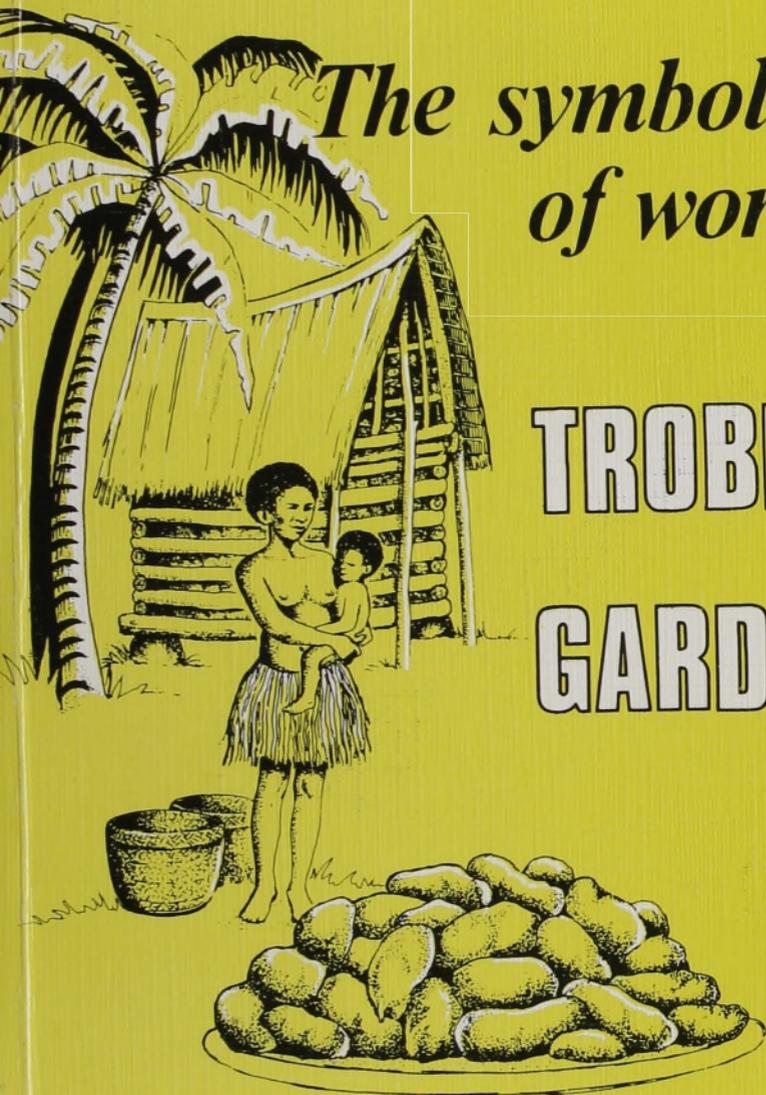


*The symbolic role
of women in*

**TROBRIAND
GARDENING**



M. Brindley

MISCELLANEA ANTHROPOLOGICA 5
UNISA 1984



The role of women in
OBRIAND
GARDENING

Magazine Society

University of South Africa
1984

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Marianne Brindley

University of South Africa
Pretoria 1984

The symbolic role of women in

TROBRIAND GARDENING

Margaret Mead

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ISBN 0 86981 311 0

Printed by
Gutenberg Book Printers
Pretoria West

Published by the
University of South Africa

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Acknowledgements

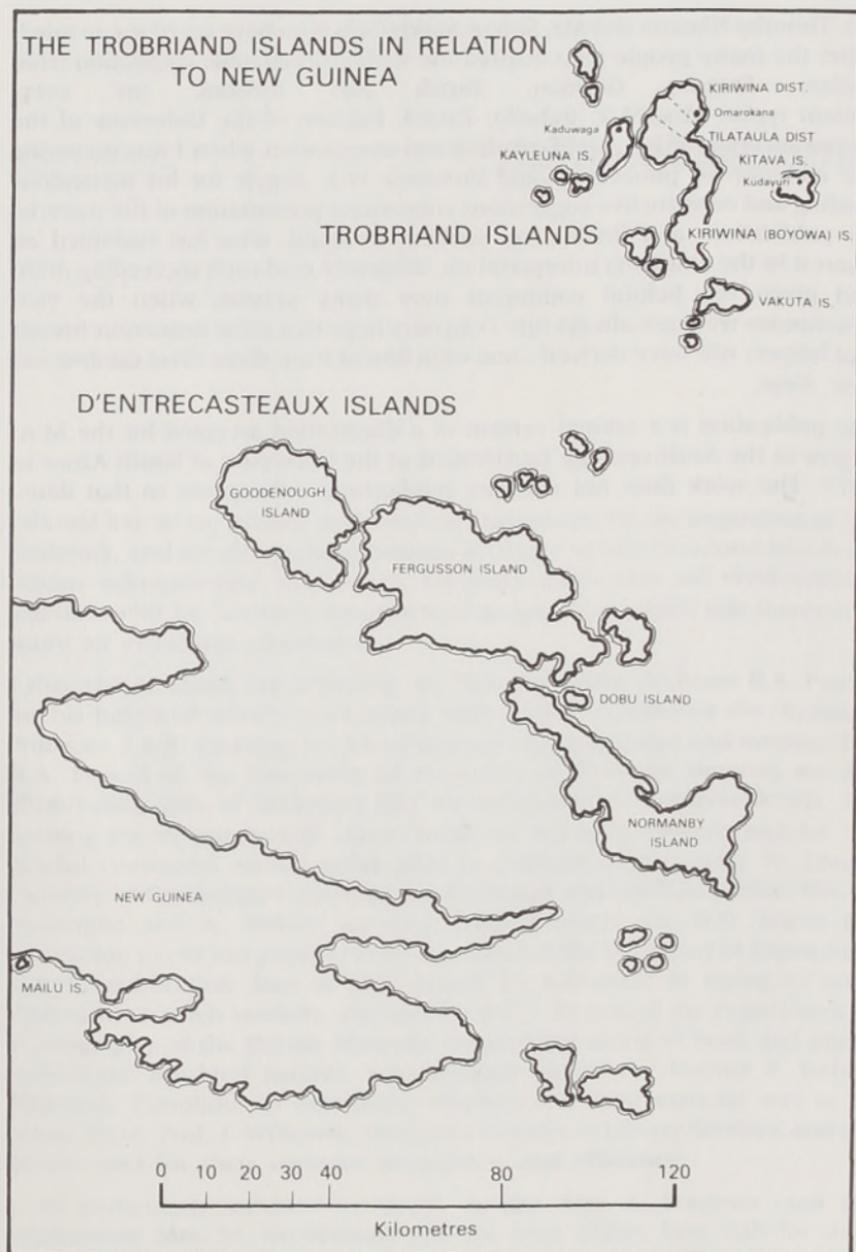
I should like to pay tribute to Bronislaw Malinowski for the inspiration of his fieldwork, and for the exciting treatises he wrote on the Trobriand Islanders. Despite acknowledged weaknesses, his acute observation and vivid writing, together with his sensitive awareness of people, have made this theoretical study an enriching experience.

I also wish to thank the following: my MA supervisor, Professor B.A. Pauw, for his help and advice, particularly with regard to ordering the material; Professor J.A.R. Blacking for his continued encouragement and interest; Dr. H.A. Powell of the University of Newcastle-on-Tyne for showing me his illuminating film of Trobriand life, for subsequent informative letters, for keeping me in touch with other Trobriand research workers, and for his helpful comments on the script prior to publication; Mr. Jerry W. Leach, formerly of Cambridge University for discussion and correspondence; Drs. S. Montague and A. Weiner for their helpful letters; Dr. N.D. Munn for permission to cite her paper (1971); the editor of the University of Papua New Guinea publication *Man in New Guinea* for assistance in trying to trace Trobriand research workers; the late Mr. R.D.J. Fearon of the Department of Ethnography of the British Museum for personal access to book and photo collections; my kind parents, who specially visited the Bernice P. Bishop Museum, Honolulu, to determine whether Trobriand material was to be found there; Prof. J. Willemse, The Unisa Director of Library Services, and the library staff for their constant friendliness and efficiency.

I am particularly indebted to Mr. R. Fenske, Mrs. A. Potgieter (and her predecessor Mrs. M. Grobbelaar) and the inter-library loan staff for their willingness to assist me in tracing sources; the Microfilm Department especially Mrs. E.V.E. Britz; the friendly photocopying staff, Mr. Pius Nkoe,

Mr. Timothy Nkoana and Mr. Simon Mokhabela who have saved me so much time; the many people who assisted me with ethnographic translation from Italian, French, German, Dutch and Russian; my ever-patient typist, Mrs. M.R. Rebello; Patrick Pearson of the University of the Witwatersrand for his careful reading and assessments when I was preparing the material for publication and Professor W.J. Argyle for his meticulous reading and constructive suggestions concerning presentation of the material for publication; and finally, my resilient husband, who has sustained an interest in the emerging interpretation, diligently read each succeeding draft, and given me helpful comments over many seasons when the yam storehouses were not always full. I can only hope that these numerous friends and helpers will have derived some enrichment from these *Coral Gardens and their Magic*.

The publication is a revised version of a dissertation accepted for the M.A. degree in the Anthropology Department of the University of South Africa in 1977. The work does not consider publications subsequent to that date.



The map has been adapted from Malinowski 1967, 138 and Weiner 1976, 26.

Introduction

This study stems from my interest in the fulfilment of the individual in literate as well as non-literate societies. I am especially concerned with women because there is a lack of clarity on the position of women in the anthropological literature, which tends towards minimal documentation and the assumption that the female is generally subordinate to the male.¹ With some exceptions² before the seventies it seemed only too true that the study of women was "on a level little higher than the study of the ducks and fowls they commonly own".³ My hypothesis is that woman's biological nature is a significant factor in her self-realization, provided the culture reinforces it positively; and to evaluate this I examine the position of Trobriand women with particular reference to gardening. Since gardening is the most important activity in Trobriand culture, and the growing of the small yam (*taytu*) provides the best documented material, it is selected as the focus of the study, with due regard for Malinowski's statements that women's position in this culture is of a high order.⁴ I chose the Trobriand Islanders because there was sufficient high quality ethnographic data for a detailed theoretical analysis.

I have made an extensive study of published books and articles and other documentary sources such as conference papers and university dissertations and theses.⁷ Every obtainable work referring to the Trobriand Islanders has been read, and as many studies as possible of other Oceanian peoples, particularly those of Melanesia. I ordered any seemingly relevant article and book without regard for the language in which it was written or the difficulty of tracing it. This detailed reading was

then supplemented by correspondence and personal discussion with scholars familiar with the Trobriand Islanders.

The analysis relies primarily on the published works of Bronislaw Malinowski. To a lesser extent I use the research of other anthropologists who have worked in the area. Although most of this research was conducted at least 30 years after that of Malinowski, I consulted every possible source, and wrote to all research workers who could be traced, for evidence that could either provide insights not available from Malinowski's treatises, or reconcile apparent contradictions and supply missing information, bearing in mind the time lag between the various studies and the effect of culture change. I could not obtain works of Guidieri, Haddon, Jansen, Julius, Meintel, Munn, Panoff, Pfund and Weiner.⁵ I read Gropper's dissertation but received no reply to a request for permission to cite.⁶ I am aware of research conducted in the Trobriands by Professor G G Scoditti and Reverend R Lawton but my attempts to trace relevant publications and establish contact with them through correspondence were unsuccessful.⁷

After formulating the questions in which I was interested I immersed myself in Malinowski's four most comprehensive volumes.⁸ Once an initial draft had been written, I began to look for other literature related to the Trobrianders themselves, the customs of surrounding peoples, and even particular culture traits such as coconuts and platforms, in the hope of elucidating their meaning or establishing correlations. Any work that seemed at all related to women, gardening, symbolism, or the interpretation that was emerging, was examined. Most books cited by writers on Oceania were read, and a number of valuable contributions normally overlooked came to light; by this means I gained clarity on horticultural practices and their symbolic associations over a wider area, and these appeared to support the validity of the argument I was advancing.

It is inevitable that there will be certain lacunae in the ethnographic material on which a theoretical treatise is based. For instance, more information on fishing-patterns, the role of pigs, and the magic and practical work of cultivating taro would have been helpful. Such omissions will only be referred to when they particularly affect the analysis. My interpretation pertains especially to Northern Kiriwina and the village of Omarakana, this being the area in which Malinowski conducted his most intensive fieldwork. The material will therefore have a bias reflecting a high-ranking village, but cultural patterns will tend to be

more clearly defined than in a commoners' village.⁹ Although there are various systems of garden magic and techniques of working the fields in the Trobriands, they are essentially similar.¹⁰ The system used in Omarakana, the capital of Kiriwina, is regarded as the gardening paradigm.¹¹ This analysis will accordingly centre there unless a system from a different area provides greater clarity.

With regard to terminology, I have departed from Malinowski's nomenclature in the use of "display" storehouse for "show" storehouse.¹² Since what Malinowski calls "sub-clan" appears to have characteristics of a clan on the one hand and of a lineage on the other, Malinowski's "sub-clan" has been retained.¹³ Malinowski's usage of "chief" is followed although it seems that this could often refer to a village headman.¹⁴ Where indigenous words are unavoidable, I have retained Malinowski's spelling. Oceanian islands are referred to by the names used in the reference quoted, even though some have since altered.

