufa, following behind him, fell in. Keembel then threw in more yams on top of him and killed him.

Yumer missed her son so went in search of him using a motor bike. She found Keembel at the top of a tree near Peswabi but he would not tell her where Gufa was. So she continued westward in her search. Keembel went back to Kureemgu where he cut down the sacred saoker palm out of which came the white people since the leaves in the top of the trunk are light in colour. He made a propellor for them out of the leaves and these white skinned people flew to the south in a plane. Then the other tribes came out of the fallen palm. Last of all came the Kerakie and after this Keembel made a plane for himself and flew off to the south."

The myths of the geenzeen are changing and one suspects that the Kerakie’s appreciation of the past is fading. Considering the coming of the Europeans, motorbikes and planes, I sense that they want to conform more to the modern world. Some seem to be allowing Christianity to influence their mythology, because Seegiwa Zuga of Bebeven village declared on 19th December 1990 that the geenzeen beings were going to return. The promoter of this idea did not have any traditional support for his suggestion. On 25th December, 1990, I asked Taaga Yaavus, a strong upholder of the true karmai zi, and he declared, “aangoh zi yao yam (there is no return).”

On 19th December 1990 I sat with Zuga Taakwam in Bebeven village and went through the list of myths that Williams presented in his thesis. (Williams, PTP, op. cit., pp. 298-314.) Then I did the same with Faatra Zubiya, Wamboi and Taaga Yaavus
on 25th December 1990 at Arufe. Here is the state of the Keraakie myths as at the end of 1990.

(a) 'The Bedinye'- this myth was presented in the same form as is found in Williams' list.

(b) 'The Saakar Palm and Peoples'- The version that Williams tells in Pauans of the Trans-Fly was the same as what I received.

(c) 'The Ascent of Wambwamb' - Williams noted the indefinite nature of this myth and the version given to me in Bebuleven and Arufe villages differed from that given him.

"This geenzen being (Wambwamb, Bangi, or Sikaru Wambwamb) was a son of Keembel and after sodomy he grew so tall that his head was in the clouds. Therefore Keembel cut him in half with his moitang (the name of the bull-roarer used varies according to the section telling the story). Immediately his upper half flew off into the sky and the feet and lower body became human beings."

(d) 'The Moon and the Sun' - The Keraakie informants rejected the main version given to Williams (that the moon is Keembel and the sun is Yumeer) and presented the 'less picturesque' version as the official modern version. In the latter, the sun and the moon are lumps of the pith of the saakar palm, which the geenzen placed in the sky. The Sun is not Yumeer and the moon is not Keembel, only representations of them. They also presented another version.

"After the distintergration of the geenzen family at Kureemngu, Keembel headed west searching for Yumeer. He climbed a marawa hi tree and made a light out of the bark which he then placed in the sky. This was the moon - haraare (gwaram). Then he climbed a dera hi tree and made a light out of the bark, which he placed in the sky. This was the sun - evah (eramb). The word hi is Keraakie for lamp."
(e) 'The Bringing of Fire'- This myth is told relatively accurately except in the modern version there is no mention of the stingray. The motai lizard goes first and the mama gango lizard goes second. The same games and humour of the hiding of the fire under the arm of the zenizeni is repeated. The storytellers said that the original fire was lost with the passing of time and had been replaced by the method of making fire by sticks. This mythological fire was called kankan. Now the Keraakie say that the fire made from matches has replaced the one made with sticks.

(f) 'The Saakar Pith and Raising of the Sky'- There are a number of differences in this story. Williams in his field notes mentions the nidedekwa tree seeds as stars.

"As Keembel cut down the saakar palm some of the skin (saakar gaane) of the tree flew off into the area around them and became clouds. The sky was very close in the geemzeen time. So Keembel climbed a tree at Peswabi (near Morehead River) while looking for Yumeer. Using his motang he cut the clouds to pieces and chased them into the sky. Using a kaazan (bamboo) knife, Keembel cut up some of the palm bark and made stars. But he also took the seeds of the nidedekwa tree and threw them into the sky to be stars also."

(g) 'The Dog and the Water' - This story, as told to me, differs a little from the one that Williams' obtained.

"Keembel was very thirsty and was not satisfied with his food. His dog, Natekari (whom Taaga Yavus declares was also a sorcerer) discovered a spring of water at a place called alikend watorahvaav. This belonged to Yumeer. The dog had a drink and came back to Keembel who noticed the water on his chin. He touched it and said, "Give (understood) mbaermbeer (part of it)." The dog led him to the water and this made Keembel very happy."

(h) 'The Flood'- In the modern version of this myth, the main features are the same but only Keembel is involved.
"The eel's name was Dev and sat under the sevet palm sucking and squirting water out of its mouth. After the shooting of the eel, the flood gushed forth to chase Keembel all the way to Taarkor. He swept it back with a broom at this point and this is supposed to be the end of the salt water in the river, yet salt water can go higher than this point. This river, which passes by Arufe village, bears no Keraakie name except eergev (river) but was called Wassu Kussa by explorers and the colonial government."

(i) 'The Two Brothers and the Flood' - This story is unknown to my Keraakie informants, which is exactly what Williams' himself indicates.

(i) 'The Origin of the Bull-roarer' - This myth follows the second account in Williams' rendering.

"While Yumeer was sweeping, Keembel heard the call of the bull-roarer coming from her vagina. On snatching it away Yumer's menstrual blood flow began. The karara (red parrot) is another name for the inside of the vagina."

(k) 'The Beginning of Sodomy' - The account of this myth which I heard follows the one that Williams presented.

(l) 'The Sacred Pipe' - The version I was given differs from the one Williams received.

"Keembel overheard a strange noise of two alternating sounds. Looking around to find out the reason, he noticed a small bird named gongo calling out the word ter. For every call it made, a small bush wallaby named select answered back with its squeaky call. Keembel was most impressed with this and set about making something like this himself. So he cut off the wallaby's tail, planted it and grew some kaazan bamboo. From this he made the sacred ali flute."

(m) 'The Kureemgu Animals' - The modern version differs from that given to Williams.
“After cutting down the saakar palm, Keembel took the pieces of palm bark called zezeg zezeg and threw them around calling out the name of the animal, bird, or fish that he wanted to appear. As the bark fell it turned into the creature, whose name had just been called.”

(n) ‘The Pig’ - This story as told by Williams is unknown to the modern informants. But they tell a different story which involves the secret named for the pig, Dar.

“Near a place called Nccumen there is a sacred site called Waartar. This is up stream on the creek that flows west of Saparam. A monstrous pig, who has horns on its head, lives there. It kills dogs if they come near it. It has two names Dar and Mangewa. But no one has seen it in the modern era.”

(0) ‘The Python’ - The modern Kerakkie know of the ser or tar or sikweikwel (python) which came from the tip of the saakar palm, but they don’t know of the names bugal (snake) nor the warjar (crocodile). They believe that if a person sees this python then he or she will die. There are many stories of people being chased by monstrous pythons. A man, named Bereg, was chased by one and he managed to make it home. But he died a short time after that. The rainbow (sikweikwel) is believed to be this mythological python moving across the skies. This link of the ser python to the rainbow can be seen in the shimmering rainbow colours that appear on the snake’s dark skin. The modern Kerakkie say that the rainbow is a mark given by the goenzeen to stop the rain becoming too great, which indicates a Biblical influence.

(p) ‘Gufa, the Cassowary and the Dog’ - The story that I was told was similar to that given to Williams but there were noticeable differences.

“Gufa shot the cassowary and the dog Natekari caught it. But it was dark in those days because the sun had not yet been made, and Gufa had no way of following the dog to where the dead cassowary lay. So he placed something white on the tail of the dog and followed it through the dark. This is why dog’s tails stand up with a white patch underneath. The dog found the cassowary at a place called Beveem. Gufa placed the remains of the cassowary in a parcel and follows the dog home to Kureemgu.
When the dog got there, it vomited up the cassowary meat and all types of garden plants grew out of the vomit."

(q) 'Gufa's Incest and the End of Keembel' - This story in its modern form has been told earlier. In Williams' version Keembel kills the son by feeding him a poisonous taro. In the modern version Keembel worked magic on Gufa, which Williams only added in his field notes. In the account given to Williams, Keembel gets his son Gufa to sit on the big taro leaves which covers the hole in which he plans to kill him. The modern version has Gufa following Keembel along a track along which the hole has been dug and hidden. After the disintegration of the geenzaen family, Yumeer heads west and becomes the founder of the Irian Jaya people.

Another myth, which Williams mentions in his notes but does not include in his 'canon', was presented to me on 25th December 1990. When Keembel had finished hollowing out the saakar palm, it was like a big cup/trough, (kwor). It floated upwards into the sky where it became the ancestor of the modern plane. In the myth given to Williams, the original kwor contained a huge geenzaen cassowary, which splashed around causing rain, while the thunder was the noise of nikav (sacred stones) rolling around in it.

This myth appears to come from a common source with the Suki (Wiram) mythology, since the myth of the rising canoe forms a major feature of theirs. Since the Suki and Kerakie met at Kendangan for trading purposes there may have been some cross-fertilization. Oral tradition declares that there was a movement of people from the hinterland to the southern coast, from Tari in the Southern Highlands Province descending the Strickland River to Suki, then down the Morcehead River to the Torres Strait, leaving a trail of identical words for mother, father, etc. But this may have occurred in reverse because numerous Suki sections claim their ancestors came from the southern Kerakie area.

(a) the Zirgu (crocodile totem) from the Arufe area.
(b) the Zirgu (coconut totem) from Tinisapu (north of Gunaav village)
(c) the Bukuaru (swamp bird totem) also from Tinisapu
(d) the Kwaynu (Diaba bamboo totem) from Boitamgu (north east of Gubaav)
(e) the Kwaynu (pig totem) from Boitamgu then through the Keraakie area to Peswabi near the Morehead River then onto Suki.

This comparison of traditional myths, recorded by Williams, with modern myths reveals that change is normal within this foundational part of their religious beliefs.


71 Lévi-Strauss, op. cit., p. 236.

72 Goldman and C. Ballard (eds.), op. cit., p. 16.
CHAPTER 7
TENSE IN KERAAKIE TIME

Einstein declared that “the distinction between past, present and future is only an illusion.”¹ He and others claim that tense is a deceptive impression of reality, but for most societies a natural division of time into past, present and future tenses exists. In this chapter, an analysis will be made of the nature of tense, which analytical philosopher Mellor described as “the present, and temporal distances from it, past and future,” to ascertain whether it is a reality.² The Keraakie people believe that tense is a reality and how this is expressed linguistically, socially, intellectually, spiritually, and emotionally will be examined. The most important part of this understanding is their concept of person as involving tense. Historian of ideas, Professor Garry Trompf, wrote in his noted volume The Idea of Historical Recurrence in Western Thought that there are a number of paradigms that enter into the notion of historical recurrence which espouse the view that “the past teaches lessons for present and future actions”.³ These views and paradigms will be observed in the context of tense-understanding in Keraakie culture.

Mellor suggested that “time can be real though tense is not.”⁴ McTaggart named this position, which referred to events as only earlier or later, as the B-series. On the other hand the position which saw events as “running from the far past through the near past to the present, and then from the present to the near future and the far future”, he called the A-series.⁵ According to B-series philosophers of time, events exist and only have one temporal characteristic. Events can be changes, but real events do not move, change, or flow; they exist in a sequence: before, simultaneous with, or later than other events. This is called the static view of time. Philosopher Keith Seddon explained this position: “Events are not intrinsically past, present and future, and they do not change in respect to being past, present and future, despite the fact that we speak of them as if they do. Time is just a matter of relations between events.”⁶ These relational properties are permanent and unchanging, whereas past, present or future tense are not. Many B-series
philosophers of time reject tense declaring it as unreal because it does not have unchanging physical properties. Are these philosophers presupposing that the physical world is the only real world, therefore concluding that the only real time must be physical? But this faces a contradiction in that “most physical processes have an inbuilt directionality” which is clearly seen in heat flow from hot to cold through time.7 The event of temperature-change presents both the idea of change and movement over time. Just because tense is not a physical feature, this does not preclude it from being real.

The Keraakie see tense as a reality and this does not differ from the conventional Western way of describing events. When they communicate, tense is a real feature of that transmission of information. In verbal discourse the Keraakie use the future tense to describe an expected event, or when they talk about the event of that moment they use the present tense, or when they talk about an event that has occurred they use the past tense. Events exist and, although some say the past, present and the future tense makes no physical difference to them, seeing an event in the present moment has a visible reality which differs from the memory of a past one or the anticipation of a future one. The emotional excitement of a present event, the grief of a past death, and the fear of a future fight, may exist in the present but each is real and is tense-oriented. On the other hand tense is a reality of a different kind. Human perception is a reality, namely the assessment in the mind of physical events according to their relationship to the speaker, and this involves the categories of their ‘pastness’, ‘presentness’ and their ‘futureness’. To the Keraakie, the latter tenses are a perceived reality. The past, present and future are used in a real description of the event in relation to the speaker’s position and communication in time. Even though an event that occurred yesterday is just a memory, and the expected event of tomorrow is only an anticipation, this does not disqualify them from being real. The memory or anticipation is real enough in the minds of people and influences how they act. Tense is therefore not physical but it does have intellectual, linguistic, communicational, social, spiritual, and emotional properties, and to the Keraakie, among other Melanesian peoples, these properties are real.
Tense is used by the Keraakie as a token-reflexive descriptive factor, requiring all linguistic statements to indicate the timing of events in relation to the moment of communication. In other words, tense is an ‘indexical’, an expression that relates what is being said to the position of the speaker in time. This is common in all languages where token-reflexive words like ‘here, there, I, he, this, now, then’ depend upon where, when and who is the person speaking for their meaning. Tense refers to the time of the speaking and not to the time property of the event. The static view of time, which says that the objective world simply is and does not happen, may be regarded as scientifically accurate but, for a people who do not count days mathematically within a yearly calendar nor have terms for hours, minutes and seconds, it is communicationally inaccurate when dealing with past events. The Suki, who are the Keraakie’s northern neighbours, declare events to be earlier than, simultaneous with, or later than, according to the B-serics view of time. They give great stress to the aspect of simultaneousness, force and continuous action, but on the other hand the Keraakie language demands a greater degree of accuracy in stating when events occurred in the past. The Keraakie are not satisfied with just stating that an event occurred earlier than the event being experienced, because they want to know more accurately its time relationship to the present moment.

The Keraakie perception of life reveals a temporal order, and earlier events must be designated a place in time by means of one of the five past tense verbal forms. They employ the latter to state the relationship of the past event to the moment of ‘being’ at that communicative point in time. These five past tense verbal forms are their means of describing and communicating the timing of events in an oral (or written) form, so that they can be understood accurately. Each event is real and so is its relationship to the present social or spiritual interaction and it must be stated accurately by means of verb tense, which is also real. All of these tensed statements are egocentric, reflecting the speaker’s (or writer’s) opinion, expectation, intention, and memory of an event in relation to himself or herself at that moment in time. The time of the happening and the time of utterance influence the tense chosen by the communicator. This is similar to what J.R. Lucas has stated: the distinction between future or past tensed statements is “a projection of one’s own temporal position”. Tense may not have any physical substance, but tensed statements have
substance in Keraakie culture and have an impact socially, emotionally or spiritually. After studying the Keraakie use of tense, I propose that scientific physical time depends upon considering life according to a specific world-view, which limits reality to physical features, but the Keraakie’s world view differs radically from the scientific one, involving many differing realities. Mellor concedes this when he wrote, “Although tense is not an aspect of reality, to us who act in time it is an inescapable mode of perceiving, thinking and speaking about reality.”\textsuperscript{10} Tensed statements are a reality to the Keraakie. Huw Price summed up the distinctive way each society understands time when he wrote, “If we want to understand the asymmetry of time then we need to be able to understand, and quarantine, the various ways in which our patterns of thought reflect the peculiarities of our own temporal perspective”\textsuperscript{11}.

The B-series position on time declares that events have dates, which are unchangeable. These philosophers wish to make statements about time that will always be true. Tense distinctions are not permanent, therefore one cannot date an event by them. B-series philosophers time events mathematically from a socially decreed commencement point, and according to a measuring system of units whether it be years, days, hours, minutes or seconds. Tense is rejected as real because it does not indicate definitive moments that date events on a permanent basis in time. Even though the Keraakie have the numerical terms to do so, they do not time events mathematically, except up to five days. Rather they date them in a permanent relation to people, other notable human events, the land, or regular natural events like the seasons and the activities of flora and fauna. The orientation of their society is not particularly mathematical but concretely relational. The Keraakie mind views tense differently to the way the scientific world does; the former’s concept being local in regards space and time and the latter’s concept global and comprehensive. The events of the distant past mythological era are referred to by the same past tense form that they use when indicating the historic past of twenty years ago. This same past tense form is used of events of three days ago, revealing no verbal concept of measured time. The Keraakie have a different understanding of time and this is seen in the way they see events, things and people as being inseparable from time: a person is time, a social group is time, the main winds are time, each season is time,
the flora is time, and the activities of animals are time. This different understanding
is also seen in their dating historical events by spatial features in the landscape. In
this debate between scientific and traditional timing concepts, each seeks to lock time
into an accurate, supposedly unchanging and socially acceptable dating basis. One
uses invisible mathematics, assuming that it is stable, when they know that it is
always being improved upon by new discoveries, whereas the Keraakie use visible
features, admitting at the same time that these things are always changing. They have
learned to be flexible in a constantly changing world and are not greatly concerned
about accuracy of time over long periods, when they know that accurate calculation
is humanly impossible. The modern mathematical dating system is being absorbed by
the Keraakie but it does not appeal to them, so ultimately it is they who will decide
what concepts of time are real within their society. Whatever dating system people
use, it and its users are embedded in time seeking to describe the time of which they
are a part, therefore total objectivity is impossible.

When the Keraakie talk about an event, it will always be referred to in a tensed
statement, from the speaker’s point in time. They will use one of at least six past, one
present or one future tense forms. This is essential when considering, for example,
that the verb ‘to think’ in the present, also has the meaning of ‘to remember’, when
used of the past, and also ‘to anticipate’, when used of the future. There is no
separate verb ‘to remember’ or ‘to anticipate’. The past uses a different ending but
the only difference between the present and future forms of this verb is the future
tense indicator.

I remembered: yand (l) de (past) neemenaan (thought, remembered)
I am thinking: yand (l) neemenaan (thinking, anticipating, remembering)
I shall anticipate: yand (l) bee (shall) neemenaan (think, remember, anticipate)

Besides verbal tense indicators, the Keraakie may use other distinctions of time by
relating the event to other events, to people or to time-indicating words. Words such
as kai for ‘yesterday or tomorrow’, and naambat for ‘two days away from the
present’ are used to time events. Because of the egocentric nature of these terms,
tense indicators are essential to express accurate meanings. Sometimes the Keraakie
add the word 'past', which can be used with any of the past tense verbal forms, to the sentence to stress the past nature of the event in time. Or in a future statement, they may add the word 'future' to stress that the event has not yet happened but is anticipated in the future. They may add the word 'present' to a present tense sentence to stress that the event is occurring 'today or now'. The Keraakie appear to see events as having occurred in a time sequence in which tense indication is very important.

The following are the various tense forms of the verb 'to cut' (vokat):

I shall cut down the tree: yando (I) wen (tree) bee (shall) yanvoitaan (cut)
I am cutting down the tree: yando wen yanvoitaan
I have just cut down the tree: yando wen bava (this moment) yanvoitaan
I cut down the tree (this day): yando wen dava (this day) yanvoitaan
I cut down the tree (yesterday): yando wen de (past indicator) yanvoitaan
I cut down the tree (two or more days ago): yando wen de (past indicator) yanvoitaaman
I cut down the tree (earlier than the last event): yando wen de (past indicator) yanvoitaanaan

As seen from the above verbal structure, the Keraakie hold that events in time move from the future into the present and then step by step backwards through the five past tenses. Seddon observed such a belief:

If something moves, it needs time in which to move and something against which its movement is relative, as we have just seen in the previous chapter. To provide answers to the questions 'How fast do these events move?' and 'Relative to what do they move?' there is no alternative to postulating an infinitive number of times. This is briefly reiterated. The only way that the alleged movement of events from the future to the present to the past can be understood is by introducing a second-order time by which their movement can be measured.12

When the Keraakie talk of time moving, they do not create a field against which to compare it or measure it, except in the case of comparing human movement with the movement of the sun, which is not measured. They do not compare the movement of
the sun with anything else. Time is declared to be chaotic and theories of regularity and measurability are only general. Yet the one stable feature in time to the Keraakie is that all time emerged from the foundational mythological era. It appears that scientific time is built on the assumption that it is regular, stable and can be measured. This raises the question: Does time have to be measured in comparative speed or numerically? To the scientific world, measurement is very important but in some other cultures it is not. The movement of time is a concept that is not only held by the Keraakie but by the majority of people throughout the world, yet some physicists reject it, saying that temporal movement is conceptually incoherent, since it arises out of metaphysical confusion. Seddon goes on to declare:

If we are to conceive of this second-order series of events as a temporal sequence, the events which comprise it must also undergo a similar temporal movement from the future into the past. We have no option but to introduce a third-order time series by which to time the movement of events along the second-order series.¹³

Scientific understandings of time and explanations of the movement of astronomical bodies are meaningless to the Keraakie, except in only a general way. Cultural time metaphors of the movement or flow of time control to some extent how time can be discussed, therefore humanity is partially trapped by their own understandings and language into a usage of past, present and future tenses. Even though some upholders of the modern science of physics have sought to eliminate the concept of change and movement in time, it still remains a mystery. Coventry and Highfield were concerned about “the need for a deeper and more fundamental theoretical framework to describe nature than any currently in use”.¹⁴ It appears that some physicists have made the physical into an absolute. Physicists seem to want to reify time, being obsessed with the idea of a reality that does not change. Paul Davies is uneasy about their appropriation of time, “abstracting it into a stark mathematical parameter” and declaring that it is all that there really is, robbing it of much of its human content.¹⁵ Whereas it is the human element in time that motivates the Keraakie belief in tense, movement and change in time.

The Keraakie primarily see tense in a sociocentric way, dividing it into three areas or people. The future tense is called fowa, the present tense is called gapeso,
while the past tense is called *fronde*. This triadic nature of past, present and future is found in the linguistic terms covering many areas of Kerraakie life: *daokra* (a past garden that has finished its task), *kakav* (a present garden that is bearing) and *orang* (jungle) marked with a *yeenvi* (purpose mark) indicating that this patch of jungle has the potential of future gardening. Yams are either referred to as *frondeman* (past) yams being last years crop which will be planted for the new crop. As the yams are growing they are called *ganosoman* (present) yams while the anticipated crop is named *fowaman* (future) yams. But the key elements in tense for the Kerraakie is the division of person into three types: *frondeman eer* (past persons), *ganosoman eer* (present persons) and *fowaman eer* (future persons). Past people are the dead or the very old, the present people are those who are productive, while children or the unborn are named the future people.

Those who call themselves *ganosoman eer* (people of the present) are people of the present moment of ‘being’. They are responsible for food production through growing gardens, sago making, gathering bush food, hunting and fishing, so that the past (*frondeman eer*) and future (*fowaman eer*) people depend upon them for sustenance. The present people are the decision-makers, maintainers of social and moral order, the house builders, the bearers of children, the constructors of canoes, income earners and organizer of the social and religious ceremonies. They are not just present-oriented but are also the keepers of the oral history of past events called ‘being’ words (*yaam eit*). They are the cultural educators of the future generation as well as bearer of the burden of anticipating the future in the present. They know that future possibilities will involve personal, community and environmental change, and worry about it. Death is the greatest concern of the present people yet they tend to deny it. In spite of this denial of the future, the present people seek to manipulate the past and the present in creating a controlled future, which will be satisfying. In the year of independence Aniba Bunai named his new-born son *Memory* to remind the Kerraakie of the past and present independence of their nation. He did not use the Kerraakie word but chose the English word, indicating that the name did not just have meaning for themselves but also for the English-speaking authorities concerning their future anticipations.
The *frondeman eer* (past people) are people who are either dead or very old. In the final stage of a married couple’s life, gender seems to be dropped and each is called *bolo* (old person). This could be because their reproductive roles have finished, so that *bolo* could also mean ‘beyond the age of producing children’. They are later called *duwen duwen* which means ‘always there or been around for an eternity’. When they reach the last years of their life they are referred to as *wao* (ripe, complete, ready to be picked) since for them life has reached its fulfillment. The latter are highly honoured as being the source of the present society as well as the living receptacle of their traditional religion and culture. They are embodied history and are constantly heard around the campfires passing on their headhunting tales and knowledge to the modern generation. They have great knowledge about land boundaries, bush foods, magic technology and practical experience about living in the Trans-Fly. At a pig feast I once observed a very old man being asked by a middle-aged man how to butcher an animal correctly, even though the person requesting had many years of experience at butchering. He deferred to the older man because the Kerakie honour the elderly and their knowledge. In the modern schools, respect is given to them and they are invited to tell their mythology and show the younger generations their traditional skills. The older a man becomes the more respect and authority he receives under their gerontocratic system of leadership. Kerakie society is not class-oriented, but rather time-oriented: *frondeman eer* (past people) have more authority than *ganosoman eer* (present people), while *fowaman eer* (future people) have no authority.

The *fowaman eer* (future people) are the unborn and children and, because of the closeness of their society in the village, are disciplined, educated and cared for by all. The perpetuation of society depends upon them so frequently unrelated adults perform a ceremony called *eiuwerah* during which they become a ‘god-father’ to the child. From then on a special relationships is established so that the elder cares for and gives gifts to the younger. When these children go to school, unrelated people will invest in their education so that they can go onto to high school and eventually find paid employment. There is more than a monetary goal in this activity, but also a social one.
This close relationship between tense and person in Keraakie society is also noted in other societies. Michael Kearney noted that images of time are strongly shaped by images of self, other and relationship among the peasants of Mexico. The collective individual is time and is conscious of all three tensed areas as he or she lives in the present. Time is an inescapable orientation to life, and the Keraakie see time resembling what James Weiner wrote about the Foi people of the Southern Highlands: "to be human is to be temporal." Frederick Errington noticed a corresponding relationship between time and person among the Duke of York Islanders whose concept of time is implicit in their concept of society and what it is to be a person. This simple time structure of past, present and future influences every area of their lives, because the past creates the present person and the future completes what the past has begun. This could be illustrated in this diagram:

In the Keraakie biological calendar, they are constantly saying 'taande fromdeman' (my past person, the one in front of me or before me or older than me) or 'taande fowaman' (my future person, the one after or behind me, or younger than me). One's position in this birth calendar is "time" to them. The community is itself a time calendar, in which each person is an indicator of time in many ways. Self (both individually and corporately) is their "clock". Life cycle events of birth, initiation, marriage or death of individual persons in this calendrical sequence are dates in this time community. Another feature of the time-orientation of Keraakie self is seen in that each person is constantly changing as they grow older. Each person's physical
body is a symbol of this time flow: wrinkles and grey hair suggests a past person, while a physically strong body indicates a present person and a child’s body generally tells of future potential for growth. Therefore the community has a changing face as new digits on their social ‘clock’ are born, grow, mature and older ones die out. Society is a dynamic time indicator.

Each person is his or her own past, present or future ‘clock’, acting on the past in the present or passively experiencing events in the present and anticipating others in the future. Edo Pivcevic likewise noted this relationship between person and time: “The self through its own acts of appropriation constitutes itself as a unity of past, present and future.” At this point the importance of the past in the Kerankie world will be considered. Every past event in the human life cycle and daily life in the Trans-Fly, such as the marriage, birth and growth of children, the planting of a garden at a different place in the dry season, the construction of their house or their movement to another village, becomes a date on their social ‘clock’. This is seen on the occasion I asked a question: “When did the Arufe village people visit Taz village?” The listener replied; “Just before Said died.” Death is the ultimate date for the individual, when the person ceases to exist, the spirit departs and becomes an antagonistic ghost, with whom the living do not want to have contact.

Past tense events are linked with the size of the communicator’s body at that time, so that each individual can mentally calculate at what time the event happened. For example Timothy Tekuam of Arufe said to me that he was chest height when Charles Ellis arrived in 1953. Geedi Kog of Arufe said that he was a baby when an American expedition came to the Wassi Kusa River to research the wildlife in the 1930s. Each individual has scars, burn marks, life cycle events, or memories from his or her own past which serve as a ‘history book’ of experience against which they name other past events. The Kerankie, not only remember the past in reference to their physical size, also link events to the place where they occurred so that history is also recorded on the landscape.
The past tense meaning in the Keraakie language is indicated by many words, as well as a verbal system, which contains a sequence covering the immediate past events to the distant past one:

*deev*: then (past or future)
*saam*: when (past or future)
*daokra*: a used garden, one that has been harvested
*bekwa*: used, secondhand, thing that is old, out of date
*meheh* and *aawaavaaroh*: memory, thought
*wao*: end of its growth, completion of life, ripe
*evoh*: end of a period of time
*kai*: yesterday (or tomorrow)
*naambat*: the third day past (or future)
*naambtao*: on the third day past (or future)
*gamo*: previous (or following) day
*bava*: immediate past indicator of the last few minutes (used with the verb)
*daava*: immediate past indicator of this day (used with the verb)
*de*: past indicator (used with the verb)
*fronde, dende, totra, tek tek (or tek)*: past, a long time ago, very old
*frondeman*: a very old thing
*dendewer*: a very old thing
*tekaanyu*: a long time ago
*dset, deutut*: this has always existed, eternal, eg, *band* (land) *deutut* (eternally) *yamaaro* (was existing): the land has always existed.

**Keraakie past verbal forms:**

Past I - immediate past event of last five minutes, *yamo* (he) *bava* (just) *yaavrot* (did) *yana* (that) *yaam* (thing): he (just) did that thing.

Past II - immediate past event of that day, *yamo dava yaavrot yana yaam*: he did that thing (today).
Past III - past event of the day before, *yamo de taawrot yana yaam*; he did that thing (yesterday).

Past IV - past which covers all events from two days till the mythological age, but has the sense of being not as old as the Past V verb, *yamo de yaavrotaam yana yaam*; he did that thing long ago.

Past V - past which covers all events from two days ago till the time of the mythological age, which has a sense of preceding others, being the oldest in time, *yamo de yaavrotai yana yaam*; he began that thing before other events.

Past VI - past continuous form, which can be used of events that were happening one day ago or long ago, *yamo taavrotao yana yaam*; he was doing that thing.

The past tense according to the A-series is defined by Mellor as “the interval of moments open all the way from the remotest past up to, but not including, the present moment.” The Kerakie seem to agree with this definition, because they see many events, things, people and creatures as only being describable by the words for ‘past, long time ago, before’. These make up a distinct block of time, in which events that occurred 200 years ago, twenty years ago, a month ago, one day ago or earlier this day can all be referred to as belonging to the past. This understanding is rejected by many philosophers of time such as Alfred Gell who declares that there is no such thing as the past, present or future tense but only temporal relationships. Time events exist and do not happen, having only a relationship before the present moment. But the Kerakie divide the ‘before or past’ into five segments with events moving backwards through them all.

To the Kerakie, the past has a spatial connotation and this is seen in that their main word for past (*fronde*) also means ‘in front of’. It appears that they perceive all past events as being ‘in front of them’. One of the reasons for this spatial understanding could be because all past events are linked by the memory to the geographical site where each occurred. They consider the past as being in front of
them in the landscape. Renato Rosaldo noted a similar understanding among the Ilongot people of the Philippines: “Excursions into the past are meticulously mapped onto the landscape, not onto a calendar.” Past events, before they occurred were unsighted in the future, so they were described as being behind them which means they were out of sight. When they emerged via the present into the open in front of them, they have become known and have been given a geographical reference point.

With regard to the reality of the past tense, the Kerakie see this in many areas of their life. One of them is seen in the preparation of a garden to plant cassava. They cut a cassava stalk off a growing plant, thrust it into the soil, and from the rotting stalk - frondeman (past) biskar (cassava) wen (stork), new sprouts emerge and roots go down into the earth. Within five or six months the old stalk will be gone, replaced by new ones while under the ground there will be many cassava tubers forming a mature plant. The past tense action of the planting of the cassava stalk cannot be seen, but its reality is evidenced by the growing plant in the present, which is a visible reality. Also the future harvest of tubers, which cannot be seen, will be dug up and be evidence of the past action of the planting of the cassava stalk.

He planted the cassava stalk: yamo (he) de yeetaam (planted) biskar wen (cassava stalk).

The cassava plant is growing: biskar (cassava) nowhat (is growing).

The plant will bear a harvest: biskar vivi (cassava tubers) bee (will) kovaarange (appear).

Lieb noted this feature when he wrote about the reality of the past saying that “there must be a past because individuals [the plant] continue to be”. In this process, there is an overlap between the becoming past of the rotting stalk, and the becoming future in the growth of the new shoots and roots. The reality of the present and the future does not find its ‘becoming’ from the present or the future, but in the past.

This understanding of events flowing from the future into the present and then into the past is rejected by some philosophers of time because to them time is static. To B-series thinkers, events exist and are only either before, simultaneous with, or
later. Seddon declared, concerning the past, that we “never act towards the past. The past is fixed and done with; there is nothing that can be done to make any of it into something different.”24 Although the Keraakie see the past as a block of completed events, they act towards the past and believe that it acts towards them. They seek to gain power from the past mythological era and use it in rain-making in the present. Williams supported this when he wrote: “We can safely say that they [the geenzaen spirit beings] are definitely appealed to by the present-day native to grant him prosperity and success.”25

Anthropologist Arjun Appadurai proposed another kind of past, “whose essential purpose is to debate other pasts.”26 Social discourse concerning the past is an aspect of politics, involving competition for prestige between different groups. This is also seen in the history of the Keraakie, concerning the headhunting raids of the Tugeri from the Merauke area of West Papua. The older men mention in detail all the raids upon the coastal people of Mari and Taz, followed by attacks on the various peoples of the Wassi Kussa and Mai Kussa river system. But when they tell the oral history of the Tugeri attacks, they declare that they drove the attackers away. This seems doubtful because the Tugeri attacked in large numbers, were devastatingly efficient and the Keraakie were not an aggressive people. During these raids they declared that their fathers moved out of the villages and lived deep in the jungle, indicating that they were terrified of the Tugeri. It is only after persistent questioning of trustworthy sources that not so flattering defeats were mentioned. Williams did not discuss the details of Tugeri raids on the Trans-Fly people in his section on warfare, except for mentioning general statements that the villagers were fearful of them. It appears that, because of the shame of the defeats their ancestors suffered, these painful events were reinterpreted by the present members of society. This reinterpretation of the past by the present-day Keraakie is also seen in relation to their mythology and sacred sites. When Williams was researching the Keraakie, the Sangaara section of Bebevein village were the caretakers of the sacred Kureemgu site.27 This social section claims leadership in the cult of the white headed hawk (inafaik), but in the present day it has lost control of the site to the Maiawa section of Gubaav village. Here again this change of the past by people in the present seems to be a political action. There are many other sacred sites around the Trans-Fly, and
some have lost their authority through the death, or decline in power, of the social sections that honoured them. In these cases, the present members of society decide what features of the past they will accept and those they will not.

The Keraakie believe that a past event can effect the present, so they seek to pacify the ghosts of dead, believing these spirits from the past can act upon them. Besides past people, certain past events can have a real influence on the present, causing other events. In the 1920s, an Arufe villager approached a sorcerer of Sibidiri village to curse his enemy. The sorcerer carried out his task, the enemy died, but the Arufe villager failed to pay for the service. Eventually in the late 1970s, the payment for services rendered was demanded and the Arufe man’s granddaughter (Ruta) was married to the sorcerer’s grandson (Taago) to settle the account. Ruta declared that she would only go through with the marriage if they lived at Arufe village and this is what has occurred. Not only did this past event influence the present, but the family feared it could influence the future, by means of a retaliatory sorcery curse if they did not repay the debt. Past events may not be visible, but according to the Keraakie they can have a present and future impact, and therefore they are still a reality. In sorcery, they take hold of the ‘power’ of the tooth of a past dead crocodile and use it to curse others. The events of the past are not finished and gone as far as the Keraakie are concerned, because they believe that the past can act upon them in the present and the future.

Another feature of Keraakie culture is the influence of the past acting in the present within their basic time structures. Through uncounted centuries they have observed the patterns of nature: the recurring wet and dry seasons, south-east and north-west winds, the flowering and fruiting of the Trans-Fly flora, and the movement of animals. The patterns of the past govern how the Keraakie carry out their agricultural plantings and harvestings, as well as their hunting, fishing, and gathering of food in the present. Most of the Trans-Fly is infertile and the Keraakie have to struggle to find enough food on which to live. Many of the fruits, nuts and roots are poisonous, and their ancestors learned how to extract the poison and make them edible. During the yearly drought in the Trans-Fly, they have learned from their fathers which tree saps are drinkable. Agriculturalist Bruce French noted in a private
letter that the Keraakie people make greater use of bush foods than most other PNG peoples. Past experience forms the basis of their existence in the present. Besides these patterns, the birth, growth, initiation, marriage, middle age and death of numerous members of the Keraakie people in the past has set a life cycle pattern for all of the present-day members. Each individual’s history sets a pattern for the present group in what could be called the ‘collective singular’. Past events are real to the Keraakie since they have moulded the present and will continue to influence the future, so they continually recall the past as they face new issues. Gosden described this as “pulling features of the past into the present and creating projections towards the future.”

Completed events cannot be re-experienced physically, but the Keraakie indicate that, through the use of language, they can intellectually reconstitute the past reality. Story-telling is a common feature of their life, and these hunting, fishing, gardening and fighting incidents of the past are greatly appreciated and generally attended by much laughter. They re-enter the horizon of the past and re-live the emotions of that past event in the present moment. The death of a person is a real event and though the actual experience of that event is past, the site of the grave, the grief of the loss and the physical gap in their society are realities to them and not just merely a memory. When a photo of Suga of Bebeven, who died in June 1982, was shown publicly in December of that year, many people were overcome with grief and mourned tearfully. The photo brought into the present the emotional realities of that past sad event. This is common in all societies. Schieffelin discovered this among the Kaluli, 300 km north-east of the Keraakie in the Southern Highlands, where past griefs or memories are deliberately brought to mind during gisoro dancing performances to make people weep. McTaggart concluded that the past has no reality in itself, but the Keraakie would disagree because to them time is ‘being’ and their remembrance of past events, are present events of ‘being’. Again one sees that the people of the Trans-Fly hold to a reality of a different type, in comparison to that of the B-series understanding.

Lieb raised the question of historical reality: “Many philosophers deny historical value because they suppose that the past is not real.” They assume that
since a past event cannot be seen, felt, smelt, tasted or heard, then it has no reality, and it only exists in one’s memory. But, as has already been mentioned, there are different types of realities. The Kerakie hold to a mythological, sacred or ritual past, which occurred once for all time and is the foundational source of all present reality. They declare as a statement of faith that it is real. Williams points this out when a person “is asked to account for what he has hitherto taken for granted, the Keraki [Kerakie] always falls back on the same explanation – ‘Gainjan [geenzeen: primeval spirit beings] did it’.” Ellade commented on this type of understanding: “Everything that has happened in history had to happen as it did, because the universal spirit so willed it.” This mythological past is believed by some to influence daily events in the present, and is therefore greatly feared. This is seen in the cases which Williams cited; “Some informants have further maintained that Gainjan [geenzeen] punished theft, adultery and suchlike offences by sickness.” In the modern era this fear of the primeval spirit beings among the majority has not changed. When a large group of Kerakie people decided to test the truth of their ancestral religion in January 1986, they went to the sacred site of Kureemgu, expecting to find the ancestral spirits in residence. As a result they split into two groups, approaching from different directions. If the primeval spirit beings should attack one group, then the other would escape. To the Kerakie the past ‘mythological time’ can act in the present which is seen in this emotion of fear which is a present reality and not just imagination. This past is very important because it tells them from where they and all other things came, given them a secure identity.

Because the Kerakie hold their past mythological origins as extremely important, it represents an actual reality of its own. They do not even think of questioning the past, but teach it so that the future will conforms to it. They bring the past into the present so as to ensure its continuation. There is no thought of building a new future. Anthropologist Alan Dundes, who studied past-orientation in various societies, suggested that “in past oriented educational systems, students are expected to know the ‘classics’ of the past.” This is also true of the education of the Kerakie young men during initiation when they are taught the myths of their ancestors. Williams noted during his study of the Kerakie in the 1930s that, “Religious interest for the Keraki [Kerakie] looks back towards the origin of things.” This is also seen
in ordinary storytelling of past events. An emphasis upon the past is further seen when a sickness or death occurs: the Keraokie discuss the sick or deceased’s person’s past events, seeking a sorcery cause for the tragedy or problem. Dundes noted that in societies obsessed with the past, “diviners in African (and other past oriented) societies seek past origins, that which has caused the present”.37 He summed up their understanding when he wrote, “Divination is defined largely as determining past causes of present states”.38 Let us take the Keraokie case of Seemi Taikwam of Bebeve who died in May 1981. His brothers carefully considered his recent past relationships so as to find out who hated him and could be the guilty person. The witchdoctor, Taaga, had had an argument with Seemi two weeks before his death, so he was declared the guilty person and an executioner appointed to take revenge. Other areas of past orientation were highlighted by Dundes; “In a past oriented worldview, young people must move in with one set of parents. One continues to live with one’s past”.39 This living with one’s parents is true of Keraokie culture as well, but it also indicates a lack of future orientation. The groom does not build a house in preparation for the new bride but he does that later. The Keraokie regard past events, people and things as real, and influencing in some way the present.

Why is there this great emphasis on the past among the Keraokie? I suggest that their migrations through PNG, the battle to settle in the Trans-Fly region, the struggle to survive, the raids of the Tuger, followed by the trauma of the radical changes under the colonial government gave a sense of chaos and a search for stability. This unsettling change seems to have caused a sense of apprehension about the future, so they took refuge in the past. On one occasion, a group of men were discussing independence and anxiously declared, “Something may come in the future and destroy our society!” The known events of the past give far more comfort than unknown future ones. In spite of the pain of the past their minds seems to have subconsciously denied it and retained only memories of the enjoyable times with their fathers, families and other community members. When one talks to the Keraokie one finds numerous insignificant past events are remembered; projecting upon them pleasant nostalgic feelings. They remember the smell of the earth as they lifted up the ripe yams out of the ground during harvest time; the savour of the first cooked yams of the new harvest are recalled with great joy; the smell of the rain
falling on the ashes of the burnt landscape at the beginning of the wet season is 
unforgettably noted; the perfumes of various flowers and the smell of ripe fruit are 
noticed and each tell the time in their season. In storytelling times in the village, 
certain people are mentioned anecdotally with attention given to insignificant 
information. One man said, “Old Sank always wore a piece of cloth around his 
head”, and everybody, who knew him, laughed. The past seems to have a satisfying 
quality, which may have been created by the Keraakie to overcome the fearful way 
they see the present and future.

Regarding the present tense, the Keraakie consider it as the moment of active 
being. According to B-series philosophers, an event exists and is simultaneous with 
other events. Or an event does not exist; since it occurred earlier and so is only 
remembered, or an event does not yet exist but is anticipated. Depending to this point 
of view, events, things, people and creatures are static physical realities in time. In 
the A-series understanding of time, the temporal term ‘present’ involves the events 
and things under discussion at the moment, indirectly indicating they are neither in 
the future nor in the past.

