Recent analyses of the Trobriand social organization have dealt with aspects of ritual, cosmology and symbolism in relation to other institutional spheres. These investigations of the symbolic ordering of social experience have not so much focused on the religious institutional order, as to stress synthetic bifurcations with other features of Trobriand social life. However, the treatment of Trobriand religious behavior in terms of the symbolic level of explanation is surely large, firstly, because the wealth of data now available enables us to see what hope stems from this "doomsday book" for the understanding of the religious element in the social organization of the Trobriands. Secondly, there would seem to exist some general significance of the Trobriand case for the development of a religious anthropology which Levi-Strauss (1962), among others, has argued for.

In this essay I will take up a symbolic approach in the study of the milamala, the return of the spirits of the dead (baloma) to the Trobriands. My concern with this liminal period is that the behavior within it expresses and gives clues to an increased understanding of Trobriand social organization.

It is my contention that in Omarakana, at least, the milamala can best be understood as a period when the conflict between persons as members of corporate subclan dalas working towards urigubu obligations, and persons as residents and members of gardening team units, is given
expression (Powell 1960:125). Moreover, this is a time of important structural and status change, involving the movement of residence for same individuals, and the vying for control, of strategic marriages and garden lands by subclans. It is also postulated that the exchange of food in transactions between persons and groups can most usefully be seen as a way of expressing (making statements about) these differences and conflicts between categories of people.

The argument thus stated stems from insights of Malinowski (1965), but it is most concisely stated (vis-a-vis Leach) by Powell (1969b:581) who notes:

In the making of gardens, whole villages, or sections of compound villages where there are more than one owning subclan, operate as organized corporate bodies under the direction of subclan leaders and garden magicians. In the matter of urigubu prestations, however, it is corporate subclans, irrespective in many situations of the actual residence of their members, which operate as corporate units both in giving and receiving urigubu.

If we follow this argument, we arrive at the construction of two "ideal types" of the social composition of Trobriand villages, a "simple" and a "complex" type (Powell 1960:124). Oamarakana is clearly a complex type in which the singular political unit is comprised of four clans, 39 subclan dalas, and five villages (Powell 1960:121-124). Leadership in many areas is competitive, Powell advises us, and institutionalized competition insures intracluster cooperation. My understanding of the Trobriand social system leads me to postulate that it is noticeably in the realm of "religious facts"--as denoted in the "cosmic renewal" (Eliade 1970:142) of the milamala--that subclans, villages, and finally village clusters, are pitted against one another, reflecting yet challenging magical and religious potency, unity and politico-economic hegemony. Out of the milamala come rights and duties (social esteem) which denote the economic "facts" of residence, affinal relationships and gardening team membership, as well as subclan affiliation involving urigubu commitments for the coming year.

I believe that an elucidation of the milamala as a set of chronological, symbolic, ecological and historical events is worthwhile for several reasons: In the first place, no one has yet looked at Trobriand religious organizations as characterized by the milamala, except Lanternari (1955), whose psychological analysis remains unsatisfactory to the social anthropologist. This striking omission is all the more curious, since Malinowski’s classic essay, "Baloma the Spirits of the Dead in the Trobriand Islands," was also his first piece of field material to be published (1916). Additionally, Malinowski himself focused on the holistic examination of systems of integrated activities, such as the kula, and the gardening cycles (kweluva)--and his approach has proven fruitful. Following this latter approach, the rituals and activities of the milamala may be viewed as "situated activity systems" (Goffman 1961:95-99), which integrate the interdependent actions of a group of individuals towards some inclusively meaningful purpose. The symbolism and structure of such systems of activity suggest analogous and in some instances homologous features, in regard to their institutionalized performances. For example, the regularities existing between gardening practices, rites and related activities before the milamala, and the pregnancy rites and mortuary ritual occurring elsewhere, suggest a common symbolic structure. More importantly, however, is the anomalous
position of the *milamala kweluva* (garden time), coming as it does at the end of one set of harvest activities and a new division of garden plots at the garden council (*kayaku*), with a consequent pause in these activities due to ecological conditions. Time is created or generated during the lull in the form of feasting and dancing, and these activities point to the coming "New Year s" celebration.

Before turning to the data, a word about Van Gennep’s insights regarding the *rites de passage* is relevant to a discussion of the *milamala*. Gluckman (1962) points out that the significance of Van Gennep’s scheme rests in the demonstration of relatively constant social movements which are displayed in ritual form in small societies. These constants of social life are therefore movements from one social "state" to another by persons and groups, with a reference to shifting qualities of sacredness and profaneness. These movements involve dislocation of relationships and ideological arrangements, and they can most successfully be dealt with at a religious period like the *milamala*, Trobriand society lacking as it does, a developed governmental structure and processes of litigation of a formal nature. By drawing upon "multivocal" symbols and multiplex relationships, an individual can generate support and esteem, and, of course, fail to do so.

In looking at the events occurring on the *baku*--the central place of a village--both mythically and behaviorally, such possibilities as discussed above are actualized in the spatial and temporal metaphors of Trobriand religious culture. Sexual license is greater than usual--being legitimized by the return of the *baloma*--which opposes strategically-existent marriages and intended rearranged (infantile) ones. The competition for *butura* (renown) and *malia* (prosperity) is heightened at the time of the harvest and urigubu exchanges, and it is in the latter institution, incidentally, that a "closure" of the matrilineal cycle is augmented. The participation for the first time (or possibly the last) of a male in these rituals becomes exceedingly important when considered in this light. In a "complex" cluster like Omarakana, for example, "impression management" becomes very difficult at these times for a man, his own matrilineal *dala*, his father’s *dala*, and his prospective partner’s subclan as well. As Gluckman notes, "Every activity is charged with complex moral evaluations, and default strikes not at isolated roles but at the integral relations which contain many roles" (1962:29). The relevant prescriptions of everyday behavior in interaction are not enough at these liminal times to guide action, for the definition of the situation may challenge codes and values that underlie the very prescriptive rules upon which the behavior is based. Through the guise of sacred action and ritual potency, the drama of everyday conflicts take on symbolic form on the *baku*. The *milamala* is therefore a liminal period, being chronologically and cosmologically "betwixt and between" as we shall see.

A study of the *milamala* must commence with the garden council (*kayaku*), which precedes a series of harvest rites accompanying the harvest of yams and their display, first in the gardens, and then on the *baku*. The next activity system comprises the *urigubu* exchanges, repair of the open yam house (*bwayma*) and the rites of "magic of plenty" (*vilamalia*). Following these events, I have sketched a brief analysis of the symbolic contrasts encompassing the open and the enclosed yam houses. The focus on the observable transformations in the village just prior to the return of the baloma will be set forth as clearly as possible in a middle section, the left-hand side of the paper presenting the data, while symbolic interpretations will accompany the text on the right. Finally, the summary is intended to deal with the meaning of the key "multivocal" terms that have emerged as important in the essay. These will be discussed with respect to the structural conflict between
membership in the corporate dala and gardening teams.

*** * * ** * * * * *

In Omarakana, the opening of the gardening magic occurs at the kayaku council (Malinowski 1965:278), which is also the initial act of the magical system of kaylu ebila. This system is wielded by the garden magician (towosi)--a senior member of the Tabalu dala—who in Malinowski’s time was Bagidou. He leads gardening activities corresponding to the sister village of Kasana i that wields the silakwa magical system for village gardening (including Osapola). Thus, on the lands surrounding the village cluster, two different magicians practice two magical systems in conjunction with the work of the gardening teams which are comprised of the residents in these villages. Now the magical system that a subclan uses is supposed to have sprung from the land which is being gardened; otherwise myth states that it will be impotent (Malinowski 1965:348-349). There exist a number of inequities in this dogma on the ground, as a glance at Malinowski’s chart of magical systems and practicing villages shows (1965:423). The discontinuities between myth and fact of residence are clearly brought out in Malinowski’s statement that whenever he pointed out that a subclan’s emergence hole and the magical system it used could not have arisen from the same lands, his informants expressed surprise. They seemed to have been unaware of the discrepancies.

