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Malinowski's magical puzzles

Toward a new theory of magic and procreation in Trobriand society

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Malinowski's classic accounts of Trobriand sociality have left anthropology with many lasting conundrums. This two-part article examines two such puzzles revolving around contradictory reports over the agencies involved in magical chants (*megwa*). On the one hand, consistent with his pragmatic and functionalist theories of language and culture, Malinowski claimed that, although ancestral *baloma* and other spirits are typically invoked in most spells, those incantations' efficaciousness derived instead from the power of the enunciated words. On the other, as part of his evidence in support of Islanders' "ignorance of physiological paternity," he conceded that spells intended to produce pregnancy in village women were instead expressly aimed at eliciting appropriate ritual actions from *baloma* spirits as agents of conception and birth. On the basis of ethnographic data recently gathered at Omarakana village interpreted through specific adaptations of the "New Melanesian Ethnography" and Tambiah's earlier "participation" theory of ritual practice, I argue that for Trobrianders the magical power of words *is* the power of spirits, and vice versa. This insight has important implications for classic and contemporary debates over the nature of "magic," controversies over paternity and so-called "virgin birth," theories of personhood and agency, and the character of *dala* "matrilineage" relations.

Keywords: magic, procreation, personhood and agency, kinship, Trobriand Islands

PART 1: THE MAGICAL POWER OF *BALOMA*

> *This power [of magic] is an inherent property of certain words, uttered with the performance of certain actions by the man entitled to do it through his social traditions and through certain observances which he has to keep. The words and acts have this power in their own right, and their action is direct and not mediated by any other agency. Their power is not derived from the authority of spirits or demons or supernatural beings. It is not conceived as having been wrested from nature. The belief in the power of words and rites*

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> *as a fundamental and irreducible force is the ultimate, basic dogma of their magical creed.*
>
> — Malinowski, *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*, p. 427

Trobriand Islanders and their culture as interpreted by Malinowski and subsequent fieldworkers and commentators have presented the discipline with numerous lasting conundrums. This two-part article draws attention to two such interconnected ethnographic puzzles: one has largely escaped anthropological attention, namely the mechanisms underpinning the supposed efficacy of indigenous "magic"; the other revisits one of anthropology's most colorful debates, the so-called "virgin birth" controversy of the 1960s and 1970s, as regards Islanders' beliefs in the spirit insemination of humans and their supposed "ignorance of physiological paternity."[1] Together these puzzles bear upon numerous other dimensions of Trobriand ethnography and regional Oceanic cultural variation as well as classic and contemporary anthropological theory as concerns the general nature and rationale of "magic" and "kinship" and the possibly intrinsic relation between the two.

As regards the first of these puzzles, on which I concentrate in Part 1, Trobrianders are renowned for highly elaborated forms of magical practice employing vocalized *megwa* "spells," "chants," or "incantations" in accompaniment with nearly all social activities—in gardening, fishing, *kula* exchange, courting, procreation, canoe construction, sorcery and curing, *milamala* harvest celebrations, warfare, and so on.[2] Over time, Malinowski's descriptions of these activities and his theorizing about them have proven both influential and controversial.[3] However, in all those discussions, few fellow post-Malinowskian ethnographers have addressed the role, if any, of ancestral *baloma* and other spirits in Trobriand magical performances. *Baloma*, in brief, are the invisible, immaterial "souls" or "spirits" of living humans which, upon corporeal death, depart the corpse and enter the spirit world of Tuma, the "land of the dead." There they enjoy a spirit existence, but eventually, as Malinowski described ([1916] 1948), *baloma* spirits age and are transformed into "spirit children" (*waiwaia*) to be reincarnated as new humans by means of inseminating women of their same matrilineal (*dala*) identity.

Now during the time of their existence in Tuma, *baloma* especially, along with other categories of nonhuman spirits, are invoked by practicing magicians in *megwa* "spells," particularly the most important ones—that is, those closely identified

1. The "virgin birth" debate, as it came to be known, was initiated with an essay by Edmund Leach (1966) based on Malinowski's report (1932) and other ethnography conducted by that time (e.g. Austen 1934–35; Powell 1956). Additional major contributions to the debate focusing on Trobriand procreation include Edmund Leach (1968), Powell (1968), Spiro (1968), and Montague (1971). Others have subsequently entered the fray (e.g. Weiner 1976, 1988; Delaney 1986; Van Dokkum 1997; Mosko 1998, 2005).

2. The term *megwa* is nowadays used to refer both to "magic" generally and to specific spells or chants. There is an archaic term, *yopa*, which is occasionally used to refer to verbalized spells (Malinowski 1922: 299).

3. An incomplete list of critics on topics other than those addressed in this essay would include, for example, Firth (1957); Tambiah (1968, 1973, 1990); Rosengren (1976); Weiner (1976); Stocking (1983); Iteanu (1995: 145–46); Senft (1997); Gell (1998).

with the *baloma* spirits' own *dala* membership and identity. I stress this because, on the one hand, Malinowski (e.g. [1916] 1948: 201; 1922: 398, 404, 451; 1935b: 213–50) staunchly maintained, as in the epigraph above, that it was the words (*biga*) spoken in *megwa* spells and not the spirits expressly invoked therein which Islanders considered to be the agents responsible for producing the desired magical effects.[4] On the other hand, over the twenty months of ethnographic research I have recently conducted in the Trobriands, virtually every knowledgeable adept of traditional *megwa* ritual with whom I have consulted contends unhesitatingly, contra Malinowski, that it is named spirits who are the critical magical agents, now as in Malinowski's day and presumably earlier.[5] In these experts' view, the correct chanting of the other words and expressions to which Malinowski attributed efficacy, basically enumerating the spell's specific themes, intentions, and ingredients, is necessary to its effectiveness, but without the active participation of spirits those words in and of themselves are insufficient to produce the desired results.

Like Malinowski, I shall focus here on that class of *megwa* known as *tukwa* considered to be most critical in how they underpin the traditional system of kinship (i.e. *dala* "subclan" or "matrilineage" identity and rank) and, thereby, the indigenous system of hereditary chieftainship and leadership.[6] Largely by monopolizing such *dala*-based hereditary ritual assets, chiefs (*guyau*, *gum gweguya*) and local leaders (*tolivalu*) are able to organize their communities. And it is through a detailed consideration of these quandaries over Trobriand magical efficacy that, in Part 2 of this essay, I am eventually guided to shed new light on the other major puzzle regarding indigenous views of the participation of *baloma* spirits in human procreation and the character of kin relationship.

Spirits and words in magical and religious practice—Recent debates

One might reasonably expect that the numerous field studies conducted in the Trobriands subsequent to Malinowski, the foundational contributions to the anthropology of magic, and the many other debates spawned by his other writings

4. The word *baloma* refers to the internal "soul" of living persons and that soul's invisible, immaterial existence once it is released from the body upon death to become human ancestral spirits (Malinowski [1916] 1948). The term *bilu baloma* includes among its referents various nonhuman as well as human spiritual beings, as described below.

5. Based on others' previously published ethnographies, two prior investigators (Philsooph 1971; Darrah 1972; see also Baldwin 1971: 282) came to question seriously Malinowski's claims as to the efficacy of magical words. There are also statements available from knowledgeable Trobrianders endorsing the view that spirits are the source of *megwa* powers (Ketobwau is Ketobwau 1994: 22–25; Malnic 1998: 143–44).

6. These spells are among the collective *tukwa* "property" of *dala* units (see below). Although Malinowski concentrated on these *dala*-based incantations, he was apparently not familiar with the named category, *tukwa*. It should be noted that there exists another category of non-hereditary "private" *megwa* spells (*sosewa*) which, unlike *tukwa*, does not necessarily require the invoking of ancestral spirits but still relies on spirit agency (see Mosko in press-a).

would have attracted considerable interest to this issue before now. After all, Malinowski's treatment of magic and his pragmatic theory of language in alignment with Frazer's view of magical instrumentality were important in the later works of Austin, Langer, Wittgenstein, Burke, Winch, and others (see Tambiah 1990: 53–83) and contributed to the development of modern sociolinguistics and other approaches that were deployed in critique of structuralism. However, "magic" generally has proven to be among anthropology's most intractable topics, to the point that, as Graeber (2001: 241) has noted, the term has long been largely abandoned or replaced by other rubrics.

In the past several years, however, interest in and debates over "magic" have reemerged as a result of new field studies that go well beyond the philosophical "rationality debate" of the 1960s but resonate with aspects of the puzzle over *baloma* spirit agency. These recent arguments have arisen largely in consequence of the development of experimental ethnographies informed by phenomenological and reflexivist approaches. A central issue concerns the epistemological and ontological status of research subjects' *and researchers'* experiences, attitudes, and claims regarding the beings and forces involved in "magical" practices (here defined inclusively with "religion," "ritual," "witchcraft," "sorcery," etc.); namely whether the spirits, gods, demons, pagan deities, supernatural forces, and so on, experienced by participants might truly exist or not, and the extent to which such expressions should be taken as manifestations of human power relations or as either valid or skeptical declarations of sincere belief (e.g. Favret-Saada 1980; Luhrmann 1989, 2012; Turner 1993; Greenwood 2000, 2005, 2009, Graeber 2001: 239–47; Lohmann 2003; Fountain 2013; Morgain 2013; Stoller and Olkes 2013; Blanes and Espírito Santo 2014; see also the Book Symposium published in this journal, *Hau* 2013). Related to many of these arguments is the claim that the culture-bounded ethnocentrism of the Western "rationalistic," "empiricist," "objectivist" orientation under which most prior anthropological research on magic had been conducted, in presupposing the nonreality of a spiritual world beyond the realm of sensory experience, has severely limited the anthropological understanding of what could be taken as a universal magical consciousness. For some, this seems to involve a problematic mixing of theology and anthropology. As formulated most forcefully by Greenwood (2009), however, the limitations of strictly rationalistic approaches to magic can only be overcome through intense, direct *participatory* engagements in its practice, which require the investigator's suspension of disbelief.

Revisiting Malinowski's magical puzzles from the perspective adopted here, I suggest, may indirectly help illuminate some aspects of the current discussions. By "indirectly," I merely say that I do not pretend to offer anything approximating an answer as to the ontological reality of *baloma* or other spirits invoked in Trobriand spells. That choice seems to me a false one: that is, the necessity of either rejecting or accepting their ultimate reality. Instead, I focus on the kinds of new insights can be attained by viewing villagers' expressed beliefs and attitudes regarding the efficacy of spirits *as if* they are real—a viewpoint compatible, on the one hand, with Luhrmann's (2012: 16–17) methodological and ontological agnosticism. I cannot say that the spirits of Tuma are "really real," since for my purposes it ultimately doesn't matter either way. It is true, as I have described elsewhere (Mosko 2004), that some of my past fieldwork experiences have caught me suspended between my

usual selfconscious scientific rationalism and my occasional convictions that the powers of indigenous (North Mekeo) magic might be real after all.

On the other hand, that concern is not the critical ethnographic point, which is instead, following Graeber (2001: 240, 245–46), among others, the intimate tie of magic to the nature of social capacities. If, as Malinowski correctly observed, Trobriand magic is an indispensable aspect of most if not all indigenous pursuits, but if he was wrong in attributing magical efficacy to the words of spells alone rather than to spirits, then our ethnographic understanding of the gamut of Trobriand institutions and their creative potentialities—kinship, chieftainship, yam exchange, harvest celebration, *kula*, mortuary exchange, procreation theory, etc.—is in considerable need of revision.

Not surprisingly, these recent controversies over magic have their counterparts in the wake of the contemporary "turn to ontology" in the anthropological study of religion. As Michael Scott (2014) has lately characterized the situation, there appear to be two main ontologies currently at play: the conventional "Cartesian dualism" of Western science dominant in most earlier twentieth-century anthropology, and what he terms a "relational nondualism" cohering from diverse, recently influential writings (e.g. Horton 1993; Ingold 2000; Viveiros de Castro 2007; Willerslev 2007; Holbraad 2009; Latour 2009; Rose 2011), including, of particular relevance to Melanesia and this essay, those of Marilyn Strathern (1988) and Roy Wagner (1975, 1991), among others, within the framework of the "New Melanesian Ethnography" (Josephides 1991; hereafter NME). The issues germane to the first of Malinowski's magical puzzles concerning the efficacy of words versus spirits, I suggest, historically anticipate the tensions between Scott's two ontologies. Malinowski's generally pragmatic orientation fits well with the established "wonder-occluding" scientism, while the material I offer here underscoring villagers' notions of spiritual agency resonates with the "wonder-sustaining" terms of "relational nondualism," particularly those of its lineaments connected to the NME.

But more importantly, I think, the basic empirical questions concerning Trobrianders' attitudes toward spirit efficacy played a fairly critical but tacit role earlier on in Stanley Tambiah's initial "performative" theory of magic (1968, 1973), which he later reformulated in terms of "participation" (1990). Reviewing that transformation in Tambiah's seminal thought, I suggest, has possibly important implications for ways in which the solutions to Malinowski's magical puzzles might point to fruitful conceptual refinements in both the NME and Scott's ontology of "relational nondualism" more generally.

Before turning away from contemporary discussions over magic, however, it must be noted that Malinowski's two magical puzzles converge rather perfectly with Viveiero de Castro's recent reminder of the "co-implication of the two founding problematics of anthropology, kinship and magic" (2009: 246). There, Viveiros de Castro insightfully treats magic (alternatively presented as "animism") and kinship as cognate expressions of Maussian gift exchange, which, as I describe below, also informs my NME theoretical approach to the puzzles over magical efficacy and the nexus of relations involved in procreation. More specifically, he argues that both kinship and magic qualify as processes of "personification." Following Gregory (1982) and Strathern (1988, 1992), he argues that just as kinship is conventionally seen as an exchange of persons as gifts, things and people in gift economies

assume the social form of persons, hence qualifying both as ontologies of animism or magic. Understandably, Viveiros de Castro's main illustrations of these ideas are drawn from what he terms "multinaturalist" Amazonia. Hopefully, the treatment I offer of Malinowski's puzzles over Trobriand magic and kinship reckoning will be seen as an endorsement of Viveiros de Castro's insight from an additional cultural realm, one far removed from Amazonia but familiar, thanks to Malinowski and other Massim ethnographers, to a large number of Euro-American anthropologists globally.