The Keraakie use two words to indicate the present:

*ganoso:* present, today. This term can be used to mean at any time during this day.
The present tense and the two immediate past tense verbal forms are used to cover 
events in the same day, either happening now, happened five seconds ago or at some 
other time during that day. A derivative of this word is *gano gano* which means ‘only 
for today, a temporary arrangement or construction’.

totar: now, this moment, new. The Keraakie use this word to mean ‘this instant’ and, 
because of the extra meaning ‘new’, appear to see the present moment or event as 
being a new one, which did not exist before. Each day, as a time indicator, is a new 
one and not a repetition of an old one. To the traditional Keraakie, the sun that rises 
each day is a new sun and not the old one of the previous day. A similar 
understanding was also found by the administration officer, Leo Austin, among the 
Yende people of the Upper Pakoturi River of the eastern Trans-Fly.40 Lieb proposed
that “each present moment is new”, and it seems this is how the Keraakie see the present event.\footnote{1}

The centrality of the present to the Keraakie mind is seen in that six of the eight verb forms are used to cover a period of 24 hours around the present moment. This is the future tense, the present tense, the past I, II, III tense, and past continuous forms, which are shown in the underlying table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Future</th>
<th>Present</th>
<th>Past I</th>
<th>Past II</th>
<th>Past III</th>
<th>Past VI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6.00 am</td>
<td>6.01 am</td>
<td>1.00 pm</td>
<td>Next day</td>
<td>Continuous</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This importance of the present verb form is stressed in that it is used in five other verbal constructions; the future, future indefinite/present indefinite, present, immediate past I, immediate past II verb constructions. The only difference is the additions of appropriate tense indicators. This is seen in the undermentioned use of the verb, \textit{yaneetaan}:

I am eating food: \textit{yando (I) nane (food) yaneetaan (am eating)}.
I shall eat food: \textit{yando (I) nane (food) bee (future indicator) yaneetaan (eat)}.
If I shall eat food: \textit{yando (I) nane (food) giya (if) yaneetaan (shall eat)}.
If I am eating food: \textit{yando (I) nane (food) giya (if) yaneetaan (eating)}.
I have just eaten food: \textit{yando (I) nane (food) bava (immediate past indicator) yaneetaan (eaten)}.
I have just eaten food today: \textit{yando (I) nane (food) daava (past indicator of this day) yaneetaan (eaten)}.

From this evidence, I conclude that the present tense is central in their verbal system. It appears that they see these events in a remarkable sociocentric way, revolving around themselves in the present moment. The Keraakie’s northern neighbours, the Suki, have the same understanding. Schieffelin also noted this emphasis upon the present among of the Kaluli of the Southern Highlands and said, “The tendency is to group events concentrically around the present”.\footnote{2} This is also seen in others key words.
*kai:* tomorrow and yesterday. In reality this word means 'one day removed from the present' relying on the context and verbal tense indicators to show whether it means one day in the future or one day in the past. Again one see their sociocentric understanding of time.

*naambat:* this word can mean two days from now in the past or two days from now in the future. This usage again indicates that the Keraakie time events from when the speaker is speaking in the present. The use of these words, which can have a past or future meaning, shows the importance of the context and the right tense in verbal construction for the Keraakie speakers, to communicate correctly and be understood.

*gano:* this term means ‘before’ or ‘after’ and can be used in the phrase ‘*gano yez*’ (the year before or the year after) or ‘*gano evah*’ (tomorrow or yesterday).

Why do they have this sociocentric emphasis in their language on the present? J. Goody and I. Watt declared that “the most significant elements of any human culture are undoubtedly channelled through words.”43 The accuracy of the Keraakie verbal forms covering immediate past events in the last 24 hours must have a significant meaning to them. It could be that this time slot is important in the economic realities of the Trans-Fly. Concern for their gardens causes the Keraakie to want accurate time information about bush fires and floods. Kearney observed this same emphasis upon the present among Mexican peasants: “This present-orientation results mainly from constantly dealing with the day to day exigencies of survival.” 44

During Williams’ intermittent residence in the Trans-Fly between the years of 1926-30, he too observed the centrality of the present to them. He concluded that, “With the Keraki [Keraakie] the truth is what is uppermost in his mind at the moment.”45 Frequently I have found that what they say at one moment may disagree with what they said before, yet this inconsistency does not seem to bother them. Williams noted that they were being sincere and not deliberately deceitful. It appears that the truth is relative to the Keraakie and depends upon how they think and feel at any one moment. An individual will proclaim information as truly authoritative data
without concern for absoluteness. This is common in their post-colonial mythology because some myths are now found to have a modern setting with helicopters and motorbikes. It is not uncommon to find the Keraakie change their thinking about cultural practices, depending on present influences, because their goal of the traditional beliefs is centered on the social ‘now’. When I asked them about the meanings of certain actions, rituals and symbols on 25 December 1983, Seegiwa Zuga of Bebeven declared that the Keraakie people did not have future myths, which corresponded with what Williams had also recorded. Yet when I was talking with Seegiwa on 19 December 1990, he declared that their myths proclaimed that the ancestral spirit beings would return to live among them. It appears that he had been influenced by the eschatological teachings of Christianity or a desire for a return to the power of the mythological era. Another case occurred on 30 December 1987 when Gombaat of Arufe declared that dogs had spirits whereas other animals did not. To verify this I asked a group of men and they said that their fathers had never told them about animals having spirits, suggesting that it was just Gombaat’s own opinion of the present moment. Irrespective of the importance of the past to them, the Keraakie sometimes allow the present to determine what they think, say and do.

Mellor suggested that, “The present tense should be the present moment.” Or one could expand on this definition by saying that the present is the time when things happen or change. On the other hand some things are static while existing in the present moment, such as a stone, therefore the present moment also includes seemingly unchanging things in time. When an event occurs in the present moment, there is a following time when it is no longer occurring. Yet when a tree is hit by lightning in the present moment, the latter is not static. This event was preceded by the electrical storm building up and succeeded by the possible burning or the disintegration of the tree. Further to this, the Keraakie regard a lightning-strike as a sorcery attack and the discussion will follow as to who is responsible, as happened on 14 October 1983. This event continues to exist as a fearful memory in their mind, which may cause anxiety as others storms approach. The Keraakie understanding of the present moment appears to differ at this point because the duration of an action begun in the present may continue beyond one moment. When they build a house, the present action of construction takes longer than a moment. A Keraakie refers to
the building of a house as being a present moment: 'I am building a house': *yando* (I) *mango* (house) *yeremetaan* (am building). The construction of the house may have taken three months, yet it is stated as occurring in the present. That present construction includes the past action of putting in the stumps and the laying of the foundational bearers, which are obvious realities. It also includes the statement of the present construction of the roof, which is also a reality. In the mind of the builder, this present statement also includes the future intended construction of the walls to complete the house. In this present statement, the 'spacious' event is a complex of present and past tense visible realities and an anticipated future completion. Yet the ending of construction may never occur, because I have seen many a Keraakie house incomplete. The present tense statement about construction in the present moment may not become a completed physical reality, but it is a communicational reality.

If the present tense consisted of only the present moment, it would be too short for anything to occur in it. When questioned about the length of the present among the Keraakie, high school educated Buni Ariba said, "It is barely five seconds thick." It would be only a point without any length. This would give credence to the B-series understanding of present tense as being an illusion. Augustine thought similarly of this dilemma:

The minutes which have gone by are past, and any part of the hour which remains is future. In fact the only time that can be called present is an instant, if we can conceive of such, that cannot be divided even into the most minute fractions, and a point of time as small as this passes so rapidly from the future to the past that its duration is without length. For if its duration were prolonged, it could be divided into past and future. When it is present it has no duration.47

The traditional Keraakie do not see time as an abstract entity, because it is always linked to things, events, creatures and people. Therefore their present is similar to that which Lieb described: "The present is the time when things change, act and persist, when there are events or occurrences, when causes cause, and when things have become what they are and have ceased to be what they were."48

From where the Keraakie stand in the present, they remember and retell the events of the past, of their history and mythological age. The mystical future time
events, expectations and intentions are also discussed from within this same present time. For them the present is as Ilya Prigogine put it for theoretical purposes, "a recapitulation of the past and an anticipation of the future".49 The normal and historical past can be dramatically presented in the tilitil dramas, while the mythological past can be repeated in the rituals and songs of Kureemgu, so that important events are not lost in the past. As Thorlief Boman summarized this type of thinking:

Everyone can become contemporaneous with a well remembered occurrence of his past while he is re-living it once more in his memory without forgetting at that moment the year or the epoch in which it took place and the significance it eventually acquired for the remainder of his life subsequently.50

This is why the Keraakie regard the present as so important. They find the social present most satisfying because the unseen social past can be reconsidered, reminding them of past joyous relationships with others. The past, which they value most of all, can be reconstituted by the mind in the present.

Besides having a past mythological religion, the Keraakie have a present 'crisis faith': one that gives them an immediate salvation, meeting their present needs. This is centred upon magic (gama, ove, and moin), which originally gained its power from the spirits of the past mythological era.51 This power is generally controlled by shamans, who has special innate power, which is also resident in their charms and rituals.52 This occupation is hereditary, and shamans are greatly feared because their power is sometimes uncontrollable and can be harmful or therapeutic. Magic power is believed to reside in certain leaves, vines, barks and plants, such as ginger, which all villagers use in a variety of rituals as the following examples demonstrate. At the time of childbirth, the Keraakie women called upon these men to help them.53 When sickness occurred, practitioners treated it in the present moment with rituals, since they had no prophylactic medicines. The cause of some sicknesses are believed to derive from the primeval geemeen spirits, who capture a person's soul, and shamans are called in to recapture the sick person's soul.54 When attracted by girls, young men practise love magic to bring about a relationship. Before they go hunting the Keraakie perform a magic ritual and wear charms to help them hunt. Magic power is
also used by the Kerakkie to protect themselves from ghosts at the time of a death, and empower them when they plant their yams.\textsuperscript{55} Williams does not mention this use of the terms \textit{gama}, \textit{ove}, or \textit{moin} for garden magic, but he did use them for sorcery. He referred to magic as \textit{wen} which means ‘tree’.\textsuperscript{56} Why do they see the need of magic? The Kerakkie say that many times they have suffered from sickness, drought, wild creatures and believe that others’ sorcery or spirits are the cause. To defend themselves, they have sought power from the spirit world, other societies or from nature through magic to overcome felt powerlessness. They are struggling to achieve their goal of a satisfactory present ‘being’, because they never think of a future salvation in another existence. Besides a past mythological religion, the Kerakkie also have present-oriented one that is centered on their wellbeing.

The present is the moment of ‘being’ and it takes a central place in their time concepts. This is experienced when significant events occur, such as the joyous consumption of their yams and participation in friendly social activities. This is the point when a state of satisfaction or completeness can be attained, which is different to the highly valued foundational past or the non-existent future. The Kerakkie dread the future because it frequently brings sickness and death, over which they have no control, whereas the past is non-threatening and is believed to be controllable for their present benefit. The B-series view of time theorists see an event as a reality, and so do the Kerakkie. But the latter are not just interested in concrete events, because to them the present event or moment is only meaningful in its relation to themselves in society. To the Kerakkie, time is ‘being’ in society. Their language requires that an event or duration in the present must be indicated in a social time frame, because an event cannot be discussed alone or timeless.

Mellor defined the future as, “the interval of A-series moments open all the way to the remotest future and back to, and not including, the present moment.”\textsuperscript{57} The future includes non-existent events, people and things that are expected and is stated by the Kerakkie in a spatial way, because future also means ‘behind’. Why do they see the future as behind them? Just as future events are unknown, they linguistically project them as being in the unseen area behind them. When the Kerakkie are asked about the future, they declare that future events have no concrete
reality since they cannot be seen, touched, smelt, tasted, or heard. This appears to fit in with what some call the future tense – an illusion. Is this the way the Keraakie see the future or is it more complex than simply an illusion?

Before an analysis of Keraakie future tense is made, their linguistic terms will be presented to see what they reveal about their understanding of future time.

- *fowa*: future, later, behind
- *deev*: then (in the future or past)
- *fowa taowa*: leave it till later or in the future
- *deev taowa*: leave it till the future or later
- *kal*: tomorrow (or yesterday)
- *gano*: following day, tomorrow
- *naambat*: on the third day in the future (or past)
- *naambtao*: leave it till later than the third day
- *baar*: a nursery garden planted for future replanting
- *maato*: maybe in the future
- *aawate, maavul, fok*: omen, having future danger
- *kwev*: the date of an event in the future
- *novongo*: about to do something (in the future)
- *otmaame*: to go and return in the one day
- *saam*: when (future or past)
- *bee*: future tense indicator

Since the Keraakie have words that indicate future events, they must believe in the reality of the future. Also they indicate their understanding of the future through their verbal system. In comparison with their five past tense forms, they only have one future tense form by which they indicate their future intentions and expectations. The fact that the present tense verbal form is used with the future indicator (*bee*), seems to indicate that the future form could mean ‘not yet present’. All of their verbal infinitives have a future orientation such ‘to hunt’: *elhat*, and ‘to bathe’: *aanuet*. Here are some examples of future verb forms:

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yando (I) bee (shall) yauvrotan (make) tarnar (arrow): I will make an arrow.
yand (I) bee (shall) nauimbotaan (climb) yana (this) wen (tree): I shall climb this tree.
evah yu (dry season) bee (will) yenam (come): the dry season will come.

The Keraokie declare that the future is so unpredictable that they cannot speak of the future in a confident way. So they often use the word maato (maybe) to indicate this uncertainty. As they sit around their fires in the evening, doubt about whether they will have food for the next week, or a harvest in the dry season, is always on their minds and on their lips. There is uncertainty about their yam crop because it is never what they imagine; either the crop is huge or it is small. More serious problems, such as drought, theft, destruction by wild pigs, or floods destroying part of their crop, also fuel this doubt. When they plant their yams at the end of the dry season, they are driven by uncertainty as to whether the rain will come (not to mention the fear of antagonistic sorcery), the Keraokie develop rain-magic rituals to ensure the crop grows. They also created sun-magic to be certain that the sun will shine so that the crop will mature. Also hunting and gardening magic rituals are used to ensure they will not go hungry. In spite of this lack of confidence, they organize their life with the belief that future events will occur.

In his major study, The Idea of Historical Recurrence in Western Thought, Trompf presented the major views and paradigms of recurrence. This time-orientation of the repetition of events in the future, may be helpful in analyzing whether there is recurrence in the Keraokie concept of the future, even though Trompf's original work considered these views and paradigms from a Western point of view.

The first is the cyclical view, which suggests that "history or sets of historical phenomena pass through a fixed sequence of at least three stages, returning to what is understood to be an original point of departure, and beginning the cycle again." When raising the concept of cyclical time with the Keraokie people, they declared that they did not have such an understanding of time. People, events, structures and all other things in nature follow a linear pattern in an endless flow and each comes to
an end after which there is no return to an original state. This is seen in their view about the sun, which rises, crosses the sky and dies. Although this pattern repeats itself the next day, they consider the sun to be a new one, and not the old one. The pattern is cyclical but the substance of the cycle is not. The same could be said about their economical, menstrual and reproductive cycles. The Keraakie do not hold to a historical recurrence involving a return to an original state, but there are other Melanesian societies who do hold to such a point of view.

In her study of the Duna people of the Western Highlands of PNG, Gabriele Stürzenhofer discovered a cyclical view in which these people saw the irruption of the colonial outsiders into their traditional way of life as the beginning of a new era. The change in social order, the enfeebled of human bodies, the decline in soil fertility, vegetative growth and plants were seen as part of a general pattern of disintegration. Rituals were geared towards arresting this entropic process of the cosmos and revitalizing it. The Duna called this change *rindi itariya*, which means ‘ground ending/completing’. This understanding of recurrence includes a new beginning, which results in the repair of the ground and a reaffirmation of their social values. She concluded:

Duna preconceptions of time appear to have been ordered in an epochal manner, projected within a genealogical framework that specified a period of fourteen generations between a given moment of creation or origin and the final dissolution of the energy that informed the structure so created.53

Nancy McDowell studied the Bun people of the Sepik River and became aware of their episodic concept of time: “An episodic view of change and the past is one of relative changelessness; changes occur only as a result of events of radical or monumental impact.”54 Society generally exists in a steady state, which is followed by a traumatic episode before another steady time state emerges. These episodes produce drastic social change so that the two states are radically different from each other, but this change does not affect their basic core values. McDowell mentioned a personal communication with Donald Tuzin about the Ilahita Arapesh people of the Sepik River as holding a similar belief about catastrophic changes between episodes.55 Errington also noted on one of the Duke of York Islands in the Bismarck
Archipelago (PNG) an episodic view of time characterised by historical static states divided by decisive leaps. One of these states was called ‘momboto’ and preceded the coming of George Brown of the Methodist Missions; it was chaotic and marked by greed, violence and self-interest, which was termed as ‘anti-society’.  

The second paradigm is the *alternation (or fluctuation)* view, which states “that there is a movement in history wherein one set of general conditions is regularly succeeded by another, which then in turn gives way to the first.” 67 The Keraakie do not see such a recurring pattern within history but the meteorological and agricultural seasons appear to follow one. Satisfied full stomachs of the dry season are followed by the hunger of the wet season, when they are waiting for their gardens to grow. This is followed by a return to the general condition of full stomachs when their yams mature. Even though there is a general recurring pattern of the wet season followed by the dry season, to be followed by the wet season, they declare that no two wet or dry seasons are the same. In fact they say that sometimes seasons do not even occur in a regular sequence, as heard in their claim that there was no wet season in 1972, and no dry season in 1995, as noted in chapter 5. To them life is chaotic (*yuvweg*). The regular ‘set of conditions’ such as the incoming tide is followed by the falling tide, which in turn gives way to the first set of conditions of the incoming tide. But the Keraakie say that the tides only follow a general pattern which can be totally disrupted by surges in the Torres Strait where the waters of the Indian Ocean meet the Pacific Ocean. The most depressing lesson they have learnt from the movement of history is that death is final and that there is no return to life afterwards or the previous set of conditions. On the other hand the stable set of conditions before death is succeeded by a set of rituals to help them cope with grief, after which they return to a stable period in which the painful memories of the death are officially forgotten. Therefore there is a general pattern of recurrence in Keraakie culture but it is not always the same.

When the Keraakie first entered the Trans-Fly, a new set of conditions was faced as they had to learn to hunt the ‘agile or sandy’ wallabies that inhabited the grassy plains. Williams observed that the Keraakie are “less given to the chase than any of their neighbours” and this is true, but they have mastered various hunting
techniques. Each youth watches and listens to his father and uncles as they scour the countryside looking for patches of jungle or thick bush where the wallabies may be hiding. On the edges of these patches, they will find areas of flattened grass which are nocturnal playing or mating arenas for the wallabies. When they discover a recently used one, they will return at sunset to wait for the emergence of these game animals. At this point they will thump the ground with their hands, imitating the wallabies, who do the same with their feet, calling other wallabies to come to the playing arena. The wallabies respond with a similar thumping noise and eventually approach the hunter assuming he is a wallaby. Before the wallaby is close enough to smell the hunter, the latter shoots it. On some occasions the wallabies will be playing together and the hunter will shoot two or three before the danger is realized and the wallabies scatter. The condition of ignorance is regularly succeeded by knowledge, which then in turn gives way to the first as a man’s son has to be taught to hunt. Trompf sums up his study: “The past teaches lessons for present and future actions.”

The third paradigm is the reciprocal view, in “that common types of events are followed by consequences in such a way as to exemplify a general pattern in history.” One of the patterns firmly held in the Trans-Fly is that the quality of one’s behaviour governs what occurs. In Arufe society a man named Samuel Kowaar frequently was involved in aggressive behaviour and fighting. On 5 January 1982 he told his young sister Aambo to proceed to the village of Pongarki and marry a young man there in a reciprocal arrangement for his bride. The eleven-year-old girl protested saying that she had not even finished primary school. Immediately Samuel stabbed her in the buttocks for questioning his word and soon the whole community became involved in a fight to protect the girl. During the fight, Samuel produced a shotgun but he was disarmed before he could fire the weapon. He was subsequently taken to the Morehead government court for this behaviour. In December of that year he forced another sister to marry a man of his choice, breaking her arm in the process. The community declared that his bad actions would receive an appropriate physical punishment in the present. On 8 January 1983 he was bitten on the leg by a
crocodile, and the community publicly declared that this was the consequence of his bad behaviour. This understanding of reciprocity permeates every area of their social behaviour.

A study of the logic of retribution in Melanesian religions is presented in Trompf's study, Payback, and this dominant feature is one in which common events are followed by consequences in such a way as to exemplify a general pattern in history.\textsuperscript{71} The historical consequences of an attack on a Keraakie person is payback by his or her social group, and this has occurred many times in their history. It is predictable that all family members will come to the defence of one of their siblings under attack. Mase of Gubaa was incensed by the beating given to his sister by her husband Boko of Derideri so he caught up with him at Arufe and settled accounts in a fight in November 1982. The general pattern of their marriage arrangements is the exchange of a sister for a bride. Failure to carry out this exchange results in the first bride being taken back or the bride's family laying claim to the first girl produced by the marriage. For example Noat Samoki of Arufe married Meeri Powar of Pongarki in the late 1970s, but he had no sister to exchange for his bride. He was constantly subject to verbal abuse for this outstanding debt, so he had to promise his first daughter as payment for Meeri to find peace. People are wealthy to the Keraakie and debts involving the giving of a productive member in marriage must be paid back in kind. Gifts are common between Keraakie men, but they always have strings attached. Pastra of Arufe lost many of his yams when bush pigs invaded his garden in April 1985, and many felt sorry for him. So they gave him yams to plant in his new garden, but when they bore a harvest the givers lined up to receive an equal number of yams in repayment. The Keraakie believe that certain types of behaviour will recur with predictable consequences, agreeing with Trompf's conclusion that 'past debts have taught them lessons for the present and the future'.\textsuperscript{72}

The fourth paradigm is the reenactment view "that a given action...has been repeated later in the action of others."\textsuperscript{73} Owing to the Keraakie mythological understanding that all things emerged from the geenzeen spirit beings, they carefully repeat those customs and actions. With the advent of the modern era, the great majority of these cultural ways of doing things have been neglected, but their
methods of food production have remained basically the same. Mangos, pineapples, passion fruit, custard apple, sweet potatoe, corn, and other vegetables have been introduced, but the traditional foods of yams, taro, cassava, as well as many bush foods, which the modern Keraakie process using their ancestral methods, still constitute the major part of their diet.

Because of the shortage of food during the wet season, the Keraakie search the jungles and dig up a poisonous yellow root called burekev exactly as their ancestors did. These tubers are then baked for a long time in an oven made of heated anthill pieces covered with ti-tree bark. After shredding these cooked roots, the pith is then placed in plaited bags and immersed in a flowing creek to assist the removal of the poison. The pith is then cooked again so that it is safe for eating. This ancestral cooking method was handed down to the modern Keraakie and, knowing how dangerous this root is, they repeat it carefully.

Another food that requires extensive processing is the hambol nut. When this nut is being cooked it gives off fumes, which can cause skin irritation, rashes or burns. The mangrove fruit called edom is another one of these poisonous foods to be eaten. Both of these are cooked a number of times with intervening washings in water before they become edible. This paradigm of recurrence is seen in the ancestral cooking method being handed down from generation to generation to the present day. Although children are taught verbally, imitation of their parents and elders is the main method of education among the Keraakie. Every day in the villages one notices mothers teaching their daughters to plait bags and mats by copying what they are doing, while boys are taught by their fathers in the art of paddle, bow and arrow making by simply following their example. This repetitious copying of past actions in the lives of others is the basic structure of Keraakie society, and covers their building, canoe making, gardening, fishing, hunting and scavenging. In 1986, I set an assignment for students of the Dauli Teachers College in the Southern Highlands, to return to their home areas all over PNG and assess how education occurred at the village level. 85% of the replies declared that children were traditionally educated in PNG through imitating their elder relatives, which follows Trompf’s conclusion that ‘the past experience of others will teach lessons for the present and the future’

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The fifth paradigm revolves around *restoration, renovation and renaissance*. “These entail the belief that a given set of (approved) general conditions constitutes the revival of a former set which had been considered defunct or dying.”75 Although Williams tried to restore some of these neglected rituals and customs in the 1920-30s, he failed.76 I suggested at a community meeting on 29 February 1984 that they should revive their traditional method of all working together (*eembrereero*) on a project, showing them a booklet on the Amish community of America doing this. This created much enthusiasm and on 19 March the Gubaav community built a house in a day. This restoration of a traditional value spread throughout the Keraakie area. Another example occurred on 6 December 1987, when Yokaar Gavai, the leader of the Evangelical Church of PNG in the Arufe area, arranged for the restoration of the traditional wedding service for his marriage to Mera Wangra. The wedding ceremony began with the appropriately decorated bride and groom’s extended families facing each other. The two groups of women rushed towards and passed each other with shrill yells. They hit the coconut palms at either end of the run, then noisily rushed back to their original position. This was followed by the men of the two families firing arrows into the trunk of a large tree. Then the groom and bride’s brother each fired an arrow above the other’s head before sitting down to have a feast to complete the wedding.77 This traditional form had fallen into disuse, being replaced by the perfunctory action of the mother taking the girl to the groom or merely acknowledging an existing relationship as legal. In the mid-1980s there had been a couple of church weddings based on a Western style marriage pattern. At that time, Yokaar restored their traditional form to its original position: the past was providing a model for the present and the future.

The sixth paradigm proceeds from a belief in the *uniformity of human nature*: “It holds that because human nature does not change, the same sort of events can recur at any time.”78 The Keraakie see recurring anger as a major problem in their community. The older men say, that in the period of endemic tribal warfare, anger was a daily occurrence, but it has decreased since the coming of the colonial era with its punitive jail terms. The most common form of anger occurs when a person becomes sick or dies, for which the Keraakie declare that these conditions are caused
by sorcery and they angrily condemn the sorcerer. On 1 June 1982 Suga of Bebeve
 died from prostate cancer, and his relatives angrily threatened to kill the person who
 was responsible. They cut off some of the deceased’s hair and sent it to a diagnosti-
 c sorcerer in the village of Dimsisi to find out who killed Suga. On 2 June 1983, a man
 in the village of Mata died suddenly and an angry enquiry was held to discover who
 was to blame. At that time Taaga (a sorcerer from Arufe) had been walking through
 Mata village so they accused him of sorcery, which he denied. The next day Taaga’s
 baby son died and the Mata men claimed a payback killing satisfying their anger.
 Recurring anger occurs not only over sickness and death, but also in many other
 areas of Keraakie life, revealing that they believe that nothing happens by chance and
 that there is a human or spiritual cause. This belief in the uniformity of human nature
 results in revenge.

 In Keraakie society a recurring human problem is the matter of marital
 jealousy. Meheng noticed his wife Manjaav watching young men playing basketball
 in Arufe village on 20 February 1984 and assumed that she was planning an
 adulterous affair. So when she came into the house, he verbally abused and beat her
 in a jealous rage. Against the background of Manjaav crying in pain, I asked a
 villager what was the problem and he replied, “Eweremsah yaam!” (being jealous).
 This is very common among young Keraakie married couples because they know
 that before marriage they were involved in illicit sexual relationships and therefore
 do not trust each other. So they jealously watch each other for any evidence of
 possible unfaithfulness. In July 1982, the members of Bebeve came to Arufe for
 meetings and sporting activities. When the gathering was over and the visitors were
 about to leave, Samaaku asked a single girl named Katel when she was returning to
 Bebeve. Samaaku’s wife overhead the question and jealously snapped, “Are you
 planning to sleep with her on the way home?” Samaaku exploded in anger, abusing
 and punching his wife, who fled to a friend’s house for refuge. These jealous
 altercations between couples are common in Keraakie society. As has been stressed
 in these paragraphs the past teaches lessons for present and future actions, and this is
 true in Keraakie society because past acts of adultery, cause them to anticipate
 present and future ones. Past sorcery curses have led to sickness and death, so they
 expect that future illnesses and death will be caused by it too. Belief in sorcery and

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jealous fears of infidelity have been the causes of past and present anger and is expected to be the cause of future anger.

Gosden also holds to the same ideas as Trompf: “All life operates through recursiveness, which is to say that we make use of the past to create the present and future action.” The Keraakie only partially believe this. They do not hold to a historical recurrence involving a cycle of a return to an original state or to a similar set of conditions, but they do believe that certain behaviour will be followed by set of consequences. In their society, customs handed down from their ancestors are generally repeated by their descendants. Historical recurrence has also occurred when defunct rituals and activities have been revived, and this has occurred in Keraakie society. They also hold to the uniformity of human nature; how their ancestors have responded, the present and future generations will also respond. Trompf’s understanding that the present is and the future will be a repetition of the past, and the Keraakie agree.

The monotonous regularity of the day and night, wet and dry seasons, north-west and south-east winds occurring seems to have subconscious convinced the Keraakie that there is something real about the future. Even though they say that the future is not real and that sometimes the dry or wet season do not occur, they plant gardens year after year according to a set time pattern with the belief that they will bear a harvest. Even when they have no garden produce, they go into the jungle anticipating that they will gather roots, nuts, shoots and fruit. The regularity of the seasons and the rising and setting of the sun as part of an eternal flow is an essential part of their daily assumptions. The reason for this future orientation seems to be based on the necessity of future thinking. Barbara Adam generalized, “In order to survive, humans have to extend their thought levels, their concerns and their planning.” The Keraakie do not conceive of an end to the flow of events in time, generally believing that it just goes on without cessation. Yet they are always plagued with doubt, and this tension is a normal part of their thinking and way of life.

Nevertheless the Keraakie do plan for the future in their numerous activities of obtaining food. In their taro gardening, the leafy upper section of each taro is cut off
for planting in a swamp, which acts as a nursery during the dry season. These are replanted in the main garden during the following wet season indicating future planning. This same feature is seen when they plant sago palm shoots, which requires fifteen years to mature before they are processed. The action of planting fruit trees, such as coconut, paw paw, mango and custard apple, indicate a future orientation because the planters will have to wait many years before these trees bear a harvest. When they harvest a bunch of bananas, they cut it when it is still green, to protect it from the ravages of fruit-eating bats and birds, and let it ripen in their houses. This shows advance thought. When the Kerakkie fish, they use the poisonous sap of a vine called ferenden, which is planted at least a year before the date of its maturation and use for catching fish, showing careful deliberation. A fish trap is constructed by the women with a future harvest of fish in mind. The Kerakkie further show careful forward planning in that they make and set different traps to catch various animals. Knowing that pigs, wallabies, bandicoots and deer will be attracted by cassava, taro and yams, they build a trap into their garden fences. This consists of a hole in the fence above which a number of heavy logs, tied in a concave pattern, are placed above a trip stick. As the animal seeks to enter the garden it notices the hole in the fence and walks in, tripping the stick. The logs fall on top of the animal, keeping it alive until the owner comes to check his trap. The Kerakkie have a number of other traps, such as ‘a spring and noose’ set on an animal track, to catch moving animals. Small log traps are set in the gardens to catch bandicoots and these are baited with food. These activities show that the Kerakkie do plan for the future in regard to their food gathering.  

When the Kerakkie plan to have a dance or a ceremony, they prepare drums, headdresses, food, alcoholic drinks and plant tobacco which shows forward thinking. Part of this planning involves the cutting of a coconut palm frond calendar or string calendar which indicates the date on which the dance or ritual is to occur in the future. Meetings connected to the local government council, national elections, the school, the church or Independence celebrations require forward planning too and the Kerakkie have no trouble doing this using modern calendars. Lieb has mused theoretically about the reality of the future: “Something of real futurity is presupposed, and to understand anything about how and why things go on we must
think the future to be real." The Keraakie seem to hold to this, but at other times they do not.

Despite these cases of future planning, one is nevertheless confronted by the fact that the Keraakie do not really place much importance upon future planning at all. This is seen in that they do not prepare for events until the event actually occurs. Lack of preparation for expected visitors is a common feature of their culture. Although the Keraakie knew that the Deputy Prime Minister of PNG, Ebia Olewale, was going to visit Arufe village on 29-30 May 1982, no arrangements had been made at all by the villagers as to where he would stay. In the village lived a woman, named Dore, who had married from Ebia’s tribe to a Keraakie man, but neither she nor her husband, offered to provide a room for the distinguished visitor. Only after Ebia arrived did discussion take place and the missionary was asked to accommodate him.

In another case, pastor Zekai Suwarmi and his family from Suki arrived on 26 March 1985 to work in the Arufe area. This had been known for many months, but only when he arrived did the church leadership begin to consider where he should stay, finally placing him with one of the deacons. There is no hierarchy in Arufe village that decides where visitors stay, and decisions like this are made on the spot by all who are present. The reason for this lack of planning may be a consequence of their past experience of visitors failing to arrive. Why make concrete plans when there is uncertainty? On the other hand, it may be because they have a unique way of looking at the future.

Before the birth of a Keraakie baby, they do not think of a name, or make a sleeping basket nor clothes for their expected babies, which could indicate a lack of concern for the future, yet this understanding could have resulted from the frequency of infant deaths. There was little point in making a basket, clothes or selecting a name when the majority of pre-modern era babies died. Others have suggested that this lack of planning may be because the parents are afraid of malicious spirits in the area, who, on seeing the baby’s basket or hearing the baby’s name mentioned, will attack it as soon as it is born. The Keraakie never suggested these reasons. Williams noted this lack of preparation of a name and admitted, “I could not discover the motive which lies behind of and the rule of delaying giving the baby a name.”

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Because of the cessation of inter-tribal warfare and modern medical care, government officers have warned the Keraakie about the problems of meeting the future food needs of the increasing population. They have agreed about these wise warnings and the need of new food supplies, but have done nothing about them. These features will also be considered in chapter 12. Schemes for the introduction of alternate food sources were carried out in 1970 (citrus), 1979 (cattle), 1982, 1987 (sago), but they all came to nothing. It could be that since these problems regarding food needs are in the future, their concept of time hinders constructive action. The future is not real and the problems may never happen, therefore they do not feel constrained to act. The fact of acting only when the event occurs indicates that their concept of time also has a strong influence.

Why is there a tension in Keraakie culture between a lack of future planning on the one hand and the appearance of planning on the other? The reason could be in their way of learning. New members learn not by individually thinking through problems, but by imitating the actions of family members and operating within the community according to ‘customs’ handed down from the mythological era. In reference to this, the statement ‘geerzeen kowaavtao’ (the primeval spirits told us) is commonly heard. When the Keraakie migrated into the Trans-Fly, as note in chapter 1, they would have had to face the problems of food supply and creatively plan for the future. After discussing with the old men their original settlement in the Trans-Fly, they declared that they were gatherers, living off what they could find in the way of bush yams (pongar) and sago. When they settled down, I assume that they would have had to remember what their parents had told them about gardening, take over agricultural methods of those they dispossessed and learn by trial and error. The same would have been true in the hunting and fishing activities. Following generations would have borrowed from their neighbours, learnt from the experience of their parents and, since these methods were essential for survival in the Trans-Fly, habitually followed them. I propose that these appearances of future planning are social habits. Gsden noted, following Pierre Bourdieu ideas, that habit may have emerged from conscious and unconscious activities aimed at maintaining political control, social harmony, as well as survival. From my observation of Keraakie culture, this is true since they say that the old methods of agriculture are right and
don't see any value in new ones. Habit is almost a moral issue since it is 'second nature' and seems to be right and anything different must be wrong. When I tried to introduce contour farming in 1969, they rejected this since it was unknown and therefore could not be right. As they face new ideas, the Keraakie tend to resist them since they do not have traditional habits of absorbing them. The new can appear dangerous since life in the Trans-Fly is so precarious, and habit is a symbol of security. In other words the habits of the past have resulted in survival so must be good for the present and future. In the late 1970s citrus and cattle were introduced and the community verbally welcomed them since they saw them as a means of earning money, but they were not successful because they were reluctant to change their traditional way of life. I propose that their traditional laws, customs and food-gathering methods are valued habits and are followed automatically without thought or conscious future planning. If new features do not have economic, political, or community pressure to be implemented they will not be accepted.

Although a future event is physically non-existent, the expectation of it can have a real impact upon Keraakie society. An example from the year of 1981 will be considered. A very old lady named Konaar had become senile and caused much disruption in Arufo village as she was nearing the end of her life. The villagers could see her physical deterioration and to them death was a definite reality even though it had not yet occurred. She tore off her clothes, tried to destroy gardens and harm people, so that the family was constantly restraining her day and night. The coming event of Konaar's death was causing present shame, so that on more than one occasion she was tied to the house stumps with wire. Because the Keraakie believe that death is not natural and has a spiritual cause, Konaar's sons were angry and searched for the person who had cursed her with sorcery. They paid for the services of a number of wingoheer eer (diagnostic sorcerers) to discover the past or present reason. No one was officially blamed, but various people were accused and threatened by Konaar's sons. The daughters-in-law wanted to carry out traditional euthanasia but the sons would not consider it. This anticipated future death caused much anguish, grief and emotional strain in the present. Since her death in 1982, the grief and anger of that past moment still has an impact in the present because of their physical loss, and the past event of her death may yet have future consequences if the
sorcerer is discovered. The Keraakie may deny the future but they do believe in it because it has a past cause and affects the present.

The future is real to the Keraakie and this is seen in that they know that nothing is ever static but is always changing and will eventually die. All things are either growing bigger or smaller, stronger or weaker. The Keraakie are very aware that everything has a future component of decay or death. The house they build or the canoe they make has a limited life. Every fruit or vegetable does not last forever but will grow ripe and will eventually rot in the future. This knowledge of future decay affects every area of their life. They do not seek to prolong the life of their houses and canoes, knowing that decay is inevitable. Anticipated events can affect the Keraakie in a real way in the present, even though the events have no visible reality. Expectation is always biased by past experience such as fear of what might happen creating anxiety in the mind of the person. It is these present emotions, based on future anticipation that are also real to the Keraakie. An event only occurs in the present, and cannot happen in the future, but future expectations may have real consequences in the present. Their understanding seems to be similar to what Lieb concluded: "The future is real but indefinite." In spite of this knowledge of the future, the Keraakie deny it because of uncertainty.

The reason for this tension, between the obvious future planning in some areas of their life and a complete lack of it in other areas, appears to be in part because the Keraakie face the future with uncertainty and fear because it is the bearer of sickness and death. The passing of a family member is the greatest tragedy because they see it as the shattering of family and community relationships. In spite of this knowledge of future death, Keraakie society makes no preparation for it. According to their traditional mourning customs, they do not mention the names of the deceased deliberately destroy the graves after a short time of mourning, as will be considered in chapter 10. Death is seen as something abnormal, because in the great majority of cases, death is believed to be caused by sorcery. In his field notes, Williams had observed in Keraakie thinking about death, that "everyone dies by sorcery" and not of old age. Their emotional expectations of the loss of a relative produces not only grief but also anger against the perpetrator. As they face the future, death taints every
event with unwanted fear, grief and anger. So their understanding of the future as
being unreal may have developed out of a rejection of these painful emotions,
resulting in the denial of death.

The Keraakie hold that the future is a result of the past actions of the spirit
world. In other words whatever occurs in the future always has a link to the past. The
Keraakie live in fear of these primeval spirit beings attacking them for past wrong
doings. Williams pondered on the idea of punishment by the spirits and wondered
whether it might have been an introduced ‘mission’ influence.\textsuperscript{88} When one considers
the Keraakie understanding of time as events being caused by the supernatural world,
however, I would suggest that the idea of punishment is not an introduced one. Let
me explain this further by way of an example. Peter Samu of Arufe was having
trouble with the twelve-year-old girl he received as his second wife. Her brother had
forced the girl to marry Peter and she fled home to her mother on a number of
occasions. As a result she was beaten to make her stay with her husband, which upset
the community who criticized Peter for marrying such an immature girl. In
annoyance at their criticism, he smashed the community oven, which drew forth a
greater denunciation of his behaviour in public. This condemnation caused his elder
brother Maraaga great shame and he wanted to leave his post as Aid Post Orderly at
Arufe and take a position in another village. Peter retired in humiliation to his house
on 21 March 1983 to await punishment by the spirit beings. He believed that his past
actions of beating up the girl and smashing the community oven would result in an
unavoidable spirit attack, not punishment by the Christian God. During the night a
frog jumped upon him, and he ran around the village screaming in terror believing
that the spirit beings were attacking him because of his past bad behaviour. This
same type of spirit punishment had occurred in another incident in Peter’s life on 3
September 1982. In these cases one sees a future idea of punishment was expected
because of actions in the past. On further consideration, Williams also came to the
conclusion that this view of expected punishment represented an ancient belief.\textsuperscript{99}
This same understanding of time is seen in various African communities: “the future
is determined by the events in the past”\textsuperscript{99}
According to traditional Keraakie's concept, the future was considered the bearer of sickness, suffering and death. This may have developed out of the sufferings of the migration era, the war of settlement, Tugeri headhunting age, and the struggle to survive in the infertile Trans-Fly. In these eras there seems to have been a denial of the future, as seen in their failure to plan for the future. With the arrival of European colonial officials, who planned confidently into the future and achieved amazing things, a new understanding of the future became a possibility for the Keraakie. The physical realities of the modern era with its desirable wealth, steel tools, education and medicine forced them to consider the future as a bearer of good. Up till this time, the future had been rejected as unseen and unreal but now it was visible in the achievements and consumer goods of foreigners. As a result, the Keraakie appear to have reconsidered their concept of future time so that it is not so feared, and some even look forward to the future as bringing them good fortune. Among the modern Keraakie some now plan, work and wait expectantly for the future fulfillment of their efforts. This change in their concept of time is not a completely new understanding because they did hold to a future, as has been evinced from their linguistic terms, cultural planning and their agricultural activities. Theodor Ahrens commented that the Europeans “brought near a different world, which for the first time meant a real concept of the future.”60 Up until this era, the future seemed to offer no benefits, and now they seek to take hold of the modern medical, economic, educational and religious order with a future orientation. One of the notable features of this new understanding of the future is found in the growth of 'cargo' thinking, which will be considered in the Chapter 12.

To summarize this study: the understanding of tense as a reality has been much debated in time literature without final agreement as philosopher E.E. Harris concluded that “the distinctions between present, past and future action remain as puzzling as before.”62 The Keraakie hold these three tenses in tension even if it appears that they contradict each other. They have a concrete understanding of time in which past, present and future tense are seen in a spatial way: the events of the past are seen as lying before them anchored to the environment while events of the future are unseen and regarded as behind them. Tense is reified among the Keraakie in that they name people as either past people, present people or future people. Since
person is time to the people of the Trans-Fly, they see time as a dynamic thing, with people, events, and things growing, occurring or moving from the future to the present and then into the past. Tense is a social reality because, as a society, they re-interpret the past myths in present terms, they reconstitute the past to be enjoyed in the present, and together they feel the impact of past and future events in the present. The regularity of past patterns of living have influenced them as a people, making them what they are in the present and will go on influencing them in the future. It is on the basis of past and present social habit, they plan for the future. Tense may not have a physical reality, but it has a communicational one, because all events must be described when they happened, are happening, or will happen in relation to the speaker's point in time. Tense is an emotional reality because the past is seen as non-threatening, as a time of social joy and is loved, while the present is seen as being stressful because that is where they come face-to-face with the events of the feared future. Tense is a religious reality because their foundational mythological religion is based on the past events that occurred at Kureengu, influencing everything in the present and future. Their 'crisis faith', based on magic, is used to manipulate the spirit world for a present salvation in facing fertility, sickness, hunger, thirst, and other needs. Based on present dreams, they create a mystical faith that warns them about immediate past, present and future events. The Kenaakie are well aware that present and future events have been influenced by and built on the past. In conclusion, I propose that they have a holistic understanding of tense, seeing people, events and everything as having a past, present and future reality in tension with one another.
ENDNOTES


4 Mellor, op. cit., p. 5.


8 Suki language verbal forms:

I shall cut down the tree: ne (I) ki (future indicator) riku (tree) kurumnataru

(shall cut)

I am cutting down the tree: ne (I) rikutma (tree) kurumnru (am cutting)

I cut down the tree: ne (I) kayet (completed action indicator) riku (tree)

kururu (cut)


10 Mellor, op. cit., p. 6.


12 Seddon, op. cit., p. 18.

13 ibid., p. 19.