It appears that the garden council, which is called o kayaku, is largely a ceremonious occasion in Omarakana, known to all to be a formal “front staging” activity (Malinowski 1965:88; Powell 1960: 132). According to Malinowski, men would gather on the front of Touluwa’s house and be given food and make speeches about the allotment of garden lands. "Such speeches, telling to all what everyone knows and to which everyone has to consent, are a feature of Trobriand public life" (1965:348) (emphasis added). However, Powell (1969:589) has emphasized "that the urigubu needs of the husbands of the women of the subclan are all met" on this occasion. Here it is important to note that the indigenous kadala, or lineage elder, is formally asked for the right of use of these garden lands (Malinowski 1965:348). Such occasions are mostly peaceful, but following them, when the gardens themselves are divided up into plots (baleko), disputes often develop. These may turn into yakala, long native litigations or "shaming techniques" (Powell 1960:133) which Malinowski mentions nothing more about (1965:103). It does appear that out of the kayaku comes competition between garden teams and challenges of competitive food exchanges (buritilaulo) for "competitive renown.” Exactly what role the autochthonous subclans play in this drama is uncertain. One conclusion we can draw is that the principle of rank is not completely successful in the allocation of lands, and consequent conflict over those resident as strangers (tomakava) working in the gardens, and those indigenous to the land, is probable (Powell 1969:186, 199).

Austin (1938:242) states that in Kiriwina the milamala is called kabuma (kaboma), which means "tabooed gardens" (Malinowski: 1965:125). This statement simply underscores what Malinowski touches on when he discusses the place of the kayaku as the opening event in the magical system’s operation. In other words, the milamala in Omarakana is more closely tied to the gardening cycle than elsewhere in the Trobriands, coming at the time of a pause in activities. The importance of this will become clearer as the nature of the incongruities between the Tabalu claims of control over the garden lands and their own lack of mythical emergence from these same lands is symbolically
dramatized as the ritual of the *milamala* unfolds.

Following the *kayaku*, there occurs an extensive series of gardening practices and rituals that denote later activities which are post-*milamala*; e.g., the burning, cleaning and planting of the main gardens (*kaymata*). Some *taro* and other lesser crops may be planted after the main crop of *taytu* and before the *milamala* commences, but the garden generally falls under a taboo lasting until the full moon of the *milamala*, after which the burning (*gabu*) takes place. It is at this point that the *taytu* is harvested and displayed initially in the gardens. For each *urigubu* prestation represented in a heap, a man will construct an arbor (*kalimomio*) to temporarily house it. Everyone admires the beautiful arrangement of the heaps and renown is gained by virtue of being a "perfect gardener" (*tokwaybagula*). There is danger in this, however, for one may only reasonably produce so much without incurring the jealousy of others, particularly the chief. In fact, Malinowski (1965:175) mentions that right before his stay, To’uluwa had reputedly had two men done in by sorcery for the accumulation and display of too much *taytu*.

At the time of harvest and only then, the competitive exchange of raw food between close villages is held. In former times, such exchanges might possibly have led to war (Malinowski 1965:176, 182). An example of such an exchange is discussed in *Coral Gardens*, which involves the villages of Wakayse and Kabwaku. It is significant and bears momentary consideration. First, the conditions of the exchange were such that a quarrel already existed between the villages. Since both villages are in the district of Tilataula (and owed their allegiance to Moliasi), they could not go to war, and so they would periodically quarrel through a “garden challenge” or *buritila’ulo* 1965:348, 127, 184). In these exchanges certain amounts of *kuvi* or long yams built in structures called *yadavi*, along with other raw foods, are exchanged in exacting amounts. The competition is offered in terms of as much food as can be mustered without the assistance of one’s affines (*dodige bwala*). The first village A will bring its food over to the challenging village B, and the latter will reciprocate on the following day; thus:

> And now comes the dramatic moment. Community B have been straining all their resources not only to repay the full quantity but to provide a surplus. The strict return measure is called *kalamelu*, which might perhaps be translated ‘its equivalent,’ the ‘equivalent of the gift received.’ If they can offer an extra quantity, this will be put on the ground and declared to be *kalamata*, ‘its eye. The word ‘eye’ is here used in the figurative sense of some thing which is ahead of, which overtakes, goes beyond. (1965:185)

If an "eye" is not presented, the disagreement terminates at this last ceremony. If it is, fighting may result. This will be taken up later. The bringing in of the *taytu* from the gardens to the *baku* to be stacked in front of a man’s *yam* house as an *urigubu* prestation, or else to be concealed away in one’s own "enclosed" *yam* house, is the next state in the activities. Prestations of cooked food, fish and vegetables (*kaulo*), or perhaps pig or *taro* pudding, would be given in the village, either before or after the return of the *urigubu* carriers, while such raw food as betel nut, tobacco or sugar cane might be given en passant (Malinowski 1965:177).

The results of the harvest can be defined in terms of several kinds (categories) of yams. The *taytumwala*, the self-produced and consumed "own *taytu," is composed of *yagogu* (seed yam), *unasu*
(inferior yam) and ulumdala (gleaning after harvest), and, of course, whatever else can be kept back from the urigubu crop, as mentioned above. The smaller crops: such as taro, pumpkin and squash, also come under this heading. In the same manner, a distinction between urigubu and taytu inwala is paralleled in the garden plots called urigubu and gubakayeki (own crop), respectively. The work of the transfer of heaps from the gardens to the baku is repaid through sagali for those involved. The handling of both the urigubu crop and the "own taytu" thereby generates a great difference in terms of the movement of individuals. Whereas, one action is largely a ceremonial and public event, the other is obliquely private (Malinowski 1965:473-475). Where one is well defined as a public gift, the other can only be guessed at. Not so the plots of land themselves, for it stands to reason that the urigubu baleko would be just as available to inspection as would the gubakayeki plots, which in some instances are mostly comprised of taro. This could possibly explain why there is such a wealth of magic surrounding the taro crop, since, paradoxically, this is supposed to be of much less importance than the urigubu crop that has little magic performed over it. Another explanation might be that the taro and kivi yams, being heartier than the taytu and capable of taking root most anywhere—even in the "untamed" jungle (odela)—are boundary transgressors. In fact, the boundary poles or tula, which for the taytu are just a frill, actually help to keep the creeping taro vines restrained, although the plants sometimes grow from the garden through the tula stakes into the jungle anyway.

Having arrived at the village with the transfer of the taytu, several days of events yet precede the milamala. The heaps of urigubu are sitting on the baku, many ready to be stacked away into the bwayma of a chiefly class (guya’u) by those offering the prestations. The same men who are doing the offering must come beforehand to repair or do any necessary construction on the open yam houses, since they service them as an additional obligation. Such a period of construction or repair would vary according to whether only a new roof was needed (approximately every ten years), as was the case in 1919, or longer if something like a log cabin is to be built (possibly every 30-50 years; Malinowski 1965:245-247). In the case of an open bwayma, which must be built up from its foundation stones (ulilaguva), these are almost always found in situ, Malinowski comments, since these are supposedly anchored to the bedrock (1965:247). As a consequence, these stones "determine the length of the kaytaulo, foundation beams, the length and width of the log cabin, and consequently the height of the bwayma" (emphasis added). The foundation stones therefore determine the relative size of the open bwayma which the urigubu offerers must fill. Such urigubu prestations rest, moreover, on the size of the foundation beams (kaytaulo: kayta = intercourse, ulo = mine; Fellows 1901:173; Malinowski 1929:56). This term will take on increased meaning as its symbolic polysemic correlates are discussed later.

Following the repair of the open bwayma, the acts of vilamalia magic are performed by the tovilamalia (magician of prosperity of the village), who was, again, Bagido’u (Malinowski 1965:246-247). The first act is carried out in the bwayma before daybreak, "at the wail of the melodious saka’u bird" (1965:220) over the sacred binabina stones that rest on the wood floor. The objects used in this rite include leaves of the setagava--a tough weed, kakemna -a dwarf tree with powerful roots, and the extremely hard wood of the kayaulo (compare kaytaulo), which is also the totemic tree of the Malasi clan. This rite is purported to make the bwayma anchored to the village, and paradoxically, to keep the yams in the bwayma from being used up.

