

Third

FIELDWORK REPORT

Kiriwina, Trobriand Islands
October 1st to December 31st

1950

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Third Fieldwork Report – *Kiriwina*, December 1950

This Report covers the three months from October 1st to December the 31st 1950. It is not intended to be as long and comprehensive as the second report, for I felt that I do not wish to give so much time to it, and that the writing of a long account would not prove as valuable to me at this time as it was three months ago.

I have been living at *Omarakana* the whole of this time, apart from a few nights that have been spent at *Guseaweta* or *Losuia*. Although the catarrh is still with me, my health is a great deal better than it was during the first 6 months of my stay in *Kiriwina*, and I have had hardly a week in the last period when I was unable to work. Relationships with the natives have also improved. I have, of course, continued to cultivate my neighbors and now have a body of some twelve informants whom I know fairly well and who seem to have a considerable confidence in me. This has made work a great deal easier, though I am still unable to claim any real “fiends”, for the reasons stated in earlier reports.

I propose in this document to outline the position in my work under the three major headings of Economics, Politics and Religion.

I Economics

1. Gardening

We are now well into the season of the North East Trade winds. The weather is humid and there is of course rain nearly every day, this is the time of growth in the gardens, and the first stage in the year's work was concluded with the carrying out of the *Kamkokola* rites about six weeks ago. This applies to *Kiriwina* proper, where I am living. In some other areas, the period was concluded earlier; on the other hand, the villagers of *Teyava*, one of the lagoon villages near the Catholic Missions at *Gusaweta*, had not concluded the burning off of their gardens a week ago and sent a delegation to the rain magician at *Omarakana* to make them some fine weather to let the cut gardens dry. The inland villagers rather disapproved of this interference with the normal course of events, and had the dry spell lasted much longer, there might have been trouble for it endangered the taitu crop at that stage.

I saw the *Kamkokola* rites at *Tilakaiwa* right through, and was able to obtain a fairly full record. The ceremonies were seen

by Malinowski, and are fairly fully described by him in *Coral Gardens Vol 1*, pp 278 – 289 incl. The ceremony as I saw it was a rather less complete version than that described by Malinowski, and it was deliberately so in order to expedite the work of the gardens, for as I said in my last report, a considerable amount of time had been lost at the beginning of this season owing to bad weather. The parts of the ceremony omitted were details; it was not affected in main outline. But the use of the ceremonial stone axe and the magician's wand in the ceremony would have involved the necessity of spelling over all the plots on separate days, and this would have taken weeks to a month, so they were not used, and the spelling over all the plots was completed in three days, as they did not have to be done one at a time. This method of simplification of the rites seems to be regularly adopted under such circumstances as obtained this year. At the same time, I found various differences in detail from Malinowski's material, mainly in the significance of some of the things done, which I think in fact, are misinterpretations on his part. Thus Malinowski says that the stick that is fastened across the two *Kamkokola* poles on the main plot, which is called the *Kailuvalova*, and which looks rather like the crossbar on a Rugby football goalpost, may be left out at the choice of the officiating magician. I was told, on the contrary, that it is never left out, and that it is the only part of the structure that is kept from year to year until the wood rots. In fact, it is very "hot" magically. It came to my notice when a little girl walked under it just after it had been set up, and there were shouts of "*Bomala*" – "*Tabu*". So hot is this stick, in fact, is that it is not kept in the village; if it were kept somewhere high, like in a storehouse or in the rafters of a dwelling, anyone passing under it would go bald; while if it were kept in the ground, anyone stepping over it would go "cross-eyed" (whether literally or metaphorically I could not ascertain) and would lose its oral sense – become a liar and thief and an adulterer. So, when harvest comes, this stick alone of those used in the rites is taken by the garden magician and sunk in the waterhole that serves the village of Tilakaiwa. The water apparently acts as a sort of magical insulation, and is not itself rendered unfit or dangerous. At the time of the next *Kamkokola* rite, it is retrieved and used again. The water also does something to prevent its rotting, but when it is too old; a new stick is cut and carefully rounded off and used. There were one or

two other items in which Malinowski seems to have been similarly misinformed. As well as the *Tiliakaiwa Kamkokola*, I was able to see another ceremony of the same type but in a different system of garden magic. This was at *Kaulagu*, a small village nearby. The rite was interesting for comparative purposes. I had no film left when it took place.

The preset stage of garden work is that of weeding and setting up large yam poles and in magic of the repeated performance of different short spells of growth magic – about ten of them before the harvest.