14 Coventry and Highfield, op. cit., p. 24.

15 Davies, op. cit., p. 275.


20 Mellor, op. cit., p. 16.

24 Seddon, op. cit., p. 75.
27 Williams, *PTF*, op. cit., p. 73.
31 Lieb, op. cit., p. 253.
37 Dundes, loc. cit., p. 67.
38 ibid., p. 67.
39 ibid., p. 66.
41 Lieb, op. cit., p. 39.
42 Schieffelin, op. cit., p. 141.
44 Kearney, op. cit., p. 192.
45 Williams, *PTF*, op. cit., pp. 159-166.
46 Mellor, op. cit., p. 17.
48 Lieb, op. cit., p. 15.
51 Williams, *PTF*, op. cit., p. 313.
52 ibid., pp. 341-342.
53 ibid., p. 175.
54 ibid., p. 345.
55 ibid., pp. 362-363.
56 ibid., pp. 315-333.
57 Meller, op. cit., p. 17.
60 Trompf, op. cit., pp. 2-3.
61 ibid., p. 2.
65 ibid., p. 33.
66 Errington, op. cit., p. 257.
67 Trompf, op. cit., p. 2.
68 Williams, *PTF*, op. cit., p. 221.
69 Trompf, op. cit., p. 3.
70 ibid., p. 2.
72 Trompf, *The Idea of Historical Recurrence in Western Thought*, op. cit., p. 3.
73 ibid., p. 3.
74 ibid., p. 3.
75 ibid., p. 3.
76 Williams, PTF, op. cit., pp. 262-265, 284-287.
77 ibid., pp. 134-145.
78 Trompf, The Idea of Historical Recurrence in Western Thought, op. cit., p. 3.
79 Gosden, op. cit., p. 188.
80 Trompf, op. cit., p. 3.
82 Williams, PTF, op. cit., pp. 418-421.
83 Lieb, op. cit., p. 169.
84 Williams, PTF, op. cit., p. 175.
86 Lieb, op. cit., p. 249.
87 Williams, WFN, B.381.
88 Williams, PTF, op. cit., p. 298.
89 ibid., p. 298.
90 Dundes, op. cit., p. 67.
92 E.E. Harris, The Reality of Time, Albany: State University of New York, 1988, p. 27.
CHAPTER 8

KERAAKIE MYSTICAL TIME

Sigmund Freud wrote that dreams “have no reference to time at all.” The Keraakie think very differently, and in this chapter I propose that their dreams are time-oriented, prophesying events that have just happened in the immediate past, are happening in the present or are about to happen in the future. I call these dreams ‘mystical time’ because they consist of a communicational relationship between the Keraakie and primeval spirit beings during sleep revealing time events. We will seek to define what dreams are and observe what some experts see as their relationship to time. An analysis will be made of the various types, categorization and interpretation of dreams, comparing them to those of other Melanesian people. In comparison with F.E. Williams’ data of the 1920-30s, it seems that there has been noticeable change in dream interpretation in the modern era. The origin, purpose, and reasons for dreams will be addressed, in relation to Freud and Carl Jung’s theories. Then a conclusion based on this evidence will be made regarding the Keraakie’s mystical time.

To define what a dream is, Jung’s suggestion (based on Freud’s study) will be our starting-point. The dream “is an autonomous and meaningful product of psychic activity, susceptible, like all other psychic functions, of a systematic analysis.” The dream, although influenced by the world of human consciousness, is an unconscious activity over which the dreamer has no control. Freud studied dreams and considered their relationship to time, saying:

The processes of the system unconscious are timeless; i.e. they are not ordered temporally, are not altered by the passage of time; they have no reference to time at all. References to time are bound up, once again, with the work of the system conscious. Unconscious processes only become cognizable by us under the condition of dreaming and of neurosis.

The Keraakie people differ with these ideas that dreams are timeless, indicating that dreams are a particular ‘time/being’ in their own right. Dreams are real to them, but
they do not have any place in the flow of measured time as minutes, hours, days, months and years. Rather they are part of ‘time/being’ before human interpretation places them in time. The Keraakie consciously assess events in dreams as referring to events in ‘time/being’, placing them interpretively in the past, the present or the future. They believe them to be communications by the primeval spirit beings (geenzeen) concerning the unknown events of time. After his analysis of dreams in Melanesia, Garry Trompf observed a similar understanding among other people.

Whatever the content is, it will turn out to be real in the waking life; thus dreams reveal the future or the need for future action because an event, such as a death, has occurred in the recent past.4

The only difference between the opinion of the Keraakie people and Trompf is that the people of the Trans-Fly declare that what they see in dreams as not only events in the future and immediate past but are also events that may be happening at that moment. The following diagram illustrates how mystical time covers these three tenses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MYSTICAL TIME</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>immediate past time</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To them dreams are ‘divine’ revelations of unknown events, and I call this relationship between the primeval spirits and dreams ‘mystical time’ in the same way that Lévy-Bruhl does:

The primitive, far from regarding the mystic perception in which he has no part, as suspect, sees in it, as in the dream, a more precious, and consequently more significant communication with invisible spirits and forces.5

What are the linguistic terms that the Keraakie use in describing dreams? The word onda (dream) is used to cover all types of dreams.

_yand onda kwakamongarwan_: I was in a state of dreaming a dream.
_yando ondai tiyereetaowan eer_: I, by a dream, was hearing a man.
_yando ondai taaketaowan eer_: I, by a dream, was seeing a man.
yando ondai tyeestaowan eer: I, by a dream, was touching a man.

The use of the past continuous verbal form in their linguistic usage suggests strongly that dreams are seen as a duration in time during which the dreamer is either an active or passive participant or just an observer of events. The Keraakie see dreams as covering a period of time which could include the future, the present or the immediate past. It appears to be more than just a coincidence that the normal verb form used for these three verbal tenses, is the same except for the future or the past indicators. This can be seen in the following examples.

yando nane bee yanehaan: I shall cook food.
yando nane yanehaan: I am cooking food.
yando nane bava yanehaan: I have just cooked food.
yando nane dava yanehaan: I have cooked food today.

The way the Keraakie use their language suggests that they see this block of time, centred on the present tense, as important. This sociocentric or egocentric feature of Keraakie time has already been noted.

In the majority of cases, Keraakie dreams deal mainly with everyday life. Following roughly the pattern used by Trompf in his book Melanesian Religion, an analysis will be made of Keraakie dreams.⁶

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of dream</th>
<th>Content</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th>Reason for suggestion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>revelation</td>
<td>pig</td>
<td>warning of future danger</td>
<td>based on past wounds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>dog</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>frog in a hole</td>
<td>omens of death</td>
<td>based on past bites</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>rotten post</td>
<td></td>
<td>like a grave</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>falling object</td>
<td></td>
<td>about to collapse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>dried out, dead, end of life</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Below are some examples of Keraakie dreams. On 30 June 1989, Wamboi Yaavus, one of the oldest men in Arufe, expounded their traditional interpretations of dreams, giving me many examples. Mege, Gaindi, Peter, Tekamu and Mote, who are middle-aged men of the same village, later verified his analysis of Keraakie dreams.

(i) Wamboi declared that if he dreamed about a man being bitten by a wild pig, he would not leave the village nor go near the bush. He would warn the other villagers too. He said, "What I saw is true and would happen the next day if I or others went to the bush." Zaga from Bebeven declared that "if we see a pig in a dream, it means that a man is coming in anger. If I dream of myself being attacked by a pig, then I know someone is angry with me. I should leave the village for a while or make a gift of food to my enemies."

(ii) If a Keraakie saw a dog growling in anger, this would mean that a headhunting raid was about to happen, or an angry man was coming. So they would flee for the jungle. Meegi of Arufe added that their fathers had told them that if they dreamed about a stranger in feathers, then that also was a warning of a headhunting raid.

Gilbert H. Herdt noted the same type of 'fear of attack' dream interpretation among the Sambia people of the Eastern Highlands of PNG "If you see the flutes in (your) dreams, it means that men will soon come to attack and kill you."

(iii) Wamboi said, "If I saw a tree, coconut, or palm frond fall, that will tell us that one of our number is going to die in the next year. This cannot be avoided." Others added to this by saying that if the tree was old, then that would indicate the age of the person to die. If it was a certain person's tree that fell, then one from that family would die.

(iv) In a series of dream interpretation given on 20 December 1990, Saawi of Gubaev said that if one hears a *nalu* bird calling in the bush, then an old woman will die. If
one sees a frog in a hole, then a married woman will die. If a rotten post is seen in a dream, the latter means that a snake will bite someone.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of dream</th>
<th>Content</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th>Reason for suggestion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>revelation of a good hunt</td>
<td>Jew’s harp</td>
<td>Promise of good future</td>
<td>repeated noise like dogs baying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>conch shell</td>
<td></td>
<td>proclaims news</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>wedding</td>
<td></td>
<td>happy time/much food</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>woman in mourning clothes</td>
<td>kill a cassowary</td>
<td>hunger for meat will soon end</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>full moon</td>
<td>promise of much food</td>
<td>full yam house</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>yam</td>
<td></td>
<td>main food eaten</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>wallaby</td>
<td>promise of meat</td>
<td>main meat eaten</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

EXAMPLES OF DREAMS:

(i) Wamboi of Arufe said, "If we see in a dream an animal shot or hear a person blowing a shell horn in the bush then we know that we are going to have a good hunt. We will get adequate meat." He continued, "If we see a person taking yams into his house then we know we are going to get a good garden crop that year." Trompf noted among the Melpa-Tumbuka people that if the dreamer saw a taro or sweet potato then that signified good health or strengthening.  

(ii) On 15 December 1990 Gaindi Sarau of Arufe said that if he saw a bamboo 'Jew’s-harp' being played, then he would know that they would have a good hunt. He then explained that the repetitive noise of the musical instrument was symbolic of the call of the dogs as they chased an animal on a hunt.
(iii) Mote, Tekaam and Meegi of Arufe related another dream that prophesied pleasant consequences: "If you see a full moon them you know that you will have much good food."

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of dream</th>
<th>Content</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th>Reason for suggestion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>revelation of</td>
<td>tide</td>
<td>friends visiting</td>
<td>movement towards the dreamer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ordinary events</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dog of another</td>
<td></td>
<td>friends visiting</td>
<td>dogs stay close to their owners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>village</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vehicle</td>
<td>government officer will</td>
<td>based on past experience</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>visit</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fire</td>
<td>hot/dry season</td>
<td>time of bush fires</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

EXAMPLES OF DREAMS:

(i) Some dreams have meanings that indicate common daily events. "If we see the tide coming in, then we know that the coastal people are coming to visit us," Wamboi Yaavus explained.

(ii) Wamboi then explained another dream interpretation: "If we see the tide going out or flood waters coming down the river, then we know that people of the hinterland are coming to visit us."

(iii) If one saw a vehicle in a dream, then it indicated that a policeman or government officer was coming, since they were generally the only ones who owned vehicles in the Morehead area.

(iv) To see a fire in a dream meant that the dry season was at hand. This was natural because that was the only time bush fires burnt.
In these dream examples, one must ask the question: do the Keraakie interpret them according to certain rules? To discern this, the dreams will be considered to see if there are basic laws governing interpretation. Are they consistently used and are they universal? In analyzing Keraakie dream interpretation, consideration will first be given to Williams’ data, which he collected during his visits over the 1926-30 period.

Williams’ data collected from Bebeven village:

* If a man saw a woman in mourning gear, it meant that he would kill a cassowary.
* To dream of his own wedding, a man would have success in hunting.
* The collapse of a house meant that his pig trap would catch a pig.
* If fire was seen, then it signified that dry weather was coming.
* To dream of a twist of tobacco meant that one would see a snake.
* A dream concerning a loose tooth was a prophecy that people would die.⁹

Williams’ data collected from Saparam village (these people later moved to Arufe village):

* To dream about a coconut would mean one would catch a pig.
* If one saw a banana then it meant a cassowary would be caught.
* If a twist of tobacco was seen, then an edible snake would be caught.
* To dream of shooting a woman meant that one would shoot a pig.
* To see a dog biting a person would mean that a raid was coming.
* To dream of a burning house meant that a big dry season was near.
* A death was foretold if a person dreamed of a bird of paradise.¹⁰

When these dream interpretations from 70 years ago are compared with the ones in use among the modern Keraakie, it was found that only two of them were the same: These cases involving a fire, which indicated that hot weather was coming, and a dog which indicated danger. Why has dream interpretation changed? This could just because of the changes of daily life, because the Keraakie know that their language, mythology, rituals and social groupings are all in a state of flux. An example of this is that the old word for ‘good’ was once *barti*, which was replaced by
samaarvi (in the 1950s) to later be superseded by meer (in the 1970s). It could be that some dreams did not fulfill their traditional interpretation so that the modern Keraakie have gone in search of new and more accurate ones. Maraaga Sarau of Arule commented on the 14 December 1990 about the dreams that he and other Keraakie had seen: "I've seen that dreams are not always true. Sometimes they lie." Andrew Strathern, in his study of dream interpretation, record that the Melpa observed that some dreams are true, while others are not.

There is always a fundamental ambiguity about dreams: they may prove later to have been true or false (ni kumb). If what they signify later does not happen, the dream itself can be shifted into the latter category. 11

There are different ways of looking at dreams. After considering Kenelm Burridge's study of the Tangu people near Madang, Michele Stephen admitted that "dreams may mislead the dreamer and be wrongly interpreted". 12 Saawi, the community leader of Gubaav, was adamant that what was seen in dreams was both true and would occur. On 20 December 1990 he emphatically declared that "dreams are very true and will not miss", (onda (dreams) eavalovivi (very true) em (are); yao (no) bee (future indicator) yelitaat (miss, fail to hit the target). What Saawi meant was that, a dream interpretation may be wrong, but what was seen in the dream is true and will happen.

What are the main rules of interpretation among the modern Keraakie? In December 1990, Saawi of Gubaav set out the three main principles behind traditional Keraakie dream interpretation as

* a pig is symbolic of man;
* the wallaby is symbolic of woman; and
* the bird of paradise is symbolic of a single girl.

Comparing this statement with Williams' data, the symbol of the bird of paradise has changed from being a symbol of death to one of a healthy girl. Considering the examples of traditional and modern dreams already given, it appears that there are more than the three general principles than Saawi gave. To the Gubaav villagers, the pig is symbolic of man but to Zaga of Bebeven it is symbolic of an
angry man, while to Wamboi of Arufe it was not symbolic but was a warning of an actual wild pig attack. Cinandi and Peter Sarau, Timothy Tekam, Mote and Mege Waianda of Arufe stated that there were many different interpretations of dreams, and this appears to be the case between the Keraakie villages of Gubaav, Bebeven and Arufe.

Among other Melanesian peoples there is a common interpretative feature, that the opposite of what is seen will happen. Trompf recorded this as being so among the Tainyandawari-Binandere people, while Struthern observed it among the Melpa people. Stephen discovered that “the theme of reversal plays a dominant role in the symbolic interpretation” of dreams among the Mekeo people of Papua New Guinea. This is not a feature of the Keraakie people’s dream interpretation, but there is a reversal of a different kind in their dream philosophy.

The Keraakie have a series of actions that if followed will negate what was seen in the dream. Not all Melanesian peoples hold to such a position, and M.J. Meggitt observed among the Mae Enga of the Western Highlands that they believed dream revelations cannot be avoided.

A man has no way of influencing the decisions of the sky dwellers; he cannot evade his destiny. At best he can employ divining techniques in order to discover his fate. Thus a man, who correctly reads the omens that appear in dreams...may learn whether he is to become wealthy and important or is to remain poor and obscure, whether he will die young or enjoy a vigorous old age, whether he is to die peacefully at home or violently in battle.

Wamboi of Arufe declared to me on the 30 June 1989 that “some of these dreams must not be revealed to other people, because then what was seen in the dream will not happen.” In the case of a person dreaming of a full moon, which promises an abundance of food, this would not occur if it was revealed to others. Williams was told that after seeing a coconut in a dream (which meant a successful hunt) the dreamer was to keep silent about it, because “to tell anyone would spoil his chances” on a hunt.
Personal action by the villagers, such as avoiding a certain danger area, which the dream-prophecy had mentioned, can be taken. When a Keraakie dreamt of a headhunting raid, the whole village fled deep into the jungle, well away from all walking tracks. By doing this they believed that they would escape the danger. Among the Suki people, who live to the north of the Keraakie, the mere retelling of the dream will overcome the danger, and it will not occur. In 1974 I overheard a man, who had had a dream in which he saw a snake bite a man named Mawasi Sinba of Ewe village, tell the dream to him. Mawasi exclaimed, "Now the snake will not bite me." He believed that by revealing the dream-event, its power to happen was broken.

Others believe that by the use of magic the power of the approaching dream-revealed danger can be frightened away. Wamboi Yaavus of Arufe declared, "If I saw my friend being bitten by a snake in a dream, then I would tell him and spit out next to him. The snake then would not bite him." This latter action of spitting out was believed by the Keraakie to be a powerful protective device against ghosts and sorcery. Williams mentioned a similar spitting action in the healing of a person in a sorcery attack.18 I have also observed its use among the Suki people to the north of the Keraakie. Among some people spittle involves 'soul substance', and this procedure is based on the belief that some humans are in possession of great powers which can overcome other malicious powers. The mere smell of human perspiration can negate some sorcery powers. On 31 May 1982, I saw the Arufe community leader Aniba Bunanai wipe the perspiration from his arm pit and give it to sick Suga of Bebedeven to smell, to effect a cure. The Keraakie also believe that excreta contains the life/power of the owner.

Alan Dundes suggests that myths emerged from dreams, and this is understandable when one considers that there is a similarity of elements used in both,19 but the Keraakie traditionally did not see dreams as a source of new religious ideas nor mythology. The caretaker of the Kureemgu sacred site, Saawi of Gubaav, said in December 1990 that their original myths were not obtained through dreams, nor were dreams used as a source of new ones. The Tangu of the Northern Madang District use dreams to find objects of great power, which they believe are revealed to them by the spirit world. "When Tangu want something to happen or not to happen
they resort to charms... (and) to stand a chance of being effective a new charm should be obtained through a dream.²² The Keraakie do not seek for charms through dreams. Of the few charms that the Keraakie possess, the nikav (sacred stones) have been brought into the area from the north and south by trading and the magic tooth charm are extracted from dead crocodiles. Stephen noted that some Melanesians use dreams as a source of new songs, dances, cult stones and religious masks.²¹ The Keraakie do not seem to use dreams to discover religious rituals, but only for supernatural guidance, warnings and promises. Maraaga Sara of Arufa said on 14 December 1990 that the Keraakie do not deliberately seek the mind of the primeval spirit beings by dreams.

The Keraakie believe that, when they dream, spirit beings enter into a relationship with them and reveal-time related things. What they hear or see in dreams are spirit communications. There is no distinction in their minds between the world of nature and that of the supernatural world in dreams. A very old Keraakie woman, Pangori of Gubav, said to me on 20 December 1990, “It is the gooneen (spirits) who speak to us in dreams.” And their messages have a purpose in time. Williams said these spirit beings “have power to influence the destinies of those lesser beings who remain below” on this earth, and the Keraakie believe that one of these ways is through dreams.²² A. Irving Hallowell observed the same feature among the Saulteaux people of North America, who regarded them as “dream revelations”.²³ This interaction between the gods and humanity through dreams was also believed by Greek philosophers, such as Plato and Aristotle.²⁴ Psychoanalyst Salomon Resnik also recorded the dream as a message, a complex, vital message. The technique of the ancient necromancers, including Artemidorus of Daldis, “consisted of translating into conventional, comprehensible language the hidden ‘mysterious’ meaning of the dream discourse.”²⁵ Stephen noted this feature among many other Melanesian peoples: “Dreams are seen as a direct means of communication with the spirits of the dead and other supernatural beings, they enable men to participate in the spirit’s realm of superior knowledge and power.”²⁶ The Keraakie also believe that the knowledge of the past mythological world becomes present.
Michael Kearney commented that “in dreams it was possible to enter into the mythic landscape and time, and meet with the characters who reside there.” He also quotes Mircea Eliade to the effect that “historical time is abolished and the mythological time is regained” through dreams. The Keraakie may say that dreams find their source in the spirit beings, but in them they do not meet with the actual characters of Keembel, Yumeer or Gufa. Rather in dreams the Keraakie come into contact with the beings of the mythological time but the events they see are not the events of that era. They are prophetic events of the future, present or immediate past. Williams also noted this: “Dreams so often come to be regarded as prophetic.” The events of the mythological era ended a long time ago and the Keraakie do not believe that their dreams involve new creative events by the primeval spirit beings. Mary Ayres declares of the people of the Trans-Fly, “The mythological age was a creative formative time of events which have passed, irrevocably finished, never to re-occur,” and the Keraakie think similarly.

There may be some confusion in terms if this mystical time were called the ‘dream time’. Some write about the Australian Aboriginal mythological era as ‘dream time’, but Tony Swain rejects this as an inadequate term. This term has arisen out of a misunderstanding of the Aboriginal languages and has nothing to do with time nor dreaming.

Swain considers this mythological era and suggests more appropriate wording:

The words that I find most applicable in English are Abiding Events. Collectively, I suggest these form an Abiding Law. The true significance of the concept behind the word is not temporal but spatial.

This spatial concept is similar to that of the Keraakie mythological age, which they see as formative events in a past time in space, which cannot be repeated in the present or future. They do not see mythological time in dreams, because the events of mythology are different to those of the mystical time; the former are creative while the latter are prophetic. Within the time concepts of the Keraakie, the geenzeen spirit beings performed the mythological events and they are referred to by means of past tense verbs. This mythological age is never in the present but always two generations
ago, keeping pace with the present. To the Keraakie, mystical time also finds its source in the spirits, but of these two ages of ‘time/being’ the mythological sacred past is more important because it is foundational to Keraakie culture.

Many have written about dreams being human reactions to pressing conditions, and one of these is Resnik. In his view, “past experiences become a projection, from the present, towards a point of space called past; experiences ‘to come’, a projection, from the present, towards the space called the future.” The majority of Keraakie people seem to differ with his understanding, holding that the events of time in dreams are not human projections. They point to numerous occasions when their dreams have been verified by succeeding events, over which they held no control. Yet the Keraakie understanding of dreams is a natural projection of their whole world view that perceives causation in terms of the spirit world, assuming that the material events of daily life have an immaterial cause. They also see time in terms of a backward linear flow, so that what is seen in dreams is about to become known in present reality. To the Keraakie, dream events come from the future and are projections towards the present and not the past.

Others believe that dreams are more than mere human projections and John B. Priestly is one of these. Numerous dreams, which he noted and called ‘precognitive dreams’, described events which later happened in real life. In cases that can be verified by reliable witnesses, these phenomena are mysterious, and a rational explanation is difficult to suggest.

An example of them is presented below:

There is the famous case of Abraham Lincoln, who, a few days before his assassination, dreamed that he heard people sobbing, went from room to room without seeing anybody, and finally arrived in the East Room, where his own body was lying in state and he was told, by one of the soldiers standing guard, that the president had been killed by an assassin. (There were several witnesses to his own impressive recital of this strange somber dream.)

This mysterious phenomenon may have been a projection of Lincoln’s mind since he knew of opposition to his policies. But this dream fits perfectly into the Keraakie
belief that the supernatural has a hand in dreaming. The spirit beings know of events before they happen and reveal them to the individual dreamer. These unknown events have either just happened, are happening or are in future time flowing backwards into the present.

Not all the Keraakie hold that all dreams have their source in the supernatural. On 20 April 1987, when discussing ‘cargo cult’ thinking with community leader Maraaga Sarau, he said to me, “My people are obsessed with money and material things, but do not want to work for it. They are always asking me for money and things. This is why they dream about money.” This is not the normal Keraakie belief about how dreams occur, but since this aid-post orderly had received a Western-type education in Port Moresby in the 1950s, he may have been influenced by it in his assessment of dreams. Also he may have been using this statement because of whom he was addressing, believing this to be the opinion of Europeans. Maraaga is a man, who gives careful thought to the decisions he makes and this is seen in his wise leadership among the Keraakie over many years. Another feature is that leaders are expected to promote the wealth of their community and this is why the villages came to him for money. The evidence of villagers frequently dreaming about people receiving money bear out his assessment of his own people. Yet Maraaga himself also believes in the traditional interpretation of dreams as seen in his telling of a dream on 14 December 1990. In this dream Maraaga saw the tide rising on the Wassi Kussa river and declared that an overdue dinghy would return that day from a trip to Daru. The villagers had become concerned for the men in the dinghy, lest it had overturned at sea, so they rejoiced greatly when it arrived later that morning. In that dream the tide was symbolic of the men in the lost dinghy, and Maraaga believed that the supernatural spirits had communicated with him symbolically about what was actually happening in the unseen present. Among the Keraakie there are differing points of view as to the source of dreams: either human projections or revelations of the supernatural and this society is in a tension between the traditional way of looking at things and the influence of Western thought.

To the Keraakie, dreams are individual experiences of the spirit beings, but they interpret them according to socially devised explanations, making them a social event. Some dreams are made known to the whole community, such as a warning of
a headhunting raid, but others, such as an omen of a death may only be revealed to close family members and friends. Other dreams are not divulged at all because to do so would hinder the desired promise from occurring. The suggested practice of the communal discussion of dreams which are supposed to occur among the Senoi people of Malaysia, does not occur among the Keraakie. In 1993 an Australian Aboriginal community at Walgett mentioned that traditionally they used to consider their dreams together around the camp fire in the morning. However since dreams are interpreted by rules, which the community has created, dreams are both social as well as individual. Stephen noted that the Mekeo valued dreaming as a power:

It is a power deliberately used, though only partially controlled, by men to obtain new information in those areas of doubt, indecision, and ambiguity where the existing social order cannot or does not provide adequate guidelines.

The present social or individual problems that occupy the minds of members of a community may be subject to unconscious attempts to resolve them while they are asleep. Dreams may in this way arrive at solutions to social problems. Examples of this will be seen in the cases of Seegiwa Zaga of Bebeven and Samuel Kawar of Arufe, whose anti-social behaviour burdened them until they perceived a way to obtain relief in dreams. Yet if, on waking, the desired solutions are not obvious in the dreams, interpretations can be made so as to provide the answer wanted. This is seen in that Keraakie interpretations of dreams have tended to change through time, and have been altered to suit the modern situation. When they dream, they often see things that their ancestors never even knew about, so interpretations have to be created for them. Also the set of traditional interpretations for their dreams are carefully considered by the pragmatic modern Keraakie as to whether they are true, and if they fail the test new ones are created. In this sense the dreams, as well as the interpretations, can be assumed to be social projections influenced by time.

In dreams, the dreamer is revealing his or her beliefs and desires in an unconscious way. After making a study of Freud's writings on dreams, Jung commented:
According to Freud the dream, like every psychic product, is a creation, a piece of work which has its motives, its train of antecedents associations; and like any considered action it is the outcome of a logical process, or the competition between various tendencies and the victory of one tendency over another. Dreaming has a meaning, like everything else we do.36

It is believed by psychologists that behind the ‘dream material’ there is ‘latent content’ which may be discovered empirically. The traditional Keraakie also believed that there was a hidden meaning, but they did not believe that this meaning was discovered by analysis of the dreamer’s desires, fears, and the stressful events, which Jung called, “feeling-toned complex of ideas”.37 The Keraakie do not regard dreams as “remnants of a peculiar psychic activity taking place during sleep”.38 When one considers their dreams, there seems to be underlying reasons for them, such as fear of sickness, suffering, raids, ghost attacks and death, which reveal a deep concern about these states, motivated by fear. This latter fear was not just egocentric but also included fear of such things happening to their relatives and friends. Anything that disrupts Keraakie society is dreaded and this is seen in the great effort they invest in seeking to resolve differences. They also dream about food because their lives consist of a struggle to find or produce enough for their needs. This type of dream is motivated either by a fear of hunger or a joy at abundance. They dream about social activities such as the visitation of friends, which the Keraakie appreciate, being obviously motivated by the joy of social relationships. The assembling of the Keraakie as a group is highly valued and not just for practical reasons. These dream motivations are not mere fantasy but are based on experiences of the past or present, which they anticipate will be repeated again in the future.

What people dream is a self-portrait. When dreams are interpreted, the interpreter is also presenting something of himself or herself in the interpretation. After studying the dreams of Freud and Jung, G. William Domhoff noted that the psychoanalysts’ dreams were the expressions of their differing personalities.39 Also the way they interpreted dreams were governed by differing characteristics of their own way of looking at things and thinking. Domhoff declared that “dreams reveal the hidden aspects of our personalities.”40 Being biased by one’s own culture, desires and goals has been noted in the writings of some anthropologists and has received much publicity in a number of critical studies of late. Domhoff himself casts doubts
on the conclusions of Kilton Stewart’s research into Senoi dream theory. When one considers the Keraakie belief in a supernatural source for dreams, and the use of symbols that are very much part of their culture, it is obvious that their dreams are influenced by their cosmology, daily needs and concerns. Since the Keraakie are anxious about death, their inability to manipulate spirit power to control life, their failure to live in harmony with the spirit world and with one another in community, I suggest that the way they interpret dreams is influenced by these foundational issues. The dream event is the symbol, which is signified in the dreamer’s narration, interpreted by the present pressures of life in the Trans-Fly. So in this way some dreams are human projections symbolizing their present needs in a disordered world, which they perceive as emerging out of underlying problems enunciated by their mythology.

Domhoff discusses Fritz Perl’s assertions that most dreams are manifestations of conflicts between various layers of the personality. I would agree with this suggestion but I would enlarge it to include the conflicts that are also obvious in Keraakie society. The majority of their dreams involve conflict of some kind or other, and this emerges from the way they see that ‘time/being’ is a struggle against disorder within nature as they struggle to survive, and this causes present anxiety. Disorder exists at times in inter-tribal fighting but this is a rare feature in the modern Trans-Fly. But every now and then there is conflict between villages or social sections over land, marriage, obligations, or food. Yet it appears that most conflict in Keraakie society occurs between individuals within the same community or between partners in a marriage, revealing deeper conflicts between various layers of the social personality. An example occurred when arch-enemies Seegiwa and Samuel teamed up to obtain by force more wives, showing rebellion against social values, the rights of others and society as a whole. This created an uproar after which the two ‘angry men’ sought to gain reconciliation with society and with the supernatural through Christian-oriented dreams.

* On 30 May 1982, Seegiwa had a dream in which the Christian God spoke to him about leaving his life of evil and reforming himself. He was trying to cross a flooded creek with his bicycle but could not do so. After many attempts in the dream, a voice said to him, “To cross the creek but you have to leave your sin behind.” Seegiwa’s
modern dream contains the usage of the bicycle as a symbol of evil. When this form of transportation first entered the Kerakie area, the local community used to talk with disgust at the pride and individualism of the young riders. Maybe this is why his bad behaviour was symbolized by a bicycle.

* On 6 June 1982, Samuel Kawar dreamed that he saw the Australian church worker preaching in the church and light was radiating out from him. Then the worker went to the grave of a man named Bawtu (who had died from Tetanus ten years before) and raised him to life again. After this dream Samuel sought reconciliation with the church leaders and began attending church regularly, believing that the Christian God had revealed that he should leave his bad behaviour.

When facing wild pigs, snakes, crocodiles, poisonous foods, electrical storms, floods and droughts, the Kerakie see nature as dangerous. The supernatural world with its antagonistic ghosts, spirit beings, and sorcery is another area in which they know controversy. Mystical time based on dreams emerges from their subconscious awareness of their impotence and powerlessness before nature, the supernatural world and death. The dreams they see are interpreted in terms of survival, because they often speak about future danger, death or the promise of food.

To the Kerakie, spirit beings are malicious but in dreams their behaviour can be different and this demands an answer. Sometimes the Kerakie see antagonistic spirit beings in dreams, but on other occasions they are friendly, which confuses the issue. This causes us to ask the question: What is behind this change in behaviour of the spirit world in dream experiences? Is this a projection of human desires? When one considers the whole phenomena of dreams, the Kerakie interpret them as helpful revelations by the spirit beings, which is out of character because the latter are normally considered antagonistic.43 I would suggest that this abnormal behaviour of these ancestral spirits may emerge from their deep desires for a return to the original world of the beginning. The Kerakie carefully compare the past powerful mythological time with the present powerless state of life in this world and are not happy. It appears that they are seeking change, having a deep desire for a restoration to the power, wealth and abundance of the mythological age, through a better relationship with the spirit world.
The Keraakie want to be part of the modern economic world and its abundance of consumer goods. Traditional dreams frequently expressed their desire for food which was wealth, while the modern world has influenced their dreaming to have money, permanent material dwellings, vehicles, an abundance of processed food, and other items. As Peter Lawrence said in a personal communication to Stephen: “There is no revolution of thought or belief but an updating of it as a result of revelation” in dreams. This creates a frustrating situation in which their traditional mystical time promises them wealth and the realities of their infertile environment and lack of economic development deny it.

Belief in dream revelations are a common feature of ‘cargo cults’. In his study of such movements in Road Belong Cargo, Lawrence cites one such case of dream revelation: “Polelesi claimed that an angel had warned her in a dream of the imminence of a Second Flood to destroy the ‘wicked’ and usher in the arrival of cargo for the ‘Elect’.” This same type of dreaming has occurred among the Keraakie. On 9 February 1982, Zorega Arura of Arufe had a dream in which he believed the Christian God told him to confess his bad actions. When he looked around himself in the dream he saw that there were twelve young men following him. They were going to become wealthy. When he woke up he told the Australian church worker and sought to influence the other young men to follow him, as the dream told him. On 1 July 1984, Manze Banai of Arufe dreamed that the Holy Spirit gave him K.5000. So when he woke up he went to ask the Australian church worker where the money was.

From these examples of Keraakie dreams, it is most obvious that there has been a change in their dream content, mainly through the influence of the modern economy. The belief that the spirit beings are revealing truth to them has not changed and they still expect to receive what the dream divulged. In fact some Keraakie thought that the Australian church worker was lying when he said he did not have the money about which the dreams had told them.

In the content of some Keraakie dreams, there has been change to a Christian religious understanding. This involves not only the content but also the source of
dreams. Originally the primeval spirit beings revealed the dream content but now they are no longer the only source of Keraakie dreams. The previously quoted dreams of Scegiwa and Samuel are of this type. These men interpreted their dreams according to their traditional religious beliefs that spirit beings were communicating with them, but they substituted the Christian God. They believed the dreams contained an imperative from authoritative spirit powers and followed it. In these examples the change in content and source of dreams also reveals that Keraakie dreaming is undergoing a change with time.

The Keraakie dream actually takes place at a point in 'time/being' during the night or day, on a certain day in a sequence of days, or in a certain season in their life. They note the time of the dream as seen in this next example. Zuga Tuakwn of Bebeveen dreamed in the wet season of 1981 about seeing a frond fall from a coconut palm. The interpretation of such a sighting was that someone would die, and the next day his brother Seeima died. He told me of this dream on 19 December 1990, almost ten years after the event, saying, "In the wet season before you came to live at Arufe, I dreamed of my brother's death." This shows that the Keraakie remember not only their dreams but also the time when dreamed, according to their traditional dating system. In this case the traumatic event of his younger brother's death was the determining factor as to why he remembered the dream. Numerous others have told me of dreams many years after the events.

Freud proposed that dreams are timeless and wrote about the dream moment: "Dreams take into account the connection which undeniably exists between all the portions of the dream-thoughts by combining the whole material into a single situation." The Keraakie would agree with Freud that the dream holds together as a single event, but they observe the time flow of sub-events within it. In their dreams there is a sequence of sub-events in a linear form, and these are remembered, irrespective of how small the length of time of the event. This was seen in Scegiwa's dream, which has already been mentioned. The dream was not just one action but a number in a time sequence. He tried to swim across the creek and could not. He returned to the shore and tried once again but failed. Dreams are not a monosyllable but a sentence, which again indicates the time sequence within the dream event, and the Keraakie see a sequence in time within their dreams.
Although Edward C. Whitmont and Sylvia B. Perera infer together that, “In the
dimension in which dreams operate, time and space are relativised or suspended,” the
Keraakie have a different set of notions.47 Any dream, which a Keraakie man or
woman dreams, is never in a timeless vacuum because it can only be understood by a
comparison to things within ‘time/being’ in the Trans-Fly. The symbols are words,
objects, or actions in Keraakie daily life and never in a totally different world. The
symbol, in Gaindi Sarau’s dream explanation on 16 December 1990 of the playing of
the Jew’s harp, is symbolic of baying dogs as they track down an animal. Zend of
Pongarki dreamed that he saw a bird of paradise flying all over the place, and
suspected that something was not right. This bird is symbolic of a young girl, so he
enquired about the activities of his daughter (Margaret) and discovered that she was
having an affair. The objects that make up these symbols are real things within time
and have been used by the Keraakie to explain dream events.

The people of the Trans-Fly believe that all things emerged from the
mythological era, therefore the spirit beings give dreams as well as the ability to
dream. This emphasis on the past, as the source of all things, was noted by Williams.
The spirit beings ordained their rituals, and “religious interest for the Keraki
[Keraakie] looks back towards the origin of things.”48 The same understanding exists
within today’s society. Although the majority of Keraakie realize that their dreams
emerge out of the past, it is doubtful whether all perceive that the events of the past
also have an influence. Past experience has provided the dream interpretation
symbols with which they interpret dreams today. The Keraakie realize that the events
seen in dreams are never totally new creations because what is seen has in many
cases actually occurred in similar or identical form in previous real events. Some of
the people seen in dreams have existed or are still alive, while the landscape is
known from past contact with it. And the language spoken is what they have learnt
from birth. In a dream in 1990 a man named Zimaagu saw a huge boat, which he had
seen in Port Moresby, sailing on shallow Lake Saru. This feature, which had been
experienced in the past, was brought into the present dream moment in an impossible
situation. Medard Boss suggested that humanity’s past is a force pervading the
present, after reading Freud’s dream interpretations.49 The Keraakie also have a
strong understanding that the present is the child of the past ‘time/being’ and this also covers dreams.

Communication with the spirit beings is the ultimate meaning of the dream event to the Keraakie. Building on this belief in the involvement of the spirits in dreams, whatever objects, people, actions and words they experience in dreams develops a greater power. Because there is no division of sacred and profane in their traditional thinking, dreaming is both ‘being’ and preternatural ‘Being’. At times the Keraakie see creatures in dreams that are horribly grotesque, so that these dreams are experienced with fear, awe, and sometimes with terror.

These experiences of the supernatural are inaccessible to outside observation because they are experienced individually in the private, unseen and unconscious world of sleep. Dreams are only given reality in social time when the dreamer’s memories are publicly revealed. This public exposure of dreams to selected people, or in some cases to the whole community, add them to social ‘being’ and give them a place in historical time. This re-telling of the dream is probably accompanied by unintentional forgetting of some characteristics, the rejecting of and maybe the elaboration of others. Therefore dreams in social time are only limited editions of the original, when they are given reality in history by being expounded. There are numerous cases of dreams that have a social impact. In 1967, a sick man in Pepaka dreamed that he died and was met by a man of light, who told him to return to the living world and give back all the things that he had stolen. This dream event was still being related years after the dreamer died. In the dry season of 1975, Zeepi of Eniyawa dreamed that he met the Christian God who exposed all the secret things that he had done. In fear, Zeepi woke all his fellow villagers in the middle of the night to tell them of his strange dream. Not all dreams express that interaction with the supernatural as clearly as the last examples do. But to the Keraakie all dreams are mysterious supernatural phenomena.

The Keraakie dream world is believed by them to be time-oriented. What is heard, experienced, or seen in dreams is believed to reveal what has just happened, what is happening, or what is going to happen in ‘time/being’. Dreams are baan baan zi (mirror words), symbols or reflections of reality. Therefore the Keraakie interpret
dreams with this understanding in mind and occasionally find fulfilment of what they expect. Even when the dream fails to eventuate the majority say that the fulfilment is happening in another society. The following examples show the fulfilment: A dream that had a present meaning was told to me by Gaiindi Sarau of Arufe on 16 December 1990, revealing an event that was happening in the dream as well as in the present time. He was attacked by a ghost, which he fought off but woke up screaming. This he said was a real event and also a dream warning of dangerous ghosts wandering around the area. Williams noted a similar occurrence when a ghost attacked a group of sleeping men. An example of a dream portraying events that happened in the immediate past was told to me in 1982 by Somaaku Zuga of Bebeve. In a dream, he saw his brother Bueg’s wife was lying dead on a mat. When he woke, he wondered what it could mean, since his brother had gone to a distant garden a few days before. That morning his brother arrived wailing loudly, since his wife had died the day before. An example of a dream which had a future fulfilment is: On 11 July 1989 Nuwira of Gubav had a dream in which he saw a flood coming towards the village from the north. This meant that bad news would come from the north and the next morning a young man arrived with news of the tragic death of Genei Saawi who had been bitten by a snake the evening before at a northern garden place. Dreams are believed by the Keraakie to be indicators of events in ‘time/being’, because they assume that they are a true interaction with the spirit beings, who are the source of everything, portraying time in the future, the present and the immediate past.

Freud saw dreams as timeless: “They are not ordered temporarily, are not altered by the passage of time; they have no reference to time at all.” Although the Keraakie say that their dreams are time, they are not a physically real time, because they are invisible psychic activities that have to be named in relationship to human ones before they become time. What the spirit beings reveal in dreams is not an unchangeable reality because they may occur or be negated. The dream events may seem to be realistic but they may only be symbolic representations of events and therefore be totally different from normal events in time. When Freud, Jung and others declared that the dream has no time, it appears that they are referring to time that is measured by the clock, which has been only lately introduced to the Keraakie. Dreams, which are constantly being adjusted to fit in with the features of the current social context, are ‘time/being’ to the Keraakie, who see them differently to Freud.
When Keraakie men and women tell their dreams, they anchor them to a point in time, such as the wet or dry season. The substance of these dreams usually contain a series of events, which are interpreted according to past physical reality and occur one after another in a time sequence. When the Keraakie tell their dreams to others, they use the normal everyday language of time and do not use totally different linguistic terms. Dreaming seems to be motivated by events in the past, in the present and the future, especially the latter because the Keraakie live in fear of the unknown events about to happen. Future death is the most dreaded of these unknowns. The symbolic meanings that govern the interpretation of Keraakie dreams are oriented in time, because they say that some dreams point to future, present or immediate past happenings. Therefore, to the Keraakie, dreams are part of ‘time/being’, when the spirit beings and the events of normal ‘time/being’ intersect. The mythological age becomes one with the individual Keraakie in dreams and can influence social ‘being’ through this mystical experience. Dreams are not a timeless image to the Keraakie, because this ‘beingness’ of dreams is time.

