THE WORK AND MAGIC OF PROSPERITY IN THE TROBRIAND ISLANDS

BY

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In presenting this article as a tribute to one of our greatest living masters of social science, I should like to express my personal indebtedness to Professor Steinmetz. His works, especially his Studies of the Early Development of Punishment, his articles on method and principle and his book on the Philosophy of War — recently republished under a new title as the Sociology of War — have exercised a profound influence on my ethnological Weltanschauung. I mention myself merely as a humble representative of contemporary Ethnologists, who, academic generation after generation, have been deeply influenced by Professor Steinmetz’s work.

If I had to specify the main reason why I regard his work as being among the most important, if not the most important of our time, I should say that it is because his contribution, side by side with that of Westermarck and Durkheim, has made Ethnology and Sociology into an empirical, i.e. a real science. Professor Steinmetz is interested in the laws of social process, in the nature of cultural phenomena and in the gaining of the right perspective and correct understanding of cultural and social facts, rather than in their metaphysical significance or in their antecedents whether ”origins” or ”diffusions”. For this reason I should like to describe Professor Steinmetz as the Father of modern Empirical Ethnology.

His thorough analysis of such phenomena as War and Law; his tendency to relate each aspect to the totality of culture; his insistence on a quantitative or full or exhaustive enumeration or comparison of relevant facts — all this has inspired most of us who are his followers and pupils with a new spirit: I mean the empirical and immanent spirit akin to that of Gestaltanalyse, or Functionalism, or Pavlov’s Psychological Approach to Psychology. The method of Steinmetz is invaluable in my opinion, above all to the field-worker. Hence to all my pupils I always recommend the works of Steinmetz as the most important,
not merely in their theoretical bearing but also and above all for the carrying out of scientific research among native tribes in the field.

It may be of interest to the admirers and followers of Steinmetz to know that at present a vigorous attempt is being made, by myself and my associates among others, to recrystallise the interest in anthropological problems and aims from the functional point of view. The Functional School, based very much on the same problems and working with the same methods as those of Steinmetz and such of his pupils as Nieboer and Ronhaar, is inspired by a direct interest in the reality of human culture. Human culture, the Superorganic, as Herbert Spencer used to call it, is an order of its own. It is something which is not an organism, still less a portion of purely physical environment. It is a secondary environment produced by man for the direct or indirect satisfaction of his needs. But culture, with all this, is not an arbitrary whimsical product of man's hands and man's brain. It shows distinct regularities, obeys laws, is subject to a determinism sui generis. The establishment of this determinism, the discovery of the laws of culture — this according to the Functional School is the main aim of Anthropology. ¹)

Professor Steinmetz' book on War I would quote as a shining example of the functional conception of human history. Essentially functional is his insistence that war which always has been, which still exists and which according to him is likely to exist for ever, must be studied throughout its range of diverse manifestations and above all in its primitive forms. The very aim of the book is also functional. The author explicitly sets out to discover what the function of warfare has been across the ages, trying thereby not only to establish the laws of its operation and its influence on other aspects of human culture, but also to obtain a glimpse into its future. Profoundly as I would disagree from Professor Steinmetz's ultimate conclusions about the value and positive function of modern warfare, I still admire and fully acknowledge his method and his Problemsstellung, and that not only as regards the whole construction of the book, but in the treatment of most special problems. This book, and only to a smaller extent the earlier book on Punishment, I regard as among the masterpieces of functional method. ²)

¹) I would like to remind continental readers that in England or America Anthropology corresponds to such words as Ethnologie or Völkerkunde. Personally I believe that there is no fixed line of distinction between Sociology and the study of primitive races; and in this belief I am merely a follower of Professor Steinmetz.

Those who know the work of Steinmetz will see that I have chosen in this article a subject, a presentation and a method which show his influence on my research. The magic of prosperity which is described in the following pages, refers to an important phase in Trobriand gardening. It takes place at the end of the harvest and it accompanies the filling of the store-houses. ¹)

1. The Magical Consecration of the Store-house.

Gardening is, of all economic pursuits, the one of the greatest importance to the inhabitants of the Trobriand Islands, North Eastern New Guinea. Although they are keen fishermen and, in times of scarcity, collectors of fruit and shellfish, although they domesticate the pig and the chicken — none of these pursuits are sufficient when gardens fail. A drought or a destructive blight on the crops inevitably mean hunger (molu) for the whole tribe; and this, the most dreaded of calamities, though it happens but rarely, is remembered for centuries. A year of good harvest, on the other hand, means prosperity (malia), that is satisfaction, festivities and, incidentally, village brawls and fights — in short all that makes life worth living.

In order to make the crops last for a whole year, the natives have to store them in well built and elaborate store-houses. After the small yams, the taytu as the natives call them, have been harvested they have to be stored away. Taytu, the pre-eminent, the staple food, is the basis of tribal enterprise; it can be transformed into objects of permanent wealth by the simplest form of capitalising, that of feeding the workers; it can be kept and paid out for services thus giving power to those who possess it. Therefore it is the foundation of native expansion, wealth and power that is stored away in the act of filling the bwayma (store-house); it is the bwayma that makes the accumulation and preservation of wealth possible. Hence the bwayma is a permanent centre of interest as well as the centre of the activities we are about to witness. (see plate 2.)