In studying the position of Trobriand women in gardening I do not consider it sufficient merely to consider the physical labour performed by women in the context of the islanders' horticultural activities. I have therefore made a detailed analysis of the symbolism that dominates gardening to ascertain woman's relationship to it, and I have also made a structural analysis of the language of ritual and the terminology of gardening to try to establish how these reflect on woman. Although my primary concern is with the position of women in gardening, I finally correlate this with her position in the culture as a whole by considering certain dominant cultural themes and the interrelation of different aspects of the culture.

It should perhaps be made clear that in providing this interpretation of Trobriand symbolic behaviour I do not assume that the people themselves consciously formulate the notions which I propose, nor that the symbolic categories here presented form conscious motivation for their actions. However, I have no doubt that symbols have a profound effect on the actions of the individual, and the use of certain categories and cognitive processes as reflected in symbolic life reinforces behaviour patterns by compelling the mind to apprehend in a certain way. I also believe that if we are to understand social life more fully then we need to address the problem of interpreting the symbolic dimension of action-patterns. Since this is not a fieldwork study but a theoretical analysis of the literature available on Trobriand life, and because of the multivalent qualities of symbols, it is possible that this analysis may be considered too one-dimensional. I hope the argument that it advances

will nevertheless enable us to gain a fuller picture of the cognitive life of the Trobriand Islanders, and hence develop less simplistic assumptions of the position of women and men in preliterate society.

Notes

- 1 Wedgwood 1937 401–402; Evans-Pritchard 1965 38–41, 57; Heuer cited by Webster 1973 113; cf. e.g. Linton & Wingert 1946 16 (Fiji, Polynesia), 35 (Marquesas, Polynesia); Hoebel 1954 286
- 2 E.g. Wedgwood 1927 381–382; Wedgwood 1937; Thurnwald H. 1934; Schmidt 1935; Landes 1938; Kaberry 1939; Kaberry 1952; Leith-Ross 1939; Schapera 1940; Mountford & Harvey 1941; Opler 1943; Scheinfeld 1947; Berndt 1950; Mead 1950; Richards 1956; Scobie 1960; Paulme ed. 1963; Campbell-Purdy 1967
- 3 Ardener 1972 136
- 4 Malinowski 1966 I xix, 8–10, 12, 20, 30, 32, 34–35, 48, 52–53, 56, 80, 83; Austen 1945–46 35; Malinowski 1922 54–55, 280; Malinowski 1932 15, 23–25
- 5 Guidieri 1973; Haddon 1893; Jansen 1961; Julius 1960; Meintel 1969; Munn n.d.; Panoff 1972; Pfund 1972; Weiner 1973
- 6 Gropper 1970
- 7 Anon. 1973a 17; Anon. 1973b 34; Anon. 1974 14; Anon. 1971 20
- 8 Malinowski 1966 I, II; Malinowski 1932; Malinowski 1922
- 9 Malinowski 1966 I 84, 366, 430–431; Malinowski 1932 112, 386; Malinowski 1922 63, 66; Powell 1953 2
- 10 Malinowski 1966 I 273, 275–277; Austen 1945–46 35
- 11 E.g. Malinowski 1966 I 84, 86, 273
- 12 Malinowski 1966 I 228–232
- 13 Malinowski 1966 I 37–38, 345–346; Malinowski 1932 417; Malinowski 1922 70–71; Powell 1956 44–50, 98, 101–105; cf. Leach 1958 120–145; Weiner 1976 38–39, 51–52; Powell 1977b
- 14 Malinowski 1966 I 33, 38–39, 192, 210; Malinowski 1922 62–66; Malinowski 1932 26; cf. e.g. Seligmann 1910 692–700; Powell 1960 118–143; Uberoi 1971 7, 20, 38, 47–48; Leach 1966 xi; Brunton 1975 544–556; Weiner 1976 45–46

An outline of gardening activities

Gardening in the context of Trobriand culture

The Trobriand Islanders are renowned for their participation in the *kula* (overseas expedition for ceremonial exchange).¹ Although they are well-known in Papua for their excellent gardens² (carefully detailed by Malinowski), their horticultural activities have received little analytical attention from scholars. Besides being gardeners, they fish and tend semi-cultivated palms.³ They evince a belief in ancestor spirits though their ritual is predominantly magical. Their political organization operates at the level of villages which are associated with matrilineal sub-clans and are interlinked through sub-clan exogamy⁴ and the inland and overseas *kula*.

In the Trobriand Islands tribal life is centred on gardening in which the northern districts of Kiriwina and Tilataula are unrivalled for their horticultural excellence. Moving south from Kiriwina, the significance of gardening for subsistence tends to diminish and fishing assumes greater importance.⁵ Several species of the yam family (Dioscoreaceae) are grown, the favourite and staple food especially of the north being *taytu* – a relatively small variety of yam – presumably *Dioscorea esculenta*.⁶ Although this little yam is susceptible to pests, is destroyed by pigs and needs careful nurturing, it stores well and is the centre of much magic and ceremonial.⁷

In the more southerly and swampy areas of the main island of Boyowa (or Kiriwina) larger yams, apparently *Dioscorea alata*,⁸ and taro (Colo-

casia esculenta)⁹ have a greater economic utility than *taytu*.¹⁰ Three crops of taro (Weiner says two) tend to be planted annually compared to one of *taytu*.¹¹ Sugar-cane, bananas, pumpkin, gourds, peas, sweet potatoes and large yams are grown as subsidiary crops.¹² Because they are for the most part not treated ceremonially and there is little information of relevance to this study either on them or on the semi-cultivated palms, their cultivation will not be discussed. Mixed planting of these subsidiary crops is followed by cultivation principally of *taytu* in the main gardens (*kaymata*) which form the focus of the islanders' attention and ceremonial.¹³

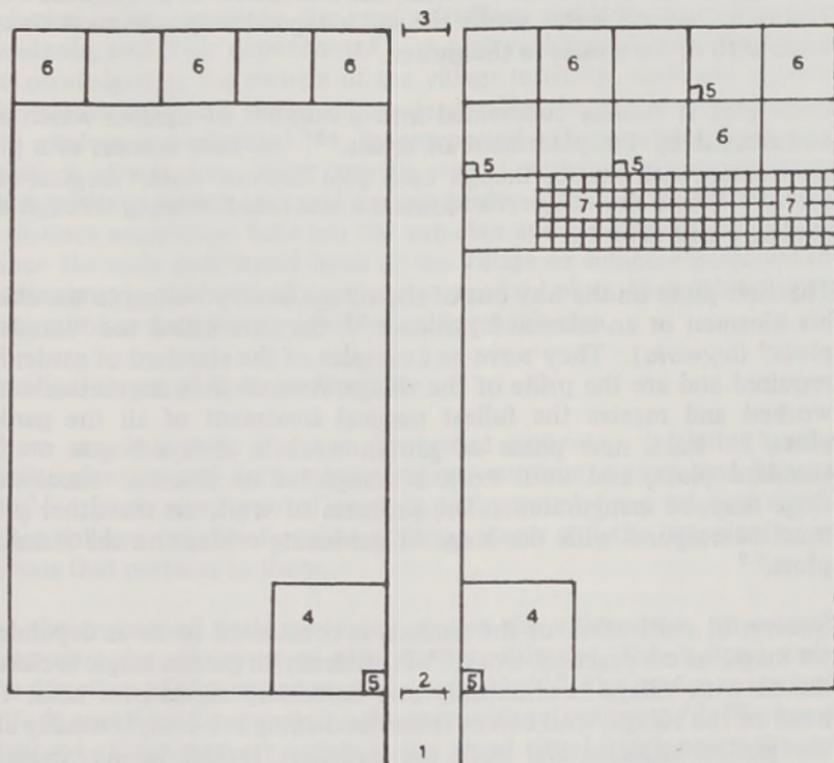
An association exists between the garden, the village and the sub-clan. The focus of the Trobriand village is a large, open, central area (*baku*).¹⁴ The gardening council, filling of storehouses, feasts, dances and ceremonies are held here, for this is the arena of public life.¹⁵ In some villages a magnificent *taytu* display storehouse belonging to the chief dominates the central place.¹⁶ The village centre is typically surrounded by a circular row of display storehouses owned by men of rank.¹⁷ They exhibit the wealth of the village received as *urigubu* (matrimonial harvest gifts) and are well-constructed, decorated and raised off the ground.¹⁸ A circular street passes round these display storehouses, and beyond it an outer ring of somewhat shabby dwelling-houses, unostentatious and flush with the ground.¹⁹ A number of roads pass into the village and one road leads from the village into the garden.²⁰

A village is associated with one or more sub-clans. When there is only one sub-clan, members of the village, by virtue of belonging to the sub-clan or residing in its village, may exploit the village territory, ownership of the village and its territory being vested in the sub-clan concerned.²¹ When the village has more than one sub-clan, one of these is dominant, and the picture of land tenure is more complicated, but the basic principle remains unchanged.²² In theory, chieftainship is ascribed to the senior male of the highest ranking lineage of the dominant sub-clan.²³ However, Powell indicates that in most cases such leadership is achieved within the "owning" sub-clan.²⁴ The chief represents the village in social, magico-religious, legal and political matters and presides over the organization of gardening.²⁵

Each village or part of it has cultivable land which is worked by its inhabitants.²⁶ The garden is associated with the territory of the village sub-clan.²⁷ As is indicated in Figure 1, the garden is enclosed and is

Figure 1

PRINCIPAL FEATURES OF THE GARDEN ENCLOSURE*



- 1 Road from village
- 2 Village stile
- 3 Stile at far end
- 4 Standard plots
- 5 Main magical corners
- 6 Individual plots
- 7 Sticks overlaid on plots

* Adapted from Malinowski 1966 I figure 4(89), figure 5(100)

divided into plots (*baleko*) with fixed perimeters.²⁸ These plots are individually owned by men.²⁹ Every male village member cultivates at least three plots of land within the garden enclosure, whether or not it

is his sub-clan land. The actual number of plots worked depends on the man's strength and efficiency, but he requires a minimum of one plot whose produce will support his household, as well as another to meet his *urigubu* commitments.^{3 0} With the exception of a few widows, a Trobriand woman never works the soil independently: she must always work with or for a male in the garden.^{3 1}

Each plot is usually subdivided into a number of squares which are demarcated by the placement of sticks.^{3 2} All four corners of a plot are treated with magic, though each plot has one main "magical corner".^{3 3} Where the village road joins the main road running through the garden, a stile is built.^{3 4}

The first plots on the way out of the village usually belong to the chief, his kinsmen or an esteemed gardener;^{3 5} they are called the "standard plots" (*leywota*). They serve as examples of the standard of gardening required and are the pride of the village. As such they are meticulously worked and receive the fullest magical treatment of all the garden plots.^{3 6} Each new phase of garden work is always begun on the standard plots, and until work is completed on them no succeeding stage may be inaugurated. The progress of work on the other plots must correspond with the stage of gardening evident on the standard plots.^{3 7}

Successful cultivation of the gardens is considered to be as dependent on magic as on practical work.^{3 8} Proficiency in garden magic is closely linked with village headmanship and hereditary rights over land. The head of the village, who comes from the owning sub-clan, is usually also the garden magician and leads the gardeners, though he may delegate this function.^{3 9} The magic of the gardens is founded in myth and performed by the male village garden magician (*towosi*) i.e. the chief who usually inherits his position and magical system matrilineally; he is the repository of magical lore.^{4 0} He is genealogically related to the original ancestress (or ancestral sister and brother) who founded the sub-clan associated with the ownership of village land. This ancestress emerged from a hole in the area, bringing with her the system of garden magic which is still followed by her descendants who live and garden there. Thus Trobriand mythology locates the origin of the people in the soil,^{4 1} and there is a matrilineal focus to the concepts of land and labour. Malinowski observes that land for the Trobriander "is the real mother earth who brought forth his lineage in the person of the first ancestress, who nourishes him and will receive him again into her womb".^{4 2} It is possible that such a unified vision of mankind and the

soil will influence the nature of Trobriand horticulture and the work performed by women and men.

The group of gardeners comprises a nucleus of men of the land-owning sub-clan, who constitute the core of village residents, as well as alien residents, and their dependants.⁴³ A high-ranking sub-clan of a village, acknowledged as the owners of the village territory, normally provides the garden magician under whose leadership the magic and labour of the gardens is performed.⁴⁴ In compound villages where there are a number of sub-clans, there may be several gardening groups or teams, each with its garden area and its own garden magician.⁴⁵ Thus there is a distinct association between the sub-clan and an area of garden land. Since the male matrilineal head of the village or sub-clan performs the garden magic and normally owns the standard plots, these plots appear to symbolize the identity of the matrilineal sub-clan.

Principal stages of *taytu* production

There are four main stages in Trobriand gardening: initiating garden work; planting and garden preparation; continuing care; and harvesting.⁴⁶ Each new type of work is inaugurated by a magical rite.⁴⁷ What follows is a brief review of these stages and the organization of labour that pertains to them.

