

Fourth
FIELDWORK REPORT

Kiriwina, Trobriand Islands

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By

H. A. Powell, B.A.

Research student of

The Royal Anthropological Institute,

Horniman Scholarship Trust,

London,

and

The Australian national University,

Canberra

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I Introduction:

I do not intend in this final Field report to attempt to survey all the work of the past three months. I wish rather to make a few general observations on special topics. The last three months have been spent in continuing investigations of the affairs of the five villages situated around Omarakana. I gave up the idea of spending short periods at other sites, as it seemed to me that it would be more profitable to complete a survey of the year's events here at Omarakana as far as I could. I now have been here continually since the end of August, with break of three days when I visited the islands of Simsim and Kawa, with Mr. Ralph Lumley who was making a trading trip to them. This was in the nature of a Christmas holiday, but though we were at these islands for only a few hours, they are so small and their populations so sparse that I was able even in that short time to make a superficial census, of clans and subclans represented etc., and the islands relation in the exchanges of various types with the mainland. However I wish in this report to try to make a brief survey of present political situation in Kiriwina, and a further brief statement of the main features of the present economy as I see it.

II Political Situation.

a/ The traditional role and authority of the Chiefs.

It is to my mind quite misleading to refer to Mitakata of Omarakana as the paramount chief of the Trobriands as do most persons concerned with the affairs of the islands. The term implies that he has direct control and authority over the other Chiefs and headman in his own right, and this is not true.

The traditional basis of the preeminence of the Tabalu, Mitakata's subclan, in the eyes of the Kiriwinans themselves, is their magical power. Malinowski calls it *Waygigi*: but this name applies only to one part of that - that which controls to some extent the sun. There is another magic for rain, and minor spells that cause insects and disease to attack one's crops. Taken all

together these control the food resources of the islands, it would be used by the chief to cause famine and death in the villages, if he considered himself slighted or otherwise injured by their inhabitants. For this reason, in the olden times nearly every village near to Omarakana, and most of the main villages at a distance, would supply the Chiefs of Omarakana with wives; for having established themselves as the relatives in law of the most dangerous man in the Trobriands, he would be bound to look after them, as they were bound to garden for him and to "help" him in other ways. Mythological claims as to the order of precedence in emergence, and how the Tabalu came to Omarakana etc., together with the tabus they observe and that are observed in their presence by

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lesser-known notabilities and commoners reflect and reinforce the fear and awe in which the Tabalu chiefs are held. It was partly this I had in mind when in the earlier report I said that I was reminded of a curtailed Polynesian tabu hierarchy. I have frequently heard Mitakata referred to as "Mother of Kiriwina" (the term mother - *inala Kiriwila*- of course reflects the matrilineal orientation of the society). This raises interesting possibilities of speculations about the nature of the mother's role in Kiriwina, but I do not propose to go into that here. But it should be noted that this does not involve ritual of a religious nature as does the position of the Chiefs some of the East African tribes. Mitakata has no obligation to perform rites to ensure good crops; he may be approached by particular communities at different times to help their crops by giving - or making- extra rain or sun, but he has to be paid for it if he does. The point is that he can harm if he wants to, not that he has a duty to benefit; and it is for the former reason that his ancestors were well supplied with wives in olden days. Further in contrast to e.g. the later heads of the Zulu, he has no direct authority over the lives or even the activities of other men, nor so far as I

can see did his ancestors ever have such authority. Essentially the role of the Tabalu chiefs, and that of the lower ranking heads of other sub lineages seems to have been traditionally basically the same as that of any other husband to his wives or in the case of commoners wife's relatives; they had to supply yam food at harvest time to his wife storehouse, and thus to his, and they were expected to help him in any major enterprise he had on hand. But he could no more command these services or anything else than could, or can, husbands these days, and they had to be paid for in traditional ways. But, because he had so many wives, and because these were usually gardened for by the senior members of their subclans, who themselves were also in a position to call in more help than juniors, the amount of the Tabalu's resources in amounts of foodstuff accumulated and numbers of persons upon whom he could call for assistance, for which he could pay, was far and away greater than the resources of any other single person in the islands. He was thus in a position to exert indirect pressure on his relatives in law, and because of his accumulated resources on

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other members of the community as well, by helping his own in-laws against them or in some cases by employing sorcerers and so on.