At the same time, I have made plans to scale of all the land under cultivation this year in the villages of *Tiliakaiwa* and *Omarakana*. This, when properly worked out, should give a fairly clear picture of the relative resources of the villagers this coming season at least, in the matter of their yams for distribution to others.

2. Fishing

At this time of year, there is a certain amount of fishing being done in the coastal reefs along the East shore of the Island, and there is a good deal of shark fishing going on in a few villages to the North East. This is confined to local consumption though, and the only shark seen at Omarakana is some brought in as tribute to *Mitakata* at the opening of the season. Otherwise the lagoon fishing and the trade inland continues. The two types of transaction mentioned by Malinowski, the *wasi* and the *Vava*, take place from time to time. But so far as I can see, neither have any connection with the *Kula*. The *wasi* is also used often in describing a sale against future payment – e.g. in the trader's stores – and the significance of the transaction in fishing is that it is made by a whole community. i.e. an inland village will decide they want a lot of fish. They will decide on what lagoon village they want to catch it for them - the decision being determined purely by the needs of the moment; there is, today at least, no traditional tie between inland and lagoon villages in this respect. The inlanders then prepare a ceremonial yam container, and its load of yams, and take them and set them up in the chosen lagoon village. If the lagoon people are agreeable, they will accept the offering, and will then appoint a day on which they will fish and on which the inlanders shall come and get their reward. The catch is allotted to the inland community as a whole and is divided by themselves amongst themselves, as is the case with the yams received by the lagooners. This ends the

transaction with no further obligation on either side.

The *Vava*, on the other hand, is an individual transaction. Any man who has some yams to spare, and feels so inclined, will find out on which day one or the other of the lagoon villages is going to have a fishing expedition and will go to the village and meet the canoes as they come in and exchange his yams as well as he can. The exchange rates of yams for fish vary according to the supplies of each available; at present they are in favor of the fishermen for yams are scarce inland. They are on the coast too, but those villages have food ready to hand in their fish. Far more gardeners are left without fish than are fishermen without yams, for those inlanders who have no yams to spare take in sweet potatoes and other vegetables, and nets they have made for the purpose, and if the fish run out as they often do, it is those who have brought no yams who get no fish.

Thus the *Wasi* and the *Vava* are, as it were, mutually exclusive for no lagoon village can do both on the same day. If the *Pwatai* brought to the village is small, the number of men who go out and fish will be proportioned accordingly, for any fish brought in on the appointed day go to the inland village concerned, which would be greatly aggrieved if other people were sold fish on the same day in the one fishing village. Further, in the case of the *Wasi*, the initiative is taken by the inland village, who bring the yams in advance; in the case of the *Vava*, it is the lagoon village which decides to have a communal fishing expedition and if it needs yams, will let the fact be known as far as possible.

3. Trade

The most important event in trade within the local communities is now looming largely on the horizon. *Kula* preparations are now in full swing. The six villages around *Omarakana* which are associated in the *Kula* to *Kitava* Islands are this year all building new canoes. This is rather unusual; mostly only one owner of a canoe would be building a new boat in a season, while the others would be merely renewing theirs. (Some six or seven canoes are the fleet from *Omarakana*.) But all the canoes more or less went to pieces during the war and a full new fleet was built after it, and now all the canoes have gone rotten at the same time, and all have to be replaced at the same time. The result is something of a strain on local timber resources, and there has been much hunting around in the surrounding villages for suitable trees for hulls, strakes and outrigger floats. As often as not, the trees

are already bespoken for one purpose or another and long and rather involved negotiations follow. The work has at present reached the state of hollowing out the logs for the hulls and thinning down the planks for the strakes. It will be another six or eight weeks before the work is done, and probably another couple of weeks after that before the fleet sail on the *Kula*. As to the present role of the *Kula* in native life, I shall suspend judgment till I see it in action; but I am already pretty sure from talking to people about it that it has been modified in some ways. So also have the roles of the specialist villages that Malinowski enumerated. European-made goods have replaced many of the articles they manufactured for daily consumption by the other Islanders, and the craft has either died out or the men work for different ends. E.g. the *Kaloma* shell making for belts and other ornaments has almost died out, while the wood carvers of *Boytalu* spend a lot of time making tables and dishes or Mrs. Lumley who sells them to visitors and exports them to Samarai and Port Moresby as curios. With a few exceptions, the standard of craftsmanship is fairly high, but the inspiration is sadly lacking.