At the outset of each gardening season the village men, in council, determine the allotment of plots to be cultivated. This is done under the direction of the garden magician and chief.⁴⁸ The garden magician's wife is mentioned as providing the men with refreshment.⁴⁹ The magician and village men are active in the grand ritual which opens the gardens. This involves a festive meal, an offering, a recitation of the central spell in the magic of gardening (*vatuvi*), use of key magical substances and a magical rite.⁵⁰ Women only participate in so far as they prepare fish for the meal.⁵¹

After this ceremony the men cut the scrub. Women assist in clearing the gardens. When the brush is cut and left to dry in anticipation of the burning, festivities connected with *Milamala* (ceremony of the return of the ancestral spirits) occur. The garden magician and his assistants then immerse themselves in a prolonged burning ceremony which entails a four-day gardening taboo.⁵² A woman of high rank participates in these ritual proceedings.⁵³ Each nuclear family is involved in preparing its own plot for planting, and removing debris and roots from the ground. There is no absolute division of labour at this stage, but the

clearing of garden refuse is predominantly executed by women, while laying out the boundary poles and sticks demarcating plot divisions is usually done by men.⁵⁴ The fence enclosing the gardens is constructed, each owner assisting by erecting that portion where his plot borders the bush. In addition a stile is built wherever a path meets the garden enclosure.⁵⁵

The erection of a magical prismatic construction (*kamkokola*) on the principal corner of every plot is performed by the garden magician in conjunction with his acolytes.⁵⁶ But in Kurokayva, in the Kiriwina district, there is another part to the ceremony involving all the villagers, including women. The women cook *taytu* (small yams) and are present at the *taytu* distribution which takes place in the garden. The *taytu* also serve as an offering to the ancestral spirits. The women then return home with the *taytu* and the men continue with the ceremony.⁵⁷ Once it is completed the main planting of *taytu* may begin. Men predominate in this activity and customarily perform it communally. *Taytu* supports are erected.⁵⁸

The garden magician utters a number of magical spells to promote *taytu* growth.⁵⁹ He also initiates weeding by conducting a simple magical ceremony with a spell.⁶⁰ Weeding continues steadily until the *taytu* vine is well developed. Women often weed communally, during which time the work is punctuated by competitive wagers, corporate eating and gossip.⁶¹ Only women may weed. Men may not approach a party of women weeders: if they do, those from the women's own community may be abused verbally while strangers might be physically maltreated. Women living in the southerly areas of the island of Boyowa or on the island of Vakuta may accost any man from another village who happens to pass within sight during communal weeding.⁶² At this time they have the right to degrade such a man sexually, pollute him with physically obscene behaviour, and sadistically handle and torment him by genital manipulation, defecation and micturition until he "will vomit, and vomit, and vomit".⁶³

During this period of continuing care of the garden the men are no longer as absorbed in their work. Their duties are restricted to protecting the gardens from pests, repairing fences, thinning out tubers, and training and tying the vine foliage over the supports. In districts where overseas expeditions for the *kula* occur, the majority of men migrate to other villages for a number of weeks. Elsewhere, time is spent in fishing excursions and leisure activities.⁶⁴

The garden magician, still preoccupied with the sound formation of the *taytu* (small yam), vigilantly continues pronouncing spells to that end.^{6.5} A ceremony performed by the garden magician together with the village men, introduces the thinning of the tubers by the men.^{6.6}

Maturation of the crops coincides with increased village excitement, which comes to a climax as the pinnacle of the gardening year is reached at harvest.^{6.7} The garnering of large yams and taro occurs before the main harvest of *taytu*. It is ushered in by a magical ceremony involving the garden magician and village men.^{6.8} The garnering of *taytu* is of singular importance in Trobriand life.^{6.9} When the *taytu* vine begins to wither and droop, indicative of ripe tubers, the garden magician performs the preparatory ceremony (*okwala*). The magic of this rite is given a few days to infiltrate the tubers in the garden, after which the main ceremony (*tum*) occurs.^{7.0} The day after the garden magician has recited the principal spell of Trobriand magic (*vatuvi*)^{7.1} over an adze, a small group of men, women and boys accompanies him to the main standard plot where a ceremonial act of harvesting takes place.^{7.2}

Harvesting is usually undertaken by family groups on their own plots. The man normally extracts the roots, the woman cleans and carries them to an arbour where they are stacked by the man; but the division of labour is not always strictly observed.^{7.3} A man builds as many arbours as the number of matrimonial harvest gifts (*urigubu*) for which he is liable.^{7.4} Finally, young women and men, related to the gardener and his wife, festively transport the *urigubu taytu* to the storehouses associated with married female members of the gardener's sub-clan.^{7.5} These kinswomen provide refreshments to the donors and their assistants after they have filled the storehouses.^{7.6} The garden magician (*towosi*), now termed *tovilamalia*, treats the storehouses and their new *taytu* with the *vilamalia* (magic of plenty and village prosperity).^{7.7} The cycle of gardening is now complete.

Production of other crops

There is little specific information concerning the production of secondary crops,^{7.8} and the extent of women's involvement with them passes unmentioned. They receive their own magical treatment; this resembles that of the main *taytu* gardens, yet is more limited. In contrast to *taytu* production for matrimonial gifts, these crops are grown for home consumption.^{7.9} Women are said to have sweet-potato plots.^{8.0}

In the south the ceremonial crop is taro, not *taytu*, but there is some

evidence of parallel magic with *taytu* in the inaugural rite, the burning, magic concerned with the *kankokola* (magical prismatic construction) and growth. No weeding or thinning rites occur, however.^{8.1} The garden magician's wife makes a brief appearance when cooking food concerned with the inaugural taro rite, and women are present at the opening feast.^{8.2} Women primarily perform the practical tasks of clearing, heaping refuse and weeding.^{8.3}

Extent of women's activities in gardening

Although the above summary might suggest that women participate in the majority of gardening activities, in fact Trobriand gardens are invariably the domain of men both in work and magic. The extensive Trobriand horticultural information actually makes only sporadic reference to women, particularly with regard to the ceremonial of gardening. They are mentioned mainly with regard to cooking, handicrafts, and transport.^{8.4} The chief's wife and the wife of the garden magician are noted as assisting in a few ceremonies, principally in a culinary capacity.^{8.5} Women are alluded to intermittently in the working of the gardens, usually in connection with the sexual division of labour and the family unit, or briefly in the grand inaugural and burning ceremonies.^{8.6} Their presence is remarked on in the *kankokola* (magical prismatic construction) ceremony and the main harvest.^{8.7} They predominate in the latter part of the horticultural year at weeding.^{8.8}

In the light of the tomes of information on gardening, such slight documentation suggests minimal female participation. It should however be noted that the mythology of gardening is matrilineal, according to which the first ancestress who emerged from the ground was a woman, and furthermore that women are cited, albeit cursorily, in a number of gardening spells.^{8.9}

The evidence indicates that women hardly ever participate in the important horticultural ceremonies meticulously observed and esteemed by the community.^{9.0} Nor does the ethnographic information indicate how much of the official garden magic women actually know. Malinowski writes obscurely that "the natives are familiar with every spell" and that "every member of the community is aware of each spell being performed".^{9.1} There is vagueness in statements referring to community knowledge of gardening spells: "They have been heard by everyone, and most natives know them by heart."^{9.2}

From such information one cannot categorically assert whether women

are included. The material creates the impression that only men are implied. Although gardening spells are uttered aloud, women are not present for the major part of all but a few magical performances⁹³ and thus remain unexposed to them. The spells are not esoterically guarded: Malinowski stresses that every man in Omarakana would recognize a text from his community's official magic,⁹⁴ yet it would be improper for any unsanctioned person to repeat them.⁹⁵

Finally, the ethnographer explains that public garden magic "though very often carried out by the magician alone, is yet of such a character and performed under such circumstances that most men know the spell, are aware of its performance, are very keen that it should be properly recited and the rite impeccably carried out, so that the magic may produce its effect".⁹⁶ One can only deduce that women are not implied in Malinowski's statements concerning the possession of a full knowledge of gardening spells and magic by the community.

In practical work also, women assume a lesser role than men. They have a part to play in preparing the new gardens and in harvesting, but these activities are performed in conjunction with men. The one gardening phase which undeniably belongs to women is weeding.⁹⁷

At first sight the horticultural evidence portrays Trobriand women as playing a minor part in this significant feature of their culture, in the manner of certain of their New Guinea counterparts.⁹⁸ However, actual involvement in horticultural activity and participation in ceremonial do not solely determine the position of woman in gardening; I believe that a people's conceptualization of an activity may also be reflected in language and that the selection of certain action-patterns and substances are symbolically meaningful. In the ensuing pages I offer a brief discussion of the terminology of gardening and how it reflects on woman; I also present a detailed analysis of the symbolism that dominates gardening in order to ascertain woman's relationship to it.

Notes

- 1 Malinowski 1920b 97-105; Malinowski 1922
- 2 Tudor 1963 381; Black 1954 2; Murray 1912 119; Austen 1939 238
- 3 Malinowski 1966 I 8, 16, 20-21, 300-310; Malinowski 1918 87-92; Malinowski 1921 2; Malinowski 1926b 108
- 4 Powell 1956 45, 56, 99, 190, 193, 273-274, 319-320, 338-341, 345, 352,

- 472–473, 478–479, 484; Powell 1960 121; Leach 1958 124
- 5 Malinowski 1966 I 13–14, 16–18, 74, 84, 273, 290; Malinowski 1922 66–67
- 6 Malinowski 1966 I 52, 81; Austen 1939 238; cf. Coursey 1967 51–52, 63–64; Merrill 1946 149; Young 1971 147; Lea 1964 76; Burkill 1935 818; Alexander & Coursey 1969 409–410; Weiner 1976 244, 258
- 7 Malinowski 1966 I 67, 76, 81, 137, 141–144, 146–151, 160, 168–171, 219–225, 242, 291; Malinowski 1966 II 90; cf. Austen 1945–46 18
- 8 Cf. Merrill 1946 149, 224; Burkill 1935 I 814–815; Coursey 1967 45–46; Coulter 1941 21; Barrau 1965 336; Alexander & Coursey 1969 409; Weiner 1976 244, 255
- 9 Cf. Merrill 1946 149; Lea 1964 76; Coulter 1941 21; Coursey 1972 216; Barrau 1965 331; Harris 1969 10
- 10 Malinowski 1966 I 290–291, 295–296; Powell 1956 4
- 11 Malinowski 1966 I 296–297; cf. Weiner 1976 201
- 12 Malinowski 1966 I 57–58, 122, 193, 315, 463; Powell 1953 4; cf. Weiner 1976 35
- 13 Malinowski 1966 I 58, 87, 122, cf. 463, 470
- 14 Malinowski 1966 I 24–26, 231; Malinowski 1932 8, figure 1 (between 444 & 445)
- 15 Malinowski 1922 56; Malinowski 1932 8–9, 210; Malinowski 1966 I 24–26, 229, 231
- 16 Malinowski 1932 8; Malinowski 1966 I 258
- 17 Malinowski 1966 I 24, 228–229; Malinowski 1932 8, 61; Malinowski 1922 55; Seligmann 1910 662
- 18 Malinowski 1966 I 195, 228, 231; Malinowski 1933 157; Malinowski 1922 55
- 19 Malinowski 1932 8; Malinowski 1966 I 24, 218, 229; Malinowski 1922 55–56
- 20 Malinowski 1966 I 99, 225, 235, 430; Weiner 1976 figure 1 (xviii), xix
- 21 Malinowski 1966 I 329, 336, 344, 346; Hoebel 1954 192; Malinowski 1932 419; Powell 1956 106, 434; Powell 1977a
- 22 Malinowski 1966 I 39, 332, 349–350, 355; Powell 1960 121, 124
- 23 Malinowski 1966 I 39, 346–347, 359; Malinowski 1932 26; Powell 1956 439, 484; Powell 1960 118, 121, 124–125
- 24 Powell 1960 125–126; cf. Weiner 1976 44–46; Hoebel 1954 193
- 25 Malinowski 1966 I 328, 332, 347; Malinowski 1922 63–65; Powell 1956 473; Powell 1960 132
- 26 Malinowski 1922 57, 70; Malinowski 1966 I 329–330, 354–357; Powell 1969b 581
- 27 Malinowski 1966 I 24, 343–344, 354; Malinowski 1932 417; Leach 1958 120, 142
- 28 Malinowski 1966 I 89–92; Malinowski 1966 II 138; Malinowski 1920a 51; Figure 1, 7 above
- 29 Malinowski 1966 I 356
- 30 Malinowski 1966 I 60, 79, 87, 90–91, 329; Powell 1956 421
- 31 Malinowski 1966 I 79, 354; Weiner 1976 34
- 32 Malinowski 1966 I 80–81, plate 26 (facing 88), plate 38 (facing 121),

