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DAIMAK: METAPHORIC STORIES OF THE KUMA PEOPLE OF JIWAKA

Rebecca Peter Bare, Undergraduate Student, University of Goroka
ambairebex@yahoo.com.au

ABSTRACT

The Kuma are the six inter-marrying tribes that live in the South Waghi District of Jiwaka Province, and who speak one of the four dialects of the Waghi language which is the Kuma dialect. The Daimak is one of the many forms of storytelling in the rich oral tradition of the Kuma people. The Daimak was a particular pastime entertainment and art form for adults and children alike. Metaphoric language is often a feature of the Daimak. Most of the stories are allegories and fables, and they are usually accompanied by songs, chants and poems. This paper will expound the metaphoric features and the significance of Daimak in Kuma society.

Key words: Oral Traditions, Stories, Kuma Metaphors, Kuma Society, Jiwaka Province.

INTRODUCTION

Daimak is a tradition of telling bed time stories found among the Kuma people of Jiwaka. The Kuma people live in the South Waghi sub-electorate of Jiwaka Province. The tradition of the daimak was an ancient practice. Daimak narratives sometimes recalled historical events and most times were fictional, sometimes with the objective of teaching morals. Many daimaks are accompanied by songs and chants but those are not required characteristics. This paper will look at the art of daimak and the Metaphors used in the daimak; it will also explore two specialized metaphors; allegory and parable as used in daimaks. The stories discussed in this paper were told in the Waghi language by my maternal grandfathers; Ngumbi Kamben, Yiess Simbe and a family friend Kiapyi Tangi. They have been translated into English for the purpose of this discussion.

THE ART OF DAIMAK

Even though Daimak is more informal and entertaining than other forms of oral tradition, it had its own set of rules for those involved:

- Daimaks were customarily never said during daylight.
- It was said lying down. Daimaks were not the kind of stories that were told around the fire place. Daimaks were said as the family lay on the bed, ready to go to sleep.
- Everyone had to keep silent when someone was telling a daimak even if they had heard it many times before.
- The person ready to tell a daimak starts with, "Ai maimai". This is a call for attention and also signals the beginning of a daimak.
- At the conclusion of the daimak the person telling the story would exclaim, "Bol dasa!"
- The audience would then comment or discuss the daimak until the next person signaled the beginning of another story.

"Ai maimai" and "Bol dasa" are almost comparable to the Western tradition of beginning stories with "Once upon a time" and concluding with "The End" except that in the Waghi language these phrases have no literal meaning.

METAPHORS

A metaphor is a literary figure of speech that describes a subject by asserting that it is, on some point of comparison, the same as another otherwise unrelated object (Oxford Paper Dictionary & Thesaurus, 1997). The Kuma people use metaphors in their speech and stories. Metaphors are not restricted to the daimaks but are also part of everyday conversation as well. Allegory and parables are other specialized forms of metaphor found in daimak which will be looked at later.

Daimaks differ from legends in that they do not have to be memorized word- for- word, are shorter and are usually meant to entertain. The person telling the story is allowed to tell it in a creative fashion that she or he chooses, without changing the plot or theme of the story. While most people find it easier to tell the daimak plainly, it is the most gifted and accomplished story tellers that creatively use metaphors in their speech.

Small Bilum *Kon Kambaning*

The daimak of the *kon kambaning* recalls the courtship of three Kuma men with young women on the other side of the Waghi River. When they leave the courtship, a young woman follows them (which indicated that she was hoping that one of them would take her for his bride). One of the young men carries her little cargo and helps her cross the river. On the Kuma side of the Waghi he decides that he would not marry her himself, but that one of his friends would. Throughout this daimak, the young woman is referred to as the *Kon kombaning* (little bilum) instead of the usual *ambek mos* or young woman. Among the Kuma metaphors, Bilums are most usually associated with women. As listed in *Table 1*, the different bilums are used metaphorically for women of different marital status in the society.

The table below lists some Kuma metaphors; the literal English translation, metaphoric meaning and its literal form i.e. the literal word(s) if metaphors were not used. These common metaphors are not restricted to daimaks but are used in every day speech as well.

	WAGHI	LITERAL ENGLISH TRANSLATION	METAPHORIC MEANING	LITERAL WORD(S) IN WAGHI
1	Kai Walpe	Flying Fox	A Gossiper.	Yu bok
2	Dop gom	The fire has died out.	A Widower	Yi Kangil
3	Dop esik	Smoke	Person without possessions and someone who does not contribute to society.	Endikim
4	Kon Kambaning	Small Bilum	Young, unmarried girl.	Ambek Mos
5	Kon Mengil	Big Bilum	Married Woman	Amp
6	Kon Arim	Old, ragged Bilum	A widowed or divorced woman.	Amp Kangil

7	Ond Nop Munamp	Cassowarina Tree top	An opportunist	Akamb Angik Kui mim
8	Koi	Rat	Female infant	Ambek ngak
9	Kai	Bird	Male infant	Yi Ngak
10	Kraime Simbil	Wild Cassowary	Person who avoids contributing to society.	Akamb simbil
11	Kamb Sine	Spotted Cuscus	Well behaved, attractive, beautiful and soft, supple bodied woman (*the metaphor is only applicable to a beloved wife, not girlfriends)	Amb Ka wei
12	Kukangdasing	Spear	Tall, slim, good looking person	Yi/Amb Ka wei

Table 1. Some common Kuma Metaphors

ALLEGORY

An allegory is an extended metaphor wherein the story illustrates the meaning or message symbolically (Oxford Paper Dictionary & Thesaurus, 1997).