Tambiah's "participation" theory of magic and the New Melanesian Ethnography

According to Graeber, nearly all modern anthropological treatments of magic "[have] been, in one sense or another, an elaboration on Tambiah" (2001: 241). Graeber makes special note of the two early signature works of Tambiah's "performative" theory of magic (1968, 1973) which reanalyzed the foundational works of Malinowski and Evans-Pritchard, respectively. In his demonstration of "how the language of ritual [including magic] works" (1968: 188), Tambiah reexamined the *vatuvi* spell of Omarakana's gardening magic, rejecting Malinowski's (1935b: 3–74) crude pragmatism and focusing instead on the analogical (i.e. metaphorical and metonymical) relations between the words of *megwa* to account for their meaningfulness and persuasiveness to participants. At the very juncture of launching into this analysis, however, Tambiah remarked that he considered deliberations over the agency of words versus spirits to be symptoms of a "Frazerian hangover" (1968: 176) and a "somewhat barren debate" (183). He thus simply proceeded to examine the symbolic functions of the *vatuvi* spell's words only, accepting without further consideration Malinowski's assertions of the nonagentive participation of ancestral *baloma* spirits. So although his performance theory went considerably beyond Malinowski's pragmaticism, the agency of spells still resided for him in words and the relations between them.[7]

In Tambiah's other influential early essay (1973), reinterpreting Evans-Pritchard (1937) on Azande magic, he similarly focused upon the analogical connections, here involving enchanted "medicines" rather than spoken spells, to the neglect again of spirit participation. In terms I shall examine below, in other words, by dismissing spirit agency from consideration, Tambiah's early performative treatments of both classic reports of magical efficacy had presupposed the Western distinction of "objects" as distinct from "subjects."

This is important inasmuch as some two decades later in Tambiah's more mature theorizing over "magic" and its relations to "religion" and "science," he clarified a distinction between two basic orientations to reality: "causality" and "participation." The laws of causality were characteristic of science and mathematico-logical reasoning. Tambiah's main interest, though, was in the alternative aesthetic and

7. Interestingly, in his analysis of Sinhalese and Pali Buddhist rites conducted in the same essay as his analysis of Trobriand magic, Tambiah (1968: 176–80) included the participation of gods, ancestral ghosts, spirits, and so on, as among the effective agents.

religious orientation, inclusive of magic, whereby "laws of participation," following Lévy-Bruhl mainly, but also Leenhardt, Wittgenstein, Febvre, and Bloch (Tambiah 1990: 84–94), effectively muted the subject–object distinction so as to include spirits and similar suprasensible beings as agents in ritual processes and procedures: for example, "the idea of *mana*, emanating from the individual as suffusing his shadow, hair and nails, his clothes and his environment … taboos and avoidances, rites of intensification, rites of severance … participation between the dead, especially the ancestors, and spirits and deities with the living' (1990: 96). He quotes Lévy-Bruhl, who could well have been speaking specifically of the Trobriands:

> The notion of society, too, is entirely different for the primitive [*sic*] mind. Society consists not only of the living but also of the dead, who continue to "live" somewhere in the neighbourhood and take an active part in social life before they die a second time. … [T]he dead reincarnate in the living and, in accordance with the principle of mystical participation, society is as much merged in the individual as the individual is merged in society. (Lévy-Bruhl, quoted in Tambiah1990: 86)[8]

Now Tambiah's later participation theory very closely approximates the other approach already mentioned on which I am seeking theoretically and methodologically to base my treatment of Trobriand magical agency: namely the NME introduced above. But there are conceptual problems here also, some similar to and others distinct from those in Tambiah's work. Marilyn Strathern's *The gender of the gift* (1988) has come to be widely accepted as the NME's foundational text. There Strathern (1988: 12–15) is similarly critical of the analytical distinction of "individual" and "society" in Melanesian contexts, which is implicit in Tambiah's quote from Lévy-Bruhl when "person" and "relations," respectively, are substituted. Also, where Tambiah, in line with Lévy-Bruhl's notion of participation, breaks down the "subject–object" distinction, this also aligns with Strathern (1988: 19). But for Tambiah, the resulting "participation" consists of persons both distinguished from and identified with one another in terms of what amounts to criteria oriented to the distinction of the sacred and the profane.

On this last score, Tambiah's and Strathern's modeling partly diverge in critical ways. Insofar as the persons who mystically participate with one another are thereby merged in Tambiah's framework, we have a theoretical precursor approximating the "dividual" or "partible person," a central concept in the NME. According to Strathern's (1988) formulation following Mauss's (1967) theory of gift exchange, persons are composite beings constituted of the elicitive detachment, attachment, and exchange of their respective parts, seen as previously transacted relational elements of still other persons, whether they take the form of material objects, body parts, linguistic expressions, nonverbal performative actions, items of knowledge, and so on. In Tambiah's participation view, just as "things" or "objects" qualify as parts of persons, so also do the imagined spiritual beings toward whom living

8. It is curious that despite this considerable shift between his "performance" and "participation" approaches, in the latter context Tambiah (1990: 65–83) devotes two chapters to Malinowski and Trobriand magic but again elides the question of spirit participation or any implications which might ensue from it.

humans oftentimes orient their actions in ritual and other contexts. In Strathern's view of Melanesian partibility, however, the components of persons are more or less strictly construed in the gendering identities and capacities of masculinity/femininity and same-/cross-sex relations. Unquestionably, Trobrianders conceptualize themselves, their relations, and the world around them in gendered terms which sometimes articulate with discernments of relative sanctity and secularity (see, e.g., Mosko 2013, in press-b). But in Strathern's analyses, the gendered dimension of personhood tends to singularly eclipse all other dimensions of personhood such as, in particular, sacred and profane identities and/or their analogs. It is noteworthy that Strathern's inspirations for both the specific notion of personal partibility and the general framework for her perspective on Melanesian sociality—McKim Marriott's (1976) exposition of the "dividual" of caste India and Roy Wagner's (1975: 120–25) depiction of the dynamics of "innovation" and "convention," respectively—were formulated with significant regard to complexities flowing from the sacred–profane opposition.

Strathern's formulation of Melanesian sociality and personhood thus runs parallel with Tambiah's initial performative theory of magic but deviates from his later participation model in effectively occluding the participation of beings such as *baloma* and other spirits marked as to their relative sacredness. This is so even in her foregrounded contexts of ceremonial exchange and initiation rituals where persons may well engage in elicitive transactions of the parts/relations of their persons in terms separate from or compounded with their gendered components.

Therefore, in adapting the NME and its core notion of personal partibility to the analysis of Trobriand magic and kinship, I am seeking to effect a shift analogous to that between Tambiah's earlier and later approaches. We cannot understand Trobriand practices in past, present, or changing circumstances without taking into account villagers' perceptions of the participation of *baloma* and other sacred beings in their persons and lives.[9]

The identities and capacities following from the Trobriand version of personal partibility, I argue, characterize the relations between living persons and spirits and thereby animate indigenous notions of magico-ritual agency. In terms of Trobriand cosmology outlined below, moreover, not only are persons and spirits identified together, but the magical words of *megwa* spells and the features of the "natural world" to which they refer are all potent components of one another.

"Magic," "religion," and the character of personhood

It is worth noting how Malinowski's account of Trobriand magic resonated (1) with the views of Tylor (1871) and Frazer (1922), current at his time, over the nature of and distinction between "magic" and "religion," and (2) with individualist

9. One of the strongest criticisms of the NME is its typically synchronic orientation toward sociality and hence its supposed inability to address change. Elsewhere (Mosko in press-a, forthcoming), I have sought to respond to this criticism, in the first instance dealing with the contemporary practice of Trobriand magic in the context of introduced gambling; and see below.

assumptions about personhood and agency which have persisted in much anthropological theorizing up to the present, the emergence of the NME notwithstanding. These two discussions, I argue, are intimately connected.

For Tylor and Frazer, agency in the sphere of "magic" was presumed to reside in beliefs in the *impersonal*, technical powers inhering in entities other than conscious beings, or persons—that is, in forces of the natural world actuated, for example, by verbalized spells and incantations. Ritual powers attributed instead by participants to conscious, supernatural beings of a *personal* sort, such as spirits with capacities analogous to humans and requiring propitiation, were classified as belonging to the sphere of "religion." The presupposition of the universal existence of these two separate spheres thereby justified Malinowski's portrayal of beliefs concerning ancestral *baloma* and other spirits as manifestations of the people's "religion" while largely excluding them categorically from participation in "magic." In elaborating upon insights from the NME as outlined above, therefore, I seek to demonstrate that the magical powers attributed by Malinowski and others to impersonal words and their combinations *are* the magical powers of persons, spiritual as well as human.

But there is more to my proposed modifications of the NME as conventionally conceived. The agnostic "as-if" position noted above fits, I think, comfortably with Strathern's (1988: 7–9) and Wagner's (1975 *passim*) presentations of their own "as-if" models as analytical "fictions" or "inventions." And their approaches are much to the same sort of purpose as I adopt here in revisiting Malinowski's magical puzzles: that is, of revealing the distortions that might arise from unconscious biases in anthropology's and my own predominantly Western cultural orientation. So in response to the charge of NME essentialism, I suggest that, by following such a tactic, it is possible to legitimately forestall the seeming necessity of assuming either that "otherworld" spirits exist or that they do not. This is thus one way in which adjustments of the NME along the lines proposed here can contribute to debates of an epistemological as well as ontological sort which have once again captured the discipline's imagination.

Austronesian comparisons

Malinowski's magical puzzles pertain not only the Trobriands but also to Melanesia and the Pacific generally, where, differently from the West, sacred powers are conceived as being immanent in all manifestations of reality. Some ethnographies of Austronesian- and non-Austronesian-speaking societies assert that local ritual practitioners are believed to recruit spiritual *persons* of various kinds—ancestors, spirits of nature, creator deities, etc.—as agents of their magico-ritual practices. Others maintain, like Malinowski, that magicians are generally understood to rely instead upon *impersonal* forces of nature named in spells and incantations to perform their miraculous feats.[10] Despite their differing implications otherwise, the

10. A sample of both views would include Codrington (1891: 119–20); Hocart (1914: 99); Hogbin (1936: 244); Chowning (1977); Lawrence (1988); Lawrence and Meggitt (1965: 6–9); Young (1971; 1983); Valeri (1985); Trompf (1991); Gell (1995); Sillitoe (1998).

supposed efficaciousness of words and spirits share one key feature that is definitive of Oceanic cultures: the notion that all beings and entities of people's conceived worlds participate in or are animated by mystical forces, *mana* being the most obvious example (e.g. Codrington 1891: 119–20; Lawrence and Meggitt 1965: 6–9; Chowning 1977: 64–66; Trompf 1991: 66, 73–74, 84–87; Sillitoe 1998: 215–16). Answers to questions deriving from Malinowski's magical puzzles as to the relations between persons, spirits, magical spells, and the beings and entities of the world named in them do not only bear on contemporary debates over magical efficacy and the nature of kinship but also respond to long-held views about the Pacific generally.

Magic and "virgin birth"

As already suggested, Malinowski's puzzle over magical efficacy has an additional twist entangled with controversies surrounding Trobriand notions of "virgin birth." It will be recalled that Malinowski ([1916] 1948, 1932) had reported that Trobrianders were "ignorant" of the facts of physiological paternity. His disavowal of the agency of spirits in magical performance thus parallels his denial that villagers possessed knowledge of the procreative contributions of fathers to children. However, there is a flip side to Malinowski's assertions regarding Trobriand views of procreation which has attracted considerably less notice, namely that in some of his and others' reports, rather than fathers, the principal agents supposedly responsible for causing (or preventing) human pregnancy and birth are *baloma* spirits of the dead: not only the reincarnated *waiwaia* "spirit children" which supposedly effect the actual insemination of women, but other *baloma* spirits which are sometimes claimed to transport the *waiwaia* from Tuma, the spirit world, and insert them into the bodies of their mothers-to-be. In some circumstances, as my own field inquiries confirm, those spirits are believed to do so in response to *megwa* spells performed by married couples or living relatives on their behalf (Malinowski [1916] 1948: 219–20, 222–23; 1929; 1932: 146–52, 154, 156, 160–61, 168; see also Austen 1934–35: 108–11; Weiner 1976: 44, 122, 251n.; 1988: 54–55; 1989: 40; 1992: 39, 74, 76, 121–22).

In his rejection of Islanders' knowledge of physiological paternity, therefore, Malinowski accepted assertions that *baloma* spirits were regarded as the source of magical efficacy, but with respect to his denial concerning practically most other indigenous magical practices he regularly insisted that the words of the spells themselves *and expressly not baloma spirits* served as effective agents. As I shall attempt to show in Part 2, this seeming contradiction is a critical one. The ambiguities surrounding Malinowski's magical puzzles and the "virgin birth" controversy are of one piece.

Omarakana, cultural change, and the current "Paramount Chief"

By now, some readers will be perplexed by the extent to which this analysis may appear to disregard the facts of historical change which Trobrianders have

undoubtedly experienced since Malinowski's time. I fully appreciate the extent to which Islanders' lives have been deeply affected by colonialism, capitalism, commodification, electoral politics, Christian conversion, formal education, and so on. I justify the basically synchronic approach of the current exercise largely on the unusual circumstances which prevail at Omarakana, my research base, as well as factors concerning the state of change across the region. Omarakana is the initial site of Malinowski's pioneering field studies and, not coincidentally, the home of the Tabalu "Paramount Chief."[11] Omarakanan viewpoints including those of the Tabalu, senior members of Tabalu *dala*, and other village elders are widely taken today, and likely in Malinowski's time, to represent the most authoritative contemporary source of *Kilivila gulagula* or "Northern Kiriwinian sacred tradition."