In all this however he was not fundamentally different from the meanest of his subjects; everyone possesses some amount of magic of one sort and another, and everyone is thus a repository of the same sort of powers as the Tabalu - but the Tabalu's magic is far the most dangerous and potent. Everyone has relatives in law upon whom one can call for help in one's enterprises, but the Tabalu's are far more numerous and important than the ordinary persons. Everyone who is regarded as a responsible citizen has the right to speak in the debates of village

affairs - but the Tabalu's speech comes last. In the matter of law and disputes, the Tabalu chief had no status other than that of an arbitrator ; i.e. he could not detail persons to enforce his decisions; or rather opinions. But he and his supporters could often make life uncomfortable for such as defied his wishes, and in any case the tendency is for the sub clans of married people to become pretty closely bound together by mutual economic and other obligations, so that it often becomes difficult for one to act without the other. Thus it wouldn't in any case be easy for his relatives in law to disregard his wishes -but conversely any course of action which the Tabalu might contemplate would have to be assessed against the various claims of his different groups of relatives in law. But I repeat again- the Tabalu's influence was influence, however strong, and not direct authority; and if as happened since the white man's government came the material resources diminish, the influence dissolves along with them. The Tabalu chiefs could not command man except in so far as they commanded resources. (I should have explained earlier that I am using the term "the Tabalu" rather in the sense that the Scots use such a term as the "Mcleod" - for the senior man of the sub lineage.) So much for a brief and incomplete outline of the basis of the authority of the Tabalu. But it must be remembered that although he had theoretically very little direct authority over people, in practice he would have a great deal of power; not the least of the reason being that he could through his relatives in law command a bigger following in a quarrel or a fight than any other single person- provided that he had not alienated his in-laws, as sometimes happened. It may be noted

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that in prehistoric times - the Dark Times long ago, as the natives call them - a good proportion of the working year was spent in fighting of one sort and another; so much so that this, together with the difficulty of clearing with the poor stone tools locally available, meant that gardens were

much smaller than at present, and the wealth of the community and consequently of its leading citizens, was correspondingly less, though the leaders were proportionately equally wealthy compared with the rank-and-file. Then as now anyone could in theory build a *kula* canoe, for example, who could afford it, but only a leader could afford the expense. Later, even in Malinowski's time, with the greater wealth available owing to the introduction of metal tools and the cessation of warfare, any industrious village can accumulate enough resources to build if it wishes.

Nowadays two major factors affect the Tabalu's position. Firstly, and fundamentally the more important, the natives know that people convicted of sorcery can be imprisoned, and they, including Mitakata regard the "famine magic" as a form of sorcery. Therefore they say, if Mitakata were known to be practicing this magic- and I understand it cannot be practiced secretly as it involves too great preparations - we should tell the government and summons Mitakata and he would be jailed. Therefore we are no longer so much afraid of him as our ancestors were of Numakala and the others. At the same time they know- or believe that if a famine did occur, the government would feed the people over the crisis. For this reason 4/5 of the communities which used to supply wives to Mitakata's ancestors no longer supply them to him. The second factor, which supports this, is the hostility of the missions, particularly the Methodists, to polygamy. This has meant the loss of the greater part of the resources of the Tabalu. It has also affected the positions of the lesser chiefs and headmen, whose positions were similarly based and maintained. It is this that underlies the fact that the loss of following of the Tabalu has not resulted in the gain of the lesser leaders, but in the more general process of villages becoming "independent", in the sense that they garden for themselves. Briefly the ancient power of the chiefs of the

Trobriands derived from there being as it were plutocratic; and they were plutocrats in virtue of their magical powers, traditional position in society, and so on.

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b/ Present position of the Chiefs

I have already mentioned the two major factors, which add up to one -the ending of polygamy. At the end of the war a conference was called at Misima to which were summoned the leading personages of Kiriwina and other communities. It was called by the then district officer, and was, so far as I can ascertain, designed to show the natives what could be attained for the benefit of their people generally if they could cooperate with the authorities, and to discuss village affairs in general. I have not yet been able to find any record of this conference at Losuia but its findings have been related to me by my informants and confirmed by native officials still in the government service at Losuia. One of the main decisions reached in regard to the Trobriands in particular seems to have been that after the present generation of leaders dies out there shall be no more polygamy. This was agreed to by the Kiriwinians including Mitakata. If it actually comes about, it means that after the death of the present chiefs the old basis of authority and prestige will disappear. The chief of Omarakana will be no more wealthy than any important head of a subclan. In fact Mitakata's wives come from a much more restricted area than did even those of To'uluwa, as I said in an earlier report. Furthermore, the people of even the villages immediately around Omarakana, the five villages I have been studying, openly say that they have had enough of gardening for the chief, and they want to garden for themselves. They are going to go on looking after Mitakata till he dies, they say, but his likely successor Vanoi will have only one wife. (He says he only wants one himself, and that he only wants one man's food in his store, and so on). Mitakata himself is well enough aware of the position, and has described himself to

me as the last of the Guyaus - the real chiefs. He has no illusions either about his present position, and has told me also that if the government did not support him he would be "nothing". At the same time he does not want to lose what little traditional support he has left. At the same time the government is trying to use him as an instrument of indirect rule. Certain types of dispute have been delegated to him as chief of the islands to inquire into and settle, and the government has decreed that his findings must be observed as must those of any European court. The disputes which he hears are those involving native custom -

