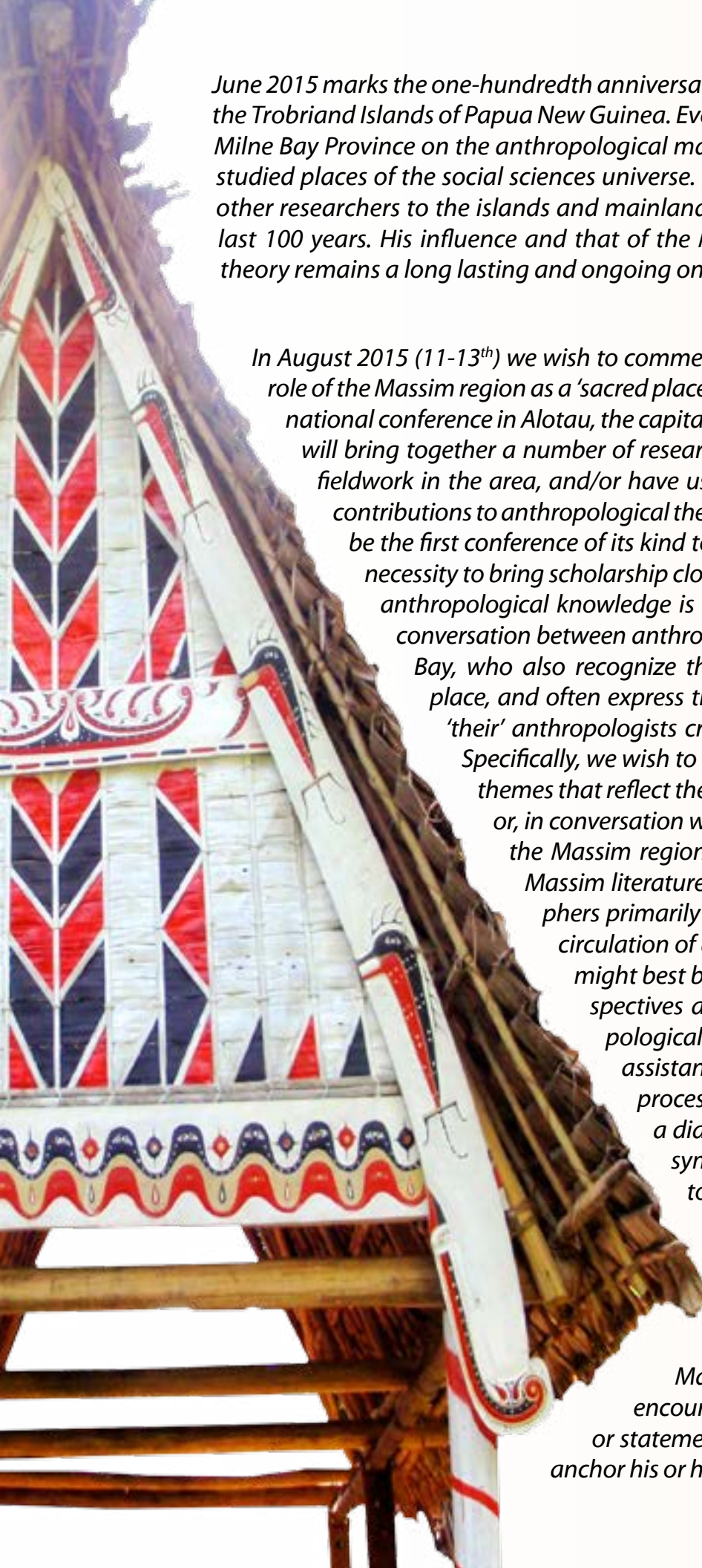


Malinowski's Legacy



One Hundred Years of Anthropology in the Milne Bay Province, Papua New Guinea
Wanigili Centre – Alotau (MBP), Papua New Guinea, 11 - 13th August 2015

The conference presentations are programmed to finish on the 13th. Nevertheless, we would like to convey at Wanigili also on the morning of the 14th for a follow up informal discussion on the conference proceedings.