Resnik sums up how he sees dreams, and in so doing turns out to support the uniqueness of the Keraakie's perception of dreams and ‘time/being’ in their own cultural way:

I believe one can say that in dreams there is a very special dimension of time, proper to the dreamer’s culture, to the system of values and ‘institutions’ that belong to one’s own territory or world. Social institutions are personified by the super-ego, an entity possessing privileged functions inside the individual’s psycho-physical space.32

We may say in summary therefore, the source of Keraakie dreams is believed to be their past mythological time. Based on that assumption, the meaning of dreams to the Keraakie is that of a mystical communication with the spirit beings, from the past to the present, revealing what has just happened, what is happening, or what is going to happen in the future. As a result, dreams receive their authority from those mythological beings. However dream content is, in the majority of cases, constructed out of their past or present experience in the Trans-Fly, yet dreams can emerge out of present pressures or out a fear of future expectations. And since death is believed to be caused by mythological spirit powers, and dreams come from the same source, the Keraakie are doubly fearful of dream-revelation. The dream event generally consists
of a sequence of sub-events that can be remembered, irrespective of how small the length of time is in the dream event. In the modern era, there has been a changing content and interpretation of dreams showing that they are also influenced by present events in time. Each dream takes place at a point in time during the night or day, on a certain night in a sequence of nights, or in a certain economic season, or at the same time as another event. Because dreams are symbolic, they are subject to interpretation and therefore cannot be accurately timed. The dream event is the symbolic object, which is signified in the dreamer's narration and interpreted by the present pressures of Keraakie disordered existence based upon their past experiences. Only some dreams come true, so the Keraakie are faced with the continuing frustration of uncertainty in the Trans-Fly.

Keraakie dreams are expressions of how they view 'time/being': a collective self-portrait so as to handle anxiety over an unknown future. In their interpretation of these dreams, they are driven by this fear of the future dominated by death in an attempt to seek information about what is going to happen. It also appears to be an attempt to control the future by constructing avoidance features. Dreams, being an extension of their belief that all causation finds its source in the spirit world, serve as a self-protective device based on an assumption that dreams are generally prophetic. What the Keraakie experience in dreams is contrary to their knowledge of the malicious primeval spirits. In dreams the latter are helpful, which appears to hint of a desire for a better relationship with them and manipulation of them to create a satisfactory future.
ENDNOTES:

3 Freud, op. cit., p. 160.
6 Trompf, op. cit., p. 110.
8 Trompf, op. cit., p. 110.
9 F.E. Williams, Field Notes, B.136. (hereafter shortened to WFN)
10 ibid., B200.
13 Trompf, op. cit., p. 115.
17 Williams, WFN, B.200.
18 F.E. Williams, *Papuans of the Trans-Fly*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1936, p. 351 (hereafter shortened to *PTF*).
Some Keraakie people dream and see past people in a living condition. This appears to be a common feature throughout Melanesia, as noted among the Enga people of the Western Highlands and among the Kamano, Usurufa, Jate and Fore peoples of the Eastern Highlands. Ronald M. Berndt commented on the latter people’s methods of communicating with the dead by dreams:

For an undefined period after death a ghost may communicate with living kin through dreams, either voluntarily or in response to a request from the dreamer: chewing himuru bark before sleep is said to be a way of getting in touch with the dead, to seek their advice or help in personal problems. (R.M. Berndt, “The Kamano, Ururufa, Jate, and Fore of the Eastern Highlands,” in Lawrence and Meggitt (eds.), op. cit., p. 86.)

The Keraakie generally do not seek to meet with the ghosts of the dead, except in the case of seeking to find out those who murdered the deceased. The ghosts of the dead are greatly feared, but in dream experiences some are seen indicating that the past has become present.

The Keraakie’s northern neighbours, the Suki, use dreams as a means of discovering sorcerers so that the sorcerized person can be cured. The diviner will sleep next to a patama tree so that the spirit being named kapnase (flesh eater), which lives in it, can tell him in a dream who was responsible. (G.C. Martin, Headhunter, Sydney: Anzea, 1979, p. 76.) The Tangu of the Northern Madang District still do something similar, in which the dreamers and victim confer with one another, discussing possible suspects. (Burridge in Lawrence and Meggitt (eds.), op. cit., p. 235.) The Arufu villagers declared that in the wet season of 1981 a sorcerer from Mibini had a dream in which he saw a Keraakie man named Somaku of Bebedeven carrying out sorcery rituals.
Discerning sorcerers among the Keraakie is done not only by dreams but by a variety of magic rituals. (Williams, PTF, pp. 356, 363.)

Many Melanesian societies interpret dreams as being the dreamer's spirit leaving his or her body to experience the dream's content. This is called the classic dream theory, and there are numerous societies in PNG who believe this. The Huli people of the Southern Highlands are one such society, who believe that “during sleep the soul departs from the body of its own volition, and the dreamer experiences the perceptions of the soul.” (R.M. Glasse, “The Huli of the Southern Highlands,” Lawrence and Meggitt (eds.), op. cit., p. 30.) When Williams asked about the nature of dreams he was told it might be the human spirit seeing the events. (Williams, WFN, B.200.) On 14 December 1990 Maraaga Sarau said, “When we dream, our spirits do not leave our body and go into the future or into another area.” They believe that the dreamer remains in the present and this is where the geenzeen (primeval spirit beings) interact with him or her. Many other Keraakie supported this opinion, while others said they did not know.

25 ibid., p. 40.
29 Williams, “Papuan Dream Interpretations,” Mankind, 2/2 (1936) p. 31.
32 Resnik, op. cit., p. 57.
36 Jung, *Dreams*, op. cit., p. 3.
37 ibid., p. 4.
38 ibid., p. 23.
40 ibid., p. 2.
42 Domhoff, op. cit., p. 111.
46 Freud, op. cit., p. 104.
50 Williams, *PTF*, p. 365.
51 Freud, op. cit., p. 160.
52 Resnik, op. cit., p. 71.
CHAPTER 9
KERAAKIE BEING AS TIME

The Keraakie people do not have a generic word for time, but some of the phenomena of the universe (e.g., sunrise, sunset, day, night, wet season, dry season, etc.) were noted, reflected upon and named individually by them as indicators of what we call ‘time’. The traditional Keraakie did not impose an incorporating concept upon these significant moments, events or durations, because they did not see them as constituting a separate category. In the modern era the English word taim (time) and the word for day(s) evāh have come to mean time as a category. I propose that traditionally the moments, events and durations of existence were time, because the Keraakie did not hold a cultural dichotomy between ‘time’ and ‘being’. They are one and the same, according to Keraakie consciousness, so that ‘time/being’ constitute a reality. The totality of human activities through time and space could be defined as ‘being’. The major institutions of Keraakie social ‘being’; such as religion, economics, kinship, politics, life cycle, space and law are time-oriented and therefore could be included in this category which we call ‘time’. My proposal is that the Keraakie see time as ‘being’, and this will be considered linguistically, epistemologically and ontologically.

As I studied the Keraakie language and culture, I was aware that I was using English metalanguage to describe their ‘being/time’ concepts. Even though the English word ‘being’ will be used, it is the Keraakie understanding that will be sought and translated for an audience that possibly has a different cosmology. Jack Kaminisky agreed with Wittgenstein, that “any analysis of language assumes a language whose syntax can only be shown but never expressed”.¹ This is true because the Keraakie language has its own structure, distinct meanings and grammatical arrangements of words in sentences. They, on occasions, include words which have no meaning, but are added to either help the sound or flow of words. Therefore in this ‘fusion of horizons’, I am hoping to avoid creating a distortion. The terms they use are meaningful to themselves but they cannot be translated exactly.
into English, because that language does not have the same depth of meaning and world view. Time analogies may be observed but cannot be used to produce knowledge. Neighbouring languages have similar words but in some cases they are not exact equivalents. It is only by observing, listening, questioning in their language and experiencing their way of life that an accurate understanding will be possible. This understanding of ‘being’ will also be compared with a variety of meanings presented by other people, philosophers and cultures.

Although some declare that ‘being’ is indefinable, an attempt will be made to define Keraakie ‘being’. The latter consists of the pulsating life of humans, linked to creatures, activities and objects in the world, including the flow of time; an observation many philosophers of time reject. It is similar to Bergson’s point of view in which he saw time as a dynamic quality. ‘Time/being’ to the Keraakie is all their individual and social activities, such as thinking, questioning, perceiving, believing, speaking, laughing, crying, discussing, doing, ritualizing, deciding, creating, struggling to survive, fighting, etc. But Keraakie ‘being’ also includes a human passiveness in birth, life and death under the impact of nature, others and the spirit world. Pierre Bourdieu noted a similar attitude of “submission to the passage of time” among the Kabyle of Algeria. 2 The Keraakie have many verbs ‘to be’ that are used with animate and inanimate things. Although the concept of ordinary ‘being’ is under consideration, they believe that it involves interaction with the mysterious world of spirit powers that are apart from yet part of nature (bandmun yaam: ways/spirit of the land, world). They do not categorize these extraordinary powers, phenomena, rituals and activities under one word, but use the same word yaam (being, way of being, and spirit) for both ordinary and supernatural reality. Therefore I will call this preternatural world ‘Being’ as opposed to ‘being’ of everyday existence.

This close relationship between ‘time’ and ‘being’ in Keraakie understanding causes one to question whether Heidegger’s well known book, Being and Time, presents a similar position. Paul Edwards, the editor of the Encyclopedia of Philosophy, has summarized that, “more sober and rational persons will continue to regard the whole Heidegger phenomenon as a grotesque aberration of the human mind.” 3 In spite of what has been called ‘impenetrable jargon’, I take the middle
ground that Heidegger has something important to say. Although his statements correspond strikingly with Keraakie statements on the subject, there is great doubt as to whether the meaning is the same. Therefore we need to clarify Heidegger's German concepts of *sein* and *dasein*. He uses a capitalized 'Being', which does not refer to an entity or a property in things, but as presence as opposed to having no existence. The Keraakie or English term 'being' can be used existentially, meaning 'he is' or as the Keraakie state: *bee* (3rd person singular) *gi* (verbal auxiliary) *yam* (is). Also 'being' can be a copula: 'he is hot' or in the Keraakie language: *bee* (3rd person singular) *waavia* (hot) *yam* (is). Or 'being' can be used in an indentificatory way, such as 'he is my brother' or as a Keraakie would say: *bee* (3rd person singular) *taande* (my) *nangan* (brother) *yam* (is).

However Heidegger does not concern himself with these distinctions in the uses of the verb 'to be'. Instead he asks what is the meaning of 'Being'; what causes 'Being' to matter? In other words, what distinguishes the 'Being' of a thing from the 'being' of a non-thing? He describes 'being' in its daily context, using the German word *da-sein*: 'being there/here,' stressing three basic structures. The first fact of 'being-there' in the world is thrownness (*Befindlichkeit*) or attunement, or disposition or realizing that we are in the world. The next feature of 'being-there' in the world involves understanding (*Vorstellen*) or projecting ways to be. Another feature of 'being-there' in the world is discourse, talk (*Rede*), because humanity is always discussing, addressing and engaging in possibilities. Because 'being-there' is a 'happening' in daily life, it is part of time. *Da-sein* 'is characterized by a time-character.'

What is Heidegger's understanding of time? He declares, "*Dasein* must also be called 'temporal' in the sense of Being 'in time'." But "temporality 'is' not an entity at all." Time is in Being and Being is in time. *Befindlichkeit* or thrownness is being aware that we are in the world and this fact corresponds to the past. People are what they are because of the past. *Vorstellen* or understanding means projecting into future possibilities, because *Da-sein* is ahead of itself, directing itself towards the future. *Rede* is discoursing about future possibilities. The eventual end of 'Being' in time is death. Heidegger declared, "That *Present* which is held in authentic temporality and which thus is *authentic* itself, we call the 'moment of vision'*. What the ordinary
world calls ‘time’, Heidegger called inauthentic. Authentic time is a unity of the past, present and future, which is defined in the term Sorge (care).

This unity of time in its own ‘potentiality-for-being’, involves the primordial phenomenon of the future as coming towards itself. Heidegger sees the past as being the result of the future; “the character of ‘having been’ arises, in a certain way, from the future”. Time is a unity and one’s projected future, based on one’s past, results in one’s authentic present. Heidegger says time is “the unity of a future which makes present in the process of having been.”¹⁰ This complex understanding of time can be seen to have an existential reality, but one doubts if it is the same as what the Keräskie understand as time. As Alfred Gell puts it,

Heidegger’s book is metaphysical prescription, not psychological description, and everything that constitutes normal experience is condemned from the start as ‘inauthentic.’ Being and Time is about transcending the categories of ordinary, inauthentic, everyday understanding of the world, so as to experience an authentic ‘moment of vision’ (Augenblick).¹¹

Thomas Sheehan agrees with this assessment of Heidegger’s understanding of temporality: “It is worth pointing out that words like ‘temporality’ and ‘time’ had almost nothing to do with naturalistic chronos. Rather, they referred to the phenomenological movement of disclosure”.¹²

What did Heidegger regard as inauthentic time? He rejected public time, because it is based on social interaction and not in our own being which is the ‘origin of temporality’. This world understanding of time is a waiting, an expecting, anxiety about time, a wasting of time, a using of time, and not having enough time. It is an infinite succession of instants, which are measured according to a social structure. Heidegger regarded time measured by clocks, as inauthentic because it is an impersonal imposition of a measuring structure. This infinite flow backwards (or forward) of ‘now-points’, he declared as inauthentic because it forgets the ‘existential-ontological structure of time’, which he saw as a ‘unity of past and future’ in the moment of vision (Augenblick).¹³ Robert Solomon summed up Heidegger’s ‘authentic time’ as:
Authentic time is not a succession of instants, but is a "unity of past and future in the 'now'." In this sense, authentic time differs from everyday time seemingly not so much in its conception of time, but in its view of the importance of the future and the past.14

This includes an authentic understanding of one's death, as being the final potential of Dasein, which holders of public time see as being the enemy.

Archaeologist Christopher Gosden commented on Heidegger's paradoxial understanding of time, as emerging out of human immersion in real life. Heidegger saw time as part of people's physical involvement with the world and not detached from it. Gosden interpreted Heidegger's philosophy, saying:

Everydayness has its own essential structures, the chief of which is temporal. Time is central to coping with the world. Time is not a successive sequence of "nows", a series of points to be measured moving from an infinite past into an infinite future. Heidegger, by contrast, felt time to be a structure of occurrence, a style of existence. Time is a human dimension and unfolds in action.15

This is similar to how the Keraakie understand time, which will cause our study to consider other Heideggerian features. But there are notable differences, because the Keraakie see time in their own unique way.

There are a number of areas in which the Keraakie seem to agree with Heidegger's understanding. The mathematization of nature is not part of their traditional thinking on time, so they too see clock-measured time as inauthentic, rejecting the "unreality" of measuring time which is to be lived. The concept of using or wasting time, not having enough time, lateness, or waiting for the right time are not part of authentic time to the Keraakie. Time events occur, when things happen, people are ready and not according to an artificial time structure. Although they see time as involving succeeding features, they do not consider them as a flow of abstract instants. They are events or durations and not an abstract grid, such as years, months, hours, minutes or seconds, thrust on nature. The latter are artificial and therefore inauthentic. The Keraakie see themselves as the origin of temporality, because each person is his or her own time in society. Each is his or her own 'moment of being' in birth, growth, marriage, death or whenever each activates himself or herself to act.
The Keraakie seem to think as Heidegger does, that time is not an entity, but, in contrast, they do see entities as time; such as people, events and phenomena.

A superficial comparison of the Keraakie’s physical understanding of time will now be made with Heidegger’s existential one. His concept of ‘throwness’ is similar to that of the Keraakie because they are very much aware of themselves being in a world established and influenced by the past. People are what they are because of the past. Heidegger’s concept of ‘understanding’, which means projecting into future possibilities, is completely foreign to the Keraakie. They do not consciously direct themselves towards the future, yet in an unconscious way they do. The concept of ‘discouraging’ about future possibilities, is different to Keraakie discussion which is basically concerned with the past. Heidegger’s understanding of ‘Being’ which sees the future as coming towards itself, sounds similar to the Keraakie’s observation that the future is flowing towards them, ‘being’ is the result of the future. Heidegger saw time as a unity; based on one’s past, projecting to the future, resulting in an authentic present. The Keraakie view of time is radically different, seeing an authentic present based only on an authoritative past, which is the source of all things. They see the future bringing death and making the present inauthentic, because death is not the fulfillment of one’s potential, but the destruction of it. Thus there is an unconscious projection of themselves into future possibilities.

The evidence for a Keraakie definition of ‘time/being’ will now be considered in an outline of their daily life. In the morning, generally the Keraakie people rise when the light of the approaching sun indicates that the day has begun. Often they are awakened before this point by the cries of the birds that seem to be more aware of the coming day. An important factor governing rising is the presence of (or lack of) dark clouds or rain which can deter the Keraakie. Yet, if a man wishes to shoot nocturnal animals before they retreat to the dark jungle at dawn, he must rise before sunrise to hunt them. During July to September the southeast winds blow, causing cool nights and it is common to see people warming themselves around fires long before sunrise. Therefore in their daily existence there is no definable point in ‘time’ to rise. People awake from sleeping - kaanah (lying down) yaam (being), and after a consideration of the light and weather, rise to relate actively with the world around them. This is the moment of rising. The actual moment of rising is ‘time/being’ but
is not an absolute since it is controlled by the irregularity of the weather, temperature, birdcalls, human desires and social activities.

When the Keraakie women rise, they invariably sweep around their houses, removing the dog droppings and leaves that have fallen during the night. But rain can delay this task. As for the men, a different pattern seems to govern their lives. Their rising could be called ‘transcending self to achieve the moment of being’ so that interaction with the world can take place. This is seen in that during the night a leak in the bark roof disturbed a man’s sleep, so that he had to move his sleeping mat to a drier spot in the house. When the man rises in the morning, he knows that he must do something about fixing the leaking roof, but nothing will be done while there are dry areas in the house on which to sleep. When numerous leaks reduce the living area to a bare minimum, the man will be forced to take his family, relatives, and whoever he can influence, to the bush to cut bark to fix the roof. He emerges from his passive self, overcomes his inertia, and actively relates to his immediate environment. Necessity produces constructive activity and this ‘moment of being or becoming’ is an important point in time to the Keraakie. They call it *waarophat* (to do) *novongo* (point of, about to): the point of doing or *mende* (desire) *de novaar* (has arrived). Some times they simply use the word *mende* (desire) to describe this point in time.

A similar pattern occurs when a crack appears in their canoes; either caused by the hitting of a submerged object, a natural flaw in the wood or the heat of the sun. Clay is placed in and on the crack to keep the water from entering the canoe and wetting their property. Nothing permanent will be done until the crack widens to the point where clay will no longer keep out the water, and their bailing cannot keep pace with the water seeping in. Then the canoe owner will cut down a tree to fashion another canoe. Again the constraint of the moment causes active ‘being’. When white ants begin their devastating assault upon a house, the owner knows that the end is inevitable. Nothing is done because the ants cannot be permanently stopped. Only when the house is at the point of collapsing will the owner build a new house. Compulsion brings about active ‘being’, and this ‘moment of being’ is time.

The Keraakie generally cook and eat when they are hungry and not according to an abstract pattern of three meals thrust upon daily life. Frequently the Keraakie of
Arufe commented that the watch on the European’s wrist decided when he ate and not the hunger indicator of his stomach. It seemed so artificial and unnatural to them. The first meal of the day usually occurs when the sun is midway between the horizon and directly overhead, but it can be earlier or later depending on hunger. The evening meal is cooked when the sun is setting and giving light to see what needs to be done. But, frequently the males only ate this meal when they came home after hunting in the twilight or after social activities. Usually their meals consist of tubers; either yams, cassava, taro, or sweet potato in that order of preference. This shows change through time because Francis Williams said that taro was more preferred to cassava in the 1920-30s. If a hunter comes home with an animal or fish, it is cooked immediately and eaten before it decomposes in the hot tropical climate. Necessity governs the moment of ‘being’. On the night of 16 January 1999, I was woken at 9.40 pm to eat freshly killed cassowary meat, because the hunter had just arrived home. The Keraakie do not eat according to a pattern because the natural events of their existence (the pangs of hunger or the catching of an edible creature) are time. In other words ‘the moment of being’ is time. It is the point where their way of life based on the past becomes active at the conjunction of future events becoming the present. This raises the question whether Heidegger’s moment of vision (Augenblick) is similar to the Keraakie ‘moment of being’?

Among the traditional Keraakie, bathing did not occur when one was unclean, covered by mud, filth or dust, but when the water was warm in the middle of the day. This time was the same during the cooler southeast season, or in the hotter seasons of the year, but for different reasons. In the cooler season the middle of the day was the warmest time to bath, while in the hotter seasons of the year, the middle of the day was when they wanted to cool off. Probably the most likely reason is that they had no towels and used the midday sun to dry off their wet bodies. Yet with the introduction of day-long paid work, school time patterns and towels, bathing has changed to be at the beginning of or/and the end of the day. Ultimately, human desire is the controlling factor governing when bathing occurs, and not an abstract time structure.

The main feature of Keraakie ‘being’ is gardening. They are always considering the need to prepare, plant, protect or harvest their gardens, so that when walking along a jungle track they will carry on a verbal commentary about the places
that were (or are to be) gardened in that area. This is similar to Heidegger’s *Rede* (discouraging about future possibilities). This is not just an individual obsession, because gardening is a community affair. A man may be considering where to plant a new garden but he is not alone because all are thinking of the same thing. There is no set time to begin cutting down the jungle for a new garden but the moment one man starts, all generally commence work. This ‘moment of being’ is a social one to the Keraakie. All of their daily activities can be influenced by wet weather, and I have often heard of planned garden work delayed because of it. Planting has been linked to many natural features that occur, such as the emergence of the stars called *meres meres* (Pleiades), or when the *yubatbat* birds call, or when the *kerta* tree leaves fall, or when the *saawa* fruit ripen, or when the south-east wind ceases blowing. These visible or felt features become moments of ‘time/being’. There are numerous other features like this in Keraakie culture, in which words are both time indicators and acts of ‘being.’ As soon as the yam leaves begin to turn brown (indicating completion of growth), people will commence digging up some of the mature yams to eat. Yet hunger is the governing factor for some; driving them to dig up some of their yams, even before the leaves turn fully brown. Therefore in regard to their gardening, ‘time/being’ is a matter of events in nature, astronomy, social pressure and human desire.

During the wet season, ‘being’ is a struggle to survive for the Keraakie, and it is colloquially called ‘hunger’ since during this time food supplies are scarce. They have to scavenge in the bush for anything edible: nuts, fruits, roots, leaves, bamboo shoots, insects, birds, eggs, animals, fish and reptiles. This time is sometimes called fruiting days. They eat over 30 different wild fruits to meet their hunger. They also scavenge through the jungle and dig up bush roots many of which are poisonous. Government agriculturist Bruce French, who visited the area in August 1982, referred to a poisonous root called *pongar*, which was “the first time I have ever seen this plant (*operculina turpethum*) grown as food”.

These tubers are baked in anthill ovens, shredded, placed in plaited bags and immersed in flowing water to remove the poison. During this time, bamboo shoots, of which there are four main types, *kaazan*, *gwegwen*, *aaha gwegwen*, and *eer gwegwen*, produce shoots in that time sequence and are a major source of food. By the time the top fronds of *eer gwegwen* bamboo bend over the Keraakie are very hungry and this time is called the ‘real hungry’
(zeeruhivi) time. The people say that, when they eat these shoots, their stomach does not feel satisfied and rumbles continually. The piths of various palm trees and the leaves of other trees are also eaten during the wet season. Because of adequate water in the creeks for processing, sago palms are cut and the sago flour is extracted. But because of the devastating droughts and bush fires, sago palms also struggle to survive and are never in large numbers. The Keraakie seek the eggs of many birds, reptiles and other creatures, as well as hunt for insects, grubs, birds, newly hatched fish, prawns, lizards and whatever else they can find to eat. Crocodiles lay their eggs in the wet season and stand guard because humans and other creatures, such as goannas, seek to steal them. But these reptiles are also hunted for their meat. The wet season is a difficult time as the Keraakie struggle to survive.

The traditional Keraakie did not have any form of permanent lighting to overcome the darkness of the night. Certain tree barks, when lit, gave temporary lighting, but the people usually depended upon cooking fires for light. Therefore the night was a time when they could not perform any task that demanded precise workmanship. Nocturnal activities were usually confined to social ones around a fire; such as telling stories, performing ceremonies or dancing, but the latter events could be hindered by rain. In the pre-colonial era males would go hunting in the moonlight, but this activity was not highly successful since they were firing arrows at the noise of moving animals or vague forms in the semi-darkness. Generally the animals heard and saw the hunters long before the hunters saw them. In the modern era, the Keraakie use torches on dark nights to hunt wallabies and are more successful. In the wet season the mosquitoes swarm in plague proportions and force the Keraakie to seek refuge and sleep beside their smoky fires. The night was generally one of inactive ‘being’.

As can be seen in this short outline of daily life among the Keraakie, they see ‘time/being’ influenced by immediate necessities and do not have a global understanding of it. They see events repeating themselves in a pattern but because they are constantly changing under the influence of numerous factors, ‘time/being’ is irregular. There is no social structure that governs planning and activities of life in the Trans-Fly, but time sets the parameters to the structure of ‘being’. Personal and social will has a great influence on the ‘moment of being’ when they transcend self,
their inactivity and do something. When Gosden studied similar cultures, he observed “that time is not an abstract entity, but a quality of human involvement with the world” and this is similar to the Keraakie understanding.\textsuperscript{18}

The physical world is, exists, is a given or is an agreed fact, to the Keraakie, who see themselves as an indivisible part of it. Humans are seen as fundamentally different and superior to animals, fish, birds, reptiles, insects, soil, stones, and trees which are named \textit{rokkaar} (things), a word which cannot be applied to people. The Keraakie refer to nature as \textit{baandman} (belonging to the land) \textit{yaam} (being, spirit) yet each thing or creature has its own unique type of existence. This term ‘land’ has, through education, taken on the global term for ‘world’, but since only one Keraakie man (Aniba Bumai) has been outside Papua New Guinea, one suspects that the term world has a vague and limited meaning in social discourse. All humans and other things; animate or inanimate, cannot exist in a vacuum separate from time (and space), which is one of the reasons why it appears that the Keraakie see ‘time/being’ as a unity. The linguistic terms for ‘being’ will be considered because “language – in particular, vocabulary – is the best evidence of the reality of ‘culture,’ in the sense of a historically transmitted system of ‘conceptions’ and ‘attitudes’”.\textsuperscript{19}

How the Keraakie see time as ‘being’ will now be analysed. Heidegger perceived the importance of language in understanding the culture of a people, and also suggested that the understanding of ‘being’ is greatly influenced by the language a people speak. Heidegger concluded:

\begin{quote}
Language is the house of being. In its home, man dwells. Those who think and create with words are the guardians of this home. Their guardianship accomplishes the manifestation of Being insofar as they bring the manifestation to language and maintain it in language through their speech.\textsuperscript{20} It is predominantly in speaking that man’s being-in-the-world takes place.\textsuperscript{21}
\end{quote}

Are the Keraakie aware of their language and do they analyse it? While many do not appear to think about it, there are some who consider their language objectively and compare it with other languages. They are aware of the subtle differences between the numerous dialects of their language family of which they declare the \textit{nambo} (Keraakie dialect) to be the source since they own the sacred site at Kurecmgu.

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Maraaga of Arufe was outstanding in alerting me to the hidden meanings of their complex verbal system. On 5 January 1994, Yokaar Gavai and other educated young men pointed out the 'backward flow' of their time, saying it was different to English. At times they disagree over the meaning of words such as the word for 'judging': some said it was falihat: to choose in judging, while others prefer faaoraahat: to split things in judging. They comment at times on Keraakie women mispronouncing certain linguistic clusters. The word for 'overcast' is pronounced keveeg by the women while the men pronounce it as keveegwa. This could be because some of the married women come from other dialectical groups. Some of the Keraakie stand back from their language and laugh over the sounds of some of their own words. One word they laughed about was taggil, which means 'a hook for hanging things on'. This may be because of their contact with the English word 'giggle'. I would say that some of the Keraakie are aware of the importance of their language as a receptacle or bearer of their unique culture, so consideration will now be given to some of these culturally oriented linguistic features.

The Keraakie use the normal verb ‘to be, to exist’ when talking about all features and activities of ‘being’. The main verb is bee (he, she, it) yam (is) The Keraakie frequently use the verbal auxiliary, go (1st person singular), ga (2nd person singular) and gi (3rd person singular and all plural forms) in these sentences. The verb ‘to be’ does not have an infinitive, but uses eemsuhat (the infinitive of the verb ‘to sit’) and ayaarhat (an infinitive of unknown origia) to mean ‘to be.’

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<th>singular</th>
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<td>1st person</td>
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<td>yand gi yenam (we are)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>bam ga nam (you are)</td>
<td>bam gi enre (you are)</td>
<td>bam gi enam (you are)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>bee gi yam (he/she/it is)</td>
<td>bee gi enre (they are)</td>
<td>bee gi enam (they are)</td>
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These verbal forms are used of all things, indicating that the Keraakie see all things as having ‘being’ or existence. Here are some examples.
This is murder:  \textit{yana} (this) \textit{gemoh} (killing) \textit{yaam} (way) \textit{yaam} (is).

A spirit is here:  \textit{ninyi} (spirit) \textit{yana} (this/here) \textit{yaam} (is).

It is the wet season:  \textit{y'hokwar} (wet season) \textit{yaam} (is).

It is a pig:  \textit{bee} (it) \textit{maamoi} (pig) \textit{yaam} (is).

The arrow is there:  \textit{tarmar} (arrow) \textit{kat} (there) \textit{yaam} (is).

The house is here:  \textit{mongo} (house) \textit{yana} (here) \textit{yaam} (is).

He is cold:  \textit{bee} (he) \textit{krueer} (cold) \textit{yaam} (is).

The Keraakie language contains many other verbs that indicate ‘being and becoming’, suggesting that ‘being’ occupies an important feature in their thinking. These will be considered briefly.

The verb \textit{bee} (he) \textit{novrot} (is being, existing, doing, or living habitually) is the intransitive form of the transitive verb \textit{yaavrot}: ‘he will do something’. \textit{Novrot} means; ‘doing things naturally without any reference to doing things to an object’. This verb is only used with animate things as seen in the example: ‘a crocodile was living/doing in this river: \textit{gasa kovrotao yana eergevaam}’. In other words the crocodile was living as a crocodile normally or habitually does in this river.

Another verb ‘to be’ is \textit{bee} (he) \textit{yemaarengar} (is sitting/living in a state of rest). It is just one of a group of verbs, which indicate by the verbal ending \textit{ngar} that the subject exists in a state of rest. An example is; \textit{Aniba yemaarengar mango} (house) \textit{kituaraan} (on the verandah): Aniba is on his house verandah.

One verb ‘to be’, that the Keraakie use, has numerous unrelated meanings: affecting, building, singing, and giving. This is \textit{yereemet}, the noun subject of which takes the suffix \textit{aam}. Here are some examples:

he is hot (heat is affecting him):  \textit{waavtaam} (heat) \textit{yereemet} \textit{bee}.

he is building a house:  \textit{yamo} (he) \textit{mango} (house) \textit{yereemet}.

he is singing a song:  \textit{yamo waah} (song) \textit{yereemet}.

he is giving food:  \textit{yamo nane} (food) \textit{yereemet}.
Another verb that has a similar meaning to the previous verb is yewend (it is affecting or influencing him). Some examples of its usage are:

komahaam yewend bee: sleep is affecting him, he is sleepy. The subject (sleep: komah) indicator of this transitive verb is the suffix aam.

zeeruhaam yewend bee: hunger is affecting him, he is hungry. The subject (hunger: zeeruh) indicator of this transitive verb is the suffix aam.

The Keraakie have another verb which seems to have an identical meaning, yivo, meaning ‘it is affecting or influencing him’. Some examples of its usage are:

gergeraam yivo: shaking is affecting him, he is shaking. The subject (shivering, shaking: gerger) indicator is the suffix aam.

komahaam yivo: sleep is affecting him, he is sleepy. The subject (sleep: komah) indicator of this transitive verb is the suffix aam.

Another verb that means ‘it is affecting him or he is feeling it’ is kanivonga. Some examples of its usage are:

euhehaam kanivonga bee: joy is affecting him, he is happy. The subject is happy (euheh) and takes a subject indicator aam.

meemee mehehaam kanivonga bee: depression is influencing him, he is depressed. The subject is bad thoughts, depression (meemee meheh) and takes a subject indicator aam.

The Keraakie see ‘being’ as the moment when people and things are changing or becoming. Besides the future form of the normal verb ‘to be’ (bee yam) there are five other verbs, which state this sense of becoming. Here are some examples:

bee (he) takraat (pain) bee (will) yam (be, become): he will become sore.
bee (it) kitong (big) bee (will) kayetunga (be, become): it will become big.
bee (it) meer (good) bee (will) koamdonga (be, become): it will become good.
nakwa (anger) bee (will) keewerenga (become): anger will become, appear, it will be angry.
krueeer (cold) bee (will) kowihonga (appear): cold will become, appear, it will be cold.

takraaat (pain) bee (will) kovaaranga (appear): pain will become, appear, it will be sore.

In the Keraakie language there are a number of words that indicate ‘being’, and also have many other different shades of meaning. The word yaaum has broad semantic scope: ‘being, way of being, reality, substance, abstract feature, a happening, a spirit being, way, ritual, a mysterious phenomena.’ This word may be added to any verbal noun, adverb, adjective or noun to indicate a distinct way or state of being in the Keraakie world. Examples of its usage are:

haamba (village) yaaum: village way of living (existence in a village).

zeeruh (hunger) yaaum: being hungry (a state of hunger).

waavat roh (love) yaaum: way of being loving.

yaaum Dambaaro ergevaan (creek) yaaum: a spirit is in Dambaaro creek.

yaaum nambo (what) yaaum (is): what is happening?

yubeseer (ghost protection) yaaum (ritual): ritual performed to protect against ghosts.

yaaum de novaar (is, appeared): a mysterious phenomenon exists, appeared.

karmaai ziende (myth) yaaum nambo (what) yaaum (is): what is the meaning of the myth?

bee (it) yaaumovna (without reality) yaaum (is): it is without reality.

The term yaaum, as an indicator of ‘being/time’, is used frequently by the Keraakie when they see and reflect upon the features of daily life. Heidegger made the comment that “the substance of man is existence”, and this is similar to how the Keraakie see ‘being’ - eerveende (people’s) yaaum (substance) beu (auxiliary) yaaum (is) ayoarhat (to live). Every emotion, action, value, attitude or thought that the Keraakie experience can be bracketed with the word yaaum to express different types of ‘being’. Examples of these stative forms are nakwa yaaum (anger), mwn yaaum (peace), unye yaaum (deceit), eeeverensah yaaum (jealousy), berber yaaum (fear), and euheh yaaum (joy). The phrase ‘yaaum zi’ oral history, literally means ‘being words’. It refers to stories, events and experiences in the past and present life of the Keraakie.
people. This concretization of the human activities of ‘being’ in time into oral history, which is remembered and constantly repeated, shows the close relationship between ‘being’ and time. The Keraakie divide yam into satisfactory and unsatisfactory types, and they see them being caused by the spirit world, which is seen in the fact that a yam (nameless spirit) is supposed to have lived at Dambaaro waterfall, about two kilometers from Arufe village. No one knew what it was but it was believed to be dangerous. Galau Tekam of Arufe village said on 2 December 1995 that when the Keraakie people passed by the Dambaaro waterfall, they fearfully turned their eyes away lest they see the yam (spirit being) there and it attack them. Spirit possession is translated as yam de novaar (a spirit is or came upon someone). This same sentence, depending on the context, can also mean: the sun rose, a social disturbance occurred, a new idea emerged, or a miscarriage happened. Thus yam can reveal daily being as well as the mysterious world of ‘Being’.

Another word that means ‘being’ is herge and can be used of only living things such as flora, fauna, and human life.

The Keraakie use another phrase, eemsuh yam, which is a derivative of the verb ‘to sit’ (eemsuhat), and means ‘way of living, being or sitting’ to indicate the characteristics of one’s ‘being’. Although the word, eemsuh indicates inactive sitting, this Keraakie phrase involves the idea of active ‘being’. Frequently one hears the statement, “Our way of living (eemsuh yam) is hard, being a struggle to survive”. This active understanding is also seen in their word eemsuhvaav which means ‘the place where a person lives’. The word chair is translated by eemsuh (sitting) rokaar (thing). Another phrase, which is identical in meaning, is ayaarah yam. The modern Keraakie do not see this phrase as being derived from any other word in their language, so it may have been adopted from a neighbouring language.

The Keraakie word viv has many meanings: body (individual and social), reality, truth, ultimate, flesh, meat, substance, essence, spirit and inner sense. Yet in a vital way, viv is linked to ‘being’, because the body (individual and corporate) is the source of, gives awareness of, structures and actions ‘time/being’ among the Keraakie. The body has inherited a physical past from its parents and a social past from its community, on which it acts in the present, and is thrusting itself into the
future by its growth, existence and coming death. Each human body is a collection of
size-dates and each social grouping records its time according to births, marriages
and deaths. Another way that they use vivi in a time-oriented way is as a suffix
indicating extremes or reality. Here are some examples:

yeeguvivi: very early in the morning.

kaakavivi: very close in time and space.

zitevivi: the evening just before darkness.

Williams mentions vivi in conjunction with a type of sorcery (pivi-devenar [vivi
devener]) suggesting that its meaning was ‘excreta’ but this is not so. The
Keraakie word for excreta is nei. Williams says the word vivi comes from the
Gundaman language (east of the Keraakie around the village of Dimisisi) but this is
doubtful, because their word for body is miq. Vivi is related to the Rouku and
Aaramba languages’ word fefe and the Suki language word nitnit, all of which have
some of the same meanings. According to the modern Keraakie, a vivi devener eer
is a man who sees his own spirit or essence outside of his body, just before he dies.

From these linguistic terms used by the Keraakie for ‘being’, a number of
preliminary observations must be noted. As far as humans are concerned, ‘being’ is
closely connected to the actions of the body in the body corporeal; thinking,
speaking, working, eating and sleeping. When the Keraakie objectively observe the
events of ‘being’, they never completely detach themselves from the reality of the
body.

Although life in society is seen as dynamic ‘being’, they also see themselves as
being passive under the pressure of external forces such as nature and preternatural
‘Being’. Daily ‘being’ also involves actively manipulating these spirit powers for
their own benefit. What they experience is never in a vacuum because it is given a
value judgment of either satisfaction or dissatisfaction.

The Keraakie language states this understanding like this:
bee (it) foiotaroro (satisfactory) yam (is): it is satisfactory, adequate, enough, sufficient, balanced, okay, good.
bee (it) foiotarorovna (unsatisfactory) yam (is): it is unsatisfactory, inadequate, insufficient, imbalanced, not good.

The Kerakie remember the past, see the present and anticipate the future in a qualitative way. Since something can change from being satisfactory to being unsatisfactory or the reverse, this has led them to see ‘being’ indivisibly linked to ‘time’. The words foioh: finished, complete, and whole, and foiohat: ‘to end’ are related to time, and are used in relation to such things as work, ritual, seasons and days. Although these words: ‘satisfactory’ and ‘end’, come from the same linguistic source the Kerakie never see death as a satisfactory end. Death involves individual and social loss as well as the disruption of the community, which is unacceptable. They refer to death as kar yam: ‘being dead, existing in a state of death’, which is not existence, but ‘non-being’, or rather ‘anti-being’.

When Fredrik Barth analysed the language of the Baktamin people of the highlands of the West Sepik Province of PNG, he perceived that they “are highly oriented towards space in ordering their experience”. On the other hand the Kerakie verbs are orientated in relation to time, space, and people. In their verbal system they use six tense forms to accurately designate when events occurred in the past in relation to the speaker by tense indicators and particles in the verbs. This has already been studied in Chapter 4. Space is also indicated in the verb through infixes, which reveal the object’s movement towards the speaker (internal indicator – an or n) or away from the speaker (internal indicator – ang or ng) or in a settled state. The first example presented here is a transitive verb:

He will take the fruit: bee (he) bee (will) taanenga (take) boie (fruit).
He will bring or take the fruit and come: bee (he) bee (will) taanenga (take) boie (fruit).
He will take away the fruit: bee (he) bee (will) tangaaanenga (take) bote (fruit).
The second example presented here is an intransitive verb:
He will wander: bee bee naarend.
He will wander towards: bee bee nanaarend.
He will wander away from: bee bee nanggarend.

The Keraakie verbs are people-oriented and any statement about people must be carefully indicated in the verb as seen in these sentences. The prefixes are w (1st singular), n (2nd singular), y (3rd singular), yen (1st plural), and ew (2nd and 3rd plural). This first group reveals the object through prefixes as well as having pronouns in the sentences:

He will see me: yamo (he) yand (me) bee (future indicator) waaket (will see).
He will see you (singular): yamo (he) bam (you) bee (future indicator) naaket (will see).
He will see him: yamo (he) bee (him) bee (future indicator) waaket (will see).
He will see us: yamo (he) yand (us) bee (future indicator) yenwaaket (will see).
He will see you (plural): yamo (he) bam (you) bee (future indicator) ewaaket (will see).
He will see them: yamo (he) bee (them) bee (future indicator) ewaaket (will see).

Another group of verbs reveals the object through prefixes: kwana (1st singular), kana (2nd singular), ta (3rd singular), tana (1st plural), tawa (2nd plural and 3rd plural), as well as having pronouns in the sentences.

I will give it to you (singular): yando (I) bee (future indicator) kwangaamong (will give) be (to you).
You (singular) will give it to him: bamo (you) bee (future indicator) taraamo (will give) ye (to him).
He will give it to me: yamo (he) bee (future indicator) kwangaamong (will give) ta (to me).
We will give it to you (plural): yandven (we) bee (future indicator) tawangaamongam (will give) beve (to you).
You (plural) will give it to us: bamoven (you) bee (future indicator) tanangaamonge (will give) teve (to us).
They will give it to them: yamoven (they) bee (future indicator) tawangaamonge (will give) yeve (to them).
The Keraakie language indicates that the cognitive, affective and evaluative events, which precede the spoken word, is ‘being’ to them. This is seen in the Keraakie transitive and intransitive verbs used for communication. The normal transitive form involves the subject initiating action on the direct object, while in the normal intransitive form the subject acts but not upon an object. In some cases the transitive object becomes the subject of the intransitive form, while in others the subject of the transitive verb remains the subject of the intransitive form. The transitive form may also occur without an object. The Keraakie language intransitive form takes a ‘n’ or ‘k’ prefix while the transitive form takes ‘y’ or ‘t’ prefix. When they use the intransitive form, its relationship to the transitive form is normally predictable:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intransitive verb</th>
<th>Transitive verb</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It is moving:</td>
<td>kitaunga</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He laughs:</td>
<td>nuret</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He rises:</td>
<td>naanot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is pouring out:</td>
<td>naassen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is biting:</td>
<td>naran</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>he is moving it:</td>
<td>titronga</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>he is mocking him:</td>
<td>yuret</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>he is raising it:</td>
<td>yaanot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>he is pouring it:</td>
<td>yaassen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>he is biting it:</td>
<td>yaran</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the case of Keraakie verbs ‘to communicate’ the meanings are not as predictable as one would expect. Their speech-acts tend to have a sociocentric inclination, with speech involving not just the speaker but the action of the group "sharing responsibility for the implications of the utterance".