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mainly disputes of ownership or inheritance, and so on. This is a good system in theory, but -

a/ since by far most of the villages and communities are no longer attached to Mitakata through marriage, their affairs are no longer "his business" in native eyes, and their problems are either settled by discussion among themselves which is of course all right, or else the stronger side gets its way, which may not be, or the cases are taken to the government at Losuia, which refers them to Mitakata. In the latter case as often as not that is the end of the matter; the case is not followed up, and one party or the other is defeated.

b/ Those cases which are spontaneously taken to him usually involve one or another of his remaining groups of relatives in law. As stated above he wishes to retain what traditional prestige he has left, and he cannot afford to risk offending his in-laws; so if only one party is so related to him the result is more or less a foregone conclusion, and the other nine times out of 10 simply ignores the result if it is strong enough. Where on the other hand both parties are related to the Chief, he

often cannot give any verdict that will not alienate one party or the other, so he "cuts off" or ends the case. Both these type of result I have seen in cases that have occurred at Omarakana. The latter involved the right to the use of names; Mitakata was in doubt and rather than offend either party he said that neither should use the names at all. Which satisfied no one.

c/ As I have tried briefly to show above, apart from his influence as a relative in law and prestige and wealth in magical powers, the Paramount Chief has in native eyes no authority to do more than pass an opinion; it is weighty, because of his prestige and reputed knowledge of tradition and myth, but no more binding than the opinion of any other senior headman. The government has acquiesced in the loss of the chiefs native basis of authority, but it still calls him the Chief. He isn't, it in Kiriwinan terms, anymore, to the great majority of the population, because he no longer has the traditional trappings of Kiriwinan chieftaincy - or rather, because they have seen him and his ancestors recently lose most of them, and because they know that Mitakata is losing even what little he had at first. At the same time the government tells the

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natives that they must obey him, as the representative of the government - and the councillors and village police to. And that if they don't obey them, they will go to jail. This is of course divergent from the native way of doing things; there seems to be no traditional way of punishing wrongdoers, mainly because there was no defined standard of reference of right and wrong. What constitutes right and wrong to the Kiriwinan is I believe what appears to him inexpedient in the

given circumstances. (I cannot go into this in detail here, lack of any definite standard- would seem to me to explain the ease with which a native will reverse his point of view in a matter of minutes; say one thing and do the opposite; use a man's best friend to put a spell on him, and approve the friend for what we should call the betrayal; and so on, so that most Europeans seem to consider these people either utter idiots or out and out scoundrels. They are neither; they merely do what seems to fit the need of the moment, and this seems to justify whatever they do.) You are traditionally at liberty to harm anyone other than a relative or, to some degree, an in law, why shouldn't you harm a stranger, who has no claims on you, if it is to your benefit immediately, and you and yours will not be called to account by his relatives, or are stronger than they are? If it ever occurred to a Kiriwinan to put the situation to words I think he would say something like this: -

“In hearing a case the chief (or other spokesman) tries to give an opinion which will reconcile the claims of both parties. He does so because both parties are traditionally his people, and it is to his own advantage to keep them together. But if we do not agree with his findings and we can get away with it, we ignore it, because it is not to our interest to abide by it. The government says that some things we must not do, and some we must. Why? Because it is to the government's interest, for some reason we don't know, that we should do so. But if it is not to our own interest, and we think, and if we can get away with it, why should we listen to the government anymore than to the chief?”

c/ The Law and the Native.

The plain fact is that after fifty years of European rule the average Kiriwinian has no idea of what lies behind the law of the government. That this is so is instanced by two cases of fighting of recent occurrence. In one case a man was killed