June 2015 marks the one-hundredth anniversary of Bronislaw Malinowski's first arrival in the Trobriand Islands of Papua New Guinea. Ever since then, his seminal work has put the Milne Bay Province on the anthropological map, making it one of the most assiduously studied places of the social sciences universe. Malinowski has led the way for countless other researchers to the islands and mainland regions of the Milne Bay Province in the last 100 years. His influence and that of the Massim on anthropological practice and theory remains a long lasting and ongoing one.

In August 2015 (11-13th) we wish to commemorate this important centennial and the role of the Massim region as a 'sacred place' in anthropology by hosting a 3-day international conference in Alotau, the capital of the Milne Bay Province. The conference will bring together a number of researchers who have carried out ethnographic fieldwork in the area, and/or have used Massim materials to make significant contributions to anthropological theory and practice. Malinowski's Legacy will be the first conference of its kind to take place in Alotau, acknowledging the necessity to bring scholarship closer to its fields and the peoples from which anthropological knowledge is derived. The conference proposes to be a conversation between anthropologists and the inhabitants of the Milne Bay, who also recognize the anthropological import of their home place, and often express the wish to engage with the products that 'their' anthropologists create once fieldwork has come to an end. Specifically, we wish to focus our attentions in this symposium on themes that reflect the deep history of the ethnographic endeavor, in conversation with the current realities of social change in the Massim region and alternative readings on established Massim literature. While written and debated by ethnographers primarily from outside the region, the creation and circulation of a Massim-based ethnographic knowledge might best be seen as a communal assemblage of perspectives and projections; we do not create anthropological knowledge without the cooperation and assistance of our interlocutors in the field, and the process of creating anthropological knowledge is a dialogical one. An overarching theme for the symposium aims at exemplifying the extent to which Malinowski and anthropology 'created' the Massim as much as the Massim created anthropology and Malinowski. As a reflection on the historical depth and topical breadth of anthropological scholarship in the region, we take Malinowski as our hinge, so to speak, and encourage each participant to identify a passage or statement from one of his works around which to anchor his or her contribution.

Day 1: The Massim and Malinowski: history, traditions, myths, cosmologies

Morning session (expected running time: 9h-12:00h)

Conference launch and opening remarks: Linus digim'Rina
Dr. Linus digim'Rina from UPNG will address the conference opening.

Andrew Connelly (University of Otago, New Zealand)
The Future of Massim Pasts: Prospects for History and Anthropology