- 121–124, 470
- 33 Malinowski 1966 I 59, 114, 123–124
- 34 Malinowski 1966 II 138–139; Malinowski 1966 I 90, 100
- 35 Malinowski 1966 I 464
- 36 Malinowski 1966 I 58–59, 64; Austen 1945–46 37
- 37 Malinowski 1966 I 104
- 38 Malinowski 1966 I 55, 62, 76–77; Malinowski 1948 28–29; Malinowski 1922 421
- 39 Malinowski 1966 I 12, 39, 64–65, 67, 84–85, 275, 328–329, 332, 347, 349, 355–356, 371, 446
- 40 Malinowski 1966 I 64–65, 67, 336, 348–349; Malinowski 1922 59
- 41 Malinowski 1966 I 60, 64–65, 336, 341–344, 348–349; Malinowski 1922 63, 410–411; Malinowski 1932 26, 155, 419; Powell 1956 45; cf. Weiner 1976 38, 40
- 42 Malinowski 1966 I 350
- 43 Malinowski 1966 I 334, 356–357; Powell 1969b 586
- 44 Malinowski 1966 I 332, 334, 346–347, 355
- 45 Malinowski 1966 I 346, 355–356; Malinowski 1932 417; Leach 1958 124; Powell 1969b 581
- 46 Malinowski 1966 I 61; cf. Austen 1939 247
- 47 Malinowski 1966 I 61; Malinowski 1921 4
- 48 Malinowski 1966 I 63, 87–92, 371–373; Malinowski 1921 4
- 49 Malinowski 1966 I 88, 108
- 50 Malinowski 1966 I 94–102
- 51 Malinowski 1966 I 95
- 52 Malinowski 1966 I 11, 79, 102–104, 110–115
- 53 Malinowski 1966 I 111, 113, plate 34 (facing 113), 274, cf. 112, 281
- 54 Malinowski 1966 I 79, 120, Plate 36 (facing 120), 122–123, 422–423
- 55 Malinowski 1966 I 123
- 56 Malinowski 1966 I 123–132
- 57 Malinowski 1966 I 282, 285–287, plate 105 (facing 284); Malinowski 1966 II 331; cf. Powell 1953 4a
- 58 Malinowski 1966 I 79, 124–125, 134–135, 137–138, 146
- 59 Malinowski 1966 I 141–144
- 60 Malinowski 1966 I 145
- 61 Malinowski 1966 I 122, 138, 144–145; Malinowski 1932 232
- 62 Malinowski 1966 I 61, 79, 122, 144, 158, 354; Malinowski 1932 22, 231–232; Austen 1945–46 39
- 63 Malinowski 1932 232
- 64 Malinowski 1966 I 138–139; Malinowski 1927a 210
- 65 Malinowski 1966 I 145–151
- 66 Malinowski 1966 I 61, 79, 138, 151–152
- 67 Malinowski 1966 I 159
- 68 Malinowski 1966 I 165–166
- 69 Malinowski 1966 I 165, 167
- 70 Malinowski 1966 I 167–170

- 71 Malinowski 1966 I 96–98
- 72 Malinowski 1966 I 170–171
- 73 Malinowski 1966 I 11, 79, 171–172; Malinowski 1932 104
- 74 Malinowski 1966 I 172, 189, 195, 199
- 75 Malinowski 1966 I 172, 176–180, 189–190, 195–196; Malinowski 1932 105–107
- 76 Malinowski 1966 I 223
- 77 Malinowski 1966 I 219–225, 233–239
- 78 Cf. Malinowski 1966 I 463, 470
- 79 Malinowski 1966 I 87, 193–194, cf. 297–298
- 80 Weiner 1976 34
- 81 Malinowski 1966 I 196, 295–296, 421–426, cf. 297–300
- 82 Malinowski 1966 I 421–422
- 83 Malinowski 1966 I 423
- 84 Malinowski 1966 I 21, 26, 30, plate 18 (facing 57), 57, 159, 185, 227, 293
- 85 Malinowski 1966 I 111, 167, 171, 427; Malinowski 1966 II 130; Austen 1945–46 37
- 86 Malinowski 1966 I 79–80, 354; 9–10 above
- 87 10–11 above
- 88 10 above
- 89 Malinowski 1966 I 69–70, 73, 84, 95–96, 98, 146, 236, 340–341, 343; Malinowski 1932 155; Malinowski 1966 II 221, 253–254, 286, 320
- 90 Cf. Malinowski 1966 I 87–102, 110–115, 125–132, 141–152, 165–171, 428, 436–443; Austen 1945–46 35–41
- 91 Malinowski 1966 II 242–243
- 92 Malinowski 1966 I 105, cf. 66; Malinowski 1966 II 244, 307
- 93 Malinowski 1966 I 112, 281–282, 285; Malinowski 1966 II 331
- 94 Malinowski 1966 II 243
- 95 Malinowski 1966 I 105, 445; Malinowski 1966 II 224–225, 243
- 96 Malinowski 1966 II 300
- 97 9–11 above
- 98 E.g. Kaberry 1941 237, 354–356, 359, 364; Kaberry 1941–42 215, 345; Kaberry 1965–66 339, 352–353; Lea 1966 9–11; Tuzin 1972 232; Gardi 1960 150, 159

The symbolism of gardening activities: procreative parallels

Linguistic evidence

Garden terminology implies a marked degree of identification between the garden and woman, and seems to suggest that women are perhaps more important in this activity than at first appears. The first indication of affinity is provided by the *vatuvi* spell which reoccurs throughout the ceremonial of gardening. It has as its key phrase "The belly of my garden swells as with a child."¹ This phrase suggests that there could be further associations between the garden and woman.

There is a distinct correlation in Trobriand garden terminology between the human being and the *taytu* (small yam). Like its human counterpart, the *taytu* can "wake up", "emerge", "rise", "climb up", "catch hold of", "turn round", "compete", "settle down", "recline", feel "ashamed" or even have "pimples"² In addition it can "hear", and has a "throat", an "eye", a "head" and a "body".³ The hair covering the tuber is called *unu'unu*, a term used to describe the body hair of human male and female.⁴ Perhaps the most explicit symbolic equation of *taytu* and human life lies in the expression: "*taytu latu-la buyagu*, '*taytu* is the child of the garden' ".⁵

That woman is symbolically represented in gardening is further suggested by the fact that the garden corners are referred to as *nunula*, meaning nipple or breast.⁶ *Nunu* also means the human breast, nipple or mother's milk.⁷ The garden (*buyagu*) or cultivated portion of land within an enclosure is referred to as having *lopou-la*, a "belly" or "inside".⁸

The garden thus appears to be symbolically linked with the human belly as distinct from the uncut bush (*odila*⁹). A specific area of ground surrounding the village stile is termed *mile'ula* – "clean of pollution" or excretion.¹⁰ The Trobriand garden could thus be associated with woman and her sexual or procreative powers, with the "belly" possibly representing the womb. Since the garden is a working area for the sub-clan, and *nunu* can mean "same *dala*" (sub-clan),¹¹ it is possible that matrilineal features are interwoven in the metaphorical fabric.

As a tentative hypothesis I also suggest that there may be a link between the garden stile and the female genital area. That the garden stile (*kalapisila*, its stile) may have sexual overtones is suggested by the expression for ejaculation: *ipisi kala momona* (it spurts out his semen),¹² the word *momona* being used for both male and female sexual discharge.¹³ The stile facing the village (*o valu*) has greater significance in the gardening ceremonial than that on the far side facing the bush;¹⁴ the word might also be related to *valulu* or childbirth.¹⁵ Although linguistic parallels are often striking, the conjectural nature of the latter two examples should be noted.

The theme of human female procreation also seems to pertain to the large yams (*kuvi*) and taro. Certain large yams have female-male associations. The verb *kopo'i* describes the process of extracting the large yams from the ground. It means "to take into one's arms" and refers to "the hugging and nursing of a little child".¹⁶ With similar tenderness should the newly-born large yam be handled.

Garden terminology thus suggests a symbolic parallel between the cultivated garden area and the parturient woman, with the *taytu* being regarded as the child. This is in keeping with Oliver's statement that "men do not prize food for its nutrition value alone; they raise it to symbol status, endow it with prestige, and use it as one of their most sacred ritual paraphernalia".¹⁷ Based on this postulate, a detailed investigation follows in which gardening activities, spells and magical objects used in the ritual are examined for further evidence of symbolism relating to woman.

Sexual congress and conception

At the beginning of the gardening cycle, each man ratifies his right of ownership over a plot of land by clearing a pathway into this area. "This process of penetration, *sunini*" serves to corroborate the land decisions

reached in the gardening council and to open up each plot for the future performance of magic.¹⁸ In Vakuta it is described as cutting open the belly of the garden.¹⁹ If the cultivated plot represents the womb (belly) of woman, the action of the man in identifying a plot as his own may be understood as an act of "opening the way" for conception.

In the inaugural ceremony the garden magician receives fish from the village men.²⁰ This he apportions to the women who prepare it for a village dinner. Eating is an act of intimacy and may have sexual overtones: it is forbidden between unmarried couples in the Trobriands, as amongst certain other peoples.²¹ Thus the public fact of the village males and females sharing a meal seems to signal some kind of unity amongst this group of people and between the sexes.

The garden magician presents a food-offering to the ancestral spirits and requests their sanction for the gardening venture.²² It seems feasible to ask whether this act merely links human and plant fertility or whether it has particular implications for woman. The question will be borne in mind as the ceremonial is further investigated.

After the meal the garden magician intones the *vatuvi* (show the way) spell over a magical mixture surrounding the axe blades brought to him by the men. This magical power is enveloped in a piece of dried banana leaf; in this way the formula permeates the magical paraphernalia overnight.²³

The *vatuvi* is pre-eminent amongst Trobriand gardening spells. Not a single important ritual is enacted without its recitation.²⁴ It is chanted at the inaugural garden ceremony, the burning ritual, erection of the *kamkokola* (magical prismatic construction), thinning of the tubers, and the *tum* (main) harvest of *taytu*.²⁵ In addition it is spoken in abridged form at the insertion of the good sapling, a ceremony aimed at imbuing the soil with fertility, and in the preparatory ceremony of the main harvest (*okwala*).²⁶

The following is an abridged version of the *vatuvi* formula:

Show the way, show the way...
 Show the way groundwards, into the deep ground...
 Show the way firmly, show the way to the firm moorings.

O grandfathers of the name of Polu, O grandfathers of the name of Koleko...
 Mulabwoyta... Purayasi... and thou, new spirit, my grandfather Mwakenywa,

and thou my father Yowana.

The belly of my garden leavens,
 The belly of my garden rises,
 The belly of my garden reclines,
 The belly of my garden grows to the size of a bush-hen's nest,
 The belly of my garden grows like an ant-hill;
 The belly of my garden rises and is bowed down,
 The belly of my garden rises like the iron-wood palm,
 The belly of my garden lies down,
 The belly of my garden swells,
 The belly of my garden swells as with a child.
 I sweep away...

The spell ends with a repetition of the opening three stanzas:

Show the way...
 The belly of my garden swells as with a child...
 I sweep away!²⁷

An analysis of spell content is necessary since the ethnographer maintains that the Trobrianders believe magical power resides principally in the spell.²⁸ Furthermore, noting the centrality of this formula to the crucial ritual events in the cycle of gardening, and the fact that no other spell achieves such prominence, it is appropriate to scrutinize its imagery. Malinowski asserts that the exordium is the most important and sacred part of a spell.²⁹ It is this opening ("Show the way ... The belly of my garden swells as with a child; I sweep away") that is of principal concern here.

The relevance of the ancestral spirits to bounteous growth in the garden has already been implied in the food-offering at the commencement of the inaugural garden ceremony. They reappear as powerful forces in the *vatuvi* formula, able to guarantee the fecundity of the gardens. The list of ancestors exhorted affirms the garden magician's charter and ability to direct the procreative process of the sub-clan's garden.

The garden magician's appeal to the shades "Polu ... Yowana", refers to ancestors on both the maternal and paternal sides.³⁰ A woman's sub-clan matrilineal ancestors are largely responsible for human conception and the living members of her father's sub-clan for ensuring successful development of the embryo.³¹ Just as a woman's maternal ancestors and her living father are influential in her pregnancy, so are the garden magician's maternal and paternal ancestors in underwriting

the fruitfulness of the sub-clan's garden. Robinson, who also notes the connection, observes: "Thus it seems that the Trobrianders themselves have some sort of concept of fertility — at least that they connect a woman's pregnancy with the growing of food in the gardens."³² Such a viewpoint would corroborate the opinion tentatively advanced on the meal opening the garden ritual, i.e. that both the matrilineal sub-clan and its affines are symbolically united in an intimate relationship in the horticultural magic.

Dominating the exordium which forms the core of the spell is the key expression "the belly of my garden". Picturesque similes liken its growth to an ant-hill and its swelling to a bush-hen's nest, which feature prominently in other horticultural spells.³³ The enormous bush-hen's nest strikes the Trobriand imagination both for its magnitude and connotations of gestation: these birds construct their massive mounds for brooding.³⁴ Malinowski records that the nest is linked with the *taytu* plant which swells when it has many tubers.³⁵

The "belly" of the garden "rises" and "lies down". The imagery is that of heaving, fullness, growing, and the tumescent manifestations of pregnancy, ending with: "The belly of my garden swells as with a child." Malinowski states that the opening of the spell conveys the idea of firmness and permanence for the crops.³⁶ He concedes that "the belly of my garden" may refer to the soil's fecundity, but emphatically denies that the phrase bears any reference to animal or human fertility.³⁷ In support of his argument he says: *lopou-la* (belly his) and *o lopou-la* (in belly his) has become a way of saying "inside".³⁸ His informants, however, explain that "*taytu* is the child of the garden".³⁹

The evidence thus suggests that the belly not only refers literally to the inside of the soil but metaphorically to the procreative function of woman. Tambiah also disagrees with Malinowski's dogmatic insistence that "the belly of my garden" has no metaphoric allusions: "Because of his commitment to his emotional and pragmatic view of language, Malinowski failed to connect the symbolism of the inaugural garden magic with the pregnancy ritual..."⁴⁰

The *vatuvi* formula proceeds with a lengthy exorcism of nefarious agents which would harm the growing *taytu*:

The grubs I sweep, I sweep away ... insects I blow, I blow away... The beetle that bores I drive, I drive off, begone... The marking blight, I send, I send off, begone... The blight that shines, I chase, I chase away, begone...⁴¹

With similar intention, spells are uttered over the Trobriand woman during gestation. These are meant both for her protection and to secure the sound development of the foetus.^{4 2} The peroration re-emphasizes the theme of enceince by repeating the first part of the formula: "Show the way... The belly of my garden swells as with a child..."^{4 3}

Thus the important *vatuvi* spell appears closely associated with propagation and the positive growth of the embryo, using as its vehicle of expression a human female metaphor. On each occasion when it is intoned it is the essential spell of the ceremony.^{4 4} It is concerned with the protection and sound development of the unborn *taytu*, just as the spells and rites of pregnancy are concerned with the human foetus.