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? [word/s missing] of fighting a recent occurrence. In one case a man was killed; in the other bloodshed was averted by the combined efforts of the village councillors and police, Mitakata and the ethnographer. But if the last name had not intervened it is quite possible that a man might have been killed because the councillors etc. would've hesitated to prevent their relatives doing what they wanted to do. Village policeman and councillors are chosen by villagers and names submitted to government for confirmation; nine times out of 10 those elected are sublineage heads, and their kinship obligations etc. ?[illegible hand written word] conflict with governmental duties to the detriment of latter. I heard frequent discussion of both cases, besides being personally involved in the latter. Inevitably the question of why were people punished by Government arose; in no case did I hear the real, very simple reason given; that the government forbids fighting, whether or not it involves bloodshed. The reasons suggested included that they fought on a Sunday that they fought in the village, not in the roads that the fight took place on the day after the injury that precipitated it was sustained, not on the same day that, in the case in which I was concerned, one of the men who instigated the fight had failed to deliver a letter I gave him for the Medical Assistant at Losuia and so on. In all cases, Mitakata himself, the councillors and policeman, and of course the man in the street (or bush) said or implied that if one or another of these and similar conditions had not been involved the Government would not have taken action, because the fights were not just fights, they were "squaring", a word which the natives have adopted, and the government had no objection to "squaring" fights as such. This

sort of ignorance and confusion is not confined to matters of law. And yet the Trobriands have been under a white administration for upwards of 50 years. The reason is in my opinion that the belated attempt to instigate indirect rule was based on a false estimate of the native role of the Chiefs and headmen; and that it was useless to expect people to understand and administer white law when they had no comparable concept of their own- i.e. of set standards of right and wrong, infringement of which would be punished by as it were an impersonal force. The result is that today the administration and its native servants largely fall between two stools of

- a/ wishing to introduce systems of values into a community which had nothing approaching them in its own outlook
- b/ trying to do this through social institutions which

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are already from other causes moribund, and which in any case are associated in the minds of the natives with attitudes and practices which are largely in conflict with those which the administration is trying to instill.

The result is confusion and misunderstanding in the mind of the native, and frustration and misunderstanding in that of the Government servant. And possibly, one must admit, all three in that of the anthropologists. Certainly the remarks above made seem to be at variance with the remarks on page 13 of my last report with regard to the native attitude to the Government's decrees. But the same thing is true here as applies in the matters e.g. settled by "decree" of the ancestors, to which I also referred in the same report. These, in broad outline, are not disputed or queried. But the content of the myths that established rights to land, for example are always open to dispute, since they have never been written down and codified; and even if they had been it is

primarily their application in particular cases that is queried; it is at this level that the principle of expediency, if I may so call it, operates. So it is with the Government's law; no one disputes the existence of the Government, any more than a right-thinking Kiriwinan disputes the fact that his ancestors did emerge from holes in the ground, or that the Government forbids fighting, any more than that the ancestors forbade incest within the clan. But the Kiriwinan has his own ideas to when is incest not incest; and he has his own ideas as to when is a fight not a fight. And it remains to be convinced of the white man's superior knowledge in such matters.

(Note 2 above - section a/ page 6- Mitakata has no Government conferred authority in cases of adultery; they should all go to Losuia. But cases are quite often referred to him for arbitration unofficially. His authority from the government is confined to the settling of disputes over land, coconut and areca palm ownership - which largely turn on inheritance and traditional claims.)

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I have referred more than once to the relation between the Tabalu and the lower ranking chiefs and headman . In some ways I find the modern Kiriwinan situation analogous to that of Royalty and the Peers of the realm and so on in modern England. I do not want to follow all analogy here, it would be misleading of course to pursue it closely. But it seems to me that the pre-European status of the Tabalu and lesser chiefs was to some extent analogous to that of the medieval aristocracy, but only to a limited extent. The natives make much of the distinction between 'the chief (the Tabalu)', the chieftains - *GWEGUYAU*" - the "TOLIWAGA", who are superior, commoners (cf. Baronets and Knights). But it must be borne in mind that in our own hierarchy there is a specific condition that confers that status on persons, and which they do not share with

other persons; that is that one has to be borne into the Royal Family: and if one is then one is fundamentally different in some way from everyone. In Kiriwina one has to be borne into the appropriate subclan to be a *Guyau* and so on. But apart from this there is no characteristics of these ranks which they do not share with everyone else: they are preeminent because they have such characteristics to a greater extent e.g. relatives in law, or in a higher and more dangerous degree e.g. magic than other people. The Tabalu's pre-eminence and dangerousness in such respects is not open to challenge anywhere in Kiriwina, or indeed the whole of Boyowa, but this does not give him personal authority over the area. The lower chiefs and *toliwaga* in the olden times supplied the Tabalu with wives, as did the leading man in all the main communities for the reasons outlined earlier. But this did not of itself make them subservient to the will of the Tabalu in any sense, though they were expected to cooperate with him. It is of interest to note that the Tabalu's traditional enemy is the *Toliwaga* headman of *Wakaisa*, a village near *Omarakana*. This notability was generally regarded I believe as the runner up to the Tabalu - not in magical powers or myth; in both respects his subclan is quite inferior- but in power, which in his case was, and is today, based on force, rather than material resources, in which he was of course always inferior, since he had far fewer wives than the Tabalu. He and anyone else was traditionally perfectly at liberty to challenge the authority of the Tabalu, and as often as not he prevailed in the trials of strength. But if he had ever tried to usurp the