Every visitor to the Trobriands will be impressed by the prominent position which the bwayma occupies: it is higher and more imposing than the living house; more lavishly decorated and more scrupulously kept in repair; and it is surrounded with many taboos and rules of conduct. Even as the Irish or Polish peasant takes more count of his pigs than of his children, and looks better after his cattle than after his wife, so the Trobriander is more interested in the

¹) This article is the somewhat extensive resumé of certain portions of a forthcoming book on gardens and gardening in the Trobriand Islands, which I hope to publish within a year or so, probably under the title Coral Gardens and their Magic — but titles are apt to be changed in the last moment. This book will contain a full description of gardening, land tenure, agriculture, magic among the Trobrianders, as well as of their beliefs connected with food and nutrition.
housing of his yams than in the housing of his family. He is obliged to look after his store-house, because if it falls to pieces, his fortunes fall with it; but he tends it with a care which passes quite beyond what is required by practical necessity. The store-house is more to him than a mere mechanical contrivance for preserving the taytu. We shall follow the magic of prosperity performed over it; we shall watch the ceremony of filling and the care with which this is done; we shall see how the bwayma is adorned with food; and how even the emptying of it is subject to strict rules. The taytu is the means of carrying out many activities; it is a symbol and vehicle of value and it is an object of aesthetic satisfaction. To the different functions of the taytu there correspond differences in the bwayma. The large open bwayma with its partially exposed interior, provides for a display of the taytu, whereas the small enclosed store-houses subserve only the accumulation of food. To these functions there corresponds a differentiation in structure, place in the village, sociological rôle and magical treatment, as well as in the ideas, beliefs and sentiments of the natives. 1)

It is the correlation of all these elements which gives the real significance to the object which we are to study, that is, to the Trobriand store-house as a centre of native interest and the foundation of native economic life.

In the magic of Vilamalia, I think I was fortunate in being able to observe a most interesting form of magical induction referring to nutritive processes and the appetite. The Trobriander's misapprehension of the fundamentals of human procreation is here matched by his misunderstanding of the processes of nutrition and metabolism.

As the readers of my Sexual Life of Savages know, each Trobriander gives a large proportion of his crops to his sister's household, only keeping a part of them for himself. The given part of the harvest is described by the word urigubu. Thus each man has to carry the better and larger part of his harvest to the village of his brother-in-law. After all contributors to a given village have transported their contributions to that village and arranged them there in well built conical heaps in front of the store-houses, for which they are destined, a date is fixed and the work of storing them away is rapidly carried out in a morning. On that day all the donors, together with their retinue of helpers, and the recipients are present. No owner may fill his own bwayma, it has to be done by those who give and by those who help the giver.

1) Photographs of the bwayma will be found in Sexual Life of Savages (3rd edition). Plates 23, 31, 57, 72 etc. The Argonauts of the Western Pacific, Pl. XXXII, XXXIII, and Crime and Custom, Pl. V.
But before the work begins, the *towosi*, the garden magician, has to perform an act of supreme importance; the last act but one of his magic. 1). For it he assumes a different title. The magic which he is now to perform is called *vilamalia*, and in his new capacity he is called *tovilamalia*. But both types of magic, the *towosi* and the *vilamalia*, are invariably done by the same man. In the capital village of Omarakana it is Bagido’u who has to act; 2) and since it is his spells and system that I have recorded in most detail, he will be the best person to watch at his work among the storehouses.

The *vilamalia* is a magical frame to the filling of the *bwayma*; the first ceremony inaugurates the filling, and the second winds it up. This is the case not only in Omarakana, but in all other villages. In fact the main outlines of the magic and the ideas underlying it are the same throughout the region, and everywhere we find a curious discrepancy between the facts of the magic, and the native comments on it. But whatever the discrepancy, both ritual and comment agree on one point; the magic is to make the taytu last, remain; it is to make the village full of *malia*, prosperity. Hence its name; *vilamalia*; *vila*-prefix corresponding to *valu*, village; *malia*, prosperity.

The contrast between *molu* (hunger) and *malia* (plenty, prosperity, and satiety) has already been mentioned. *Malia* has also the wider meaning of "wealth" and of "absence of disease, dangerous influences and disaster". 3)

On the eve of the day agreed upon for the filling of the storehouse, Bagido’u goes into the bush and collects three bunches of magical herbs, *setagava*, *kakema* and *kayaulo*. *Setagava* is a tough weed with roots which are very strong and difficult to pull out of the ground. The *kakema* is a dwarf tree also with powerful roots and immovable save with great effort. The *kayaulo*, the totemic tree of the Malasi clan, is extremely tough; the wood can be cut with an axe or knife, but it is impossible to break it. Thus all the magical substances of this ritual are associated with tenacity, toughness and compactness.

Next morning before sunrise, at the time when the first *saka’u* bird utters its melodious wail, the magician repairs to the store-houses. He begins with the large *bwayma* of the chief, the *bwayma* which stands in the middle of the village and which has a personal name.

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1) The magical system of the Trobrianders will be fully described in the forthcoming book announced above.
2) The readers of my *Crime and Custom* and *Sexual Life of Savages* are well acquainted with this intelligent, and forceful, though at the same time tragic personality. Cf. especially Chapter II, 3, of *Crime and Custom* and Chapter I sec. 2, of *Sexual Life of Savages*, where also a full description of the village of Omarakana will be found.
3) Whether the word *malia* corresponds to the Polynesian and Melanesian word *mana* "power of magic" I cannot decide, though there are certain etymological indications pointing in that direction.
Dudabile Kwaya’i. This name "Darkness of the Evening" is associated with the impression of darkness produced by the wealth of the stores which it contains. Bagido’u climbs up the wall of logs, using the interstices as a ladder, and descends to the floor (bubukwa) of the well. He squats on the floor, lays down a bunch of the leaves, and takes up a stone which has been there since the building of the bwayma. Holding the stone close to his mouth he charms it over with the following spell:

"Rattan here now, rattan here ever, O rattan from the north-east!
Come, anchor, thyself in the north-east.
I shall go, I shall fasten in the south-west.
Come, anchor thyself in the south-west.
I shall go, I shall fasten in the north-east.
My bottom is as a binabina stone, as the old dust, as the blackened powder.
My yamhouse is anchored; my yamhouse is as the immovable rock; my yamhouse is as the bedrock; my yamhouse is darkened; my yamhouse is dusky; my yamhouse blackens; my yamhouse is firmly anchored....
It goes, it is anchored for good and all.
Tududududu....
The magical portent of my spell rumbles over the north-east.”