At. daybreak the yam house is filled, dodige bwayma. The best yams are displayed outwardly. If there
are multiple donors, each man will have a boy or man inside who will put away his *urigubu* gift. The compartments inside run all the way to the top of the *bwayma*, and even though a man may have several heaps outside, he may have only one compartment inside. In good years, it is said that the yams overflow these compartments to combine at the top. Afterwards refreshments are taken with one’s kinswoman in the village; this consists of raw and cooked food (Malinowski 1965:222-223). Sometimes pig is distributed in this counterprestation. When the strangers are gone, some of the yams are taken out of the structures into which they have just been stored and return gifts called *kovisi* are given. The *taytupeta* gift is also presented, possibly to one’s maternal aunt or uncle (Malinowski 1965:423-424)

The same evening of the day of this first rite, one other thing occurs: The magician (*tovivilamalia*) "spits over them (closed *bwayma*) with medicated ginger root, and he performs a rite over all the roads entering into the village, and over the central place" (Malinowski 1961:169; 1965:225). This action parallels a similar one which will occur in a day or two at the opening of the *milamala*, and at its close.

Before going further, it should be pointed out that the *vilamalia* magic is not only performed at harvest times, but at several other sociologically "dangerous" occasions. In Oburuku, for example, Malinowski states that the magician might be called upon if sickness or serious hunger (*molu*) threatens the community. Curiously, when a falling star drops near the village, these "adverse *vilamalia*" rites are also performed. Such an oddity of a thought-system yet unexposed will become more meaningful in a moment.

The second rite of *vilamalia* occurs in the next couple of days as performed by the magician. It is called "the piercing of the village" (*basi valu*). The wild ginger root *leya*, the hard tree *lewo*, and the *kayaulo* totemic tree are all manipulated by Bagido’u at noon in his house. He utters a spell analogous to that used in the *kamkokola* ceremony in the gardens earlier. This spell (Malinowski 1965:223-224) will be seen to affirm the foundation (*u’ula*) of the village structure, and to make the food resistant to decay and consumption. Every structural feature of the *bwayma* is enumerated in the rite, except for the *kaytaulo*, which is curiously omitted. Later Malinowski (1965:254-255) mentions the discrepancy and states that the term was left out of the litany (*tapwana*). Old Bagido’u had no more "than a lapse of memory or attention" here. No doubt, but it seems odd that in a spell affirming the *u’ula* of the village yam house and *malia*, the magician would fail to recound the *u’ula kaytaulo* (foundation beams) of the *bwayma*. Or perhaps in Trobriand religious organization it does make sense.

In commenting on the function of the *vilamalia* magic, Malinowski notes that everyone believes that the "magic of plenty" is meant to prevent hunger:

> But whereas the objective facts reveal to us that the whole performance is directed at the yam house, at the food accumulated there, the comments of the natives make the human organism the real subject matter of the magical influence. (1965:226 227)

Furthermore:

> "Supposing the *vilamalia* were not made," I was told by Bagido’u, "men and
women would want to eat all the time, morning, noon and evening. Their bellies would grow big, they would swell all the time, they would want more and more food. A man takes half a taytu and leaves the other half. A woman cooks the food, she calls her husband and her children they do not come. They want to eat pig, they want to eat food from the bush, and the fruits of trees, kaulo (yam food). They do not want. The food in the bwayma rots in the liku (log cabin) till next harvest. Nothing is eaten.” (1965:227)

I have quoted this passage at length because the ideological stance of the speaker, Bagido’u—a Tabalu guya’u of Omarakana—is revealing for its "message." This position complements a related belief that the Trobrianders dogmatically assert, ergo, an ignorance of the physiological necessity for food. Malinowski states: “They believe that food is transformed in the stomach (lulo) to excrement (popu).” (1965:227). One may question the idea of a group of human beings anywhere being ignorant of the physiological need for food, just as the famous question of the Trobriander’s reputed ignorance of physiological paternity has arisen.

The difficulties here may be that Malinowski has taken what his informant (Bagido’u) has said as being “all” of the Trobriand “true facts” (Powell 1968:652)—and the only version. In both cases the “ignorance” of the ignorance of the location of one’s sources of information is crucial, and both Montague (1971:339) and Leach (1969) have pointed out that this controversial Trobriand procreative belief is “men’s talk,” valid on formal occasions dealing with subclan affairs. Therefore, just as we would expect a lineage elder to deny the necessity for a genitor in procreating children (who belong, along with their inheritable property, to his dala, so we would expect him to deny the need for a kind of food (urigubu yams) which should not be grown on the dala’s own plots, which legitimizes marriage contracts annually with strangers (tomakava) and which is the source of his village’s malia.

The notion of this denial of the necessity for food and its linkage to malia must be examined in the context of the context of such an attitude comprising part of a “thought system.” The statement may be viewed as being one piece of a symbolic code of cipher that allows for the elaboration and expression of cosmological statements regarding an activity that is not simple as “natural fact,” but which is also the focus of complex collective representations. Nourishment, as Eliade comments (1962:157), "as a purely physiological act or economic activity is an abstraction. To feed oneself is a cultural action, not an organic process." Thus, a central problem is to discover the religious ideology that underlies such a view.

In order to view these statements about food in their proper social context, it is necessary to look at the arrangement of the bwayma on the baku, both before and during the festivities of the milamala. While the return of the spirits is occurring in belief, important physical changes are transforming the face of the village, and it is the latter that will now be examined.

At various places (1929:10, 71 and 1965:passim) Malinowski comments on the baku of the village. In Coral Gardens (1965:431), he remarks that the baku of Omarakana is very anomalous, in that the chief’s house and bwayma are located on it.
Apparently the power of To’uluwa as a Tabalu chief of Omarakana enables him to do this. (Because the *baku* has been the focus of so many of the activities described thus far, and since it will be even more important in the remaining discussion of nilamala ritual, the map of this area taken from Malinowski (1965) has been presented to enable the reader to work with the symbolic contrasts discussed below.) (See Figure 1 on next page.)

The following contrasts may be observed between the open/uncovered *bwayma* and the enclosed *bwayma* (*sokwaypa*) (Malinowski 1965:242) and the surrounding *baku*:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Bwayma (open)</strong></th>
<th><strong>Sokwaypa Bwayma (enclosed)</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Near chief's house</td>
<td>1. Near married commoners' houses <em>(bulaviyaka)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Near bachelor's house <em>(bukumatula)</em></td>
<td>2. Near widow's house <em>(bwala nakaka'u)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Near burial ground; dead displayed</td>
<td>3. Regeneration implied; marriage, seed yams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. <em>Vilamalia</em> magic performed</td>
<td>4. No magic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Ritual spitting of ginger harvest, dancing <em>(danger?)</em> and funerals</td>
<td>5. No spitting <em>(no danger?)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. No eating/cooking allowed; taboo</td>
<td>6. Cooking tenaciously avoided</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. <em>Bwayma</em> &quot;off limits&quot;</td>
<td>7. Public place; lovers meet for intrigues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Only <em>taytu</em> stored</td>
<td>8. Other food, raw and cooked, seed yams, daily food</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. <em>Bwayma</em> cared for by <em>urigubu</em> offerers, '.strangers&quot;</td>
<td>9. <em>Sokwaypa</em> cared for by owners, residents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. <em>Bwaytana</em> associated with a darkness, hence <em>To uluwa</em>s <em>bwayma</em> &quot;darkness of the eve&quot;</td>
<td>11. <em>Sokwaypa</em>, actually more public, more activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Yams are obtained by climbing to top and reaching down</td>
<td>12. Yams obtained by reaching up through ceiling/roof</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. <em>Bwayma</em> associated with <em>malia</em>, prosperity, success of Tabalu</td>
<td>13. <em>Sokwaypa</em> associated with everyday lives of <em>tokay</em> who know <em>molu</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
These contrasts may be summarized in the form of a syntagmatic linear chain which reveals the following oppositions:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OPEN BWAYNA</th>
<th>CLOSED BWAYMA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CHIEF</td>
<td>COMMONER</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BACHELOR</td>
<td>WIDOW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEATH</td>
<td>LIFE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MAGIC</td>
<td>DANCING</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DANGER</td>
<td>PROFANE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RAW</td>
<td>SAFETY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COOKING</td>
<td>COOKED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DARK</td>
<td>LIGHT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FORMAL</td>
<td>ILLICIT/BACKSTAGE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STRANGERS - THEM</td>
<td>RESIDENTS - US</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MALE</td>
<td>FEMALE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DOWN</td>
<td>UP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MALIA</td>
<td>BUTURA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KOSI</td>
<td>MOLU</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TAYTU</td>
<td>BALOMA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TARO</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Taking these oppositions as being symbolic of contrastive features of Trobriand religious organization and cosmology, we may now argue that the mediation and regeneration of such divergent "facts" occur at times of great liminality and ritual activity. Such a time exists in the milamala, and it is this series of rituals to which we now turn.