In regard to the Government assisted manufacture and sale of Copra about two hundred natives received payments varying from 30/- to 1/2d for copra they had made and sold. This was a back payment, received a week ago, for copra that was sold on their behalf about two years ago.

II Politics – Groupings of the Population

During the last three months, my major task has been census and map-making. On the former count, I have made a detailed census of the five villages of the *Omarakana* “Team”, as they often refer to themselves. This covered some 450 people and offers a fairly typical sample of the patterns all over the Island, as well as covering the villages in which the chieftainship is most strongly developed. As well as the ordinary vital statistics, I have obtained clan and sub-clan affiliation, villages of origin, lists of relatives of the present dwellers in the five villages who are living elsewhere, which covers adoption away from home, and covers such factors as the proportions of sons living in fathers’ villages, etc, and especially – who gardens for whom, and to whom the various gardeners dispose of their crops at harvest time and who gives them food in turn. This covers to a large extent, the amount of more or less regular exchange

computation, in conjunction with the above mentioned plans of the gardens. I want also to try to complete information on such topics as how many garden plots are owned by the men, and how many coconut and areca palms, etc. The census is, of course, incomplete as yet, but it has already revealed a few points of interest on a preliminary analysis of results. To quote three:-

There are eight cases of “incestuous” marriages within the clan in Omarakana, one of them being that if *Mitakata*'s heir, *Vanoi*. *Mitakata* tried to stop it, but could not bring enough pressure to bear.

About 70 men in 20 different villages garden at least one plot each for *Mitakata* more or less regularly. Some did not contribute this year because of poor harvest. The villages are all in *Kiriwina* district proper. This compares with about three or four men gardening for the average head of a household. The average yield of a plot in a good year, but not one of special competitive gardening, will be about 100-200 baskets of yams. The basket will hold about 25 lb. In such a year, the ordinary household head can expect about 25-50 peta per head of his contributors, and headmen or men of eminence about 50-100.

In the villages studied, less than half the plots gardened are for wives' brothers. Of the remainder, about a third are for elder brothers, about another third for mothers' brothers or sisters' sons or daughters, and the rest varying proportions for fathers and mothers, sons and daughters, and other relatives. But this, it must be remembered, is a very provisional estimate; I have not yet had time to analyze at all properly. The figures relating to residence as adults in the father's village are very involved and I cannot make even a provisional estimate. All sorts of other relationships figure as claims for residence, apart from classificatory fathers and mothers.

In regards to map-making, I obtained copies of the American Air Forces map of the Islands, and have been plotting on it such village groupings and distributions as

1. The Government Instituted Barracks groupings
2. Traditional native alignments
3. Groupings under the Methodist Mission, who have one church and native teacher serving a number of villages. This is a effective grouping in other contexts than that of Sunday attendance, as I shall mention later.
4. Groupings for the *Kula* – not merely which areas go where,

but also which groups of villages within the area cooperate to form a *Kula* Fleet. Thus, there are about three independent fleets that sail to *Kitava*.

5. Such matters as the kinship ties of the villages of *Omarakana* “team” with each other and with other villages, and the distribution of foodstuffs at harvest time from and to each.

All this takes a good deal of time, but my informants soon got the hang of what I was trying to do and proved helpful and accurate. It has been made clear that as there is a great deal of fluidity in population movements from village to village, so there is a corresponding elasticity in the grouping of villages for different purposes – except where effective contact is limited to a few villages because of relative territorial isolation, when the same group will, of course, operate as a unit in all the various circumstances.

One further thing I have plotted – the distribution of *Mitakata*'s predecessor *Touluwa*'s wives' villages and those of the other important chiefs and headmen in the Islands, against *Mitakata*'s. This has shown that *Mitakata*'s sphere of effective influence was reduced, as was known from other material, but it has also shown that the sphere of influence of the other local leaders has been similarly reduced. I and others here had rather thought that there might be gain in the case of the lesser men at *Mitakata*'s expense; what is apparently happening is however that more and more villages are becoming “independent” and gardening for themselves, to quote a native criterion.

