

M I L A M A L A

A study of the harvest festival celebration
in the Trobriand Islands

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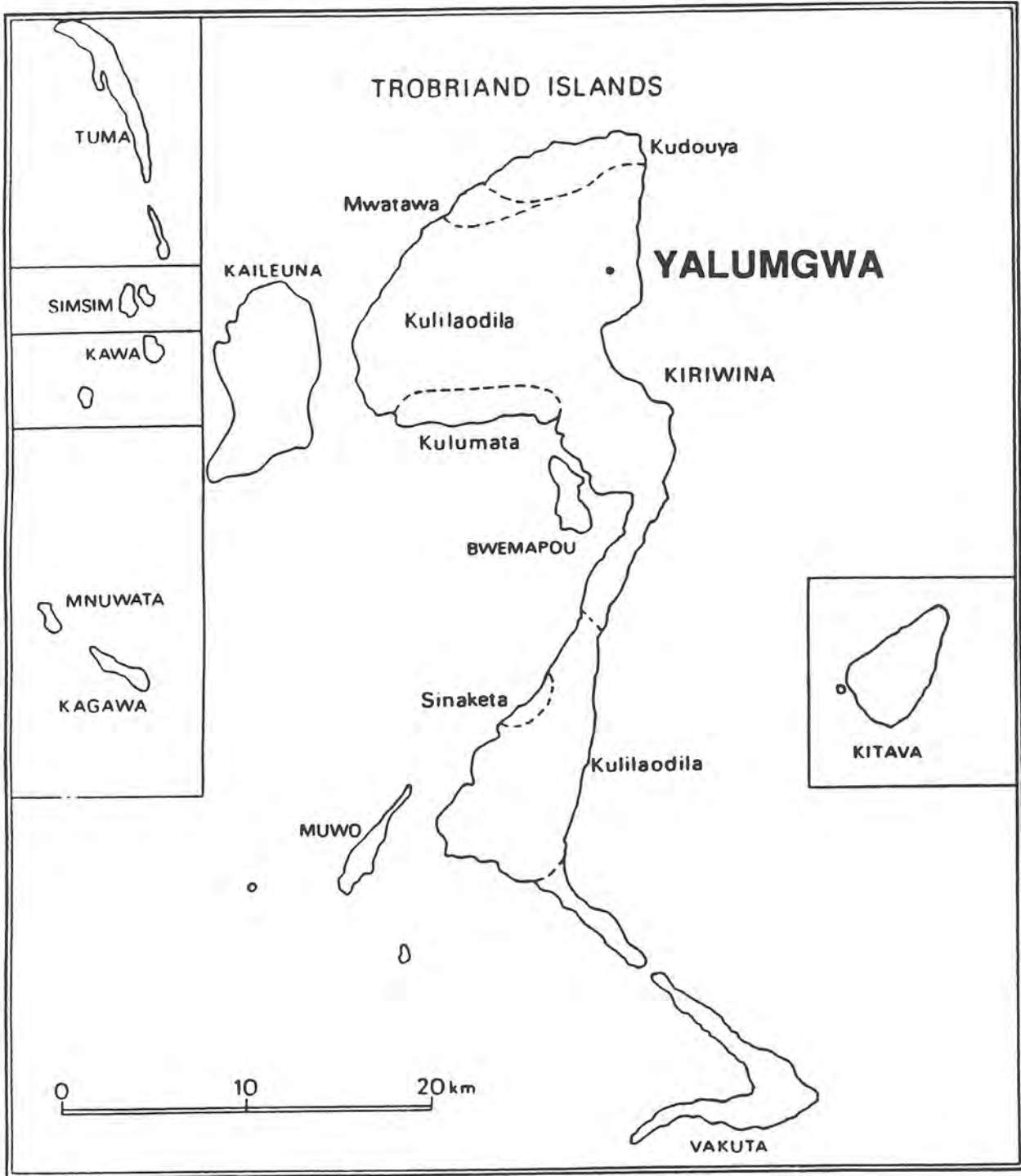
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INTRODUCTION

Any anthropological field trip to the Trobriand Islands is engulfed within the massive amount of publications that Bronislaw Malinowski has written. His work on the Trobriand Islands "*Remains the most famous, if not the most copious and exhaustive, ethnography in the Anthropological literature*" (1). Malinowski revolutionised ethnography. He was the first person who managed to spend an extended period of time amongst a community (recommended by Rivers in 1913 (2)). He added to River's ideas by developing the method of statistical documentation of concrete evidence, the collection of imponderabilia of everyday life and the accumulation of a corpus inscriptorium.

"these three lines of approach ... lead to the final goal, of which an ethnographer should never lose sight. This goal is, briefly to realise his vision of the world" (3).

His theories on fieldwork have since been criticised yet they laid the foundation for future ethnographers. The publication of his diaries has brought the strongest personal criticism over comments such as

"I see the life of the natives as utterly devoid of interest or importance, something as remote from me as the life of a dog" (4).

Geertz described Malinowski as

"a crabbed self pre-occupied hypochondriacal narcissist, whose fellow-feeling for the people he lived with was limited in the extreme."(5)

Whatever the reader's views on Malinowski, he has given a lot to the discipline of social anthropology.

The aim of this dissertation is to provide a more comprehensive account of Milamala, the Trobriand celebration of the return of the spirits. As Malinowski said in his self-critical catalogue of his 'errors of omission and commission' in reference to Note 8: 'Visit of the spirits':

"The evidence there given is incomplete as it contains only the results of my first two expeditions to New Guinea." (6).

Malinowski, having written so much about other aspects, wrote surprisingly little about a major event in the Trobriand calendar. His main discussion of Milamala was in Baloma: The spirits of the dead in the Trobriand Islands (1916 Journal of the Anthropological Institute, Vol 46).