The men's axes, which will be used at the ceremony of the bad and good sapling, are infused with this spell of plenty, and are also surrounded by fertility substances aimed at enhancing the magical effect of the ceremony. Throughout the gardening ceremonies the magician uses these fundamental accoutrements for the beneficial effect they exercise on the *taytu*.^{4 5} A strip of banana leaf is attached to each axe-blade as well as a specially prepared magical mixture containing leaves of creepers and a white rhizome, a portion of the spherical hornets' nest, earth from the bush-hen's nest, chalk from coral boulders, white petals of an aromatic pandanus, pieces of a plant with fragrant flowers, and above all coconut leaves.^{4 6}

Some ingredients selected for the magic of the gardens and in particular this first rite, have connotations of fruitfulness, luxuriance, sound development, durability, desirable colour and shape.^{4 7} Clearly there is an element of sympathetic magic here, whereby a creeper with verdant foliage is utilized to enhance the growth of the *taytu* vine or parts of a large hornets' nest to obtain bulging *taytu*. But one may discern a further symbolic dimension.

Just as the *vatuvi* (show the way) spell contains the theme of roundness, so the choice of magical items such as chalk from large coral boulders and parts of the *sasoka* tree which has huge, globular fruit,^{4 8} reiterate the significance of the convex shape for gardening.

The magical objects are wrapped in the leaves of a banana palm which is characterized by a thick trunk bulging toward its base.^{4 9} These palms are owned by women, and women's skirts are made from these same leaves.^{5 0} Connotations of roundness linked with femininity are apparent, and there is a further connection with maternity. The Trobriand

mother's pregnancy mantle also consists of banana leaves.^{5 1} The white petals of a species of pandanus, *kaybwibwi*, known for its long aerial roots, is included in the magical mixture.^{5 2} A derivation, *nukaybwibwi*, refers to long, pendant (human) breasts.^{5 3}

There is a widespread tendency in social life for colour to affirm a relationship between objects and ideas.^{5 4} Thus, in Trobriand gardening ritual, leaves of a small bush plant (*ubwara*) with attractive long white tubers^{5 5} are chosen to promote similar properties in the *taytu* tubers, as are the white petals mentioned above. Whiteness in *taytu* is a sign of excellence: those of good quality are referred to as "white" and those of bad quality as "black".^{5 6}

The same value judgements pertain to people. In Trobriand ideology whiteness is an indication of human beauty; it occurs extensively in the pregnancy ceremony.^{5 7} At the first pregnancy rites parts of plants associated with whiteness feature as magical substances: for example white plumed birds are invoked in the spells.^{5 8} It would thus seem that whiteness of the magical items used for the first inaugural gardening rite is metaphorically linked with the pregnancy ceremony. The prerequisite of whiteness in the pregnancy ceremony^{5 9} is not only allied to concepts of the beauty of motherhood but also to symbolic purity: " 'If a woman does not wash and anoint, and if her skin is black, people will say this woman is very bad, she has men in her mind, she does not look after her confinement... when her skin is white... she does not think about adultery.' "^{6 0}

The pandanus, with its breast-like aerial roots, is also incorporated in the catalogue of magical items on account of the appealing aroma of its white petals, as is the *kubila* plant.^{6 1} The probability that such substances are linked symbolically with the *taytu* in more than a superficial sense seems borne out by the fact that fragrance is considered a desirable attribute during the first pregnancy ceremonial.^{6 2}

Finally, the prominent inclusion of coconut leaves or coconut oil in horticultural magic raises the issue of their significance. Malinowski remarks that each time he asked the main garden magician of Omarakana for a list of the magical ingredients of gardening, coconut leaves were mentioned first.^{6 3} These leaves may be used for women's skirts.^{6 4} In addition, the use of coconut oil in the first rite within the garden (together with hibiscus flowers as adornment^{6 5}) invites associations with Trobriand beauty magic which occurs as part of the pregnancy ceremo-

nial.⁶⁶ During a woman's gestation the coconut features prominently as a fertility symbol⁶⁷ and coconut oil is used by the expectant mother not only to ensure a smooth, lovely skin, but to strengthen the infant.⁶⁸

The next stage in the ceremonial sequence occurs on the morning after the magical treating of the axe blades: the men decorate themselves, receive their medicated axes, and in solemn single file follow the chief and garden magician to the principal standard plot for the performance of the rite of the bad and good sapling.⁶⁹ The fact that the gardening team consists of a core of sub-clan men led by the matrilineal head, who make for the plot belonging to the chief, indicates that the ensuing matters have implications for the sub-clan.

At the spot where the village road leads into the garden the stile will be built. Here the garden magician steps into the adjacent corner of the standard plot which is to become the main magical corner, cuts a sapling, charms it, and throws it over the boundary belt.⁷⁰ The spell identifies the bad sapling with the bush-pig — destructive and ugly. It expurgates influences that may prove alien to sound growth in the garden and hereby effects a symbolic cleansing. Bush-pigs are undesirable because of the extensive damage to crops caused by their rooting.⁷¹ But a metaphoric dimension appears, namely that of cleansing the garden and establishing its symbolic identity through the concept of purity.

In the spell recited over the bad sapling the bush-pig is linked with fighting, ugliness and "evil smells".⁷² Elsewhere we are told that sexual intercourse is taboo within the garden enclosure:⁷³ should coitus illicitly take place in or near the fields, the bush-pig would be lured by the scent, "break through the fences and destroy the gardens".⁷⁴ This may be compared with the pregnancy ceremony which stresses that improper sexual behaviour on the part of the incipient mother would jeopardize the development of the foetus and cause her skin to blacken and become ugly. The expectant mother establishes her symbolic status by associating herself with cleanliness, whiteness and beauty, particularly refraining from adultery and fruit associated with excrement.⁷⁵

Just as an adulterous union would impede the proper development of a woman's pregnancy, so illicit sex would attract the bush-pig and harm garden growth. It is submitted that the bush-pig and bad sapling therefore symbolize impurity and adultery which are anathema to the developing garden and pregnant mother.

The bad sapling is cut down with the axe that apparently represents burgeoning purity since it has been in contact with the magical substances and infused with the procreative *vatuvi* spell. It is thrown over the garden boundary to the domain of the bush-pig, associated with disorder, disturbance and unattractiveness – the bush, where defecation must also take place.⁷⁶ The sapling is thus thrown into *yosewo*, referring to uncut jungle, evil influences and the bush-pig.⁷⁷ The term is extended to all that is lifeless and useless and thrown on a rubbish heap.⁷⁸ Significantly the garden area surrounding the stile is termed *mile'ula*, clean of pollution (including excrement).

Such contrasts and analogies are in line with others occurring in Oceania.⁷⁹ For instance, the Orokaiva of the Northern District of Papua identify the garden and taro with the female, while the male is associated with the bush and bush-pig.⁸⁰ The North Luzon Ilongot link the garden, woman and domestic pig, contrasting them with the forest, man and bush-pig.⁸¹ It is noteworthy that to the Kiwai Papuans of New Guinea, bush-pigs are a symbol of fighting and, as in the Trobriands, are attracted by sexual intercourse.⁸²

It thus seems feasible to consider the bush-pig as a symbol of disorder or adultery in the Trobriands. The act of the bad sapling, though ostensibly aimed at magically discouraging the hazard of bush-pigs, thus symbolically identifies the condition of the garden with that of a pregnant woman.

The garden magician now cuts a second sapling (which stood next to the first), inserts it into the ground at the place of the prospective *kamkokola* (magical prismatic construction), and sits beside it in the manner of a woman.⁸³ He sways his body and the sapling from right to left whilst reciting the brief *kayowota* (*yowota* sapling) spell:

I cut my garden; with my charmed axe, I make the belly of my garden blossom. My garden rises, it stands up on that side; it rises, it stands up on this side.⁸⁴

Still sitting with buttocks on the earth, the garden magician uproots a handful of weeds and with swaying motion rubs the ground whilst reciting the *yowota* (prepare the soil) formula.⁸⁵ This formula⁸⁶ has as its kernel "the belly of my garden" theme, which forms part of the *vatuvi* spell.⁸⁷

Who sits down and blesses on all sides within the tabooed grove of Yema?

It is I... we anoint it with coconut cream, we make the *taytu* vine grow up quick and straight in the tabooed grove of Yema.

The belly of my garden lifts,
 The belly of my garden rises,
 The belly of my garden reclines,
 The belly of my garden grows to the size of a bush-hen's nest,
 The belly of my garden grows like an ant-hill,
 The belly of my garden rises and is bowed down,
 The belly of my garden rises like the iron-wood palm,
 The belly of my garden lies down,
 The belly of my garden swells,
 The belly of my garden swells as with a child.

The planting of the sapling is said to instil fecundity into the soil while the rubbing of the ground makes the earth soft.^{8 8}

In both the *kayowota* and *yowota* spells the recurrent image is one of projected tumescence and growth. The *kayowota* is particularly suggestive of penetration, since the garden magician "cuts" the sapling and inserts it in the garden, the cutting being associated with fertility (*talala* = to cut into flower, make blossom by cutting^{8 9}). The allied *yowota* spell takes up this theme and conveys prophetic affirmations concerning fertility – the garden "swells as with a child" – the whole verse, lifted out of the *vatuvi* formula, repeating the imagery of gestation in the garden.^{9 0} In addition the *yowota* formula refers to the anointing of the tabooed grove with coconut oil,^{9 1} which substance is also applied to the pregnant woman.^{9 2} The garden as tabooed area, and pregnant woman in a symbolically apart state, are thus conjoined through the common element of the coconut.

The intention of the act of the good sapling is to imbue the earth with soft fecundity.^{9 3} The Kurokaywa (northern Kiriwina) version is particularly vivid. "The cutting of the bad stick is to drive away evil influences and to make the earth fertile. The good stick is a symbol of fertility, and the rubbing of the ground with the leaves is to make the soil good. The whole ceremony... is meant to instil the vital forces of fertility into the earth."^{9 4}

In view of the preceding symbolic allusions to sexuality and procreation it should be considered whether the rite of the good sapling has sexual

connotations. Trobriand theories of conception maintain that an ancestor of the same sub-clan as a woman is rejuvenated and reincarnated by being placed in the woman by another ancestor spirit, usually also one of her own sub-clan.⁹⁵ It is believed that a woman's vagina must be dilated by mechanical or sexual means to allow insertion of the spirit child (*waywaya/waiwaia*) by the ancestral spirit,⁹⁶ the father's role being "to keep open the way' by sexual intercourse". (It should however be noted that Malinowski regards the belief in insertion through the vagina⁹⁸ as "less authoritative" than that in insertion through the head.⁹⁹)

There is ambiguity as to the stage of physiological pregnancy reached when the spirit child is inserted. According to Malinowski menstruation stops after the coming of the spirit child;¹⁰⁰ but Austen records the view that cessation of menstruation antecedes the insertion: pregnancy as we know it is already advanced, the breasts having begun to swell.¹⁰¹ Despite uncertainty as to the exact time of "foetal" insertion, and variation in details of the beliefs, what they have in common is the idea that a spirit child is implanted into a woman.

It would therefore seem that the good sapling, which is directed into the garden and empowered with generative growth, represents the phallus or some mechanical agent symbolically penetrating and preparing the female for the reception of the foetus.

The problem of the substance with which the ground is rubbed remains unanswered. The ethnography is unclear: Malinowski in one place states that it is rubbed with "weeds",¹⁰² yet elsewhere it is said to be rubbed with "magical herbs".¹⁰³ If the latter is correct then the garden magician could be imbuing the earth with the procreative magical mixture associated with pregnancy. The weeds or herbs could symbolize semen, which is believed to assist in coagulating the menstrual flow.¹⁰⁴

During the symbolic acts of "cutting" and rubbing the soil the garden magician adopts the sitting position of women, *sipuyatayle*.¹⁰⁵ Malinowski emphasizes the female nature of the act, explaining that this stance is purposely adopted to honour the two women who, according to tradition, originated the magic of the fields in Omarakana.¹⁰⁶ This is acceptable and need not conflict with the interpretation offered of the garden perceived as a woman whose vagina is opened in the magical act of the good sapling. Tambiah moreover points out that the garden

magician's behaviour of sitting flat on the ground with buttocks touching it is not only a feminine act, but together with his food taboos, presents him as simulating a pregnant woman.¹⁰⁷

I hold that the garden magician's symbolic behaviour is not unequivocally female, and that he also manifests male behaviour such as penetration. A single rite out of the whole gardening sequence seems insufficient for ascribing purely female symbolic significance to the garden magician's role.¹⁰⁸ However, the important point for the present purpose is that the garden magician serves as a polysemic symbolic medium¹⁰⁹ enacting the drama of fertility.