III Religion – The Higher Life of *Kiriwina*

Fortunately for me, there was a death in *Tilakaiwa* about two months ago. That is, the *Tilakaiwa* woman who was married to an *Omarakana* man and was living in the latter village, died on the beach one day. She was taken first to *Omarakana*, and later that same evening, to *Tilakaiwa*, where she was mourned for and duly buried the next morning. When her relatives from *Tilakaiwa* went and fetched her out of the husband's house at *Omarakana* a mock fight was staged to show the eagerness of the two parties to have possession of the remains. There followed on the day of the burial, the usual opening *sagali* in the series of exchanges that

follow a death. This opening exchange I saw, and have seen the second in the series of exchanges elsewhere. I obtained on this and other occasions, a scheme of the remainder of the exchanges proper. Malinowski says that they seem to go on indefinitely, but I was given a list of four. All are made by the kin of the dead man to other parties who “help” them to deal with the new situation in one way or another. Thus at the *Sagali* that follows the burial, skirts and yams are given to the women and men respectively that helped in this case to carry the dead woman home, first to *Omarakana* and then to *Tilakaiwa*, and the *Lukwasisiga* figured largely in the list of recipients apart from their being the kinsfolk of the dead woman’s husband and therefore mourners. The woman was a *Lukuba* of the *Lobwaita* sub clan – the “owners” of *Tilakaiwa* village, and my own adopted kinsfolk. The second exchange has still to take place. This is called the *Lisala Dabu*, and is held usually as soon after the first *Sagali* as the women of the dead person’s sub clan have had time to prepare skirts to give to their opposite numbers and when the men have enough yams to give to theirs. These commodities are presented primarily to the mourning sub clan as a reward for their pains – this was explicitly noted by my informants – especially the widow and children, but also anyone who has “helped the mourners”, e.g. by sitting with them and comforting them, or giving them food, may be given some share also. In this *Sagali* the names of recipients are publicly called as a means of recognition of their services. This is true of all *Sagalis*, incidentally. I have seen this *Sagali* in connection with the death of a person in one of the nearby villages, but it is called the *Sigiliveaka* – the Big *Sagali*. It again is for the benefit of the mourners, especially widows and children. But it is normally held at harvest time, when there has been a good harvest, so that the presents made can be as large as possible. There is considerable backlog of un-discharged obligations in *Kiriwina* at present, owing to last year’s bad harvest. The final in the prescribed succession of *Sagalis* follows the last named at the *Milamala* moon, and is called the *Pinela Woula* ???– the washing of bodies. Again, the recipients are the mourners and their helpers, but this time

the list of the latter is rather more specific, for there is a special sub-*Sagali*, as it were, for the death of paternal female relatives of the mourners who, at the time of the death, performed the head-shaving and the blackening of the bodies with soot. These same women at the last *Sagali* now ritually wash the same bodies, and mourning is formally ended. These last two events in the cycle I have not seen, and probably shall not see, as it is unlikely that they will take place before I leave the Islands. In the old days, of course, these ceremonies marked successive stages in the process of mourning – firstly its institution, and later stages of gradual emergence of the mourners, especially the widow(er), from the seclusion of the little cage.

But today, although the *Sagali* sequence is more or less kept up, the mourning formalities are relaxed almost completely. I saw myself in the *Lisala Dabu*, mentioned, that the widow was present on the spot, when under the old system she would have been shut up in her house, while the widower, in the case of the *Tilakaiwa*, death was out in the gardens on the fourth or fifth day after the burial, though he was in full mourning. In the matter of costume, the bones in Malinowski's account have been discarded at Government request in favor of some articles belonging to the deceased. There is no exhumation to look for signs of sorcery marks, or to prepare the long bones as lime spatulae. As for the sucking of the bones, it was indignantly denied by *Mitakata*, who said it had never been practiced in *Kiriwana*, and was fit only for bush *Kwanakas*. In the *Vesali*, the mourning dance, most of the performers were women, but the sons and husband of the dead woman also took part at various times. But although a great deal of observances have dropped away, they have not been replaced, at least in the instances I saw with any Christian rites. The Mission boy from *Omarakana* did not put in an appearance that I saw at any time during the period from her death to her burial in the *Tilakaiwa* woman's case, though he was there all right for Sigalis. But the woman was pagan, though her husband was a Christian, and she was taken into the church for his sake; they were not, however, married in the church. The Methodist mission leave all such village affairs more or less in the hands of the men on the spot, but the Catholic fathers attend anyone in the village to which they have access, Catholic, Methodist or unbeliever, if they will let them.

However, I have a lot to learn yet about the activities of the Missions, though I have attended services in the Methodist

Festival at Oiabbia at Christmas. I have also has numerous conferences with the Fathers, and with the Methodist Missionary.

I should have noted, by the way, in regard to the *Sagalis*, that Malinowski's remarks about "innumerable" exchanges in the death rites, in my opinion, probably refer to the presentations that are made by the usual party to the mourners in the period between the *Lisala Dabu* and the *Sigiliveaka*, when the latter is delayed, as is the case at present. But these are not public events; they are private and more or less informal, though expected, and are designed to keep the mourners quiet and contented till they get their due reward.