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magical prerogatives and traditional prestige of the Tabalu he would simply have been ridiculed. The Tabalu always returned eventually to *Omarakana* and resumed their role as "Mother of Kiriwina". But this indicates as I have tried to show that the mother was not the mistress in an authoritarian sense; and that force without traditional prestige is also recognized, for the

Toliwaga was not generally reprobated for attacking the Mother. It may even be that here Force was playing some sort of complementary role to traditional prestige- but that is pure speculation. The lower ranking chieftains shared this traditional prestige to some extent, and themselves had multiple wives, as did the Toliwaga; but their polygamy was rather a matter of temporary expediency than the long-term policy pursued in regard to the Tabalu, to whose clan some of them belonged. (It should be remembered that the **clan** is exogamous, and that it is within the sub-clan that the rank hierarchy is inherited. Those sub chiefs of Mitakata's , e.g. the Tabalu *Gumguyau* of Olivilevi, whose house is now extinct, would make the Tabalu annual presents as head of their own sub-clan; lesser chiefs and commoner headman of the Tabalu's own clan - the Malasi - would be attached by a recognized "legal fiction" to the senior wife of the Tabalu, and would garden "for" her, though her clan would be different, and in this context would generally be regarded as her relatives; while sub chiefs and headman of other clans would of course supply wives and garden for them.) This is so today in the case of the Malasi headman of Youlawtou. Thus the wives of the Tabalu would normally be replaced as they died or were divorced, even to the extent of supplying a man, called the male wife - *Tokwava*" - if no eligible female were available. The defunct wives of lesser chiefs might or might not be, depending on the circumstances. In the case of the Toliwaga of Wakaisa , the initiative rested with him; he made a formal request for a wife, which amounted to "give me another wife - or else!" This request, and its having been unsatisfactorily responded to, seems often to have been the precipitating factor in fights between the Tabalu and the Toliwaga.

To revert more directly to the matter of the authority of the chiefs and headman - I said on page 6 par. c/ that this is not binding. Traditionally it is not, in the sense that such pronouncements were

not obeyed simply because the chief or headman qua chief or headman had made them. They obeyed if at all because the chief and headman- in the sense of lineage head, be it noted,

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not of the government appointee - acts as the mouthpiece of public opinion, and it is diffuse social sanctions, operating largely through public opinion, that bear on the man who because of his own interest tries to ignore or disobey. The system, if it can be so-called, is common in primitive communities; but I think that the combination of this with a developed social rank system is not common, and could be taken as further support for those who regard Kiriwinan as intermediate between Papuan and Polynesian social organization.

But the way in which the government appointed village headmen, or councillors or policemen (who incidentally in Kiriwina is often a senior man of the owning sublineage in the village) works differs fundamentally from the native system. The villager is ready enough to accept a councillor and policeman's decision as the mouthpiece of his fellows in the community; or in the case of the non-official orders of such people- which are many- he will often obey through fear, as the Tabalu and others were obeyed at times - fear of sorcery, which the chief or councillor, as rich men, can command, if they do not know it themselves; or of direct physical violence by the supporters of such rich man- their own relatives and their in-laws etc. But in general public opinion, as evident from the matter of fighting before mentioned, so far as government laws are concerned, is at best neutral, and the only efficient sanction is fear - of gaol, or other direct punishment. So if an individual thinks he can get away with it he will disobey the law without any sense of wrongdoing; with in fact general approval, since the law of the government is not the result of the discussions and practices of the Kiriwinans and their ancestors.

The difference may be expressed as that between the decision that crystallizes within the community or individual, and the decree that is imposed upon it or him from without. The former is far more effective. It should be noted that the Paramount chief of the East and West African "Kingdoms" performs a social role the Kiriwinan counterpart of which is not that of a so-called Paramount chief, but that of the government. So it is not surprising at least to the writer that a system that works well in West Africa does not work in Kiriwina.

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Note on the use of Force in Kiriwina.