It must be appreciated also that the Tabalu of Omarakana is known to have in his possession the two most powerful ritual items upon which the powers of other subclans and villages still depend for their livelihood: the female *tokwai* spirit, Kabwenaia, embodied in an igneous stone, and her male counterpart, Kaisusuwa, inhabiting a wrapped wooden stick. In their conjugal-spiritual intercourse, these two are viewed traditionally as the "source" (*u'ula*; see below) of agricultural plenty and scarcity and epidemic illness for the entire archipelago. But Omarakana continues to retain its regional preeminence inasmuch as the sacred knowledge possessed by the current Tabalu, Pulayasi Daniel (Figure 1), is nowadays unrivaled. It is widely known that Pulayasi was formally adopted as "son" (*latu tau*) and personally groomed from infancy by his "uncle" (*kada*), Mitakata—a contemporary of Malinowski who reigned as Tabalu successor to To'uluwa from 1929 to 1961 and who is generally regarded as the greatest "Paramount Chief" of the modern era. As such, Pulayasi is considered to be the nearly complete embodiment of Mitakata's (and thus his predecessors') person and office and the singular reservoir of Tabalu *tukwa*, or traditional knowledge and ritual powers. Although some Islanders might question particular details of Pulayasi's viewpoints, anyone familiar with the contemporary Trobriand scene will appreciate how even those contestations are largely configured with reference to the dominant Omarakana-Tabalu viewpoint as personified in Pulayasi.

More generally, I argue that it is impossible to develop a full and accurate account of Trobriand historical change when the ethnographic baseline for those transformations is seriously flawed or incomplete, as I think is the case with current ethnographic knowledge of indigenous *megwa*. If, as Malinowski and others have maintained, magic is an essential component of virtually all indigenous activities, any attempt to chart the course of change in those areas must needs begin with a robust understanding of the indigenous logic and content of those magical practices.

11. The designation "Paramount Chief" is an artifact of the establishment of colonial control by British and Australian forces. Here I prefer to use the indigenous title for that position, the "Tabalu."

Figure 1: Tabalu Pulayasi Daniel resting among graves of deceased Tabalu relatives, Omarakana village. (Photo by Mark Mosko 2012.)

Take, for instance, Islanders' conversion to Christianity. The large majority of Northern Kiriwina villagers profess to be "Christian," but that Christianity is strongly inflected and syncretized with the traditional understandings set out here as regards the people's indigenous relations with ancestral and other spirits. None of the local Christians or even their leaders whom I have interviewed, including Pentecostal pastors, deny the existence of *baloma* and other spirits as powerful, albeit evil and malevolent beings. Virtually all Kiriwinan deaths that take place nowadays are interpreted as the result of "sorcery" (*bwagau*) produced by magicians' manipulation of evil *bilu baloma* spirits (see below), now often identified with "Satan" and "devils" of the Christian pantheon. In nearly all cases of serious illness caused by suspected sorcery at Omarakana and other villages, patients and their families first consult native curers (*tayuvisa*), whose efficacy is attributed to *baloma* spirits. Only later do villagers seem to consult church deacons and pastors for spiritual healing purposes, much along the lines of indigenous curing rites. Only as a last resort do patients present at the Island's health centres. Sunday services of the dominant United and Catholic churches are attended overwhelmingly by women and children, while the men who monopolize *megwa* tend to stay away. Not coincidentally, male gardeners and fishers who profess to be nominally Christian tell me they still practice their private gardening spells oriented to indigenous spirits, sometimes appealing also to Yaubada, the Christian God. Men from across the Island still regularly visit the current Tabalu, Pulayasi Daniel, with

requests for traditional magical assistance. When in 2010 the critical burning of the gardens was delayed for well over two months owing to unrelenting rain, on September 13 the men of Kabwaku village led by their Toliwaga chief, Toguguwa Tobodeli, came *en masse* to Omarakana with a substantial payment (*susula*) to induce Pulayasi to use his traditional sunshine spells to dry out their gardens. Sergio Jarillo de la Torre (2013) reports that modern-day carvers, even when they petition Christian spirits, employ traditional magical techniques to seduce potential buyers, including European tourists, into buying their wares. As I have recently described (Mosko in press-a), cultural innovations such as men's gambling with cards have adapted indigenous magical practices of courting, *kula* exchange, and warfare in appeals to ancestral and other spirits for support in winning. None of these cultural changes, I maintain, can be accurately gauged without a sound grasp of their indigenous precursors.

The spirits, the spells, the words, and the puzzle

The word *baloma* refers to the internalized "soul" of living persons and that soul's existence as a "spirit" being once it is released from the body upon death. *Baloma* in the latter sense, then, are human ancestral spirits (Malinowski [1916] 1948). A broader category, *bilu baloma*, refers to those and additional spiritual beings, including *tubu daiasa* "creator deities," *tosunapula* "first to emerge" spirits of particular *dala* matrilineages, *tokwai* "nature sprites," and potentially malevolent *mulukwausi* "flying witches," *kosi* "ghosts," and *itona/tauva'u* "warrior spirits." To my knowledge, Malinowski never attempted a systematic classification of these.

Malinowski's claims regarding the supposed noncontribution of spirits to the effects of magical spells are inconsistent with his accounts of the tenor of relations between living humans and spirit inhabitants of Tuma in five main additional contexts: procreation and reincarnation (as noted above), dreams and trances, funerary rites, annual *milamala* harvest celebrations, and, most significantly in the present context, supposedly perfunctory ritual "food offerings" or "sacrificial oblations" (*ula'ula*) in accompaniment with *megwa* and other activities. When presented by magicians to spirits as preliminaries to *megwa* performances, the latter offerings were supposedly separate from the causes and effects of the magic itself (Malinowski [1916] 1948: 214, 243; 1935a: 279, 468–69; but see 1916 [1948]: 215; 1922: 422–23; 1935a: 95, 279).[12] Otherwise, for Malinowski, *baloma* spirits conducted their spirit lives in the spirit world, Tuma, largely absorbed in their own

12. Evidence I have gathered regarding the logic of *ula'ula* oblations lends further support to my present argument that *bilu baloma* spirits are the agents of magic. Their separate treatment, however, raises issues well beyond the question of the magical efficacy of spells in the strict sense and, owing also to length limitations, must await a later opportunity for analysis. For now, it is sufficient to note that *ula'ula* offerings are essentially sacrifices intended to obligate the named spirits, inducing them to reciprocate by performing the acts as instructed in the next-recited *megwa*. As I have argued at length elsewhere (Mosko in press-b), the logic of sacrifice fits comfortably with that of personal partibility.

affairs some remove away from Boyowa, the visible world of their living human descendants.[13]

As Malinowski observed ([1916] 1948: 196, 199–215; 1922: 428–63; 1932: 182; 1935b: 92), *megwa* spells are typically structured as three sequential segments (*u'ula* "base," *tapwala* "body," and *doginala* "tip") in accord with a particular botanical imagery employed in virtually all indigenous contexts of activity—indeed, which he appreciated as "*characteristic of native canons of classification*" (1932: 143, my emphasis), despite his indifference otherwise to structural concerns. In the opening *u'ula* section (meaning "base," "origin," "foundation," "cause," "reason"), the main purpose of the spell is enunciated and ancestral *baloma* predecessors and other spirits are invoked by personal name or kin term (e.g. "grandfathers"). In the *tapwala* middle section ("body," "trunk," "stem"), the specific magical actions intended to take place with respect to the patient, target, or victim are declared. In the spell's concluding *doginala* ("end," "final point," "tip"), the magician states the anticipated results. The most well-documented spell exhibiting this three-part structure is the Omarakana *vatuvi* "striking of the soil" spell as presented by Malinowski (1935a: 96–98) and reanalyzed by Tambiah (1968: 191–92). Not mentioned by Malinowski, with *megwa* and other contexts of *u'ula-tapwala-doginala* sequencing there is typically a fourth element, the spell's *keyuwela* ("fruit," "offspring"), whereby its results materialize (Mosko 2009; 2013: 498–502).

Malinowski reported that the opening *u'ula* invocation of spirits constituted "the most prominent, persistent and universal, feature of Trobriand magic" (1932: 328), and that the spirits' names were typically recited also in the *doginala* "tip." But those two segments are distinguished also by the inclusion of the spell's general theme and intended results, respectively. On those grounds alone, one might reasonably assume that such direct incantations are expressly addressed to the spirits and predecessors as instructions for performing the tasks enumerated in the middle *tapwala* segment. It will prove useful to examine carefully Malinowski's claims on this matter.

In "Baloma," published between his first and second fieldtrips, he commented:

> That the names of the ancestors are more than a mere enumeration is clear from the fact that the *ula'ula* ["oblation"; see above] is offered in all the most important systems. … But even these presents and the partaking of the *sagali* [i.e. distributions of food and other wealth], though undoubtedly they imply the presence of the *baloma*, do not express the idea of the spirits' actual participation in fostering the aim of the magic; of their being the agents through whom the magician works, to whom he appeals or whom he masters in the spell, and who perform subsequently the task imposed on them. … The *baloma* participate in some vague manner in such ceremonies as are performed for their benefit, and it is better to keep on the right side of them, but this view by no means implies the idea that they are the main agents, or even the

13. To the people of Northern Kiriwina, the term "Boyowa" is the indigneous name of the main island of the Trobriands, nowadays known as "Kiriwina." However, villagers also routinely refer to the generalized visible, material universe as "Boyowa," in contrast to the invisible, immaterial world of Tuma.

> subsidiary agents, of any activity. The magical virtue lies in the spell itself. ([1916] 1948: 214; see also 196, 213–15)

In his postfieldwork publications, Malinowski expressed the same reservations even more forcefully. In *Coral gardens*, his most mature and through treatment of Trobriand magic, for example, he noted:

> But in every community, among the Trobrianders quite as definitely as among ourselves, there exists a belief that a word uttered in certain circumstances has a creative, binding force; that with an inevitable cogency, an utterance produces its specific effect, whether it conveys a permanent blessing, or inflicts irreparable damage, or saddles with a lifelong obligation. … It is this creative function of words in magical or in sacramental speech, their binding force in legal utterance, which, in my opinion, constitutes their real meaning. (1935b: 54)[14]

> The words are supposed to exercise a mystical effect *sui generis* on an aspect of reality. This belief is due to certain properties and associations of these words. (1935b: 219)

So, what empirical documentation might have led Malinowski to dismiss the participative or agentive role of spirits in Trobriand *megwa*? Midway between his two fieldwork experiences, he noted:

> The data here given concerning the role of ancestors in magic must speak for themselves. *It has not been possible to obtain much additional information from natives upon this subject.* The references to the *baloma* form an intrinsic and essentially important part of the spells in which they occur. It would be no good asking the natives "What would happen if you omitted to invoke the *baloma*?" (a type of question which sometimes reveals the ideas of the native as to the sanction or reason for a certain practice), because a magical formula is an inviolable, integral item of tradition. It must be known thoroughly and repeated exactly as it was learnt. A spell or magical practice, if tampered with in any detail, would entirely lose its efficacy. Thus the enumeration of ancestral names cannot conceivably be omitted. Again, the direct question, "Why do you mention those names?" is answered in the time-honored manner, "*Tokunabogu bubunemasi* [our old custom]." *And in this matter I did not profit much from discussing matters with even the most intelligent natives.* (1916 [1948]: 213–14, emphases added)

Given this absence of native exegesis, the repetitive "rubbing" or "impregnation" of the words of voiced spells into objects which accompanied many recitations impressed him as the "most effective and most important verbal action" (1935b: 216) of *megwa* performance. For example,

> He prepares a sort of large receptacle for his voice—a voice-trap we might almost call it. He lays the mixture on a mat and covers this with another mat so that his voice may be caught and imprisoned between

14. For additional rejections by Malinowski of the magical agency of *baloma* spirits specifically, see also [1916] 1948: 196, 213–15; 1922: 407, 412, 433, 435–36; 1935a: 452–82; 1935b: 215–18.

> them. During the recitation he holds his head close to the aperture and carefully sees to it that no portion of the herbs shall remain unaffected by the breath of his voice. He moves his mouth from one end of the aperture to the other, turns his head, repeating the words over and over again, rubbing them, so to speak, into the substance. When you watch the magician at work and note the meticulous care with which he applies this most effective and most important verbal action to the substance; when afterwards you see how carefully he encloses the charmed herbs in the ritual wrappings prepared, and in a ritual manner—then you realise how serious is the belief that the magic is in the breath and that the breath is the magic. (1935b: 216; see also 215–18; 1922: 406–8; 1935a: 93ff.)

My contemporary informants describe these actions as *yopu'oi wodila*, literally "put into something with mouth." They argue that the *kekwabu* "images" and *peula* "powers" of the words of the spell as a complete form (*ikuli*, i.e. as a *gwadi* "child" of the magician; see below) do indeed impregnate the object, but insist that it is only with the agency of *bilu baloma* that this transference can be effected, similarly to how ancestral *baloma* are understood to impregnate women with fetuses from Tuma (see Part 2).

Nonetheless, at several critical moments in his postfieldwork writings, Malinowski revealed lingering doubts as to whether his unequivocal denials of *baloma* magical efficacy accurately reflected the native point of view. For example, in an appendix to Volume 1 of *Coral gardens* titled "Confessions of ignorance and failure," he wrote:

> *[T]here remained a great many lacunae in my data, simply because I did not spend enough time in the field collating and synthesising them. Take, for instance, the problem of the part played by the spirits in general, and ancestral spirits in particular, in native tribal life.* … What exactly is the relation between the mischance brought about by the offended spirits and mischance brought about by malicious magic? *I cannot say, for again I have not investigated this problem as fully in the field as I should have done. I occasionally enquired whether it was really the wrath of the baloma or the evil intent of the magic. But the answer would usually be "I do not know"… [H]ere again I have not gone deeply enough into the subject to ascertain what they [spirits] do and whether they are really believed to be there.* (1935a: 467–68, emphases added)

Malinowski in his own mind, therefore, had sufficient reason to leave open the possibility that in the view of his interlocutors *baloma* and other spirits might have played a critical agentive role in magical practice after all. And in this regard, it is notable that in the spells provided by Malinowski, the person(s) stated in middle *tapwala* segments to be performing the stipulated actions were sometimes identified by the first-person pronomials (i.e. singular "I" and plural "we"), but shifted at other times, even within the same spell, to singular and plural second-person "you." Malinowski took this to suggest that "[t]he spirits stand in the same relation, as the performer does, to the magical force, which alone is active" (1922: 423). But as Tambiah (1968: 190) recognized, this points specifically to a conceptual identification, and hence potential "participation," of the invoked spirits with the magician—a view to which I shall return below.