This spell and rite, performed on the floor of the store-house, is named "the pressing of the floor", tum bubukwa or kaytumla bubukwa. In it we have first of all the symbolism of the "lawyer cane" (rattan), to the natives associated with an obstinate toughness and tenacity which surpasses all other vegetable growths. The lawyer cane is invited to encompass about from the north-east to the south-west and to be firm. Then the bottom of the taytu is identified with the binabina stone, the stone over which the magic is spoken. The taytu is also identified with the ancient dust and the blackened dust such as is found on the kuroroba, the shelf in the house where the clay pots (kuria) are put. The idea underlying this is that the taytu should remain so long in the store-house that the floor of the latter should become covered with black dust. Then, in a direct statement, the storehouse is said to be anchored, to be like a coral outcrop still joined to the bedrock; to be like the bedrock itself. And towards the end the idea of darkness, which here means fullness, plenty of taytu, is again developed.

In this spell therefore we have definitely an impression of the desire

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1) In the book above announced on Trobriand gardens, the reader will find the native text of this formula, among others, with full commentary, linguistic and cultural, as well as interlinear translation and grammatical annotations.
to give stability to the accumulated crops; the same idea as we saw embodied in the magical herbs used in the rite and also in the stone which the magician picked up on the floor of the bwayma. Such stones are called binabina, which is a generic name applied to all the volcanic and basaltic rocks and stones found in the l’Entrecasteaux archipelago. Coral stones, the only kind found in the Trobriands, the natives call dakuna. Binabina stones are imported from the south, and in the principal store-houses of the Trobriands there are always one or two such stones on the floor. In this context they are called kautyumla bubukwa, “the pressers of the floor.” Their function is to impart their qualities to the stored food; they are heavier, harder and less brittle than the local dead coral.

After the magician has chanted over the stone, pressed the magical herbs and finished with the main store-house, he visits the other open bwayma. Where there are no stones, the magician takes a taytu left over from the old store for the purpose and uses it in the same fashion.

2. The Filling of the Bwayma.

Although the magician started at daybreak, the filling of the store-house has to begin almost immediately after he has finished. For his work is by no means easy or short; he has to make the round of a large village, climbing into one store-house after another. The filling of the bwayma, which has to be completed in one morning, is usually begun fairly early, about eight o’clock. I have seen the filling of the bwayma in Omarakana only once, and as it was raining heavily I could take no pictures. A boy or young man stands in the well of each store-house and another man hands him the yams through the interstices, and these are disposed in layers on the floor. If there are several donors, each of them has his own delegate and his own compartment inside. One donor may have more than one heap outside, but he never has more than one compartment within.

The same method is followed in filling the bwayma as in stacking up the heaps, that is, the best yams are displayed on the outside. (see plate 3.) First a few of the finest tubers are handed up and these are arranged in the lowest interstices between the wall beams of the cabin. Some of the poorer taytu from the interior of the heap follow and are placed on the floor. Then again some better, which are disposed in the higher interstices, and so on. Since most of the big tribal ceremonies at which good taytu is used follow almost immediately after harvest, there is a tendency to store the better taytu at the top of the bwayma, whence it can be easily removed.

When there is a good crop, there is enough taytu to fill the log cabin and to overflow into the space under the thatch. The vertical sticks which divide the well into compartments run close up to the
roof, so that the allocation of space to various donors is continued to the top of the store-house.

All this refers only to the open, decorated store-houses in which the show crops, the taytu whose main function is display and the representation of wealth, is stored.

After they have finished their task, the fillers sit down in groups and partake of refreshments which are provided not by the main donor but by the recipient. The donor and his party settle down near the recipient’s house, whose wife, by the principle of urigubu, is his near kinswoman; they open and drink the green coconuts provided for them, crack and chew betel-nuts, eat cooked yams, taro and bananas. In a chief’s village a pig or two would often be killed and distributed among those who have filled the yamhouse.

After this the strangers retire, and within the village a new distribution takes place; taytu is taken out of the bwayma almost immediately after it has been stored there and kovisi and taytupeta gifts are distributed. The kovisi is taken out of the urigubu just received, the small gifts are taken from the own harvest crop.

3. The Second Act of Vilamalia Magic.

The day after the filling, or perhaps two or three days later, if the weather is bad, the toyvilamalia performs his second and concluding rite — the basi valu “the piercing of the village”, a name which alludes to the main act of the ceremony. In the morning he goes to the bush to collect leaves from the tree lewo which grows on the belt near the seashore, and from the kayaulo tree; also wild ginger root, leya. The lewo is a hardy but stunted tree which is said to live for a very long time. The kayaulo, as we know, is the tree with the tough, unbreakable wood, and the leya is in magic always associated with fierceness and toughness. In his house, about noon, the magician chants over the lewo leaves, the kayaulo and leya. This is the spell:

“Anchoring, anchoring of my village,
Taking deep root, taking deep root of my village,
Anchoring in the name of Tudava,
Taking deep root in the name of Malita.

Tudava will climb up, he will seat himself on the high platform.
What shall I strike?
I shall strike the firmly moored bottom of my taytu.