Other discussions of Milamala are dotted around in his subsequent monographs on the Trobriand culture. There is also usage of other material written by subsequent authors which is provided in quotation form and a further list is provided in the bibliography.

The author's personal material is used extensively throughout the dissertation. The author spent approximately three months with Luciana Lussu in the Trobriand Islands living in Oluweta village, a subsidiary village of Yalungwa under the auspices of John Kasaipwalova and Chief Nalubutau. We had been introduced by our 'guiding angel' Jutta Malnic. We were very kindly looked after

by Kenneth and Jenny Kalabaku. Kenneth is the youngest nephew to Chief Nalubutau and has been educated at the University of Papua New Guinea. Kenneth was an invaluable interpreter and very kindly drove the author to other villages.

The main method of research used was by participant observation, by questioning and tape recording locals in Kiriwina dialect and then through translation via Kenneth at a later stage. This method was not always used as Missionaries have been educating the locals to the ways of English and hence a number speak it quite fluently. Other data for this dissertation was collected at the local hospital due to the influence of Joseph Anang.

The dissertation attempts to balance a fine line between 'new data' and 'old data'. 'Old data' was collected from the elders and is hopefully representative of the data acquired at Malinowski's time. The author's main sources of 'old data' were from Andrew Kalabaku (village leader of Oluweta) and Chief Nalubutau (Chief of Yalungwa). Other 'old data' was picked up from talking to Tolosi (the guardian of the Labai caves) and elders in Luia, Kabwaku and Yalungwa. This 'old data' is used to compare Malinowski's details of Milamala, the author's details and any subsequent authors'. There are also many areas to which Malinowski does not devote any attention (especially dancing) with which there is little to compare. The 'new data' is comprehensively used in Chapter Two and Chapter Four.

Data on the activities of Milamala was almost wholly taken from outside of Yalungwa village. In 1991 there was no Milamala

celebration in Yalungwa so in order to obtain data, the author travelled to other villages by Toyota truck. The author also spent four days at Luia, a village in the Kuboma region, studying Milamala with an English teacher who was very informative. The lack of Milamala in Yalungwa was a big disappointment but meant that the sources were collected from further afield.

Another disappointment was the lack of cricketing festivities. Our hosts said that the last one had been five years previously, put up by Yalungwa and was so expensive in food and valuables that nobody had held one since due to the inability of being able to match up to it! Thus cricket is not mentioned. There is, though, an excellent film produced by Jerry Leach on it even though it is only a reconstruction ⁽⁷⁾. Weiner described the film:

"cricket is examined in its many levels of meaning, and, by the end of the film, cricket as played by the Trobrianders makes sense" (8).

This dissertation is split into five parts: Chapter One looks at the myth of Milamala and the sequence of ritual events in relation to the return of the spirits (Baloma). This contradicts Malinowski's view of events in numerous places. Chapter Two looks at the main activity of Milamala: night and day dances. Malinowski makes scant references to dance so much of the material is drawn from the author's sources and from Father Baldwin. Chapter Three looks at the activities during Milamala such as Kasivila, the change in the role of Karibom, the statistical evidence for increased sexual activity, the role of Kayasa, Buritilaule and Vatowa.

Chapter Four looks briefly at the political and social influences on Milamala, the change of Milamala, the present situation, and the future of Milamala. The conclusion analyses the Milamala period and attempts to place it within anthropological theories on ritual.

ENDNOTES FOR INTRODUCTION

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CHAPTER ONE

Malinowski saw myth in its functionalist aspect such that

"the thesis of the present work is that an intimate connection exists between the word, methos, the sacred tales of a tribe, on the one hand and their ritual acts, their moral deeds, their social organisation, and even their practical activities on the other" (1).

and that

"Myth fulfils in primitive culture an indispensable function: it expresses, enhances and codifies belief; it safeguards and enforces morality." (2).

The collection of the myth of Milamala by Malinowski (3) fits in with his functional hypothesis. The author also collected the myth of Milamala from Tolosi, the blind man of Labai, who has specific clan control over the caves where legend has it that the Trobrianders came from.

'Before the spirits used to live in Tuma. There were two brothers, one died and was buried in the dust. The living brother performed dances over his grave. Out of the dust came a baby. This baby grew up and when the brother died, performed the dance on the grave repeating the cycle. However, the cycle was destroyed by one of the brother's jealousies. This brother had left the body in the dust. He had smelt the body going bad and had disliked his brother. The dead brother asked why he did not like him. The brother answered lamely, "It's just that I don't". The dead brother told him to bring a coconut, to remove the skin and break it in half. "The top half [with the three eyes] represents the fact that the

Spirits can see [kwaimatana] while the bottom represents the fact that the people are alive [kwaisibula]. I represent the top half while you represent the bottom half. We will be invisible to you while we can see you". The spirit went to Tuma. The spirits return at Milamala and come to know only one section of Trobriand life.'

The collection of the myth some seventy-five years later still shows that the internal structure in relation to the episode retains the crucial theme of the myth (refer to J. Vansina). The theme with the coconut effectively remains the same in the two versions Malinowski collected and in the one the author collected.

Malinowski suggests three ways in which Milamala is timed:

1) "*Milamala usually coincides with the pause between the cutting and burning" (4); "when the food is finally in the storehouses there is a pause in native gardening, and this pause is filled by the Milamala" (5).*

2) By the appearance of the marine annelid Eunice Varidis which takes place on the reef near Vakuta.

3) Following the moon of Milamala which is after the moon, Iyakoki:

"The inaugural ceremony is held at a certain full moon, and is followed by a month of dancing which reaches its climax at the next full moon". (6)

The first two are just rough estimators of when Milamala should occur. The arrival of the marine annelid at Vakuta signifies that that month Vakuta region only should celebrate the return of the spirits. Malinowski states that "*the dates of the moon are*

fixed by the position of the stars, in which astronomical art the natives of Wawela ... excel" (7). In fact, "In Kiriwina the natives told me ... that they thoroughly rely on the astronomical knowledge of the wawela men" (8). This is contrary to the information that the author received. From informants, the author found out that the date is traditionally set by Mwaligilagi, who are also obliged to let Omarakana know. When the moon for Milamala appears, the villagers shout (katugogova) to let everybody know. Next day the opening ceremony of Milamala begins.

