

Traditional and Cultural Aspect of
Trobriand Island Chiefs

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I am going to speak of the chieftainship of the Trobriand Islands, and to trace out some of its bearings on the native culture, particularly the alignment of families, clan, and totemic divisions, and its place in the social, economic, and political drive of the people. I hope that its possible contribution to the political set up of the future, may suggest itself without any underscoring from me. The question of the Kula I regard as in too separate and distinct a context for me to deal with it adequately here. The kinship terms are as given in Malinowsky. His treatment is exact and complete. There is nothing to add. These people do not have the elaboration of terms that is found in the surrounding Melanesian area.

I am not a trained anthropologist, so I cannot relate what I have to say, to the anthropological scheme of things known to you. The name of the clan from which the Trobriand chiefs are chosen, is known as Tabalu, a kind of clan McGregor of cousins, all related in some degree on their mother's side. I will try and build up from my recollections of my contacts with these, some idea of the way they understand themselves; and then, to avoid tedious retraversing of familiar ground, I will skirt around the edge of the known, and what should be better known, in an effort to give some idea, not of how a new or different picture may be developed, but of the way present perceptions may be deepened.

I will frequently refer to Malinowsky, whom I used as vade mecum books of reference over a number of years. Any lack of coherence I hope to make good by answering your questions at the end.

In my time Mosilibu was head of the Tabalu clan in Tukwaukwa, the village next to the Catholic Mission Station. He took exact note of the clan's fortunes in the various districts of the Trobriands. He told me the Tabalu had died out on Kitava, an island of eight hundred souls; that there was no one to succeed Wadisoni of Vakuta, an island of five hundred souls; that in Kadawaga of Kaileula, an island of eight hundred the Tabalu numbers were going down. The same was true of Gumilababa, and even of the community of the paramount chief at Omarakana. He looked on Mitakata's heirs, as anything but characters of chiefly quality. Neither Waibadi nor Vanoi held any promise in his eyes at that date.

This prompted him to study alternatives. He was passionately jealous of Tabalu honour, and if he himself had been paramount chief, he could not be more convinced of the importance of that office, or more devoted to its maintenance. Talking to him one felt, that here was a little kingdom, like one of those out of which the English nation grew.

According to Mosilibu the paramount chieftaincy did not have a necessary connection with Omarakana. Historically as it were, it had been at Labai, at Okaiboma, and at Tukwaukwa. He put forward the claim, that the senior line was still in fact at Tukwaukwa. It had taken refuge there originally, and had never gone back. A junior branch had taken over the ancient glories of the Tabalu in Omarakana.

About the year 1948 Mosilibu took advantage of every possible occasion to impress these ideas upon me. He regarded Tabalu glory as a thing of the past, except in his own community and that of Kavataria. It was evident from the way he talked, that in his mind, it was the body of the Tabalu women, that gave the clan its power. If these were young, numerous, informed and sociably capable, the chief had backing and he

could be a real power. The Tabalu women of Tukwaukwa were the biggest such body in Boyowa, and they were well backed by their cousins in Kavataria, and many had gone as mission Teacher's wives to the D'Entrecasteaux. The chief of Tukwaukwa was in fact the real paramount chief, and should indeed be honoured as such.

Mosilibu adduced as evidence of the seniority of the Tukwaukwa line, the obviously more ancient quality of its magic spells. I was prompted on the one hand to discount this; and on the other I found it a very curious remark. On the side of discounting it, was the fact, that a little previously, Dabugera, sister of Mitakata, had given me a version of one of the Tudava myths. It was in the form, not of a myth, but of a fantasy, and I was questioning her about its classification. Was it not rather a Kukwanebu than a Liliu. She insisted that it was a Liliu or myth. Also about this time her husband Monakewa, whom I have often dubbed in my own mind at least, author of the Sexual Life of Savages, had been keen to have me write down a couple of love charms. To humour him I did this, and he swore me to secrecy with much palava and ado. Later when I studied the spells, they struck me as being only faintly in the medium of spells, and as having very slight content. On his next visit I asked him naivishly if they were his own composition. He at once charged me with betraying confidence, and of having discussed them with someone else, which I had not. I was quite used to discussions of this kind becoming common knowledge very soon, so I took Mosilibu's comparison of the Tukwaukwa and Omarakana spells, as a reflexion of this. On the curious side is the fact, that the only spells which I ever wrote down of the Tukwaukwa systems, are the most indecipherable of all the Boyowan texts, that I have ever studied.