The socially approved method of carrying through one's enterprises or securing one's own way is that of utilizing and manipulating one's kinship and other socially approved rights - those that derive from economic relationships etc. Although the basis of the influence of the Tabalu lies in fear, the mechanism which this fear underlies is polygamy, and it is perfectly proper for a man who has a lot of wives to have a lot of influence. But this influence sooner or later proves an inadequate to securing his and his close followers ends, as they come into serious conflict with those of his followers, and at this point the Tabalu and other persons in a similar position fall back upon direct coercion; under this heading can be included the employment of sorcerers as well as gangs of "bullies" against individuals and at a higher level, of warfare against communities. The effectiveness of such methods, when they cannot be met with superior force, is obviously recognized; but since their employment disrupts and denies the efficiency of the system of reciprocal obligations, it is socially disapproved, and a man who resorts to such methods is assumed to be doing so because he is trying to short-circuit the "legal" method. the Tabalu have a "legal" right to their great influence, but the Toliwaga of Wakaisa and others are in and equivocal position, since his influence is based directly on the use of force. Now I believe

that a major reason for the failure of the Kiriwinans to respond to Government authority is that it seems to them that is based on violence - e.g. armed police and the gaol - rather than the use of what to them constitute "legal" mechanisms; its position is comparable to that of the Toliwaga, rather than that of the Tabalu; and in saying that they will gaol people who disobey what powers they confer on the Tabalu, they are tarring the latter with the brush of the Toliwaga. This also helps to render ineffective the appointment of the villagers as government officials. They tend to either avoid exercising what to them seems arbitrary authority if they have a Kiriwinan conscious, or they use such powers to further their own ends as the Toliwaga uses force to further his, and thus get the government into disrepute.

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III Economics.

The most striking thing about Kiriwinan economy at present is that it is still traditionally Kiriwinan; the main commodity, indeed the basic commodity, remains the yam, and it is still handled and disposed of in the traditional way, and through traditional channels. One might go further and say that so far from altering the economy of the Trobriands in any fundamental way, the introduction of European goods and tools has so far intensified it.

Malinowski says that one of the most important function of the chiefs and headman in the prehistoric times was that of the communal bank and financier. I have had it frequently borne in upon me that the one benefit of which the Kiriwinan is really conscious is being owed to the

European, for which he is grateful, is that of the intensification of gardening, as mentioned above - the introduction of metal tools and the stopping of warfare, both of which led to a very great increase in the amount of land under cultivation by the individual and of its yield. The native habit of referring to the prehistoric times as the Dark Times Long Ago has no reference to what we generally regard as a process of enlightenment, but to the fact that the margin of survival was actually small in the olden days and famines relatively frequent. All major economic undertakings have to be paid for, as Malinowski stresses. I think in the olden times it was not so much that such undertakings were forbidden to the majority of people in principle, as that it was forbidden to compete in wealth with the higher ranks of the community. So that the majority of people simply could not afford to finance, for example, dances, or the *Kula*. The reason is not so much perhaps that the cost of goods - e.g. a *masawa* canoe - was high; if that had been the reason the price level so to speak would have adjusted itself. The critical point is that these undertakings involve the services at various stages of large numbers of helpers and specialists all of whom have to be paid - i.e. fed primarily - by the person responsible for the undertaking. Further as I said earlier the amounts of food available for giving to the sisters husband's relative was much smaller. So that the ordinary man, or even the senior man in a small village, simply could not raise enough capital to finance major undertaking, especially as in

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most cases he would either be himself gardening for the Tabalu, or helping, in the sense of gardening for, someone who was. The *Kula* was traditionally forbidden to the commoners. I am inclined to believe that in fact if not in theory, the commoner was also unable to garden ordinarily for his own sister's relatives in law; that all had to help their senior relatives to garden for theirs; and as the senior relatives usually gardened directly or indirectly for the Tabalu, and to

some extent for such of their in-laws as were lesser notabilities, most if not at times all of the “*urigubu*” or marriage gift portion of the harvest went to the notabilities, and that the average commoner had only enough for himself and his own family, while he received from his wife's relatives only a token present, if any at all, since they also were in the same boat.

The main channels or institutions through which the basic commodity of Kiriwinan economy are redistributed art, in the order of importance in which my own observations have led me to place them (i.e. judging them by the quantities of yam food that are distributed by each means, not by the importance of the transaction in native eyes, which is not easy to assess) are:-

1. *Sagalis* or funeral rites
2. *Urigubu* - the marriage gifts from wife's to husband's subclan
3. Payments and presents along with other kinship alignments - e.g. the *Pokala* (see my third field report section IV)
4. Dance- and cricket-feasts.
5. The *Kula*- including canoe building, entertaining of partners etc.
6. Native trade - e.g. *Wasi* and *Vava* purchases of fish and other commodities.
7. Sale to Europeans.