It shall be anchored, it shall be anchored.
My soil shall be anchored.
My ulilaguva, my cornerstone, shall be anchored.
My bubukwa, my floor, shall be anchored.
My liku, the yams in my log house, shall be anchored.
My kabisivisi, my compartments, shall be anchored.
My sobula, the young sprout of my taytu, shall be anchored.
My teta, the sticks that divide my log cabin, shall be anchored.
My bisi’a’i, my decorated front board, shall be anchored.
My kavalapu, my gable-boards, shall be anchored.
My kiluma, the supports of my thatch, shall be anchored.
My kavala, my roof batten, shall be anchored.
My kaliguvasi, my rafters, shall be anchored.
My kivi, my thatch-battens, shall be anchored.
My katuya, my thatch, shall be anchored.
My kakulumwala, my lower ridge-pole, shall be anchored.
My vataulo, my upper ridge-pole, shall be anchored.
My mwamwala, the ornamented end of my ridge-pole, shall be anchored.

It is anchored.
My village is anchored.
Like an immovable stone is my village.
Like the bedrock is my village.
Like a deep-rooted stone is my village.
My village is anchored, it is anchored for good and all.
Tudududu ...........
The magical portent of my village rumbles over the north-east.”

With the utterance of this formula, the magician has come to the end of all the spells connected with gardening, harvest and crops.

After the herbs have been charmed they remain between two mats until near sunset when the magician starts to make his last round of the village. He begins naturally with the chief’s store-house. In front of it he makes a hole in the ground with a small stick called dimkubukubu or katakudu, made of kayaulo wood and charmed with the other substances. Into this hole he puts some lewo leaves and a twig of the kayaulo tree, squats down and chants into it the charm just quoted. Then, through one of the interstices of the liku (log cabin), he thrusts some of the lewo leaves among the tubers. He chews some wild ginger root and ritually spits right in among the taytu in the bwayma. Subsequently he makes the round of the other show store-houses and repeats the same proceedings at all of them, but without chanting the spell over the hole. For the minor store-houses, those standing outside the inner ring, no hole is made and only some leaves of the lewo are inserted and the yams are spat upon ritually.

In passing over the kadumilagala valu, the points where a road strikes the village — at Omarakana, seven in number — the magician chews ginger and spits on the ground. On the broad entrance which opens from the twin village of Kasan’i, Bagido’u makes one more hole and chants the spell into it. He also spits with leya over the spot.
I saw the *basi valu* (piercing of the village) performed on a wet, sultry afternoon in August 1915. This was the first time that I was allowed to witness any important magical ceremony in the Trobriand district. Bagido'u was only accompanied by his younger brother Towese'i, who held a mat spread over the magician and his ritual paraphernalia. They went to the large *bwayma* without any pomp or ostentation. From a distance the two might have been taken for men repairing or adjusting something about the store-houses. There was no unction, solemnity, or display of any transcendent or esoteric qualities in the proceedings. The whole action was businesslike — everything was done quietly and deftly. The complete absence of any crowding spectators, or even of any interest or curiosity on the part of the villagers seated under the eaves of their houses or *bwayma*, also contributed to divest the performance of any solemn, ceremonial character. Although there is no definite and explicit taboo, it would not be considered the proper thing to crowd round the magician or to gaze at him or show any undue interest, and children would be kept back on such an occasion.


As I have mentioned, perhaps the most remarkable feature of this magic is the discrepancy between its meaning, as revealed in an objective analysis of spell, rite and context, and its aim as laid down in the comments of everybody concerned, including the officiating magician himself.

Both of course agree that the magic is a magic of plenty, that it is a magic meant to prevent hunger. But whereas the objective facts reveal to us that the whole performance is directed at the yamhouse, at the food accumulated there, the comments of the natives make the human organism the real subject-matter of magic influence.

Let me once more survey the magical facts. Both rites are performed over the store-houses. In the first rite the magician presses the floor, even as the title of the ceremony indicates, *tum bubukwa*. The substances used in this ceremony are all symbolical of tenacity, strength. It is these substances which are pressed on the floor, and they are pressed by means of a stone which symbolises stability. The words of the first spell — with its metaphors of anchoring, of the lawyer cane encompassing the store-house; with its comparisons, and direct comparisons at that, to bedrock, to a coral outcrop; with the invocations of darkness and plenty — leave not the slightest doubt that it is directed at the yamhouse and is meant to make the yam-house — that is, its contents — resistant, tenacious and enduring. The second rite is also performed on the store-houses; the hole is made in front of a store-house and resistant substances are inserted
into it. The same substances are put among the stored food, and this food is spat upon ritually. And here again, the spell tells the same tale. The anchoring and heaping up refer to stability and to plenty. Every detail of the store-house is enumerated; the whole village, which means really all the food stored in the village, is made immovable and unshrinkable by verbal impregnation. The piercing of the ground of the village would obviously mean a magical isolation and entrenchment.

What is the gist of native comments on the other hand? They have not the slightest doubt that the magic does not act directly on the substance of the food but on the human organism, more specifically on the human belly; or, to use a non-native word, on the appetite. It is not the food to be eaten up which is made resistant to nutritive destruction, it is the mouth which eats and the oesophagus which swallows that are made sluggish and disinclined. "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. I make the magic, the belly is satisfied, it is rounded up. 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 till next harvest. Nothing is eaten."

I have put together here a number of statements received on various occasions from Bagido'u. Time and again I discussed the same subject with other men and I found everyone confirming his view.