Mosilibu must have been ninety years old by this time. He had already stepped down from active exercise of his chieftaincy, having handed over to Togewase his nephew. This made his observations more interesting in that he was personally disinterested. I did not gather any impression, that Mosilibu's recognition of the Tabalu women of the Tukwaukwa and Kavataria communities and their number and importance, included also an appreciation of the fact, that these were the only Tabalu to have submitted to a mission education. It was at this time that Mitakata came to me to ask if the Catholic Mission could do for Waibadi, whom at the moment they favoured, what it had done for Kalubaku. He would allow us three months. As Kalubaku's education had taken seven years, this was a bit silly and nothing came of it.

Mosilibu living less than two hundred yards away, was my most frequent and voluble contact with the Tabalu. I am sorry now that I made so little of the opportunity. But conversation with Mosilibu was very trying, and to the Tabalu of Tukwaukwa an embarrassment. Even white traders were aware of this, and commonly retailed the symptomatic reason, supplied by the natives, that it was because he had been seduced as a youth by one of the pariah women of Boitalu. But from knowing him, I always felt it had far more to do with his bumbling talk. It was simply laborious to talk with him. He had nothing of the glory of the Tabalu's tomadagi biga, or clarity of expression. He was quite capable of nattering away for fifteen or twenty minutes, without properly completing a single sentence. In fact he cut such a poor figure, and was so lacking in charm, that it was a matter of frequent surprise, that his view and awareness of things was so broad, and his ideas so good. There was always much more thought in his conversation than there was in Mitakata's.

During the six or seven years I was in the Trobriands before the war, the Tabalu of Omarakana had always avoided contact with the Tabalu of Tukwaukwa. The reasons given for this had always seemed less than

satisfying. There was never a hint before the war, that anyone was thinking about the future primacy among the Tabalu, certainly not as far as Tukwaukwa was concerned. So when Mosilibu began his propaganda after the war, I thought to myself, that here was something, that made sense. This provided a quite adequate reason for the coolness of the Omarakana Tabalu towards those of Tukwaukwa. One could also understand why their disdain was shown in a sly way; why they were so cagey.

Togewase who exercised the office of chief for Mosilibu, was very discreet, and had nothing to say on Tabalu affairs, I had little opportunity to know the quality of his mind. Though once he was explicit. I remarked to him, that in a village the size of Tukwaukwa, there was always a proportion of converts to the Catholic Church. That since we had had practically none, I suspected pressure somewhere. He said impatiently, that there was pressure indeed, and indicated that he did not like it either. His explanation was the insistence of the Tabalu women, that their submission to mission teaching was responsible for their prosperity, counterwise to that of the Tabalu in the other districts of the Trobriands; that the Tukwaukwas had better remain good Methodists, or evil might befall. Togewase was, I think, much more familiar with Catholic than with Methodist Christianity.

Going around with Togewase's heir presumptive was a whole group of young fellows, mostly junior to the heir, who were quite voluble on how different things were going to be, when their turn came to run things. That was something else again.

Togewase was certainly tomadagi biga, clear in speech. I only heard him once, at a kayaku or speech night, when he laid down the garden programme and policy for the new year. The subject matter was humdrum, and since he spoke after the others, some of whom tried to be flamboyant, he sounded deliberately flat; but for clear, ordered thinking, terseness, and adequateness it was beautiful.

My daily contact with the Tabalu of Tukwaukwa left a deep impression on me of their power as a political force. Their vigour was amazing. Considering the relative smallness of their numbers, their dominance was out of all proportion to their contribution to general affairs.

It struck me often as a great pity, that so much drive should have so little to promote. Given home rule, this clan would provide a ready made political party, with a well developed political sense, and flair for political procedure, with an already established tradition, with an aristocratic or noblesse oblige mentality, that the general population could rely on, with a definite culture of self-control and patience, without which the ordering of human affairs is impossible.

This political power was very real to me, and would be to anyone who read Malinowsky in the Trobriands. But it occurs to me that it might not be so clear to those who depend more on Malinowsky alone. So at the risk of covering what is already well known, I would like to restate, according to my own understanding, the relationship between totem and clan, and between clan and branch.

The Kumila or totemic divisions do not have any political significance. Though the Kumila is in every native's daily thinking, every village being divided under four totems, and all social activity being divided among these four divisions, the channelling of this activity is not done on the basis of the Kumila, but on the basis of the Bwala which belong to the Kumila. Bwala says house, and is the Trobriand term for clan or historic family, with a known original seat,

or point of origin. These points of origin are dotted around the Trobriands, being usually marked by some monument or other, such as a megalith, or what passes for one, an old village site or grove, usually sacred, sometimes just a point on the coast.

