

Article 10

Fathers and Matrilineality

Annette B. Weiner

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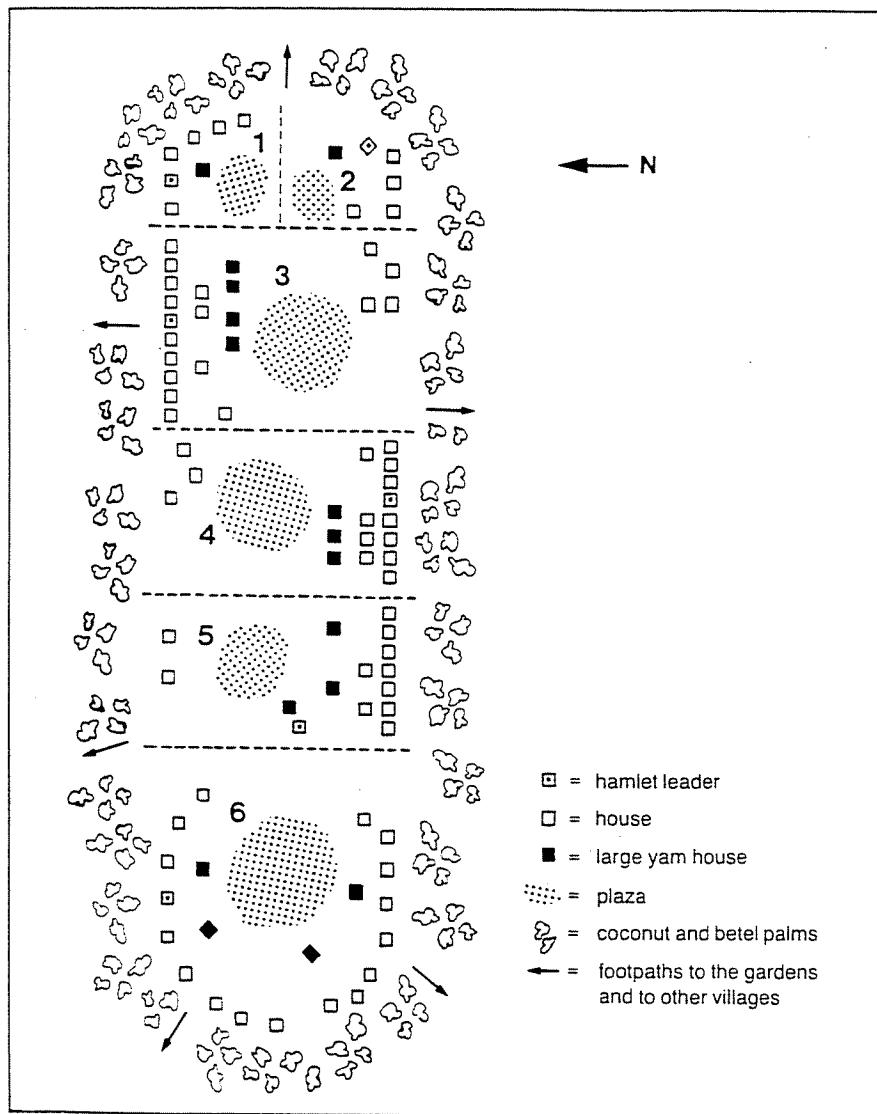
The only thing I know for sure is death is a very special thing—more so than birth. When you die you go to another island, Tuma, and join your relatives. Babies also come from here. . . . There also is no big ceremony for birth. The woman must stay in her house for several weeks and the baby is placed high up in a wooden type crate above a fire which never dies. After this short period the child sleeps with his mother and the children a few years old sleep with their father.

Linda Weiner

INTERRUPTED SLEEP

I was awakened just before daybreak by an insistent scratching noise on the thin, coconut-frond wall of my house. I whispered, "Who?" in the usual Kiriwina way. Bomapota replied, "Get some tobacco and come to Naseluma's house." I knew what the message meant, for Naseluma was in the last days of her pregnancy. I hurried out into the darkness across the empty village plaza. The door of each house I passed was pulled shut. The village was dark and silent. The chilled dawn air fell on my shoulders and I walked faster. The house was just ahead. A patch of light shone dimly through the frayed edges of the woven mat door. I entered the small one-room house expecting to find Naseluma in labor, but I saw that I had come too late.