The theory is not astonishing in itself. The natives are not aware of the need for supplying the organism with new material, and their ideas about the digestion and the physiology of nutrition are rudimentary. They believe that food is transformed in the stomach, (lulo) into excrement (popu). They have a dim glimmering of the connection between food and life. They know that the scarcity of famine produces all sorts of illnesses and can ultimately kill man. Also, in speaking of old age, they will say that the stomach becomes closed up when a man is very old and then he dies. None the less abstention from food is to them a virtue and to be hungry, or even to have a sound appetite is shameful. Hence you must not speak about being hungry, especially in a strange village. Therefore to reduce the desire for food to its minimum, to make man dispense with food as much as possible, appears to them an excellent device. And again kaulo, the farinaceous staple food, is to the native his daily bread and not a great delicacy. To eat somewhat less kaulo every day would not be even a
1. Bagido'u, the magician of prosperity

2. A big store-house (bwayma)
3. The filling of store-houses with yams

4. People on platforms of a yam-house
5. Small boy in front of his yam-house

6. Navavile, the garden magician of Oburaku preparing for a rite
serious hardship to him. I was puzzled as well as amused by this point of view, and I often discussed it with various informants. They would tell me in praise of Bagido’u’s magic of Omarakana that his was the best vilamalia.

He himself boasted of it often, telling me that many can do good towosi (garden magic) but nobody can match him at vilamalia. “And what would be the good of harvesting splendid crops if they were eaten in a hurry because people had too much appetite?”

In 1915, when I was in Omarakana for the first time, I had not yet acquired much taste for taytu, though later on I grew really to like it. Bagido’u told me as a proof of the efficiency of his magic that I myself preferred mango, breadfruit, or bananas; that I preferred even pineapple to taytu; that I ate a great deal of taro and things out of tins, instead of eating taytu. This he said was the result of his vilamalia. He also pointed out to me, which was quite true, that in spite of a very meagre taytu harvest in 1915, the bwayma remained full for a long time. He forgot to mention or to notice that, following the poor harvest, there was an exceedingly good season for fruits as well as for taro.

Thus the natives believe that the magic acts on the human organism while the magic itself tells quite as clearly and consistently that it is aimed at the store-houses. The discrepancy must remain, as this is not the place to discuss possible explanations of it.

5. The Function of the Store-house.

Our account of the ceremonial filling of the store-house and the magic performed over them refers only to the decorated store-houses which are, strictly speaking, the privilege of rank. These are large rather than numerous, as size in itself has an aesthetic value to the Trobriander; they are built with an open log cabin to permit of an ostentatious display of their contents, and they are conspicuously placed, usually in the first or inner ring round the baku (the central place). They can be, and even nowadays (1918) often are, decorated with carving and with white, black and red paint; and, especially if they have been recently repaired, hung with an array of pandanus streamers, shells, maize cobs, large painted yams, coconuts and pigs’ jaws. Thus, in those villages which consist in a double ring of houses, the baku, the centre of village life, the place of dancing, festivals and rejoicing, is surrounded by a glittering circle of bwayma, through the interstices of which the Trobriander can see and gloat over his accumulated wealth of taytu.

A stranger crossing the district and passing through a number of villages is puzzled and impressed by the fact that the highest and best buildings are not the habitations but the store-houses. Even in
villages of rank the chief's store-house is bigger and better built than
his personal hut. This is because the store-house is much more im-
portant as a source of power as well as a symbol of it. Add to this
that dwellings must be built flush with the ground and huddled
together, for fear of the sorcery that might otherwise creep under-
neath or between them, and we understand how it is that these are
always overtopped and out-shone by the bwayma.

But besides the show bwayma there are small enclosed store-
houses, modestly situated in the outer ring among the dwelling houses;
yet so placed as to be well in view of the community and the owner
in order to minimise the danger of pilfering. No taboo restricts their
use and they are easily accessible, as the husband or wife have con-
stantly to repair to them for the daily yam.

The chief alone has no inferior, domestic store-house; urigubu and
taytumwala (own taytu) are alike arrogantly displayed. The com-
moner, on the other hand, has no show store-house; and none of his
stored food is displayed. His urigubu, though stacked apart and
reserved for ceremonial occasions and exchanges, is stored in the
enclosed bwayma with his taytumwala.

These two extremes, the chief and the poor commoner, shade
gradually into each other through the various degrees of rank. The
more aristocratic and richer citizens would have bigger show bwayma
and would store more taytumwala in them; those not so well-endowed
and of lower rank less, and so on.

Though less showy, the inferior store-houses are more important
than the show bwayma, for they contain the food used for daily
consumption, and also the seed yams for next year's planting.

The filling of these bwayma I cannot unfortunately describe with
the same fullness of detail and documentation as the ceremonial ones,
though I have seen it done countless times and have even taken part
in it. I am not even able to state with any degree of accuracy what
proportion of the aggregate crops harvested is stored in them. This is
due to a defect in my method which led me to pay more attention
to the ceremonial and dramatic than to everyday events.

But had I not made this mistake, an accurate computation of
taytumwala as compared with urigubu would have been difficult. The
urigubu is counted and the count recorded with kalawa leaves; it is
displayed, boasted about and well remembered. Quite the opposite is
the case with the taytu kept for a man's own use. The transport and
storing of it goes on unostentatiously from day to day. Far from being
a subject for boasting, the quantity of food reserved by a man for his
own use may even be concealed. If a man for any reason receives
a small urigubu so that he has to keep a large proportion of his harvest
to supply the needs of his own household, this is considered shameful.
It would be concealed by the man himself and it would be extremely
bad manners in anyone else to talk about it. Add to this that such a misfortune would most likely befall commoners who do not display their *urigubu* to any extent, and the difficulties of getting accurate information are obvious.

Speaking, however, from innumerable though undocumented observations, I should say that only about a third of the taytu harvested is show taytu, the other two-thirds being used for daily consumption and for next year's seed.

Food is brought into the village from the time of the *basi*, the preliminary thinning out of tubers. I am not sure whether the *bwanawa*, the thinned-out tubers, may be stored or whether they must be eaten immediately. Certainly they are never put in the show *bwayma*, and if kept would be kept in the dwelling or hidden away in an inferior store-house.