Magical agency in post-Malinowski ethnography

Reports from the many ethnographers who followed in Malinowski's wake variously address questions of *megwa* agency. Linguist Gunter Senft (1997, 1998, 2010), who has most closely studied *megwa*, largely defends Malinowski against the criticisms of Tambiah in affirming that Trobrianders (Kaileuna Island) consciously attribute a special Frazerian efficacy to the power of magical words independent of their metaphorical and metonymical meanings and performative functions. But also, at certain junctures, Senft, like Malinowski, seems to equivocate over whether *baloma* might after all be included among the possible agents of *megwa*. At one point, for example, he widens the scope of magical interactions ("participations") so as to include not only the kind of analogical meanings identified by Tambiah but also the animate, inanimate, and spiritual beings named in spells, including them among the addressees and/or agents (Senft 1997: 371–86). In other instances, Senft points to invoked ancestral *baloma* as the relevant mediating agents through identifications with the magician; in yet others, the addressed ancestral *baloma* are grouped with the named animate, inanimate, and nonhuman entities as the agents of the spells but distinguished as beings separate from the magician (1997: 374–79, 381, 382–86, 387); and in still other contexts, these addressees function as patients subject to the power of the magicians' magical words (1997: 388–89).

Annette Weiner's account of the location of magical agency in "hard words" is similarly ambiguous as to spirit participation. She (1976: 218) initially followed Malinowski in attributing the power of magic to "spoken words," which she amplified in her later treatments (1983: 691–92, *passim*; 1988: 71), conceding ritual efficacy to words through Tambiah's repetitive metaphorical and metonymical significances while couching her analysis in a theory of language closely approximating Malinowski's pragmaticism: "[H]ow Trobriand magic is thought to work can be understood only from a theory of Trobriand language in use, not from a theory of magic as such" (1983: 691–92). In the latter work she related how "objects" addressed in spells (e.g. animal and plant species, implements, other items of the physical environment which absorb a spell's words) serve as mediating agents carrying the magician's verbal message to the target or patient (702–4), more or less consistent with Malinowski's notions of how the words of spells are "rubbed," "impregnated," or "breathed" into "objects" (704; see above). However, at one point she includes "deceased former owners of the spells (ancestors)" (702) among those "objects."

In her analysis of the art and aesthetics of expert (*tokabitam*) canoe carving (Vakuta Island), Shirley Campbell reports that carvers, the items they carve, and the materials employed in their work become "imbued" with magic (2002: 43), and that carving magic is "thought to have a life of its own" as a "separate power that is not only used by the owner but also, to some extent, uses the owner" (54; see also 61ff.). However, she does not offer an account of the mechanics of magical performance or specify indigenous views of purported agency. Nevertheless, at one point, Campbell implies that *baloma* cannot be agents of the *megwa* employed in *kula* voyaging. Just prior to departing on a *kula* expedition, the canoe owner (*toliwaga*) entreats the male *baloma* spirits of his *dala* to stay back as their presence "is thought to adversely affect the canoe's ability to manoeuvre rough open seas." Campbell reasons, "*Baloma* reside underground while waiting to be reborn. Their

subterranean abode connects them to the heaviness of land where they are immobile, in stasis between death and rebirth" (160). My Omarakana informants insist that magical rites performed at sea are directed chiefly at the onboard spirits, flatly rejecting any suggestion that ancestral *baloma* are constrained by the heaviness of land or subterranean abodes. And although Malinowski did not consider spirits to be the agents of sailing magic, he was given to understand that ancestral *baloma* did accompany living kin on *kula* voyages (1922: 435–36).

Gioncarlo Scoditti's treatments of canoe art and oral poetry (1990, 1996, 2012) on Kitava Island include numerous references to *megwa* spells in the inheritance, initiation, composition, memorization, and performance of ritual carvers and poets. But following Tambiah, among others, he (1990: 88, 97 n. 6; 1996: 11, 68, 270; 2012) stresses the metaphorical and aesthetic values of spells rather than their inherent magical potency, such that the participation or possible agency of spirits is barely considered. His interpretation of the "unusuality" and secrecy of *megwa* words (1990: 68n, 97n), however, recalls the efficacy of utterances themselves as variously argued by Malinowski, Senft, and Weiner. Elsewhere, Scoditti (1996; 2012) groups *megwa* with the "songs" and "poems" (*wosi*) composed by contemporary poets, concentrating again on the subtle aesthetics of the words and images as thought and experienced by performers and audiences, eliding again indigenous views of magical agency. Nonetheless, he hints that Kitavans might regard *baloma* and other spirits as magical agents after all when, with one spell, the magician-carver invokes his deceased father, from whom he presumably acquired the spell, "as a protective deity" (1996: 213). Even more suggestively, he notes that human chanters of *megwa* are equated with the spells' ancestral *baloma* authors (119n, emphasis added).

From Kaileuna Island to the west of Kiriwina, Susan Montague (1983) reports that men's capacity for performing *miegava* (cognate with *megwa*) or "noise force" depends on their inherent gender identities and their proper observance of dietary "taboos" (see below). The latter, when violated, produce blockages in magician's bodies, preventing the internally stored mental/magical energy from being externalized. *Miegava* itself, she records, "consists of non-substantial force *possessed by baloma* residing in the non-substantial part of the universe. It is manifest and available in living people in terms of sound, as are all other non-substantial forces" (41, emphasis added). *Miegava* force is said to consist in the "ability to 'order the natural elements'" (42; see below). Somewhat confusingly, she states that "[t]he crop in the ground [i.e. garden fertility] 'magic' probably is not magic at all, but encouragements sent to *baloma* to infuse the plants with animation and growth" (45n). In any case, Montague's information seems to leave open the possibility that in traditional Kaileunan reckoning, *baloma* spirits and the *baloma* souls of magicians are intimately related with the words of *miegava* and that spirits are at least indirectly involved in the effectiveness of spells.

Harry Powell, who conducted fieldwork near Omarakana in the early 1950s, did not investigate the topic of magic deeply, but still noted that unseasonable weather could result from spirits' dissatisfaction with people's misbehaviors toward them by making mistakes in the performance of spells or failing to provide them with enough food, presumably through *ula'ula* oblations (see fn. 12 above). Also, he reports that *baloma* spirits invoked in Omarakana's rain magic were understood to have "their [i.e. the spirits' own] magic":

> [I]t was no use trying to make rain magic against the baloma. The rain was obviously the result of their magic, and as they include in their numbers all of the dead and gone magicians of the past, and as the baloma are spirits anyway, obviously no mere human rain magician's efforts could hope to prevail against them once they really got cracking. (Powell 1950: 12)

Frederick Damon, reporting on the *kaluwan* (cognate of *baloma*) spirits of Muyuw Island, provides no data regarding the possible role of spirits in magic. However, he (1990: 258n) concedes that, for several reasons, his informants were "extremely reluctant" to give him knowledge of magical spells, resulting in a significant gap in this dimension of his ethnography.

Among the previous generation of Northern Massim ethnographers, only Nancy Munn (1986: 82–84, 288n) explicitly names ancestral *balouma* as effective agents, but immediately after making that assertion with reference to a single instance, she cautions against generalizing to other Gawan spells.

Recently returned from doctoral fieldwork, Sergio Jarillo de la Torre (2013) reports that informants in several communities to the south of Omarakana affirm that indigenous spirits are the principal agents of traditional carving spells, which have in certain respects been joined by spirits of the Christian pantheon.

Despite Malinowski's strident protestations of the magical effectiveness of words, his own writings and those of subsequent investigators and commentators offer at least fragmentary evidence that ancestral *baloma* might well be perceived by Trobrianders as playing critical agentive roles, similar to reports from some other parts of Melanesia. What exactly that role is and how it relates to the efficacies which have been attributed also to other entities and beings—words, metaphorical/metonymical relationships between words, nonhuman spirits, other animate and inanimate beings of the "natural" world, and so on—have yet to be rendered intelligible.

Framing the issue in these terms inevitably calls for a detailed reconsideration of the relevant aspects of Trobriand cosmology, which, on the basis of recently gathered ethnographic information, is more complicated and differently configured than has been reported thus far. What follows is a condensation of innumerable hours of discussion, questioning, rethinking, and reanalyzing the existing ethnographic corpus guided by my village interlocutors' knowledge. Readers should be advised that, to the best of my ability, the following account strongly reflects the authoritative viewpoints of the inhabitants of Omarakana, and particularly the current Tabalu and his cadre of both Tabalu *dala* and non-Tabalu followers, and other Islanders I have interviewed as well.[15]

15. As I have been advised by the Tabalu, Pulayasi Daniel, the information contained within the following account of the indigenous cosmology is very likely not readily accessible from all or even most Trobrianders. This is partly because it holds a central place as *tukwa* or sacred hereditary knowledge of members of Tabalu *dala*, particularly those based at Omarakana (see below). In this as in other instances, knowledge of *tukwa*, including the content of *megwa* spells "owned" by a particular *dala*, is restricted to selected *dala* members and children of male members. Therefore, while other villagers of different *dala* may know various bits of Trobriand cosmology as outlined here, it is presumably only Tabalu affiliates, and only some of them at that, who are in possession of the full and most authoritative accounts. Pulayasi adds this as one explanation

Cosmology

All beings and entities of the traditional Trobriand "universe" (*kwetala valu*, literally "one village" or "place"), whether perceived as animate or inanimate, material or immaterial, or human or nonhuman, are enlivened by a property termed *momova*, variously translated as "life," "vital spirit," or "vital breath" (Scoditti 1996: 68; 2012: 67ff.; Lawton 2002; Baldwin n.d.), or, as I prefer, "vital essence." My informants' elaborations on these meanings indicate that even those entities which appear in their outward, material form to be inanimate or lifeless nonetheless harbor invisible *momova*. Thus all beings and entities of the visible, material world of Boyowa including humans, plants, animals, rocks, features of the land, sea, and sky, and so on, possess, embody, and/or participate in inner *momova*.

Critically, however, the *momova* of any particular being or entity of Boyowa is also considered to coexist as, or to be a component of, its invisible counterpart in Tuma, the realm labeled by Malinowski ([1916] 1948) "land of the dead." This latter designation is misleading, though, insofar as it implies that the various occupants of Tuma are somehow lacking in *momova* or the capacities of life, when according to informants they are actually the source or essence (*u'ula*) of life, including the life of their material manifestations in the visible world, Boyowa. This does not mean, however, that Trobrianders lack a notion of "death" (*mate*); far from it. But "life" and "death" are for them differently conceived than in the West. The spirit world, Tuma, and the beings and entities inhabiting it are saturated with *momova*, the essence of life, on which the inhabitants of Boyowa depend for their very material existence.[16]

Tuma and Boyowa

To explain this fully, one must first comprehend the specific spatio-temporal location of the two realms and their general relations to each other. Ethnographic reports of Tuma's purported location have been quite varied, ranging from the island of Tuma, lying north of Kiriwina or Boyowa; the underworld beneath the land surface of Boyowa or other islands of the archipelago; the initial underground habitation of all beings and entities of Boyowa before their cosmic emergence from the cave, Obukula, near the present-day village of Labai to Omarakana's north; the subterranean "holes" or "houses" from which initial *dala* matrilineage ancestors (*tosunapula*) are believed to have emerged in the aftermath of cosmic creation; and the invisible abode of all *bilu baloma* spirits, including human ancestral *baloma* and other categories of spirit beings yet to be described (i.e. nonhuman *tokwai* "nature sprites," *itona* or *tauva'u* "warrior spirits," *tubu daiasa* "creator deities").

Tuma, as presented to me at Omarakana, however, is the hidden, invisible "inner" (*olumwela*) dimension of the universe, interpenetrating the visible, material "external" (*osisuna*, *yosewa*) world of Boyowa so that the two realms coincide. This

for why fuller accounts of Trobriand cosmology have not been given to ethnographers working elsewhere in the region.

16. In this sense, Trobriand cosmology would qualify as an instance of Descola's (2010) ontology of "animism." But as I shall outline below, on the basis of additional ontological criteria, Trobriand cosmology also qualifies as "totemism" and "analogism."

is how humans, animals, plants, physical features of the world, and so on, in their material manifestations can exist outwardly in Boyowa, yet harbor inwardly the *momova* of Tuma. Perhaps prototypically, the invisible insides (*lopola*) of bodies are part of or participate in Tuma. It is through this intimate, mystical connection of the two realms that living humans of Boyowa are able to communicate and interact with ancestral and other spirits of Tuma.

Villagers have impressed upon me often that Boyowa and Tuma are like "mirror images" (*saribu*) such that every being or entity of outward material or bodily existence (*yo'udila*) has its inner immaterial (*kekwabu*, literally "image" or "image-like") counterpart. This relationship of material body to immaterial image characteristic of the two realms is reversible, however. As it was explained to me in terms of the culture's prevalent "canoe" symbolism, for example, to living humans Boyowa is the "hull" (*waga*) that carries them about, with Tuma as the "outrigger" (*lamila*) that guides or supports the craft, but for *bilu baloma* spirits Tuma is their "hull" and Boyowa is their "outrigger." This relationship of mutual, reciprocal interdependence between Tuma and Boyowa constitutes the broader context through which islanders' *megwa* and other ritual practices are understood to acquire their efficacy.

When my informants elaborated on the mirror-like relation between Boyowa and Tuma, the question occurred to me: What is the mirror image of a living human if his/her soul only enters Tuma upon death? Or phrased conversely, if everything in Tuma has a material complement in Boyowa, what is the Boyowan counterpart of a person's *baloma* "soul" once the person identified with it has died and disappeared from Boyowa? The answer to both questions is the same, as suggested already: living humans are in critical ways the material Boyowan embodiments (*yo'udila*) of Tuman spirits, and *bilu baloma* in Tuma are the reflections or images (*kekwabu*) of Boyowan beings and entities.[17]

Kekwabu *images and* peula *powers*

While the beings and entities of Boyowa and Tuma are both "alive" in being animated by *momova*, within each realm their specific kinds or types of *momova* differ from one from another as qualitatively varied "forms" or "configurations" (*ikuli*) of distinctive *kekwabu* "images" which accordingly possess distinctive *peula* "powers" or "capactities" as exhibited in their Boyowan manifestations. These two aspects of *movova—kekwabu* "images" and *peula* "powers" or "capacities"—draw us considerably deeper into the base of Trobriand magic and, as I shall explain in Part 2, kin relations.