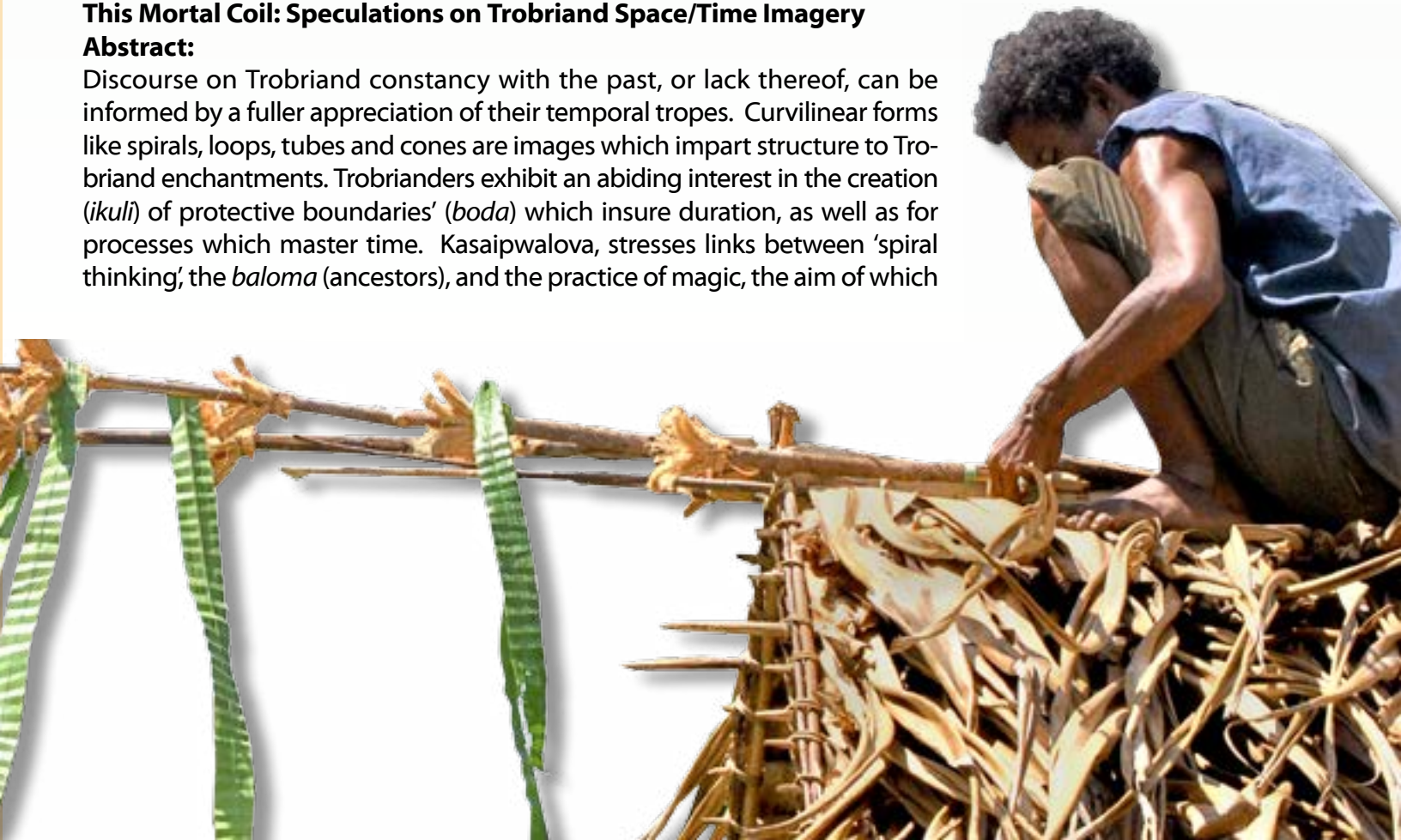
Abstract:

When thinking and talking about recent developments in the Massim, Trobriand Islanders look to the past as well as the future. During my field research I found that Trobrianders consistently evoked the past in myriad ways, and showed an abiding interest in learning as much about the histories of the region as they could. Many people thought, spoke and acted as historians in their own right – collecting, discussing and analysing the narrative and material past with enthusiasm, and pressing me for historical materials not presently accessible in the islands. More pragmatically, the past is invoked in a variety of contexts for different ends, such as settling land disputes or judging the 'authenticity' of 'traditional' performance. This leads me to conclude that any discussion of the present concerns of Massim people can be enriched by widening the analytical frame to take in not just the present and future, but also the pasts that inform them. In working to bring anthropological understandings of the area into closer articulation with pressing local concerns, we might ask two questions: What can history do for anthropologists? And what can historically equipped anthropologists do for people in the Massim? The archive can add depth to understandings of continuity and transformation in any domain, and the 'repatriation' of archival materials can help Massim people gain greater control over their own histories, with corollary benefits for their guests. A few concrete examples will hopefully provoke conversation on what pasts are important for Islanders, and why; and speculation on what kinds of constructive collaboration might best accommodate a wide diversity of present-day Massim and academic perspectives.

Allan Darrah (California State University, Sacramento, USA)
This Mortal Coil: Speculations on Trobriand Space/Time Imagery

Abstract:

Discourse on Trobriand constancy with the past, or lack thereof, can be informed by a fuller appreciation of their temporal tropes. Curvilinear forms like spirals, loops, tubes and cones are images which impart structure to Trobriand enchantments. Trobrianders exhibit an abiding interest in the creation (*ikuli*) of protective boundaries' (*boda*) which insure duration, as well as for processes which master time. Kasaipwalova, stresses links between 'spiral thinking', the *baloma* (ancestors), and the practice of magic, the aim of which



is a return of the past, when work was measured in solar cycles instead of those of the moon. In reciprocity for their magical agency the ancestors require the living to pursue customary paths (*keda*) which cleave respectfully to their *gum*; spatially a *gum* is a spiral's point of origin while in temporal contexts it is the *tosunapula*, the first to emerge in this world and the source of magical agency. The *kabitam* designs, which decorate *boda*, and the rituals which accompany their transfer between generations, are replete with imagery which links spiraling waves to ancestral memories that facilitate shifts between temporal contexts. Language, and by extension the very process of enchantment, is imaged as desiccated strands, which can be looped, tied, cut into bits and agglutinated. Desiccation, which produces a curve, is a model for maturation. Desiccated language, emanating from a *gum*, coils over and over itself to produce an *ikuli* which is a self-similar fractal of the past in the present. An iconic form of conforming to the past is found in the spiraling *milamala* dances which both embody and give voice to the present but otherwise visually absent *baloma*.