At the regular harvest, the *tayoyuva*, most of the inferior taytu, called generically *unasu*, is brought straight to the domestic store-house, though some of it is shown in the *kalimomyo*, the arbour in which the gardener displays a part of his crops — especially his *urigubu* gift — before they are transported. The seed taytu, of which a man is proud, is always first exhibited in the *kalimomyo*, but afterwards it is transferred without ostentation by the owner and his family to the store-house. The *ulumdala*, the gleanings after the main harvest, is also put in the inferior *bwayma*.

As in the filling, so also in the removal of crops, a distinction is made between the show garners and the enclosed ones. The latter have to be visited daily and their structure is adapted to their use. The man or woman has only to enter them and reach up his hand to secure the necessary yam. The show store-houses, on the other hand, are only emptied occasionally and then much larger quantities are taken out. At a ceremonial distribution (*sagali*), or on occasions when large presents such as *vewoulo*, *dodige bwala* or *yaulo* are given; or again when considerable quantities of food are sent to the coastal villages at a *vava* or *wasi*, the exchange of vegetable food for fish, then only will men and women climb the *liku* and take out several basketfuls of taytu, which are usually left for a few hours on show in front of the store-houses before they are carried to their destination. On such occasions the crops are graded. Some of the really perfect tubers which line the interstices and are disposed on top of the compartment are selected and the baskets topped with them; and at the subsequent distribution or exchange they are always kept in this position. In the case of the exchange of taytu for fish, the commoners would contribute their quotum from their *urigubu*.

A characteristic of the show store-house is that tubers once taken out of it are never returned to it and its contents are never added to until it is filled again at the next harvest. The only exception to this
rule is found in coastal villages where it is customary to refill store-houses with the taytu received in exchange for fish.

In years of plenty it sometimes happens that the best tubers, those placed in the interstices of the liku are never eaten. Exposed to sun and rain, they sprout and send out long shoots, and become useless either for food or planting. Because this is a sign of malia, it is not a matter for regret but for congratulation.

Both types of store-house have their associated or extraneous uses. The big bwayma furnish the decorative setting to the central place of the village. Dancing, games, athletic competitions, social and official gatherings all take place on the baku, and the surrounding bwayma speak to the villagers of prosperity, gustatory pleasures and satiety. To outsiders they speak of the welfare of the village, they advertise its wealth, they provide the necessary butura (renown). In villages where there are no special sitting platforms provided for the comfort and shelter of the villagers, such as we find in the capital and equally in the pariah village of Bwoytalu, the front of the show bwayma may be used instead. But it is not strictly proper to use a ceremonial store-house in this familiar fashion. Where other platforms are provided, there would be none under the overhanging gables of the bwayma, and only the owner and such few privileged persons as he might choose to invite would venture to sit on the projecting ends of the foundation beams.

The smaller store-houses, on the other hand, play a prominent part in the day to day social life of the village. On the lower platforms, elevated, dry and quiet, men will sit; or boys and girls, taking advantage of the perfect privacy of such retreats, will use them for love trysts and amorous meetings (see plate 4). The domestic storehouse does afford privacy, for good taste forbids any one to enter it but the owner and his own relative, that there may be no suspicion of vayld’u (theft of food) which is regarded as specially despicable. Also their discreet position in the outer ring among the dwellings and the inconspicuous entrance from behind, make them very suitable for private meetings.

Associated with their rank and the position of store-houses in the village, is the idea of the sensibility of taytu to the smell of cooking. It must not be pervaded by the steam of cooking pots nor by the smoke of baking tubers. The yain-houses of the inner ring, which are open and therefore specially accessible to smell and smoke, are protected by a taboo on cooking imposed on any dwellings that may stand in the inner ring. Only the chief’s personal hut (lisiga) or a bachelor’s house (bukumatula) is ever erected there, and in these cooking is forbidden. An almost conventional or symbolic protection is sufficient for the small store-houses, which stand in the same ring as the dwelling houses (bulaviyaka) where the meals are prepared; their
THE WORK AND MAGIC PROSPERITY.

covering of plaited coconut leaves screens the taytu from the sight
and at the same time protects it from the obnoxious smells of cooking.

A store-house, whether big or small, always belongs nominally
to the husband. He is, as a rule, a citizen of the community in which
the household is situated, but even if he is an outsider and lives there
through cross-cousin marriage or because he is a chief’s son, he still
owns the store-house. At the same time in a polygamous, and therefore
aristocratic household, each wife has an open bwayma specially
allotted to her and filled by her kinsmen. The smaller enclosed
bwayma, owned by the man and used by the woman, really belong
to the household.

An attractive feature of Trobriand villages are the diminutive
storehouses on high stakes owned by small boys. The taytu from them
is used by the mother, but the ownership, with all that it implies of
pride and vanity, is vested in the boy (see plate 5).


I have described the vilamalia as it is practised in Omarakana.
I shall now add a brief account of another system which I recorded
in the southern parts of the district, in the village of Oburaku, and
then compare the two and discuss the native theory of the effects and
modus agendi of this magic.

In Oburaku, as in Omarakana, the vilamalia frames the harvest,
but it is not as closely connected with the filling of the bwayma; it is
in fact much less the magic of the yam-house and the yam-crops.
Thus the first ceremony does not take place immediately before the
dodige bwayma, the filling of the garners. Nor is it called by any
name associated with the structure of the storehouse, as is the case
in Omarakana where the first rite is “the pressing of the floor”.