Katukuala is the first ceremony in which the spirits are welcomed back to the Kilivila region. It consists of a 'sagali'. The sagali can last one-two days, depending on the size of the village, and should be held in clan order - (ie Malasi -> Lukuasisiga and then returned). Yams are roasted in the ground ovens and then exchanged. After the ceremony the drums may be beaten. A lizard skin for the drums has to be found. That night drumming and dancing begins. At the end of katukwala a man's sister presents him with traditional valuables so that he may open up the yam house.

All through the Milamala season the food is left for the spirits to eat. After a short time it is given to a relative who should reciprocate. Food that has been spiritually consumed is known as 'bubualu'a'. After the first ceremony, dancing should continue day and night until the end, at 'Ioba'. During this period it is shameful to plant gardens; it shows no respect to the spirits and as such it may be reflected in a bad harvest.

(Plate 1 overleaf: the sagali at Katukuala)



After Katukuala dancing continues for one or two more weeks, day and night, until Ulaboda (souls of the dead come back to dance) occurs. Ulaboda has had no reference as far as the author has read. Mwaligilagi is again involved in letting the Paramount Chief know the date - Ulaboda occurs when the moon is ripe or full (Tubokana Kimwakimla). During the feast all the spirits should have returned and Tuma (their residence) should be empty. The food as usual is left for the spirits to eat and then exchanged in the usual manner. After Ulaboda the end of the Milamala period is drawing close. Malinowski writes that the last festival - 'Ioba' - "*takes place on the night of woulu"* ⁽⁹⁾ "... The second night after the full moon, about one hour before sunrise, when the leatherhead sings out (saka'u) and the morning star, Kubuana appears in the heavens" ⁽¹⁰⁾. The author's information suggested two possible alternatives:

- 1) When the moon is at past full moon (yolukula); and
- 2) When Uluwa (a set of 6 stars) is overhead (bikatuwati).

When the day for Ioba is decided - by the Paramount Chief - everyone is informed by word of mouth. That day food is prepared for the departure of the spirits; new bunches of bananas, roast yam mona and taro mona (cooked in the ground oven). At the appointed time the food is taken from the ground oven and set on the houses of the verandah with other goods such as grass skirts (doba). The cleaning of the spirits from the village begins from the side farthest from Tuma and is swept by beating coconut branches on the ground, shouting out "baloma, baloma, bakalosa, bukolosa" to the

beat of the drums. When the spirits left, a number of old people who had recently lost partners began to mourn for them.

Malinowski's witnessing of 'Ioba' (11) seems to have been similar to the one the author attended, although a lot more youth were present. After Ioba, food is carried to more distant relations (bikabisa popula) and should be repaid with the equivalent or with traditional valuables. That morning, 'pem Ioba' occurs to get rid of the remaining spirits.

The informants who gave the author data were in disagreement over whether the spirits were disabled and old, or whether it was ironic that it was called pem Ioba ('pem' means disabled) but was in fact to rid the village of the youthful and mischievous spirits. Malinowski describes 'pem Ioba' as in the same mould as Ioba. My data suggests that women take more of an active part; throwing yams, paw paws and coconuts to make the spirits leave. Inevitably the men end up getting hit by hurled objects.

After pem Ioba the Milamala period has finished. Depending on the circumstances it is possible to carry the dancing into the next month (usiqula period).

There are two aspects of Malinowski's account that were absent at the Milamalas I attended. The first is the custom of Tokaikava - small platforms for the spirits (baloma) of chiefs (guva'u). Even in Malinowski's time: "*No tokaikava were made in Omarakana or Olivilevi during the Milamala I saw in those villages. The custom is on the decline.*" (12). The other is the custom of

lalogua - "a great display of food and ... gives a much more 'showy' and festive aspect to the villages" (13).

Malinowski writes that there is a "fixed end" (14) to the Milamala season. Some villages end the season early generally because they are not dancing. Other villagers who are dancing (bigebisa kaesosau: carrying the drums) can push the date of Ioba further to allow for more dancing. If all the chiefly (Ileguva'u) villages are dancing, the period can be pushed up till the moon is gone (Odudubilaveka: moon nearly hiding away).

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8. Ibid.
9. Ibid, p.380.
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11. Ibid, p.381.
12. Ibid, p.376.
13. Ibid, p.377.
14. Ibid, p.388

CHAPTER TWO

Dancing is the most important activity during the Milamala period. They should be held day and night at this time. Malinowski notes a number of different dances:

1) daytime dances - "*there are two main types of dance in Boiowa: the circular dances, where the orchestra (the drums and the singers) stand in the middle, and the performers go round them in a circle, always in the opposite direction to the hands of a watch. These dances are again subdivided into:*

- (a) bisila (pandanus streamer) dances with slow movement;
- (b) kitatuva (two bunches of leaves), with a quick movement; and
- (c) kaidebu (wooden painted shield) dances with the same quick movement ... the second group of dances are the kasawaga, where only three men dance, always in imitation of animal movements." (1).

2) The night-time activities are split into (a) Karibom; (b) Bi'u. The author witnessed the Bisila and the kasawaga. No mention was ever made of kitatuva and the kaidebu was known but was very rarely done due to a lack of shields and the elders' reluctance to teach it. The bisila and the kawawaga are the dances that are generally done at Milamala.