In some cases the objects, places and sometimes subjects in the daimak narratives represent a deeper concept which is mutually understood from the Waghi cultural context. One such daimak is the story of the *Red Pandanus Gift*.

The red Pandanus Gift

This story tells of two brothers, Bai and Moken, who had a successful hunting expedition in the forest. They stopped for lunch and some time later realized that the birds and cuscuses they had hunted were missing. After tracking animal bones and fur they come across a huge pile of decaying carcasses and animal bones with a huge old lady sitting on top of the pile. They knew that it was the old lady who had stolen the birds they had hunted. The old lady guiltily asks them to stay with her the night and promises to compensate them. Her house was located deep in the forest. In the night, they were visited by many beautiful and enchanting young women. Early the next day, the young men are each given a red Pandanus as a gift by the old woman and told to carry it with care. On their way back, Bai is ungrateful for the gift and keeps hitting his Pandanus on tree trunks and throwing it on the ground. He keeps saying that the old woman should have given them her daughters instead of the stupid red pandanus. Moken, on the other hand, tells him to handle the gift with care, like he himself is doing. When they reach the clearing at the edge of the forest, they tap their red pandanus on the big tree trunk like the old woman had told them to. The story concludes with the revelation that the red Pandanus were actually young women given to the young men as gifts. Moken's bride is the prettiest and happiest because she was carried with care, whilst Bai's bride is ugly and bleeding all over.

The theme of the daimak is that one should always appreciate what one has in life and revere it because the true value can never be known until it is too late. The red Pandanus, the forest, the young men's journey are just some of the allegories in the daimak that are explained in the table below.

ALLEGORY	CULTURAL CONCEPT	MEANING
The Red Pandanus <i>Kombe</i>	A very valuable delicacy which is often a traded food item.	The fact that it was given as a gift would mean that everything that one comes across in life must be held in perspective and treasured.
The forest <i>Kekpine</i>	Highlands's forests are dark but luscious and rich in game.	From where the young men were they had to find their way out and overcoming the situation, they emerge (from the forest).
The young men's expedition <i>Koikamb yie rak</i>	Hunters either return from the forest with a prize or empty handed.	This in actuality signifies that the young men are boys (in the beginning of the story) but emerge as men (the fact that they have brides in the conclusion)

Figure 2. Table showing Allegories from the 'Red Pandanus Gift' daimak

As has been stated, some of the daimaks told are allegories which actually have a deeper underlying meaning that is intertwined with the society of the Kuma/Waghi people.

PARABLES & FABLES

Parables are extended metaphors narrated as an anecdote illustrating and teaching a moral or religious lesson such as the Biblical Parables in the New Testament or Aesop's Fables (Oxford Paper Dictionary & Thesaurus, 1997). Fables usually include animal characters and contain morals behind the narrative. Kuma fables feature familiar animals, such as birds, rats, snakes and cuscuses, as well as insects (such as spiders).

Kip kin Kukang kin, The Eagle & the Owl

There is a Kuma fable about the eagle and the owl. The eagle and the owl were best friends and shared everything they had. They would soar above the Waghi River and look around for their grub which they always shared between the two of them. One day as the owl went out looking for more grub eagle selfishly ate everything they had previously collected. When owl returned he discovered that the greedy eagle had left him nothing. Owl then sang to eagle telling him that this was the end of their long friendship and he would migrate inland to the forest and would always have more to eat than eagle.

This fable featuring the two bird characters teaches the theme of friendship, honesty and hard work. It also has an accompanying song which is sung from owl's point of view.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF DAIMAK IN THE KUMA SOCIETY

Daimaks have been an important aspect of the Kuma culture. They have no restrictions, as to age or gender but, since they are usually told in the family homes, they are mostly about old people, women and children. This is because men were usually busy in the *Haus man* but they also took part in the story telling when they were at their homes. This art of bedtime stories is significant in the Kuma society for three main reasons. Firstly, daimak itself is an art and the *yupor nga yi* (male) or *yupor nga amp* (female) story tellers were respected for their art in telling it. Secondly, it is a form of night time entertainment for the family. The children would look forward to the daimak all day even asking their parents to tell it to them during daylight but that is against the custom, so they have to behave and wait for the dusk. Traditionally, as the story was told in the home to an enthusiastic audience, it kept the children in at night, and out of trouble. Thirdly, it was a way in which children were educated about the Kuma society's morals. Daimak was suitable for children; besides entertaining them, the themes behind the stories teach their society's morals. Those morals were indirectly instilled in them until they were initiated into womanhood and manhood. The initiation educated them further on their society. Adults who also partook in the daimak were reminded of Kuma morals and teachings.

THE STATE OF THE DAIMAK IN THE KUMA SOCIETY TODAY

Today, as modern development has taken place and with electricity being available, the Kuma families have other forms of entertainment, such as television or video houses and or gambling houses. Many school age children nowadays prefer hearing western stories or doing homework instead of listening to daimaks. The typical extended Kuma families are beginning to become nuclear families and so children cannot learn or listen to their grandparents tell the daimak. Even though it has not died out completely it is not at all as popular today and is rarely practiced. If it should die out, then its metaphoric features would eventually die out, too.

RECOMMENDATION

Oral Traditions, such as the daimak and other legends and stories of the Kuma people should be recorded before they die out, but people need to be trained on how to document and conserve such important aspects of language and culture. Kuma people (as well as many other Papua New Guineans) need to be made aware of the importance of their oral traditions. They should try to maintain them and pass them on to their children, instead of adopting Western stories and forms of entertainment because the art and morals of our societies are often intertwined in such traditions.

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