I have the impression that Christianity remains up to the present, a phenomenon unrelated in native eyes to real life, except insofar as it has become the focus of exchanges in the typical *Kiriwinian* manner. This, I think, was clearly instanced at the Methodist Christmas celebrations. These are held annually at *Oiabbia*, and started out by being a feast of fellowship and general merry-making. But the organization was left as a matter of policy in the hands of the native teachers. The result is that it has become merely another big feast like that of *Mitakata* or the cricket *Kauvesa* at *Obwelia* which I wrote of in my last two reports – with the Mission boys taking on themselves the role of the chiefs, even in some cases to supplying pigs. And in *Oiabbia*, while the feasting was going on, they sat aloft on the veranda of one of the teachers' houses at *Oiabbia*, in the manner of the chief of olden time – though *Mitakata* at his *Kauvasa* mingled freely enough with the throng. I asked a number of informants, both pagan and Christian, what was the reason of the celebration; in all cases, the answer was the same – for the people to have a good time, like at *Omarakana*. There is not even a pretense among the native Christians that it is the celebration of the birthday of Christ. However, it is not as important an event in the eyes of the natives as it was seen immediately before the war. The reason, as I was told repeatedly, is that people went there to eat and to be rewarded for merry-making – the races run, the competitions entered, and so on. Nowadays, there are not enough pigs. The feast is organized around the village churches. Each, with the villages it serves, provides its own food, and the teacher, if he can provide a pig. Before the war, all the food used to be collected together and divided between all the spectators. But nowadays, each group eats its own food, and if their *Misinari*, as the native teachers are called, does not supply

them with pig, they just have to do without. This year, *Keleba* had a pig ready for the *Omarakana* people to eat, but they wanted to have it in the village. He insisted that it – and they – should go to *Oiabbia*. In the event the people refused to take it there when transport arrangements broke down- they refused to carry it from the start- and as there was to be no pig for them, only a few went at all. On the other hand, *Mitakata* had heard that many of the other villages were saying that there was “famine” in *Kiriwina*, and he called on the villages of *Omarakana* “parish” to make a special effort and scrape the bottoms of the bwaimas so that they would have a reasonable showing of food on their stand at *Oiabbia* (*pwatais* are set up for each “parish”, as they were set up for each *Barreki* at *Omarakana* – and will be on New Year’s Day for the Government festivities at *Losuia*). *Mitakata*’s appeal, which emphasized local patriotism, was nobly responded to; *Keleba* on the other hand, was much ashamed when so few of “his boys” supported him.

A further present-day complaint is that there are not prizes for all those who take part in the “sporting” events. In normal white man’s fashion, there are prizes for 1st, 2nd and 3rd. The *Kiriwninan* says ‘Why should we run ourselves silly to please other people and get nothing for our trouble ourselves?’ This also is a postwar phenomenon, I believe; its result is that in most of the events, except those that for some reason or another appeal for their own sake – footraces, of which there is a native tradition, and excellence at which counts in the same way, though to a lesser extent, as excellence in dancing, and the Greasy Pole, which they seem to find enjoyable for its own sake – in the most of the events, there are only three entries at a time – the same number as there are prizes.

I find the lack of response to Christianity interesting. Not that it is in itself a unique phenomenon – it is, of course, common enough in our own society. But the ease with which it is ignored – e.g. the fact that no one feels guilty when he is caught out in a “sin”, together with the apparently complete lack of any native traditional religious beliefs in the slightest degree of development, and the very well developed and complete magical systems- has led me to wonder whether it might not be that the magical system together with the chieftainship between them supplied the religious or spiritual needs of the *Kiriwinans* in the old days, the chief having some of the attributes of divinity, and magic others. I am reminded of the Polynesian Tabu hierarchy without the gods,