Members of the various Bwala, like Kweinama, originally a single family, have migrated at various times, and like the Tabalu are found scattered around the different islands and communities of Boyowa. In this larger sphere they are spoken of as Dala. They are thought of as Bwala only at, or in relation to their point of origin or Sunapula. Their headmen in various districts being cadet branches. The various Dala are all on the same pattern as the Tabalu.

Each Bwala or Dala has its secondary bird emblem. If you ask Togewase, what his bird was, he would say Bubuna, pigeon or dove, because he belongs to the Malasi totemic branch, and this is a fundamental division of humanity, like male and female, relative and stranger. A Trobriand youth has this on his mind most, because it determines which girls he makes a pass at, and which he shuns. At times when there is a gathering of people in large numbers, they tend to cluster instinctively, according to their Kumila.

But the particular bird emblem of Togewase is the Pulou, a bird built like a currawong or jackdaw, but light coloured. This bird has a lesser practical importance. It is used as an heraldic token, to decorate a chief's house or store, or to use in poetry as a reference to the clan. Though I did not make a study of this, I always understood that each Dala had its bird emblem proper to the Dala. I was quite well aware that these sub-divisions as it were of the totemic branch had an enhanced importance in other districts outside the Trobriands, especially where people were decreasing in numbers. In Milne Bay a colony of Bohutu people were dubbed Hulana, because they were all one Kumila, most marriages being, to Trobriand sensibility, incestuous. About 1950 I had good confirmation of this in processing some of the Catholic Marriages. Getting the name, village, and totem of the four grandparents, I found, more than once, say, a butcher bird, a king fisher, a bird of paradise, and a hornbill as the given totems of the four grandparents. When I suggested that they were still all one Susu (:Kumila) they ruefully agreed. They were all Hulana or Crows. If there was any upstepping of the secondary (link?) totems in the Trobriands, I would have heard of it. Any such community would be like the Bwoitalus notorious to a degree, as in fact the Hulana were in Milne Bay.

Though it was made perfectly clear by Malinowsky, it is worth the tedium to contrast and compare Kumila and Dala. Kumila is on the metaphysical level as it were, and divides all humans, indeed all creation, all fish and fowl, beast and beastie, plant and spirit. The Trobriand natives have an explanation of it for humans, that sounds like a reflexion of the medical doctrine of blood types. Kumila is antecedent to any line of descent, or original ancestor. I never heard of an original ancestor of a Kumila. The correct term of reference to the bird emblem is Tuwada, Elder, side-stepping any idea of direct descent. I found among the Eagle totemic branch a real veneration for the Elder, as though to a being of a higher order, benign, wise, provident.

Except for the tabu on marrying within the Kumila; the actual work of the totemic principles is all on the basis of the Dala. The frequent slogan at the Kayaku, keep the Kakalumwala (ridge), really means, keep your alignment with the Dala, like saying, Stay in your own Union. Though there may be in a given village, two or three or more Dala in the one Kumila, in the Kumila with the dominant Dala, it may seem that Kumila and Dala are co-terminous, that they coalesce as one and the same thing.

The dominant Dala doubles its predominance by aligning most of the rest of the village on its side as in-laws by marriage. This makes the remnants so eager to scramble on to the bandwagon that they out-Herod Herod, they support the chief or headman loudest of all, they are the splice on the tip of the whip, the crack comes from them.

It only seems that the chief or headman owns the village. The expression *toli-valu* or *tolela valu*, merely says villager, and does not indicate ownership unless the context does. Lacking a chief, the headman is Tokaraiwaga, which says Decider. The flavour is quite democratic.

The intensity of the Trobriand communal living is quite at variance with other parts of Papua, with which I became familiar. For a long time I kept reminding myself of material factors, they were practically one dormitory, lived in the open on the threshold or *Kaukweda*, so unless an individual retired to the jungle, there was no individual private life; and since the next house was not six feet away, there was scarcely any private family life. The whole village was as much a single community as a band of monks or nuns. They must be the most socialised people on earth. An existence more compactedly social, seems scarcely possible. It needs a discipline, and they have it, they are just like the members of a feudal castle or stronghold. It is all quite contrary to one's experience of other parts of Papua, and is much commented on by other Papuans visiting the Trobriands.