At the end of this rite of symbolic penetration the garden magician rises, strikes the soil with his wand of office and utters the *kaylepa* spell:

I strike thee, O soil, open thou up and let the crops through the ground.
Shake, O soil, swell out, O soil, swell out as with a child, O soil.¹¹⁰

The men have been silent and watchful. Suddenly they scream and run to their plots with their medicated axes. Each cuts two saplings on his plot (*baleko*) dealing with them in like manner to the garden magician. Every man also clears the scrub in the corner of the plot on which the magical prismatic construction will later be erected. The garden magician's acolytes repeat only the *yowota* (prepare the soil) formula referring to the swelling of "the belly of my garden" on each plot, the soil being rubbed with weeds.¹¹¹

The injunction given to the soil in the *kaylepa* spell is so blatant and analogous to the process of gestation and birth that it requires little additional comment, except to point out that the words simulate pregnancy and anticipate parturition. That the garden magician now uses the hereditary wand of office also suggests references to matrilineality, for he wields it as the living descendant and representative of the founders of the sub-clan.¹¹² The men thus convert the soil into a symbolic condition resembling that of a pregnant woman. By being the actors, they indicate their relationship with the productive capacity of the soil. This association with the soil continues throughout the horticultural cycle and has particular relevance to the female members of the sub-clan who receive the finest produce of the garden in the form of *urigubu* (matrimonial harvest gifts).¹¹³

After the rite of the bad and good sapling, the scrub is cut and left to dry; during this time the annual feast of *Milamala* takes place. This celebration pertains to the return to the villages of their sub-clan by the ancestral spirits. Austen suggests that the term *Milamala* could be based on the root *mila* = to simulate; Malinowski thinks *mala* might be an alternative to *malia* (= plenty).¹¹⁴ *Milamala* is characterized by food distributions and an intensification of feasting, gaiety, reciprocal visiting, sexual indulgence and, above all, dancing.¹¹⁵ The Trobriand dancing period may only commence once the village drums have been consecrated. The drums are of phallic nature: they are called *kupi*, a ribald synonym for the glans penis.¹¹⁶ At the termination of *Milamala* the period of mourning for the deceased is lifted.¹¹⁷

Malinowski regards *Milamala* as a harvest festival.¹¹⁸ But this does not explain why there is such an emphasis on Life, and why it is timed to occur between the ceremony of inauguration, with its apparent symbolic association of the garden with a purified female, whose "way" has been opened, and that of burning the fields.

Lanternari interprets the festival as a "neurosis" whose main features — sexual orgies and festivities for the dead — serve as a trigger mechanism for pent-up anxiety.¹¹⁹ To him it appears that *Milamala* represents a crisis at a critical period of uncertainty in the Trobriand horticultural year, i.e. the interlude between the end of one harvest and the beginning of work for the next.¹²⁰ His statement with regard to the timing of *Milamala* is not quite accurate, for work in the gardens has in fact started, though the planting period is yet to be inaugurated.¹²¹ Since the present study pertains to the role of women in Trobriand horticulture, it is not in place to evaluate Lanternari's argument in detail. It is necessary, however, to bear in mind his viewpoint. *Milamala* may be psychologically ambivalent, reminding people of their fallibility and mortality,¹²² yet perennially affirming abundance and the renewal of life.

In order to understand *Milamala* more fully we should consider the myth of its origin:

A woman died and some time later her pregnant daughter bore a son. The new mother, with insufficient milk for her infant, requested a dying man to ask her mother on arrival in the land of the spirits, to bring her grandson food. The spirit woman complied, brought food and roasted a yam for her grandson. She went to the bush and prepared a garden for her daughter and then proceeded to the house, but her daughter took fright and told her mother to return to the spirit land as people would not recognize her and would

regard her as a witch. The spirit woman left, saying that once a year she and the other spirits would return invisibly to the villages at *Milamala* to see the people.¹²³

This myth is matrilineal (mother, daughter, son). It is concerned with death and hunger on the one hand and life and food on the other. It links the fate of produce with that of people, for the earth has no food, just as the mother has no milk. It appears reasonable, as Lanternari points out, that in this myth "the mother who lacks milk is the mythological symbol of the earth that does not yield food... The connection between the cycle of human life and the cycle of plant life finds its most open expression in the perfect coincidence of the planting of the garden, the birth of the baby and the beginning of the new year."¹²⁴ Though the coincidence is imperfect, it is close enough to suggest a correlation between yam and human life, and the relevance of woman and the ancestral spirits to the rejuvenation of life in the garden and the sub-clan.

Although it may emphasize the periodic experience of mortal danger by human death or plant dearth, *Milamala* sanctions yearly regeneration. *Milamala* does not appear to be only a harvest festival to celebrate the people's joy in overflowing storehouses, or to illustrate their desire for a worthy new crop, though such feelings may play their part. Symbolically, it seems to reveal themes of courtship, life and fertility; and in this context the presence of the ancestral spirits has important implications.

At *Milamala* the ancestral spirits (*baloma*) are feasted and welcomed to their sub-clan village.¹²⁵ They appear to be linked with the prosperity of the village and crops,¹²⁶ with the resurgence of life for mourners, and in the myth with the bringing of food to their living kinsfolk. This should be considered along with Trobriand dogma attributing human conception to a visitation by the ancestral spirits. Taking into account these factors, together with the timing of *Milamala* (after the opening of the garden and antecedent to burning), it is proposed that *Milamala* could be a festival celebrating the rebirth of life. The ancestors revisit their sub-clan villages, just as they revisit their female matrilineal representatives to bring them spirit children. They could also signal the rebirth of *taytu* as is suggested by the subsequent horticultural ceremony.

Burning is an accepted practical horticultural procedure amongst many swidden farmers.¹²⁷ The Trobrianders maintain that the soil would become sterile and infertile if they did not burn the leaves.¹²⁸ This is a

logical pragmatic statement, for inorganic nutrients are hereby added to the soil.¹²⁹

Malinowski's description concerning the presence of women at the burning ceremonials is rather loose. It is stated that anyone, "even women", may attend, and yet that only those with special permission would participate.¹³⁰ A distinct order that people are to remain in the village is in fact given; moreover, only the chief's eldest wife is designated as being a party to the ceremonial entourage.¹³¹ In Malinowski's earlier notes he states that men and women participate in the burning ceremony, with the garden magician's sister or daughter playing a specific part.¹³² What is noteworthy is that burning apparently requires the presence of at least one woman for the first time in the magical proceedings of gardening, even though the degree of her involvement remains uncertain. Since she is married to, or part of, the matrilineal subclan represented by the garden magician, the activities will probably be relevant to this social group.

The Trobrianders hold the burning observances in high regard. Extensive rites are involved which suggest the possibility of a metaphoric dimension.¹³³ At the outset of the burning ceremony the garden magician and his helpers set the scrub ablaze with magical torches made of coconut leaves preserved from the previous harvest. At that time the garden magician permeated these with the powerful *vatuvi* spell.¹³⁴ On the second day he places some substances and torches on a mat. The torches again contain dried coconut sprouts and around the end of each is tied a strip of banana leaf.¹³⁵ Once more he utters the *vatuvi* formula: "The belly of my garden leavens... The belly of my garden reclines... The belly of my garden grows to the size of a bush-hen's nest..." and folds over the banana leaf to contain the magical essence.¹³⁶ The garden magician and his acolytes prepare magical heaps of sticks, branches and weeds on the standard plots. After a while he lights a medicated torch and sets fire to the refuse heaps which have been constructed on the standard plots, the ritual representative following his example on the other plots.¹³⁷

On the third day the garden magician and his helpers, who carry taro tops, set out for the standard plots. Over the largest of the taro the garden magician utters a spell which, except for the opening line, is identical to that of the bad sapling,¹³⁸ expurgating malign influences. Then he plants this taro at the corner of the standard plot previously cleared (i.e. that adjacent to the village stile). The assistants treat the other

plots accordingly.¹³⁹

On the fourth day, in the final ceremony of the burning, the garden magician plants a yam tuber of the type *kwanada* at the corner of the standard plot which is the focus for magical activity. Before the planting he squats at this corner, holds the tuber close to his mouth and in a brief spell orders it to grow.¹⁴⁰ Afterwards he takes a taro top from an assistant. This he gently charms, encouraging it to swell, then plants it.¹⁴¹ Again, all plots are similarly treated.¹⁴² These burning rites seem to relate woman and her procreative properties to the horticultural cycle. The banana, coconut leaf and the *vatuvi* formula all appear again in the firing. The repeated use of the banana leaf indicates continuity of the concept of female fertility evident in the inaugural garden ceremony.¹⁴³

The magical torches are composed of coconut fronds ostensibly for the purpose of sympathetic magic.¹⁴⁴ Yet the choice of these leaves is striking, and indicates that the symbolism could be functioning on different planes. The coconut leaves have been magically loaded by the *vatuvi* spell with pullulatory energy at harvest.¹⁴⁵ There is, in addition, the belief that the prosperity of the harvest is hereby conveyed and quality instilled into the new crop.¹⁴⁶

But as was submitted in discussing the inaugural garden ceremony, the coconut in gardening magic could be associated with human fertility, for it plays a noteworthy part in the ceremonial of gestation. The magical torches made of coconut leaf could again have symbolic connotations of fecundity. What is more, they have for some months been imbued with the pivotal spell of gardening (*vatuvi*) which has as its focus of interest the successful maturation of the *taytu*. It would therefore appear that the procreative theme is clearly enunciated in the horticultural magic by repetition and incorporation of the *vatuvi* spell in key magical acts.

The banana, the coconut and the images of the *vatuvi*, connoting fertility, could be some of the main elements uniting the process of gardening with that of human pregnancy. Fire may provide another symbolic link. As in other parts of New Guinea,¹⁴⁷ fire in the Trobriands is intimately associated with womanhood, for its origin lies in the vagina of a culture heroine.¹⁴⁸ And, as elsewhere,¹⁴⁹ fire is a dominant protective feature of pregnancy customs in the Trobriands. As part of Trobriand puerperal rituals, the parturient mother must sit naked over a fire. This

is said to be propitious for childbirth, a deterrent of black magic and a cleansing process.¹⁵⁰ The ceremonial application of fire on the garden seems connected with its use in pregnancy. It may thus symbolically cleanse and engender fecundity in the fields. What emerges from the second firing (specifically of refuse) is not only the continued projection of fertility upon the garden but, by the use of fire, the conferring of symbolic purity on the plot or womb.

The action of the garden magician in relation to planting the *kwanada* yam at the magical corner of the standard plot may be interpreted as simulating the ancestor inserting the human foetus into the womb. Such an interpretation is consistent with the Trobriand belief that an ancestral spirit (*baloma*) who belongs to the same sub-clan as a woman, brings a spirit child and inserts it into her. The standard plot usually belongs to the village chief or garden magician (who is often one and the same person), or some other member of the dominant sub-clan. The garden magician is the recognized matrilineal representative of the ancestors who founded the sub-clan. He now apparently mimics the ancestral role with regard to the women of the sub-clan by causing the soil to conceive.

The incorporation of taro in this and a later *taytu* ceremonial¹⁵¹ raises questions as to its meaning which cannot be ignored. Austen postulates that the presence of taro in *taytu* ritual is the result of its being the older Trobriand crop.¹⁵² Malinowski deals cursorily with the problem, also attributing historical priority to taro cultivation in the Trobriands.¹⁵³ The documentation on existing taro magic is too inconclusive to pass judgement as to whether this magic is a vestige of former taro ceremonial. Another possible question concerning the presence of taro is whether it implies that the *taytu* ritual will have an effect on taro fields as well. It might be argued that the appearance of taro in the *taytu* ceremonies simultaneously ensures prophylactic protection for the taro crop; but for lack of data the question as to why it would differ from the other secondary crops remains unanswered.

The Trobriand material pertaining to taro and *taytu* does not lend itself to interpretation in terms of what Lévi-Strauss calls binary opposition, as it does in New Caledonia, where the gardening ceremonial involves distinctive symbolic groupings:

taro	yam
female	male
wet	dry. ¹⁵⁴

What should be borne in mind, however, is that taro and taro gardens may be associated with women in Oceania generally.¹⁵⁵

The first act in the gardening ceremonial in which taro is involved is called "dog's excrement".¹⁵⁶ Excrement is taboo in the garden as are excrement-associated foods to the pregnant woman.¹⁵⁷ This taro ceremony bears some affinity with that of the bad sapling in that their spells are virtually the same, and both ceremonies take place in the magical corner.¹⁵⁸ But they differ in that the bad sapling is excised from the garden whereas taro is introduced into the garden. It is probable that the bad sapling symbolizing pollution is expelled since it is not generative of growth.¹⁵⁹

The taro's symbolic function is more complex. It may be associated with blood since the weeding spell makes reference to "taro red like blood";¹⁶⁰ but the name of the act associates it with excrement. The implication appears to be that taro has some positive function to perform in the belly of the garden antecedent to its becoming waste, and thus it may be seen as non-polluting. Therefore it seems possible that this taro could be a metaphoric equivalent of female blood which has positive value before it assumes a negative form. Most Trobriand theories of conception stress the necessary presence of the mother's blood for the nourishment of the foetus.¹⁶¹ Austen notes that the mother's blood is said to change after the entrance of the spirit child.¹⁶²

Viewing this act of ceremonially planting taro in the context of the ceremony of striking the soil (purification and penetration) and that of the preceding act of burning the garden (cleansing) and the ensuing rite of planting a ceremonial yam (foetus)¹⁶³, the incorporation of taro at the magical corner next to the *kwanada* yam appears to connote the nourishment needed by the newly-planted yam, the taro being equated with the mother's blood that sustains the foetus.¹⁶⁴ This does not exclude the possibility of taro having other symbolic connotations as well.