The milamala begins between August 14th or 15th and ends on September 11th or 12th in Kiriwina (Austin 1938:245; Malinowski 1948:180-181). The baloma return to the houses of their veyola, falling--as they may or may not--on the land of the origin of their indigenous dala. I believe that the runilamala (mila = to simulate, mala = prosperity; Fellows 1901:191; Austin 1938) is most usefully viewed as a New Year's period, when the harvest collection is celebrated along with the consequent malia. Baldwin (1945), Malinowski (1965:86) and Lanternari (1955) argue this, while Austin (1938:245) refers to it.

When viewed in a comparative light, Eliade (1970:142) cites the milamala as containing all of the major elements of the "great agrarian festival of the New Year" that occurs in various parts of Melanesia. In this "New Year" celebration, a ritualized adjustment of Trobriand social life commences, in which a cyclical concept of time denying death and outlining patterns of economic activity, like the harvest (Malinowski 1927:209-210) and urigubu exchanges, comes around full swing in the milamala garden time (kweluva). The fruitfulness of this approach is that it lends itself to the processual model of Van Gennep's rites de passage, which Leach (1961:133) has drawn attention to in this respect.

In order to understand the Trobriand concept of time as it relates to the
milamala, we may draw upon Austin (1938) where an association can be discovered between the various "garden times" (kweluva) and the movement of the moon and stars. Though most Trobrianders cannot enumerate more than about ten moons, Austin states a good astronomer (towosi) can count twelve. Malinowski (1927:209) indicates that people can generally enumerate ten, eleven or twelve moons, and sometimes thirteen "under pressure." It is indeed this thirteenth moon that is of predominant interest.

If one is to believe Malinowski, the last moon is the kuluwasasa and the first is the milamala.4 Austin, however, lists the last moon as kuluwalasi, the first as kuluwasasa, and the second moon as milamala. Neither is actually wrong. What is out of place is the milamala, or rather the Trobriand social calendar, based as it is on cycles of structured social activities which are supposed to match natural cycles but probably rarely do. The milamala cannot be considered a "garden time" because it does not generate garden activities--or any activities for that matter--except the rituals of the period (see Malinowski’s "Chart of Time Reckoning," 1965:50-51). What Leach says about society "creating" time (by structuring activities) is exactly right here. Contrarily, kuluwasasa, which Austin (1938: 240) says is a corruption of the term kweluvasasasa, "passageway between the old and new garden periods" can be recognized as that transitional period that leads into the milamala when the garden harvest is in and a taboo is placed on gardening activity.

The latter point Lanternari (1955:414) emphasizes in the tabu di lavoro or "work taboo." Thus, the kuluwasasa is a pre-liminal stage, whereas the milamala can most usefully be understood as a liminal period of shifting formality, role-reversal and masquerade, as Leach (1961:132-136) defines these behaviors. In reference to the symbolism of the bwayma illustrated above, this transitional period replicates cleavages and conflicts of Trobriand social organization as these have been revealed in the earlier "garden challenges," urigubu exchanges, garden council and other harvest activities. Furthermore, the milamala is a time which bridges differing notions of cosmology, representations of which are postulated in the syntagmatic chain of concepts revolving around the baku. (See also Kessing 1971:223, concerning the "frame of symbolic polarities.") The changes which immediately begin to transform the baku into a stage of dancing, food exchanges and eating therefore, scenes of shifting sacredness and profaneness (recall that these activities are normally tabooed on the baku) can be observed in the construction of several new structures on the central place.

In Omarakana (because it is a "chiefly village"), special very high platforms are built for the baloma guya‘u, called tokaykaya. These are five to seven meters in height (Malinowski 1948:180). In addition, "there is a great display of food" on long specially-built scaffoldings of wood called lalogua, approximately two to three meters high. On such platforms are placed raw food. "Such structures run around the central place, but in good years they might extend round the circular street which runs concentrically with the baku and even outside the village into the highroad, that is the path leading to another village." (Malinowski 19.48:181). It is important to recall that only recently has the urigubu been put away and the vilarnalia magic performed. Now the state is set for the balorna to appear off the water from the Northwest to inaugurate
the first day of activities:

**MILAMALA RITUAL**

The first day of the milamala begins by the acts of the magician of renown, touributu. The magic of the conch shell ta’uya is conducted and the conch shell is blown. This announces "the coming displays with the thrilling ostentation of magical power" (Malinowski 1929:348). After this the magician goes to each road which enters Omarakana and buries food. "The burial of food expresses the desire for plenty within the village, is a symbol of it, and is believed to effect it." (1929:348). During this time cooked food is being prepared in each house, to be exposed in wooden dishes to the ba1oma, after which it is always given to "some friend or relative" who returns the prestation (Malinowski 1961:184; 1948:182).

Following these first events, people begin to gather in the village. There is "learning, training and preliminary contests" (Malinowski 1929:348 349) to attend to. Before dancing can begin, however, the taboo on drums existent throughout the year must be broken. This is called *katuvivisa kasausa’u* "consecration of drums" (Malinowski 1948:175; 1929:38). The drummers intone a chant in a circle in the baku, dancers moving slowly. Malinowski states: "But they are not allowed to proceed; almost at the first throb of the drums, there breaks forth from inside the huts the wailing of those who are still in mourning; from behind the inner row of houses, a

**INTERPRETATION**

It is significant to note that the name for the magician at this period is *touributu*, which is magician of renown through the *milamala*. This initial act of burying food is unique, as far as I can determine. Its only parallel is the burial of a man on the baku, since both of these acts return the cooked to nature (raw) and both affirm group (viz. dala) strength via *malia*. The exchange of cooked or raw food between neighbors and affines does the same.

These taboos establish the close connection between mortuary and *milamala* from the start.

This constitutes an act of role-reversal and a feigned hostility between the mourners and village men. It is important because the end of the *inilamala* will cause the break of certain ties (e.g., a widow will return to her own village) and the establishment of new ones through residence changes.
crowd of shrieking, agitated females rush out, and attack the dancers, beat them with sticks and throw coconuts, stones and pieces of wood at them." (1929:38). These actions succeed in stopping the activities, but the taboo is broken and the ritualized events proceed.

**Katukuala**

Around noon the katukuala sagali is to be held. This ritual like the earlier events occurs on the *baku*. For the purposes of the feast, a "moeity" division of the clans and subclans is made. According to Malinowski (1929:262), this division was: *MALASI, LUKULA-BUTA, LUKWASISIGA* and *LUKUBA*. Powell (1969:603, n.7) was told by informants that it is: *MALASI, LUKULA-BUTA* and *LUKUBA, LUKWASISIGA*. In this ceremony, in which the Malasi *sagali*, the following occurs:

1. Food is prepared in common and brought by all clan members to the *baku* in heaps on "tabooed wooden dishes" (*kaboma*); such food is cooked (1961:171).
2. Food is distributed by the *tolisagali* To’uluwa; the names of all are called out by him and his *veyola*.
3. The men move away; women come into the ring and take taytu back to their houses for private consumption (1929:347).
4. Next a *bubuala’u* may be held. This is the exchange of food between the chief (*guya’u*) and so-called commoners (*tokay*). The chief may offer pig and betel nut, while commoners return fish and fruit. This food is all raw.
5. Later the remains of this food (fish tails and pig jaw bones) may be displayed on the yam houses (*bwayma*).

The first real dance begins in the afternoon. The performers, *tokolima tala*, and the dancers, *tokwaypo’u*, (play and intone a chant). These are all paid later by the *tolisagali* (1929:348, plate 58). At sundown, people disperse, men removing their

This division into clans is also parallel at the final *sagali* ending the mourning period (see below, page 20). Such leadership in these religious activities suggests the power of the Tabalu in Omarakana. As is the case of the assignment of garden plots, the gardening magic, etc., Tabalu hold the primordial roles.

It is essential to note that all of the food exchanges during the milamala open with the exchange of COOKED food; whereas, other *sagali* s (outside of, or between villages) begin with RAW food being exchanged.

That women take the food is expressive of handling both the cooked and the taytu (see above).