In Oburaku also there are two acts of vilamalia and the first one
is carried out at the new moon preceding the tayoyuwa (the main
taytu harvest). The magician, who is the towosi and tovilamalia in
one person, repairs to his hut, taking with him a conch shell (ta’uya)
devoted especially to this magic from year to year, some dry banana
leaves, and some wild ginger root. First of all he takes the trumpet,
which is a cassis cornuta shell. He stuffs the mouthpiece with dry
banana leaves and into the open lips of the shell he utters the following
charm:

"Restore, restore . . . .
Restore this way, restore that way.
Trumpet shell, restore, restore.
The hunger-swollen belly, trumpet shell, restore, restore.
The hunger exhaustion, trumpet shell, restore, restore."
The hunger faintness, trumpet shell, restore, restore.
The hunger prostration, trumpet shell, restore, restore.
The hunger depression, trumpet shell, restore, restore.
The hunger drooping, trumpet shell, restore, restore.
The throbbing famine, trumpet shell, restore, restore.
The utter famine, trumpet shell, restore, restore.
The drooping famine, trumpet shell, restore, restore.
From the *tatum* (house), trumpet shell, restore, restore.
From the *kaykatiga* (house), trumpet shell, restore, restore.
From the earth oven, trumpet shell, restore, restore.
From the hearth stones, trumpet shell, restore, restore.
From the foundation beams, trumpet shell, restore, restore.
From the rafters, trumpet shell, restore, restore.
From the ridge-pole, trumpet shell, restore, restore.
From the front frame of my thatch, trumpet shell, restore, restore.
From the shelves of my house, trumpet shell, restore, restore.
From the threshold boards of my house, trumpet shell, restore, restore.
From the threshold of my house, trumpet shell, restore, restore.
From the ground fronting my house, trumpet shell, restore, restore.
From the central place, trumpet shell, restore, restore.
From the beaten soil, trumpet shell, restore, restore.
From the leaves of my trees, trumpet shell, restore, restore.
From where the roads starts, trumpet shell, restore, restore.
From the roads themselves, trumpet shell, restore, restore.
From the seashore, trumpet shell, restore, restore.
From the low water mark, trumpet shell, restore, restore.
From the shallow water, trumpet shell, restore, restore.
Restore this way, restore that way.
This is not thy wind, O hunger, thy wind is from the north-west.
This is not thy sea-passage, the sea-passage of Kadinaka is thy [sea-passage.
This is not thy mountain, the hill in Wawela is thy mountain.
This is not thy promontory, the promontory of Silawotu is thy [promontory.
This is not thy cleft, the cleft in Kalubaku is thy cleft.
This is not thy sea-arm, the passage of Kaulokoki is thy sea-arm.
Get thee to the sea-passage between Tuma and Buriwada.

Get thee to Tuma.
Disperse, begone.
Get old, begone.
Disappear, begone.
Die away, begone.
Die for good and all, begone.
I sweep thee, O belly of my village.
The belly of my village boils up.
The belly of my village is darkened with plenty.
The belly of my village is full of strong beams.
The belly of my village streams with sweat.
The belly of my village is drenched with sweat."

After the spell has been recited, the magician breathes a strong guttural aspirated "Ha" into the open lips of the trumpet shell. Then he places it with its mouth downwards on a mat, so that the virtue shall not evaporate. Presently he takes a piece of dry banana leaf, folds it over so as to form a conical bag and, placing some wild ginger root in it, charms it over, again reciting the formula just given.

Late in March 1918 I witnessed this performance in the house of Navavile, the tovilamalia of Oburaku (see plate 6). After the magic he and two or three of his nearest kinsmen went to the northern end of the village, where the road from Kiriwina strikes it. There one long blast was blown on the trumpet shell, and then Navavile chewed the ginger and ritually spat it several times towards west, north and east. Then we walked across the village to the south, where exactly the same ceremony was repeated. Then the trumpet shell was carried to the shore, and a man waded into the lagoon and dropped it into the water at a well-marked spot. A few months hence it will be fished out, and used again.

Whether this last act, the submerging of the trumpet shell, means that prosperity should be anchored at the mooring-place of Oburaku; or whether it means that the trumpet shell, carrying with it the various evils and disabilities of hunger exorcised in the spell, should be drowned — I failed to ascertain.

All this happens before the beginning of the harvest. After the harvest is over and when all the store-houses have been filled, the magician has to perform the second ceremony. He repairs to the jungle and there he makes an extensive collection of leaves. Most of them come from the eastern seashore, the momola. Among them are the leaves of the lewo, the same tree that figures in the vilamalia system of Omarakana. This tree grows on the coral ridge and down towards the open sea. It is a very long-lived tree, with a strong stout stem, never growing very tall, but sending down its roots to the coral outcrops or the bedrock and gripping this very tightly. The natives told me that, as this tree lives long and is difficult to uproot and grows right into the bedrock, so the taytu should remain long in the store-houses.

Another small but stout tree, the bulabula, which grows to a great age and has deeply penetrating roots, is used for the same reason. The kayaulo again is a tree of very stunted growth which spreads its branches wide and low on the ground. The kayaulo, which we also
know from the Omarakana magic of *vilamalia*, has a very hard wood. The leaves of the croton tree are also used in Oburaku, since the croton is associated with the sacred stones standing on the central place, which symbolise the stability and permanence of the village. The leaves of the casuarina tree are used because of the density and darkness of its foliage, while the flowers of the hibiscus symbolise to the natives the joy and festivity which always go with plenty. Besides these, Navavile has to collect the leaves of certain fruit trees, the bread-fruit, the *menoni*, the *gwadila* (a tree with nuts), the *saysuya*, the *sayda* (nut tree), the *gegeku*, and the leaves of the Malay apple. Curiously enough, the leaves of the pawpaw, an importation of the white man, are also used.