Discussion

Lunch break (12:00h-13:00h)

Afternoon session (expected running time: 13:00h-16:00h)

Linus s. digim'Rina (University of Papua New Guinea)

Three *Bublikwa* Stones: displaced cultural references

Abstract:

Bagidou climbs up the wall of the logs, using the interstices as a ladder, and descends to the floor (*bublikwa*) of the well [sic]. 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:

The spell and rite, performed on the floor of the store house, is named "the pressing of the floor", *tum bublikwa* or *kaytumla bublikwa*. (Malinowski 1935 Vol. 1:220-221)

Traditional notions that relate towards the suppression of hunger and at the same time 'anchor' abundance of food or wealth is a recognizable theme in the Massim area (Malinowski 1935 Vol. 1; Young 1971 & 1983, Kahn 1986:84; digim'Rina 1995:173 to name a few), and elsewhere. As it were, the notion inspires and stimulates cooperative food production, instills resource management acumen, and promotes personal and group renown, and cultivates envy too. But are there any traces of the notions these days or, have they inevitably succumbed to the challenges of the 21st century with surrogate notions on relations of production and resource deployment or, modernity?

In this paper I present the Trobriand concept of 'Tumla Bublikwa' and its accompanying rites as a pragmatic approach towards organizing food production and managing resources. I revisit the described functions of such notions as had been presented especially by Malinowski for Kiriwina, and Young for





Goodenough Island, respectively. The procedural rites, magical formulae including the cultural significance of Bubukwa stones have been mostly abandoned. Perhaps by default, they have largely become mere museum specimens and some getting redefined and taking on different trajectories.

Notwithstanding, knowledge and practice of Tumla Bubukwa is esoteric so that only a few privileged but competent yam gardeners could sustain its application. As styled by Malinowski, the Towosi were the orchestrators of yam gardening procedures as 'master gardeners'.¹ However, since 1996 I have come across a few more male elders that claim to possess and use the knowledge with personally owned (inherited) Bubukwa stones. I present a case in this discussion in order to demonstrate the cultural significance of inheritance, succession and values.

In this paper, I explore issues on the effect and significance of the role of Towosi and/or Bubukwa stones practitioners upon average Trobriand yam gardener then. I was only a kid when I first experienced the authority of a Towosi in a season of yam completion, Khayasa. The experience is recalled and reflected upon. By focusing on the ethics and etiquette involved in yam cultivation, and showing the level of adherence displayed by average Trobrianders on yam cultivation, this might lead us to appreciate the apparent persistence and insistence shown by average Trobrianders towards the whole notion of yam cultivation.

While Christianity and new ideas have an undeniable effect on the way Trobrianders conduct their gardening activities today, it is however the persisting adherence towards a yam culture that in itself influences Christian conducts too. It is, I argue these underlying cultural foundation set by notions like bubukwa/Towosi practices that ensures a lifetime adherence to culture, and for the Trobrianders, a yam culture. Tumla Bubukwa through Towosi and other competent gardeners provide meaning and life to the Trobriand culture – they are the teachers in a classroom.

¹ This compares well with Toitavaleta or Tokweli from the neighboring Goodenough Islanders (Young 1971:447ff).