or rather with the gods replaced by culture heroes. In the absence of any native tradition upon which a Christian church could be founded – or rather with the social needs which are met with varying degrees of success by western Christianity in western society already adequately met by native institutions which have not yet been undermined, or at least destroyed. It is not surprising that Christianity has met with as small a response as in fact it done in Kiriwina. Church membership is fairly high – possibly 50% of the population – but attendance is small on the whole. One of the district heads of the Methodist Mission in Papua told Father Dwyer of the Catholic Mission that the *Kiriwinan* was the least rewarding field in the whole of the area, and that he doubted whether there were more than 450 “genuine” converts in the whole island. If by “genuine” converts, he means those whose conduct based genuinely in conscious Christian morality – native Christian, I mean – I doubt whether the count would number more than fifty, including the native teachers. I should say that the Catholics have a far better chance of making an impression than the Methodists, for the organization of their church is, I think, rather nearer to the Kiriwinan outlook, which seems to rely far more on traditional and unquestionable authority than it does on debate in council and village assemblies, the latter being the system which the Methodists have tried to foster. It is, I think, because of this that the innovatory aspects of Methodist Christianity are ineffective from any positive point of view, so that the Mission Church has become merely another sphere within which traditional Kiriwinan social mechanisms operate. At the same time, the beliefs and interest in the traditional indigenous mythology has been largely lost through derision and ridicule in the Churches, and to some extent, replaced by more or less garbled version of Biblical myths, which are regarded in much the same way as were the native – interesting fables which serve to explain origins of unusual objects or phenomena and so on, and which pleasantly while away a tired evening, but of no very great relevance to daily living. It is significant, I think, that myths, which have a direct bearing on affairs, such as the myths of first emergence, are as alive as ever, and that comparable tales in the bible are often compared with and explained in terms of these, both in and out of the pulpit.

In *Kiriwinan* social organization, very many matters that are of interest for practical daily purposes were “decreed” once and for all, as often as not with no reason given and quite arbitrarily, by the ancestors of the subclans in the myths of first emergence. This applies, for example, to the clans to which the subclans belong. Each founder of a House as she emerged or usually her accompanying brother and guardian, would announce that he belonged to such and such a clan, and that his tabus and insignia were such and such. I have been able to find no beliefs about the previous underworld existence of these beings that would account for these claims and statements; they are merely recounted and accepted quite uncritically. The word, which I have translated as decree, in *Kiriwinan* “*Karaywaga*”, is used to describe the decisions and laws for a simple decision by an ordinary citizen in the course of the day’s events. The word is also used in translations of the scriptures and in references to the authority of the Church, especially by Catholics. And some of the attitudes of uncritical and un-understanding acceptance which underlies the attitudes of traditional beliefs in the minds of the ordinary native and also applies to the other authorities. This has a number of results, or correlates anyway; for example, the point I have already tried to make, that Catholic religious attitudes are more readily acceptable than Methodist, which place the burden of decision and responsibility more directly on the shoulders of adherents. The lack of any political consciousness in the western sense, in spite of the fact that the Islanders have been under Western control for as long as many more advance African colonies, and that efforts have been made by the Administration to foster the development of indirect rule, may also be partly accounted for in this way – the native tends, I believe, to regard the Government as well as his ancestors, as a body, whose authority and whose decrees simply have to be accepted now that it is here, and it never really borne in on them that District Officers would like them to think for themselves – within reason – or that they should question their decisions, any more than they do those of their own chiefs, once they are made. The difference being, of course, that they do have a hand in the making of the chief’s decisions, though they have not learnt to debate with the D.O.’s. The result is that there has, in the past, been little positive response to attempts to encourage

such reforms as improvements in village sanitation. For these well-meaning efforts tend, I think, to be regarded emotionally, though they are often well enough appreciated rationally, as arbitrary interference with status quo which, though itself equally arbitrarily established, is familiar and of course safe. At the same time there is, I believe, a feeling, at least among the more conservative present-day leaders of the village communities, that such reforms are the thin end of a broad wedge; they are well enough aware of what has happened in some areas of coastal Papua to native life, and are genuinely afraid of the same sort of collapse in their own communities. The result of all this is an attitude towards such orders as that Fridays are Government days and are to be spent cleaning up villages and paths, comparable to that of the third former to the headmaster – you cannot question his rules, but if you break them and get away with it, that one is up to you. I have been often asked by local villagers whether or not I think the Patrol Officer is going to make an inspection “next Friday – because if he isn’t, we’re going fishing or copra-making”. Which also shows that some, at least, of the villages regard me as being ‘on their side’. I might add that in one case, the questioner was the village constable.