The notion of *kekwabu*, first, has been mentioned in several previous ethnographies, variously translated as "shadow," "reflection," "characteristic," "valuable characteristic," "photo," "drawing," "spirit substance," "image," "resemblance," "spirit part," "spiritual essence," "spiritual aspect," "ensemble of pieces/parts," "element of knowledge"; and occasionally it has been equated with the *baloma* "spirit" or "soul" of something, even of nonhumans (e.g. Seligman 1910: 734–35; Malinowski [1916] 1948: 150–51, 156, 167, 180–82; 1922: 512–13, 184; [1926] 1948; Weiner 1976: 82, 199; 1988: 42; Scoditti 1990: 58; Campbell 2002: 98, 106; Lawton 2002; Mosko 2009:

17. From the perspective of this mirror-like imagery, the cosmological tie between Boyowa and Tuma is analogical (Descola 2010).

694; Baldwin n.d.; Hutchins and Hutchins n.d.).[18] It is peculiar, therefore, that almost nothing has been made ethnographically till now of its cosmological significance, at least as it is comprehended at Omarakana. Each of the glosses listed above carries a degree of indigenous meaningfulness, but the English gloss for *kekwabu* which I take to be most useful for present purposes is that of "image," namely the *momova*-laden, nonsubstantial image components or characteristics of anything which, by virtue of different associated *peula* ("powers," "capacities"), differentiate and assimilate beings, entities, species, and so on, of Tuma and Boyowa from and to each other.

Peula "power" or "strength" (also "active," "force," "strong," "robust," "hard"), as a second inherent aspect of *momova*, has occasionally been mentioned ethnographically also (e.g. Weiner 1983: 693; Powell 1995: 74; Lawton 2002; Senft 2010: 76; Baldwin n.d.; Hutchins and Hutchins n.d.) but rarely analyzed. By a sort of indigenous *post facto* logic operating similarly to Oceanic *mana*, the visible attributes and capacities of any being or thing in Boyowa are considered by Islanders to be expressions of specific inner *peula* powers inextricably tied to the perceived contours of the form of that being's or thing's invisible *kaikobu* images. The exact expression of those inner powers and images is understood to be an instance of "emergence" (*sunapula*) directly analogous to the mythical, creative mythical coming forth of the visible Boyowan cosmos from the cave, Obukula (see Part 2). Accordingly, any configuration of *kekwabu* images with its paired *peula* power(s) has a dual existence, if you will—as the potent nonmaterial form of some invisible being or entity of Tuma and, through the effect(s) of the *peula* powers or capacities intrinsically associated with those internal images, as its embodied material counterpart as a visible manifestation of Boyowa.

From what I have learned, *kekwabu* images and *peula* powers are understood to operate between the two realms in something like the following way: When you peer upon anyone or anything of Boyowa and then quickly close your eyes, that immaterial but definite image which remains in your mind (*nona*) is a *kekwabu* (actually, an *ikuli* "formation" of many distinct, separate *kaikobu*) initially internal to that person or object which, through expression of its *peula* capacities—hence coming forth or emerging (*sunapula*) from Tuma—has been projected so as to be detached from that person or thing so that it appears internally as an element of your "mind" (*nona*, *nano*) and "thought" (*nanamsa*), hence a component of your own person.

Those readers versed in the NME will readily recognize in this presentation, at least to this point, the generalized dynamics of personal partibility inherent in indigenous understanding of virtually any interaction between persons (and "things") of Boyowa as mediated through and manifested by the *kekwabu* images and *peula* powers arising ultimately from Tuma. Others more familiar with corresponding Oceanic animistic notions will, again, hopefully appreciate the extent to which Trobriand thinking in terms of internal and manifested *kekwabu* and *peula* approximate the classic renderings of *mana.* The relevance of Lévy-Bruhl's, Tambiah's, and others' notions of "participation" and the pan-Pacific immanence of sacredness mentioned above should also be evident in these details of *momova* "vital essence"

18. *Kekwabu* is the Northern Kiriwinan dialectical version of *kaikobu* and *kaikwabu* as reported from other regions.

in its various transactable forms. But these and additional aspects of *kaikobu*, *peula*, and human-spirit relations, to which I next turn, challenge what in the West are recognized to differentiate categorically "persons" from "non-persons", "things" or "objects".

Human spirits,* nona *"mind," and* nanamsa *"thought"

Among the scattered ethnographic references to *kekwabu* listed above, there are instances where the inner *kekwabu* of specific nonhuman objects or beings have been described as being equivalent to those entities' *baloma* "souls," as if animals, plants, natural phenomena, and so on, that embody *momova* are constituted of the same order of *baloma* "souls" as humans and ancestral spirits. I have occasionally heard such attributions myself in the field. However, when I asked my interlocutors for clarification on this point—do these entities possess *baloma* "souls" or "spirits" in the same sense as human beings?—they uniformly told me "no," explaining that allusions to the immaterial *kekwabu* of nonsentient beings and entities as *baloma* are common enough but technically inaccurate. While those other beings are constituted of *momova*-laden *kekwabu* and associated *peula* that generate their material manifestations in Boyowa, those images and powers do not include *nona* "mind" and *nanamsa* "thought," which critically distinguish persons. Pigs, garden plots, trees, reefs, winds, and so on, of Boyowa do not possess mind or thoughts and thus cannot communicate through words with humans—*unless* they happen to harbor beings which are otherwise constituted of mind and thought (see below).

The *baloma* "souls" of living humans are partly composed of *momova* in the specific *kaikobu* and *peula* forms of "mind" and "thought," thereby distinguishing them as "persons" (*tomota*; see below) separate from nonsentient beings and things of creation: that is, those which lack the images of *nona* "mind" and powers of *nanamsa* "thought." Upon being released from their bodies following death, human *baloma* "souls" continue to exist in their immaterial *baloma* "spiritual" forms with the retained capacities of mind and thought of persons.

But the *baloma* of humans, living and deceased, are not the only beings in the cosmos which possess images and powers of *nona* and *nanamsa*. Rather, all those beings which have appeared in the literature and are construed by Islanders as *bilu baloma* or "spirits" in the generic—ancestral *baloma*, *tubu daiasa*, *kosi*, *tosunapula*, *tokwai*, *itona/tauva'u*, *mulukwausi*, etc.—are classified as such on the basis of possessing or being constituted of *nona* and *nanamsa*. And it is on the criterion of sharing those qualities that all sentient beings can potentially communicate with one another as "persons" (*tomota*), as Trobrianders define that notion. Nonhuman *bilu baloma* spirits such as *itona/tauva'u* "warrior spirits" and *tokwai* "nature sprites" along with human *baloma*, *kosi* "ghosts," and *mulukwausi* "flying witches," in other words, qualify as "persons" precisely in this sense of being composed of the *kekwabu* images of mind with the associated *peula* capacities of thought.

Furthermore, on this basis, not only can humans and spirits communicate with one another, but in the context of *megwa* they do so through the medium of structured images and powers of *nanamsa* thoughts as realized in ordered sequences or formations (*ikuli*) of words. In this specific sense, the magical power of words, as conceived by Malinowski and others, *is* the magical agency of persons, including *bilu baloma* spirits of Tuma and humans of Boyowa. The words of *megwa* spells

are thus potent images among the definitive components of the beings in whom they are incorporated as persons. The *u'ula* and *doginala* invocations of *megwa* as illustrated in the *vatuvi* and other spells thus do not merely pay mythological homage to magicians' ancestors and predecessors, as proclaimed by Malinowski; in the view of Omarakanans and other Islanders, those words as structured *kekwabu* have the *peula* capacities of identifying the magician with the named *bilu baloma* spirits, thereby reconstituting them as the persons empowered to act in the present as they had done in the past since the time of the spell's origination.

This can be explained partially by recalling how Malinowski (1922: 315, 409–10, 412; [1925] 1948: 76) and others (Tambiah 1968: 184; Weiner 1976: 218, 252; Scoditti 1996; 2012; Senft 1998) have variously reported that *megwa* are seen as being stored in a magician's "belly" (*lopola*) after entering his person through the larynx or vocal organs of his throat, the seat of "intelligence" or "mind" (*nona* or *nano*) also located in some accounts with the *dabala* "head." As explained to me by my Omarakana friends, all of these assertions are correct but only partly so and in subtly different senses. When a magician transmits a spell to his successor and as the recipient learns it, they both voice it repeatedly, externalizing in the one case and internalizing in the other. Thereafter, the words of the spell as potent (but not activated) images are stored as separated images in the initiated magician's bodily *lopola*.

Here, the term *lopola* refers not only to a person's "belly" or "abdomen" but also to his/her generalized "insides," including the head, larynx, mouth, torso, limbs, organs, and so on, insofar as all inner body regions enclosed by skin are infused with watery blood (*buyai*). Thus the words of the spell with their attached powers, once learned, course disjointedly through the fluid blood of the magician's body, where, in that decomposed condition, they are magically inert or "cold" (*tula*). The critical faculty of *nona* mind, concentrated in the magician's "head" or "brain" (*dabala*, inclusive of the larynx, as has been reported by some), is to draw up the disconnected images and powers of the spell from the magician's "belly" and to organize or structure them into a particular coherent sequence or form (*ikuli*, *simuli*) of words—that is, as a *nanamsa* "thought"—exactly as the spell was initially internalized by the magician and his *bilu baloma* predecessors. It is the *nona* "mind" located in the head or larynx, my informants insist, where the *megwa* is thus first recongealed, or, as Malinowski characterized it, "crystallized" (1932: 409; see also Montague 1983: 45n).

When the images of the spell in that form are voiced by the larynx and other vocal organs at the oral tip of the magician's body, they become energized or "hot" (*yuviyavi*). In that condition, projected as invisible sound into the air or wind (*yagila*) and thus into invisible Tuma, they emerge from the magician's mouth as the spell's potent "fruit," "offspring," or "child" (*keyuwela*, *gwadi*; see Part 2). This means that the vocalization of the structured sequence of *kekwabu* images recreates and reinvigorates the identity and relations of the persons of both Boyowan and Tuman realms associated with the spell—the magician and the invoked *bilu baloma*—as one person.

Those spells which are regarded as hereditary to members of a given *dala* (*tukwa*) can only be learned and effectively used by persons constituted of the appropriate *dala* images and powers. Here the claim is that the *kekwabu* and *peula* ingredients of a given *dala*'s spells are contained or stored in the blood of *dala* members. However, only those principally male members who are able secondarily to learn the *ordered,*

structured sequencing of the verbal images or words as a fully formed megwa *spell* from a suitably knowledgeable predecessor—that is, through the human capacities of mind and thought—will be able to effect the desired results. This, incidentally, explains why men are unable to perform effectively the hereditary *megwa* of *dala* with which they possess no identification even if they mentally learn the spells, further refuting Malinowski's claims as to the exclusive magical agency of words. One needs to have embodied the appropriate inner *kekwabu* and *peula* stored in one's blood, prototypically through kin relations, in the first place.

There is considerably more significance attached to these processes of storing, forming, and producing *megwa*. As my Omarakana confidants sometimes portrayed it, the summoned *bilu baloma* instantly come to occupy space at the magician's shoulders or back, and then proceed invisibly and instantly as spirits through Tuma to enter the *lopola* (including the head and mind) of the patient or target, where the *peula* powers of the spell's *kekwabu* images are activated, meaning that they alter the form (*ikuli*) of the patient's previous configuration of images and powers.[19] To be sure, the words of the magicians' spells are *kekwabu* images possessing specific *peula* powers, but not separately from the *bilu baloma* of which those images and words are themselves detachable parts. In other words, the resolution of Malinowski's magical efficacy puzzle lies in the ways that the words of spells are construed cosmologically as personal components of the invoked spirits as well as the invoking magician.

But still, this is not the complete story as it is understood at Omarakana. Those beings and entities of the cosmos which do not qualify as sentient *tomota* "persons" in the sense considered here, while they may also embody *momova*-laden *kaikobu* images and powers which partake of both Boyowa and Tuma, do not harbor *baloma* "souls" or "spirits" properly speaking since they lack the inner, invisible *kaikobu* constitutive of the *peula* powers specifically of mind and thought.

Nonetheless, those non-person kinds of beings and entities do play certain active roles in *megwa* spells and contribute to their effectiveness. To explain how they do so in concert with the minds and thoughts of human and spirit persons, it is necessary to probe even deeper into the indigenous cosmogony, into the initial creation of the universe as Trobrianders traditionally understand it and the developments which mythically ensued. But also, it is by virtue of the mythical interactions between the initial inhabitants of Tuma and Boyowa consequent to cosmic creation that the relationships underpinning contemporary Islanders' relations to each other in terms of kinship, clanship, and rank through various mechanisms of gift exchange were established.

PART 2: AN ARCHAEOLOGY OF TROBRIAND CREATION AND PROCREATION

> *The wording of magic is correlated with* a very complicated dogmatic system*, and with theories about the primeval mystical power of words,*

19. This process would seem to parallel Malinowski's (1932:148–49, 152–54, 160) reports of women being inseminated by *waiwaia* "spirit children" through their heads; see Part 2.