I still doubt whether Malinowsky appreciated this. If only he could have gone back after twenty-five years or so, and forgetting his everlasting enquiry, his restless search for more and more data, had just let himself absorb the feel, of how all the factors he had 'documented' actually worked out, he might have rewritten his works, and given us something unique in anthropology. Malinowsky and the Trobriands could have provided that. I fancy there could have been a masterpiece, something like Da Vinci's *Mona Lisa* in the realm of art.

Malinowsky's research I think was as exhaustive as it could be, short of completely absorbing the Trobriand language. I was continually surprised on referring back to him, to find that his enquiry had already impinged upon some discovery, that I had supposed was all my own. His analysis too was masterly. He seems to have left nothing unexplained, and his explanations are enlightening even to the people who live there.

It is curious then, that this exhaustive research and patient, wise, and honest explanation should leave a sense of incompleteness. But it does. I feel that his material is still not properly digested, that Malinowsky would be regarded as in some ways naive, by the people he was studying. That the people he describes would still seem somewhat foreign to the Trobrianders themselves. I was surprised at the number of times, informants helping me with checking Malinowsky, would bridle. Usually when a passage had been gone over more than once, they would say it was not like that. They did not quarrel with facts or explanation, only with the colouring as it were. The sense expressed was not the sense they had of themselves, or of things Boyowan.

I am not surprised that students are finding that Malinowsky, having dug down through the strata as it were, and opened the way to so much comparative study, can now be reinterpreted in the light of Malinowsky. This, I suppose is vindication enough of a 'documentation' so exact, so exhaustive it bores. Living among these things I could have done with a lot less proliferation of the obvious, and a lot less explanation which only explained Anthropology, or the anthropologist, or got in the way of my own thinking. Anyway I longed for a positively expressed exposé backed by the authority of Malinowsky, and running affirmatively somewhat thus:

The Trobrianders are a matrilineal people. They are uncompromisingly logical. They exhibit a consistent work out of the matrilineal system right down to its bitter conclusions. Their Urigubu is an example. If you see a man grow two or three acres of crops, and then load most of it into the store of his sister's family, don't be surprised. It is mad to us. It makes sense in their set up. They are a primitive people. Among primitive people the father is a more ambiguous and unreliable factor in community affairs. Motherhood on the other hand cannot be ambiguous. Mother love also is more reliable. So these primitives compromise. They build a social system on what they know is sure. They reinforce the love for each other of mother and children, and that of children reared together for one another, with a system consecrated by lavish ceremonial, back stopped by their most profound and religious cult - the brother-sister tabu.

It is a system that works. It has an intrinsic validity of its own. It has been proved. It is exacting. Deviate and die is the lesson of their folk history. But since it works it must be less strange than it seems. This is a fact. It is.

When a man loads his sister's store with the produce of his own garden and his own family, he does not deprive his own wife and children. What is stored in the Bwaima, is only the more keepable portion of the staple of the main crop. It is only a fraction of the product of the garden. None of the fruits, greens, nuts, or soft and unseasonal vegetables are put in the Bwaima. The Bwaima holds only the strictly conservable excess of the main crop. It is the show stuff. It is paid in as tax, to the social and political economy of the whole community. In normal years, these stores are still intact, after six, seven, even eight months of storage.

Then when foraging begins to fail, it is paid out again in aquittal of social and political obligations, in such a way that everyone gets back, equivalently, what he produced. Sister's family paying back ceremonially, what it ceremonially received.

It is a system at once of Taxation, Insurance, Capital Investment, Social Welfare, and Political Sanction, reduced to its least common denominator, a crate of food.

When a man loads his sister's store with his conservable surplus, he is not passing it out of his control, he is putting it in safe keeping. His own wife and children cannot touch it. It has been ceremonially presented to his sister's family and 'Paid for'. His sister's family cannot touch it, because it is earmarked for certain social and political purposes and obligations, to which she is obliged equally with her brother, and to which her husband is co-opted by his marriage to a member of the dominant Dala, and who is mostly of the party of the beneficiary anyway. Besides there has to be a refill. The Bwaima is the gauge of their social consequence. They have to preserve their honour. This is the Trobriand defense against their most haunting spectre Tokomada, the Eat All.