At the end of this day’s events, food does what Malinowski says it does: it affirms and defines social status and classes of status. Most importantly, it does so in an articulated idiom of categories of food exchange behavior.

Formality ends and a nighttime of liminality and "communitas" begin. Sundown is, after all, a symbolic juncture, where the public normally gives way to the private and familial. Some of the most important symbolic qualities here concerned
headdresses.

After supper (1929:249), the drums sound again as they will throughout the night. People gather for a different form of dancing in which ornaments are not worn. This is the karibom, a slow rhythmic dancing. It assumes a period of fun and games much opposed to the formalism of the daytime activities. Children play about, old men and women lead their grandchildren in endless dancing, while young people carry out amorous advances and excursions between different villages (1929:240-250).

*Katumwailela: Mid month*

This day proceeds the initial day of the milamala. Food is reciprocated at the beginning of the day; this may be either cooked food or raw scraped coconut. Later, a special sagali is held called *kasakasa katukuaka*, that means the "priming of the rank and file" (1929:349). Evidently this term refers to the "moiety" division of the first sagali, and such an "inverse social grouping" would be LUKULABUTA, LUKWASISIGA, LUKUBA, MALASI. This occurs in Omarakana only (1948:263).

A special dance occurs, Malinowski states, which may be either the *rogayewo* or the *inuvayla'u*. The karibom follows as before.

*Yoyova Period*

This time is alternatively called kovayse or "winding up" (1929:349). It is described as the "main activity" by the Trobrianders themselves. Some additional building occurs at this time: around the baku the buneiova platforms are constructed in order to display valuables (vaygu'a), especially those of the chief. Such valuables are set out in the morning and removed again at night.

A. *Ulakaiwa*

This is the 26th day of the month of milamala, and the rites occurring on the day are called alternatively, *itavakaye keudebu* or *itavakay bisila* (1948:263), consisting of:

include what Radcliffe-Brown might have called "the identification of alternating generations" (Leach 1961:131) and a special emphasis put on promiscuous sexual relations, in accordance with Trobriand ideals. The problem is that such behavior works against secular institutions like infant betrothal, and politically arranged marital alliances, as the difficulties with some Tabalu marriages may reveal. (Remember that the famous incident between Namwana Guya’u and Mitikata occurred several months after the milamala, when Mitikata allegedly committed adultery with the former’s wife.)

This is a moiety reversal and a return prestation. It would be interesting to know which chief (guya’u) would lead here. A division of dances exists: one type is *bisila* (pandanus) and it has three subdivisions: *bisila*, *kitatuva* and *kaydebu*, all of which belong to subclans. The *kasawaga* is commonly shared.

This symbolic division of space is meaningful. The chief’s platforms are overshadowed by those of the baloma guya’u platforms; such platforms contrast a normal taboo against anyone being elevated above the chief. The valuables may allude to possible kula links, in a manner similar to the initial conch shell magic. The long scaffoldings of raw food profane the sacred baku by providing a direct link of pollution with the outside.

The communal eating of taro must be noted at this point. *Bwayma* symbolism suggests that taro is associated in thought with one’s "own crop," in addition to having a female aspect. Primarily, such an action contradicts the Trobriand belief that food should be taken with one’s family. Secondly, the sexual division is an "arbitrary" purity division setting up a ritual
1. The "consecration of the kaydebu" (katuvivisa kaydebu). This dance rite should occur first, and it is apparently homologous in structure to the katuvivisa kasausa'u.

2. A "great communal eating of sago or taro pudding," provided for all by the tolisagali. This food is cooked in large clay pots tabooed for this very purpose (1929:349, plate 86; 1961:171).

3. People eating in sexually segregated groups in different parts of the baku. (1961:171)

4. The food may be taken in family groups which requires that it be taken out of the clay pots and put in wood dishes.

5. This day is also called itavakayse keydebu, "preparing of the dancing shield," and itavakayse bisila, "the preparing of the pandanus streamer," for the performance of both these dances (1929:349). In addition, the gumagabu, "dance of shields," may be held.

B. Yamkevila

This is the day before the full moon and it is alternatively called itokolukwa'i (1929:349). All of the events of the previous day are repeated, including food exchanges in the morning, the eating of taro pudding, and dancing.

C. Yapila/Kaytaulo  The Full Moon

This is the final day of the milama1a, the larpula, the "rounding off day" (1929:349) of the full moon (kaytaulo).

The following events occur:

1. In the morning the toliuributu ritually sweeps the baku with a "charmed broom," just as a month before he performed the spitting of the ginger, the conch shell magic, and the burial of food (1929:350).

2. Many people gather on the baku; large numbers of communities are represented who sit in separate groups and display "serious faces" (1929:349 350). Relatives who are visiting may help in the proceedings.

3. In the morning, the inaugural dance, the mweli (a bisila type) is performed. The men wear flowers, vaygu’a, and grass petticoats. Such dances are corporate property, and can be purchased or sold like land.

This day comprises the most extensive period of activities that is held. In Leach's schema, it denotes formalistic behavior first, then role reversal, and at last masquerade. The "charmed broom" envisages the activities of the witch (mulukwausi).

This is an inter dala and inter village event. Here "formalism" equates with seriousness.

This is the role reversal phase bringing the Old Year to a close. The ritual also is highly contrastive of the nighttime karibom.
This dance is both specially conducted and anomalous, for women may participate. However, Malinowski says that he only once saw such a performance, and this was by a woman of the "highest rank" (1929:39).

4. At noon the kawawaga begins. It is a highly ritualized dance by three performers who imitate the movements of animals (1948:264). In 1915, Numwana Guya’u and Mitikata were two of the three dancers, the third remaining unknown (1929: plate 3).

5. Now comes the important sagali (mitalela valu), "eye of the village." Malinowski explains he could not decipher this (1929:350). This is a prestation of raw and cooked food that appears not to be returned. Each group sits with its back to the others, eating as the food is distributed, ritually washing, dressing and ornamenting themselves. "This is an occasion for much merriment and some horseplay, the givers and receivers exchanging appropriate jokes." (1929:350)

6. Beauty magic is now performed on the three actors of the final dance by the women of the category tabu to them. Such magic is homologous to that performed in the pregnancy ritual by such women outside of the village. A flattery gift is given with the words agu tilew’i, "my flattery gift which is wrapped in he." Such an exchange is competitive in nature, implying that the boys’ attentions are being sought (1929:353). First a boy removes his valuables, leaving them with his tabula, while the appropriate women perform the magic over him. The spell of the rite names the filiation, dala membership, and origin hole of the dala of the WOMEN (1929:354 355). The colors of the toilet are red, white and black.

7. After the performance of the beauty magic, a sagali is held whereby the performers give return gifts to their tabula, as repayment for the

Role Reversal. The woman may have been T&uluwa’s first wife, Kadamwasila.

The presence of Namwana Guya’u and Mitikata in this picture, knowing what we do about the kawawaga being an imitation of totemic animals (clans ranking subclans), leads me to believe that the event is linked to their famous quarrel. The "eyes" metaphor is related to this.

Radcliffe Brown’s thesis concerning the function of joking relationships is relevant here. Ego is in a position of potential hostility and advantage, vis a vis this group of women, thus friendly and relaxed relations are valuable (see Powell 1969:194 199, esp. 195).

The competition for ego’s attentions in the beauty kayasa also substantiates this impression. In the case of Mitikata, Namwana Guya u and Mr. X, other informal aspects of the interaction are being symbolized. These three male guyu, are, after all, faced with a set of marital ties and choices involving three different dala’s. Again, these three colors appear over and over in Trobriand symbolism.

Such a sagali affirms the ties with ego’s father’s dala the magic used is analogous to that of the mortuary and pregnancy rites, which also bring to
beauty magic (1929:350).

8. While the beauty magic is being performed outside the village, the magic of safety and renown (butura) is performed on the baku. Malinowski vividly describes the scene: "The elaborate ritual preparation of the dancers gives some indication of the tense emotional atmosphere which is characteristic of these big festive assemblies. The whole complex of dangerous passions which at the same time spring from and generate the spirit of emulation, is wrought upon by such a culminating occasion of personal display" (1929:357).