The Keraakie understanding of speech involves seeing it not as just meaningful sounds. When a subject is addressed in speech it is seen as involving the speaker’s assessing and interpretation, so that a major analytic, and effective activity is going on. As regards the verb in ‘he speaks’ (nowaavat), the transitive form changes the ‘now’ prefix into a ‘y’ so that it is yaaavat. The infinitive of this verb ‘to speak’ is owaavhat while the infinitive of the transitive form ‘to read, interpret, assess, divide’ is waarhat. One would expect the transitive form to include the meaning, ‘he is speaking to/telling him’, but this is not the case, because a different verb (taamdongo) is used for that. The transitive form reveals an extended meaning.
showing that the Keraakie realize that the speaker is involved in more than just enunciating words.

The Keraakie transitive verb in ‘he proclaims something to them’ is **yangawaitot**, causing one to expect that the intransitive form would mean, ‘it reveals or he is speaking’. This is not the case because the verb **kaatlinga** means ‘he reveals’, and **nowaavat** means ‘he is speaking’. The intransitive form of **yangawaitot** is **nangawaitot** which means ‘he is following’, and appears to be an optionally transitive verb since the object is understood. The Keraakie usually place the adverb **fowa** (behind) after the verb, to reinforce the meaning. The subject must be following something, therefore it appears that ‘following’ and ‘proclaiming something’ are linked together in the Keraakie mind. This raises questions as to what they mean; is personal ‘following’ a prerequisite of what he or she is proclaiming? Does it require belief in it? Or are the Keraakie indicating that speech is more than mere words and involves an expectation that what is proclaimed will be accepted and followed?

When one desires ‘to speak to someone’, a completely different verb is used; ‘he/she tells him: **yamo taamdonga bee**’. The intransitive form is the verb **kaamdonga**, which one would expect to include the meaning; ‘it speaks’ but it does not. This intransitive verb means ‘it is becoming’. One would expect the transitive form of the verb **kaamdonga** to mean, ‘to change it, her, or him’, but that verb is **fonatai tiyetunga** (make different); which is obviously a completely different verb. To the Keraakie, it appears that when they speak to another human being, it involves ‘becoming’. It could be that they see the need to become one with the indirect object in some way for communication to take place. Or it could mean that ‘telling him/her’ will involve a ‘becoming’ or a change.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intransitive verb</th>
<th>Transitive verb</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>He is speaking:</td>
<td>he is interpreting it: <strong>yaavat</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>nowaavat</strong></td>
<td>he is dividing it: <strong>yaavat</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>he is assessing it: <strong>yaavat</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>he is reading it: <strong>yaavat</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He is following:</td>
<td>he proclaims it: <strong>yangawaitot</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>nangawaitot</strong></td>
<td>he tells it: <strong>taamdonga</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is becoming:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>kaamdonga</strong></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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These linguistic terms are social theatres of their experiencing, questioning, seeking, creating, a continual revising of their assumptions and action – resulting in ‘being’ and ‘becoming’. It appears that within Keraakie understanding, words are not just sounds nor descriptive symbols but are also performative. All speaking or communication in the Keraakie culture is seen as dialogic; being the interaction between the speakers, the data under consideration, the hearers and action. This indicates that the Keraakie perceive language as being an agent that brings about change in ‘being’. It is not just a means of describing, or expressing things but also involves ‘discerning, thinking, doing things, putting into practice, becoming, bringing about change, rebelling or controlling others’. It seems that language is not just sounds but a concrete act of ‘being’ to them.

Another feature of Keraakie culture is that some forms of speech are performative statements by which they manipulate the powerful spirit world. The latter I call ‘Being’ because they also use the same word, yaam, for preternatural and ordinary features of life, although they do not see them as the same. They seek to use sacred words to control natural time events, when they call on the sun, moon or stars to appear. The Keraakie did not believe that astronomical phenomena would appear naturally and according to a ‘time’ schedule. Language is seen as containing power, producing change in ‘being’ as well as in time. Mary Ayres, in her thesis on the people of the Trans-Fly area, also noted the performative power of speech and the fact that the aural enactment of their mythology was held in awe as a corresponding reality to the original events. Ayres sums up her findings.

The real meaning of things, true knowledge, is known through hearing, and it is actually spoken by even fewer. Thus two aspects of native epistemology can be defined: the ostensive reality, the visible objective world of the land and the landscape, which is principally known through the sense of sight; and the inner reality, hidden esoteric knowledge, which is principally known through the aural senses of hearing and speech. And, the latter created and recreates the former.

The Keraakie believe that certain words spoken during rites are endowed with ‘Being’ power, which can be used to control nature, humanity and time. Essentially they believe that ‘Being’ can be manipulated.
At this point a study will be made of a few cultural categories in Keraakie daily ‘being’, observing their relationship to time. Politics, which Paul Hiebert defined as “the acquisition and use of power and leadership within a group or society”, is greatly influenced in Keraakie culture by ‘time/being’. Leadership is a male structure based on age and experience within their society and not by popular election, administrative gifts nor hereditary. Gerontocracy entails a coercive oppression of women as a political weapon to control them and their children. This was primarily done through male domination of religious knowledge, by stressing female ignorance and instilling fear in the women and children. The noise of the playing of the bull-roarers and sacred flutes were referred to as the voices of spirit beings, so that women and children hid in terror inside their houses. This use of religious knowledge was used also to enforce time-oriented leadership among younger males, by only allowing those who had been initiated at a point in time into the religious mysteries of mythological time to participate in leadership. Therefore, when the teenage male entered the adult community, he was in training by the older men as a potential leader in the Keraakie decision-making process. This age-oriented leadership pattern was also enforced through ritualized homosexuality so that the young men had to submit to older men. Gerontocracy was also used to restrain the desires of young men, and bring them under their authority by promising brides in the future to kept the younger men subservient to the elders. This direction of the marriage market is still used in the modern era as a political weapon by the older over the younger men. Age is the key principle of leadership in Keraakie society, since people are time.

Community leadership in the Keraakie village of Gubasv (1967 to 1987) was held by the oldest men, Moigam, followed by Yeekimu and then by Saawi, who, each in turn, were the most influential in community affairs, until they died. Williams said that “the headman’s position is hereditary” but these three men were not related to each other. Since those days, they have been replaced by younger educated men (Yokaar, Gima and Sabiyam). In Bebdeven, Zuga (the eldest man) has been the dominant figure over the period of 1967 to the 1990s, in spite of a tussle with his three sons, Somaku, Seegiwa and Bueg for control. Since all of the men of Bebdeven belong to the Sangaara section, leadership cannot be anything else but
hereditary. In Arufe village, there is a difference in leadership, with Aniba Bumai (President of the Morehead Local Government Council), Maraga Sarau (the government aid-post orderly), and Peter Sarau (the village magistrate) holding political authority, although they were not the oldest. The reason may be that all were educated and had access to modern wealth, government positions and equipment. Maraga and Peter’s elder brothers (Gedi and Gaindi) did not have leadership ability, indicating that personality and competence also influences Keraakie politics. Although public decisions are made through consensus, rather than through directive leaders, older experienced men have great influence. ‘Time/being’ was an important factor in traditional Keraakie politics as seen in the respect given to age, but change is occurring. Keraakie gerontocracy is losing authority to younger men in a world where education, employment and money have now become power.

In Keraakie society law is time and space-oriented because they believe that it emerged from the sacred site of Kureemgu during the past mythological era. Williams recorded the Keraakie belief that this traditional law was given by the primeval spirit beings: “Gainjan [geenzeen] ordained it” and the same is also stated in the modern era. Some still believe that if mythological law is despised, the blasphemers will be punished by the spirit beings. Swain declared that the true concept behind Australian aboriginal ‘dreamtime’ is not temporal but spatial and referred to this mythological era as abiding events or law. “The Law is the life-plan derived collectively from Dreaming Events.” The Keraakie also see their plan of existence, which emerged from the sacred age, as a law for present and future daily living. The Keraakie word for law is yorrow, which has numerous other shades of meaning such as ‘tabu, forbidden, sacred, holy’. Williams held that this word yorrow meant a social group’s totem, but this is not so. The Keraakie would say that their totem (kaaki) is yorrow in the sense that it is sacred and cannot be eaten. Even though their yorrow (sacred law) was supposed to be eternal and unchanging, the “advanced degree of disorganization and decadence” among the Keraakie that Williams found, indicates change through time. One doubts if that change was caused solely by the 20 year influence of Europeans, which was not that overwhelming since officers only had yearly contacts with the Keraakie. I suggest that their preceding history of migration around New Guinea, inter-tribal fighting and
the raiding of the Tegerri set a pattern of change to their yorwe which was continued by the occasional visits of colonial officials.

"Economic systems consist of the patterns of production, ownership and exchange," according to Michael Howard and Patrick McKim. Economic 'being' is time-oriented among the Kerakkie, and consists of producing, obtaining, exchanging food and other items according to seasonal calendars. The dry season is one of an abundance of food while the wet season is one of hunger. As a people, they are driven by scarcity, building on such basic resources as land, seed yams, plants or tools, using an appropriate technology to produce crops or food to overcome the scarcity. Economics is a social activity because it builds on past family relationships, leading to the present establishment of relationships, which are 'insurance' policies against future hunger as well as social capital for future ventures. In the Trans-Fly, traditional economics continues unchanged, but this operates in conjunction with introduced forms which have not been very successful. Time constitutes the structure of Kerakkie economic life, and is central to their 'being'. Besides yam production, people scavenge for roots, nuts and berries in the jungles, process sago and hunt for animals, birds, fish, and shellfish. Each of these economic activities occur at a distinct time slot in their calendar.

In Kerakkie 'being', their understanding of people as time is important in the matter of physical descent. Anthropologist David Schneider observed that "the term kinship is used to refer to both the biological system of relations, quite apart from any sociocultural aspects, and also to the sociocultural aspects." There is no general term in the Kerakkie language for relationship even though it is the most important feature within their society. It appears that 'relationships' are to basic in their thinking that it does not need to be stated. Yet they do talk of having a good relationship with another person; be (they) nawaarinyet (relate well together), and numerous words are used to describe specific relationships between people. Kerakkie kinship is one of patrilineal descent from ancestors, which has given rise to numerous extended family groups which are called gango. This word also means 'head', which means 'first' in the family, indicating their time orientation looking back to the original head or source of their family line. The last in the family is called the 'tail' (semi). In this patrilineal descent system each person is obligated to respect
his or her father and other older members of the social section as well as to control and support the younger members. The family is divided not on gender but on time lines into older (cane) or younger (nangak) siblings. But there are other sociocultural kinship forms that are time-oriented.

When two people are born on the same day or within a few days of each other in Keraakie society, they are referred to as raman and are regarded as close kin. They call each other yehemand, which has come to mean ‘friend’ in the modern era. In their growing up they play, hunt, fish, work and are initiated together, so they share a common ‘being’. This is a binding ‘kinship’ or ‘age-set’ relationship, which Williams described:

The yahomant [yehemand] are alleged to help each other in fencing, hunting and so on, though I believe this has little practical purport. They do not forget their association, however, and having been thrown together in the thrilling experience of initiation and in the subsequent seclusion they become something like chums.43

Traditionally children of raman could not inter-marry, even if they were allowed to do so under Keraakie exogamous rules of marriage. An example of this raman relationship is seen in that of Peter Sarau, Timothy Tekaam and Mote Walanda of Arufe, who were all born about the same time. This ‘time’ kinship between these men has been stressed on many occasions to me as an example of what they mean. There are no rituals nor political functions (as are found in some African societies) linked to this Keraakie ‘age-set’ structure.44 Here again one notes the unity of ‘being’ and ‘time’. Daniel Shaw noted a similar kinship understanding among the Samo people of the upper Strickland River area, when youths of roughly the same age are initiated together they are called somon.

Same-cycle housemates serve as the core of a Samo community. ‘Sibling-ship’ as defined by the Samo, does not refer to genealogical co-filiation from a common set of parents, but rather is determined by co-residence and the relationship of individuals within an initiation cycle. Hence the term ‘sibling’ is here equated with ‘housemate’ of the same initiation cycle.45

A claim on land at Tareer was made on the basis of space and time kinship by Noat Samoki of Arufe in the 1980s. His father had lived and gardened on that land
with the original Kaunze owners over many years. When the owners died, Noat claimed the land through a kinship of past association over time. Since Auye’s section and Said’s section have died out, their land is claimed by their Sangaara fellow gardeners from Bebeven village. In Keraakie thinking, this type of kinship is based on a time and space relationships.

Keraakie society performed life cycle rituals when a baby was born, followed by many others in the child’s growth through to old age and death. This sequence of events revealed the society’s perception of the individual’s journey through ‘time/being’. One of these is the eumerah (take hold of the hand) name (feast), which involves a non-relative giving his or her name to a baby at a feast. From that time on they refer to each other by the word taahor. The Keraakie are usually named after past ancestors, which are stated to have emerged in mythological time, but in the modern era, names from other sources have been added and some of these are time oriented. An example is Seeng of Arufe, who when he went to Port Moresby to work in the 1950s, called himself Tom, but when he returned home in the 1970s, was called Moresby by his village people. Seeng was his pre-urban ‘time/being’, Tom was his urban ‘time/being’, and Moresby was his post-urban ‘time/being’. Frequently children have been named after policemen, teachers, and evangelists during the time of their residence in the area. A person’s name can emerge from the sacred time, from the visit of foreigners, or named after places where they lived.

The Keraakie concept of ‘time/being’ may have individualistic dates but ultimately it is a social concept, because all they experience, learn, ponder, utter and do occurs within their community and has social purposes. This is also seen in their life cycle from birth to death and their biological calendar, upon which Durkheim commented; “It is the rhythm of social life which is at the basis of the category of time”.47 Although events occur in the Trans-Fly without the community being aware of them, society is only conscious of those that they experience. The Keraakie people always refer to events as occurring in a social time scale of people’s lives and never at an abstract point in time like 1940 or 1960. They may time events by the natural phenomena of sunrise, midday or sunset but what matters is the event’s relationship to people and other events within the community. Meetings can never be late nor early, because when the community arrives, acts or departs that is the right time.
Gabriele Stürzenhofecker noted a similar feature among the Duna of the Southern Highlands, calling it 'embodied temporality', in which time is never divorced from life in the physical body, being the temporalization of experience. The perception of events in a time/space continuum are seen from the viewpoint of a participants. The Keraakie regard the physical body as foundational to 'being', because what the body experiences makes them aware of the daily flow of time events as well as themselves interacting with others as part of a community. Both individual and corporate self are time.

Besides this rhythm of social life at the basis of some Keraakie categories of time, I propose that there is another reason. They are constantly talking about the chaotic nature of 'being' in the Trans-Fly and their time concepts appear to be an attempt to control this disorder. The Keraakie are well aware of the general patterns of time in nature, as seen in their linguistic terms, and I suggest that they seek to project this order on the disorder of 'social being'. This awareness of chaos causes an unsettledness, which Heidegger called unheimlich (not being at home). The Keraakie are insecure in 'being' and see themselves as the victims of uncontrollable natural, human and spirit forces, which give rise to anxiety, apprehension or frustration as they face the inevitability of death. Karl Marx commented that: "Man makes religion," being the sigh of the oppressed, in an attempt to dodge the reality of human suffering. In the case of the Keraakie, this suggested 'escapist fantasy' does not accurately describe their religion because the spirit beings are believed to be the cause of many of their sufferings. Their religion gives an explanation for their troubles, laying the blame on the supernatural world of 'Being' but it does not proclaim deliverance through them.

When the Keraakie face immediate needs such as, sickness, hunger, and infertility, they seek to manipulate magic power to help and protect them. Metaphorically they are always looking fearfully over their shoulder as they anticipate death sneaking up behind them in the future. Death is seen as flowing from the unseen future into the present where it will alienate them from everything. Death is the beginning of 'anti-being' because ghosts have been alienated by it against their own families. Heidegger called such an attitude of dread to be unauthentic, and although the Keraakie deplore it, they assess it to be their authentic human
experience. They greatly desire perpetuation of social ‘being’ but know that such hope could be self-deception as they have seen many communities die out. The unwanted end of ‘time/being’ occurs for the individual when physical life comes to an end in death, causing a permanent disruption in social life. The Keraakie belief system contradicts Heidegger’s understanding of death as the fulfilment of man’s possibilities. In comparison to the present and future, the past is stable and non-threatening, and therefore more satisfying to them. Keraakie mythological time is retold in the present to give life purpose. Also past historical events are re-activated in humorous dramas called tītī which are performed from time to time when large crowds assemble for some special event. Past ‘being’ has a satisfying present function in disordered daily ‘being’.

Heidegger summed up this close relationship between time and ‘being’, when he wrote that “Being finds its meaning in temporality.”50 By this he was indicating time as being a unity of a three-fold ‘self-transcendence’. The future is seen as human being ‘ahead-of-itself’, the present as a ‘making present’, while the past is a ‘having been’. Joseph Kockelmans sums up Heidegger’s understanding, “What is meant by temporality is precisely the unity of this structural whole; the future which makes present in the process of having been.”51 This was the phenomenological ‘movement of disclosure’, according to Heidegger. The Keraakie are also aware of time in a three-fold form since they hold the non-threatening past and fearful future in a tension in the present, which results in the ‘moment of being’, which is different to Heidegger’s ‘Being’. The Keraakie also talk about people, events and things as either fron’deman (belonging to the past), ganosoman (belonging to the present) or fowaman (belonging to the future) in a social unity. The ‘moment of being’ for the Keraakie is the accumulation of past events impinging on the present, which necessitates immediate action before the future renders further action impossible. This self-transcendence results in ‘time/being’. Time understanding is the underlying structure of how they observe ‘being’, the ultimate ontological foundation, which is not seen as different to ‘being’. Because Keraakie time is ‘being’ it is not a measurable commodity even though they do measure up to three days.

The Keraakie place a far greater emphasis on the landscape and environment in their understanding of ‘being’, than Heidegger does in his Being. The dynamic
Trans-Fly context is time to them. The landscape, which involves the physical world of flora and fauna, is the calendar of the events that constitute ‘being’. All of the latter creatures and plants emerged through the power of spirit beings who dominate them through suffering and death. The Keraakie say that people are not the only ‘site’ of ‘being’ (as Heidegger thought), because the natural and preternatural world around is also involved. Therefore Heidegger’s Being which is present human existence as opposed to non-being is a limited one, when comparing it to that of the people of the Trans-Fly.

Heidegger is interested in the historical past since “we are rooted in a past and thrust into the future.”52 Keraakie ‘time/being’ differs from Heidegger’s understanding, in that they place a far greater emphasis upon history and not on resultant future possibilities. They are very conscious of their ancestors and the events of the past that continue to influence the present. All that they are, think, speak and do as a community finds its source in the past era, which they remember and see as real in front of them, evidenced by the marks on the landscape. Their ancestors, who have emerged from the past mythological age, were the actors of historic ‘being’ which is continuing to have an impact on the modern Keraakie. They are always yearning to grasp hold of that past mythological power to overcome their weakness in the present. Mythology and history are of vital importance to the Keraakie, when compared to Heidegger’s limited position.

In conclusion, the predication of time is ‘being’ to the Keraakie. All that they are is time: living their lives with an emphasis on the present, greatly fearing the future, which causes them to view the past as non-threatening. They project themselves outside of present ‘being’ into the past, where mythological and historical memories seem to have filtered out unpleasant past ones. The fact that the Keraakie have survived and exist in the present dominates their mind. They see ‘being’ as authentic present activity, which Heidegger called the inauthentic ‘making present’. The Keraakie present pre-supposes a past and a subconscious fear of the future which are held in tension in their mind. They do not hold that ‘only the present is real,’ because to them the past is also real. The past, in spite of its ‘absence’, is evidenced in the landscape and is the source of themselves, their cultural way of life, and daily ‘being’. Thus the ‘having been’ of the past is present to the Keraakie mind, as is the
future which is fearfully expected. They subconsciously ‘look over their shoulder at the behind/future’ and see that it is bringing an inevitable and unwelcome end in death. The anticipated ‘having been’ of the future is faced in the present and denied. This fear of the future influences all they do and is part of their struggle to find food and survive in the harsh Trans-Fly. ‘Time/being’ to the Keraakie, is both infinite, in that they believe it flows endlessly out of the future into the present, yet it is also finite because it can end (individually or socially) with the death of ‘being’ in death. This disagreeable ‘having been’ will emerge ‘in front’ of them and cause the termination of ‘time/being’.

The awareness of the end of ‘time/being’ in death means that daily ‘being’ is a search for overcoming power. Part of their denial of the future is the denial of the rational inevitability of time, believing that the seeming time patterns in nature can be broken. The Keraakie hold that all is in chaos and nothing is absolute. Death is believed to be caused by supernatural ‘Being’ so since there is no greater power, they must harness it. It appears that their knowledge of this power is inadequate because the Keraakie are constantly borrowing charms, rituals, songs, and other religious ideas from their neighbours to resolve this powerlessness. This search could be called ‘the making present what is absent or unseen’. They appear to reject the inevitability of the future and create a ‘time/being’ structure, which denies death, by projecting the non-threatening satisfactory ‘being’ of the past into the present. The mythological past is made immediate to overcome uncomfortable future events, so that ordinary ‘being’ is interpreted from this past. The essence of ‘being’ is ‘Being’ and through magic or primeval power the Keraakie seek to control the moment of ‘being’ so as to exist satisfactorily. Through the transcendence of weak self, plagued with death-motivated fear, anxiety, and insecurity, people strive to achieve satisfactory ‘being’. Time is essential to ‘being’, which consists of taking hold of the powerful past and making it present to overcome the fearful ‘anti-being’ of the future. As Maurice Leenhardt declared when writing about the Canaque people of New Caledonia, “for the Melanesian mentality, the notion of time and the notion of being are indistinguishable.” This is true of the Keraakie people.
ENDNOTES:


8 ibid., pp. 277-311, 349-357.

9 ibid., p. 387.

10 ibid., pp. 373-377.


18 Gosden, op. cit., p. 1.


27 Supernatural ‘Being’, according to the Keraakie, is constantly interacting with daily ‘time/being’. When they face this preternatural world’s intrusion into their daily affairs, they respond in ‘eerembah’ (surprise and awe) or ‘berber’ (fear), which are subjective feelings in the presence of the mysterious, unexplainable or powerful. ‘Being’ is an external force active in the world around them, in unusual events, possessing people or may be latent in things like stones, trees, and vines. The Keraakie do not have a generic word to sum up this mysterious world but they can use *yaam* (spirit, being, way of being, rite, substance, reality, happening) as a general term for spirit beings, sorcery, magic, mana and ritualistic power.

The Keraakie do not believe that there are invisible, necessary, essential and universal forms behind visible things, as presented by Platonic teaching. Yet, they admit their ignorance of the preternatural world and suggest that there may be invisible spirit forms behind some events, in some things, and working through some people and creatures. These spirit beings are believed to be generally antagonistic and are the source of all suffering, sickness and death. They are ‘Being’ and participate in ‘being’ but are different to it because the Keraakie assume they are able to do unusually powerful ‘things’.

To the Keraakie, ‘Being’ involves the activity of mythological spirits or deities called *geenzeen*, who are the source of all supernatural power. These past beings and
their creatures are still active in the present and are often linked to sacred sites called boiv or geaevyooav. (Williams, PTF, pp. 295, 310. Williams’ Field Notes, B.425, 545. Hereafter shortened to WFN.) Belief in powerful spirit beings or creatures from the mythological age is common throughout PNG, and some societies believe that they are eternally present. (G.W. Trompf, Melanesian Religion, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991, pp. 12-13, 35-36, 46.) Trompf points out that in Melanesia, dreams are regarded as communications from the spirit world. (Ibid., pp. 106-123) The Kerakkie also believe that the mythological primeval spirit beings are involved in dreams, interacting with people and proclaiming the unknown future, present and immediate past. In this way dreams, which are called onda, are time-oriented.

The Kerakkie believe that the great majority of things in nature possess or can be infested by some form of ‘Being’, which they seek to manipulate for their own benefit. Certain leaves, bark, tree-sap, roots, vines, objects and rituals are held to contain ‘Being’ power to help them in daily ‘being’ to control hunting, fishing, and garden fertility. This power is believed to be extractable from concrete objects by touch, by eating, and by smell. Red clay (nawen) is applied to houses, objects, people, etc., believing that it has the ‘Being’ power to protect or to kill. (Williams, PTF, op. cit., pp. 73, 248, 259, 316-323) The bush tuber pongaar (also called ‘the basis of moisture’ – hakwar deveneer) is considered to contain ‘Being’, and is used for rainmaking purposes. (Williams, PTF, op. cit., p. 321) The most powerful of natural objects is the crocodile tooth (moin), which is used to stroke a yam, so that when planted, the magic power will produce many yams. (Williams, PTF, op. cit., pp. 216, 345) The stroking action of a magic charm to empower the yam is seen in the name given to the long purple-fleshed yam, moin (magic) gaane (skin) which Williams called mwingani.

Preternatural spirits, called ninyi, meermeen or eenka, are either non-human spirits or ghosts who are part of ‘Being’ and are regarded as dangerous. Another spirit, which the Kerakkie fear, is the dangerous ‘python-woman’ spirit called tungiaali who dwells in certain trees. Yet in a small lake just east of Arufe a non-dangerous totem spirit is believed to live. Before women fish there, they have to make a food offering to the spirit so that it will help them catch fish. Trompf lists
numerous varieties of these spirits that are feared in all Melanesian religions. (Trompf, op. cit., pp. 12-19) The sentence *yaam de novaar* can mean a spirit from the world of ‘Being’ is possessing or oppressing a person or something strange such as a fit, trance or insane behaviour has appeared in a person’s body. The Kerakkie believe that spirits or the ghosts of the recent dead are harmful and can cause sickness and misfortune, as do some other Melanesian societies. (Williams, *PTF*, op. cit., pp. 361-365. Trompf, op. cit., pp. 14-15)

The Kerakkie see themselves as generally passive before ‘Being’, and unable to resist its superior power. Some people possess this supernatural power in a form named *fot*, which is innate and could be called ‘mana’. (D. Whiteman, “Melanesian Religions: An Overview,” in *An Introduction to Melanesian Religions*, E. Mantovani (ed.), Goroka: The Melanesian Institute, 1984, pp. 98-105) This power is believed to exist in the person who has exceptional ability to make a good canoe, house or carving. Fot is also feared as it can work independently and cause sickness, pain and death in others, without the possessor’s volition. This power can also heal. (Williams, *PTF*, op. cit., p. 352. Trompf, op. cit., pp. 25, 95-98. Whiteman, op. cit., pp. 196-203)


‘Being’ was involved in all areas of life. A.P. Lyons heard the Kerakkie belief in 1924 that the primeval *geenzeen* eel (*tombagweer*) impregnated married women, when they washed in the river or creeks. (A.P. Lyons, “Paternity Beliefs and Customs of Western Papua,” *Man*, 24/44 (1924), pp. 58-59) Williams replied to this in 1933 saying that the Kerakkie men were well aware that they were responsible for impregnating their wives. (Williams, letter to *Man*, 33/128, (1933), pp. 123-124) Yet Williams quoted a magic spell that was spoken to women to assist delivery during labour: *tumbaw’r henute komu degwar ragaraga*: which he translated as
'tumbawu' grease wave or wriggle tail.' This is incorrect and a more accurate translation is 'eel (tombagweer) make slippery (henu) the tight throat (kam tegwar) secret words (range range).' The latter words indicate that there was originally a belief in the intervention of the geenzen spirits in the matter of conception and deliveries. Also 'being' was linked to female blood that flows in childbirth or menstruation (wemes) and therefore very dangerous to men. Women were traditionally excluded from the family house and made to live in the bush until menstruation had finished. The ancestors had warned them that if men came in contact with this blood, its dangerous power would cause swelling of the joints and a painful death. Because of this reason, women gave birth in the bush away from the village.

On 5 May 1982, a missionary was asked at a public meeting in Arufe village, "Are you white people geenzen or ninyi (ghosts)? Will you die like us?" When Europeans first arrived in the Trans-Fly area, they were thought to be ghosts of people who had risen from the grave and were given the Kiwai people's name for ghost, markai. This word continues to be used, but its meaning has changed to indicate, 'one who has authority'. In the traditional Keraukie mind, Europeans were originally thought to be part of the supernatural world of 'Being' because of their amazing equipment, white skin, authority and the fact that none of them died in the area. Not only were the Europeans believed to be part of 'Being', but their material things were believed to have emerged from the mythological world. This belief has given rise to 'cargo-cult' thinking, which will be described in Chapter 12.

33 Ibid., pp.34-36.
34 Williams, PTF, p. 242.
35 Williams, WFN, B252.
36 Oral testimony Aniba Bunai (December 1983).
38 Williams, PTF, op. cit., p. 86.
39 ibid., p. 85.
42 Williams, PTF, pp. 108-122.
43 ibid., p. 189.
46 Williams, PTF, op. cit., pp. 175-177.
47 Durkheim, op. cit., p. 488.
50 M. Heidegger, The Concept of Time, op. cit., p. 41.
51 J. Kockelmans, “Heidegger on Time and Being,” in Martin Heidegger, op. cit., p. 147.
52 Polt, op. cit., p. 5.
CHAPTER 10

DEATH IN KERAAKIE TIME

The renowned physicist Stephen Hawking has written confidently, “The universe must have a beginning and, possibly, an end.”1 Similarly the Keraakie see all things as having a beginning in mythological time, but do not know if the flow of ‘time/being’ has an end or not. Yet they do see social groups and individuals having an end in death. Human experience has been that all beings die, which according to the Keraakie is not normal. Hui Shih wrote of this phenomenon, “The creature born is the creature dying”, but the Keraakie see themselves as being born to live.2 They do not see themselves as being subject to mortality, or experiencing ‘time/being’ as a dying participant. Heidegger saw death as part of being, a positive factor and not a negative one. It is mankind’s ultimate possibility, the climax of existence. Being is the bearer of its own future – “being-towards-death.”3 The Keraakie see themselves differently, as being acted upon by outside forces similar to what Roy Wagner noted of the Daribi: “The individual is acted upon by the world more than he acts upon it.”4 The Keraakie believe it is abnormal for ‘time/being’ to end in death. In this chapter a comparative study will be made of the Keraakie understanding of death as the end of time. Their concept of death and the fear it engenders will be discussed. The Keraakie response to death also includes grief and anger, and an analysis will be made of why they react in this way. What do they do to resolve these reactions? Consideration will be made of Keraakie cultural concepts of time as being a denial of the end of ‘time/being’ in death.

As the Keraakie think about ‘time/being’, they are confronted with the fact that the individual’s life may come to an end in death. This relationship of death and time is common as psychologists Kastenbaum and Aisenberg have established:

Thoughts of time and death have a natural affinity for each other. It is difficult to imagine how we could form any conception of death without some conception of time.5

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This temporalization of human experience is emphatically stated as a personal end in time, when the Keraakie say of the deceased: bee (he) foioh (end) de (past indicator) tam (is in a past state), that is, he is finished or he died. From this statement it is obvious that there is a finality about death in Keraakie thinking. Death is an uncomfortable problem to the Keraakie, because it is an end of life without any prospect of more life. The Keraakie have a word for a temporary end of things: metam, but this is never used of death. The latter is final. When a person dies, the body may still be present, but he or she as a living being (mbarmbar) has gone forever and will never experience the joy of their fellow villagers’ company, food, or family life. The Keraakie also use the word eembeembe (derived from the word ‘one’: eembru) to describe the cessation of life in death. This means that the person has died once and will not return. The immaterial part of the human being, which survives death, is now called the ninyi (ghost), and is in no way seen to be a continuation of life. Death is the end of ‘time/being’ to the Keraakie.

The Keraakie word for death is kar but there are numerous verbs for dying as seen in the following list:

He will die: bee bee keuwelindanga.
  : bee bee nawaatet.
  : kar bee yeraamgot.
  : bee kar bee yam.
  : bee foioh bee yam.

He will cause death: yamo (he) karot (to death) bee (him/her) bee (will) yegemet (hit).
  : yamo (he) bee (him/her) bee (will) tinyaamonga (finish).

The most commonly used verb is yam:

He shall die: bee kar bee yam.

He is dying: bee kar yam.

He died: bee kar de tam.

He is in a state of death: bee kar de yamaaro.
What does the word for death, *kar*, mean to the Keraakie? It is also used when referring to a deserted place: *yu kar* (the land is empty, the occupants have left), or when referring to a lazy person: *tand kar* (the person’s hand is dead, useless, powerless). Many other verbs and ideas are used to indicate death, such as:

- *yeende* (his) *meheh* (thinking) *de* (past indicator) *neivo* (finished/ended).
- *yeende* (his) *herge* (life) *de* (past indicator) *neivo* (finished/ended).
- *yeende* (his or her) *eembone* (breath) *de* (past indicator) *neivo* (finished/ended).
- *yeende* (his or her) *eembone* (breath) *de* (past indicator) *nangtor* (left).
- *yeende* (his or her) *tikav* (heart) *yaa* (not) *negevut* (working).
- *bee* (he or she) *de* (past indicator) *nowlye* (fell).
- *bee* (he or she) *de* (past indicator) *naavrangot* (lost).

What conclusion can be suggested from this study of Keraakie linguistic terms? The Keraakie know that death is not a thing which can be touched, heard, seen, tasted nor smelt. It is not some invisible being called ‘death’ that attacks and kills human beings. It is not a sickness because two can suffer from the same sickness and one will die while the other will not. They conclude that it is a state and use the term *kar yaam* (being dead) when describing the human experience of death. This state is something about which they have an awareness based on observation, but what they see is not death. The latter has an impact on human beings, and is described by the Keraakie in relatively concrete terms such as when their thinking ends, their breathing stops, their heart stops beating, their eyes no longer see, their voice refuses to sound and the body is lifeless. Death is not one or all of these things but rather is unexplainable, which they categorize as a concept (*emaarah*). The Keraakie describe death in terms of the *nbarinbar* (spirit) leaving the body and becoming a *ninyt* (ghost) which has a radically different and malicious nature. From their observations, death involves the disintegration of the body. They see death as a process, but they claim no personal experience of what it involves – ‘We do not know’. Death never follows a set process, because one person can die in an instant while another will suffer over a long period before death occurs. The age of a person or the nature of the day or yearly season does not indicate when death will occur. Death is a complex concept that defies description as an internally consistent feature, but its influence is painfully real.

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When a person dies the Keraakie believe that the human spirit departs from the body and becomes a ghost, which remains in the general area of the death, until they are chased away at a ceremony called the kwarwaraonah. They are supposed to head towards the south down the Wassi Kussa River and do not return. The Keraakie do not consider that the life of the ghost can be compared at all with normal life in the human body. They describe the life of the ghost as ‘not real living’. Some PNG societies see the life of the ghosts as having many parallel features to normal human existence. According to R.M. Glasse the Huli people of the Southern Highlands believe that the ghosts continue in an existence which seems to parallel human living. When a person dies “the soul continues to dwell among the living, taking an interest in their affairs.” The Keraakie do not see the life of the niniyi as being equal to a human form of life, but as something that is totally different. The existence of the ghost is not better than human living in this world but is considered much worse. It is seen as less than normal and is therefore abhorred. The Keraakie feel sorry for the niniyi in its existence without a body. Life to them is very much linked to the human body and anything less than this is unthinkably appalling. The word for reality is vivi which also means body, indicating that life in the body is reality. Death brings time/being to an end, which is not seen as a neutral state of ‘non-being’. This is seen in their belief that the niniyi is always angry and will maliciously attack any human being, even close relatives, which is a state that is the opposite of normal Keraakie behaviour. The existence of the ghost is ‘anti-being’, an unwanted and abhorrent state.

The Suki people, who live 90 kilometers to the north of the Keraakie, hold a similar view that death (gewaru) is the end of time for the individual. They see the gukari (a word derived form the combination of gewaru meaning deceased and amkari meaning new) as being angry at first before eventually becoming a gurne (ghost) and wandering off into an aimless existence. The Umeda people of northwest P.N.G. have a different understanding of the end of time. A. Gell wrote about Umeda belief “that eventually a cataclysm will happen which will completely destroy the world.” Gell perceived that this was not the end, because all dead things in the world will be revived and recreated “only to go through the same cycle once again”. Stürzenhofecker noted among the Duna people of the Southern Highlands
the idea of “the ground completing/ending” which constituted an ever-present and never realized tendency. Malinowski’s study of time among the Trobriand Islanders does not mention an end of time, but his other writings reveal that they did not regard death as the end of time. He wrote, “New life, in Trobriand tradition, begins with death”, describing a belief that the spirit leaves the deceased at death but returns later as a new foetus. Death to them, therefore, is not the end of time.

In the Keraakie mind, time is closely related to ‘being’ and is seen as both individual and corporate existence. The end of a life occurs when death strikes and this event is seen as a disastrous interruption to their social ‘being’. When they consider the past people of their community, such as their ancestors and grandfathers, they are reminded that all their lives ended in death. Besides seeing death as the end of ‘time/being’ for the individual, the Keraakie see ‘time/being’ as an endless flow, sweeping from the future, bringing death into the present and ending human lives. Time is ‘being’, which will end in an abhorrent death for the individual, and possibly society itself. They believe the world is full of malicious powers and people who are out to destroy their most valued institution, the social group. This experience points to one certainty that ‘being’ ends in death yet they still persist in seeing death as abnormal. After death, people are no longer human and are only remembered as dead corpses: kar (dead) bu (log). Life is ended and the ghosts join the past generations. To the Keraakie, death is the dominant feature in this backwards movement of ‘time/being’ and they have no word for hope.

To the Keraakie death is meemee (bad), which is a common human assessment. This is confirmed in the words of H.S. Silverstein, who wrote about similar cultures: “The commonsense view is that a person’s death is one of the greatest evils that can befall him”. Death fills the individual Keraakie with fear, which includes the fear of entering a state of lifelessness, spelling the end of all that he or she has enjoyed in life. In other words the individual cannot project itself into coming death because it does not know what it is. Geedi of Arufe village said to me on 1 December 1995, that his father Koag, who died in the early 1970s, cried out as he was dying, “I am very frightened”. This is noted in other Melanesian societies. The Keraakie also fear death because they do not know what is going to happen after death. In December 1995 the men of Gubaav said that the cause of their personal fear of death was the
ignorance of what follows it. They have seen dead people and the fact that they are 
not breathing, eating, drinking, talking, or thinking fills them with fear. Whatever 
was life to the human being is no longer there. This alienation creates fear because 
they may be next to die. The Keraakie know that after death the human spirit has a 
radically different nature. It is now angry instead of friendly. Their fear of death 
includes a fear of the future state of being a ghost. The Gubaav village men asked, 
"What causes it to change its attitude of love to hate after death?" Their conclusion 
was that the ghost is ashamed of his sub-human state, and angry at being deprived of 
his body. It is also jealous that humans still have their bodies. The deceased's body is 
without food and unwashed in the grave where it will disintegrate and be eaten by 
worms and insects. This is considered evil and is another reason for the ghost's anger 
and maliciousness.

The most hated feature of death is that it ends the life of one of Keraakie 
society's members, destroying relationships within the family. Death also disrupts 
the community by removing one of it's members so that the wholeness of society is 
now disrupted by an uncomfortable gap. The good things he or she was enjoying 
with others, raising children, helping others, dancing together, obtaining and eating 
food together have come to a premature end. The deceased held a respected, 
necessary and supportive relationship within the community, but now they do not 
have his or her company, support and labour. A member is never just an individual, 
but a representation of their social 'being', and death attacks their innate sense of 
unity. To the Keraakie it is painful and they feel the individual's death as if they were 
physically suffering it. Genuine tears flow freely during this painful period. It is the 
continuing family that defines the value of the individual and it is the group that is 
under attack during death. Fischer wrote that death "can cause terrible grief, pain, 
and suffering among others", not only among the person's family, but also among 
friends and acquaintances. The solidarity of the social group is seen in the last 
words of Keraakie people as they faced death. All called their family closer for 
comfort. Some encouraged their family members to care for each other, live good 
lives and not cause social disharmony. Zend Powar of Pongarki village declared, on 
15 December 1995, his father's dying words, "I want to see all my children before I 
die". He also wanted to extend his memory in the family and said, "Put my name on
the next boy born.” Two other men, Zamber and Torez, sensing the horror of this coming separation, called to their family members as they died, “I am leaving you.”

Death is evil to the Keraakie because it transforms a father, mother, son, daughter or friend into an antagonistic ghost who could hurt or kill them. One of their own number will change and do the unthinkable: attack the members of his own family. Keraakie social ‘being’ is threatened by a death. Many a Keraakie man has cried, when dying, because he did not want to attack his own friends as he knew the ghost would do. On 1 December 1995, Gaindi of Arufe village said how his adopted father, Seeng of Bebeven village, wailed as he was dying, “I am very disturbed. When I die my ghost will come back and harm my family and friends.” The belief in the malicious activity of the ghost towards the community is also held by the Mae Enga people of the Western Highlands, and the Suki people of the northern end of the Trans-Fly.16 Death changes a the friendly spirit into the horrible ghost, which is believed to be devoid of anything of value. In comparison the Kaluli people of Mt Bosavi see the life of a ghost as being a reflection of life in the physical world and not something to be feared. What people do in this world, they also do in the next world.17 Yet the Keraakie regard the ‘life’ of the ghost as being antagonistic to living people, one of ‘anti-being’ and not another form of life.

Death is also evil because it cuts short the life of a baby, child, man or woman from fulfillment of their potential. The child has not even had the chance of growing up and entering into the full experience of life. When a teenager, Tatamasi Aniba of Arufe, was dying of snake bite in 1995, he said, “I do not want to die. I want to get married and have children.”18 His personal life was incomplete. This is typical of the Keraakie understanding, who see death as a tragedy because they believe that this is the only life one can live, and the individual’s life has been cut short. Death truncates the individual’s personal life.

Heidegger comments upon ‘being-in-the-world’ as involving the idea of an ‘end’, which is ‘wholeness’ or completion of being. This belongs to ‘the potentiality-for-being’, that is to say that Dasein reaches its wholeness in death.19 The Keraakie do not see the individual’s death as a part of normal ‘being”; it is the end of ‘time/being’. Death cuts across the potentiality of the individual Keraakie so that
something is still outstanding in his or her being. Heidegger's point of view sees death as loss experienced by those who remain. The Kerakie would agree with that but they say that the dying person also suffers loss, being unable to complete human potential because of death. The activities of the dead do not end at death, because the Kerakie believe that the deceased's ghost will attack people if they eat his or her yams or bananas. After a person dies his or her property is destroyed, lest someone should inadvertently use them, and cause the ghost to become angry.