There are days when half the women in the Trobriands, seem to be out on the road in caravan. All are loaded with baskets of yams from the Bwaima. They are going to Sagali, or ceremonial distributions. This is the release mechanism of the stored surplus. It is at once the promotion, preservation, and controlled functioning of the cast iron social and political system which the Urigubu constitutes. For the women it fills in nicely, an otherwise drab and dreary period of the year. For men it is a time to go on Kula, or in some way or other get right away from the women. The whole of Boyowa becomes just one big forum at these times. Many times I amused myself stirring in some topic at one side of the island one day, and the next day cycling to the other

side of the island, to be told and asked about the same topic. With a little patience it was possible to find where the balls were made that would be fired later. I felt it was natural that women dominated this society. They are as emancipated as in any civilised country. Politics is mostly their making, as witness the cry of the heart of Namwana Guyau, 'La mekita matouna, si mekita komwaidona la kwava. If you want to translate the phrase, 'Its all politics', for Trobriand understanding just say 'Beisa Bwaima Wala', or 'Sagali Biga'!

All the natives of the Eastern end of Papua are aware of the social and political set-up of the Trobriand Islands. It is at once their envy and their despair. The rigidity of the discipline, and the frightful sanctions that to them must underlie such a system, awes them. That practically no one goes abroad to work, that they do not even leave the village for casual work for a month or two, means to outsiders, that tribal sanctions are wielded without fail, and brook no exception.

Actually, having grown up knowing no other way of living, but the common village life, having never known individual freedom, having always been motivated by Si Vavagi Tomota, the common endeavour, having been always informed by Ninasi Tomota, the common mind or idea of the community, the Trobriander is very much at a loss on his own. So he clings to his village life. His own life is identified with it, and all his drive for self preservation fights for the integrity also of the village life. So there is little occasion for use of the ultimate sanctions, though they seem to be an ever present thought, and all the Melanesian folk around speak in awe of them. The people want things the way they are.

This is not to say that there are not fierce stresses. Malinowsky speaks of waves of suicides. This did not seem to happen during my time. But tenseness was a matter of continual encounter, much more frequent than a reading of Malinowsky would prepare one for. The phenomenon of amok needed no explanation. Though it was frequent enough, the wonder was, it was not more frequent. There were a number of conventional manifestations, advertisements as it were of tenseness, bundles of freshly polished spears, a glowering figure honing axes and knives, outbursts of torrential obscenity, love thwarted lasses chanting ditties, trying to send half a village round the bend, night watches for possible workers of black magic, the tense quiet of a village struck by sudden crisis, sometimes night long speech making. All these and many more examples of tense living tied in in some way or another with life on the community level. I remember sometimes riding by bicycle through seven or eight villages :: in an afternoon, and on asking what was the matter, being told more than once, 'Giburua'! All this intensified the communal living, and were intensified by it. Where the Trobriands were different to the surrounding Melanesia, was in the village not flying apart. These things gave proof also that the bonds, binding this society, were extraordinarily strong. So in this tight little province, of about twelve thousand people, in less than a hundred communities, there was enough ado for a whole nation.

These spiritual conflicts seem to me to make the best and most direct approach to the understanding of the Trobriand character, and to forming some idea of the moral stature of some of its people, and I think that Malinowsky did not follow up on this approach, even where he was aware of it. He knew of the ousting of Namwana Guyau, and the preparation for the succession of Mitakata, at the time it happened. Namwana Guyau could talk of it to any length, to the end of his life. He did in fact hold my attention completely absorbed, at a time when I regarded my knowledge of the tongue, as very sketchy indeed. He gave me an introduction to a culture more incisive, to a higher level of

thinking, than I had expected from reading Malinowsky. It was quite an experience. Malinowsky himself made this contact with the people more than once, as he tells us. But he only refers to it. He does not put us in contact.

Later on my experience with Namwana Guyau paled before one that I had with Mokasoka of Tukwaukwa. Mokasoka was a poor nerve crazed ruin of a man, that I always felt sorry for, and knew no way of helping. My tolerance of him irritated the people of the village. They even resented it. They told me bluntly, and with stern expression, that I should pack him off, he was dangerous. They told me in his hearing that he would end by committing suicide.

Mokasoka was another case of missed opportunity for me. I realised too late the calibre of his mind. At the time I was still writing down native stories by dictation. Mokasoka could not accomodate me in this way, so in spite of his eagerness, I put him off. Only once did I do, what I should always have done, just sit back and listen. This once, when I did that, I had an experience more profound, than I have had, reading any book, seeing any cinema classic, opera, or what you will. I have never been so absorbed, or carried away into the world of the story, as I was by Mokasoka. In answer to some question or reference to Gumagabu, he described Tomakam's last trip to the Koya, the trip on which he finally carried his feud. It was a profound excursion into the realm of mystery and horror.