Frederick H. Damon (University of Virginia, USA)

Malinowski and Indo-Pacific History: Massim Themes in the Austronesian Expansion

Abstract:

Malinowski's Trobriand ethnography is rightly noted to have ended one epoch in the social sciences—a kind of speculative historical analysis—and started another, spatially and temporally situated and delimited research. In Leach words, "the special distinguishing characteristic of Malinowski's field technique lies ...secondly in the

theoretical assumption that the total field of data under the observation of the field-worker must somehow fit together and make sense" (E.R. Leach 1957: 120). The advances in learning this method has achieved, and continues to achieve, do not need to be argued. Just the same, the historical and regional limits the method enshrines also stands out. Following upon a total of close to 49 months spent on Muyuw, Woodlark Island, in the northeast corner of the Kula Ring, in the best of the Malinowskian tradition, this paper argues for setting the learning Malinowski's method achieved in a larger regional and historical context. I try to show how the cultural system crystalized in the Massim is a close variant of patterns evident from at least Southeastern China, the ostensive origin point of the Austronesian expansion. The sense we now need to develop is one hardly restricted to what can be understood from the methods Malinowski's legend enshrined.

Discussion

Day 2: Production, Exchange and Change in the Massim

Morning session (expected running time: 9h-12:00h)

Mark Mosko (Australian National University)

Bwekasa: The life-giving sacrificial rites of Trobriands Islanders, living and deceased

Abstract:

Bronislaw Malinowski achieved his fame in anthropology on the basis of two related achievements: first, of course, for introducing to the anthropological world the marvellous culture of Trobriand Islanders, and secondly, in the course of that, for giving us a paradigmatic illustration of the workings of a society organized around the procedures of reciprocal obligatory gift exchange. It is arguable that without Malinowski's contributions in both regards, what many consider the founding text of modern anthropological theory -- Marcel Mauss's masterpiece, *The Gift* (1964) -- might never have been written. Malinowski's and others scholars' detailed illustrations of the pervasive give and take of Trobriand life have by now covered *kula*, *keymata* harvest exchange, payments of tribute to village leaders and chiefs, *lusaladabu* and other *sagali* mortuary exchanges, *kayasa* competitions, *wasi* vegetable-fish exchange, marriage payments, and *sibuwala* gifts to lovers. But our knowledge of these practices has till now focused almost exclusively upon reciprocal transactions among living human beings (*tomota*) residing in the visible, material world of Boyowa. Almost nothing is known anthropologically about how, according to the traditional religion, islanders also engaged in reciprocal exchange relations with ancestral *bilu baloma* and other spirits of Tuma, the land of the dead. Malinowski, for example, noted just a few occasions when villagers presented food or other offerings to the spirits in order to maintain favourable relations with them; namely, *ula'ula* 'oblations' preliminary to reciting *megwa* magical spells, at *milamala* harvest festivals, and upon the return of successful *kula* expeditions.



But neither Malinowski nor any of his ethnographer successors have probed the details or rationale of those or analogous practices more deeply. In this paper, I present findings gathered from annual investigations at Omarakana since 2006 concerning practices of *bwekasa* 'sacrifice'. *Bwekasa* offerings are prototypically given by family, *dala*, hamlet or village groups at the start of every shared meal when the prepared food is set down undisturbed for a brief period before it is consumed by the assembled people. During those few critical moments, however, the group's invisible *bilu baloma* ancestral and other spirits are believed to be present and to consume the food's internal *kekwebu* 'shadows' or 'images' leaving behind traces of their *sopi* or *bubwalua* 'saliva'. This *bubwalua* is understood to contain the power (*peula*) for giving *momova* life to the Boyowan humans who ingest it. But just as importantly the *kekwebu* shadows of the food received and eaten by the spirits furnishes them with the capacities they require to sustain their spirit life in Tuma. I argue that these and analogous *bwekasa* gift transactions with spirits are central to, but heretofore unreported for, numerous other practices including *megwa* magical performances, *sagali* mortuary rites, *gugula* yam heaps, the display of long yams, *milamala* harvest celebrations, *kula* exchange, *sibuwala* lover's gifts, *pokala* payments, *keyasa* competitions, and so on. *Bwekasa* sacrificial gifting thus illustrates the intimate, essential, mutually life-sustaining character of relations between the people of Boyowa and the spirits of Tuma, and thereby amounts to nothing less than the foundation or base (*u'ula*) of traditional Trobriand religion.