The ceremonies governing the burning of the garden closely follow the festivities of *Milamala* in which the ancestral spirits are welcomed to their sub-clan villages, conveying the theme of the principle of life and its renewal with regard both to mankind and to the crops. In this context, it is suggested that the ceremonial firing makes the womb of the garden receptive to foetal life, symbolically implanted in the form of the *kwanada* yam. Perhaps this is why the Trobrianders consider the burning ceremony as "indispensable" to successful horticulture.¹⁶⁵

Fencing in the garden is a necessary practical activity. Oceanian ethnographers state that fences keep out bush-pigs which damage the crops.¹⁶⁶ Austen records that no-one may traverse the fence into the Trobriand garden except by using the stiles, for pigs would scent a route and enter the enclosure at that point.¹⁶⁷ Once it has been fenced, the garden visually becomes a specific entity contrasting with the bush outside, and it is signalled as being in a symbolic state of purity. No-one may enter it except at the appropriate place lest bush-pigs be attracted to the place of unlawful entry. This accords with the symbolism found in the ceremony of the bad sapling: the symbolic purity of the plot, like that of the pregnant woman, must not be endangered.

In similar vein, the Enga (Western Highlands, New Guinea) surround newly-made gardens with a fence of saplings and vines to which bits of women's aprons are tied. The influence of these is so powerful that apart from the husband no man will cross them for fear of blemishing his appearance.¹⁶⁸ Douglas has drawn attention to the symbolic importance of bodily margins allied to concepts of pollution:¹⁶⁹ it seems that the Trobriand garden fence could play a similar role in signalling the confines of femaleness.

The next event in the garden cycle concerns the erection of the *kamkokola* on the magical corner of every plot. The ceremony is associated with the erection of poles (*kavatam*) to support the *taytu* vines.¹⁷⁰ In the limited sense of the word, *kamkokola* means the pole erected vertically at the main corner of each garden plot, but the term can also refer more generally to the entire magical prismatic construction of which the *kamkokola* pole is the perpendicular, or to the similar pyramidal structures raised on the other three corners of the plot.¹⁷¹

Prior to the *kamkokola* ceremony the garden magician inserts a special stick representative of the taboo on garden work into the ground at the magical corner of every garden plot. The first day of the *kamkokola* ceremony resembles that of the inaugural garden magic.¹⁷² The identical magical substances are used and attached to the axes in a banana leaf. All the accoutrements are placed between two mats into which the garden magician reiterates the potent *vatuvi* spell:

Show the way... The belly of my garden grows to the size of a bush-hen's nest, The belly of my garden grows like an ant-hill; The belly of my garden rises and is bowed down... the blight I blow, I blow away... The belly of my garden leavens ...¹⁷³

The repetitive pattern of the symbolic actions, words and objects, as introduced in the first major ceremony of garden magic,¹⁷⁴ reinforces the imagery of conception, the burgeoning of the garden, and the necessity for continued vigilant magical protection against elements dangerous to the embryonic *taytu*.

On the second day the garden magician (or his delegates) makes a deep hole with a digging-stick at the corner of the standard plot.¹⁷⁵ A pole is rubbed with some of the standard magical mixture of gardening prepared the previous evening, and a portion is placed in the hole.¹⁷⁶ The pole is thus steeped in connotations of tumescence.¹⁷⁷ It is then secured upright in the hole; now the pole is designated *kamkokola*. Two other poles are made to rest on either side of it.¹⁷⁸ The garden magician ceremonially erects the *kamkokola* in the main corner of every plot; the other three are built by the owner himself.¹⁷⁹

It is a recognized fact that supports help develop a tall strong yam vine and produce good yields.¹⁸⁰ As horticultural practitioners the Trobrianders are aware of the correlation between the successful underground development of the tubers and the height and profusion of the vine.¹⁸¹ Malinowski nevertheless observes that the people view the *kamkokola* erections both practically and mystically, and that their work at this stage is characterized by a zealous pride in the aesthetic appearance of the structure erected.¹⁸² He comments on the feelings of satisfaction aroused in the inhabitants by the *kamkokola*.¹⁸³ Considering the present theoretical inquiry one is immediately led to wonder whether the *kamkokola* poles might have some symbolic significance, and what relevance there is in the fact that the garden magician (or his assistants) personally performs the heavy task of constructing the principal *kamkokola* on all the plots.¹⁸⁴ An examination of the events which take place on the third day of the *kamkokola* ceremony provides an indication as to their symbolic significance.

On this day the garden magician proceeds to the standard plots, his acolytes carrying the ritually treated axes and plants chosen for their capacity to induce splendid foliage or great size.¹⁸⁵ A few men accompany them. The magician squats close to the *kamkokola*, lays a bunch of leaves on the ground and, facing the *kamkokola*, recites over them so that the spell will spread over the garden, infusing the soil with its power.

Anchoring, anchoring of my garden,
 Taking deep root, taking deep root in my garden,
 Anchoring in the name of Tudava,
 Taking deep root in the name of Malita...
 I shall strike the firmly moored bottom of my *taytu*.
 It shall be anchored.

It shall be anchored...
 My soil is anchored,
 My *kamkokola*, my magical prism, shall be anchored,
 My *kavatam*, my strong yam pole, shall be anchored,
 My *kaysalu*, my branching pole, shall be anchored,
 My *kamtuya*, my stem saved from the cutting, shall be anchored,
 My *kaybudi*, my training-stick that leans against the great yam pole, shall be anchored...
 My *kaylivalova*, my tabooing-stick, shall be anchored,
 My *kayvalihuwa*, my great yam pole, shall be anchored.

It is anchored, my garden is anchored...¹⁸⁶

Once the leaves are charmed, they are inserted into the soil at the *kamkokola* pole.¹⁸⁷ The garden magician then strikes the *kamkokola* with his axe, which has been empowered with the principal gardening formula: the *vatuvi* spell,¹⁸⁸ and utters a few ritual words indicating that this is the *kamkokola* of the garden magicians. The acolytes replicate the ceremony on the other plots.¹⁸⁹ The central image of this *kamkokola* spell is one of anchoring the *taytu* and securing all the garden structures which assist its growth, until finally the garden and its contents become firmly established. In addition the cultigen is invoked to root itself with a drilling, screwing movement.¹⁹⁰

In contrast to Malinowski's interpretation that the *kamkokola* ceremony concerns the *taytu* poles (*kavatam*),¹⁹¹ Trobriand informants were emphatic that the ceremony was associated with successful planting.¹⁹² In magical sequence the *kamkokola* ceremony follows that of symbolic penetration and conception.¹⁹³ The singular size and decorative appearance of the *kamkokola* construction in the garden¹⁹⁴ and the attention it receives are meaningful. It seems possible that the triangular-shaped *kamkokola* structure is a symbolic projection of the pregnant womb. It is this vertical pole which supports the vine of the *taytu*—"foetus" (the *kwanada* yam) ceremonially implanted in the "belly of the garden" at the burning ceremony.¹⁹⁵ The vine twining up the *kamkokola* could then represent the umbilical cord conjoined to the womb.

Austen indicates that the ornamented *kamkokola* poles are inserted once planting is in progress or the *taytu* have begun to sprout.¹⁹⁶ Whether these structures antecede or follow the actual planting, there is clearly a connection between them and the planted *taytu*. Malinowski considers the *kamkokola* ceremony to be the turning point in Trobriand gardening, ending the preparatory activities inaugurating the period of growth.¹⁹⁷ In symbolic terms the *taytu*, like the human embryo, has been implanted and is about to develop.

After the *kamkokola* ceremony a short rite is conducted, aimed at preventing pests from entering the gardens.¹⁹⁸ Earth from the bush-hen's nest is mixed with a plant and burnt in the *kamkokola* corner, the mixture having first been imbued with the words:

O *nabugwa taytu*,
 O *nakoya taytu*,
 O *teyo'u* plant,
 Boil in the belly of my garden,
 Go on boiling in the corner of my garden.¹⁹⁹

This little magical act revives intentions already seen in the inaugural gardening ceremony:²⁰⁰ eradication of influences injurious to the growing trophophyte.²⁰¹ It is a theme consistently followed in the horticultural ceremonies and important to that of pregnancy.²⁰² Parts of the bush-hen's nest are now brought into direct contact with the *kamkokola*. Already incorporated in the symbolism for its connotations of hugeness and brooding,²⁰³ the bush-hen's nest is also associated with heat, a theme taken up in the spell. The "belly of my garden" image reappears and the verb "boil" is utilized, appropriately suggestive of heat, activity and movement. Heat is also relevant to the human foetus and mother in the puerperal ceremonies where it features as an aid to parturition, as a cleansing agent, and as a prophylactic against all ills that might befall the mother and child.²⁰⁴

Now the actual, as opposed to the ritual, planting of *taytu* begins. I do not attach much importance to the fact that women may help the men in planting the secondary crops,²⁰⁵ for these do not have the symbolic importance of the principal yield of *taytu*.²⁰⁶ Occasionally women will help with the main planting but essentially this is done by men.²⁰⁷ Basically planting is a practical activity: the man in a single prolonged action squats and loosens the clods of soil with his digging-stick in his right hand, while his left, "with a swift, caressing movement" sifts roots

and stones from the loosened soil. He then embeds the seed tuber.²⁰⁸

Men usually plant communally and during this time some unspecified taboos are in evidence.²⁰⁹ They also indulge in special cries, competitive challenges, and songs, forbidden at other stages of gardening. Certain planting melodies are directed at the sound development of the tubers.²¹⁰ One of the chants uttered while the work is in progress is:

"Bogina'i (name of a woman about whom nothing else is known) is recently deflowered", with the rejoinder: "But your vulva, Bomigawaga (an equally obscure female personality), over there at the corner of the fence, has for long time had a considerable circumference."²¹¹

Malinowski offers the following comment: "The obscene allusions... are connected with the planting; the deeper the soil is broken up at the planting-spot, and the more thoroughly it is worked, the better will grow the *taytu*. Hence the parallel of the sexual act. This was the interpretation given to me by my native informants."²¹²

An analogy to the abovementioned relationship of the breaking up of the soil and sexual intercourse presents itself in the Trobriand theory of procreation and of their origin as a people. The genesis myth says that the autochthonous ancestress was unable to give birth to people until her vagina had been opened or pierced, no matter by what agent.²¹³ Human conception is similarly explained.²¹⁴ A woman's vagina must be opened in order to conceive: "once opened up — in the normal course of events this is done by sexual intercourse — there is no need for male and female to come together in order to produce a child".²¹⁵ A woman who has a great deal of intercourse will have a more dilated vagina, facilitating the entrance of a spirit child.²¹⁶

It seems possible that the above "opening" action preceding the implanting of the *taytu* into the soil²¹⁷ could be a practical correlate of the symbolic dilation of the vulva of the garden (ceremony of the good sapling)²¹⁸ prior to insertion of the embryo (rite of the *kwanada yam*).²¹⁹ Since planting is primarily the activity of men, it may be seen as male penetration of the female, and the pointed digging-stick with its vigorous probing activity, as a phallic symbol. In South Pentecost (New Hebrides) it is said that "men wield the digging-sticks because the act of jabbing them into the ground is metaphorically viewed as sexual penetration".²²⁰

Reference to female genitals in the quoted planting formula in context of the corpus of horticultural spells concerned with "the belly of my garden",^{2 21} plus reference to an analogy between planting and sexual intercourse, seems to affirm male-female interaction in the process. It is open to debate whether or not such visible acknowledgement that the male has a part in preparing for insertion of the *taytu*, or foetus, indicates Trobriand awareness of the physical facts of procreation. For a fuller understanding of this important problem reference should be made to the extensive literature on the subject.^{2 22} Certainly the method of planting complements the cultural exposition of procreation, i.e. that males (or some object) must prepare the way for the insertion of the foetus into the belly or womb.^{2 23}

I think that the action of males in planting^{2 24} demonstrates a sex-linked activity and appears to recognize the male's contribution to preparations for the embryo. In a simple, personal way each male Trobriand planter re-enacts the principle presented in abstract form by the garden magician in the ceremony of the good sapling (penetration)^{2 25} and insertion of the *kwanada* yam (conception)^{2 26} with relation to the feminine earth. The cultural dogma still holds: the male prepares the way for the implantation of the foetus in the womb, and in planting he carefully embeds the *taytu* just as the ancestor would the human foetus.

My argument thus far is that not only are there linguistic associations likening the garden to woman, but that the symbolic action-patterns of the gardeners reinforce an analogy between the process of horticultural growth and that of human procreation. As with a woman, the garden must be penetrated symbolically for conception to take place; the garden formulae and magical substances used express images of tumescence and fecundity, and the burning of the gardens and concept of heat are linked with plant and human fertility and cleansing. Finally, the yam is inserted into the female earth as is a spirit child into a woman. In the next chapter I will pursue this analogous developmental process as the tuber grows and is harvested.