III Kinship System – The *Pokola*

In his account of the system of land tenure and inheritance, Malinowski dismisses the institution known as the *Pokola* as being of relatively little significance. (c.c. Coral Gardens Vol I, passim) I am persuaded, however, that it is an important mechanism in its own right, as well as being a typical example of the sort of use to which yam-food and other commodities are put socially. In essence, the Pokala is a system whereby the elder members of a subclan may be presented with presents by their juniors from time to time, and in their turn, make over property to the junior members. There are four types of property that may be handed on in this way – always from senior to junior, never the other way – and these are the four basic, as it were, ingredients of horticulture -

1. Land, both as house and garden sites
2. Coconut Palms
3. Areca Nut Palms
4. Magic – both ‘black’ and ‘white’

There are, of course, other equally important properties in the system of horticulture and its ramifications, but these are more or less permanent and immovable, or, in the case of magic, ‘hidden’, i.e. in the mind of the owner, and therefore not easily obtained. The goods, etc., which are presented by the juniors include the

'movable' possessions that do not come into the four classes named above, foodstuffs of sorts and services. The valuables – nowadays these include European tools and money, as well as some categories of food - betel nut, bananas, coconuts - are the articles which are specifically collected and presented when a younger man wants to obtain one or other of the special classes on a particular occasion; but where a man gardens for his mother's brother or his own elder brother, or 'looks after him well' in other ways, e.g. in sickness, the yam food he gives and the services he renders will be regarded as *pokala* for this purpose and rewarded with gifts of land, magic, etc. The two categories of kinship in which this operates are mothers brother - sisters son, and between elder and younger brothers. A man cannot, of course, *pokala* his father, but the father may while his son is still a child *pokala* the older matrilineal relatives of the child so that 'when he grows up, he will already have a garden and look after his father'.

Malinowski says that he cannot see how the systems benefit's the junior man during the senior's lifetime. In fact, the land or whatever it is usually made over to the younger man as soon as the older feels that he deserves it, and then becomes his property, so that he has disposal of it at once, and may be *pokalaed* in his turn for it by his own juniors. At the same time, the elder man may feel that he wants the land in question during his own lifetime, or it may be that his junior has looked after him well and he wants to reward him, but has nothing he feels he can spare at present, so he gives the junior the property to be taken over after his death. This is directly relevant in the matter of inheritance. The successor to the headship of a lineage, or the next in succession to anyone that dies, becomes his executor after his death. Any of the dead man's property that has been made over by him during his lifetime publicly, goes to the recipient without any possibility of the heir and executor claiming it. Anything he has been given himself he also retains, but all the other property of the dead man of the four categories above mentioned has to be distributed by the executor amongst the matrilineal sub-clan. The persons to whom the distribution is made are defined as 'those who help the heir with the death *sagalis*', for which he responsible; in fact other factors are borne in mind, such as the personal status and merits of other member of the sub-clan, their relationship with and claims on the heir, and so on. What is left after this *sagali* becomes the heir's, as the

head of the sub-clan or sub lineage within the sub-clan. He does not have to divide out all the property un-allotted by the dead man, but he has to see that all reasonable claims are met and all services and status of individuals recognized. Thus, if the estate of the deceased was small, as it would be in that case of an ordinary member of the kingroup, the executor will have little left out of the 'pool' when all claims have been met, but if it is large, as when the deceased is a chief or head of a sub-clan, the heir, who will, of course, be the dead man's successor as headman or chief, will have a large amount of land etc. left under his control. But the *Pokola* to junior members of a lineage group is very important as a means of securing property which without it would not come their way until all their seniors had died before them - which might easily, of course, be never.

Two other points I will mention now, though of course the subject cannot be exhausted or even fully described in a report such as this. One is that if a young man *pokolas* his senior for a piece of land say, and the latter dies before he makes the property over publicly, by an announcement to a responsible few of the sub-clan, the land goes into the 'common pool'. The act of making *pokola* gifts does not in itself establish any claim on the property in question, though if the matter were well known the executor might see to it that the man concerned got his land at the *sagali*. But there is no obligation on him to do so. Magic, of course, is rather different; if it is not passed on by the owner during his lifetime it simply dies with him.

Secondly, the matter of gifts by father to son. Malinowski says that the son's right to such gifts end when the father dies. This is not strictly true. When such a gift is made or at the death of the donor the heir may retrieve the property by making a gift appropriate amount to the son, when the son must hand over the property to the mother's brother or younger brother of the dead man. But if the heir, acting of course with the assent of the other responsible members of the sub-clan, does not wish to retrieve the property, he simply does nothing about and the land etc. thereafter remains inalienably the property of the son and his heirs.

A similar system operated in the case of the making over of land by the village headman to strangers or new residents in his village. Here at the death, either of the headman or the man to whom

the land was originally given it may be redeemed in the one case by the headman's heir, in the other by the headman himself. So that the system in this case serves to provide a sort of probationary period for new members of the community.