> *about mythological influences, about the faint co-operation of ancestral spirits, and much more important, about the sympathetic influences of animals, plants, natural forces and objects.*
>
> —Malinowski, *Coral gardens and their magic*, Vol. 2, p. 222 (emphasis added)

In seeking to solve the puzzle of the source of agency in Trobriand magic thus far, I have focused on information indicating the terms by which Islanders conceive of a personal identity between magicians and the spirits invoked in their spells, namely through the compatibilities of inherited and learned *kekwabu* images and *peula* powers involving mind and thought. In his writings, Malinowski conceived of this very linkage as "mythological" in nature. For example,

> There is another side to the lists of ancestral names in magic, which must be remembered here. *In all Kiriwinian magic a great role is played by myths, underlying a certain system of magic, and by tradition in general.* How far this tradition is local and how far it thus becomes focussed on the family tradition of a certain subclan has been discussed above. *The ancestral names mentioned in the several [magical] formulae form therefore one of the traditional elements so conspicuous in general. The mere sanctity of those names, being often a chain linking the performer with a mythical ancestor and originator, is in the eyes of the natives a quite sufficient prima facie reason for their recital. Indeed, I am certain that any native would regard them thus in the first place, and that he would never see in them any appeal to the spirits, any invitation to the baloma to come and act, the spells uttered whilst giving the* ula'ula [oblation, see below] *being, perhaps, an exception.* But even this exception does not loom first and foremost in his mind and does not color his general attitude towards magic. (Malinowski [1916] 1948: 215, emphases added)

This identification of magician with ancestors as being "mythological" evidently provided Tambiah with a reason to exclude ancestral spirits from his initial performative treatment of Trobriand magic (see Part 1):

> The three parts [of a spell; i.e. *u'ula*, *tapwala*, and *doginala*] appear to present the following progression. The *u'ula*, which is brief, states the basis on which the spell is constructed, firstly the major theme or metaphorical idea which is elaborated in the spell and secondly *the mythical heroes and ancestors who wielded the magical powers in question and with whom the magician himself becomes identified. This second feature is the portion of the spell that relates the magic to myth, which I do not discuss.* (Tambiah 1968: 190, emphases added)

However, there is much more in Trobriand mythology and cosmology generally that is relevant to questions of magical efficacy, particularly the role not only of sentient persons but also of the other nonsentient beings and entities named in spells through the medium of words. How, then, did the entire Trobriand dual universe of Boyowa and Tuma in their spiritual, human, and nonhuman dimensions get mythically established? The answer to this question will eventually touch on the second major puzzle left by Malinowski concerning the

indigenous cosmogony and those aspects of kin relationship consequent to human procreation.

Cosmogony

Over the course of numerous in-depth discussions, Tabalu Pulayasi, members of my principal research team at Omarakana, and others have provided me with the following details regarding the sacred story (*lili'u*) of *bubuli*, the mythical events of "creation." In summary, at the beginning there was only the primal god, Topileta, and his female counterpart, Tugilupalupa, locked in the embrace of sexual union (cf. Seligman 1910: 679, 732–34; Malinowski [1916] 1948: 156–59, 242; Baldwin 1971: 318, 369–73; Glass 1986, 1988; Ketobwau 1994; Malnic 1998: 185, 196). Topileta is the paternal (*tama*) spirit or god (*baloma*, *tubu diasa*) of the universe, described by Malinowski and others as the chief or master of immaterial Tuma. But Tuma, my informants add, was initially Tugilupalupa's womb; hence she is regarded as the mother (*ina*) of creation, and her vagina through which all of beings and entities emerged is considered to be the legendary cave, Obukula, at the northerly end of Kiriwina Island near Labai, the ancestral Tabalu village.[20]

From the separation of this primal pair, the universe and all beings and entities it contains were born or created (*bubuli*) as their "children" (*gwadi*). The visible world of Boyowa and all of its inhabitants thus emerged (*sonapula*) from invisible Tuma, the womb of Tugilupalupa, with progenerative characteristics of paternal Topileta also.[21] As offspring (i.e. *keyuwela* "fruit") of the two gods, every *momova*-laden being and entity of creation thus embodies and is animated by certain of the specific sacred characteristics and capacities (i.e. *kaikobu* and *peula*) of the divine parents. Accordingly, every subsequent emergence of beings and entities from Tuma to Boyowa—including in particular, as we shall presently see, the vocalization of *megwa* spells and the reincarnation of humans—thus recapitulates the cosmic procreation of the universe or some focused aspects of it.

The first children to emerge were the spirits referred to, like their divine parents, as *tubu daiasa*, which can conveniently be glossed as "creator deities." The term *tubu* is a variant of the word *tabu*, which in kinship terms nominally refers to "grandparent," but in this context applies more generally to "first ancestor" or "progenitor." The term *daiasa* here means "our." Some of the more mythically famous *tubu diasa* appear as central characters in various recorded myths, the most popular and frequently cited being the tale of the cannibal monster Dokanikani, heroic Tudava, and his mother Malita (or Mitigis, Bulutukwa) (Malinowski [1926]

20. The oral traditions of most, although not all, *dala* include mention of the local emergence of *dala* ancestors on *dala*-owned land. According to my Omarakana and other sources, these events occurred mythically in the course of *tosunapula* migrations before "settlement" (*sibogwa*) on the lands that their living descendants have come to occupy.

21. This version of Trobriand cosmology, of itself, is consistent with the preponderance of ethnographic evidence which refutes Malinowski's notorious claims of Islanders' supposed "ignorance of physiological paternity"; see below.

1948: 122–24; 1927: 111–14, 244, 340; 1935a: 68–75; Baldwin 1971; J. Leach 1971; Lawton 1993: 181–82; Malnic 1998: 164–73).

According to Tabalu Pulayasi, however, the most notable of Topileta and Tugilupalupa's *tubu daiasa* offspring is a different Tudava, Ika'ili Tudava, who has often been confused and/or conflated with the Tudava of the Dokanikani story correctly named Ikuli Tudava. These two Tudava characters are father and son. The more famous Tudava, Ikuli Tudava, who was mythically born of Malita and who mythically killed the Dokanikani monster, was the son of the other Tudava, Ika'ili Tudava, also known in some Massim myths as Dovana or Gere'u. Ika'ili Tudava, the father, was the first son of Topileta and Tugilupalupa to emerge from Obukula, and he was of Tabalu *dala*. The son, Ikuli Tudava, like his mother, Malita, was of Tudava *dala*.

The term *ika'ili* means "speaking/saying things, they come into existence." Thus in Pulayasi's cosmogony, Ika'ili Tudava had the power or ability inherited from his parents, Topileta and Tugilupalupa, to "say" things into being either by speaking their names from his mouth or by blowing them out through a conch shell. In this fashion, the originally divine *kekwabu* images and *peula* powers distinctive to various species acquired their embodied, material character in Boyowa from the interior images and powers of Ika'ili Tudava's person.

As he moved about, Ika'ili Tudava created many of the inhabitants and features of the land, sea, and sky orally, as distinct from the way that his female *tubu daiasa* paramour, Malita, mythically gave vaginal birth to her plant, animal, and other children, including the son, Ikuli Tudava.[22] Ika'ili Tudava's capacity of generating children from his mouth thus stands as a masculine sort of procreative capacity comparable with the ability of females to reproduce children through their vaginas. And in coming forth or emerging in this way, Ika'ili Tudava's children embody *kekwabu* and *peula* of their father and mother according to their specific characteristics and, through them, those of the primal cosmic pair, Topileta and Tugilupalupa.

Now in many accounts of Ikuli Tudava's birth, he was conceived after water dripping from the top of a cave opened his mother's vagina (see Malinowski [1916] 1948: 228; Campbell 2002: 179). However, *sopi*, the term for "water," is commonly used to refer to the magic transferred from one man to his successor orally (Kasaipwalova 1975; Scoditti 1996: 96, 199; Campbell 2002: 56). By implication, Ika'ili Tudava's son, Ikuli Tudava, was mythically conceived for emergence into the universe through the voice of his father's words. In some accounts of the Tudava story, it is he, Ikuli Tudava, who, after slaying the ogre Dokanikani, traveled about the Massim archipelago performing many acts of verbal creation. But according to Pulayasi, these feats were those of the father, Ika'ili Tudava.

Pulayasi adds that Ika'ili Tudava was not the only *tubu daiasa* spirit offspring of the primal pair with the *ika'ili* capacity of creating children through the agency of voice. That capacity was shared with Topileta and Tugilupalupa's other offspring known as *tosunapula*, "beings who emerged [from Obukula]" or "first emergent ancestors". These are the brother–sister couples standing as the primal antecedents

22. The famous water (*sopi*) dripping from the stalactite which pierced Malita's vagina in conceiving Ikuli Tudava is identified by Pulayasi as the watery saliva (*bubwalua*) of Ika'ili Tudava (cf. Malinowski [1916] 1948: 228; 1935a: 68–75). As I shall discuss below, mouths along with caves are viewed as analogous to vaginas, capable of giving birth.

of *dala* matrilineages.[23] Through their spirit pedigrees they together possessed the masculine-paternal capacity of *ika'ili*, calling things into existence through voicing their names and other characteristics with words. But the *tosunapula* pioneers of distinct *dala* inherited different *kekwabu* images and *peula* powers from their respective progenitors, and it is those distinctive configurations which continue to differentiate *dala* matrilineages, and much else, from each other.

According to Omarakana elders, Ika'ili Tudava not only created many of the features of the world, he also instructed ancestral *tosunapula* of separate *dala* upon their emergence from Okukula to migrate from Labai and lay claim to specific parcels of land and sea. As they did so, those *tosunapula* called into existence various animals, plants, and other phenomena of the world which, like them, embodied *some* of the images and powers distinctive to their respective *dala* identities. It was in this way during the phases of creation and migration that the universe was eventually populated by most of its now-known occupants and features. Accordingly, the world is currently inhabited by beings and entities, each of which (or each species of which) is a "child" or partial embodiment of the *tosunapula* persons of a specific *dala* identity. But also, the beings and entities thus created along specifically *dala* lines of differentiation, or at least those *kekwabu* and *peula* powers associated with their respective *dala*, are among the sacred possessions (*tukwa*) shared among all humans of those respective *dala* identities. Other components of a *dala*'s *tukwa* include its living and deceased human members, similarly associated nonhuman *tokwai* spirits, lands, decorations, insignia, titles and rank, totems, myths, and so on (see below).

It will be helpful to elaborate on a few critical details. All beings and entities of the cosmos are descended as children from the primal gods, Topileta and Tugilupalupa, and are thus animated by *momova* "vital essence," including the specific images and powers ultimately inherited from them. That vital essence was in the first instance procreative in an explicitly sexual sense, deriving from the conjugal union and separation of the primal couple and the procreative acts of the *tubu daisa* creator gods.

In the following episodes of creation focused upon human *tosunapula*, however, that vital force was manifested not in the form of giving birth sexually or vaginally, insofar as *tosunapula* brother–sister couples observed the taboo against *dala* incest. Instead, as they migrated, they reproduced orally and thus quasi-incestuously through the recitation of *kekwabu* images as words that have associated with them specific *peula* powers. Thus the primal powers exhibited mythically by Ika'ili Tudava and *tosunapula* of different *dala* are duplicated in the capacities nowadays exhibited by magicians in the performance of *megwa* through the detachment or enunciation of sacralized words.

Consequently, as I shall explain below, present-day *megwa* spells *are* the creative vocalizations of *tosunapula* employed at the time of creation and subsequently transmitted intact to living human descendants. However, the miraculous feats of the *tubu daiasa* of creation result not from the mere utterance of *megwa* "words," as Malinowski maintained, insofar as those words are personal components of the sentient beings who contributed to the creation of the cosmos, or parts of it, along

23. *Tosunapula* are the same spirit ancestors described by Weiner (1976: 39) and Malinowski (1935b: 262–63) as *tabu*.

dala-specific lines. Therefore, when magicians call forth the personal images of their predecessors (and other *bilu baloma* spirits; see below), they are effectively replicating or reenacting events and events of creation. As Malinowski ([1925] 1948: 74–75) reported, all of the *megwa* in existence today are unchanged from the time of creation.

Now because the *tosunapula* siblings ancestral to a specific *dala* are understood mythically to have also verbally created distinctive kinds of nonhuman beings and entities, those latter species are likewise viewed as "children" (*gwadi*) of those *tosunapula*, thereby sharing with their human co-descendants some of the same *dala*-specific identifying *kekwabu* images and associated *peula* powers. I stress *some* here because, as in the case of strictly human procreation as traditionally understood by Trobrianders, children inherit some, perhaps all, of the characteristics of each of their parents.[24] This means that every *dala* constituted as a human collectivity is connected by means of shared images and powers to a unique population of nonhuman beings and entities of both Boyowa and Tuma. Thus, for example, the chiefly Tabalu *dala* has various animal, plant, and celestial beings with which it identifies. Members of Yogwabu, a commoner (*tokai*) *dala* based also at Omarakana, recognize yet other beings and entities mythically created by its *tosunapula* with which they identify, and so on.

The general principle here is that, if the word naming a certain species or any of the other features associated with it is mentioned in a *megwa*, that species and its characteristics are part of the *tukwa* of that particular *dala*, inherited unchanged from the time of creation. That species, in other words, is seen as sharing kindred *kekwabu* and *peula* with persons who also identify with that *dala*. Taking the example of the *tapwala* segment of the *vatuvi* gardening spell discussed by Malinowski (1935a: 96–98; 1935b *passim*) and Tambiah (1968: 191–92), the "grubs," "blights," "insects," "beetles," and so on, that "bore" and "destroy" crops and that are to be "swept" and "blown away" are constituents of the *tukwa* of the magician's and his predecessors' *dala*.

This indicates why the meaning of *dala* goes far beyond "subclan" or "matrilineage group"—the usual definition in anthropology since Malinowski—as it includes also the beings and entities of the cosmos which together embody, in whole or in part, the same images and powers. I believe that until now Montague (1974: 43–49, 71, 103–4) alone has perceived that *dala* consists not in a corporate group or matrilineage of people but in essentially shared magical capacities—what I have presented here in terms of shared *kekwabu* images and *peula* powers. The bird, fish, mammal, and plant species, *koni* emblems, designs and decorations, traditional lands, and politico-ritual rank as well as the people and the *megwa* they embody as common descendants of the same mythical *tosunapula* are thus all parts of or participants in the same *dala* identity, its *tukwa*. A *dala*'s store of *tukwa* images and powers is the ultimate source (*u'ula*) of the life (*momova*) of its human and other members, and to those *dala* members with the capacity of mind and thought those

24. The particulars of Trobriand beliefs about human procreation are, of course, immensely complicated and controversial. Thankfully, the Tabalu, Pulayasi Daniel, and my other Omarakana informants have affirmed in broad outline my earlier analyses and the further details presented below.

tukwa images and powers are "sacred" (*bomaboma*). They should avoid ingestion of them in the exactly the same sense as people should avoid *dala* incest (*suvasova*).