For the Bisila dance, there are generally 1-2 singers and 2-3 drums as the 'orchestra'. The drums (kaesosau) are split into two

sizes: (1) the kupi (the large drum); (2) katunenia (little drum). The drums are made out of meku or gai wood. The older drums would have been scraped out by hand with a wallaby bone. The dancers dress up according to the occasion. It is always necessary to wear a grass skirt. The men wear it tied at their stomachs, exposing the pubic sheath and the women wear a shorter version tied at the hip.

For instance at Lapula (the final dance of Milamala) the dancers would use their best decorations and their strongest magic, whereas for a normal day dance limited herbs, scents and decorations would be used.

The Bisila dance takes its name from the pandanus streamer that is used to create movements and express the songs. The streamer is, as it suggests, from the pandanus leaf and is bleached on a fire. It is held with both hands and manipulated into different positions such as rolled up, squashed, or at full extension. The dancers move around the 'orchestra' circularly. The line of dancers are arranged so that the best dancer leads (can be male or female). After this it is generally done by height and sex (men then women). Age is of little importance and children learn from early youth. The ideal line is one that tapers from the front down and to achieve this, tall people are pushed to achieve prominence in dancing skills. The main dance leader sets the pace and atmosphere. A good dance leader is able to motivate and transform the dance.

(Plate 2 overleaf: The Bisila dance)



Each village owns a number of songs which are spread between the clan groupings. There are many variations of bisila such as logayewa songs (Kabwaku village owns one), lekolekwa songs (Yalungwa owns one) and usituma. With each song comes a distinctive difference in the movements of the bisila.

Each song is split into a number of sections, for instance:

Lekolekwa (chicken), a song owned by Yalungwa:

- (1) lekolekwa
- (2) keguyau
- (3) geltobara
- (4) oluveka
- (5) omwaliveka
- (6) obuliveka.

Each section has its own poetic history (Kavila), drum beat and bisila style. Each section in the lekolekwa may have 10-20 verses, a short drum beat (katusewa) signifies the end of section and the continuation onto a new one.

An excellent example of a Trobriand song can be found in Oceania 15, taken down and translated by Father Baldwin. Each verse tells a drama and within it is the Kavila which provides the history of the song in poetic form. Only the old people would know specifically what the references are and this would be taught to apprentices. A good illustration of the poetic form is shown below,

it is a verse from the Ogabwan section of the Usituma dance⁽²⁾:

- | | | |
|-----|-----------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. | Wógu le Sabwàni | Now I am ready, |
| 2. | Manàko O wamài | Eager for the dance, |
| 3. | Wósi kwatubulisa | For the dance you perfected, |
| 4. | Wógu le Sabwàni | Now I am ready |
| 5. | Manàka O wamài | Eager for the dance, |
| 6. | Na Vài O Kaisài | For the dance by the waves, |
| 7. | Tagéga O tuputàku | The swaying on the shore, |
| 8. | Tuwàbu bu ka sakàisa | That you gave to Tuwabu, |
| 9. | Viviña bu ku gibwàisa | That the woman did not like, |
| 10. | Wógu le sabwàni | Now I am ready, |
| 11. | Manàka O wamài | Eager for the dance. |

Lines 8 and 9 are giving the history of that particular verse. The rest is the chorus setting the scene for a particular reference.

The songs and dances themselves can come from a number of different sources. For instance, Usituma is a song that was learnt by Bolapsa in a trance at Tuma. When she awoke she taught the village the dance and that is how it spread. The lekolekwa is supposed to have come from Iwa, a nearby island. A lot of the new songs come from 'black burden'. Trobrianders would be forced to work in new places and the writing of songs would develop different place names and dance styles to reflect their travels. This is also suggested by Father Baldwin -

"with extensive vocabularies of the other languages in the Massim and North-east coast area ... a quite extensive literature could be revealed ... full of anthropological and linguistic data" (3).

The Kasawaga is a very different kind of dance and relies solely on the dancers and the drummers to express the story. Malinowski states that it is "*always in imitation of animal movements*" (4). There is more to it than that: Yalungwa has 6 types of Kasawaga -

- (1) tomadawa
- (2) siginagana
- (3) kwaku
- (4) bubusi
- (5) silita
- (6) wovela (lost from knowledge)

Tomadawa is the one that is practised the most. The dance enacts the chasing of the sea dugong (a large ocean-dwelling mammal). The real life chase involves following the mammal with canoes. It is useless spearing the animal as it makes it harder to kill. They swim up to the sea-dugong, take their pubic sheaths off and hold it over the animal's nose until it dies. The dance reflects the chase. In the dance the three men move towards the drummers, miming the chase rhythmically to the drum beats. When they reach the drummers, the sea-dugong has been killed and the dance is over. Only the best dancers partake in the kasawaga. To dance it the men would wear full traditional dress with ranking ornaments.

Before, it was mentioned that villages owned dances. These dances are either bought or composed:

"Dances are 'owned', that is, the original inventor has the right of 'producing' his dance and song in his village community. If another village takes a fancy to this song and dance, it has the right to perform it. This is done by handing a substantial payment of food and valuables ceremonially to the original village, after which the dance is taught to the new possessors" (5).

The following passage shows how Usituma spread:

"Then Kuwenaia, the chief, commanded a full performance in the village of Obwelaki ... When Kilitala of Kavataria saw this dance, he made arrangements for Tobesaula to come and teach the people of Kavataria ... Kaboka, chief of Tukwaukwa, saw the grand appearance at Kavataria and determined to have the dance" (6).

It is possible to do well out of a song or badly in an economic sense, as Baldwin shows in reference to Kadaguwai:

"it is still a sore point with Uweilasi that he has never recouped himself properly on his outlay" (7).