Further, by the use of this system and by bringing other pressure to bear, an old and senile lineage head can be replaced in his lifetime without suffering any loss of 'face'.

I said earlier that it does not impose an obligation on the senior if he accepts *pokala* from his junior. In this respect the transaction differs from the normal use of an initial gift in opening or rather establishing a contractual relationship. In the case of the *Wasi* mentioned, the acceptance of food in ceremonial form from the inland village is equivalent to the signing of a contract by the lagoon village. But here the relationship is between strangers. If the gift of a stranger is accepted by the headman, then he must make over the land he is *pokalaed* for. But within the kin group, it is the social duty of the younger man to *pokala* his senior anyway, but while the older man ought to reward the younger, he does not have to. If he is not generous enough, all that happens is that his juniors come to know him as a mean old so and so, and cut down their gifts and services to the socially permissible minimum - or go and live with a senior who is more generous.

V Conclusion

This report, like *Topsy*, seems to have 'grewed'. None of the topics touched on have been exhausted, obviously, but it will serve to show some of the matters that have arisen out of this work. I have for months left, for I shall have completed my year in *Kiriwina* on the third of May next. I shall send a further field report at the end of April. During the next three months, I hope to complete the census of the five *Omarakana* villages, and possibly to make a less complete survey of one or two other villages. I should have liked to go to a coastal (lagoon) village for a while, and to *Vakuta* where the Mission - Methodist - appears to be a lot stronger than in *Kiriwina* proper. But I think that having gone so far here at *Omarakana* I shall probably do better to see the year through here, and perhaps pay flying visits to other places as opportunity offers. As it is, I hope to go to *Kitava* with the *Omarakana Kula* fleet, in about six or eight weeks time. In the meanwhile, there are the preparations for

gardens and the pursuance of other topics, including kinship and religion. Unfortunately there is no marriage in process or prospect at present, and no birth, but I hope to question my informants on both these matters. In any case, to repeat a point often referred to earlier, the bad harvest last season has had a marked effect on all forms of fulfillment of obligations that involve the transfer of yam food, and as this involves all the transactions that occur at the 'life crises', death, marriage, and so on, these have been largely postponed till after the next harvest. So that I have had to rely largely on indirect methods to investigate them. But things may look up from this point of view after the harvest of the *kaymugwa* gardens.

There are tomorrow - January the first - celebrations at *Losuia* organized by the Government Station, and we get a new Assistant District Officer this month. It will be an interesting start of the New Year in *Kiriwina*.

VI Notes

1. *Kamkokola* -pp 1-2

I do not think that the shortened form of the rite is regarded as being less potent than the longer, but the full form seems to be more certain of success

2. *Wasi* and *Vava* -pp 3-4

Re the significance of the one against the other - as stated, the *Wasi* is an inter-community transaction, while the *Vava* is between individuals; in the former, the instigation of the fishing expedition is by the inland village, in the latter by the fisherman themselves; but further, the former involves the setting of the economic side of the transaction into a public ceremonial, which ensures that the fishermen will in fact carry out their part of the transaction, while the *Vava* is opened and closed on the spot. The *Wasi* in the latter respect is comparable to the *Pokala* type of transactions between strangers, and e.g. to the feast given by the giver of a dance to his future helpers, the eating of which binds them to assist him in fulfillment of the project. In such cases the acceptance of the food is the public acceptance of the obligation involved.

Although it is not the thing for one village to hold *Wasi* and *Vava* at the same time, for the fairly obvious reason that the temptation to sell all the fish in *Vava* rather than meet the debt resulting from having eaten yams a few days ago might prove too strong, it is quite possible for one lagoon village to *Wasi* with two or more inland on the same expedition, if its resources in men and canoes are adequate. The converse is equally possible - in fact again if it has enough resources in yams there is nothing to stop an inland village from having *Wasi* in one village and *Vava* in another on the same day, if the catch turns out to be inadequate in the *Wasi* village. But if a lagoon village, having already fulfilled its obligations from a *Wasi*, still had a surplus of fish, it could *Vava* them to anyone who had anything to exchange on the spot.

3. *Urigubu* - harvest gifts. Pp 6

The average household head as stated receives the produce of from one to four other plots than his own. At the same time he will be gardening himself one to three plots for others; his sister's husband, or his father or mother's brother etc. *Mitikata* gardens for about five men, though he usually has more than one plot for each, and his wives in some cases garden as other as well.