There are two critical qualifications regarding the scope of *dala*, however. First, not all *tosunapula* who emerged as children of Topileta and Tugulupalupa at the time of creation are genealogically ancestral to humans. These others are Tuman "spirits" (*bilu baloma*) of specific kinds who also migrated and "settled" (*sibogwa*) across the land- and seascape but never adopted the practices initiated by humans which followed the eventual occupation of specific locations by *tosunapula* ancestors. As one result, these other spirits do not undergo the death and reincarnation that is consequent to the initiation of exogamous, inter-*dala* heterosexual reproduction. These nonhuman *tosunapula* emergence spirit beings are thus immortal, with the characteristics and capacities of mind, thought, and perpetual life (*momova*) of inner Tuma, living underground, in large trees, grottoes, large stones, and so on.

These nonhuman *tosunapula* are the spirits which have been described ethnographically as *tokwai* "nature sprites."[25] The world's *tokwai* in this sense emerged from Obukula alongside or being carried by their human counterparts, thereby sharing with them the same *kekwabu* and *peula* so as to identify and classify them according to *dala* distinctions. And just as the human *tosunapula* progenitors were distributed among specific locations of the land and sea, their nonhuman *tosunapula* relations were scattered accordingly. It is for this reason, for example, that the human *tolivalu* "owners" of specific partitions of land and seabed share *dala* identity with the *tokwai* that invisibly inhabit those locations, since those *tokwai* are also regarded as *tolivalu* "owners" or "leaders" of the same tracts and included among the magician's *tukwa*.

The *tokwai* which emerged and migrated alongside particular human *tosunapula* were endowed by their divine parents with the same *kekwabu* images and *peula* powers of mind and thought. This originating class of emergent *tokwai* spirits, in short, qualify as *tomota* "persons" even though they are not human. It is for this reason that magicians can communicate with them through *megwa*, invoking them by name along with ancestral *baloma* in *u'ula* and *doginala* passages of spells. Moreover, a given magician personally identifies with those summoned nonhuman *bilu baloma* as parts of his own person through the sharing of *tukwa* images and powers, even though he is not descended from them in the same sense that he is from his human progenitors, that is, by parturition. Thus nonhuman *tokwai* spirits can participate in the magician's magic as component relations of his person.

Secondly, not all of the beings and entities of Boyowa and Tuma that are proclaimed to harbor *tokwai* spirits are sentient, possessing the images and powers of mind and thought. Here, as with the term *baloma* (see above), the term *tokwai* carries a certain ambiguity. While the, let us say, "ordinary," visible animals, plants, and other material features of Boyowa are understood to be animated by invisible *momova* "vital essence" of Tuma and to share many of the images and powers of the original nonhuman *tosunapula-tokwai* of creation, on their own they lack the characteristics of mind and thought. As some informants put it, these visible material beings and entities might well incorporate *tokwai* in the sense of *kekwabu* and

25. The malevolent, war-like *tauva'u* or *itona* thought to cause epidemic disease are a subcategory of *tokwai*.

peula, but they are distinct from the mindful *tokwai* of creation with which they are thereby connected. Thus, presently, magicians can refer to and draw upon the images and powers of animals, plants, and other features of Boyowa in their spells insofar as those species are animated by the same *dala*-specific characteristics as the original nonhuman *tosunapula* with whom magicians are also identified.

A magician as participant in his *dala* therefore enjoys a "totemic" relationship with the sentient and nonsentient *tokwai* that emerged from Obukula with his *tonsunapula* ancestors and thus with the specific animal, plant, and natural species associated or identified with them. The shared images and powers connecting them are the *kekwabu* and *peula* that are mainly voiced in the *tapwala* segments of spells.[26] In general, people of a given *dala* must observe dietary and other restrictions associated with exactly the beings and entities that are called upon in the *tukwa* spells of the *dala* with which they identify. These are the "taboos" mentioned by Malinowski and others that accompany specific *megwa*.[27] Parents instruct their children on which foods or other behaviors they must avoid, even if they do not know the exact wording of their *dala*'s spells. This way, when grown, the children will be eligible to receive and use those *megwa*. Violation of one's *dala*'s taboos renders one unrecognizable to the *bilu baloma* who observed those proscriptions while they were alive. Rather than performing actions as the spell instructs, the spirits turn their back on anyone they do not recognize as themselves in terms of shared images and powers. Violation of the taboos of one's *dala* is thus analogous to the commission of *dala* incest (see below), which similarly compromises one's *dala* identity.

Now, the many distinct species of animals, plants, and "natural" phenomena populating Boyowa are related to one another through the perceptions of them that that people hold through their capacities of mind and thought. As Pulayasi and others explain, this is how seemingly distinct beings and entities of the visible world can nonetheless embody the same or analogous *kekwabu* and *peula*. Even though black clouds and *maua*, a species of black fish, are clearly different entities, sharing the quality of "blackness" enables them to be meaningfully voiced together in Omarakana's weather magic for producing heavy rains. On yet other *kekwabu* and *peula* criteria, the sea-passage of Kadilabona, the village of Labai, *de'u* leaves, and the leaf ribs of coconut palms jointly cited in the *vatuvi* spell are assimilated to each other.

These are exactly the kinds of metaphorical and metonymical connections which Tambiah (1968) through his initial performative approach insightfully recognized as explaining what he interpreted as the power of magical words. However, in the view of the indigenous cosmology elaborated here through my adaptations of the NME and consistent with his later participation theory (see Part 1), the power of those words has everything do with Islanders' understanding that their significations and effectiveness are equivalent to the personal constitution and agency of the magician as identified with invoked *bilu baloma* spirits.

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26. In this regard, Trobriand cosmology conforms to Descola's model of totemic as well as animistic and analogistic ontologies. This explains, in part, Seligman's (1910: 661–735) strong focus on "totems" in his formulation of Northern Massim social organization.

27. The term for these taboos is *kikila*.

Megwa as reproduction

This leads me finally to consider the agency of spirits in connection with procreation as a key dimension of Trobriand kin reckoning along with magic. From the very beginning, my field interlocutors have been adamant regarding the magical agency of *bilu baloma* rather than words alone with *megwa*. My initial impression was that, through invoking those spirits, the magician was recruiting them to transport mystically the invisible images and powers of the named nonsentient species from their specific locations in the Boyowan external world, bringing them together and manipulating them outside the magician's body before being transferred by the named spirits to the target or patient to produce the desired results.

In subsequent discussions, though, my informants portrayed a significantly different scenario. The *kekwabu* and *peula* of "natural" species and phenomena that the magician calls forth in the *vatuvi* spell, for instance—the grubs and beetles swept and blown away, etc.—are seen as coming instead from the magician's own bodily interior (*lopola*), where they have been stored for vocalization and projection, then to be carried forth invisibly by *or as* the spirits through Tuma to the intended destination. Moreover, the complete externalized, vocalized *megwa* is regarded as the magician's "child" (*gwadi*)—indeed, equivalent to a "person"—modeled on the characteristics of the mythical *tosunapula* children, human and nonhuman, generated by their procreative separation from the deities of creation described above as well as on the ordinary reproduction of offspring to human mothers and fathers. The utterance of *megwa* through men's oral cavities is thus analogous in different but complementary ways to the masculine *ika'ili* creative acts of spirit ancestors, on the one hand, and to the giving of birth through women's vaginas, on the other.

Recall my description above of the procedures by which *megwa* are supposedly produced within and without the magician's body, namely how *megwa* vocalized by the magician repeatedly emerge from his vocal channel into the initiate's oral cavity; how the *megwa* are repeatedly voiced by the recipient so that they can be internally formed or memorized, indicating that no one can learn a spell through a single repetition; how the memorized words are dismantled from one another, enabling them to flow through and be stored in the blood of the magician's body; how in being recalled as *megwa* they are summoned to the magician's mind; how there they are reconstituted or re-formed by the mind into a coherent, ordered thought; how that insubstantial but ordered thought can then be repeatedly enunciated by the organs of the throat and mouth for emergence, at once to Boyowa, to outside the magician's material body, but invisibly also to be constituted in the internal, invisible realm of Tuma.

These steps follow closely the processes involved in indigenous views of human procreation and birth as I elsewhere summarized them (Mosko 1995, 2005) on the basis of the reports of previous investigators but subsequently affirmed in general outline by my Omarakana informants.[28] I present the key connections here as a series of analogies between procreation (**in bold**) and magical generativity (*in italics*):

28. Tambiah (1968: 195) observed how Malinowski failed to appreciate the symbolic parallels between garden and pregnancy magic, although his informants were clear on the

Children are conceived partly as a formation (*ikuli*) of the gendered elements or contributions of two gendered parents, a feminine, largely substantial but fluid or bloody mother and a masculine, largely insubstantial but nonfluid, inelastic father.
Megwa consist of a formation (ikuli) of elements drawn from two gendered parts of the human body (i.e. disconnected words stored in/flowing amorphously through the body's bloody lopola interior and masculine, largely insubstantial/reasoned/structured nona mind).

Human children are the products of the formation of a fetus wherein the disconnected images and powers flowing in the blood of the mother's *lopola* are drawn down and coagulated in the womb by the forming influences of the father.
The disconnected words of a spell stored in the blood of the magician's body are drawn up into the throat by the reasoning or thinking capacities of the magician's mind.

From the vaginal-end of the woman's body, she gives birth to material children identified as *tukwa* of her *dala*.
From the head-end of the magician's body, he gives birth to immaterial children identified as tukwa with his dala (see below).

The father sexually penetrates the vagina of the child-to-be's mother.
The magician mentor provides the spell which enters the magician's body through the mouth.

The father's contribution to the child consists in the feeding (*vakam*) of immaterial, invisible images that have the capacity of conveying form (*ikuli*) to the child.
The mentor's contribution consists of immaterial, invisible images that have the capacity of giving form to the disconnected images and powers of the spell otherwise dispersed in the initiate's body blood.

The father feeds the fetus through the mother's vagina with repetitions of sexual intercourse, resulting in the fetus "child" being *ikuli* "coagulated," "congealed."
The mentoring magician orally recites the spell numerous times for it to be received, internalized, and ikuli "coalesced" as his "child" formed in the initiate's memory.

The mother contributes two components to the child which identify her and it with her *dala*: the distinctive character of her substantive blood and the insubstantial *waiwaia* spirit child sent from Tuma.
The magician correspondingly embodies substantially the tukwa images and powers of his dala along with the insubstantial bilu baloma immanent in his own person.

relationship. My argument here is more general: that in the terms of the culture, the logic of *all* masculine magical *megwa* production and creativity is analogous to feminine bodily reproduction and procreation, and vice versa.

The *waiwaia* spirit child is brought to the mother by *baloma* spirits of Tuma who identify with the mother's (and also the father's) or fetus's *dala*.
The spell as recited by the magician and transferred to the patient is accompanied by baloma spirits of Tuma who identify with the dala of the magician (or his father; see below) and mentor.

The repeated acts of sex between the parents shape or coagulate the images and powers of the mother contained in her blood so as to form a fetus in the mother's *lopola*, after which repeated acts of sex are suspended.
The magician's and mentor's repeated reciting of the spell continues until the spell has been completely formed or memorized, whereupon it is stored in the magician's lopola.

The fetus gestates in the mother's *lopola* until such time as she gives birth through her vagina.
The spell resides inertly in the magician's belly until such time as he is ready to externalize it through his mouth.

The mother's reproductive organs consist of a moist inner *lopola* container (*bam* "womb"), delivery tube (*bulabola, wila* "vagina"), clitoris (*kasesa*), and labias (*bilibala*, *bila*).
The magician's vocal apparatus consist of a moist inner lopola container (wadola "mouth"), delivery tube/throat (kayola), uvula (kasesa), and lips (balola, bila).

In the process of giving birth, women excrete red fluids likened to blood along with the newborn child.
When magician's speak their megwa, they typically excrete or spit red fluids likened to blood from their mouths (i.e. betel spittle, as the chewing of betel is a normal preliminary or accompaniment of reciting megwa).

The human child who emerges is constituted of the images and powers of its *baloma* ancestral spirits in Tuma.
The enunciated magical spell is constituted of images and powers shared with the magician's ancestral baloma spirits in Tuma.

In order to conceive and give initial birth, women must be penetrated by some external physical means, since being of a given *dala* identity (*tukwa*) is of itself insufficient to conceive and give birth to children.
In order to learn a spell sufficiently to use it, a magician must internalize the spoken contents of the spell, since being of a given dala is not sufficient to mentally know and perform the tukwa spells of that dala.

When parents fail to inculcate their images and powers into their children properly or exactly as according to their respective *dala*, the children will be ineffective in their own lives.

When magicians fail to learn and operationalize their megwa perfectly (as, for example, in leaving words out, violating related taboos), the magic will not work properly.

The child born to a woman contains the images and powers of the *bilu baloma* spirits of their *dala*.
The megwa spell voiced by a magician contains the images and powers of its bilu baloma predecessors.

Children born of women embody the distinctive images and powers of human and *baloma* "persons" (*tomata*), with mind and thought, who are thus capable of exhibiting agency.
The megwa children (i.e. spells) created by magicians contain the images and powers (i.e. words) distinctive to tomota human and bilu baloma "persons" with mind and thought, who are thus capable of exhibiting agency.

From these parallels, it can be inferred that the magical words of *megwa* do have pragmatic and performative effects, but not only in the narrow manners claimed by Malinowski and Tambiah initially. The magical powers of the words of *megwa* are inseparable from the personal characteristics and capacities of the persons of both living human magicians and the spiritual beings who embody them through *dala* or other relationships and identities.

Discussion and conclusion

For the sake of conclusion, I shall concentrate on the clarifying light which this last point and the above analogies shed on indigenous views of human creativity, procreative as well as magical, along lines consistent with Viveiros de Castro's formulation of the intrinsic relation between magic and kinship. The *momova* "vital essence" given expression in *megwa* is as magically creative as human procreation is magical.