The dancing of the Bisila and the Kasawaga should happen every day, leading to the climax of Lapula (the last dance) which can happen just before or after Ioba (this also depends on whether the dancing season is going to carry on into Usigula). The Lapula requires full dress. This dressing and magic is applied by the Tabusia (father's sisters, their daughters and female cousins). The Tabusia apply flowers, paint, use dancing magic (wageva), and facial magic involving kaveki shells and kaydoby magic to rub away ugliness. The dancer has to look his or her best for the last dance (other adornment magic mentioned in 'Sexual Life of Savages' (8), pp.295-298). There are many variations of adornment magic. The

dancer in return for the Tabusia's help reciprocates with valuables (anything up to a clay pot or a few kina) to the extent of the help received. Many people from other villages go to watch the lapula so it is a great shame for the dancer if anything goes wrong.

In the kasawaga, the most prominent of the dances, there is special magic for drummers to keep the beat and other magic to create havoc with the beat: ketilapela - to destroy beat; kevalola - to correct beat. In 'The Sexual Life of Savages'⁽⁹⁾ Malinowski mentions uributu magic - 'to spread renown'. Unfortunately this was never confirmed by the author.

The night time dancing is the time when the young come into their own. Malinowski describes the Karibom:

"After the evening meal, the village drummers, standing in the centre of the village place (baku), beat out a slow rhythm. Soon children, old men and women, youths and maidens assemble in the central place and begin to walk round it. There is no special step, no complicated rhythms; only a slow, regular monotonous walk." (10)

Malinowski notes the part sex plays in the evening dances; but since it seems from the description given it has progressed into much more of a 'bacchanal' (11), Weiner, in this passage, describes the tapioca dance, which has reached increasing popularity with the youth of the Trobriand Islands. It was introduced at Mtawa village by Kalikitava, and is now almost accepted as a traditional dance. The tapioca plant is very common in the Trobriand Islands and is a symbol of fertility. This perhaps comes from the fact that the edible tuber is very phallic.

The Karibom now consists of two dances: (1) the Tapioca; and (2) the Karibom. Early evening is associated more with the Karibom and there is a complete change in the atmosphere and conversation: people just asking the opposite sex who they slept with the last night and whether they were available that night. As Weiner says:

"This night of sexual 'play' is decidedly indiscriminate when seen against the more usual roles governing adolescent behaviour throughout the year" (12).

If the villagers holding the Karibom have invited another village (outsiders - kakoya), then they will usually dress up and await the arrival of the other youth. They would normally enter the village as a whole group, dancing and singing. One village was known for its ability to compose songs en route to the karibom rather than singing the usual ones. Depending on the village, food is given to the visitors by the families, and this is a sign of a good Karibom. Dancing generally lasts for about 3-4 hours, and as the dance approaches the end, the Tapioca dance is usually done.

The Karibom can get very violent with boys just raping women. To protect themselves, the women avoid dark nights and occasionally take knives. The songs that are sung during the night dances are extremely sexual and the dancing increases the desires with plenty of lower groin contact (bilumapu: hip bumping) between the sexes. When the drums and the whistles (new Western toy for dances that adds atmosphere) finally stop, there may be some agreement to sleeping arrangements (although a number of pairs will have already slipped off into the bushes), such as the other village's

women remaining behind and the host's women going to the visitors' village. This is less likely to happen than it did in Malinowski's day as the jealousy of males is an increasing factor.

The songs that are sung by the youth are only ever sung during Karibom time. Different songs are sung at Gogebila and Dadodiga (Sawili Songs, 1935, p.178 ⁽¹³⁾). An example of a Karibom song is shown below:

Kemata kwisi

(rough translation)

'Kemata kwisi kakoya

'unerected penises our visitors have,

Gala ikemasi tolivalu

Never did they fuck us the hostesses.'

The whole song is sung a number of times, dancing round the circle to the beat of the Karibom. There is a large repertoire of these songs.

The other night-time activity is Bi'u:

"The favourite and most important game is a tug-of-war (bi'u). A long stout creeper is cut and an equal number of players, each standing behind the other, take hold of either half of the creeper. Usually the game starts somewhere in the middle of the village (baku)" (14).

Other villages (kakoya) are invited to partake in Bi'u. Malinowski suggests that it takes place most commonly at full moon. This is certainly the preference as it can get very rough. The author heard many stories of women being dragged off and raped in the bushes. Bi'u follows much the same pattern as the Karibom. The other villagers arrive, form the entry procession (katukwasa),

dance in and are probably fed. The villagers split up into male and female groups and swap so that the host village has the visitors' women and the male visitors have the hostesses'. They form the two teams for the tug-of-war. The game begins and the two teams pull. The winners of the pulling wait for the losers to dance back to the starting place and then they return. This game is played many times. During the game couples are constantly disappearing into the bushes and then returning.

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9. Ibid, p.303.
10. Ibid, p.211.
11. WEINER, A., The Trobrianders of Papua New Guinea, New York, Holt, Rinehart & Winston Inc, p.112.
12. Ibid, p.112.
13. MALINOWSKI, B., Coral Gardens and Their Magic, Vol 1, London Allen & Unwin, 1935, p.178.
14. MALINOWSKI, B., Op cit, 1929, p.207.

CHAPTER THREE

"The baloma is by no means entirely out of touch with the living world. He visits his native village from time to time, and he is visited by his surviving friends and relatives. Some of these latter possess the faculty of getting right into the shadowy world of spirits." (1)

Many people do have visions of spirits during Milamala. Spirits are often blamed for misfortunes such as articles disappearing. The spirits are looked after by their respective families:

"the spirits return to their own locality, they are tended by their own kindred and given offerings of food grown on their own soil." (2).

Malinowski also mentions the con-artists involved with the spirit world and the author heard many of these stories.