Also the death creates tension within the community as the relatives conduct an inquest to find out who was to blame for the believed sorcery that killed the deceased. When Seemi of Bebeven died in March 1981, Taaga of Arufe was suspected because he had argued with him just before his death. So Seemi's relatives appointed an executioner to kill him. This was not carried out because of the potential trouble it could cause, with foreigners moving into the area. The plan was later discovered by the accused who attacked the prospective executioner with bows and arrows at Arufe village on 12 October 1981. Such vengefulness could totally disrupt the community in an inter-family war, which the Kerakie dread most of all. Among the Suki and Zimakani people, who live to the north of the Kerakie, payback killing has destroyed whole families. Trompf noted numerous cases of vindictiveness motivated by retributive logic. Williams described the impact on society of a death believed to be caused by sorcery among the Kerakie as a menace to the peace of society:

There is surely no more fertile breeding-ground of the sentiments of fear, distrust, suspicion, hatred and vengefulness. Sorcery, then, or rather the belief in it, appears to be in the main a disruptive force in society.

The Kerakie are aware of the death of societies, such as the Baro, Moibu, Meet, Maziar, Dap, Kandog, and Mund Mund people, which occurred in the past headhunting era, and have already been listed in chapter 1. This has not only meant the cessation of a society, but also all that they counted dear such as their stories, history, culture, values and belief systems. Even in modern times certain social groups have ceased to function. The Kaunze people, who were culturally and dialectically closely related to the Kerakie people, once lived at Bebeven and
have since died out, possibly from sickness and infertility. The remnants have been absorbed into other neighbouring groups. A Keraakie social section under the leadership of Auyee, which was claimed to have been a sub-group of the Sangara clan, lived at Ames and honoured a sacred site at Taarkor, died out in the 1940s.25 The Zongariya clan, who was led by Said of Arufe village, ceased to exist when their last male died on 8 May 1983. In these cases the death of individuals brought an end to social sections. Their word vivi (reality) is used of the individual as well as the body corporate and it is this latter sense that is of vital importance to the Keraakie. To them, life is a struggle with death to perpetuate social ‘being’.

Many Australian Aboriginal societies hold to a geocentric understanding of procreation, the linking of people to space. Conception relates people to a certain place as an unchanging reality in the middle of constant change caused by death. When a person dies, it is a satisfying “return of place-being to place”.26 But the Keraakie hold to a sociocentric understanding of stable reality, irrespective of death the community persists. They struggle with individual death that constitutes a shattering of present social ‘being’, society will continue. Through procreation the dying are replaced through descent lineages which are seen as permanent realities in the middle of chaos. Daniel Shaw noted a similar understanding among the Samo people of the upper Strickland River: “Survival is built into the Samo worldview: socially through group cohesion.”27 Social ‘being’ to the Keraakie is very important, because people are time.

There is a tension in the Keraakie’s understanding of the finality of the cessation of the individual’s ‘time/being’ in death, and the endless flow of ‘time/being’. The latter seems to be pulsating eternally and also interacting with humanity as the bearer of all the events of life culminating in the end of ‘time/being’ for individuals and possibly societies. The Keraakie state that through procreation in society, they can lessen the fear of death by perpetuating ‘being’ in their children. Contradicting concepts is a recurring feature in Keraakie time concepts.

Death is never the same for each individual, because at any particular moment he or she may be influenced by situational factors.28 At night the Keraakie are very fearful of death, because that is the time when spirits, ghosts, sorcerers, murderers,
crocodiles, snakes and wild pigs are active. The meaning of death is also influenced by the identity of the person who died, whether an only son, a distant relative, or an enemy. Death can produce the feeling of abandonment in the mind of the individual after the death of a father or mother, while loneliness can envelop them because of the death of a friend who gave life special meaning. The pain of separation is also very acute when a child or spouse dies, as seen in the case of Idaba of Bimadeven who mournfully roamed the jungle daily during October 1982 in search of his deceased baby girl. One lady died of cancer and others described her painful death as hard (tekar). When persons met their death by a brutal pig attack or were murdered by an unknown person, death has very bitter memories. The features of personal experience, the events that led to the death, or whether it is night or day influence the Kerakie people's personal concept of death apart from the social one. Death is perceived to include the departure of that which gives a person meaning or reality or life or power or ability.

The numerous Kerakie mourning ceremonies are symbols signifying their values, beliefs and time understanding. When a person died, the community was horrified, filled with loathing, anger and grief, and perform rituals as a reaction. On death, the corpse was laid out in the open, so that the community could assemble around it and express grief through crying, hitting their bodies, and chanting. The mourners then fired blunt arrows at the opposite moiety since it was believed that someone from that social group had caused the death by sorcery. It was unthinkable that a person would curse someone from his or her own moiety. This grief is time-oriented because the mourners are those of the same generation or family as the deceased. The majority of the community does not shed many tears for babies or old people, who are born distantly in time. One of these rituals is no longer performed by the Kerakie but is still being carried out by neighbouring societies and is called 'the forgetting of the dead'. Williams called it "the ceremony of the leveling of the mound, that is, the low heap of earth on the grave", and the dismantling of grave-house. Food was laid on the grave and a small feast was held by the mourners. A similar ritual is performed among the neighbouring Rouku village people, which is very similar to and seems to have had the same purpose as the Kerakie ritual. Ayres recorded the Rouku people's comments about these ceremonies as being "to finish the memory" of the deceased by depersonalizing the grave.
Foodstuffs and a pig are put on the grave so we won't think about the people who died; we'll just forget them; it makes the grave smooth. No visible sign of human construction remains to mark the memory, the grave site is no longer distinguished. In the same way that cleared ground is a mark of human settlement - either a living place or a garden - the meaning of the grave site is redefined in social terms as a place of the living by being cleared and smoothed.30
The spot of land is reincorporated into the place, and becomes indistinguishable from the rest of the land in the place. After the people who had seen and known the deceased die, the genealogical knowledge of the individual once and for all passes out of knowledge.31

The 'leveling of the grave' was neglected by the Keraakie between 1932 to 1967, a change that was believed to be caused by the impact of the colonial era and Christianity. In the modern era, most of the Keraakie declare that they hold to a belief in the resurrection of the dead, and therefore the graves are no longer destroyed. They mourn the loss of one of their number as they always have, but now the body is buried in new clothes, a small house is built and maintained over the site. Keraakie women tend to keep their best dress for the day of their burial. Mutual support of the grieving relatives continues, and the deceased's memory is perpetuated. A new idea emerged in 1983 and pre-death thanksgiving feast was held for Said Garevo just before his death. Donald Tuzin condemned the intrusion of Christian ideas into the mortuary practices of the Arapesh people of the East Sepik River area, calling them "bloodless". He assessed the people's attitude:

They also perceived that the attitude was profoundly subversive of broader cultural understandings because traditional mortuary procedures importantly affirmed a variety of descent and ritual relationships and also validated ideas concerning the nature of corporeality and social personhood.32

At a public meeting on 6 July 1986 at Arufe, most of the influential Keraakie discussed the resurrection of Jesus Christ, declaring that because of it they had overcome their fear of death. They had cast aside their traditional mortuary rituals because they were based upon a wrong understanding of the dangerousness of the ghost, the hopelessness of life after death, and the nature of 'social personhood', which is now believed to continue beyond the grave, instead of being shattered by death. Despite these changes brought about through the influence of Christianity,
some are introducing non-Christian ideas by seeking to make contact with the dead at the grave.

Arnold van Gennep proposed that in human rites of passage there are three stages: separation, transition, and incorporation. These could be seen from the deceased’s point of view whereas the Keraakie observe them from the community’s. Death is not just the separation of the individual from the community so much as the reverse. It is the community that experiences the separation. The transitional mourning period involves the community as well as the individual, since both are in a state of uncertainty. When the incorporation stage is reached, it is not the deceased who is incorporated, but the society. One could say that the “funeral rites incorporate the deceased into the world of the dead”, where the Keraakie hope that the dangerous ghost will cause no more harm. From their social point of view, the mortuary rite of driving away the ghost and the transformation of the grave is performed so that the society can return to a stable state. Some see the incorporation stage as involving the family members, who have been subject to tabus and are now brought back into the community. The final stage is one of the healing of the social wounds caused by the death. These three ritualistic stages show the Keraakie’s understanding of the end of time in death, and their desire for the society’s restoration and continuance through time.

The Keraakie have speculated much about the end of time in death and their conclusions about its causation are seen in their sacred myths. The most important myth is that of the primeval family, where the father killed the son twice, because of an incestuous relationship with the mother. Williams collected varying versions of this murder and the modern version differs from all of them. This is the published version:

Kambel now proceeds to his revenge. He takes a taro of the kind called bonjikaka, cooks it, and affects to share it with his son. He refrains from eating his own share, but Gufá eats his and dies in consequence. Gufá has in the meantime come to life again. He leaves Kuramangu and goes to his maternal uncle in the Kaunjje tribe. When Gufá shows himself again at Kuramangu Kambel exclaims ‘Why have you come back? You are dead’, and then in his annoyance turns his back and will not speak further. But presently, planning his second revenge, he alters his manner and pretends to welcome his son.
He digs a pit and covers it with one of the huge *woratar* leaves. Then he places the food on top of the leaf and summons Gufa to sit down and eat. As the boy does so the leaf collapses; he is thrown into the pit and there speedily buried by his father. From this second death Gufa does not rise.\textsuperscript{35}

Another myth that addresses death is the killing of the Bedinye man, which is the opening one of Williams’ collection. This is presented as an accident in his published account but other oral traditions present it as an act of anger. As Garry Trompf has noted, Melanesian myths are known for payback killings, and this story may be an account of ‘retributive logic’ because of some offense.\textsuperscript{36} There is no mythological or historical data to support this possibility.

One day, however, he shot something lurking in the long grass and killed the old man Bedinye. Kambel took the body home, cooked and ate it, and hung up the jaw after his accustomed fashion. Then he slept soundly. All the time he thought Bedinye was nothing more than a wallaby.

The next morning he awoke and lay reflectively counting his wallaby jaws. When his gaze rested upon that of Bedinye he was puzzled at its shape. He rubbed his eyes, then sprang to his feet exclaiming, ‘Why, I have killed a man!’

Kambel was very repentant.\textsuperscript{37}

These myths reveal that in Keraakie thinking death occurs through the intervention of another, and it is not natural. This is common in Melanesian mythology, as seen in my own research among the Suki and Aaramba people of the Trans-Fly and the Zimakani people of Lake Murray. The Daribi also believed that in the beginning people were immortal but in their case “this ideal state was terminated by a curse laid upon mankind by the culture-hero Souw”.\textsuperscript{38} Williams noted that death occurred through direct or indirect spirit power of some kind. This traditional Keraakie belief was recorded by Williams, “Sickness and death are very commonly ascribed to sorcery, though not indeed invariably”.\textsuperscript{39} Trompf noted among the Toaripi of Papua a similar understanding.\textsuperscript{40} In Keraakie society, even accidents, such as a man cutting his leg with his own axe, is regarded as having been caused by another putting sorcery on the tool to cause the accident. If one dies from a snake bite then a sorcerer is blamed for sending the snake to kill the person concerned.\textsuperscript{41} To the traditional Keraakie it seems that endless life is the expectation of human beings and death is abnormal. In mythological time, death was caused by the primeval beings whereas in the non-mythological era death is seen as an attack by sorcerers, ghosts,
or spirit beings. This is still the understanding of most of the Kerraakie people today. Timothy Tekam of Arufe village said in 1995 that the general understanding is that "Ove (sorcery) is the cause of death."

As the Kerraakie contemplate death, they are fearful and anxious, associating numerous things with death. Among these are dreams while omens, such as a branch falling from a tree, is seen as a warning of death or disaster. A falling star indicates that someone has just died. If one hears a tutu bird call, it means that an old women will die. If one looks at the moon too long or sees a fish with patterns on its side then one will die. If a goanna, cassowary or snake poke their tongue at a person, the person will stop breathing. The Kerraakie believe that short people, who wear cassowary headdresses, live in numerous sacred sites (e.g., Dambaaro), so that if one looks at one of them, the observer will die. At a funeral, if one sees a branch fall or a crow flying then another person will die. If people hear an owl or a kanaa swamp bird calling, these sounds indicate that an unknown sorcerer is roaming around seeking to kill someone. If the sun is red, it signifies that someone will be bitten by a snake. This fearful expectation of the end of time in death is linked to their powerlessness.

The Kerraakie believe that before the irresistible flow of ‘time/being’, they are helpless so they are passive as they face death, cowering in the knowledge of their impotence. Before the onslaught of such supernatural powers, such as magic, ghosts and spirit beings, they can do nothing. There is another power, which Williams does not mention in his study of the Kerraakie, which the latter believe can cause death. This is fot or innate power, which resides in the human harhar (intestines), and is believed to be able to kill. Trompf calls this ‘mana’ and it is noted among many other Melanesian peoples. Oral history declares that Taaga of Arufe village walked through Mata village in June 1983, and a man died there because of his fot. I personally heard Zimiki of Arufe on 21 September 1981 command Taaga to leave the area where her mother-in-law lay ill. His fot could kill her simply by being close to her. Some people use certain tree leaves, bark, crocodile’s teeth charms or the smell of burnt hair for protection from these supernatural powers, but the Kerraakie say that there is no certainty that they will be effective. The Kerraakie feel impotent when facing death.
The Keraakie see life as chaotic and everything that happens is without order. They say that death is a mysterious feature because one can die by any one of an innumerable number of ways, ranging from extreme violence in a pig attack to total non-violence in sleep. Dying is not restricted to day or night, to dry or wet season, nor any other particular time, and can occur unexpectedly or be preceded by a long period of illness. Death is also unpredictable in time, because Suid Gaavo lived to a very old age, outliving his and the following generation before he succumbed. It can occur at any time: in youth, middle age, and old age, so that it is not governed by order, but seeming chaos. The timing of death can never be predicted accurately, and this uncertainty lies behind most of their cultural activities. Behind all of these causes lie the terrifying world of sorcery and the spirits.

In December 1990, I discussed with the old men of Arufe (Wamboi, Taaga, and Paatra) the possibility of the pre-existence in time of the human spirit. They rejected this idea as being foreign to them. Then I raised the issue of human spirits returning in a human form as a baby, but they rejected this idea too. Yet when the Keraakie, the Kiwai and the Suki of the Western Province first saw white-skinned Europeans they referred to them as ghosts. This is verified in the word used for introduced Western clothes by the Kiwai and Suki people, which means ‘the skin of ghosts’, and is still used today. When asked about this reaction to Europeans by their grandfathers, they gave two reasons for this understanding. When black-skinned people grow older their skin becomes lighter in colour and if they drown the skin becomes white. Also the Keraakie old men said that the Europeans confidently behaved as though they owned the land, so they thought that they must be the ghosts of the original owners. Their grandfathers could not explain who the Europeans were as the myths had never mentioned white-skinned people, so out of ignorance they referred to them as ghosts (Kiwai word: markai). Traditionally, they had no thought of reincarnation, but that idea seems to be emerging or being absorbed from outside. In December 1993, an Australian named David Green visited Arufe and some Keraakie asked if he was a recently deceased man’s ghost. I asked why they thought that and they replied that it was because David Green had a scar on his leg in the same place as on the leg of the deceased person. The Keraakie are obviously open to new ideas.
To the Keraakie the future was filled with overwhelming dread so they ignored it to avoid pondering the horrible possibilities of suffering, sickness and death that it may bring. Present events are a tension of enjoying others’ company and expecting chaos giving rise to anxiety. When a painful event is past, it is non-threatening. It can be recalled by memory, but it can never inflict pain again. So the Keraakie concentrate their thoughts on the past mythological age with its desired supernatural power, but even that continues to elude them. They live in a tension of remembering a stable non-threatening past, living with the joy and pain of the present, a dreaded anticipation of the future, and the frustration of the unattainable power of the past mythological age. This distress is then crowned with the most painful blow of all when hated death strikes with irretrievable finality, bringing ‘time/being’ to an end for the individual and possibly society. As a result, it seems as though the Keraakie destruction of the grave was a denial of death.

Of humankind’s reaction to the finality of death, anthropologist Ernest Becker generalized that “everything that man does in his symbolic world is an attempt to deny and overcome his grotesque fate.” The normal way the Keraakie face the pressures of life, such as death, is seen in their ‘entertainment’ which involves tiltil (dramas), humorous story telling, games, music, dancing, art and ritual. Humorous dramas take numerous forms such as the portrayal of an historic event, normal events of their daily life, or a satire on a person or group’s behaviour. These are partially a diversion from the sadness of life dominated by death. Extended family groups with their kinship responsibilities provide protection against death during droughts and in inter-community fights. Keraakie marriages are an attempt at overcoming death through procreation, so that new babies result in the continuance of society. They also unite different families so that, through these close relationships, people will be less likely to kill each other in community disagreements. Laws are orally promoted as warnings about unacceptable behaviour, which may cause retaliation and death. Economics involves gardening, hunting, fishing and gathering, all of which are attempts to maintain life in the face of starvation. Religious rituals were performed to placate murderous spirit beings so that humans will not suffer their anger. In all areas of life the Keraakie are conscious of the possibility of death and are trying to do something about it.
It appears that Keraakie ‘time/being’ is a human construction to overcome the disorder of life in this world. Edmund Leach sums up this attitude by saying, this “irreversibility of time is psychologically very unpleasant” as it inevitably leads to death.\textsuperscript{46} Death is not just one of the features of this disorder, it is the worst and final one in the eyes of the Keraakie. What Fischer wrote about death, sums up the way they see it, being “the permanent and irreversible cessation of life”.\textsuperscript{47} If they cannot control death, they can at least avoid the dread by ignoring or denying it. This is seen in that the Keraakie ignore the future because it is the bearer of sorrow, suffering and death. They develop a mystical time which, through dreams, they believe that they can perceive what is going to happen in the present and the future. It is an attempt to control that which is uncontrollable. The present is a struggle to survive, and they develop time structures from flora, fauna, astronomy, and meteorology in an attempt to manipulate nature, avoid hunger, and overcome fear. The Keraakie also construct a calendar in which every member of the community has a known place according to the order of their birth. In fact it is a form of social embodiment of time indicating that, to them, people are time. This stress upon social relationships, the unity of society and its continuance seems to be a means of finding security against the end of individual ‘time/being’ that death will bring. Writing about Kaulong society Goodale said, “Immortality is achieved only through the replacement of oneself with a child”, and the Keraakie have a similar understanding.\textsuperscript{48} They appear to build defences against the end of time in death, by deliberately removing evidence of a death through the leveling of the grave ritual, and avoiding discussion of that which shattered their social relationships. They seek immortality in the family/social segment/society with each man continuing his family through a son to overcome extinction. I suggest that they also create an accurate sequence of time in the past tense verbal forms so as to demonstrate their control of the irretrievable events of the past. But it is the mythological time, when life was far more powerful than the present death-dominated one, which is the main time that demonstrates this denial of the ‘ever-present reality’ of death.\textsuperscript{49} Even though Keraakie mythology opens with the story of ‘the death of the Bedinye’, it gives some hope of overcoming death with the coming back to life on Gufa. They yearn for this powerful time to overcome the reality of disorder, anxiety and death. Because of this fear of death, the Keraakie construct a backward flowing concept of ‘time/being’, which appears to be a denial
of death. They dwell on the past and present, because death in the future “obliterates meaning – that the fact of our eventual deaths renders all of our strivings pathetic and absurd”.

In conclusion, Keraakie time could be seen as a human construction created by their society and projected upon various features of ‘being’ to give them security in a world of disjunction, dominated by the inevitability of death and the terror of the supernatural world of ‘Being’. Time seems to be a denying or ignoring of death so as to give them release from the horror of meditating upon this anti-human future, because they see death as a state of ‘anti-being’. This fear of death and the spirit world appears to have dominated the Keraakie’s understanding of time.
ENDNOTES:


6 ibid., p. 5.


8 G.C. Martin, unpublished research notes on the Suki the people (1967-79).


14 ibid., p. 767.


18 Oral testimony of Bunai Aniba, (December 1995).

19 Heidegger, op. cit., p.281.

20 ibid., p. 282.


25 ibid., p. 68.


28 Williams, PTF, op. cit., p. 5.

29 ibid., p. 376.


31 ibid., p. 304.


34 ibid., p. 146.

35 Williams, PTF, pp. 312-313. Williams Field Notes, B.379. (hereafter referred to as WFN)

36 Trompf, Payback, op. cit., pp. 1-18, 30-32.

37 Williams, PTF, p. 299. Williams, WFN, B.330.

38 Wagner, op. cit., p. 38.

39 Williams, PTF, pp. 336, 356.
41 Williams, *PTF*, p. 358.
42 ibid., pp. 334-360.
47 Fischer, op. cit., p. 6.
49 Trompf, *Melanesian Religions*, op. cit., p. 35.
50 Fischer, op. cit., p. 8.
CHAPTER 11

KERAAKIE TIME IS SYMBOLIC

After studying the Albom people of the Sepik River area, Meinhard Schuster concluded, that because of "the need for stability of essential relations and associations or more generally the world order", they felt the essential nature of historic time.¹ This is similar to that of the Kerakie people, who feel the same need of stability and seek to order their chaotic world through the symbols. The most obvious of the latter symbols is language, which is pregnant with meaning, being the way in which all that is important is generated, expressed, empowered and maintained. Semiotics does not just consist of verbal communications but it also involves human behaviour. As Susanne Langer concluded that culture "is also a language; that every move is a gesture. Symbolization is both an end and an instrument."² Symbolic systems do not have one purpose, but are polyvalent, signifying a society's identity, values, fears and goals. Clifford Geertz suggested that "in the study of culture the signifiers are not symptoms or clusters of symptoms, but symbolic acts or clusters of symbolic acts."³ Taking up these propositions, an investigation will be made of Kerakie language and culture as symbolic systems. Daniel Malzt suggested that the basic nature of time-reckoning is symbolic, and this study will consider Kerakie time from that point of view.⁴ Firstly we will need to define the terms 'symbol' and 'sign', and observe the various theoretical positions that have emerged in the study of semiotics. Then consideration will be given to various studies in symbolic anthropology, that have given rise to different types of symbols, which include referential, manipulative, idefificatory, redressive, educational, regulative, political, protective, inspirational, cognitive, condensational, sympathetic, commemorative, integrative, and structural ones. The main symbols used by the Kerakie will be reviewed and in particular the way that their time concepts form a highly complex symbolic system, which signify how they see their physical, social and spiritual world. In conclusion, what are the underlying 'meanings' or 'interpreters' (Charles Peirce) or 'purposes' that give rise to Kerakie symbols in their struggle to survive in the Trans-Fly?
This study is fraught with danger for, as Roy Wagner put it, “the study or representation of another culture is no more a mere description of the subject matter than a painting “describes” the thing it depicts. In both cases there is a symbolization.” As I re-symbolize Keraakie conceptions, I am aware that I am transforming their symbols into Australian ones so that I can understand them. As a result, I may end up with a Western conception of Keraakie time, and fail to give an accurate statement of what time is to them. But, by being aware of this danger, such knowledge should help me to avoid misrepresenting their concepts of time.

What is involved in the study of symbols? There are two main streams of thought: the one founded by Ferdinand de Saussure and the other by Peirce, who are both linked to thinkers of preceding and following eras. The former was concerned about communication whereas the latter aimed at knowledge and meaning. Saussure saw the sign or symbol as a two-sided entity: “The linguistic sign unites, not a thing and a name, but a concept and a sound-image”. These were called the signified and its audible signifier. He contended that a sign is a unity of the mental concept (signified) and its ‘physical’ existence, which was a linguistic term called signifier. In his study of signs and symbols, Saussure was concerned about the way words were related to one another; pointing out that their differences help establish meaning and permitted communication within a linguistic group. “Language is a system of interdependent terms in which the value of each term results solely from the simultaneous presence of others.” From this language system (langue) emerged concrete acts of speech (parole), which gain their meaning from the whole. Saussure’s semiology does not define clearly the nature of the signified and its signification, limiting itself to the way writing represents speech in communication. The relationship between the signifier and the signified, and their resultant meaning is only dealt with in a cursory manner. Is meaning clarified by using more signs? Saussure does not appear to relate language to culture, nor does he seem to see the influence of the world and history on language. He declared, of writing, that it is “unrelated to its inner system” of language.

Philosopher Mark Gottdiener protested about this fallacy of signs being a “simple unity of signifier and signified through the mechanism of la langue”.
Saussure did not allow for numerous other factors, such as the objects themselves, human interpretations, emotions, and attitudes towards them. Philosopher Jacques Derrida also criticized Saussure’s understanding, “One must therefore challenge, in the very name of the arbitrariness of the sign, the Saussurian definition of writing as ‘image’ – hence as natural symbol – of language.” De Saussure studied language in a synchronic state or historically frozen state, which is very artificial, because time governs the application of words to objects in a society. In the history of the Keraakie people, their culture, values, beliefs, and so on, which are all ‘signs’, have been in a state of constant change. This is seen in the altered meaning of numerous words such as ‘day’ (evah) and ‘moon’ (haraare). In his semiology, Saussure saw culture as having a similar structure to language, with all societies having cultures in common, being a “pan-linguistic phenomenon” and a mode of communication. Claude Lévi-Strauss and Roland Barthes followed Saussure’s understanding of signs.

Peirce’s study of symbols was an attempt to understand the human environment and people’s experience in it. He declared that signs are triadic in nature, which was similar to Charles K. Ogden and Ivor A. Richard’s understanding. Peirce suggested that the “sign is something which stands to somebody for something in some respect or capacity.” The latter “something” be called the object, and when people encounter this object, it creates in the mind of the person an equivalent sign, or perhaps a more developed sign, which he called the interpretant or the “proper significate effect”. There is an inter-relatedness because the sign, the object and the interpretant can only be understood in relation to the others. The interpretant is decided by social agreement, rule, or convention. In other words he stressed that the sign imparted meaning effect upon the reader, who generated the meaning depending upon the social environment. Peirce set forward different ways that signs convey meaning.

First, according as the sign in itself is a mere quality, is an actual existent, or is a general law; secondly, according as the relation of the sign to its object consists in the sign’s having some character in itself, or in some existential relation to that object, or in its relation to an interpretant; thirdly, according as its Interpretant represents it as a sign of possibility or as a sign of fact or a sign of reason.
He proposed three trichotomies of signs. The first involved a ‘qualisign’ (being a quality, a vague sensation or appearance), a ‘sinsign’ (an event, object or token), and a ‘legsign’ (a general type). The second group involved an ‘icon’ (being similar to the object), an ‘index’ (having a dynamic relation to the object), and a ‘symbol’ (based on a rule of interpretation, it functions as a sign of an object). The final division is a term (having a qualitative possibility, being a predicative sign), a ‘proposition’ (a sign of actual existence), and an ‘argument’ (a sign of law). “Some of the concepts and distinctions introduced by Peirce...have become part of the standard conceptual repertoire of philosophy and semiotics.”\textsuperscript{15} Although he related culture to language in a global way, he did not analyse it. Peirce’s comprehensive work was criticized by Gottiener, who declared, “Peirce’s formulation is as limited as Saussure’s for the case of the imaginary relation between thought and its signs.”\textsuperscript{16} Others have taken this study of signs further.

Social anthropologist Mary Douglas defined her work on symbols: “I am developing a sociological approach to the problem, let me concentrate, instead, on the kind of use to which people put their symbols in everyday life, as regulators or channels of power.”\textsuperscript{17} In her studies, she found symbolic systems to be foundational to social relationships. Dirt, pollution, food taboos, animals, and everyday human activities were features of her study of symbolism. In some societies there are different symbolic systems while in others she discovered an integrated holistic understanding of symbolism uniting conceptual and social structures. One of her arguments is that the human body has a symbolic dimension in representing society. She went so far as to write that “the body...provides a basic scheme for all symbolism”.\textsuperscript{18} This suggestion will be taken up later in a comparison with the Keraakie understanding of the body (individual and corporate) as time. Summing up her position, she saw symbols as socially determined, seeking to establish and maintain social relationships.

Structuralists, like Edmund Leach, in their analysis of symbolic systems stressed the relationship between the sign and the thing symbolized. Symbols were systems of communication, whose meaning had to be discovered. His works show the influence of Lévi-Strauss, who saw all human behaviour, myths, language, and so on, as having a common structure. He sought to discover the universal structures of
social symbols, but there are numerous interpretations depending on the interpreter, the data available, and the environment. This approach gives priority to only one method of analysis, when symbols are more than just bearers of meaning. Anthropologist Dan Sperber rejected ‘the search for meaning’ idea in symbolism, seeing symbols as being involved in the construction of knowledge:

It is therefore not a question of discovering the meaning of symbolic representations but, on the contrary, of inventing a relevance and a place in the memory for them despite the failure in this respect of the conceptual categories of meaning.

Clifford Geertz continues this discussion, presenting a fuller understanding of cultural symbols: “The whole point of a semiotic approach to culture is, as I have said, to aid us in gaining access to the conceptual world in which our subjects live so that we can, in some extended sense of the term, converse with them.” He suggested that culture is symbolic, with each society living differently based on a particular way of looking at things. In semiotic language, the former is the objective activity (or “thin description”) and the latter is the mental concept (or “thick description”). In The Interpretation of Cultures, Geertz states the task as being “an analysis of the system of meanings embodied in the symbols...and the relating of these systems to social-structural and psychological processes.”

In this study of Keraakie culture, Peirce’s triadic pattern (sign, object, interpretant) will be combined with Ogden and Richard’s triadic pattern (symbol, reference, referent) in an attempt to discover the purpose of symbols in Keraakie culture. Words will be referred to as ‘symbols’, meanings or mental impacts as ‘concepts’, while people, actions or things are ‘objects’. The word ‘sign’ will be used to indicate things and ‘symbol’ to represent things. The Keraakie refer to a symbol as baanbaan zi (which means literally ‘a reflection word’), seeing the object not as the reality but as a mirror image of it. Baanbaan is used to describe a reflection on the surface of the river, a pool of water or mirror. This Keraakie word also has the meaning of ‘underneath’, indicating that they see the presence of underlying powers, structures or meanings. Using words, they seek to objectify and mentally ‘hold at a distance’ the disordered flow of life in the Trans-Fly, so as to understand, control and empower it. At this point, an analysis will be made of the different types of symbols
found among the Keraakie and their relation to time, in order to discover of what they are a 'mirror image'. I propose that Keraakie time concepts are signs indicating deeper mental concepts.

In Schieffelin's study of the Kabuli people of PNG, he discovered a significant symbolic ritual (called gisaro) through which he was able to view most of the fundamental issues of their life and society. Do the Keraakie have a significant sign that is central to their culture? Most Melanesians ritualize or perform in a dance what is important to them rather than writing about themselves, but during the thirty years of observing these people, I did not see any ritual that was supremely important to them. Francis Williams, during the 1920-30s, did not mention a significant ritual either, but noted that their culture was disintegrating so that key rituals may have ceased to exist such as the welomango mentioned in chapter 1. When I asked the Keraakie if they had a key symbol or sign, they said, "The yam is important to us". On 1 December 1995, Noat Somoki of Arufe village declared that "the yam is our life". This successful businessman, of about forty years of age, meant that they were dependent upon the latter tubers for their food and that their life revolved around growing and eating them. They struggle with hunger in the infertile Trans-Fly and death is held at bay through their yam crops. At any time during the year, whatever the season, they are always thinking or doing something about their yams. The dry season begins with the harvesting and eating of the yams, then the following season involves clearing the jungle, burning the trees and preparing their new yam gardens. Then comes the planting of the seed yams, which is followed by the wet season. The Keraakie watch in expectation as their yams sprout and send out long vines which climb the special sticks planted to hold up the vines. This natural growth is accompanied by an equivalent growth in hunger among the Trans-Fly people for their maturing yams. The final season before harvesting is the weeding so that nothing will hinder the full growth of their gardens. This is the time cycle of the yam, which encapsulates the life of the Keraakie, and symbolically represents 'time/being' to the people of the Trans-Fly. I propose that Noat's statement "the yam is our life" holds symbolic meanings other than the obvious ones.¹⁴

The growth cycle of the yam is based upon the underlying time structure of the seasons, and their symbolic nature will be considered. When the Keraakie people
moved into the Trans-Fly area they experienced the north-west wind which brings heavy rain. This drenched the landscape and inundated 90% of it to a depth of about 10 to 20 cms. Therefore they gave this phenomenon the linguistic symbol of yu (land) hakwar (wet, moist, sap), which has through time been shortened to y’hakwar. It is descriptive of the rain-soaked environment at that time of the year and this symbol became a temporal term, involving the greater time meaning of regular wet seasons. Symbols are multivocal, so besides being a symbol of the wet season it is also a symbol of the power of the rainmakers who are responsible for bringing it about. The wet season is the time of devastating storms that wreck the Kerakie houses, the landscape, the crops, flooding creeks and rivers. It also symbolizes the swarming of numerous insects: leeches, mosquitoes, sandflies, march flies and ants, which make life uncomfortable for the Kerakie. Worst of all, the wet season symbolizes the hunger and their continuous scavenging through the jungle for fruit, roots, leaves, nuts and whatever else may be edible. This symbolic word is both precise, in its meaning, and imprecise because each individual brings his or her own experiences to colour its meaning. The symbol can conjure up different pictures, depending upon the past happenings in the life of the individual, such as a death or marriage at that time. This taking hold of the memories of past experiences of previous wet seasons, giving them a mental form in the present, and an anticipation of the future crop, creates a multidimensional time concept. The linguistic term y’hakwar emerged from symbols for the ‘saturated land’ and is symbolic of past, present and future ‘being’ during the wet season in the Kerakie mind. It is also a dominant symbol of a polysemic nature, unifying many diverse elements and meanings.
The symbolic nature of the wet season in the Trans-Fly is a challenge to consider using Charles Peirce's terminology to describe it. He saw that a sign could function as an index:

> Which refers to its object not so much because of any similarity or analogy with it, nor because it is associated with general characters which that object happens to possess, as because it is in dynamical (including spatial) connection both with the individual object, on the one hand, and with the senses or memory of the person for whom it serves as a sign.\(^25\)

Therefore to the Keraakie the sign *y'akwar* is linked to other signs such as the north-west wind, storms, rain, flooding and swarming insects, which are called *indices*. They are a physical representation of the wet season, indicating that it is occurring. The distress and unhappiness, which the Keraakie experience during the wet season, are what Peirce called *qualisigns*: “a sign of pure sensation before there is a consciousness of the sensation as such.”\(^26\) They have no direct link to the falling
rain of that season but signify how the Keraakie feel as they suffer from the millions of mosquitoes, leeches, sand flies, march flies that hatch at that time. The pattern of the repetition of the wet season is observed by the Keraakie so that it is also what Peirce called a *legisign*, “a law that is a Sign”\(^{27}\). They note the habit or convention of recurring wet seasons followed by recurring dry seasons, creating a general law.

Other linguistic symbols, which are used of time, are polysemic:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symbol/sign</th>
<th>Object</th>
<th>Interpretant</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>evah</em> <em>yu</em></td>
<td>dry season</td>
<td>time pattern</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>south-east winds</td>
<td>cool at night</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>sunny blue skies</td>
<td>hot/thirsty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>harvesting of crops</td>
<td>not hungry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>social activities</td>
<td>happy time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>work of preparing land</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>evah</em></td>
<td>sun</td>
<td>light</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>day</td>
<td>safe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td></td>
<td>totem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(primeval spirit)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>kwewe</em></td>
<td>no sun</td>
<td>darkness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>dangerous</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>evilness</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>totem</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>haraare</em></td>
<td>moon</td>
<td>light in the dark</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>time indicator</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Keembel</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>(primeval spirit)</td>
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After the wet season commences with the arrival of the north-west monsoon, a sub-season called the worvaartoh (growth) occurs, which is followed by the sub-season called sambaarah (weeding). When the wind changes to the south-east, the first sub-season werwer (south-east wind) of the dry season commences. The leaves of the yam plants dry out and turn yellow, and this marks the beginning of the aarnoh (eating or harvesting) time. As all the Keraakie men go out to harvest their gardens, they cut grass and lay it over every creek bed. This symbolic activity is to protect the crop from unseasonal rain during the harvesting. After the digging up of a few yams, the men carry them back to the village, jumping over the grass they have previously laid in the creeks. When the yams are cooked, all the men collect their mats, bags, dogs, bow and arrows. They stand in a line and shout: “We are going to Gukaabi”: yand (we) bee (future indicator) yamanggam (will go) Gukabiaat (to Gukaabi). This site is a noted spirit place among the northern Suki people. Then the Keraakie eat the yams and sit down. This symbolic ritual may be performed to deceive the malicious ninyt (ghosts/spirits) into thinking that the villagers are going away and are not staying to harvest, thereby the spirits will all depart for Gukaabi. The deeper meaning is that the Keraakie do not want the ninyt around when they are harvesting lest they spoil or steal their yams. This ritual is a protective symbol so that they, as a people, will survive. In the Sepik River area the yams are believed to have spirits which do not want to be harvested, and the people of that area perform rituals to deceive these spirits in a similar way to the Keraakie.28 The people of the Trans-Fly do not mention yams as having individual spirits.
After the harvest, the Keraakie begin their festive season, during which others are invited to dances, marriages, rituals, reciprocal yam prestations and the eating of the yams. The symbolic meaning of this work of planting through to harvesting is the hoped-for joyous climax of eating yams, therefore the yam is a symbol of social pleasure. This roughly occurs between June to November, and although it involves the hard work of clearing and planting new gardens, this is a socially oriented activity which the Keraakie enjoy. The eating of yams is also a symbolic creating of and maintaining of social relationships.

Alfred Gell attempted to summarise Heidegger’s understanding of time, stating that “it is being ‘in’ time, rather than, so to speak, ‘being time’ by recognising, in the visionary moment, first of all that time is encompassing, and second, that time is self.” Some anthropologists make a distinction between self and person, seeing self as “one’s own individual embodiment while the person is a social concept”. The Keraakie man or woman has an awareness of himself or herself as an individual but always as part of a group. They see each other as consisting of a duration in social ‘time/being’ as well as individually experiencing the events of birth to death and their signifying series of symbolic ceremonies, which are all dates in a time sequence in the life of the community. Not only is each experiencing time, but he or she is also affecting other individuals in Keraakie society. Victor Turner suggested that a symbol is a thing regarded by general consent as naturally typifying or representing or recalling something by possession of analogous qualities or by association in fact or thought. These symbolic rituals may have a purpose or be an end in themselves. A study will be made of these symbolic rituals and their purpose in regards to Keraakie ‘time/being’.
The protection of these actions has a deeper symbolic meaning: the perpetuation of Keraakie society through attempting to control death. In other words these ritualistic tabus are symbols for the suppression of harmful ‘time/being’ and the promotion of good ‘time/being’.

When the child is approximately five years of age, the mother’s brother (baava) pierces his or her ear lobes at a special ceremony. Among the people of the Fly and Strickland rivers, the term baava and the mother’s brother’s ritualistic action seem to have a common origin as seen in similar linguistic terms: baba (Suki) babo (Kafuli and Samo of the upper Strickland River). This ritual signifies the next step in the social growth process, in which, up till this time in the life of the individual, the mother has played the major part in bearing and feeding. Through this rite, the child is incorporated further into his father’s family line by his mother’s family. The piercing of the ears signifies the coming of age. A small bow and arrows are given to the child and the uncle receives a gift of food from the parents.\textsuperscript{33} Williams did not state the reason for these symbolic actions, but according to the modern Keraakie they signify growing responsibilities: dependency on one another in the search for food and reciprocity. There is a close relationship between the child’s mother and her brother, and he is also involved in the nose piercing of the boy at approximately eight years of age. At this special ceremony the mother’s brother gives the child a drum, another bow, more arrows, and other things.\textsuperscript{34} Again Williams did not give a reason for these symbolic actions, but the modern Keraakie see them as preparation for future social responsibility. The symbolic actions of ear and nose piercing are symbols of social
maturation through time. This also appears to be the way that the Samo people of the upper Strickland River area perceive these actions.\textsuperscript{35}

The most important of these growth rituals is the initiation of youths into adult manhood. This rite is the graduation out of a 'preliminary' state in the village (the domain of the women where they have spent their childhood) into a 'liminary' state in the jungle (the domain of men) at Kureemgu, the site of mythological events, which could only be entered by men on sacred business. Physical and spiritual growth through time and incorporation into adult society are the key elements of this symbolic ritual. The latter links pain in symbolic beating to this transformation into manhood, but it also was a symbolic attempt to order the chaotic flow of time by giving the youth a date in his maturing process. Christopher Gosden perceived, "People create time and space through their actions," and this is true of the Keruakie who see this ritual as an important date in the individual's life.\textsuperscript{36} The rite of initiation transforms the youth into an adult with the possibility of marriage, empowering him through procreation to hold in check the time-ending forces of death.

The next symbolic ritual that expresses the Keruakie's growth through time is marriage. According to their exogamous marriage laws, which are common throughout the whole Trans-Fly region, one must marry outside of one's moiety by exchanging a sister for a bride from the other moiety. The symbol of the Sangaara moiety is inafiak (white-headed eagle) and the symbol of the Bangu moiety is the waana (white-chested eagle), expressing aspects of the Keruakie social structure.\textsuperscript{37} When a traditional wedding ceremony is held, there are many symbolic features.\textsuperscript{38} Various men shoot arrows into a tree and the groom fires an arrow over the heads of villagers for which the Keruakie suggest a variety of symbolic meanings. The first suggestion is that the girl is departing from her father's section to her husband's and is thus considered dead. So they shoot into the tree symbolizing the bride. This suggested symbolic meaning is not exactly true as she is still regarded as their girl by her father's section and can be taken back under extenuating circumstances. Seegiwa of Bebeven took back his exchange cousin when the girl received in exchange died in 1981. Another symbolic meaning suggested is that the marks left by the arrows on the tree are permanent marks to remind everyone of the exogamous marriage arrangement. Williams proposed, "The general shooting of arrows by the kinsmen
over their sister, done silently and deliberately as it was, might suggest a symbolic threat, as it they would punish any ill treatment of the bride in her husband’s village.” This reason is unknown in the modern era. Another proposed meaning is that since her relatives would be crying at their girl’s departure, so all must cry with them and the trees cry by releasing tears of sap from the arrow wounds. Williams cites a symbolic reason that the direction of the arrows shows the bride the track to her future. At the wedding I witnessed at Arufe on 6 December 1987, the arrows were not fired in the direction where the couple were going to live, rather they were fired east and west and the couple came from the north and were going back there to live. Another suggestion, made to Williams, was that the arrows passing each other “symbolizes...the acts of exchange”. This idea is unknown to the modern Keraakie. Whatever this symbolic action originally meant, it appears that in the modern era individual creative symbolization is the name of the game.

Marriage could also be classed as a reciprocal symbol, because girls are exchanged from the opposite moieties, and numerous prestations between the two groups will take place in the future. The wedding ceremony becomes a social date to which other events may be related. The wedding of Yokaar Gavai and Mera Wangra of Gubaav on 8 December 1987 is roughly regarded as the date when the Martin family left Arufe (17 December). Marriage is also a time-oriented symbolic event in the present, based on past traditions, and signifying a permanent arrangement with a future hope of children. In fact the nuptial rite is a future-oriented symbol of the eternal perpetuation through the birth of babies of the community. The Keraakie marriage ceremony emphasises the role of a wife as a producer of babies. The man and the girl create a new family in the male’s social segment, signifying that marriage is a symbolic incorporation rite.