I have always found myself rather opaque to civilised efforts of this kind, but I got such a drenching from Mokasoka, that I could shudder at the recollection for months afterwards, and I can still savour it to this day. The horror was like a living thing in Mokasoka himself, and was communicated by contagion.

In writing down stories at dictation, I had often been nudged, or otherwise alerted, that the vinavina passage, contained a message for my more mature understanding, that here was a more important point in the story, than any that amused the children. It was Mokasoka who showed me, how big this story could be.

I do not know where he figured among the Malasi of Tukwaukwa, but he was openly, and to his face, referred to as Tobwagau, sorcerer, and I always felt that he had been used by some of the Tabalu, to do their dirty work. The contempt and hatred of the hirer for the hired, in the matter of poisoning or black magic, is a prevalent and consistent pattern in Trobriand affairs, and is the only explanation that is adequate for such relationships as that of Omarakana and Bwoitalu.

I felt that Mokasoka, telling the story of Tomakam driven by village politics, to carry his feud to the Koya, counter to his every instinct, principle, and inclination, was really making his own confession and apologia. If he had ever done dirty work for members of his own, or any other community, he certainly raked them for it. His denunciation was the most bitter and insufferable, that I have ever witnessed, and its sting was matter of public acknowledgment. He was once taken into custody for questioning by the District Officer, but was released overnight, or there would have been no staff next day.

To come to some conclusion, let me say at once, that I regard the social and political system of the Trobriands as ferocious. The chief is Kadada, Uncle (maternal) to his closest supporters, and often the dutchiest of uncles at that. I was often given the title myself on working bees, when I disagreed with something or other, and the workers in their hardy way, retaliated. I recognise, that it avails itself of

possibly the only solidarity that exists in a matrilineally minded people. I recognise that the urigubu discipline gives a wonderful order to the community living, that this ordered living develops intelligence and character, that this puts the Trobrianders generally, as much ahead of other Melanesian folk, as urban populations generally, are ahead of rural populations. I recognise that this is a familiar discipline, that it makes the whole village in effect one family, that it has a curiously vital effectiveness, like the idea of the ancient Romans of extending citizenship of their city to the wide world. I recognise that this is largely responsible for a code of social behaviour, a Job-like cult of patience, of accepting the joke, even when it is against oneself. In the language of their philosophy, if you do not laugh you die. In their own way they are a civilised people. I recognise too, that if this discipline were to break down, a much more chaotic, and much more evil state of affairs would exist.

But the system itself is in part intrinsically unnatural and artificial, and is felt to be so by the natives themselves.

I adduced the case of Namwana Guyau, dispossessed with his mother and brothers by the death of his father Toulawa. He put his finger unerringly on the false principle, the matrilineal system, the upheaval it caused on the succession of a new chief, and the beggaring of the party that succeeded. But he knew no substitute for the urigubu, nor perhaps would he have wanted to change it.

At the other end of the scale, I adduced the case of MOKASOKA, a member of a minor Dala, of a minority with no right to call their souls their own. The lot of these minorities in the present set-up is cruel.

I could adduce many other cases. The most improvident women, belong also in the prominent Dala. Some have large families, and because they can and want to have a share in the brave show, they favour the wealthier and better provided moiety, at the expense of the weaker. Only rankers can have large stores. The rest can forego ambition. Members of the minor Dala, and weaker in-laws of the ruling Dala, accept as a matter of course, to be publicly pilloried for shortcomings that are not real, and which in any case they are powerless to prevent. I once saw Wailesi of Okaikoda, married to the sister of Mokaipwesi the Tokaraiwaga, and brother of Mokaipwesi's wife, so that he was Mokaipwesi's brother-in-law twice over, and father of six of Mokaipwesi's nephews and nieces, publicly awarded a bedroom pot with no bottom, as 'payment' for his urigubu.

When I suggested to him that this was a bit rough, he reminded me that it was not only directed at himself, but at his wife, who was Mokaipwesi's sister, that she was improvident. There were about two thousand people present, and there was cheering and laughing, when Mokaipwesi as master of ceremonies handed the useless pot to Wailesi. The brother-in-law accepted with good humour, but his grin was rueful.