9. There is a belief that black magic is used against all at this ceremony, except the sorcerer and "his friends." To counter this kaygiauri sorcery, the magician of the village (here Bagido’u) spits wild ginger root over the aggregate. In addition, herbs (kwebila) specially charmed for the purpose, are put into the armiets of the dancers (see 1929:plates 75 77). The kayma-glauri and competitive butura can most usefully be viewed as "competitive events" (kayasa) which in former times might have broken into fighting (1929:359).

10. While the dancers are preparing, and the sagali is in progress, the to’uributu is ritually producing renown for the village (cluster) In his own house.

11. The magician’s "most important performance" now takes place. On a folded mat is placed a drum, conch shell and some reeds. Into these he chants a magic spell. The objects are then given to the three dancers for the final (lapula) dance (1929:plate 79).

12. Dancers, singers, drummers and all are given the signal by the to’uributu (and 2 acolytes), and the three begin to run through the village streets into the baku, pointing reeds to the ground. At the end, the reed is thrown up and whoever catches it, achieves butura throughout the district (1929:260).

The magic of these two ceremonies legitimizes two different principles: butura, or individual renown, and malia, or village renown. The conflicting rights and obligations of residence and dala membership is the central issue.

Fear of sorcery and black magic seem to concomitantly accompany the occasions when the three corporate groups gather for the "life crises" of a person. The mystical unity of a dala links sets of persons together in ways antithetical to inter-dala alliance and cooperation.

This aspect of Bagido’u’s magical repertoire is again focused on. In this, an extension of his position as tolivilamalia is occasioned. Such a multivocal performance may mean that in Omarakana, the office Bagido u holds is more important than elsewhere by the fusion of different magical systems.
13. The men of the reed utter screams that, signal the drummers to beat out the *yoba*, tabooed until this time. Conch shells blow and the three performers begin the *kasawaga* the ritualized animal dance mentioned above (1929:260 261; 1948:186). This is the last event of the daytime.

Diese ist actually a public intervillage/subclan performance of the *yoba*.

This is the day following the full moon. The activities of the previous days are concluded unless an extension of dancing, the *usigola*, is held.

1. In the afternoon, the magician puts coconuts, banana and other raw food together with *vaygu'a* in a basket. Later when he hears the *yoba* beat of the drums, such a basket will be placed outside his house as a parting favor (*talois*) for the baloma. This is called *katubukoni*.

2. Stone tomahawks are place in front of the chief’s house.

3. Private offerings of food by individuals stay inside the house; presumably these are given away as before in exchange.

The **Woulo**

The second night after the full moon, the baloma must leave their native villages and return to Tuma. Thus, an hour before sunrise, the leatherhead (bird) sings out and the morning star *Kubuana* appears in the sky. Dancing stops and the drums intone the *yoba* beat (1948:185 186). This spell accompanies it:

"BALOMA, 0!  "0 spirits, go
BUKULOVSI, 0!  away; we shall
BAKALOUSI, GA!  not go (we will
YUHUHUHU. .!"  remain) ."

1. At midday of the **woulo**, the second *yoba* is performed, called *pem yoba*, the chasing away of the lame. It purports to rid the village of the spirits of the women and children, the weak and crippled." (1948:186)

The conceptual notion of time is well brought out in the *yoba* ideas. Malinowski says in several places he tried to bribe boys to play the *yoba* beat for him, but they refused to do so, the implication being that if they had, the events ushered in by the *yoba* would have directly followed. They are irreversible, and suggest a movement towards some end.

Austin comments on the association between the Trobriand "New Year" and the stars, saying that an identification exists between the *milamala* and the morning and evening appearance of the Pleiades (1938:241). Perhaps the appearance of the morning star might also be associated with the end of the "Old Year" on the night of the **Woulo**, in the same manner that Westerners associate it with partying behavior at 12:00 midnight.

This second yoba seems to be more of a private village affair than the previous rite.
2. The dancers start at the end of the village farthest from where the road to Tuma (kadumalagaga valu) "strikes the village grove," all the baku and related parts are swept (1948:186).

3. Finally, the kasawaga is performed at the end. The elder men don't take part in this dance much, Malinowski states (1948:186 187).

In terms of the Trobriand social calendar, the milamala has come and gone. A New Year has begun, yet a final major mortuary sagali--called so’i in Vakuta, and having "Boyowan counterparts" (Malinowski 1961:490; 1929:158), which I suspect may be present in what Powell (1969:603, n.7) calls the sigiliveaka in Kiriwina are ritually performed right after the final yoba of the milamala consequently, we may view these transactions as "postliminal" rites. The importance of this final sagali for the bereaved is that it concludes a long mourning period by the widow who has been shut away in her husband's house, guarded by the dead man’s veyola and cared for by hers. During the sagali, the persons involved in exchanging pair off according to a moiety division of clans once again (Powell 1969:603, n.7; Malinowski 1929:134, 262). Sagali transactions occur in which a final payment to the widow, her children and veyola is given by the deceased man’s matrilineal kin (veyola).

So’i appropriately means "evacuating the bowels" (Fellows 1901:182), for it serves as public recognition of the fact that the man or woman is marriageable again, and that formal ties with the husband or wife’s dala are ended. Indeed, Powell (1969:178) concludes that the relationship between the widow and her affines becomes one of tomakava, or that of strangers again. Scatologically of course, "evacuating the bowels" identifies defecation as a metaphor for the mortuary ritual, which makes sense if we extend the metaphor of yams, both raw and cooked, as being complex representations of categories of persons. The body of the widow or widower surrenders--presumably to its dala’s own lands--that which once again belongs to it, since her relatives are now feeding and caring for her (as well as removing her excreta). Alternatively, the urigubu payments should now cease. However, our interpretation does not relate the meaning of so’i to the religious organization of the preceding milamala events, so it is momentarily necessary to return to the symbolic uses of categories of food as a means of "making statements" about people.

Let us examine the recurrent regularities in the use of multifarious categories of food in the Trobriands. Whereas, cooked food opens every day of ritual activity of the milamala, raw food is initially given at the pregnancy and mortuary sagali as part of the exchange of marriage gifts, and as the urigubu prestation. In the sense that a man is buried and exhumed (culture transformed to nature)--he is then eaten as raw food as well--after having been inspected for signs of sorcery. There is a simple explanation for this. Everyone of these ceremomous prestations is composed of the urigubu harvest prestation itself, which is raw taytu. It is "saved" for just such occasions. Therefore, these ‘raw’ transactions consist of prestations made between different corporate groups (dalas) that periodically meet at the liminal times of "crisis" in the lives of its members (property).
and at the milamala. The "raw" is given by one dala to another in exchange for something it needs. This "something" is a set of males who can comprise the heads of viable households who will then participate in gardening teams. "Raw" here equates with marriageable male (and his dala), as well as taytu. "Cooked," on the other hand, denotes actions stemming from within the village cluster unit itself, and therefore represents village residence and group membership, as well as female, and taro. The combined "raw and cooked" gifts are rare. In the table of food transactions carried out during the milamala (see below), this category of food transactions occurs only once on the last day (full moon) of the month, during the "eyes of the village" sagali (mitalela valu).

![Figure 2
FOOD TRANSACTIONS OF MILAMALA](image)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Monthly Sequence</th>
<th>Burial of Cooked Food</th>
<th>Cooked Food Exchanged</th>
<th>Exchange by &quot;Chief&quot; and &quot;Commoners&quot;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Day 1 Midmonth</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;Taro pudding shared&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day 26</td>
<td>&quot;Taro pudding shared&quot;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day 27</td>
<td>&quot;Taro pudding shared&quot;</td>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;Raw and cooked&quot; food (mitalela valu)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full moon</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The spatial use of food is represented by the fact that only raw food is elevated (as the chief and baloma are); whereas, only cooked food is ever buried, as for example, on the first day (and in the burial of a man on the baku). We may postulate at this point that the categories of yams, taytu and taro, are the focus of symbolic oppositions such as male/female, stranger/owner, matching categories of garden plots, urigubu/gubvakaykiki, and categories of yam crops, taytu/taytumwala.