This does not imply that fresh supplies would be involved in each transaction. The same yam might go through all the stages - but not in the hands of the same owner. It is apparently a sign of poverty to use a yam received as part of a *sagali* to meet one's own *sagali* obligations; similarly for *Urigubu* - this is definitely tabu. But I can use yams I receive as *urigubu* when I make a *sagali*, and what I receive as either I can use to buy fish with. The limitations are often

practical as well as "bad form";

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the meeting of one's marriage obligations is the first thing one does with the new crop, and to use yams for this purpose that had already changed hands in a *sagali* would mean that they were last year's, and old. So yams that have been *sagali*ed cannot be used for purposes of *urigubu*.

To revert to my original theme - the introduction of iron tools and peace by the whites led to an intensification of all these activities - except of course no. 7, which it initiated. More - it made it possible for everybody, in some things, and for far more people in others, to undertake such enterprises. It should be remembered also that yam food capital could not be accumulated from season to season, so that the only forms of negotiable investment so to speak available - e.g. canoes, ceremonial and practical axe and adze blades, the armshells and necklaces used in the *Kula* - were only available to those who could accumulate the necessary resources in yams in one season, to finance their acquisition or construction. Where in the old days of the activities listed above numbers 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, and of course 7 were closed to all except notables, nowadays practically anyone who has a few industrious relatives and relatives in law can carry them through. So that the accumulation of resources in the hands of the chiefs etc. no longer serves a useful social purpose. This is a further reason why the polygamy of chiefs has been so easily ended - or almost ended. It is no longer felt necessary to support the Chiefs out of fear, and it is no longer necessary from the economic viewpoint either. The villages which do support Mitakata out of a remnant of fear and respect for tradition - those in Kiriwina district proper - propose, as I have said earlier, to end this system after his death. They want to garden for themselves, because now they can meet their communal needs by so doing, and they feel it a burden without

reasonable compensation to have to give half their crops to the Tabalu. They are quite articulate about this and Mitakata is well aware of it. It is the reason underlying the fact that villages are becoming "independent", rather than transferring allegiances to other chiefs now that the Tabalu are no longer preeminent. The net result of all this is more and better *sagalis*, *urigubu* gifts, *Kula* canoes and expeditions, and so on; and it is the people who generally benefit

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directly, not the Chiefs etc., and who nowadays want to enjoy these benefits themselves.

To restate the position briefly - in the old times the resources in yam food of the natives as a whole were much less than they are today, owing to the effects of contact with the whites. Then, the average village head - i.e. head of a subclan owning the village- could not normally, through his own relations and those of his wife, at any one time, amass enough to finance the greater undertaking which were regarded as of interest and benefit to outsiders as well as to villagers themselves - i.e. dances and *Kula* mainly, as distinct from *sagalis* and marriage gifts etc., which affected as participants only close relatives and in-laws- and as regards the latter type of undertaking I think myself that they were held and made on a much smaller scale than at present. Thus the function of notables as communal financiers was socially valuable. Nowadays however the actual surplus of yam food over basic needs is absolutely great enough to allow any moderately industrious body of kinsfolk to carry through such undertakings. This is exemplified in the present building of canoes in the Kiriwina district. Here each kin group - i.e. village - is financing its own building very largely, while in the old days Mitakata's predecessors would have "underwritten" the major part of the operation; they would have employed the necessary experts, supplied all the betel nut and most of the yam food etc. consumed by the workers at major stages

in the work; in short the work would have been done as a concerted effort under the leadership of the Tabalu, and under their control. As it is the building of each canoe has been an individual effort by the people concerned, and the whole thing seems to me to have been rather less efficiently done than would have been the case in the old days. But I am not too happy about this, and feel that further analysis of my material may rather alter my impressions.

The fact remains that people now want to be independent of the Chiefs economically. But they have so far wanted this, not in order to change old systems in other respects, but so that all shall be able to Express themselves in these activities in a way that was previously limited to the major leaders of the community. They want, they say, to gain renown for their own subclan by

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making big *sagalis* and holding big dances and so on themselves, not merely to get a certain amount of reflected glory from assisting the doings of the great. This has already been achieved to a large extent by the people farthest away from Omarakana, but the local villagers are still rather chafing under the yoke. But at the same time it is felt that to hold a dance without a chief would be to lose some of the glory of the occasion and there is a tendency beginning to form, rather than already established, I think- for the dances to be held in villages of the chiefs still, thus preserving the outward form or requisite; but they are regarded as voluntary efforts, by the villages contributing, rather than the result of the Chief's own initiative. This is clearer in villages away from Omarakana, where most of the resources in betel nut, pig, etc. are still nominally at least Mitakata's; but even here this is what the people would like and intend to see, happen after Mitakata is succeeded by Vanoi. In fact Mitakata, having so many fewer wives than his predecessors, cannot command anything like their resources in yam food etc. and has to rely

on the goodwill of other groups no longer connected by marriage ties, in giving his feasts.