Sergio Jarillo de la Torre (American Museum of Natural History, USA)

The Kula of the Gospels: Christian Magic and Exchange in the Trobriand Islands

Abstract:

Katupela guguya or "exchange of sermons" is a current practice in the Trobriand Islands where whole villages are encouraged to visit close or distant communities to "give prayers" on a set date. The word of God is literally gifted by visiting parties that preach for their hosts; hosts will later on reciprocate and offer other passages of the Bible when they visit their current guests' village. Modelled partly upon the familiar patterns of circulation of the *kula*, *katupela guguya* also involves more material exchanges, including, in some occasions, *kula* valuables. The reification of Christian cultural elements (see Harrison 2000) not only facilitates their circulation in exchange circuits; it also helps define these circuits, investing them with new meanings. This increased ontological and epistemological mobility has been capitalized upon by some individuals to posit a coherent continuity between traditional magic practices and present-day understandings of Christianity (e.g. Methodist pastors who proclaim themselves *towosi* garden magicians). I argue that this exchange of sermons can offer original insights on how people conceptualise and negotiate social change in the Massim.

Discussion



Lunch break (12:00h-13:00h)

Afternoon session (expected running time: 13:00h-16:00h)

Jordan Haug (University of California San Diego, USA)

Cultivating Hope After Mine Closure in Misima

Abstract:

In places where extractive industries have left an indelible mark, eroding infrastructures and disappearing economic opportunities following project closures often contribute to crises of hope. Hope for future equality with people in wealthier parts of the world seems no longer practical. Through ethnographic research in Misima, Papua New Guinea, this project seeks to answer the pressing question of how people in these communities value equality and hope for its realization in times of dramatic geopolitical and economic decline.

In 2004, the small island of Misima became the site of one of the most significant industrial mine closures in Oceania. Since that time, the possibilities for the island's geopolitical, infrastructural, and economic advancement have dramatically declined. In spite of this foreclosure of opportunity and increased isolation, many Misimans hope for better futures where they are able to obtain geopolitical, infrastructural, and economic equality with the rest of the globalized world. Through moral projects like education, cooperative fund raising, and denominationalism, Misimans infuse presently persistent inequalities with the possibility of greater equality. I believe these moral projects of cultivating hope subvert the inevitability of inequality in favor of egalitarian ideals.



Ippei Moma (University of Kitakyushu, Japan)

The Interlacing Thoughts: A Study on Traditional Money Exchange in the Louisiade Islands

Abstract:

People in the Louisiade Islands, far from mainland Papua New Guinea, live and trade self-sufficiently. One type of traditional currency, stone axes known as "Tobotobo," is used in feasts in funerals or as payment for sailing canoes. People in the Louisiades sail in their canoes in search of this traditional money. Most notably, "Bigman" visit their exchange partners 40–100km away to get "Tobotobo". Upon return, other islanders put forward claims that this traditional "Tobotobo" axes be distributed by "Bigman" among their neighbors. The traditional money is brought to feasts and then gifted to a particular person, yet people also visit "Tobotobo" owners prior to these feasts to try to get the stone axes from them. Surveying the sequence of events, I have researched the complex trade networks that form following the exchange of "Tobotobo" in the Louisiade islands. By analyzing how people get "Tobotobo" through these networks and how they exchange them at feasts, I shall map out the current state of trade networks. Moreover, I will also focus on the diversity of choices presented to those in the trade by pinning them against the background of their individual intentions. These intentions express how people live via their "ways of selecting," revealing what lies behind their respective thoughts when establishing trade networks.

Discussion

Day 3: Beyond the Massim: Objects, Photography, Collections

Morning session (expected running time: 9h-12:00h)

Harry Beran (Independent researcher, UK)

Not Quite so Careless – Malinowski on Trobriand Art

Abstract:

Malinowski collected more than 2600 Massim artworks and artefacts between 1915 and 1918, almost all kept in the British Museum, the Melbourne Museum and the Phoebe A. Hearst Museum in Berkeley. This is the largest field collection of Massim material culture anyone has made. Its history has already been sketched by Michael W. Young in 'The Careless Collector' in *Hunting The Gatherers*, edited by Michael O'Hanlon and Robert L. Welsch (2000). Young notes that while Malinowski did not make a catalogue of his collection, a great deal of information about objects in it can be found in his fieldnotes and unpublished typescripts. The collection is regarded as a Trobriands collection but some objects were made and probably collected elsewhere. This presentation discusses three types of objects in the Malinowski Collection where some of them may have originated outside the Trobriands and where their origin is of special interest: dance paddles, presentation axe hafts, and canoe carvings. The discussion notes that there has been a great deal of change in the material culture of the northern Massim in the 19th century.