The magician tears up the leaves and makes a hash of the green stuff which he places between the folds of a large mat. Meanwhile the men of the village have assembled in front of his house, each man bringing with him a small *vataga* (oblong basket) and a digging stick. The latter is handed over to the magician, who places the folded mat and the digging sticks on the platform in front of his house. Then in the presence of all those assembled, the magician chants the following spell:

"Thy mother is Botagara'i,  
Thy father is Tomgwara'i,  
I exorcise, I exorcise, I exorcise.  
I exorcise his illness.  
I exorcise his weakness.  
I exorcise his black magic.  
I exorcise the foundation stones of my village.  
I exorcise the foundation beam of our houses.  
I exorcise the big logs of my yamhouse.  
I exorcise the rafters.  
I exorcise the ridge-pole.  
I exorcise the floor of my yamhouse.  
I exorcise the sticks that divide my log cabin.  
I exorcise the rafters of my gable.  
I exorcise the sprouting of my taytu,  
I exorcise my gable wall.  
I exorcise the beaten soil.  
I exorcise the belly of my village.  
I sweep the belly of my village.  
The belly of my village boils up.  
The belly of my village is darkened with plenty.  
The belly of my village is full of strong beams.  
The belly of my village streams with sweat.  
The belly of my village is drenched with sweat."
After the chanting of the spell, the magician distributes the magic mixture. Each puts his portion into his vataga (oblong basket), and departs to that point on the outskirts of the village nearest to his house, where, making a small hole with the charmed digging stick, he buries some of the leaves. Then he returns to his house, inserts part of the remaining mixture in the foodhouse among the taytu and thrusts the rest between the urinagula stones, the three stones forming the domestic fireplace. This rite is called "piercing the village", basi valu, the same name that is given to the second rite in Omarakana.

So far there is very strong parallelism between the magic of Omarakana and that of Oburaku. In both villages we have a magic associated with harvest and with the storing up of the crops. In both villages the magic is in some way associated with the store-house, though this association is less pronounced in Oburaku than in Omarakana. The magical substances in both systems are partly identical and certainly of exactly the same type of magical symbolism; we have everywhere the symbolism of stunted growth above ground, of strong gripping roots, of longevity and endurance.

There is however one radical point of dissimilarity: the magic of Omarakana is carried out only at the harvest of taytu, the magic of Oburaku is carried out also at the harvest of the large yams, kuvi, a harvest which has a special name and special inaugurative ritual everywhere. The vilamalia, moreover, in Oburaku is also a magic which can be performed at times of hunger, sickness or disaster.

At isunapulo, the harvest of the kuvi and taro, the tovilamalia of Oburaka collects leaves from the aromatic mint (sulumwoya) and from the tuvata'u (marigold) plant. He charms them, reciting the first spell, and then distributes them among the men. Each of them puts some of the herbs under the front platform of his house and some at the entrance of the road to the village nearest to him. This is called the closing up of the front part (vaboda kaukweda), and the closing up of the roads (vaboda kadumalaga). This magic bars the way of hunger and ill-luck into house and village.

Even more interesting is the use of vilamalia which is not connected either with harvest of with the filling of the store-house. When there is sickness in the village or when hunger threatens the community, the magician may be called upon to perform the vilamalia. He will then carry out both rites exactly as they have been described here. Especially in times of hunger the vilamalia will be performed, and these occasions in Oburaku are not rare. In the month of October or November, when the taytu from the foodhouses is finished, and the new gardens have just been planted so that many yams have been used for seed, the pinch of molu is often felt in this village, which, though subsisting largely on fish, always needs vegetable food. When hunger is so bad that the women have to go out to the jungle in search of food, the people will say to the tovilamalia, Kuyovilaki.
m'malu; boge ilousi vivila, ikalipoulasi o la odila; “turn your village (make the luck of your village turn); already the women have gone, they are scouring the bush”. Then the magician would again medicate the trumpet shell and the ginger root, and perform the first ceremony. Again he would collect roots and make the second magic over them.

An interesting topographical comment was given to me by Navavile, the head garden magician of Oburaku, and some of his associates. When the trade wind starts blowing, sometime in the month of April or May, it blows the magic over from the island of Kitava, where the magicians have been performing their vilamalia and exorcising all the evil bidding it depart with the wind. The evil influences driven out of Kitava will strike the village of Oburaku, bringing sickness, hunger and death. As the wind continues blowing, more and more of these evil influences will come, till towards the end of the trade wind season, hunger may set in seriously, and sickness and death. In October or November comes the change of the seasons, when the north-west wind begins to blow. Now is the time to retaliate. Navavile sends scarcity and misfortune away from his island and they are carried by the drift of the wind towards the island of Kitava. Thus the tide of wind and the tide of human fortunes turn together.

It is an interesting piece of magical interpretation of natural events. The turn of the seasons, the time of calms, is I think invariably the period when illness appears. In Oburaku, where the natives rely a great deal on fishing, hunger and scarcity would be most felt about the months of October, November and December, that is, towards the end of the trade wind season, when fishing is still difficult and the crops may begin to be exhausted. Later on, with better fishing and the appearance of new crops, prosperity would return, so that the vilamalia then performed might really appear beneficent. In Kitava on the other hand, where the large yams and taro are the staple crops, the hunger would be more likely to set in a little later, about the middle of the monsoon season. But this interpretation is solely based on statements of natives which are not always reliable.

It is however, certain that the vilamalia in the south of the Trobriand Islands is definitely a magic of death and sickness; on its positive side it is an exorcism of evil influences from the own village, and on its negative side it is an evil magic directed at an outside community.

At harvest the magic in Oburaku is performed exactly for the same reason as in Omarakana; it is meant to make the vegetable food remain in the yam-houses. As in Omarakana, it acts, not on the food primarily, but on the digestive organism and on the appetite. Their minds are nauseated (imiminaye ninasi); they decline food, so that it remains in the store-house (ipakayse kaulo, bisisu wa bwayma). “Fish they like, fruits from the bush they like, but not the yam food” (magisi yena, magisi kavaylu’a, kaulo gala).