Returning to Pulayasi's rendition of cosmic generation, the *tosunapula* ancestors of the various *dala* were born of the sexual separation of the primal deities, and they inherited from them their definitive images and powers. But during their creative journeys before settling, the human *tosunapula* did not utilize their genital organs in sexual relations to reproduce offspring of their same *dala* kinds. They were brother–sister pairs who together, while conforming to *dala* prohibitions against sexual incest, nonetheless possessed the capacity of creating "quasi-incestuously" from their oral cavities "children," or beings and entities of the eventually settled world with whom they shared *dala*-identifying images and powers. Once settled and entering into relations with persons of other *dala*, however, those children proceeded to reproduce human offspring heterosexually and exogamously from the opposite ends of women's bodies, their vaginal "tips." Seen in this light, the creative images and powers of *megwa* issuing from magicians' mouths in the present are what remain among living humans of the original creative images and powers of mind and thought emergent in *tosunapula* ancestors. And insofar as those *megwa*

"children" emerge from men's mouths similarly to how women as "mothers" conceive and give human birth from their wombs, the procreative agency of magicians is masculine and paternal even though their spells are among the *tukwa* of their own supposedly matrilineal *dala* identities.

But after all, the *ika'ili* magical powers of the *tosunapula* brother–sister pairs were endogenous as to *dala*. Human *tosunapula* of different *dala* affected their diverse miraculous creations without interacting with one another until the time of eventual "settlement" (*sibogwa*) on the land. Thereafter, life, including the giving of birth, death, and reincarnation for the descendants of the human *tosunapula* (i.e. their *baloma* offspring), changed. From this it follows that *dala* entities incorporate images and capacities necessary to magically reproduce children, and thereby themselves, both with and without contributions from beings or entities of other *dala*. A single *dala* by definition thus contains certain capacities of both endogenous and exogenous reproduction—capacities nowadays still embodied in the blood of people's bodies but formed and externalized as human sons and daughters by women vaginally and as *megwa* by men orally.

Now this conclusion resonates undeniably with the classic reports of Trobriand "virgin birth" insofar as pregnancy is seen as resulting from the inseminating influence of a *waiwaia* "spirit child," *except* for three critical ethnographic caveats.[29] First, *waiwaia* "spirit children" are seen as originating in Tuma, an invisible womb-like, maternal kind of place as illustrated by Obukula cave. But a *waiwaia* "spirit child's" constituent images and powers, being invisible and nonsubstantial yet eventually manifested in its physical appearance in Boyowa, are to that extent masculine or paternal (see Mosko 1995: 667–70). As noted above, the internal *baloma* "soul" of a living person, grown from the implanted *waiwaia*, is intimately connected with the insubstantial images and capacities constitutive of that person's eventual *nona* "mind" and *nanamsa* "thought" or "reason," qualities categorically identified with men and masculinity. To that extent, the inseminating *waiwaia*, although it is of the same *dala* identity as the mother, qualifies as a *masculine* sort of contribution to the child's person. In short, inseminating *waiwaia* "spirit children" are masculine entities, although they can secondarily take the form of either males or females in the children into which they can develop. This is essentially the same recipe as when senior *dala* males transmit their spells to their *dala* juniors and when male magicians give voiced form to the images and powers of spells cursing through their blood. In short, acquiring the images and powers of one's *dala* through birth by women is not enough to effect those capacities magically; one needs also to combine those disjointed images and powers through the structuring, forming, *ikuli*-making agency forthcoming from same-*dala* men, that is, endogenously.[30]

29. It is not my intention here to reopen the debate over "virgin birth," for I do not delve into the many additional data which point to the deep significance of Trobriand paternity. Rather, I focus here on the agentive parallels of *baloma* ancestral spirits in procreation and *megwa* performance. This treatment of implicit incest in beliefs regarding spirit impregnation of females also differs substantially from the account of Weiner (1992).

30. In this passage, I allude to the way in which the gender distinction of "male" versus "female," along with other key dichotomies in the culture, is systematically crosscut such that anything conceptualized initially as "male" is typically composed of both

Secondly, in the bodies of living humans, the *lopola* "interior" is viewed as primarily feminine, substantial, and wet, whereas the *nona* "mind," as seat of *nanamsa* "thought" or "intelligence" to which the *baloma* of a human is initimately associated, is viewed as insubstantial, dry, and thus mainly masculine (cf. Montague 1983; Scoditti 1996: 69; 2012: 69–71; n.d.).

And thirdly, even if in some sense the *waiwaia* "spirit child" embodies masculine qualities to be fused or formed (*ikuli*) with the same-*dala* images and powers flowing in the mother's blood, it is still understood to be transported to Boyowa by other *baloma* of Tuma, which, according to some reports, are inseminating *male* ancestors (Malinowski [1916] 1948: 219; 1932: 148–49, 150; Weiner 1989: 40), or even by *baloma* ancestors of the fetus' human father's *dala* (Malinowski 1932: 147, 150). This, it will be recalled, constituted one of the ethnographic contexts that contradicted Malinowski's theory of the magical power of words (see Part 1).

In sum, even if the *waiwaia* child's *dala* identity is that of its female mother, it is "male" as regards its insubstantial masculine character, and the spirits seen as responsible for transporting it to the mother are, in the course of doing so, accordingly masculine and hence "paternal," even if "incestuously" as per shared *dala* identity.[31]

This should not cause total surprise. Within the framework of "matrilineal inheritance" of *dala* identity as it has been presupposed in most prior ethnographic accounts, there are numerous indications from the indigenous cosmology of complementary masculine-paternal spiritual agencies—agencies which in one way or another involve contributions of images and powers outside of or separate from the lineaments of strict *dala* maternity.

This is my main, final concern. Virtually the same logic applies with the intergenerational cycling of *megwa* spells. Since the *tosunapula* settled and initiated the exogamous heterosexual reproduction of their human descendants, their *megwa* spells have *not* been typically or by rule inherited *directly* or *automatically* by nephews from uncles or other *dala* elders. To Malinowski's considerable consternation ([1916] 1948: 226–27; 1932: 345, 349; 1935a: 177), the most important and powerful *megwa*, such as those of chiefs, village leaders, garden magicians, and others (i.e. *tukwa* spells), were regarded as among the collective wealth of their matrilineal *dala* groups, but the *dala* men supposedly entitled to inherit those formulae had to pay heavily (*pokala*) for them when, even more perplexing, magicians' sons were typically given them "freely" by their fathers even though they possessed different matrilineal *dala* identities. For Malinowski, this illogic was a manifestation of what he saw as a conflict between principles of "matriarchy" and "patriarchy," or "mother-right" and "father-love."

"male" and "female" parts, and the same for any being or entity initially classified as "female" (see Mosko 2013). This formulation comes very close, I think, to exemplifying Strathern's (1988) notion of androgynous Melanesian persons conceived in terms of cross- and same-sex relations; see also Scoditti (2012: 67).

31. Trobriand attitudes toward "incest" (*suvasova*) have generated an enormous literature in their own right, the systematic analysis of which goes well beyond the bounds of the present essay, but which I hope to examine more fully in future along the lines provisionally set out here.

My research has revealed that the children (*latu*) of male members of a given *dala* are classed as a particular subcategory of *dala* members and hence as part of their father's *dala*'s *tukwa*. These children of men are termed *litulela* (and reciprocally a person's father's maternal *dala* kin are called *tubulela*), as distinct from the children of *dala* women (*veyolela*). *Litulela dala* affiliates receive through procreative and other contributions the distinctive *kekwabu* and *peula* of their father's *dala*, not only those of their mother. Fathers and children are thus anything but "strangers" (*tomakava*) to one another, as reported by Malinowski (1932: 3, 5, 16; cf. Weiner 1976 *passim*). Not only is this directly relevant to indigenous theories of procreation, but it also explains why it is that magicians customarily transmit their secret *megwa* to their sons rather than to their legitimate *dala* heirs (see also Mosko 2013, in press-a).

Edwin Hutchins (1980: 19–43; pers. comm.; see also Powell 1956: 391, 393–97; Weiner 1976: 125, 157–59, 163; Campbell 2002: 52) has clarified the inheritance between men of *dala* land which applies in most particulars to the transmission of *megwa*, since both are *tukwa*. Fathers are understood not to give their land or spells as "free" gifts to favored sons (even less so to nephews) but rather as reciprocities for the *kaivatam* indulgences (food, labor, betel, tobacco, money) that considerate loving sons customarily present to fathers over the full course of their lives. This is the basis of the intimate *litulela–tubulela* relationship which encompasses the people of father's *dala* and the children of men of one's own maternally defined *dala*. Such gifts and other observances are accepted as sufficient justification for a father to give important items of wealth imbued with the images and powers of his own maternal *dala* to one or more of his favorite sons, who, as *litulela*, are "one *dala*" (*kwetala dala*) with him. Mainly because of the usual residence pattern of patrivirilocality, a man's male *dala* relatives (uncles, brothers, nephews) are practically excluded from those same opportunities; hence, it is much later in their adulthood that male *veyolela* maternally related kin might become able to present substantial *pokala* solicitations to their elders, more or less substituting as the *kaivatam* gifts of sons, with the intention of acquiring land, *megwa*, or other *dala* wealth. Although Hutchins does not make this point explicitly, my Omarakana informants stress that those *pokala* prestations are intended to cultivate in the uncle or *dala* elder dispositions analogous to those routinely generated through paternal relationship. Through *pokala*, in other words, *dala* juniors attempt to establish "adoptive" (*vakalova*) father–son relations with their own *dala* seniors. It is according to the identical logic that chiefs and local leaders will often formally adopt a young chosen nephew as "son" to succeed them, as in the case of Pulayasi.[32]

The result is that before the *megwa* spells of a specific *dala* are transmitted endogenously across generations, they commonly pass from "fathers" to "sons"—*including* to "nephews" or others "adopted" as "sons," and nominally, therefore, to men in that specific respect "outside" of the maternal *dala*—before they can *exogenously* reenter the *dala* of their matrilineal origination. If a *dala* elder's son has already received *megwa* from his deceased father, then the father's male *dala* relatives must make a special payment (*katuyumali*), more or less equivalent to *pokala*,

32. The contemporary chief of Kwenama *dala* based at Yolumgwa village, John Kasaipwalova, was similarly adopted as son by his mother's brother, the previous chief, Nalabutau.

to the son who has "replaced the father" (*keymapula*; Weiner 1976: 196–97; Mosko 1995: 771), so as to elicit the *megwa* of their own *dala* from him.

In short, *megwa* "children" are regenerated within a *dala* according to processes analogous to how human "children" are procreated with their endogenous masculine and feminine *dala* identities and through extra-*dala* "paternal" contributions. Although the capacities of *megwa* recapitulate the asexual-endogenous masculine creative powers of *tosonapula* before settlement, the processes by which they are reproduced nowadays within and between *dala* reflect as well the exogamic exchanges inaugurated by *dala* ancestors subsequent to their mythical settlement on the land.

To close, the notions of "personal partibility" and magical "participation" thus provide a new lens through which two prominent puzzles of Trobriand culture can now be reconfigured and hopefully solved. The crucial conceptual innovations here are that in the Trobriands persons are not viewed as unitary subjects in the sense of the canonical Western "individual" separate from the inanimate "objects" or "things" that they "possess" or "own." Instead, they are composed of the detachable, elicitive components of other persons, including the elements and relations of *baloma* "souls" and "spirits" and the *kekwabu* "images" and *peula* "powers" of which all beings of the cosmos are constituted and in terms of which they participate with each other. As concerns Malinowski's puzzle over magical efficacy, the words of spells are effective not following from their categorical differentiation from *baloma* and other spirits, but because they *are* spirits, or at least detachable, personal components of them. As for the enigmas over "virgin birth," the inseminating influences of spirits, *waiwaia*, blood, warmth, dripping water, and so on, are in the terms of the culture and cosmogony not separate from the agency of procreative fathers; they embody the personal images and powers of paternity.

However, the utility of personal partibility and participation as demonstrated in this essay does not stop there. Without it, the images and powers of *megwa* might initially have been taken to be mere "objects" while the *kekwabu* and *peula* of parents, children, and *baloma* might similarly have been seen as "subjects," and thus not immediately comparable. After all, it is the analytical faculty of personal partibility and participation to dissolve the distinction of persons and things which has enabled me to compare indigenous views of magical and procreative agency as analogs of one another.

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Les énigmes magiques de Malinowski: vers une nouvelle théorie de la magie et de la procréation dans la société trobriandaise

Résumé : Les écrits classiques de Malinowski sur la socialité trobriandaise ont laissé à l'anthropologie de nombreuses énigmes durables. Cet article en deux parties examine deux de ces énigmes relatives aux descriptions contradictoires des agents impliqués dans les chants magiques (*megwa*). D'un côté, en accord avec ses théories pragmatique et fonctionnaliste de la langue et de la culture, Malinowski a affirmé que, si les *baloma* ancestraux et autres esprits sont généralement invoqués dans la plupart des sorts, l'efficacité de ces incantations dérive plutôt de la puissance des mots énoncés. De l'autre côté, en guise d'évidence de « l'ignorance de la paternité physiologique » des insulaires, il prétendait que les sorts destinés à produire la grossesse chez les femmes du village avaient expressément pour but de susciter des actions rituelles appropriées des esprits *baloma* en tant qu'agents de la conception et de la naissance. À partir de données ethnographiques récemment recueillies au village d'Omarakana, interprétées sous l'angle de la « nouvelle ethnographie mélanésienne » et de la théorie de la « participation » dans la pratique rituelle formulée antérieurement par Tambiah, toutes deux ici revisitées, je soutiens que pour les trobriandais le pouvoir magique des mots *est* la puissance des esprits, et inversement. Cette nouvelle compréhension a des implications importantes pour les débats classiques et contemporains sur la nature de la « magie », les controverses sur la paternité et la soi-disant « immaculée conception », les théories de la personnalité et de l'agencéité, ainsi que les caractéristiques des *dala* « matrilinéaires ».

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