John Kasaipwalova (Trobriand Islands)

Sail the Midnight Sun: A contemporary PNG kesawaga (folk opera) celebrating the epic voyages of Massim Argonauts

Abstract:

I heard of Malinowski during my first year's residence at St. Leo's College, University of Queensland. My introduction to Kula literature in English came from the University Library "Argonauts of the Western Pacific," a masterpiece crafted by Malinowski 100 years ago. At the end of same year, my uncle, (Late Chief Nalubutau) initiated me to my first kula partner – a Grand Kula Master (Chief Tokavataria), who was then collaborating with the Japanese to make the documentary titled, "Argonauts of Western Pacific" – a period of almost 50 years after Malinowski.

Today, after almost 50 years after that initiation, this paper shares briefly a mythopoeic voyage of Massim Argonauts Yolina, Sabwaibwaileta and others, who through the world tours and performances of contemporary *kesawaga* :

- Sail the Midnight Sun
- Dance of the Snail
- Sana Sana

I have created a historic journey of research and creativity undertaken by Sopi Arts School, Raun Raun Theatre, the National Theatre Company, Sanguma musicians, Massim Culture Foundation Inc., National Kenu & Kundu Festival, as major players who can be rightly called Argonauts of Melanesia. A call? A challenge? An opportunity? Perhaps in the 21st Century Massim and Malinowski Legacy can look forward to an APEC family of cultures and may well provide the ocean upon which new mythopoeic heroes to become known as the "Argonauts of Asia Pacific."

Discussion

Lunch break (12:00h-13:00h)

Afternoon session (expected running time: 13:00h-16:00h)

Steven Winduo (University of Papua New Guinea)

Tower of Babel from Babylon to Trobriand

Abstract:

The folktale of the Tower of Babel has the potential to teach as well as explain the way people view the world. The Trobrianders explain their worlds in terms of those who are alive and living, those who are humans, and those who exist in another world below or above, and those who exist as spirits outside of the realm of reason and rationality. There are of course, the two worlds that the Trobriand Islanders move in and out of, if and when wanted. The Trobrianders have their own worldview, which is "how individuals or groups perceive and interpret the world, the nature of the cosmos, and their place within it." It is clear among the Trobrianders their worldview was constructed in their relationship to the world around them. Malinowski, who studied their worldview, was convinced that the Trobriand Islanders have very ritualized systems of naming, classification, and understanding: "Malinowski understood that rituals and folk narratives such as myths reflect and affect a people's beliefs about how they ought to classify people, ideas, and features of their environment and how they relate to the world and to one another. Malinowski reasoned that magic and religion help people cope psychologically with times of trouble, stress, and anxiety. Troubles may be alleviated by means of ritual. Religion and magic function to give people confidence during times when natural phenomena (such as storms at sea) threaten them. Moreover, religion helps people cope with the death of a loved one through beliefs about an afterlife." The Trobrianders provided Malinowski with the scientific base for his arguments on functional anthropology. The Trobriand Islanders uses magic in rituals to "assure a good yam crop and to still a sense of security before embarking on long sea voyage. Intimately familiar with soil content and preparation and the building of sea-worthy crafts, Trobrianders had scientific knowledge of their environment. However they also needed the assurance from magic and ritual to reduce the chance of unexpected misfortunes." There are similar worldviews that communities have in the world. The important element of people's worldview is that it structures and frames the way people think and respond to events. It also provides explanations to the natural, supernatural, and the metaphysical world around them. It is possible the Trobriand Islanders could have used the origin of the language story to explain the special relationships that exist between them and the world external to their immediate experience.

Final discussion and conference closure

Professor Marilyn Strathern (University of Cambridge, UK) will address the conference closure.

A photograph exhibition will take place during the conference. Ethnographic films and documentaries will be projected daily after 16:00h at the Wanigili Centre. Please check up for other activities organised by the Massim Cultural Foundation to take place during the conference dates.

Attendance to the conference is free.

All photos courtesy Sergio Jarillo de la Torre