There is a branch of magic that Malinowski does not seem to have collected, that of Kasivila. Kasivila is the turning of the consciousness and of going to Tuma spiritually. Men and women have the magic for doing this. Unfortunately, the author was not able to note down the magic involved. It requires chewing or smoking a type of plant which invokes a trance which can last for 2-3 days. People who have undergone this and managed to make it into Tuma, come back with the same account of what happened. Malinowski supplies this account of Tuma:

"In their anticipation, Tuma is thronged with beautiful women, all ready to work hard by day and dance by night. The spirits enjoy a perpetual scented bacchanal of dancing and chanting on spacious village places or on beaches of soft sand, amid a profusion of betel nut and of green coconut." (3)

There are many stories surrounding these activities. For instance, a wife caught her husband going to Tuma and enacting love making to one of the beauties there and beat him with a stick. Another story is that of a man who went to visit his recently-departed wife in Tuma because he was so unhappy without her. He saw her with new boy-friends and was so upset and furious that when he returned he burnt all the doba that was to be used in her Lisaladabu (final mourning ceremony). The author volunteered to undergo the ritual - the topic was brought up at a development meeting of all the chiefs where the request was refused on the grounds that some people had so enjoyed their stay that they hastened their deaths to get there!

Kasivila is an integral part of Milamala, although it does bring up a slight problem of inconsistent views. For instance, all the spirits are supposed to have returned to Kiriwina during Milamala. It was explained to me that Tuma was just a nominal place in their minds, a sort of 'heaven' to compare to Western belief even though they don't have the extreme of 'hell'.

Vawoto is another aspect of Trobriand culture that is usually confined to the Milamala period. Vawoto is a large scale reciprocation of valuables such as pigs, coconuts, etc. For instance, if a village came to watch another village's dance, the elders of the dancing village might decide to 'Vawoto'. They would give away pigs, etc., to the other village. Their village would go back and make a feast for the Baloma. A few days later this same village would return the valuables and the dancing village would

make a feast. (If this happens outside of Milamala it is referred to as a 'Buritulaulo' and can lead to all sorts of trouble.)

As previously stated, Milamala increases the licentiousness of the youth and this is expressed in the night time dancing of Karibom and Bi'u. Malinowski writes of Katavausi and Ulatile expeditions to villages⁽⁴⁾. This doesn't happen anymore and to hazard a guess, this is probably why Karibom and Bi'u have changed so radically to allow for their outlet of sexual expression.

The theme of sex is explored further in this dissertation where it is taken to its logical conclusion. If more sexual intercourse occurred during Milamala as a result of night time dances, this would surely be reflected in higher birth rate figures. Unfortunately this turned out to be rather complicated to check. There is a hospital at Losuia in charge of maternity cases. However, only 18% of the pregnant women have their children at the hospital. This is for a number of reasons, the main one being fear of sorcery and the problem of clan alliances. When a woman gives birth, defecation often occurs and this would mean great shame if anyone outside of her clan saw it and told anyone else. Consequently the women who use the hospital are generally those with complications.

There are records of all the births taking place in the hospital and these include details of ages, village and any complications. One would expect to see an increase in the birth rate 9 months after after the Milamala period - in May or June.

Three years of data (1988-90) are used.

Table 1: Births in 1988-90

January-March	April-June	July-September	October-December
58	74	71	56

Table 2: Average Age of Mothers 1988-90

January-March	April-June	July-September	October-December
24.3	24.6	25.3	22.5

Table 3: Parity 1988-90

	January-March	April-June	July-September	October-December
0	22	22	20	20
1-4	18	34	37	27
5	6	10	8	5

Table One lists the number of births. These show a slight increase in the number of births from April-June which was as hypothesized. Table Two shows that the age rate for April-June is the third highest which is contrary to expectations. The night dances involve the teenage proportion of the population and one would hypothesize that the age of the mothers would be reduced as a result of increased sexual activity within this age group. The third and last table is parity. Parity is a reference to the number of children already born from a certain mother. One would expect an increase in the number of first time mothers in relation to the above-mentioned group. The results show that April-June and January-March are on a par. Overall the results are not at all conclusive and certainly not statistically conclusive. It should also be mentioned that there is doubt over the correctness of the ages listed.

Kavasa, as Malinowski states, "is a generic name for any period of competitive obligatory activity" (5). There are many types of Kavasa from a dancing one to a butia (sweet smelling flower) Kavasa. The person who sets the Kavasa (Toli kavasa) in motion is usually the headman of the village. He lays down the competition publicly and people are expected to attend to that challenge even though they don't have to accept it publicly. For instance, a Kavasa I viewed in Kabwaku had a number of competitions with prizes for the people who won, varying from a beku (traditional stone valuable) to clay pots. The challenges were started by chief Mweyoyu's nephew who is a contender for the next

chief. He emphasised that everyone should carry on working hard for themselves and for the village. He also laid down a prize for the young gardeners to win and prove themselves. After his speech, other people joined in laying down kavasas. They are usually proposed with betel nut which is laid on the ground. If the challenge is accepted publicly, the betel nut is picked up by the acceptor and shared out.

Kavasas can take place on a number of different practical levels. They can take place at the village level, or at the inter-village level, or possibly at the clan level. An inter-village level Kayasa was agreed between Obwelia and Obawada with a pig and a beku donated for the prize. The Kayasa hoped to achieve a certain level of yam production.

Kayasa's are also a springboard for any man to enter into village politics. The Tolikayasa relies on his clan's kin (keyawa) to provide assistance for his Kayasa and for this they would be paid in traditional valuables. The success of the Kayasa is a reflection of the strength of the matrilineage which has undertaken it. Also outside of the matrilineal group, it is a reflection on the ability of the village.