How does this food cycle relate to a human one? The mortuary activities best illustrate the correlations. In the case of a man acting as a father, he handles the excrement of his child which pollutes him. However, a man derives status from being married and being a father, while, incidentally, being given taytu by his brother-in-law and other urigubu payers. As a son, a man’s father will some day die, whereupon he repays his father for the sacrifices which the latter made, by the act of eating some of the decaying flesh of the body after it is exhumed and examined for signs of sorcery. As a result (no doubt!), the man comments: "I have sucked the radius bone of my father; I had to go away and vomit; I came back and went on" (Malinowski 1929: 156). Afterwards in the village, the mouths of the sons are ritually "washed" through gifts of food and oil given by the women of the dala of his father who stand in the category tabu to them. (On this count, Montague’s interpretation (1971:361) of the custom is faulty, since she interprets Malinowski’s use of the phrase "dead man’s kinswomen," who are most surely veyola or "real kinsmen" (1929:150), to mean "sisters," instead of the beformentioned women of tabu, which they are most likely to be.) In time, the various bones that were removed will be turned over to his father’s matrineal kin after the danger of pollution has diffused. Nonetheless, these bones can never be used by the dead man’s matrilineal kin as utensils as they are by his children and widow--who
regard this as an unpleasant duty— for their stomachs would swell up and death might even result (1929:157).

As for the "state" of the widow, her confinement and care by her matrilineal kin commences a long period of liminality that has become a highly institutionalized aspect of religious organization in the Trobriands. In the so’i, one of the things that is being symbolized is that the widow is anomalous because she no longer has a place as a member of a gardening team, and hence must receive food from other (or additional) sources. Moreover, just as the widow’s ties with her husband’s lands must break off, so must she refrain from eating any food grown underground, as in times of molu (famine). The widow is structurally "hungry" in this state (Austin 1945).

Some of the oddities of the milamala complex are now comprehensible. The tensions of the final day of the milamala—the kaytaulo—are multifarious but capable of understanding. For the most part, they stem from the competitive gardening activities, food exchanges and the division of the garden plots that generates disputes, both within and between dala. Again, problems emerge out of the dual facts of living in Omarakana: residing there, irrespective of dala membership or legitimized status, while having to garden urigubu plots for fulfillment of one’s unigubu and other dala obligations. In this light, Malinowski’s famous incident involving the expulsion of Numwana Guya’u from the village cluster may not be quite so extraordinary (Powell 1960:130) as it seems, particularly since we noticed the roles which both of these men took in the final formalized ritual of the milamala. Moreover, it seems likely that the entire period of the milamala, with its numerous opportunities for amorous activities, imposes an important structural, stress on marriages and alliances in the Omarakana cluster. Given that, urigubu does legitimize the marriage contract—more possibly is the marriage contract (Powell 1969:592)—that organization of the urigubu payments as a whole represents corporate unity of the subclan, and symbolizes a latent subordination of donor to recipient, it is likely that more emphasis is placed on the "right kind" of marriage than Powell indicates in his article on "Genealogy and Residence" (1969:197-198). In fact, Fortune (1963:279) has commented that Malinowski’s work makes it appear as though these "amorous occasions" are secular, continuous through the year, and constituted premarital courtship, when more importance should be placed on arranged marriages. Granting this, it may be assumed that the special dangers and opportunities of the milamala condition an awareness that brings the symbolism of the urigubu into preeminence in the relationships and institutions which organize the activities of people throughout the month. The symbolic importance of Tabalu leadership in milamala ritual, together with its political and economic effects upon other spheres of social life, now draws our attention.

The position of the Tabalu in traditional land tenure around the Omarakana village cluster may be noted as one area of necessary religious leadership and mythical legitimization. According to Malinowski, the Tabalu own 80% of the lands strategically surrounding the village cluster (1965:Document 8). In addition, this dala wields the towosi and vilamalia magic, and the sunshine and rain magic also. As I earlier indicated, the Tabalu cannot, by virtue of mystical domain, "own" the rain or sunshine magic, and yet they do (Malinowski 1965:430-431). Both Malinowski (1927:205) and Powell (1960:134) have attested to the very real potency that attaches to this magic in native thought, while yet noting that the origin hole of the Tabalu is inconveniently out of place. Mythically, the anomalous burial of (cooked) food at the entrances to the village therefore draws attention to the success (cultural inventiveness) of the Tabalu, by mythically affirming a ground to
cosmos claim of legitimacy of leadership in religious organization, *vis-a-vis*, the ritual ownership of their magical systems. The only *dala*s who can compete with the Tabalu in this respect are the Toliwaga and Kwoynama, who are both apparently positioned on good garden lands. The Toliwaga area traditional enemy—and not unexpectedly; the Kwoynama have formed an alliance with the Tabalu through institutionalized bilateral cross cousin marriages (Leach 1958:139).

Several of the significant ritual metaphors that have been noted throughout our investigation must now be understood in this context. The symbol, *ritalela valu*, or "eyes of the village," has multivocal correlates meaning "eye of taytu," "face," "point" or "tip," and penis (*matala*)? In this ritual transaction, as noted above, a gift of raw and cooked food is presented to the attending *dala*s on the final day of the *milamala* by the Tabalu, and it is not reciprocated. Such an anomalous category of food represents an "offering up" of the most eligible males of the village cluster (i.e., those of the Tabalu) *vis-a-vis*, the most eligible preferential females, those of the *tabu* category. These are the women with whom the men joked and who performed beauty magic over the dances toward the end. Therefore, the "eyes of the village" metaphor may be viewed as symbolizing, on the one hand, the fact that the Tabalu are a *wife-taking* and an *urigubu* taking *dala*, in contrast to the other assembled subclans. Such a transaction between these groups may simply legitimize this arrangement, as it were, on the final day of the "Old Year." It follows, of course, the legitimization of marriage contracts through the *urigubu* before the *milamala*. On the other hand, this ritual transaction serves as a model of the social esteem or mystical "aristocratic power" that the Tabalu possess, and which will consequently allow for the holding of "power positions" in the coming "New Year."

Another important ritual symbol exists in the term *kaytaulo*. It has taken on the variable meanings of "my intercourse," *bwayma* foundation (beams), the full moon of the *milarnala*, and may be related to the incomplete *kayaulo*, the Malasi totemic tree. In this sense, *kaytaulo* can be noted as buttressing the mystical foundation of the Tabalu *dala*, because it represents the size of its yam houses (in Omarakana) by specifying the amount of *urigubu* necessary to fill them, which is another way of "saying" how "good" the marriages are that it contracts. It is therefore through the polygamous marriages of the Tabalu, which the men of other subclans are competing to contract their women into, that Tabalu hegemony in the Omarakana village cluster and beyond is maintained. Not just any intercourse will do for the parties involved, but only those which produce *malia* and *butura*. Old Bagido’u knows that only some *dala*s can *milamala* (e.g., simulate prosperity) in this way, and that *milamala* is therefore a derivative of *kaytaulo* in some of its here-named multivocal aspects.

Why, then, omit *kaytaulo* from the *vilamala* spell mentioned above? Why not subsist on excrement, produce one’s own *urigubu* and *malia*, or endogamously father the children of one’s own sub- clan? These are my last points.

CONCLUSION
Social esteem in the Trobriands is based upon many ideological and mystical codes of conduct which should, in an "ideal model" of social organization, be adhered to. As an esteemed member of Omarakana, therefore, a man faces the social contingencies of residing somewhere, earning a living, and marrying and rearing a family. In addition, however, the obligations of subclan membership must also be met, irrespective of any of the foregoing bases of social organization. A central concern in this essay has been the attempt to understand how the secular conflicts of institutionalized gardening activities and urigubu exchanges are symbolized and dealt with in the religious organization and culture of the milamala.

My contention is that in certain religious events preceding, contemporaneous with, and antedating the milamala, the social relationships of participants are structured through an elaborate ritual "language" of categories of food exchange. This system of ritualized food exchange is articulated with a "thought system" containing verbal categories and ritual symbols paralleling a cyclical model of time that sees its annual closure in the milamala. It is further argued that such a ritual "language" allows statements to be made concerning the "state" of participants, vis-a-vis, their esteem position relative to the contingencies (outlined above), of social life in Omarakana.

In the articulation of a ritual "language" of food exchanges, and a parallel "thought system," we might expect to be able to identify certain forms of symbolic action which are connective of the two classes of events. As these are identified, it might be possible, furthermore, to construct an elementary "observer's model" that renders understanding of some symbols that have become pervasive and essential features of a limited set of Trobriand "social facts." We believe this to be possible because certain symbols have not only become pervasive, but are also identified in thought by Trobrianders themselves; e.g., the use of yams as a ritual metaphor for people.