Home to the Trobrianders is O Valu, in the village, and each village is a castle or stronghold. Only those who belong in the family-Dala or are in-laws are real citizens, the rest are poor relations or slaves. They usually advertise the fact by their exaggerated behaviour. It is wise for them to be fools to show themselves even more base than they are. A lot of the much publicised wantonness of Trobriand girls comes from this remainder element. Even lick-spittle sycophancy wears an air of hardihood, and claims more than due attention. In drawing conclusions about Trobriand village life, it is important to know, who does what, and why, otherwise one's views can be all coloured wrongly.

I would have found it refreshing if Malinowsky had featured a little the women, described as Nakitu, or reserved, the ones who only know one lover, the man they marry. In departments of life where discretion is natural you have to dig. These women are silently, but deeply, and at times very noticeably, respected. Just to know these and who they are, is enough to realise that the impression one gets from Malinowsky of Trobriand women, though so largely right, does not apply to all. I expected to find this, and was not surprised when I did. But even a missionary with much experience elsewhere, was sceptical, till he met one of them. He told me incidentally, that in another place, when trying to find a native expression for virginity, he had been careful to establish the idea very clearly in his informant's mind, and then was startled by the informant's reply, as to how he would describe such a person, by being told (Direct quote) 'Bloody Fool'!

I have never felt any inclination to demolish Malinowsky, though I worked six months with a priest, Father Norin, who had spent his life studying New Guinea peoples and languages, who continually urged me to do that. To him Malinowsky seemed like a heretic writing against the faith, he had to be answered. Sieving through his books, and checking with me all he suspected was erroneous, he repeatedly declared that I was able to do that. But I could not share his attitude at all, Malinowsky could stand as far as I was concerned. I was glad and grateful for the coherence. It seemed providential, it seemed almost as though Malinowsky had laboured just for me, I was the principal beneficiary. In particular I sieved him for linguistic clues. If he was only half right it was gain, he saved me time and labour. It was his insight, perfect or less than that, but he was to be honoured for it. It did not mean that there was not other insights, and necessarily changing insights. With the continuance of culture contact, a new generation, and a new people would grow up in the Trobriands. The old construction could always be used for comparison, and those who so used him, could assess his reliability best for themselves.

This is not to say that I regard Malinowsky as complete. He himself admits that the Argonauts is sketchy, and he promises a better study. In part this promise was kept in Coral Gardens, and Sexual Life. Perhaps he was misled by his functionalism, but he should not have stopped at functionalism, to my mind the best book remains unwritten.

Trobriand life by their own dichotomy, divides three ways, O Kaukweda, Wa Bwaima, and O Baku. Malinowsky has 'documented' as far as is needful, and sometimes more than is needful, the individual personal life, and the individual family life O Kaukweda, also the communal social life and political life Wa Bwaima. But the more cultural and spiritual life O Baku, has not yet been written. It would cover a great folk history, a vast development of story and song, of myth, magic, and cosmogony. It would include a pilgrimage to the various Sunapula or Bwala of the various clans or Dala, their megaliths or monuments, groves, burial caves. There could be most interesting gleanings from the context of proper names. A Trobriander can go among people who are foreigners to him, who speak an unknown tongue, but the names of persons and places are familiar Boyowan ones, and he can construe them when their owners can not. Distant Trobriand historical contacts O Busibusi, Lomyuwa, the various Koya, Kokopawa, Kaitalugi, Kwaibwaga are vistas that have been no more than glimpsed. Possible linguistic links with Bantu, with the New Hebrides or New Caledonia, ethnographic links with Rossel Island and the hill folk of Taiwan, and with the Solomon Islands.

The deposit of culture so to speak (by analogy with the deposit of faith) has only been scratched. Myth and magic, story and song, are still only half understood, we do not see these people as the entity which they see themselves. We need more than functionalism, we need a synthesis more humane if not more romantic than Malinowsky gave us. But this perhaps goes outside the scope of Anthropology.

Describing the Trobrianders only on the O Kaukweda and Wa Bwaima levels, leaves their marked veneration for chiefs for one thing, and particularly the paramount chief, somewhat anomalous. It is the sense of the Trobrianders, that they represent a much older, and a higher civilisation than that of the surrounding Melanesians, that they have survived long periods of conflict with the Dokinkani or Cannibals, and that they did this by their superior organisation. Prior to the coming of the white man, this was their only salvation. Their lands and waters are rich, and a perpetual temptation to the surrounding hillbilly Melanesians. They had to be united to survive. Half their 'literature' is concerned with this struggle. The evolution of a kind of kingship was a necessity, though it is not now. Yet it is my feeling, that if the Tabalu were to die out, another Dala would evolve a paramount chieftaincy just to satisfy the mystic, poetic and historic sense of the people.