Kayasa emphasises 'friendly' competition within Trobriand society in comparison to 'Buritilaulo'. Malinowski mentions Buritilaulo in 'Coral Gardens and their Magic' (6). Buritilaulo is a dangerous challenge that is generally expressed in terms of long kuvi, a yam that requires a lot of skill to grow. It generally

stems from insults, although the last serious Buritulaulo evolved from the Kiriwina football competition in 1990. There was a rough game between two villages, Yalaka and Kuluwa. Insults were traded, fighting began on the pitch which led to severe discontent on both sides. On returning back to the villages, Yalaka people collected their kuvi yams and began to take them to Kuluwa. Kuluwa heard about it and met them halfway. They didn't even contest yams, they just started fighting straight away. One person died in the ensuing fighting. Eventually, the fighting was stopped and about 30 people were jailed. Weiner expresses the reasons for the fear of buritulaulo excellently:

"All parties believe that the losers having been publicly humiliated, will try to destroy the members of the other lineage through sorcery, a fear that lasts for generations." (7)

Kayasas provide the resources to hold the festivities that Kiriwina does. Dancing competitions, cricket matches and Bi'u all require communal effort for the festivities to be a success. Unfortunately the competitive side has its detractors and this is expressed when competition exceeds its mark in Buritulaulo.

(Plate 3 overleaf: laying down a kayasa)



ENDNOTES FOR CHAPTER THREE

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3. MALINOWSKI, B., Sexual Life of Savages, London, George Routledge, 1929, pp.295-298.
4. Ibid, pp.221-224, 227-231.
5. MALINOWSKI, B., Coral Gardens and their Magic, London, Allen & Unwin, 1935, p.213.
6. Ibid, p.186.
7. WEINER, A., Trobrianders of Papua New Guinea, New York, Holt, Rinehart & Winston Inc, 1987.

CHAPTER FOUR

The description of Milamala so far has given the impression that it is an annual event. It is within the Islands yet it varies from village to village according to the social and political situation. As stated in the Introduction, Yalungwa had no Milamala the year I was there. This was mainly due to the fact that Chief Nalubutau's younger brother unexpectedly died, which was an enormous shock to him. There were other factors such as Chief Nalubutau's age and reluctance to organise dances and a mediocre harvest season. The net result was the cancellation of Milamala and the plunging into mourning.

The mourning was symbolised by the placing of coconut branches round the central area of the village (baku). When a village enters into mourning, no events may take place. Milamala is effectively cancelled. Only one other village in the Kilivila region held a Milamala celebration, and that was Kabwaku (Luia being in the Kuboma region). The other villages in the region held no dances for the spirits (yet attended Kubwaku's) even Omarakana. Chief Nalubutau is very close to Chief Pulyasi and it is speculated that Omarakana halted any dancing festivities as a sign of respect for Nalubutau's mourning. This is also apparently the reason why Kabwaku, led by Chief Mweyoyu of the Toliwaga clan and ancestral enemies of the Tabalu chiefs (based at Omarakana) held a Karibom. The other reason for the lack of harvest festivities was a bad gardening season.

All festivities have to be planned in advance. Kayasa's have to be organised to produce the resources. Chiefs (Tolikayasas) have to know and calculate what resources should be available to make festivities a success. Other factors have to be taken into account: for a Karibom - are there enough youths to dance, and is there a leader amongst them to shoulder part of the organisation? Chiefs might also use a Karibom to show off a pretty young niece for prospective marriage. Milamala represents the return of the spirits yet to have a Karibom, Bi'u and day dances necessitates political goodwill in all village factions.

Malinowski predicted that

"at the death of the present Paramount Chief (Touluwa) ... a complete disorganisation is sure to take place among the natives of the Trobriands, and is certain to be followed by a gradual disintegration and extinction of the race"(1).

This dire prophecy never happened.

Since the Kabisawali movement (2) and its counter-movement (3), TK, Trobriand politics has resumed a less radical approach. The chiefs now form a part of the Kiriwinan constitution and have more power in the running of the Island. Outside of this legitimate power, they still own large amounts of land through their matrilineages, and power through sorcery.

Change is happening in the amount of control the chiefs have, but at a slow pace. The Government has introduced a National Development Fund distributed through members of its Assembly. This

is attempting to develop Kiriwina. The money, however, depends largely upon the chiefs and their supporters who vote politicians into power. Thus, instead of taking real power from the chiefs, the Fund has just driven it underground into the world of political bickering.

Outside of the political realm, change has been happening in Myth. For instance, in Myth, two quotes are provided to show the former views of elders and the present view.

1) *"The Tabalu, with members of other dala, came out of the ground at a spot called 'obukula' near the northern village of Labai" (3).*

2) *Vanoi said "old men always told of the Tabalu coming out of the ground, but I know there is only dirt in the ground. Maybe they came by canoe" (4).*

The second opinion was again re-affirmed by a statement from Tolosi, the old man from labai whose clan traditionally look after the caves. He said that the ancestors came from Fiji. After God punished people in Sodom and Gomorrah, some went to Fiji and from there to the Trobriands. Two canoes left from Fiji, one sank on the way and the other reached the Trobriand Islands. On arrival they went into the caves.

This new representation is significantly changed from the old idea of arriving from the earth. The mission influence over a long period seems to be having its required effect. Mission

influence is also evident in the way a number of young people used to describe Tuma. They described it in reference to heaven. From the young people the author spoke to there is less enthusiasm to the idea of Tuma. However, the decrease in the concept of Tuma is compatible with the Christian ideals of heaven. This lack of enthusiasm and belief in Tuma did not really seem to affect the Milamala period as such, as they celebrated it with zeal.

The Milamala period itself is changing. The 'Ulaboda' ceremony was omitted in the ceremony at Kabwaku. It seems that the village elders 'forgot' about it, and some people the author asked didn't even know about it.

Mwaligilagi, the village entrusted to deliver news of the dates when Katukwala and Ulaboda should begin, has little of the knowledge left and does not perform its traditional role vis-à-vis letting the Paramount Chief know when to start Katukwala and Ulaboda. This task is now performed by Chief Nalubutau who advised the Paramount Chief Pulyasi on these matters. In fact a number of villages are taking it into their own hands and starting the ceremonies when they see fit.