I would now like to briefly examine three key aspects of Trobriand religious organization: If we accept the beliefs underlying these institutional complexes as data, and focus on understanding their functioning in thought and behavior, more generalized statements concerning the forms of symbolic action that emerge in certain contexts may be possible. The first such aspect is malia: Malia appears to be a general condition surrounding villages after urigubu exchanges. It is consequently the village cluster which exhibits or displays malia, since dala yam houses are anchored on village grounds. Yet dalas produce malia, by virtue of their urigubu income, which is, of course, contingent on several factors.

A second fascinating aspect is urigubu: Urigubu is linked symbolically and politically to malia in several ways. Urigubu is most importantly a behavioral-attitudinal category that may be used to denote the process of how yam houses are filled and maintained, and how one's dala obligations are met. Additionally, it is primarily through institutionalized urigubu exchanges that a man formally, interacts with the members of other dalas with whom he associates, and with the elders of his own dala on formal occasions. Fundamentally it appears that it is the dala, and not individuals, as Powell (1969:592) has remarked, which consumes and fulfills urigubu prestations. However, clusters like Omarakana are comprised of dalas competing for the best garden plots and marriages. The structure of sets of social relationships seems to necessitate that others, perhaps
inside the village cluster but outside of one’s *dala*, produce the *urigubu*, since one of its primary functions is the annual legitimization of marriage contracts. The ubiquitous *urigubu* symbolism in the *milamala* is expressive of such a special concern.

*Butura* is a third aspect of the *milamala* that requires study: As another behavioral-attitudinal category, *butura* is perhaps best described as a condition of individual renown (though Malinowski is vague on this point). Individual subclan members generate *butura* for themselves, for example, in the performance of magic which they gain by right of filiation from their fathers. It is through the collective efforts of the men of a *dala*, on the other hand, that *malia* is produced for their *dala* within the village cluster.

Examining these "social facts" in the light of several forms of symbolic action--consuming and vomiting--we discover some new and interesting insights into certain social processes in Omarakana. Whereas, in the first place, one might incorporate *butura* into one’s social personality, in the second, one vomits at the presence of *malia* as an esteemed *dala* member, since such collective renown is built upon the yams produced by another *dala* that sanctions the legitimacy of a sister’s (or other matrilineal kinswoman’s) marriage into this subclan. In the widest sense, a man should never consume the food of another except on ritual occasions anyway, and this is done in segregated corninensal units. In a more symbolic way, it is of interest to examine the notion of *kaytaulo* in this context. We may postulate that Bagido’u’s omission of this term from the *vilamala* spell has an ideologically founded one (conscious or not), since to claim *kaytaulo* would be like claiming *malia*. *Kaytaulo* legitimizes a man’s status as an *urigubu* receiver, as a brother-in-law or maternal uncle, etc., and yet, to claim as much (or to claim *malia*) as one’s sister’s marriage (“my intercourse”), is an obscene indiscretion confounding the rigid taboo that surrounds brother-sister interaction.

There is another context in which the symbolic contracts between consuming and vomiting are meaningful. This is the occasion of the exhumation of a man’s father’s body, whereupon the son customarily eats some of the decaying flesh. Malinowski’s account of this symbolic complex, described above, relegates the actions of the actors to the purely sentimental level, with a vomiting reaction presumably physiological in nature. Yet at the symbolic level we may again emphasize that it is through this institutionalized symbolic action of the sons that several different things are ritually "said" and affirmed: First, by their actions (of consuming the flesh), the sons are denying their part in any suspected sorcery, while reaffirming their mystical ties with their father’s *dala* (which, among other things, plays a role in the selection of their wives). Second, by vomiting, these men are identifying their social positions as siblings and as *dala* members in a "thought system" whose recent schism may be bridged by actions of reaggregation with their subclan. The actions of the widow throughout her mourning period and in the *so’i* seem to similarly establish lines of separation and aggregation, innocence and guilt, purity and pollution, as her food taboos and the special handling--actually a reclaiming--of her excrement reveal; her subclan is once again claiming her as part of its own perpetual cycle.

In an essay dealing with religious organization and ideology in the Trobriands, it hardly needs to be stressed that a large influence is exercised through the "nature" of the kinship ideology possessed. A matrilineal ideology stressing avunculo- virilocal residence and ranked matrilsubclans is part of this. Certain beliefs that have been encountered throughout our investigation, such as
the denial of genitor in procreation and of a need for food, as well as certain forms of action, such as eating and vomiting, are also to be explained in reference to ideological office, role, social esteem or "state," and something else which we have called a "thought system." Nonetheless, whether we regard this set of "social facts" as being "formal talk" or "men’s talk" (Powell 195,6:277 278), seems to obscure the fact that in all social systems there is such an order of action; it belongs to what Turner has broadly called "structure" (1971). Its importance is that it is a powerful stimulus to action because it organizes institutional grouping, ritual, thought and symbolism in relation to a metaphysically-shared system of "truths." In Omarakana, the value of such "truths" is that it both divides and unifies people during a month of milamala activity that sets the tempo of social life for the coming year.

Trobiand religious organization encompasses a ritual "language" of food exchange and a parallel "thought system" which are chronologically integrated by means of a linked set of behavioral-attitudinal and verbal categories. The lines of cognitive linkage between such structured events are lines of ideological and categorical purity and pollution which are metaphorically expressed. Death and destruction are attached to a confusion of categories, and since events are linked together, partly through the means of a set of key "multivocal" symbols, it is particularly important that the lines of juncture and cleavage be observed. Thus it was that Malinowski’s drummers were reluctant to beat out the yoba pattern early, because it signals the end of the milamala. And so it is that a falling star offends the normal scheme of things; its natural displacement demands human explanation, since the natural order is so closely tied to the social one. Perhaps this explains why falling stars are associated with the sorcerer in myth (1961:322-324). Perhaps; in addition, this is why excrement, which is both a natural and a cultural product, is so carefully dealt with. A society can claim both its own excrement and falling stars, for where the one seems to promise self-regeneration, the other begs pardon for its demise. In the annual renewal of Trobriand structure, "societas"- the process whereby symbols of antistructure are converted to structure--has become an institutionalized aspect of the milamala, thus promising that religious symbols that articulate a viable "thought system" may prevail upon the organization of things on the ground.

FOOTNOTES

I would like to thank Dr. Jay B. Crain for his helpful comments on an earlier draft of this article.

1These indigenous dalas, according to Malinowski (1965:430 431), are the Kaluva u which reside in the Yogwabu section of Omarakana, and the Buryama whose members now reside in Kwaybwaga. However, Powell’s account (1960:120-121) curiously, omits a mention of these.

2This is a functioning, viable institution, as Powell (1960: 140) reveals in his discussion of three separate buritilaulo that occurred during his field work in 1950-51 in three separate village clusters.

3Powell (1969:581-583) generally agrees with Malinowski’s approximation that
three-quarters of the crop of a main garden is given away in a normal year as urigubu. While this is not the place to discuss the urigubu institution at length, Powell’s conclusions that urigubu payments are basically made within a village cluster, irrespective of the needs of the domestic households, in accordance with the status in local affairs of the involved parties, are in line with the arguments of this paper.

4This is the reverse of Malinowski’s account in 1927 (p.21), which indicates that he had changed his interpretations by the time Coral Gardens was published (1935).

5Powell (1969:602,n.2) remarks that Mitakata, guyau of Omarakana in 1950, was blamed for the poor harvest of that year "on the grounds that he had failed at the previous harvest to put out an adequate supply of valuables (vaygu’a) for the spiritual enjoyment of the dead revisiting Omarakana at the milamala."

6There are apparently wide differences which exist for the mourning periods of "chiefs" and the so-called "commoners." Though Powell (1969:197) states that he doubts that "true widow inheritance" exists, Malinowski (1929:136) indicates that To’uluwa did inherit one class of his wives from his predecessor, and that this act, along with his leadership in organizing the man’s funeral, legitimized his claim to office. Thus, it would seem that To’uluwa’s mourning period was greatly altered or nonexistent in terms of the norm.

7Other meanings may also exist, but these appear to be the "dominant" ones.

8We have already noted some of the symbolic aspects of the action of defecation. Other symbolic modes, such as the symbolism surrounding swelling, could be investigated in a similar manner.

BIBLIOGRAPHY


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