I would like to say in passing that I regard this institution as autochthonous, as the people claim, that it is equally, or more ancient than any Polynesian chieftaincy, and does not need any theory of Polynesian colonising to explain it, or the correspondence of its features. I found the outline idea the same everywhere I went among the Melanesians of Papua. They just explained that there were no chiefs among them, or they had died out, as among the Suau.

Similarly with the megaliths, they were erected in the Trobriands by Trobrianders, sharing in the spirit of the times, that was wide in the Pacific at one time. Mitakata himself, tongue in cheek it seemed to me, argued with me against this idea, insisting that Trobriand ways were changeless, that it could not be the work of Trobrianders, that the bones they dug up were bigger than Trobrianders, and not like them. He would claim it was the work of intruding outsiders and on their initiative. He scorned the idea that he was descended from such outsiders. The megaliths are called Dikula Kwaiwaya, Kwaiwaya Stones, Kwaiwaya being a man's name. They are referred to in spells, story, magic, and proper names of places. Curiously the area of the megaliths or the bigger of them, is also the area of the Traditional Cannibal headquarters, of the time when the islands were overrun and occupied, it seems, much on the lines of the Viet Cong in South Viet Nam.

The sense of struggle is pervasive of Trobriand culture, and also helps to consecrate their traditional customs and institutions. The chief, heir of the culture heroes to begin with, becomes standard bearer against the invaders, and then chief emblem and caretaker of the abiding glory. Add to this that his code is one of high personal integrity and nobleness, that he is the high priest of magic, the one on whom general prosperity and welfare depends, and it is easy to see, how it is an office surrounded by veneration and affection.

Togewase was once telling me of a trip he made to the headquarters of the Methodist Mission at Salamo, and talking to my understanding, a word to the wise as it were, as one priest to another, complained that he had stayed up all night, rather than sleep in a room where people had had intercourse. Inferring, 'Wouldn't you think those Tabalu mission teachers wives/^{would} know better form'.

If we skip the tradition, and the sacred character of their institutions, we miss the glory, we do not know the native as he knows himself. In down grading him, we down grade ourselves. If we only know the chief on the O Kaukweda and Wa Bwaima levels, he is just a master of ceremonies, chairman, or one to decorate a social occasion. If we do not know the emotion, we do not know the thing. The ceremonial alone is silly. But we cannot see others as silly, without, in their eyes, seeming a little silly ourselves. It was a surprise to me to find, that Malinowsky was mostly remembered by the natives, as the champion ass at asking dambfool questions, 'Do you bury the seed tuber root end or sprout end down'? Like asking, 'Do you stand the baby or the coffin on its head or on its feet'? I preferred not to refer to him at all, with the white people who had known him. He had made them uneasy, and they got back at him by referring to him as the anthrofoologist, and his subject anthrofoology. I felt too that this was partly a reflexion of native unease, - they did not know what he was at. Partly again because he made of his profession a sacred cow; you had to defer, though you did not see why, and if you were a government official or a missionary, you did not appreciate the big stick, from one whose infallibility was no more guaranteed than your own.

Analysing, taking apart and explaining soon becomes a bore, quickly becomes a case of more and more about less and less. Malinowsky himself pointed out, you quickly reach the point of diminishing returns. Describing the natives O Kaukweda and Wa Bwaima, is mostly emphasizing differences or strangeness. It is when we feel oneness with the native, that we come closest to understanding, and it is then that he can trust us.

Trying for myself, to put my finger on the key to the fascination of the Trobriand story, I came to think of them, as an adumbration of that religion-state, that made the entity of the ancient Jews. Only these people have a ritual without a creed. No magic, myth, song, story or explanation is complete or even understandable by itself. It needs (Ave Functionalism) the living context of the people, even to make functional sense. They can not really explain themselves, or their culture, or give reasons. Their answer to what people think, what they do, how they do, is that they just do. Ninasi Tomota, Si Vavagi Tomota, Bubunesi Tomota, make a wall around their world that contains them, even imprisons them. It is like the biologist tidying up the periphery of knowledge with a wall called Evolution. But just to prove the coherence of the Boyowan entity, with a question or two, or a mere suggestion, is electrifyingly exciting to the Trobrianders. This coherence has yet to be worked out. But the Trobrianders themselves would work at it hardest of all. They would need help, and they would welcome it. They would be fanatically critical of outside understanding, but that would make the story all the better. The best book on the Trobriands has yet to be written, but I am not quite sure that it would be pure anthropology.