In finalizing this section, Keraakie person is a time symbol, signifying growth through time in birth, physical maturation, social maturation through various symbolic rituals and an end in the irreversibility of death. Geertz’s comment upon these factors in Bali time, parallels the thinking of the Keraakie:

Surely among the most important is by the recognition in oneself and in one’s fellowmen of the process of biological aging, the appearance, maturation, decay, and the disappearance of concrete individuals.
In other words time is a symbol of ‘being’, which for the individual can end in death and also for society. When one compares Geertz’s study of Balinese time with Keraakie time as symbolic systems, one notes some similarities and some differences. The process of biological aging, which has just been mentioned, is the most important of time concepts among the people of Bali, according to Geertz, and it is also seen in the same way by the Keraakie. The Balinese “detemporalizing conception of time” is seen in their attempts to blunt the impact of their comrades continually dying, the impact of their uncompleted lives on the living and the impact upon the unborn. This is also a major concern for the Keraakie. The Balinese create time calendars of various time units, not in order to count and total them, but to describe and characterize them, to formulate their differential social, intellectual, and religious significance. The Keraakie do something similar, but they do not have a calendar based on days, nor create cycles of days, nor do they name nor qualify days, as the Balinese do. Yet the Keraakie do qualify seasonal time, dividing the wet and dry seasons respectively into bad or good eras. Another similarity between the Balinese and Keraakie understanding of time is the fact that the Balinese do not have a general word for ‘time’. Leopold Howe also pointed out that accuracy and mathematical precision in regard to the passage of time are alien to the Balinese. The Keraakie hold an identical understanding.

Geertz’s claim, that Balinese time is different from other cultures, is criticized by Maurice Bloch as cultural relativity. The latter declared that “the logic of languages implies a notion of temporality and sequence and so if all syntax is based on the same logic, all speakers must at a fundamental level apprehend time in the same way.” Admittedly all people see the same raw material of time and experience the same time, but, from the different positions they take, it is obvious that they disagree with Bloch’s assumption. Each society’s world view and experience will influence how they interpret that raw material. Edmund Leach asserts that there are only two types of time: one in which time is repeated and the other involves irreversibility. Howe disagrees with this, declaring “that there is only one duration, and that this can be conceived of as both cyclical and irreversible at the same time.” The Keraakie hold to a durational understanding of time, seeing the repetition of events, and even name these events with the same linguistic symbols, but they deny
the cyclicity of time. Even the simple cycle of the day is not seen by them as such, but as a duration that moves irreversibly towards the end at sunset, when the day dies. The same linguistic term (evah) is used of the next day, but to the Keraakie it is a new sun that rises, starting a new day and not the sense of the sun returning. Also, Howe’s assumption that all will apprehend time in the same way is not born out in this study of Keraakie time.

Geertz presents the idea that the Balinese seek to reduce time to “a motionless present”. They anonymize people by giving them concealed names, birth order names, tekonyms and titles “to dampen the intimacy implicit in face to face relationships” by viewing all as “stereotyped contemporaries”. Another reason for this depersonalization may be to distance themselves from the ultimate ‘uncomfortableness’ of death, which the irreversibility of time will bring. They thus create calendars based on the interaction of independent cycles of day-names, as part of achieving this ‘absolute present’. The latter calendars do not show change in time but discern the best possible day to hold a wedding, a funeral, harvest crops, launch a business, and so on. They are not durational but punctual, when events become time points or dates.

Geertz suggested that the “depersonalizing conception of personhood is a detemporalizing (again from our point of view) conception of time.” Howe supports this view of the cyclical nature of Balinese time by providing evidence of the cycle of daily events and also of the months. But Bloch points out that Balinese politics and agriculture reveal a durational understanding of time as well. This is also supported by Howe’s evidence showing that a day to the Balinese is a duration in itself, when he names the various points of the daily flow of time. Therefore it is obvious that Balinese time involves both cyclical and durational characteristics, but to say that cyclical time is radically different from durational time is to overlook the fact that event sequences are a feature of both linear and cyclical time. Howe concludes, “I would claim that repetition (cyclicity) and irreversibility (linearity) are both integral features of Balinese notions of duration.” This is irrespective of whether the events in the cycles are agricultural or ritualistic. Alfred Gell, in his discussion of this issue, suggested that Bloch may have misinterpreted what Geertz wrote. The latter was not giving a comprehensive analysis of Balinese time concepts,
but only providing a symbolic interpretation of certain prominent themes, which give an insight into Balinese culture. What Geertz also revealed is that Balinese time is closely linked to person, and this is similar to Keraakie time.

Keraakie symbols tend to represent the flow of life from birth to death in time, with each person, event or ceremony as a 'social chime' in their growth through time. The individual is time to the Keraakie and these numerous rituals were the dates of this living 'time-piece' within society. Other events are dated in relationship to them such as the statement: 'I was at school at Morehead when Yani Wells was a patrol officer there [late 1960s]'. However people are not just time symbols, because each of these points in time has other symbolic meanings that cover their social relationships, their belief systems, and their responsibilities within the community. Yet deeper symbolic meanings are found in the baambaan (symbol, reflection, underlying structure) of their values, motivations, fears and yearnings, which are also signified by these ceremonies. The whole of Keraakie existence is a multifaceted symbol of their struggle with the distress and emptiness of disorder and chaos in the Trans-Fly. Underlying this is an egocentric concept of order, that does not see disorder as normal, but that all things should work together to meet their needs in satisfactory 'being'. This disorder consists of the struggle to find food to live, to resolve social disharmony, to overcome their terror of spirit powers, to placate the geenzeen spirit beings and cope with death. All cultural relationships, rituals, objects, activities and time concepts are their symbolic attempts to overcome (waingehe) in this struggle and attain satisfactory 'being'. John Fiske declared: "A sign is something physical, perceivable by our sense; it refers to something other than itself; and it depends upon a recognition by its users that it is a sign." To the Keraakie a symbol only signifies or reflects reality and is not the reality they want, satisfactory 'being'. All their cultural and time symbols aim at frengheh yoam (resolved being), in their struggle against disorder, and they as a people (individual and group) are time and the symbol of resolution.

Williams used the word waniwan when referring to the spirit or shadow of a person who is sick or dying. The word waniwan is most likely a misspelling of baambaan which means symbol and not shadow (gor). The modern Keranskie only use mbarbar for the human spirit and not baambaan. It appears from Williams' research
(if it is correct) that the Keraakie saw the human spirit as being a symbol of the human body in 1926-32. The importance of the human body is stressed by their word for it (vivi) which also means ‘reality, group, essence, ultimate, meaning, substance, flesh or meat’. The body is central to the Keraakie mind because the whole of their life revolves around caring for and protecting it in their struggle to survive in the Trans- Fly. The body is time-oriented, being central in some of their time concepts. The physical size of a person's body can become the date when an event happens in society, being a comparison between the size he or she is at a point in time and what he or she is in the present, so as to ascertain the time gap indicated. In Keraakie society, each individual is a digit of time, having his or her place in a linear sequence of living members from the youngest through to the oldest. This is their way of expressing age, because they do not count the years. Each person is anticipated to hold many sequential positions in time as they move through life, until death intervenes. The age of the body governs these positions: first as a baby (maaivet toge), then an infant (toge), a child (haakar/merez), a teenager (strewweer/merez dükar), a married person (eeri/damaave), a parent (develaama), a mature adult (kitong eerieusa), an old person (bolo), and finally a corpse (kar bu). These stages are linked to events (birth, initiation, marriage, etc.) which are regarded as social time points and to which other events are related. The body is also a time indicator, recording past events by scars, burns, or deformed limbs caused by tragedies, sickness, or whatever. Manoba Emang of Arufe was attacked by a wild boar in January 1985 and the numerous scars he carries are indicators of that time. In the family of Somakku Zuga of Bebeven village, twin boys were born in the mid-1970s. Both were allowed to live, which traditionally was not the case. One boy, Maro, was fed on breast milk while the other, Wariye, was fed on coconut milk, and as a result the former became a big man, while the latter is small. Their history is recorded in their bodies for all to see, showing that time is a living physical reality among the Keraakie.

Another time feature of the body arises out of the rhythmic patterns that constitute human living. The body makes essential demands and these are noted as regular time events, which Gay Luce called "a kind of time map of the body's various rhythms". These include the normal beating of the heart, the breathing of the lungs, the eating of food, the drinking of fluids, washing, sleeping, sexual activity, defecating or urinating. Some of these are obvious time indicators, such as
eating times, because the Keraakie cook the late morning meal when the sun has risen midway towards the zenith. This time is called yeegu angar angar and is around 10 am. Another meal is cooked on sunset and it is called zite nane (evening food). Yet the governing factor in these meal times is not an artificial time grid thrust upon nature but the hunger pains of the stomach. I was once asked by an observant Keraakie, "Why does your watch decide when you have a meal and not your body?"

The monthly female menstrual cycle is another feature of this physical time pattern, and each woman points to the position the moon will be in when she is due. The moon is the time indicator because they know that menstruation usually begins in the night. Also this governs their sexual activities, because men are fearful of dying if they come in contact with menstrual blood. During their menses, women usually leave the family house and go and sleep in the nearby bush. Keraakie men state that they are sexually more active in the morning than at other times. If an argument between a man and his wife occurs early in the morning, the villagers declare that it is because she rejected his sexual advances.

The circadian rhythm of the body, which involves various physiological and biochemical functions of the organs, blood, urine, and so on occur in a regular time-oriented pattern. Barbara Adam suggested that "all of our body's physiological processes are temporally organised and orchestrated." An example of this is noted by Luce, declaring that "urine flow is rhythmic." The Keraakie are generally unaware of many of these biological rhythms, but they do observe the regularity of the beating of the heart, the breathing of the lungs, and urinating. Some of these changes are noted as time indicators, but most do not play an important part in Keraakie time. These physiological changes support the major concept that the body is a symbol of time and 'being'. This rhythm within the body commences for the individual before and at birth and marks a new beginning of time for an individual within society, while its cessation indicates an end of time for the individual being the death of the body. Both of these individual events affect the society in a marked way, because they mean either gain or loss of social reality.

Social unity is called eembrereero and comes from the words 'only one' (eembru: one, ro: only) which is the opposite in meaning to the terms for individuality (beero). Only through social unity in a spatiotemporal context do the
Keraakie see the possibility of their eternal continuance. The fact that the word for body (vivi) has the idea of the ‘body politic’ (a social phenomenon) has been noted by many philosophers such as Plato, Aristotle and Hegel. This Keraakie word is also used of a corporate group in relation to others. When the Keraakie Bangu social section meets it is called body (vivi) because it is different to the Sangara, Zirgu or Maiawa social sections. When the Keraakie meet as a social group it is called vivi and is regarded as different to the Aaramba tribal grouping. The latter use a similar term fefe (body) for social group or reality. To the Keraakie, the physical body is foundational to their understanding of ‘being’ (yuam) which is not a thing but pulsating temporal life in the body corporate. It is the bodily senses that give rise to their concept of ‘time/being’ since it consists of what they perceive with their eyes, touch, smell, taste and ears. On the other hand, Keraakie ‘time/being’ is not purely a sensed concept but also a social one being the body corporate.

The word vivi (meat, flesh, body, substance, group, reality, essence, and meaning), and the word yuam (time/being, way of being, existence, reality, activity, abstract feature, a happening, a spirit being, way, ritual, a mysterious phenomena) have different meanings but are linked in the Keraakie mind. The group (vivi) is time-oriented in emerging from the past, living in the present, and being their security concerning the future while its temporal activities are ‘being’ (yuam). This close link is noted in the description of a productive village meeting: eumengah (meeting) vivvato (with substance, people and meaningful discussion) yam (is) or eumengah (meeting) yuamovato (with constructive ideas and action) yam (is). These two words have a difference in meaning but the result is almost the same to the Keraakie. The physical body is a symbol of the social group which in turn appears to be a symbol of ‘being’. When a Keraakie couple have a son, their joy is ecstatic and the father constantly carries his infant son around with him. When Meeku Seemi of Bebeven produced a son in 1985 for Midaawa Kawar of Arufe, he was inseparable from the baby boy, who meant the continuation of the social section. Even though the community is always changing under the impact of death, the Keraakie see the group as the one permanent feature of their existence. The importance of this perpetuation can be seen in the case of the death of two young unmarried men, Genai Saawi of Gubaav village (1989) and Tatamasi Aniba of Arufe village (1994), who were bitten by poisonous snakes. As death approached, both lamented the fact they would never
have children to continue their family. There is a great emphasis upon a man having a male heir to take his place (uguh or vaaw) for the perpetuation of society in time. The Keraakie felt very sorry for me only having three daughters and no sons and voiced it many times. The continuance of social 'being' through male descendants seems to be the greatest desire of Keraakie males. The group is the symbol of their overcoming the end of time in death, resulting in duet/deutut yoam (eternal existence, substance, being).

To conclude, the symbolic nature of Keraakie time is seen in the way it is used to comprehend and control the terrifying world of the spirits, death, and social disharmony. As they confront the powerful and dangerous world of spirit Being, the Keraakie attempt to understand, protect themselves and manipulate the supernatural world. The physical world of the Keraakie is declared to have emerged through the efforts of the geenzeen (primeval spirit beings) in the sacred time. This mythological era is the most important of all their time concepts, because it gives them their identity as a unique people. The reality of that past age is made present through the telling of the karmal zi (myths) at Kurcemgu and is seen in the time indicators of the sun, moon, and stars as present evidence of that mythological age. The geenzeen spirit beings are believed to be dangerous because they continue in some powerful way in the present world. Therefore the Keraakie have many charms and rituals so as to protect themselves from these powers. They also manipulate this past power source in sorcery attacks on enemies and in magic so as to protect and provide their needs in the present and future. The mythological era is a symbol of past Keraakie origins, the source of what they are now in the present, and the possible power to overcome death in the future. They also believe that the primeval spirit beings are in control of the future, because they warn them of what has just happened and what is going to happen in the future. This is done through dreams and could be called mystical time, which with the mythological time are symbols of their insecurity because the spirit world causes all sickness and deaths. Time is a symbol of their attempts to control their fear of spirit powers.

Many Keraakie time-features are an attempt to understand and bring order to the disharmony of life in the Trans-Fly. 'Time/being' seems to be out of control and they do not see any consistent regularity in nature or society. The year divides into a
battle with hunger in the flooded landscape of the wet season and a battle with thirst in a hot landscape burning with fires in the dry season. The seasons are economic symbols of the struggle to survive in the infertile Trans-Fly: growing food, hunting, fishing, scavenging and processing food so as to live. The yam is a symbol of time, life and ‘being’. Their calendars list the activities of flora and fauna, so as to note when sources of food are available. Many social features (such as kinship and social groupings) are time-oriented, being symbols of their past lineage and source of present necessary mutual support. The night and the day are symbols of qualitative time because of the Keraakie’s fear of death. Everything seems to be of an adversarial nature in the Trans-Fly, so some of their time concepts are symbolic attempts to order their sufferings from the millions of leeches, mosquitoes, sand flies and march flies. They believe that the antagonism of the natural and spiritual world results in death, being the end of ‘time/being’. Even the danger of dying through contact with menstrual blood is symbolically regulated by dating it according to the position of the moon as a means of self-protection for men. The Keraakie seek to control their fear of death by symbolic rituals denying its existence, seeing the past as non-threatening and fearfully rejecting the future as the bearer of death. This emphasis on the past is noted in their use of five past tense forms. The Keraakie seek to neutralize death through emphasising the present and the past to avoid pondering the future. Through stressing growth in the body and the reality of social ‘being’, they create a secure sense of life to hide the insecurity they feel as death approaches. Present society is time to the Keraakie and its perpetuation through procreation is their way of seeking to overcome death. The body is a symbol of the social group, which is a symbol of continuancy in life. Keraakie time concepts are symbols of their attempts to restrain their fear and powerlessness in the face death.

The symbolic nature of time among the Keraakie is noted in that many time-features are an attempt to maintain stability in the middle of social disharmony and violence. Their mythological time revealed the source of disharmony among the geenzeen spirit beings but it presented no obvious solution. The Keraakie have created a male time-oriented leadership to resolve this continuing problem, so that when the young men are initiated into the mythological secrets, it is an education into their gerontocratic leadership structure. Initiation is a time symbol of social control through an authoritative elite group based on age and knowledge of the sacred era.
and *geenzeen* spirit powers, out of which has emerged their tabus and laws that regulate society. The Kenaakie also seek to regulate society through their biological calendar, which is a symbolic placement of each person in a community time line stressing obedience of the younger to the older. The individual’s body is a symbol of time with each stage of growth named as an achievement, with increasing responsibilities and obligations within society. Although they note the importance of the individual, it is the maintenance of the social group that guides all their thought and actions. Time is embodied in society and they work together according to a time pattern based on age and mutual responsibility so as to maintain harmony. Time is a symbol of their attempts to achieve social harmony.

The numerous Kenaakie concepts of time have multiple symbolic meanings, which enunciate their attempts at comprehending, ordering and empowering life in the Trans-Fly, so that they will have satisfactory ‘being’.
ENDNOTES:

7. Ibid., p. 114.
8. Ibid., p. 23.

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Geertz, op. cit., p. 24.

ibid., p. 125.


Among the Keraakie, the yam is a religious symbol which finds its origin in the past mythological time in the story of ‘Gufo, the Cassowary, and the Dog’ (F.E. Williams, *Papuans of the Trans Fly*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1936, pp. 217, 312. Hereafter shortened to *PTF.*) In this myth the primeval dog vomited up cassowary meat, from which grew yams and other garden produce. This connection of dog vomit and yams has an everyday symbolic meaning to the Keraakie. Dogs feed their offspring by ingesting the meat of animals caught and then regurgitating it for their pups. This image is a symbol of themselves and their food supply, since the women eat yams and produce breast milk (*nono nui*) for their babies. At the age of about three months, a baby is fed masticated yam from its mother’s mouth, believing that it is necessary for the child’s life and growth. But there is another symbolic meaning, because even though the Keraakie love yams, they have a greater desire for meat, which is rare in the Trans-Fly. If they see a wallaby, cassowary or pig when they are hunting, they will declare, “There is my overwhelming desire”; *kat* (there) *taande* (my) *aasi* (strong desire) *yam* (is). Since meat is a rarity, yams represent their ‘meat’, being symbolic substitutes for what they really desire. This is indicated by the Keraakie word for meat, *vivi* which also means ‘reality’. The superiority of meat over yams in their thinking is also seen in their mortuary tabus. The relatives of the deceased do not eat meat because the deceased is not eating it, but they go on eating yams even though the dead person is not eating them either.

The Keraakie word for ‘planting’ also means ‘worship’. Examples are seen in these sentences: ‘they were planting their yams’: *yamovem* (they) *nane* (yams) *tehetaowat* (were planting), and ‘they were worshipping the spirits’: *yamovem* (they) *geenzeen* (primeval spirit beings) *tehetaowat* (worshipping, expressing fear and awe). The yam planting process involves symbolic activities such as planting leaves from huge trees which signify that the Keraakie gardener sees these leaves as symbols of the power and size that he or she wants transferred to the growing yams. Leaves from
trees that produce a great crop of fruit are also used, symbolizing the number of yams desired. Williams also noted that bark, roots, ginger, lime and twigs were used to help growth because of their hot taste. The Keraakie word for hot (waawnta) also means power and symbolically they believed that these things would give power to the growing yams. Williams also told of a ritual during which the blood of bandicoots or goannas is smeared on the yams before planting. This symbolic ritual is performed to take the life-power of these animals and help their yams to grow. (Williams, *PTF*, op. cit., pp. 315-318) Another ritual involved the burying of the chopped up pieces of a black snake (*kweve*) in the ground with the seed yams, so that they will grow long like the snake. (Williams, *PTF*, op. cit., p. 116) The yam named moingaane means magic (*moin*) skin (*guane*), and reveals another symbolic rite, which was carried out to make the yams grow. The skin of the yam was ritually marked with big crocodile tooth magic charms (*moin*) and this is how this *diocorea alata* yam got its local name. All of these symbolic rites are time-oriented, seeking to manipulate the power of past growth of the huge trees, long snakes, or large crocodiles, and redirect it in the present to produce a big crop in the future. The close connection between the planting of their yams with powerful objects to gain fertility may be an act of worship expressed in the same linguistic terms. Or it could be that the traditional Keraakie may have used other religious rituals in the planting of their yams, which have been neglected in the modern era, and these involved worship of the *geenzeen* spirit beings. Frequently the Keraakie perform a religious ritual by quoting sacred words over the yams as they are planted, to help them grow. When the older villagers talk about their yams, they indicate respect for them almost bordering on worship. The symbolic use of yams is also mentioned by B. Malinowski (*Argonauts of the Western Pacific*, London: Routledge, 1932, and *Coral Gardens and their Magic*, London: Allen and Unwin, 1935) and by M. Young, (*Fighting with Food*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971, and *Magicians of Manumanua*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983).


27 Peirce, op cit., p. 102.

28 D.F. Tuzin, “Yam Symbolism in the Sepik: An Interpretive Account,”

29 Williams, PTF, op. cit., p. 231.

The Kerakie hold four types of feasts. One feast is called tam, during which long lengths of grated dioscorea alata yams and scraped coconut are cooked and eaten. The tortor feast consists of dioscorea esculenta yams which are split, scraped and cooked. Another feast is the zam kovakova, which consists of scraped taro while the hakar feast consists of sliced up yams. In all of these feasts part of this food is laid aside for community members who are absent. The cooking is done by the women, who go and collect anthill pieces, which are then heated on top of a fire which is five metres in length. The grated tuber and coconut are squeezed and mixed with water, then moulded and wrapped in tree bark. Each of these lengths are called a set. They are then placed with split lengths of banana tree trunks and coconut palm fronds on top of the heated anthill pieces. Ti-tree bark covers the food and it is left to cook for about three hours. These feasts are held in the dry season (during September to December) after the yams and taro have been harvested. Williams observed the importance of food among them: “Food is sociologically as well as biologically an important thing in Keraki life.” (Williams, PTF, op. cit., p. 235) The feasts are symbolic representations of the establishment and maintenance of social unity, since all members of the community are involved.


33 Williams, PTF, pp. 177-178.

34 ibid., p. 179.


37 Williams, PTF, pp. 123-124.

38 ibid., pp. 123-171.

39 ibid., p. 144.

40 ibid., p. 144.

41 ibid., p. 144.
42 ibid., p. 148.
43 Geertz, op. cit., p. 389.
44 ibid., p. 389.
45 ibid., p. 390.
46 ibid., p. 391.
47 ibid., pp. 392-398.
49 ibid., p. 233.
52 Howe, loc. cit., p. 231.
53 Geertz, op. cit., p. 404.
54 ibid., pp. 389,399.
55 ibid., pp. 391-393.
58 Howe, loc. cit., p. 225.
59 ibid., p. 231.
60 A. Gell, op. cit., pp. 78-83.
65 Luce, op. cit., p. 114.
CHAPTER 12
CHANGE IN KERAAKIE TIME

Radical change has flooded Keraakie society in the twentieth century, but no single theory can explain the nature of this transformation because it is multilinear. Physically they are still the same people as those Williams wrote about in the early 1930s, but intellectually, religiously, socially, emotionally and economically they are very different. First a definition of change will be sought and discussed in relation to time change theory, to better understand how the Keraakie have adapted to recent alterations in their lives. The main theories behind social change will then be considered. This of course raises key questions: Has change always been a part of Keraakie society, or has something new been thrust upon them by the modern world? What new features have they developed in their understanding of time? In considering change, an analysis will be made of the impact of historical and social events upon the Keraakie people and their concepts of time. I am proposing that modern change, which appeared in the development of 'cargo' thinking and a proposed 'cargo cult', is closely linked to their traditional understanding of time and the emergence of new concepts of time.

Mellor wrote: “Change, I said there, is a thing having incompatible properties at different dates.” When a people change, they become different to what they were at a preceding point in time. The Keraakie changed from an existence of endemic tribal warfare (mak yaam: being at war) before the 1920s to one of relatively peaceful co-existence (mur yaam: being at peace) with their neighbours, when the colonial administration intervened. To those who had lived in the period of constant warfare, peacetime introduced an incompatible property. The Keraakie note change in their language by using the word 'different' (fonatai). The words fonatai yoam (being different, or the state of being different) is the main phrase used of change, but there is also a number of verbs that are used with fonatai to indicate change. For example:
toge (the child) fonatai (different) de (past) naamdo (became): the child changed.
toge (the child) fonatai (different) kayetunga (is becoming): the child is changing.
toge (the child) fonatai (different) bēe (will) yam (be): the child will change.

In getting our bearings let us reconsider McTaggart's proposal that the A-series understanding of time is necessary to account for change, because the B-series cannot do so. Thus McTaggart:

If there is any change, it must be looked for in the A-series, and in the A-series alone. If there is no real A-series, there is no real change. The B-series, therefore, is not by itself sufficient to constitute time, since time involves change.²

Is McTaggart's understanding of change wrong? Is the movement of an event from futureness, to presentness and to pastness needed to account for change? B-series philosophers say no, because all events have dates as to when they occur and these do not change or move. The time when an event occurs is its 'date-property' and it cannot have the incompatible property of a differing date. Events exist and cannot change, and are earlier than, simultaneous with, or later than, another event in a sequence in time. The B-series understanding of change, as declared by Alfred Gell, states: "Change is concomitant variation between the qualities of a thing and the date at which these qualities are manifested by that thing."³ Change is an event, but as Mellor has pointed out, "not all events are changes".⁴ The movement of a coconut frond in the wind is an event but only a change if it has different properties after the movement. "Real change in short must have effects, and their immediate effects must be next to them in space and time."⁵ Thus cause and effect is a change in a sequence of events which the B-series philosophers date in time.

Dating is a social construction, which differs from society to society. The B-series dates events in relation to a mathematical structure imposed upon nature, whereas the Keraatkie dating of time occurs in the world of social interaction. They may date events mathematically for up to five days, but the great majority of dating
is done by naming nature, people, events, and changes as time. To them, time is not an abstract structure in which change occurs. The Keraakie see change as real and describe it temporally in an egocentric and communicational way, and not according to an unchangeable mathematical sequence. A change event is seen as being in a relationship with the speaker, which governs how he or she observes and communicates it. Future, present and past are not physical properties of the event, but they are defining properties by an observer, communicating his or her relation to the event in time. The Keraakie see this perception as real, a view which Mellor concedes theoretically when affirming that “perceptions of anything have to be events”. The change event of the birth of a baby is anticipated in the ‘future’ in relation to the speaker’s present position in time, whereas in B-series time the birth is described as ‘later’ in a sequential dating system. After the birth of the baby, the event is seen in the ‘past’ in relation to the speaker’s present position in time, whereas in B-series time the birth is described as having occurred ‘before’ in a sequential dating system. To the Keraakie, mythological, biological, natural, astronomical, meteorological, economical, or social events are seen as change in relation to the speaker at the present moment. The event does not change but the tensed statement about it has to change because of the speaker’s changing position in time. It is this way of looking at time that causes the Keraakie’s time understanding to be more akin to an A-series understanding of time than a B-series one. All changes are temporal, since they involve difference before and after a point in time. Events occur at a particular date in time, while processes extend over periods, which may involve many dates, in time. As sociologist Piotr Sztompka commented theoretically, “It is impossible to conceive of time without reference to some change.”

Well known sociologist Anthony Giddens wrote in 1993, that generally speaking “over the last half-century or so, the pace of change has accelerated” around the world. Is this the case for the Keraakie? Or we might ask has it always been part of Keraakie culture? Williams noted in his research among the Keraakie people during the 1926-1932 period that their culture was undergoing radical change.

The people are letting their customs go by the board and don’t seem very much disturbed about it either.
The fact is that the ceremony is obsolete and my informants, who saw it for the last time so many years ago, seem to have forgotten its details and can offer very little help in its elucidation.\textsuperscript{10} It is obvious that Keraakie culture was going through a period of change before the 1930s, but as to what was causing them to question their beliefs, myths, and rituals, discard, or alter them is unknown. Williams wrote, \textquote{Keraki [Keraakie] mythology is, to say the least, grievously confused... There is clear evidence in the mythology, as in other aspects of our study, of cultural mixture.}\textsuperscript{11} Cross-fertilization is obvious between the peoples of the Trans-Fly, with each group absorbing myths from the others, as borne out in the studies of Williams and Ayres.\textsuperscript{12} This is seen in the similarity between the myths of the Bensback River (centered on the sacred site of Kesul), the myths of the Morehead River (based on the sacred site of Tjuari), the myths of the Wassi Kussa (linked to the sacred site of Kureemgu) and the myths of the Mai Kussa (centered on the sacred site of Mikud). Mary Ayres wrote that these \textquote{mythologies are very much alike}.\textsuperscript{13} M.C. Howard and P.C. McKim suggest that \textquote{myths express the unobservable realities of religious belief in terms of observable phenomena}, and since this is true of Keraakie belief one would think that they would be the last thing to be changed.\textsuperscript{14} But if the community's values and beliefs are changing then one would expect that their mythology would do the same. It has been common for some to declare that primitive religions are static and resistant to change, being founded on a \textquote{'timeless' sacred era which is not influenced by 'history'}\textsuperscript{.} From the evidence of religious change through diffusion noted in chapter 6 the Keraakie mythological beliefs are not static, and change was occurring among them before the modern era. The more that Williams learned of their culture during his many visits from 1926-32, the more he felt that it was in \textquote{an advanced degree of disorganization and decadence} and many ceremonies had become just memories.\textsuperscript{15}

From oral history it appears that the Keraakie have absorbed objects, technology, ideas, and rituals from their neighbours in a process of diffusion. For example, they borrowed an intricately carved sorcery-empowered weapon called the farasi from the Suki people to replace their own carved dombon. Both of these weapons had an identical purpose of commencing an attack and paralysing the enemy, but because the Suki were more successful headhunters, the Keraakie assumed that their farasi was superior.\textsuperscript{16} The dances performed by the Keraakie
include ones adopted from the various Trans-Fly people. Williams wrote, “The ‘wallaby’ dance, like others more attractive and mobile seen among the Keraki [Keraakie], has been imported from their neighbours, and the words are in a foreign tongue.” In the modern era, the dances that I saw being performed were a mixture of traditional Keraakie ones, Kiwai dances, and others from the Torres Strait. The latter required the addition of bamboo percussion instruments to their traditional orchestra. The Keraki ancestral bow is the bwegwen, but they have absorbed the garetan model, which Williams wrote was borrowed from the Suki people. However the Suki declare that they borrowed it from the Ilambo people to the west. Moreover Keraakie arrows show evidence of being copied from their neighbours. Williams wrote, “The method of binding with blood and lime appears to have been acquired from the Wiram [Suki].” The traditional arrows he listed are rarely seen today, having been replaced by Suki cassowary and bone models, which are themselves being neglected for arrows with steel heads. The clubs and stabbing daggers that the Keraakie used in warfare were traded from the Suki whose names were retained. Williams also noted that the Keraakie borrowed different animal traps from “the tribes on the east and west”. Oral history tells of them absorbing new types of taro, yams, and cassava, as well as flowers, pineapples, pawpaw, mangos, and citrus fruit in the modern era. From this evidence, the Keraakie’s claim that change was a normal part of life is seen to be true.

The vagaries of nature, such as floods, droughts, cyclones and earthquakes, are a force for change and can bring devastation to crops, buildings and other structures. After a major flood in 1986 at Arufe, some gardens and bridges were destroyed and then rebuilt at different places. But there are also positive change factors, such as human creativeness, and this is a notable feature in the Emang family of Arufe. Emang perceived the obvious benefit of shotguns over his bow and arrows in hunting, so set out to obtain one. In the 1950s he was given one, took it apart, analysed its inner workings, and before long he had set himself up as a gunsmith for the other gunowners of the Trans-Fly. Emang also built houses that were different to the traditional ground level ones and the square version, which the patrol officers directed the Keraki to build in their place. His son Wamboi took this family innovativeness to greater lengths by building three level houses, without having ever seen one before. The Keraakie were willing participants in this modern change
process because they saw the benefit of many of these innovations. New types of fruit and vegetables have been planted, because they wanted to eat and sell them. Besides this principle of desired benefit, they also saw some of the modern goods as being of superior quality, so they rejected stone axes and bamboo knives for steel ones, grass skirts and shell 'trousers' for cotton ones, bark containers for plastic or steel ones. Some of the Keraakie have worked hard to buy sewing machines, shotguns and bicycles because of their usefulness. They note other modern equipment (such as outboard motors) that will be of great advantage to them and are seeking more change. Creative change is a natural feature of human society and the Keraakie are no exception.

This process of change has continued and is particularly noticeable when comparing Williams' study of this people with their modern descendants. The withering away of publicly enacted tradition among the Keraakie people in the modern era appears to be part of a worldwide process of homogenization of culture, but was there any body of tradition to be withered away? Or was there a continually changing set of traditions which adjusted to fit the prevailing social, political and economic climate? The basic unchanging value, through which it appears the Keraakie interpreted the world around them, was to take on board whatever was of benefit to them and to let go what was of no benefit to them at that moment in time. Many researchers decry the loss of culture, but from this study of Trans-Fly cultures, it appears to have been a natural process. Paula Brown, writing about the Chimbu people, noted this same element of change: "All people are constantly changing and adapting to new environmental and social circumstances."

Although the Keraakie say they live in a world of continual change and disorder, they declare there are basic structures, such as marriage, family, and social groupings, which remain the same. Yet even these are under threat. Sociologist Robert H. Lauer declared: "Change is normal and continual," proposing that change itself can be taken as a constant, a fact with which numerous anthropologists and sociologists agree. Continual change in social affairs is the essential unchanging element. The Keraakie perceive their society as a constant in the middle of perpetual change.

C. Stafford and B. Furze in their book Society and Change present various theories of change: the functional, the conflict and the interactionist perspective, all
of which can be seen in Keraakie society. The functional theory states that the various features of society work together and resist change so as to maintain social stability. Williams noted this and wrote that “each societal component functions in such a way as to maintain this stability.” The Keraakie centered their social life on their supposedly unchanging mythology, because it gave them identity, explaining their origins and every part their culture. But this was only a desired value consensus because their sacred time is undergoing change in the modern era. The conflict theory of social change presents the concept that different groups in society are in competition, and that beliefs and values are held in tension. The Keraakie know this because their numerous social segments have differing sacred sites, rituals and beliefs. Some of these groups were dying out and new ones were starting through the arrival of immigrants, while other social sections were being absorbed by others. Interactionist theorists declare that the previous theories tend “to de-emphasize the individual”, and they point to the necessity of focusing on the micro-world of everyday life and social interaction to try and understand society and change. Williams wrote hinting at a similar understanding in Keraakie society, that “it is probably in essence an extension of the feeling of self in a strong and vivid sense to the group at large and to the other individuals that help compose it.” One does find that the interaction of individuals reinterpreting society and reacting to each other is an important feature of Keraakie social reality. This is seen among the Keraakie where individuals like Seegiwa and Koag have greatly influenced society and brought about surface change. Institutions and structures are the result of human interaction, being a tension between the desire for change and the desire for stability. On the other hand the Keraakie cling to their social structures because it is through them that they have survived in the past and in the present.

What concerns the Keraakie most of all about change is how it will affect them as a society. They are aware of, analyse and execute change themselves but are also aware that spirit powers and the forces of nature can be involved. But they do see the community as being the key element, the target of, and the most influenced by change, which is obvious because it involves human beings reflecting. The Keraakie observe and interpret events as they experience them, noting when things are different to what they were in the pre-colonial era. People are the persistent actors, who embody change by the variations of physical growth, activities and behaviour
through time. This involves their own self-understanding: a consciousness of
difference occurring to themselves. They declare these events to be change in time,
and point to life in Keraakie society as a process of change – from conception, birth,
growth from babyhood, through childhood to adulthood, to death and decay. But it is
also an autobiographical one, as each person learns, acts, and grows according to his
or her own unique abilities and potential. Edo Pivoivic wrote theoretically about this
human element in change when he said: "If there is change, there must be selves".28
Each remembers the difference from what they were, to what they are now, and also
each can anticipate further change before it actually happens. Although these
memories and expectations can be wrong, they can be socially verified so as to
ascertain their truthfulness. Yet the memories and expectations are real statements
made in a temporal way at dates in time. Change is a major part of Keraakie life,
since it involves growth through time, present thought and action, which are based on
past remembrances and future anticipations. Because of these features, their society
is time to them.

My study of the Keraakie began in 1967 when the Evangelical Church of PNG
at Suki sent pastors Tatamasi and Waragiye to take up the Arufe people's invitation
to help them. Enthusiasm in the area was very high, as seen in the almost total
attendance at church and the literacy classes. Many young married men came to the
pastors seeking training, so a short-term Bible School was commenced at Arufe.
After six months' training, the better students were sent to Suki for theological
education, and eventually they took over the leadership of the Keraakie church in
1975. This move was not appreciated by the majority of the members, who seemed
to have had a different understanding of the purpose of the church. They were asking
for Europeans. After three years of turmoil, the Suki pastors were sent back to seek
to rectify the situation, but this did not help either. There was obviously something
very different about the expectations of the Keraakie church to that of Christian
teaching. In September 1981, my family and I moved from Suki to Arufe and sought
to get to the bottom of the problem.

We took with us a Suki pastor, Makina Sinba, who had worked in this area
previously, to analyse the situation. After visiting all the Keraakie villages, Makina
reported, "Some people say that the missionaries have come to Arufe to give them money and material things." Anthropologist Juillerat noted precisely this same expectation of himself among the Yafar people of the Sepik area of PNG.²⁹ It appeared that the Keraakie were also interpreting Europeans as a source of wealth to overcome their poverty. The Christian teaching on salvation was being viewed from a materialistic point of view, which was different to that of the Bible. Keraakie mythology had told of a powerful and wealthy primeval era, which was followed by one involving a struggle to survive. They never believed in a return to the sacred age, but the coming of the Europeans with their economic wealth gave the appearance that it had returned. The teaching by Charles Ellis on the coming millennial kingdom of God on this earth, and his numerous material gifts appeared to have encouraged their materialistic hopes, because they were interpreting Christian salvation in terms of modern economic wealth.³⁰ They also linked these riches to the Europeans. This assessment was verified on 15 February 1982 when pastor Yaaki Power, who was the Chairman of the Keraakie Church, declared that the arrival of the missionaries would mean material benefit for the people of the Arufe area.

In March 1982 at the Annual District Church meetings of the Evangelical Church PNG at Arufe, the members expressed a desire for material benefits, such as an outboard motor and a freezer, but there was no money to pay for them. Towards the end of the meetings the pastors openly criticized me for not sharing the wealth that God had given me for the Keraakie people. On 24 March 1982, the Parents and Citizens Association in the Arufe Community School had a meeting where their desire for progress was one of the items on the agenda. Midway through the meeting they invited me to attend. When I arrived the chairman asked, "You have been here six months and why have you not given us an iron roof for our school?" I asked the meeting where they planned to raise this money. They said that I was to give them the money, which I did not have. A couple of weeks later a group of community leaders came with a proposal for me to consider. The spokesman said, "We are ashamed that we only gave you a small piece of land when you came to build your house. We have decided to give you a bigger block of land, which will include the land behind your house." Since this block included the school they were indirectly handing me responsibility for it. I thanked them for their kind offer and said that I
would have to consult the national president of the Evangelical Church of PNG, who rejected the offer because the church did not want the extra financial responsibility for a primary school.

Day after day requests were made for money, equipment and business projects, to which I expressed a desire to help but pointed out that I did not have unlimited finance. In this atmosphere of desire for economic improvement, Gaindi Koag of Arufe had a dream in which his dead brother, Goiri, appeared to him and told him that the European's money and things were 'in the grave'. In the dream Goiri gave him a bag of money, but when he touched it the money turned to leaves. On 14 March 1983, he came to see me, inquiring as the meaning of the dream. Gaindi was interpreting the event from the traditional religion's point of view that dreams were authoritative messages from the spirit world. I answered that I had never seen any money come out of the grave, and then told Gaindi the story of a Suki man who had believed this, but never found anything in the cemetery. After that the Suki man had thrown away his false belief. Gaindi continued the discussion, saying that the dream was true and wanted to know where he could find the money.

On 23 October 1983, I was talking with two older members of the church when they used the phrase 'light of the gospel.' As the discussion continued it was obvious that this phrase was not being used in the Biblical sense of spiritual light but had the meaning of money and material things. Later at a public meeting, a high school educated girl asked the missionaries, "When are we going to see the light?" When asked what she meant by 'light', she replied, "Money, material benefits, cars, and outboard motors." At a church meeting on 29 April 1984, one of the deacons declared that the 'light of the gospel' was iron roofs, water tanks and other good things. It was obvious that the Christian idea of wealth in heaven was being expanded to include wealth in this world.

Gaindi came to see me again on 30 June 1984 and declared, "Last night I had another dream in which I was told to come to you because you hold the key." This was not the first time that the term 'key' had been used among the Keraakie. Moigam Nuwira of Gubaav had used it eleven days before, when he asked who had the 'key'
to heaven's material wealth, so it was obvious that this term was being used in village discussions. When Gaindi was asked what he meant by ‘key’, he replied, "I want to open the way to get an iron roof house with a pantry full of food. Is this wealth in the grave? Is this God you talk about under the ground?" According to their traditional mythology, fire and water came up out of the ground underneath a pandanus palm.\(^{31}\) So it appeared that modern wealth was being interpreted from a traditional point of view. The primeval spirits beings were not under the ground but had departed into the sky or to the south. The fact that the white people came from the south may have given Gaindi’s idea substance. White people were called ghosts and this might be the connection between wealth and the grave.

This all sounded similar to what I had been told by a group of Keraakie men on a journey down the Wasu Kassa river in September 1978. They said that on the island of Saibai in the Torres Strait, people used to go to the graves at night to find power, money and material things.\(^{32}\) These people made regular trading visits to the Papuan mainland, where they told the villagers about a big boat loaded with good things for the black people, and sometimes its engines could be heard on the Mai Kassa river. I asked Gaindi about the source of his ideas, and he denied being influenced by the events of the Torres Strait saying they only came through dreams.

During the month of August 1984, pastor Yaaki, the chairman of the Keraakie church, spoke at a mid-week service and said, "The missionary believes and is born of God. Therefore he is being blessed by God. Look at his iron roof house and the good food that comes on the plane for him". He was suggesting that the evidence of true Christian belief would be seen in the material benefits one received, which was similar to their traditional belief that large yam harvests indicated the blessing of the primeval spirit beings. This is seen in their yam competitions called *faar* when the winner is declared to be in a right relationship with the spirit powers.\(^{33}\) The traditional understanding that wealth came through religious ritual was being promoted.

The third time, Gaindi came to ask me on 6 April 1985: "If I believe in Christ, from where will I get the money and material things? Will you or the pastors give
them to me?” I replied, “Neither I nor the pastors have any money to give you.” Gaindi ended the conversation in disappointment. The next day a pastor spoke to me saying that a request for money should not be denied because sharing was a foundational value in their culture and to refuse to share was a major sin. It appeared that Gaindi had complained to the pastor about not receiving the desired money. The next evening, pastor Balag preached on Acts 4:32 and pointed to the early disciples’ sharing their things. His message went on for fifteen minutes before he made his conclusion, “The Bible says that we are to share all the missionary’s things. God has given them to him for us.”

On 9 April 1985 Gaindi again came to see me and his ideas seemed to have taken a new turn. He said that he could see the truth: “You said in the church service that we must take up our cross and follow Christ. Therefore I must be crucified like Christ, so that the money and material benefits will come.” I re-explained the passage of Scripture showing that one did not have to be literally crucified. The Bible meant that a person must die to his or her own selfish desires, and then do God’s will. Gaindi listened but the look on his face indicated that he was not happy with the explanation.