Notes

- 1 Malinowski 1966 I 97
- 2 Malinowski 1966 I 141-142, 154; Malinowski 1966 II 142, 163, 165, 167, 209, 281-283, 301-302, 306
- 3 Malinowski 1966 I 140-142; Malinowski 1966 II 138, 169, 171-172, 174, 209, 299

- 4 Malinowski 1966 I 172; Malinowski 1932 253
- 5 Malinowski 1966 II 263
- 6 Malinowski 1966 II 140
- 7 Malinowski 1932 254; Weiner 1976 92
- 8 Malinowski 1966 II 83–86, 144, 262
- 9 Malinowski 1966 I 76, 89, 286; Malinowski 1966 II 16, 29, 43, 68, 87, 89.
- 10 Malinowski 1966 II 139
- 11 Weiner 1976 92
- 12 Leach J.W. 1974
- 13 Malinowski 1932 142
- 14 Malinowski 1966 II 139; Malinowski 1966 I 90, 100
- 15 Cf. Malinowski 1920a 68
- 16 Malinowski 1966 II 102, 137, cf. 100
- 17 Oliver 1942a 36
- 18 Malinowski 1966 I 92–93.
- 19 Malinowski 1966 I 421
- 20 Malinowski 1966 I 93
- 21 Malinowski 1932 64, 372; Malinowski 1966 I 203; Harrington 1967 359;
Weiner 1976 171, 173, 184, 195; See e.g. Tambiah 1973 128, 131
(Thailand); Yalman 1969 91 (Sinhalese, Ceylon); Malinowski 1915 566–
567 (Mailu, New Guinea); Hunt 1899 10 (Murray Islands, Torres Straits)
- 22 Malinowski 1966 I 95–96
- 23 Malinowski 1966 I 95–96, 99; Malinowski 1966 II 257
- 24 Malinowski 1966 I 96; Malinowski 1966 II 215, 257
- 25 Malinowski 1966 I 96–98, 113, 127, 152, 170
- 26 Malinowski 1966 I 101–102, 169
- 27 Malinowski 1966 I 96–98
- 28 Malinowski 1922 403; Malinowski 1926b 112; Malinowski 1916 388
- 29 Malinowski 1966 II 258
- 30 Malinowski 1966 I 85, 468; Malinowski 1966 II 262; Robinson 1962 148–
149
- 31 Malinowski 1916 403–406; Malinowski 1932 146–149, 152, 180–196;
Robinson 1962 141–142, 144, 149
- 32 Robinson 1962 149
- 33 Malinowski 1966 I 101, 146, 169
- 34 Malinowski 1966 I 105; Malinowski 1966 II 330
- 35 Malinowski 1966 II 221
- 36 Malinowski 1966 II 262
- 37 Malinowski 1966 II 262–263
- 38 Malinowski 1966 II 262
- 39 Malinowski 1966 II 263
- 40 Tambiah 1968 195
- 41 Malinowski 1966 I 97–98
- 42 Malinowski 1932 179–190
- 43 Malinowski 1966 I 98

- 44 Malinowski 1966 II 257
 45 Malinowski 1966 I 105–106, 127, 152
 46 Malinowski 1966 I 94–95, 105–106
 47 Malinowski 1966 I 105–106
 48 Malinowski 1966 I 105–106
 49 Malinowski 1966 I 106; Malinowski 1966 II 114
 50 Malinowski 1966 I 312; Malinowski 1966 II 114; Weiner 1976 94
 51 Malinowski 1932 180
 52 Malinowski 1966 I 106
 53 Malinowski 1932 254
 54 Cf. Mauss 1972 77
 55 Malinowski 1966 I 106
 56 Malinowski 1966 I 152; cf. Munn 1971 6
 57 Malinowski 1932 181–183, 191–192, 255; cf. Tambiah 1968 203
 58 Malinowski 1932 181–184
 59 Tambiah 1968 196
 60 Malinowski 1932 191
 61 Malinowski 1966 I 106
 62 Malinowski 1932 187
 63 Malinowski 1966 I 105
 64 Malinowski 1932 256; Weiner 1976 6, 95
 65 Malinowski 1966 I 99, cf. 283
 66 Malinowski 1932 298–301
 67 Malinowski 1932 186
 68 Malinowski 1932 187, 198
 69 Malinowski 1966 I 99–100
 70 Malinowski 1966 I 99–101
 71 Malinowski 1966 II 221; Malinowski 1966 I 67; Austen 1945–46 38
 72 Malinowski 1966 I 100
 73 Malinowski 1966 I 119
 74 Malinowski 1932 415; cf. Malinowski 1966 II 178
 75 Cf. Malinowski 1932 192
 76 Malinowski 1932 375
 77 Malinowski 1966 I 99–101
 78 Malinowski 1966 II 83
 79 Cf. Barrau 1965 343–344
 80 Schwimmer 1973 162
 81 Rosaldo & Atkinson 1975 56
 82 Landtman 1917 340, 391; cf. Saviile 1926 173 (Mailu, New Guinea)
 83 Malinowski 1966 I 101
 84 Malinowski 1966 I 101
 85 Malinowski 1966 II 158
 86 Malinowski 1966 I 101
 87 19–20 above
 88 Malinowski 1966 I 101–102
 89 Malinowski 1966 II 158
 90 21–22 above

- 91 Malinowski 1966 II 268–269
 92 24 above
 93 Malinowski 1966 I 101–102
 94 Malinowski 1966 I 280
 95 Weiner 1976 121; Malinowski 1920c 805; Malinowski 1924 298; Malinowski 1929 402; Austen 1934 107–108
 96 Malinowski 1932 154; Malinowski 1916 412; Austen 1934 102, 105
 97 Rentoul 1931 154
 98 Malinowski 1916 403
 99 Malinowski 1932 149
 100 Malinowski 1932 149, cf. 179
 101 Austen 1934 103, 108–110; cf. Powell 1956 277
 102 Malinowski 1966 I 101, 107; Malinowski 1966 II 268
 103 Malinowski 1966 II 254; Malinowski 1966 I 280
 104 Cf. Powell 1969b 603
 105 Malinowski 1966 II 254
 106 Malinowski 1966 I 101
 107 Tambiah 1968 197
 108 Tambiah 1968 197; cf. Malinowski 1922 413–414, 419; Malinowski 1966 I 447
 109 Cf. Turner 1969 37, 48, 51
 110 Malinowski 1966 I 102
 111 Malinowski 1966 I 102
 112 Cf. Malinowski 1916 387; Malinowski 1966 I 93, 99; Malinowski 1966 II 148.
 113 Malinowski 1933 157; Powell 1953 13
 114 Austen 1945–46 28; Malinowski 1966 II 119
 115 Malinowski 1916 370–374, 378, 384; Malinowski 1932 211; Powell 1953 12
 116 Malinowski 1916 372, 380 n.1, n.3
 117 Malinowski 1916 382
 118 Malinowski 1916 371; Malinowski 1927a 213; cf. Baldwin 1945 201
 119 Lanternari 1955 406, 409, 417, 419
 120 Lanternari 1955 416–417
 121 9–10 above
 122 Lanternari 1955 416–417, 419
 123 Malinowski 1926b 96–97
 124 Lanternari 1955 419 (translated from Italian)
 125 Malinowski 1926b 99–100; Malinowski 1916 370, 376–378, 384; Powell 1953 14
 126 Cf. Malinowski 1916 376–379; Malinowski 1966 I 468
 127 Beattie 1964 185; Brookfield & Brown 1963 165; cf. e.g. Williamson 1912 195 (Mafulu, New Guinea); Gitlow 1947 62 (Mount Hagen Tribes, New Guinea); Conklin 1954 198 (Yagaw Hanunóo, Philippines)
 128 Malinowski 1966 I 77, 110; cf. Conklin 1957 64, 71 (Yagaw Hanunóo, Philippines); Freeman 1955 44 (Iban, Sarawak)
 129 Gourou 1958 26–27, 31; Watters 1960 81; Coursey 1967 69; Conroy 1953 26; Spate 1953 170 (New Guinea)

- 130 Malinowski 1966 I 112, 281
 131 Malinowski 1966 I 111
 132 Malinowski 1966 I 274
 133 Malinowski 1966 I 112–115
 134 Malinowski 1966 I 111, 170; Powell 1953 3
 135 Malinowski 1966 I 112–113
 136 Malinowski 1966 I 113
 137 Malinowski 1966 I 113
 138 Malinowski 1966 I 113–114; cf. Malinowski 1966 I 100
 139 Malinowski 1966 I 114
 140 Malinowski 1966 I 114
 141 Malinowski 1966 I 114–115
 142 Malinowski 1966 I 115
 143 22 above
 144 Malinowski 1966 I 116
 145 Cf. Malinowski 1966 I 170
 146 Malinowski 1966 I 116
 147 Forge 1970 274 n.5 (Abelam); Van Baal 1966 273 (Marind-Anim); Seligmann & Giblin 1910 379–380 (Wagawaga); Frazer 1930 44–45 (Dobu, D'Entrecasteaux Archipelago); Speiser 1923 238 (Melanesia)
 148 Malinowski 1927a 205; Malinowski 1927b 115; Frazer 1930 48–49
 149 E.g. Hough 1926 174; Skeat 1900 342–343 (Malays); Cole 1945 116, 154–155, 280 (Malaysia)
 150 Malinowski 1932 194–197
 151 Malinowski 1966 I 145, 165–166
 152 Austen 1945–46 42
 153 Malinowski 1966 I 119, 459, 469–470; cf. Barrau 1965 331, cf. 340
 154 Leenhardt 1937 63
 155 E.g. Burkill 1951 446; Mason 1968 317 (Ulithi, Micronesia); Lane 1965 259 (South Pentecost, New Hebrides); Hogbin 1934 410 (Ontong Java); Hogbin 1935 319 (Wogeo Island, Schouten Group); Schwimmer 1973 117 (Orskaiva, Papua); Oliver 1942a 35 (Nagovisi, Bougainville); Mead 1934 378 (Arapesh New Guinea); Kaberry 1941 354, 363 (Abelam, New Guinea); Williamson 1912 63, 198 (Mafulu, New Guinea)
 156 Malinowski 1966 I 113
 157 Malinowski 1966 I 119; Malinowski 1932 192
 158 Malinowski 1966 I 114, cf. 100
 159 24–25 above
 160 Malinowski 1966 I 145
 161 Malinowski 1932 149; Powell 1956 277; Austen 1934 108–109
 162 Austen 1934 109
 163 28–33 above
 164 Malinowski 1932 149; but cf. Montague 1971 359
 165 Malinowski 1966 I 112
 166 E.g. Powell 1953 4 (Trobriand Islands); Newton 1914 44, 122 (New Guinea); Saville 1926 172 (Mailu, New Guinea); Riley 1925 93 (Kiwai, New Guinea); Kaberry 1941 350 (Abelam, New Guinea); Hogbin 1938 134

(Wogeo Island, Schouten Group); Oliver 1942b [180] (Bougainville, Solomon Islands); Coombe 1911 4 (Raga, Pentecost); Humphreys 1926 63–64 (southern New Hebrides)

- 167 Austen 1945–46 38
 168 Meggitt 1958 308
 169 Douglas 1966 145
 170 Malinowski 1966 I 124, 131, cf. 470 n.14
 171 Malinowski 1966 I 123–124, 127–128; Malinowski 1966 II 161
 172 Malinowski 1966 I 125–127
 173 Malinowski 1966 I 96–98
 174 19–21 above
 175 Malinowski 1966 I 127; cf. 64, 286
 176 Malinowski 1966 I 127–128
 177 22–23 above
 178 Malinowski 1966 I 127–128
 179 Malinowski 1966 I 127–128
 180 Coursey 1967 83–84; Alexander & Coursey 1969 407; Galang 1920 71–72; Mahoney & Lawrence 1959 4 (Ponape, Micronesia)
 181 Malinowski 1966 I 129
 182 Malinowski 1966 I 59, 77, 128–129
 183 Malinowski 1966 I 123–124, 128
 184 Cf. Malinowski 1966 I 128
 185 Malinowski 1966 I 129
 186 Malinowski 1966 I 129–130
 187 Malinowski 1966 I 130
 188 19–20 above
 189 Malinowski 1966 I 130–131
 190 Malinowski 1966 II 277
 191 Cf. 35 above
 192 Malinowski 1966 I 124, 131
 193 28, 33 above
 194 Malinowski 1922 59
 195 32–33 above; Malinowski 1966 I 128
 196 Austen 1945–46 39
 197 Malinowski 1966 I 132
 198 Malinowski 1966 I 131–132
 199 Malinowski 1966 I 131
 200 19, 21 above
 201 Malinowski 1966 I 132
 202 21–25 above
 203 21 above
 204 32–33 above; Malinowski 1932 194–197
 205 Malinowski 1966 I 123, 125
 206 6 above
 207 Malinowski 1966 I 79, 134
 208 Malinowski 1966 I 133–134

- 209 Malinowski 1966 I 125
 210 Malinowski 1966 I 125, 134–135
 211 Malinowski 1966 I 135–136
 212 Malinowski 1966 I 136
 213 Mackay 1909 70; Murray 1912 123; Malinowski 1932 155–156; Malinowski 1916 411–412; Holdsworth 1970 59–60
 214 27 above
 215 Malinowski 1923 111; cf. Malinowski 1916 407
 216 Malinowski 1916 412
 217 38–39 above
 218 25–28 above
 219 32–33 above
 220 Lane 1965 259
 221 E.g. 19–20 above
 222 From 85 items traced, the following serve as examples: Frazer 1914 96–107; Malinowski 1916 406–418 (Trobriand Islanders); Jones 1925 115–128; Malinowski 1932 140–178 (Trobriand Islanders); Thomson 1936 374–379, 383–393 (Wik Monkan, Gulf of Carpentaria); Ashley-Montagu 1937 (Australian Aborigines); Warner 1958 21–24 (Australian Aborigines); Schneider 1968 126–129; Spiro 1968 242–261; Powell 1968 651–652 (Trobriand Islanders); Leach 1969 85–110; Barnes 1973 65–73; Scheffler 1973 747–756; Monberg 1975 34–40; Weiner 1976 121
 223 39 above
 224 38–39 above
 225 25–28, 39 above
 226 33, 39 above