Outside of the ritual element in Milamala the dances and festivities are changing. As previously noted, the introduction of the Tapioca dance has radically changed Kariboms in comparison to Malinowski's descriptions. Dances themselves are forgotten as the elders die and do not pass on the often elaborate songs with hundreds of verses and the meanings of the chorus.

Trobrianders have a history of resisting change. As Weiner says:

"Tradition wins out despite people's willingness to try something new. Withstanding more than a century of Western influences, Trobriand society has proved far more resilient to change than ever Malinowski believed possible. (7).

Change is taking place at a much more subtle pace. Radical change has not yet defeated Trobriand society, yet it is time that seems to be changing the ideals of tradition. Once the traditional changes to the new but is still encompassed under traditional, significant change has happened. As is shown in the example of the origin Myth, Christianity is expressed in a myth that originally had no such reference. This myth was supposed to have come from one of the most reliable sources in tradition on the Island, yet it has changed so much that Christian history is accepted within it. This is not meant to be a pining for the good old days, but a reflection on how change seems to be setting in at the heart of society.

'Kabisawali' seems to be rearing its head again as John Kasaipwalova has new ideas of development for the Island. The latest plan is a 40 million kina project. This is to encompass a number of hotels on the Island. Outside of hotels, a new infrastructure of roads is planned and a radical new plan for education, health and social organisation. These new facilities are expected to prepare the Trobrianders for the cultural change that will surely follow. When we left the Islands, the plan was in full flow with surprisingly little resistance. John Kasaipwalova has settled

his differences with Lepani Watson, former leader of the TK movement and a majority of people on the Island seem to be behind the project. Obviously if this current plan goes forward then Milamala will change, to what extent it is impossible to forecast.

ENDNOTES FOR CHAPTER FOUR

1. AUSTIN, L., Oceania 16, 'Cultural Changes in Kiriwina', 1945-46, p.15.
2. MAY, R. J., (ed), Micronationalist Movements in Papua New Guinea, Canberra, Australian National University, 1982.
3. WEINER, A., Women of Value, Men of Renown, Austin, University of Texas Press, 1976, p.46.
4. Ibid, p.47.
5. Ibid, p.25.

CONCLUSION

Malinowski's work on the period of Milamala contains serious omissions which he did acknowledge to some extent. This, the author believes, is due to the era from which Malinowski came. The material Malinowski studied fitted into the theories that he was propounding as Young wrote, "*all too often he brought Trobriand Man to life only to parade him as the embodiment of a theory, and finally to kill him off as a pastiche of his own ideas.*" (1). Trobriand culture was almost slotted around Malinowski's functionalist theory.

Malinowski's scientific theory of culture does not adequately explain Milamala. Other anthropologists have proposed more intuitive theories. Van Gennep in 1908 was the first anthropologist to notice the importance of rites as indicators and vehicles of transition from one sociocultural state and status to another. Van Gennep distinguished three stages:

- "1) *Separation from ordinary life;*
- 2) *Margin or limen*
- 3) *Re-aggregation, when they are ritually returned to secular or mundane life"* (2)

The Milamala period falls approximately within these boundaries. Katukuala signifies the separation from ordinary life into a different phase. The Limen phase consists of the period from the end of Katukuala to the beginning of Ioba. The end of Ioba signifies the return to secular or mundane life.

Van Gennep categorised these rites into periods of life changes and at crucial turning points of the year. Milamala is an example of the latter:

"The latter were performed for collectivities, were public in character, and often portrayed reversals or inversions of status or confusion of everyday categories" (3)

The middle stage, liminality, means

"a state or process which is betwixt-and-between the normal day-to-day culture and social states and processes of getting and spending, preserving law and order, and registering structural status. (4)

This idea of liminality has been taken further by other anthropologists. Leach has looked at the types of ritual behaviour, dividing them into: (1) formality; (2) masquerade; and (3) role reversal. Formality and masquerade are seen as opposites and role reversal is seen in opposition to secular life. Leach has suggested an intimate structure between rite and anti-rite. There are many readily available examples of this, such as carnival and New Year's Eve in Scotland. The period of Milamala can be seen in terms of this. Formality is shown through the rites of Katukuala and Ioba. Masquerade can be seen in the night dances of Bi'u and Karimbom. Role reversal could also be seen in this as only the youth participate in the revelry, the adults being almost totally excluded. Ioba also exhibits a form of role reversal in the sense that the youth beat away the spirits and practically prohibit the adults from taking part. The next day pen ioba takes place and this

is another example of role reversal as the women take over in the ritual sphere. These contrasting dichotomies of formality vs masquerade and role reversal vs the secular are present at Milamala. The only problem in attaching this theoretical background to Milamala is the role of the youth. From the dissertation it is seen that they are really the only ones in the Limen phase. The adults do not participate in the bacchanal night dances which are representative of the masquerade. Also the time limit seems to be excessive if Milamala is compared with other events that have been analysed in such terms. They are never more than a day or two and Milamala is a whole month. This is the weak link in analysing Milamala in terms of contrasting dichotomies within Van Gennep's hypothesis of public liminality.

Turner has developed the idea of public liminality further, incorporating it into an evolutionary scheme such that modern society's liminality is seen within performative arts and carnival is seen as a proto-feudal form of liminality. The author does not agree with her in this aspect but Turner has also analysed liminality in relation to change and of remodelling the social reality. This can be seen in the way that up and coming chiefs organise and take over the ritual sphere in Milamala. Milamala, the author believes, fits comfortably into Leach's thesis and benefits from Turner's analysis.

ENDNOTES FOR CONCLUSION

1. YOUNG, M. W., The Ethnography of Malinowski, London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979, p.10.
2. TURNER, V., Process, Performance and Pilgrimage, New Dehli, Concept Publishing Co, 1979, p.95.
3. Ibid, p.95.
4. Ibid, p.94.

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