For the fifth time, Gaindi came to see me on 24 April with the same questions about money and self-crucifixion. I declared that Christianity was a matter of trusting in God and working for material benefits. It did not involve physical crucifixion. Matthew 6:33 was read to him, “Seek first God’s rule as king in your life and all these things will be added to you.” The counseling session did not change Gaindi’s mind.

A few days later, Gaindi returned to talk about ways of getting material things. He wanted money and the only answer that he would accept was the way to obtain it. The fact that I could not give him any money disappointed him. Europeans had power and ability to obtain money, so Gaindi wanted to tap into that supply. It seemed that he saw me as the new primeval geenzeen spirit being, and he was seeking to re-establish relationships with the powerful mythological age that had been shattered when Gufa died and Keembel and Yumeer ran away. Gaindi came
back on 3 May and once again asked how he could get money and material things. I asked him how he had got money before, and he replied that he had been paid money by the government for working on the roads and by selling garden produce. I suggested that since the world had not changed, he should work if he wanted money. It was again pointed out that there was no need to be crucified, but Gaindi did not appear to want to take the pathway that was being suggested.

Over the month of May there was much talk in Arufe about Gaindi’s ideas and although many tried to correct his views, his thinking did not change. He continued to declare that he must be crucified for the money to flow. Even his influential brothers spoke to him about his beliefs but Gaindi was convinced that he was right. He declared that the white-skinned people had crucified Christ and now had all wisdom and money. The Keraakie people would have to sacrifice a black man to get similar wisdom and material possessions for the black people. The same idea of crucifying a black man was being discussed at this time in Dimisisi village by the neighbouring Diblag people, indicating that this thought was spreading among the people of the Trans-Fly.

On 16 June 1985 some Arufe people came and told me of Gaindi’s latest idea. He now believed that when the villager crucified him all must eat his body so that the material things and money would appear, just as was suggested by the Christian communion service of participating in the body and blood of Jesus Christ. His thoughts did not stop there but continued to develop. On the night of 17 June 1985 Gaindi proclaimed that he would rise from the dead as a white man, speak English, and have all the white people’s money and material blessings. He believed that he would save the Keraakie from poverty. The village men were very concerned and said, “He is convinced he is right and will not listen to us”.

This way of thinking was influencing others. During the first week of July, the church leaders held meetings to face the question: What should we do to encourage the growth of the church? Pastor Yaaki, who was the chairman, said, “There is no growth in the church because the missionary never gives us any money or material things.” At the end of that week, on 8 July 1985, Gaindi again came to see me to
discuss his beliefs of self-crucifixion and resurrection as the Biblical means of obtaining money and material blessings. When he was told that this was not the right way, he would not listen.

That night Gaindi called a meeting on the Arufe airstrip for all the Kerakkie males to discuss his ideas. The men invited me to come but I declined, preferring to leave the matter for the community to handle. At the meeting Gaindi said, “I have spoken to the missionary nine times and he agrees with me - that I must be crucified for the money and things to appear. I will rise from the dead and the light will come.” The villagers knew he was not telling truth, so Gaindi’s brother Peter asked, “Did the missionary really tell you that you should be crucified and rise again?” Gaindi replied in the affirmative, offering himself to be crucified on the spot as proof of the genuineness of his beliefs. Although the community agreed with the desire to get ‘cargo’, they did not like the method. A villager said, “But if we kill you, we will all be jailed.” The social disruption that would evolve was stressed as they discussed these ideas. Although there were some in the crowd who agreed with Gaindi, they remained silent. One of his brothers asked him, “Have you seen a man die then rise from the grave with money?” When Gaindi said he had not, his brothers declared that they would not agree with him being killed, because there was no certainty that he would return to life with the ‘cargo’. Others pointed to the fact that the teachers and medical workers were the ones who had the material benefits and they did not have to die for it. Two of Gaindi’s brothers were community leaders, and there was no way that they would agree to his plans, so his suggestions were not taken up.

It was obvious that there had been a change in the traditional understanding about the spiritual source of material benefits among the majority of the Kerakkie. They believed in the power of spirit beings but the physical reality of the modern world was saying something different. Two weeks after this abortive launching of a ‘cargo cult’ the men in Gubaav rejected their mythology and destroyed their magic charms. The step these men had taken was finalized by the desecration of the Kuremgui sacred site on 8 January 1986 by the whole Kerakkie community, led by Saawi, the caretaker of the traditional religion. He cut down the sacred bamboo, trod on the leaves, which should have resulted in his death, and planted a garden on the
site. Although the idea of sacrificing Gaindi for money was rejected, the belief upon which his proposal was based still remained in the minds of some people, especially its propagator. On 4 December 1987, just before the Martin family left Arufe permanently, Gaindi came to see them. He asked, "How are we going to get money and material things now that you are going?" He firmly believed that wealth was associated with the Europeans and the Keraakie could not obtain it by themselves. In Gaindi's thinking, it appeared that the white people were the new geemseeen, upon whom modern wealth was dependent.

Gaindi was not alone in promoting 'cargo' beliefs, because Zorega Arura of Arufe also propagated them. He joined a Christian sect at Morehead called the New Apostolic Church in 1987 and gave their teaching a 'cargo' flavour. This is the same group with whom the Peli Association of the Sepik was linked in the 1980s. Many Keraakie joined his movement, but because no 'cargo' ever came their way, by January 1999 they had deserted it. Seegiwa Zuga of Bebeven presented a new myth on the 19 December 1990: that the primeval being, called Gufa, would return from the south (Australia) with unbelievable wealth. Seegiwa, because of his lawlessness, was not a popular figure but his ideas did have an influence on others. On 14 December 1995, Katmali of Pongarki said that there were a number of people who believed in the imminent return of Gufa with money for the people of the Trans-Fly. New religious ideas based on a synthesis of the traditional and the modern are continuing to develop as the Keraakie seek to address their dissatisfaction with the present conditions of an imbalance between what they want and do not have.

Because of the monumental change that the Keraakie are going through, it seems that Gaindi sought to interpret and face it in the light of their valued traditional beliefs. As Roy Wagner observed, this was a sustained, cumulative culture shock, which forced them "to objectify, to seek comprehension". Change was not new to them because they had experienced it in the days of their migration through New Guinea, the conflict with the residents as they entered the Trans-Fly, the stress of struggling to survive in an infertile land, the trauma of the Tugeri attacks, and then the invasion of the Europeans with a new political, educational, medical, economic, value, and religious belief systems. On their arrival in the Trans-Fly, they had
objectified their values and beliefs so as to comprehend and stabilize their existence through the creation of a mythology, based on land called Kureemgu. As the Keraakie faced this new change, they described it as chaos and Gaindi tried to overcome this disjuncture with new myths and rituals.

Another reason for Gaindi’s cult may have been an attempt to resolve the problem of a lack of traditional leadership among the Keraakie people, which had been built on the knowledge of the Kureemgu myths, religious ritual, sorcery power, magic for healing and the ability to communicate with the spirit world. All of these aspects had been ignored by the Europeans and replaced by the authority of the police, medical care, money, material things, schools, scientific and Christian knowledge. Others were making decisions about the Keraakie people’s lives and the latter felt they had no authority. Glynn Cochrane noted a similar feature among the Elema people in the Papuan Gulf where “the status of the big men was completely eroded away”, before the ‘cargo cult’ emerged there. Some doubt Cochrane was right in saying these men were ‘big men’ when it appears that they were chiefs. Whatever the truth, there was definite loss of authority. Gaindi was a strong supporter of the traditional religion and tried to use sorcery to establish his authority, but nobody took much notice of him. Christianity seemed to have undermined the authority of the Kureemgu mythology and the fear of sorcery in the minds of many people. In his social segment Gaindi was an elder but his two younger brothers, who followed the ways of the modern PNG government, were community leaders at Arufi. It appears that he was frustrated by his powerlessness and sought to establish his authority through their traditional religious values. It was the responsibility of traditional leaders to obtain wealth for their people, as noted in chapter 8, and it was obvious that Gaindi’s movement was partially an attempt to do this.

As Gaindi listened to the teaching of the Christian missionary, he was obviously gripped by the centrality of Christ’s death on the cross and the command to take up the cross and follow him. Death, which the Keraakie all feared and hated, was being declared as the way to a satisfying and wealthy world. This was a radical reversal from a feared future into a joyously expectant one. Christian teaching was understood by Gaindi in a different way, and re-interpreted so that by his sacrificial death and resurrection as a white man, he would reclaim the grave from its abhorred
position. White people were the *geenzeen*, and Gaindi would rise from the dead with abundant riches for all of the Keraakie, creating a new mythology. John Strelan cited many similar movements throughout Melanesia that emerged through a fusion of traditional religion and Christian ideas.

Sztompka stressed that in "the study of social change, time is not only a universal dimension, but the core, constitutive factor", and this appears to be true among the Keraakie people. Foundational to their time concepts is sacred time, which is a "tensed belief" concerning their past origins, their understanding of life, assumptions and values. With the advent of the Europeans, attempts were made by the Keraakie to adjust to the change by modernizing their main myths to include Europeans and their equipment such as motor bikes and helicopters. The same modernization idea has occurred in other PNG societies. Because the wealth, power, technology and tools of the modern age were superior to those of the Kureemgu mythology, some of the Keraakie began to doubt it. Traditionally they had a past orientation emphasising mythological time, and did not have a forward orientation until the coming of the colonial administration, Western education and Christianity. They held that the future did not promise anything good, so therefore Gaindi's movement was actually a reaction against the future terrors of sorcery, spirit attack, pain, sickness, death and the horrible existence of the ghost. When missionary Charles Ellis promised a future 'heaven' with no more sickness, hunger or pain, he was presenting a state for which the Keraakie yearned. This future hope became an obsession in the Keraakie church, so that most sermons preached by the pastors were on the return of Jesus. Gaindi was also seeking to make the desired rich future present.

Ellis had proclaimed a millennial 'kingdom of God' in the present through Christ's death on the cross to obtain salvation. As the Keraakie observed all the material and powerful benefits of this new age, they believed that the 'kingdom' was arriving. But Gaindi's movement wanted more, such as a regular food supply, freedom from sickness, protection from sorcery attack, and a renewed relationship with the primeval spirit beings, instead of a present plagued with the uncertainty of disorder. It was also a yearning for the return of the non-threatening past mythological time with its power and wealth. Gaindi believed it had arrived and his
movement was an attempt to grasp it for the benefit of all. Not wanting to lose the best of both systems, he desired a synthesis of the two religions. His attempts were confirmed in his mind when he received dreams, which were valued as the way primeval spirit beings communicated reality. Dreams are common in cults as a means of presenting and authorizing new knowledge by spirit world verification. Therefore through the medium of 'mystical' time an answer surfaced for Gándi, which addressed the problems of the past, the present moment and the future.

In this analysis of change, it is important to take note of Garry Trompf's comment (which was quoted in the initial proposal in chapter 1) concerning the importance of time in social and religious change:

Eliade has raised what is probably the most fundamental of all questions which ought to be raised concerning these cults (and indeed concerning any chiliastic-looking movement in the Third World). It is a question about the understanding of time or, if we must say it, the religious understanding of time. Mircea Eliade considered cargo cult movements as being a regeneration of time and the cosmos. It is impossible to grasp the full significance of cargo-cults without taking into account a mythological/ritual theme of "the annual return of the dead and the cosmic renewal which this implies". In Keraakie traditional religion there was no return of the dead, and although they yearned for the 'regeneration' of the mythological era, the myths never promised it and they did not appear to have carried out any ritual to bring it about. The people of the Trans-Fly believed that the mythological time "had passed, irrevocably finished, never to re-occur". The only ritual that could have been a renewal one was the walomango (fertility shrine) which had been desecrated by Luff a European trader of Mabadau plantation at the beginning of the colonial era as seen in chapter 1. The practice of this ritual has ceased and if one assumes that this ritual was a renewal one, it would appear that the Keraakie rejected it for a Western economic one in the 1920s. Many rituals are based on the principle of reciprocity: the giving of objects to the powerful spirit beings in exchange for the desired objects. From what information Williams gleaned, the villagers placed yams on the shrine, and dedicated them to the spirit beings so that they would receive many more in return. This shrine was protected by sacred taven clay which was believed to be able to kill thieves. Luff did not suffer any ill-effects.
from this sacrilege and the desecration did not alter the flow of yams from their
gardens, which may have undermined their faith in traditional religious power.
European’s power and wealth suggested that they were the new geenzeen spirits.

Keraakie mythology declared that all wealth came from the primeval age, and
it was obvious that the new tools and consumer goods were better than the traditional
ones. They described them by the same mythological term geenzeen meaning big and
better. This may have given the impression to Gaindi that the mythological era had
returned but in a new form. In traditional economics they had worked hard for little
in comparison to the new economic age in which they were receiving money,
clothes, food, knives and axes. But it was not enough and Gaindi’s expectations were
greater than what he was receiving, because he desired a return to the abundance of
the mythological era. Since Christianity had come at the same time as the new
wealth, he had linked the two. His own brother, Maraaga declared that since Gufa
had risen from the dead and was the son of Keembe, the father figure in their
traditional trinity, he was Jesus. Magic rituals were the Keraakie’s traditional
means of obtaining power and wealth from the supernatural world to bring about a
harvest from their gardens, or success in hunting and fishing. Gaindi seemed to
believe that Western consumer goods could be obtained through the right religious
ritual, and Christianity seemed to provide this in the crucifixion and resurrection. So
as to gain this wealth, he became a member of the church through baptism, and even
though he questioned church leaders on numerous occasions, these discussions did
not bring him any wealth. He felt the missionaries did not want to share their hidden
knowledge, wealth and power, because they only pointed to an eschatological
fulfillment. This frustrated Gaindi because the Keraakie believed in only one world:
the here and now, and not a future one in heaven. He was not prepared to wait for
eschatological wealth, so based on his religious beliefs he sought to bring about
present wealth. Taking some Christian ideas, he proposed that he should be crucified
and to rise from the dead as a white-person with all the ‘cargo’.

In Gaindi’s mind the new wealth was very much linked to Europeans.
Although he never said so, it appears from the evidence that he saw missionaries as
the returned or new geenzeen. Others also held that the Europeans were part of the
supernatural world, and they altered the ‘creation’ myth to include them, saying that

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the white people came out of the upper leaves of the sacred saakar palm. The fact that they came up the Wassi Kussa river from the south, where the primeval being Gufa fled, indicated that they were linked to the geenzen. The word for south (kwayanzeri) comes from the word for grave (kway) and south was believed to be the direction towards which the dead departed. The Europeans were referred to as markai, which is the Kiwi word for ghost or spirit of the ancestors. This raised questions concerning whether the white men were the geenzen returning after the disintegration of the ‘golden’ era or were these new geenzen? The same awe of Europeans was noted by Bruce Knauff among the Gebusi of the Nomad area of the upper Strickland river.48 When independence came in 1975, the European patrol officers began to withdraw, but the Keraakie did not transfer this awe to the national patrol officers. In fact they became very critical of them. In December 1982, the people of Bebeveen asked for a American missionary, who would be richer than the Australian ones. It appears that the missionaries were believed to be geenzen spirits who were supposed to give wealth.

Andrew Lattas sees this type of reaction as being caused by the impact of Christianity and colonialism. "It is within this phenomenological structure of self-constitution that the power of colonialism becomes a structure of self-alienation where the black man desires the body of the white man in place of his own body."49 This is a valuable insight, but there were other complex features behind Gaindi’s movement, such as the Keraakie time concepts. These are the mythological past and their relationship with the spirit beings, their past painful history, their present struggle to survive in the harsh, disordered and unhealthy Trans-Fly, their yearning for physical and social satisfactory ‘being’ (which is time), their fear of the future, their religious belief concerning the revelations of the spirits through dreams; and their yearning to resolve the end of time, death. Many of these traditional religious and social issues were foundational to Gaindi’s ‘cargo’ movement besides the influence of colonial domination and Christian teaching.

In the Trans-Fly, egalitarianism among males was part of the Keraakie social structure. Women were different and did not have equal authority with men. Everyone worked with the community in mind so that all would benefit equally and this is seen in their sharing of meat caught in a hunt. If one person lacked, all he had
to do was ask and he would receive from the other members of his social section, because a request could not be denied. If one person possessed more wealth than another, it was felt that this imbalance had been caused by sorcery power. Therefore all who had a surplus made sure that others benefited from it, lest they be accused of selfishness or sorcery. The inequality between the Keraakie and the Europeans has been part of the traumas of this era of modern change. They have been employed by foreigners but the wages were small and, even if things were available, they could not buy much. Requests for money and other things had been made to Europeans to overcome the imbalance, but they lived by a different set of values and said no. Gaindi’s proposal of a ‘new cult’ appears to be his creative attempt at synthesizing Western wage labour, money, leadership and the production of material goods, in the form of a new religion which incorporated Keraakie beliefs and values. It involved a total salvation: one of sharing wealth, living together in harmony as a social unit and not striving individually against each other. Gaindi and his followers want change that does not involve hard work, but one that includes power to provide for all their needs in this world, a salvation that stresses equality and satisfaction. This attitude seems to be similar to what Wagner has written about “the symbolic use of European wealth to represent the redemption of native society.”

Jeremy Beckett also noted this among Saibai Islander in the Torres Strait, and Gaindi appeared to be seeking a material ‘redemption’ for himself and his people.

In conclusion, from the evidence Keraakie people have been continually changing throughout their history. They hold that all wealth (material, knowledge, power, ritual, and social) came into existence in the mythological time, and some believe that the economic riches of the colonial era was the return of this sacred age. Traditionally they held that all events flowed backwards from the fearful future into the present, which was the moment of satisfactory or unsatisfactory ‘being’, and then on into the past which was a stable, non-threatening time. With the coming of the modern era, there has been a radical change in attitude towards the future, so that instead of it being the source of pain, the future is now generally seen as the source of material and social wealth. The mystical time revealed through dreams the coming of events and this now included wealth. However their expectation of Christianity as the religious source of this new wealth have not been realized. Political leadership was failing to provide wealth and power, so Gaindi set out to establish a new form of
self-sacrificial leadership, apparently modelled on Jesus Christ and incorporating traditional values. Therefore, using traditional religious beliefs and values, cross-fertilized with Christian ideas, he sought to start a new religion to gain equality, harmonious living, obtain wealth, political authority, and deliverance from all pain, fear and death.\textsuperscript{52} This new religion is a symbol of all for which they yearned. But it appears to be dependent upon Europeans, who were the new geenzaen beings, and Gaindi’s new interpretation of the gospel, which was the new mythology. This is a new time.

However, the change Gaindi wanted did not occur because society, led by his own brothers, resisted the social instability of a return to inter-clan warfare his sacrificial murder would bring. Keraakie society had already faced the conflict of the replacement of their traditional politics, economics, and religion during the colonial era, and were not open to more. Gaindi’s new religion was promoting radical change and although there was some ‘grass-roots’ support, it was not enough to sway the majority. Gaindi’s promise of future change was rejected because of a fear of social instability and the loss of the benefits of the immediate past and present eras. The importance of stable social institutions and structures influenced by the qualitative understanding of the past as good and the future as threatening influenced the Keraakie decision-making.
ENDNOTES:

4 Mellor, op. cit., p. 119.
5 ibid., p. 108.
6 ibid., p. 148.
9 Williams’ Field Notes, B.404. (hereafter shortened to WFN)
11 ibid., p. 294.
13 Ayres, ibid., p. 90.
15 Williams, PTF, p. 85.
16 ibid., pp. 266-268.
17 ibid., p. 23.
18 ibid., pp. 411-412.
19 ibid., p. 413.
20 ibid., pp. 413-415.
21 ibid., pp. 418-419.
25 Williams, PTF, pp. 245-261.
26 Stafford and Furze, op. cit., p. 11.
27 Williams, PTF, pp. 245-258.
31 Williams, PTF, pp. 302-305.
33 Williams, PTF, pp. 233-234.
36 Williams, PTF, pp. 236-244.
38 Williams, PTF, p. 238.
40 Sztompka, op. cit., p. 43.
45 Ayres, op. cit., p. 48.
47 ibid., pp. 216-217, 312, 322-324.
50 Wagner, op. cit., p. 31.
51 Beckett, op. cit., p. 70.
52 Trompf, op. cit., pp. 189, 205: “Cargo cults are collective responses to the new order of life epitomized for Melanesians by ‘the new goods’”, being “new religious movements, picking up on the potentially all-embracing qualities of local traditional religion as well as on the proclaimed missionary message that a total vision and reorientation are what the transforming qualities of the Gospel are all about.” Juillerat, op. cit., p. 511: “The cargo cult, which I will analyse later in the chapter, attracts men and women of all ages, for it represents the fusion of old cultural values and a millenarian utopia in a new material and spiritual world.”
CHAPTER 13

CONCLUSION

According to Alfred Gell, time "is intrinsically unitary and unifying" yet, from the way the people of the Trans-Fly observe life, they do not see time that way at all. The Keraakie yearn to see time unifying all of their life, struggling to bring all the numerous conflicting concepts of time into a harmonious and satisfying whole, but they hold from practical experience that time is not a unity. Time is constantly changing and there are too many unknowns and contradicting features about it for it to be "unitary and unifying". The Keraakie note that time is a human creation influenced by nature, the movement of the sun, moon and stars, weather, economics, history, human growth, individual and social being, giving rise to qualitative, emotional, rational, social, religious and symbolic features. Against the background of their struggle to survive in the Trans-Fly, the Keraakie see time as a complex of contradictory concepts which they hold in tension.

Time is a vigorously debated subject with seemingly as many theories as there are philosophers of time. These numerous theories fit into two basic positions: the B-series view, which rejects the idea of tense saying that the temporal relations between events never change, being 'static' and are related to one another in the sense of before, simultaneous with or later than, on the other hand the A-series holds that tense is real and that events move from the past, to the present and then to the future, or conversely. According to this McTaggart dichotomy, the Keraakie are A-series theorists, using tense as a token-reflexive factor to indicate the timing of events in relation to the moment of communication. Yet like B-series theorists, they too see events as having an unchanging relationship to each other.

Using their language as a flexible tool and receptacle, the Keraakie note and interpret the recursive phenomena of nature, economics and society in the Trans-Fly according to their basic values, assumptions and goals, creating time structures. These constructions are symbolically used to comprehend, control, maintain and perpetuate life in their world. The most important feature of their language is the
verbal system which is structured in a temporal way, affecting every other linguistic
term. Although the Keraakie observe a pattern in time, they also note that it is only a
general one which so often disappoints constructive planning. Therefore they declare
that time is plagued by disorder. Life however is never static and Keraakie time
concepts are changing under the influence of the world.

The most important and complex Keraakie time concept is that of mythological
time, which is the era of the primeval spirit beings when all things (including the
Keraakie people) emerged in the world. This time period is told in narratives which
are symbolic statements about themselves, their origin, beliefs and values, giving
them identity and security in an unstable and hostile environment. How long ago this
momentous time occurred is unknown, but the Keraakie say that the sacred time was
only two generations ago, revealing that it moves spatially forward and keeps time
with each generation. This results in a clash with historical events which are receding
further into the past while mythological events are moving forward to be equidistant
from the present. Yet some of these myths give the impression that the incident under
consideration is an historical event. In this mythological block of past time all things
were bigger and more powerful than they are in the modern age, and therefore the
Keraakie seek to manipulate the spirit power of this sacred age and make it present
through ritual and the re-telling of the myths. In modern Keraakie society some hold
to the authority of this sacred time but others are neglecting it.

The Keraakie believe that these spirit beings of the mythological era
communicate with them in a mystical relationship through dreams, revealing the
events of the future, present and the immediate past. I name this relationship mystical
time. The Keraakie’s experience of the past and present is the basis of these dreams,
while their expectations and desires for the future tend to make up their content.
Dreams are interpreted by a socially derived set of meanings, which are intended to
protect the Keraakie from the shock of bad news in the present and to warn of harm
or death in the future. In other words, mystical time is an attempt to control the future
and especially the end of time in death.

The Keraakie see events as emerging from the future into the present and then
moving backward in a sequence into the past as evidenced by their five-step past
tense verbal forms. Although they have numerous features in their culture that could influence them to create cyclical or oscillating concepts of time, they see time as flowing in this linear way. This movement is spatio-temporal, because they describe the future events as unseen and behind them flowing into present experience and then on into the past, which they see as being in front of them, since events are remembered by features in the eternal landscape.

The Keraakie see tense as an important communicative factor in their verbal structure, because the speaker must indicate the time of each event in relation to the moment of communication. Also tense has a qualitative factor: the future is feared as the bearer of pain, sickness and death; the present is the 'moment of being'; while the past is valued since it contains their origin myths and is regarded as non-threatening. The Keraakie tend to reify tense in society by naming people and food by these various tense categories. The past occupies a major part in their thinking beginning with the foundational mythological time, and their five past tense verbal forms which record historical events in the physical ‘book’ of the Trans-Fly environment. The Keraakie recognise that the past is the basis of all knowledge, ritual, and culture in present society, but the past is not seen as a finished time because they believe that it can still influence the present and future. Existence in the present alternates between a frustrating landscape covered with water to one that is dry and burning hot, so that the present time is a struggle for survival. Generally the Keraakie do not plan for the future because to them it is unpredictable and therefore unreal. But on the other hand, with the influence of modern education and Christianity, their understanding of tense is undergoing radical change.

After considering the Keraakie linguistic terms for time, it is obvious they hold to a concrete or physical understanding of time generated from the environment in which the Keraakie participate or are observers. This is seen predominantly in their calendar, which is not a mathematically measured one, but consists of the concrete events that happen in a general pattern against the background of an endless flow of wet and dry seasons. The physical event or phenomenon is time and not an abstract idea divorced from the happening. The phenomena of the winds, the weather, the flora and fauna are time but the Keraakie recognise that these are unstable and the calendar can break-down at any time. This phenomenal time is described as chaotic.
The most important time concept to the Keraakie is their community, in which individuals are dynamic time features, marking points in social time through key events in their lives. Yet, there is a number of abstract terms for time, which reveal the Keraakie's philosophical thinking about time and indicate the potential for change to an alternate view of time.

The Keraakie have an egocentric understanding of time, which divides the social calendar into those born before or after the speaker. Each individual is in a social linear sequence so that each knows his or her position in the human time line, and becomes a date for events in relation to the communicator. This egocentric nature of time is also seen when a Keraakie person speaks, because he or she will refer to others as either moving away from, towards or static in relation to himself or herself. In their transitive verbs the present tense form is central, since it just adds tense indicators to make the future and immediate past tense forms. A number of the Keraakie words for time are also seen in an egocentric way, meaning a day or two on either side of the present moment from which the speaker is speaking. Some kinship terms are used in the same way, meaning a number of generations on either side of the speaker. In all of these cases it is the context that defines the meaning.

As the Keraakie do not have a word for time, life with its individual and social 'being' in space is time. Some societies thrust a mathematical time-grid upon nature and society to date future, present or past events of 'being', but the Keraakie hold that 'being' and time can not be separated. There can be no 'being' without time and their can be no time without 'being', so they see the world from their unique 'time/being' perspective. As a result every time concept is named in relation to the 'being' of nature, people, their growth and action in society. The Keraakie wonder at their 'being' (looking back to the past mythological age), but do not even consider that they might have had no existence. Thought about 'non-being' after the end of time in death is avoided. What it means for the Keraakie to be is found in their 'being' calendar, in which each individual grows from babyhood to childhood, to be a teenager, to be an adult, to being married, reaching middle age, old age, death, before departing into the world of the ghosts of past people. They tend to be passive before the flow of time events until necessity forces them to take constructive action, which could be called the 'moment of being'. The family group or social segment,
which is descended from a past ancestor, is extremely important in the Keraakies’
time thinking and as a result kinship terms are time oriented. They seek through
procreation to perpetuate their group through time, and this is what gives
‘time/being’ meaning to them. This relationship between time and ‘being’ may sound
similar to Heidegger’s understanding but they are very different.

The most dreaded feature of life in the Trans-Fly is the end of time in death,
which has transformed this group of nomadic people into competent gardeners,
gatherers and survivors. For the Keraakie, life is a struggle to find or grow enough
food to avoid death, so that they have been forced to create seasonal, flora and fauna
calendars to keep a tag on food supplies. ‘Being’ means to eat and share food in
harmonious relationships with others and all these features are time-oriented. But the
end of time is not a steady state of non-being for the deceased, because the Keraakie
regard the ghost as being tormented because it has no body (vivi: reality). The most
horrifying feature of this belief in the end of time in death is that their highly valued
social relationships are shattered by it and from that point on the ghost will proceed
to attack its own family members and others. This time after death can be called one
of ‘anti-being’. As a result, the Keraakie tend to deny the reality of the future, (which
is the bearer of death) through the mortuary ritual of removing any evidence of a
grave. The way they face this uncomfortable future is by seeking to overcome death
by naming society as time and achieving immortality through reproduction.

Many features of Keraakie society are obviously symbolic, such as their
language, religion, rituals and relationships, but others are not so obvious. These
include their main food, the yam, and the various activities connected with its
planting, maturing, harvesting and eating. Besides the latter economic system, their
understanding of the body, self, personhood and social being are all symbolic
representations of time. Daniel Maltz noted that time-reckoning is a structured
symbolic system and this is true of the Keraakie’s concepts of time which seek to
comprehend, control, enable and perpetuate life in the infertile Trans-Fly.2 The
features of their time system symbolically seek to address their disrupted
relationships with the spirit world as mentioned in their mythological and mystical
time, to maintain social harmony through an age-oriented leadership, and to redress
the inevitability of death in the future through many cultural rituals.
The Keraakie concepts of time appear to have been changing throughout their history as they migrated across the island now named New Guinea, during settlement in the Trans-Fly and in the era of Tugeri raiding. With the coming of the modern era, influenced by the new colonial, business, medical, educational and religious authorities, they have radically changed their attitude towards the future, so that instead of it being the source of pain and death, it is now seen as the source of material and social prosperity. However, their expectations of this future wealth have not been realized and they are now seeking further change using traditional religious beliefs and values, influenced by Christian ideas. These new religions symbolize their goal of obtaining knowledge, harmonious living, equality, a secure food supply, wealth, political authority, and the overcoming of fear of the spirit world and death. Central to this new faith is a changed attitude towards time.

In spite of the Keraakie declaring that life in the Trans-Fly is one of disorder they do see regular patterns of time within it, which are also patterns of 'being'. Their time is made up of numerous complex concepts, that appear to be contradictory, but each is held in tension as they seek to understand, describe, control and manipulate life. When the Keraakie face the problems of hunger, social disharmony, the supernatural world of 'Being', and death - these concepts of time are symbols of what they value and want to see happen. They are not alone in this understanding, as their neighbours, the Aaramba and Suki people, have similar time concepts. The Keraakie understanding of time is always in a state of flux and is now undergoing radical change as they face the modern world.
ENDNOTES:


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TIME


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The Nkse language is spoken by approximately 1,500 people of the Nkse Fly in the area east of the eponymous arm of the Kavirondo River, as far east as the Nkse Lagoon and inland near the 50 km mark. There appear to be three or four distinct dialects of the language, and the dialect analyzed for this statement is that of the Kavirondo (Kavirondo) village and the villages close to it. In the mythology of the people this village area is the area from which this tribe and these to the west of it originated.

The chief informants were Nkse, Nkse, Kavirondo, Nkse and Nkse (Nkse is the Kavirondo pastor who comes from another village and exhibits slight differences in phonetic forms and in grammatical structure).

The analysis was undertaken from 17th to 26th November 1984.

The alphabet is:

- a, e, a, d, e, o, f, g, h, i, l, n, m, n, m, o, w, y, z, u, v, k, k, i, w, y.

I. PHONETICS.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Orthography</th>
<th>Phone</th>
<th>All-Phonic</th>
<th>Phonetic Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>b</td>
<td>/b/</td>
<td>[b]</td>
<td>Voiced bilabial stop. Occurs initially, medially and finally, in free fluctuation with /p/. Example: Chichewa: &quot;mbiri&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mb</td>
<td>/mb/</td>
<td>[mb]</td>
<td>Voiced bilabial nasal plus voiced bilabial stop. Occurs initially, medially and finally. Example: Chichewa: &quot;mbiri&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>p</td>
<td>/p/</td>
<td>[p]</td>
<td>Voiceless bilabial stop. Occurs in introduced words initially. Example: Chichewa: &quot;pamala&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>t</td>
<td>/t/</td>
<td>[t]</td>
<td>Voiceless, unaspirated bilabial stop. Occurs in introduced words medially and in consonant clusters. Example: Chichewa: &quot;tangala&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>k</td>
<td>/k/</td>
<td>[k]</td>
<td>Voiceless unaspirated dental stop. Occurs initially, medially and finally. Example: Chichewa: &quot;kumalala&quot;</td>
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<td>l</td>
<td>/l/</td>
<td>[l]</td>
<td>Voiceless unaspirated dental stop. Occurs initially, medially and finally in free fluctuation with /b/. Example: Chichewa: &quot;kumapalala&quot;</td>
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</table>

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Orthography</th>
<th>Phoneme</th>
<th>Allomorph</th>
<th>Phonetic Transcription</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>d</td>
<td>/d/</td>
<td>[d]</td>
<td>Voiced dental stop. Occurs initially, medially between vowels and as the first member of a consonant cluster, and finally.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nd</td>
<td>/nd/</td>
<td>[nd]</td>
<td>Voiced alveolar nasal plus voiced alveolar stop. Occurs medially and finally.</td>
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<tr>
<td>k</td>
<td>/k/</td>
<td>[kʰ]</td>
<td>Voiced velar stop. Occurs medially and finally.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>s</td>
<td>/s/</td>
<td>[s]</td>
<td>Voiced velar stop. Occurs initially, medially between vowels and as a member of a consonant cluster, and finally.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m</td>
<td>/m/</td>
<td>[m]</td>
<td>Voiced velar nasal plus voiced velar stop. Occurs medially and finally.</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Note: There are words which have /d/ plus /g/ medially as in /g+dʰ/, /g+nd/, /g+kʰ/, /g+s/, /g+m/, /g+m/ should be written /g+g/ to keep them separate. Also before /d/, /nd/ and /s/ some speakers always have a slight glottalization, whilst other have none.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Orthography</th>
<th>Phoneme</th>
<th>Allophones</th>
<th>Phonetie Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>/w/</td>
<td>/wu/</td>
<td>[wː]</td>
<td>Voiceless unaspirated implosive bilabial stop releasing to laryngeal voiced unaspirated velar stop. Occurs word or syllable initial only. e.g. [wː=ku] /wː/ “universe” [wː=kuː] /wː/ “perspective”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**NOTE:** Villager's literates in Hill Puts have been using "wu" and "ge" for these. There are some contrasting words with [wu]-vs [ge]-Based to date, it seems definite that the implosive variant will not need to be written.

| /z/ | /s/ | [z̃] | Voiceless bilabial fricative. Occurs initially and occasionally medially and finally in flutuation with [s]. e.g. [z̃ʃt] /ʃt/ “brick” [z̃k] /ʃk/ “neck” |

| /ʂ/ | [ʂ] | Voiceless alveolar plosive fricative. Occurs initially, medially between vowels, at the first member of a consonant cluster, and finally. e.g. [ʂːm-]/sːm/ “sincerely” [ʂːt] /ʃːt/ “warth” [ʂːu]/sːo/ “crocodile” [ʂːa] /ʃːa/ “time” |

**NOTE:** There is occasional free flutuation with the affixes to in the initial position.

| /z/ | /s/ | [z̃] | Voiceless alveolar plosive fricative. Occurs in the initial position.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Orthography</th>
<th>Phone</th>
<th>allophone</th>
<th>Phonetic Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ə</td>
<td>/ə/</td>
<td>[ə]</td>
<td>Voiced alveolar grooved fricative. Occurs initially, medially as the second member of a consonant cluster, and finally. e.g. əɡə /əɡ/ &quot;mam&quot;  /eː/ /ˈeɑzəl/ &quot;damsel&quot;  /ˈmʌθə/ &quot;mother&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ɾə</td>
<td>/ɾə/</td>
<td>[ɾə]</td>
<td>Voiced alveolar grooved affricate. Occurs initially (more frequently than ə), medially between vowels and as the second member of a consonant cluster, and finally. e.g. ɾəɡə /ɾəɡ/ &quot;hair&quot;  /ˈmʌsəl/ &quot;mussel&quot;  /ˈrɪvər/ &quot;river&quot;  /ˈʃeɪk/ &quot;sheik&quot; Note: Following ə or ɾ, a final ɾ is backed giving the ɾ sound, but it is not shown in the orthography.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ɛ</td>
<td>/ɛ/</td>
<td>[ɛ]</td>
<td>Voiced alveolar trilled vibrant. Occurs initially, medially between vowels, as first or second member of a consonant cluster, and finally. e.g. ɛn̩ /ɛn/ &quot;nem&quot;  /ˈɛrəɡ/ &quot;water inlet&quot;  /ˈɛrə/ &quot;river&quot;  /ˈɡɔʁə/ &quot;gourd palm&quot;  /ɛ / /ˈɛ/ &quot;men&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ɪ</td>
<td>/ɪ/</td>
<td>[ɪ]</td>
<td>Voiced palatal lateral. Occurs initially (in introduced words), medially between vowels, as the first member of a consonant cluster, and finally. e.g. ɪn̩ /ɪn/ &quot;nœm&quot;  /ˈɪɭəl/ &quot;flying squirrel&quot;  /ˈɪ/ /ˈɪ/ &quot;nœm, noem a&quot; /ˈwaktəs/ &quot;loudly&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n</td>
<td>/n/</td>
<td>[n]</td>
<td>Voiced bilabial nasal. Occurs initially, medially between vowels, as the first, second and third member of a consonant cluster, and finally. e.g. ɲən /ɲən/ &quot;nœn&quot;  /ˈɲəm/ &quot;nœm, noem a&quot;  /ˈɲərəl/ &quot;nœrsel&quot;  /ˈɲərə/ &quot;nœrə, noerə&quot;  /ˈɲəˌstəmən/ &quot;travally&quot;  /ˈɲərə/ &quot;nœrə, noerə&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m</td>
<td>/m/</td>
<td>[m]</td>
<td>Voiced alveolar nasal. Occurs initially, medially between vowels except after &quot;i&quot;, as the first member of an &quot;nd&quot; or &quot;nd&quot; cluster, and finally. e.g. /ˈmən/ &quot;food&quot;  /ˈmən/ &quot;food&quot;  /ˈmən/ &quot;track&quot;  /ˈməŋ/ &quot;gungo&quot;  /ˈməŋ/ &quot;hand&quot;  /ˈməŋ/ &quot;teeth&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n</td>
<td>/n/</td>
<td>[n]</td>
<td>Voiced alveolar palatized nasal. Occurs medially and finally following &quot;i&quot;.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orthography</td>
<td>Phoneme</td>
<td>Allophone</td>
<td>Phonetic Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>----------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/k/</td>
<td>[k]</td>
<td>Voiced dental plosive. Occurs initially or medially in consonant clusters.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/s/</td>
<td>[s]</td>
<td>Voiced dental fricative. Occurs initially, medially between consonants, and finally.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/f/</td>
<td>[f]</td>
<td>Voiced dental fricative. Occurs initially or medially in consonant clusters.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

II. VOWELS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vowel</th>
<th>Phoneme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>/i/</td>
<td>[i]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/u/</td>
<td>[u]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NOTES: As there is length in the mid and low vowels, there is probably length in the high vowels also, but this has not been positively established at the time of writing.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Orthography</th>
<th>Phoneme</th>
<th>Allophone</th>
<th>Phonemic Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>e</td>
<td>[ɛ]</td>
<td>Voiced mid front open unrounded vowel. Occurs initially, medially and finally, e.g. 'mae'/mae/ &quot;mis&quot; [mae]/sade/ &quot;your&quot;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[æ]</td>
<td>Voiced mid central close unrounded vowel. Occurs in syllables following or preceding a stressed syllable containing a front vowel, e.g. 'mae'/mae/ &quot;river&quot; [mae]/leat/t/ &quot;select&quot; [mae]/ &quot;wallaby&quot;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/æ/</td>
<td>[æ]</td>
<td>Voiced low front close lengthened unrounded vowel. Occurs initially, medially &amp; finally. e.g. [æ] /æ/ &quot;river&quot;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a</td>
<td>[a]</td>
<td>Voiced low central open unrounded vowel. Occurs initially, medially and finally. e.g. [ɛ] /ɛ/ &quot;salt water inlet&quot; [ɛ] /ɛ/ &quot;village&quot; [a] /a/ &quot;it is&quot;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/ə/</td>
<td>[ə]</td>
<td>Voiced mid central close unrounded vowel. Occurs in syllables following a low central vowel e.g. [ɛ] /ɛ/ &quot;slide&quot; /ɛ/ &quot;slide bamboo&quot;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o</td>
<td>[o]</td>
<td>Voiced mid back open rounded vowel. Occurs initially, medially &amp; finally, e.g. [o] /o/ &quot;orange&quot; /o/ &quot;fungus&quot; [o] /o/ &quot;flog&quot; [o] /o/ &quot;outgoing tide&quot;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note:** This vowel is both longer and slightly lower than [ɛ] but to the informants the significant difference is the length, not the lower sound. They hear it as a lengthened [ɛ], so consequently it is written /æ/.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Orthography</th>
<th>Phoneme</th>
<th>Allomorph</th>
<th>Phonetic Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>oo</td>
<td>/o/</td>
<td>ʌː /ː /</td>
<td>Voiced mid back open lengthened rounded vowel. Occurs medially in words studied to date. e.g. [ʌː] /muː / &quot;moo&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>u</td>
<td>/u/</td>
<td>ʌː /ː /</td>
<td>Voiced high back close unrounded vowel. Occurs only in open syllables. e.g. [ʌː] /fuː / &quot;furnace&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>ʌː /ː /</td>
<td>Voiced high back open unrounded vowel. Occurs only in closed syllables. e.g. [ʌː] /buː / &quot;book&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**NOTE:** As there is length in the mid and low vowels, there may well be length in the high vowels. The following three words have been noted as having length: ʌːr] "water, rain"; [ʌː] "scar pleura" and [ʌː] "ground". Alternatively, what has been interpreted above as [ʌː] & [uː] could possibly turn out to be short and long forms. Literate people, once they get used to writing "ae", "aa" and "oo", will soon decide whether there is "un" and "iː".

### III. VOWEL GLIDES.

The vowel glides appear to be:

- ai, ao, au, ei, eu, oo, oi, uai, eei, eeu

  - /ai/ ʌi /ai/ "rainbow"; /baidam/ "shark"
  - /au/ ʌo /au/ "I'm entering"; /mwa/ "python"
  - /ei/ ɛi /ei/ "me"; /ana/ "woman"
  - /oi/ ɔi /oi/ "meas"; /mam/ "woman"
  - /au/ ɑːi /au/ "meas"; /mam/ "woman"
  - /ei/ ɛi /ei/ "meas"; /mam/ "woman"
  - /oi/ ɔi /oi/ "meas"; /mam/ "woman"

### IV. STRESS

The stress in this language appears to be unpredictable and therefore phonemic. Some conditioning factor may emerge, but stress should be marked on each word in the dictionary in the meantime.
V. TONE & INTONATION.

There is no evidence for tone. Intonation patterns appear to be clearly distinguishable, and it is recommended that when story material or any sentence material is being recorded, an effort should be made to record also the rise and fall of the voice so that the basic intonation patterns may be worked out.

J. E. Rule
Arusa
26/11/81