But the growing independence of the "common man" in this respect is not evidence for example in any tendency for the general standard of living to go up through the use of his greater resources in the acquisition of European goods; the villages, the houses, the clothing and diet, as well as their activities, remain much as they were thirty or even fifty years ago. The intensification of traditional ways of using surplus resources seems to absorb at present all these resources. This is of course not the only factor preventing the developments that the missionaries and government, and others concerned with the well-being of the natives, would like to see, though in my opinion it is a major one. Others I have mentioned in the previous reports include:

- a. The limited nature of contact with Europeans and the unrealistic and limited knowledge of their economy and so on resulting from this. The whites have been here a long time, the contact with them is very limited, and until recently they have been very few in number.
- b. The demands made by kinsfolk on a man who tries to accumulate a little capital for his own use, and the obligations of kinship ties generally. For both these factors see esp. F.R. no. 2, section VI, Copra. no. 1, III.

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- c. The strong tendency for new elements introduced into the native culture to be integrated in traditional ways. This has resulted e.g. in the classification and utilization of money as a *Vaygu'a* - an article of wealth of the same order as the *Kula* articles and others. As a result money is used largely non-productively. In

relations with traders money is paid out by them for copra etc. with one hand, and taken back again with the other in exchange for goods or to pay debts, in a way rather more like the use of the local token than of really valid currency. It is as I have also said previously used to obtain consumers goods almost entirely.

III General Remarks and Conclusion.

Both the matters above treated of obviously require further analysis. But I am greatly pressed for time at present and shall have to conclude this report in mid stride. We are in the final stages of canoe building preparations for the first concerted expedition to Kitava by the Kiriwinans as a whole since the war. No *masawa* canoes have been built here since then until this season, the natives relying on borrowing canoes from other communities for their excursions each year. A result of this has been that Kiriwina, especially Mitakata, has lost a great deal of its prewar prestige in the *Kula*, for most of the armshells obtained have gone directly to the villages from which the canoes were borrowed, and consequently the Kiriwinans have not received very many necklaces either. The Sinaketans, who traditionally cover the route to the Amphletts, have become impatient and themselves taken to going to Kitava, which is resented by the Kiriwinans. We heard a week or so ago that the Kitavans were coming back from Iwa and elsewhere with large quantities of arms shells: the Sinaketans, Vakutans and others have already gone to Kitava and the Kiriwinans are anxious lest they should find the rest already gone when we reach there. So the final stages of preparations have been hurried as far as the weather permits; I have been caught rather unprepared as I am due to leave on 1st May, and have all preparations to make before we go to Kitava in case we should be delayed there. I shall write a report on the *Kula* after I reach England, I hope. For the present all I can say is that the war and other factors have

modified it considerably in practice, if not theory. The majority of the adult male population now take active part in it, where previously it was restricted to the notables, and the Road principal has to quite a considerable extent been obscured in favor of exchanges being made where and when possible. I should like to add here, that many individuals are chafing against the restraint on "bettering

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themselves" individually and collectively, which the observation of traditional economic obligations involved. This is I believe the result of accumulated tendencies resulting from contact with white culture; it was slow before the war because the contact was so slight in effect. But the sight of the Armies' standard of living and the break in native life has precipitated affairs. At present Kiriwina is still in the grip of a "conservative" reaction to that break; but the grip is weakening, and I think that the next few years, especially if the Government helps by giving a judicious lead to the "liberal", or even "labor", element of the population, will see changes for the better in the life of the average Kiriwian. But if the natives are left to themselves, I fear that there last stage may be worse than their first. For major changes in material conditions without corresponding development in outlook and integration with larger cultural units- e.g. Papua - will "detrribalise" the Kiriwian as effectively as mine labored detrribalised the South Africans, or Port Moresby the local natives; and here in Kiriwina there seems to be little chance of spontaneous development of new non-material basis of cultural integration because of the relative, but effective still in the natives viewpoint, spatial isolation Trobriands from the rest of Papua. This isolation seems to be more effective a barrier to knowledge and ideas than it is in fact a material diffusion; and the Kiriwian cannot begin to break down those barriers, though he is beginning to want to, unless he receives help in the first stages. It is to my mind a pity that

the attempt at introducing a system of indirect rule into a community which as I have tried to indicate was not adapted to respond to it, has resulted in the retarding of inevitable changes, and the loss to a large extent of cultural integration which originally existed and which might have helped the native to adjust much more easily than he now seems able to do. This matter and others I hope to deal with in post-fieldwork reports.