In the far corner stood a high bed like the ones mourners sit on when their spouses die. There Naseluma lay with her new baby wrapped in a blanket. Beneath the bed, a wood fire, barely smoking, gave off some warmth. Her mother and her mother's sister had assisted with the delivery and now sat relaxing in front of a small kerosene lantern on a pandanus mat near the door. They laughed at my surprise that Naseluma had already delivered. I knew then that they sent the message for me to come because they had no tobacco. Shrugging off my fieldworker's disappointment at not being notified earlier, I joined them while they broke off a tiny piece of the thick trade store twist, separated it into tiny pieces, and rolled them in newsprint, making a long funnel-shaped cigarette that, in the customary way, they passed between each other to smoke. How private the birth of a baby is, I thought, when



Map 3. The six hamlets that together comprise the village of Kwaibwaga.

most Trobriand events are so public. There was no village response to the infant's first cries. Naseluma's baby did not even draw attention from those in neighboring houses. What a contrast to the huge gatherings that the plaintive cries announcing a death precipitate. A birth never brings people together in the way that a death does; it only involves the closest matrilineal female kin and, occasionally, a visiting anthropologist.

At marriage, a woman goes to live with her husband; but shortly before

she gives birth, she returns to her mother's house, where she remains throughout the rest of her pregnancy and for several months after the baby is born. Most marriages take place between young people who live near each other, usually within the same village or in neighboring villages. As Map 3 illustrates, each village (*valu*) is divided into sections called hamlets (*katuposula*). Each hamlet represents a matrilineage, although only a few members of the matrilineage may reside there, as discussed in Chapter 5.¹ Marriage is exogamous within a hamlet but not within the village. At marriage, even though a woman goes to live in her husband's place, she is rarely left without the support and continued companionship of her own kin. Naseluma grew up in Kwaibwaga, and when she married a Kwaibwaga man she had only to move her belongings to her husband's hamlet at the far end of the same village.

Now that Naseluma's son was born, she and her infant had to remain secluded for two months. Naseluma's husband and his kin were required to bring her food, but only her own matrilineal kin would cook for her and attend to her other needs. While she is nursing it is important that she observe stringent taboos on what she eats in order to protect the health of herself and her baby. During the first two months, the food taboos are even more inclusive. Her enforced seclusion also requires her to stay on the high bed, with a fire burning steadily, and to cover her body with a long, light-colored cape, made like a woman's skirt from dried banana-leaf fibers.

These restrictions for new mothers are similar to the prohibitions that a Trobriand widow or widower must observe. For example, separated from all but the most minimal social interaction, such women each sit on a high bed at the back of the room. Nursing mothers, like mourners, also must give up eating yams and pork, the two most favored foods. There are differences as well: For Naseluma a low fire burns under the bed, whereas for mourners there is no fire. Mourners blacken their bodies in an attempt to cover their own social identity. A woman who has given birth also covers her body, but with a light banana-leaf fiber cape that gives the effect of lightening the color of the body. The similarities of seclusion for birth and mourning, with their important oppositions between warmth and cold and light and dark, suggest that death and birth, although decidedly opposite states of being, nevertheless are linked together in a more deeply meaningful way.

BIRTH AND ANCESTORS

As described in the last chapter, Trobrianders believe that at death, the spirit (*baloma*) of the deceased becomes youthful again and continues its existence not far away on the island of Tuma. For a spirit, however, life on Tuma does not replicate itself without interruption. In time, it too ages and

¹ Neither Malinowski (for example, 1922; 1929; 1935, I) nor Powell (1969a; 1969b) recognized that villages were divided into hamlets. Therefore, they could not fully explain the variation in residence patterns within a village in relation to each matrilineage. But see Chapter 6 and also Weiner (1976: xvii-xviii, 38-43) for an extended discussion.

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Photo 16. About to leave the house for the first time after giving birth, Borobesa wears a long cape and covers her head.

becomes feeble; but by bathing in sea water, its wrinkled skin is sloughed off and its life continues as before. When this occurs, however, a spirit child called *waiwaia*, a term that also means "infant" or "fetus," is created. Although such a spirit child is thought to belong to the matrilineage of its own birth, it is not recognizable by any personal name.

Unlike the *baloma*, which continues its presence on Tuma, the spirit child cannot stay on the island but must return to Kiriwina, where it enters a woman's body and causes her to become pregnant. It is believed to enter a woman who is a member of the same matrilineage to which its original *baloma* spirit also belonged during its life on Kiriwina. Because the fetus is formed by the combination of a woman's blood and an ancestral spirit (*sibububula*), it acquires its mother's matrilineal identity. At birth, an infant always receives a name from its mother that previously belonged to a deceased member of her matrilineage, making this ancestral connection even more apparent. Ancestral names and ancestral spirits, each in their own way, thus regenerate matrilineal identity through time.

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actually creates a spirit child. Nor did they all acknowledge an identical method by which the *waiwaia* impregnates a woman. Some of the women I knew said that they became pregnant only after a particular *baloma* came to them in a dream and told them that a *waiwaia* was being sent. Other women confided that their pregnancy was induced by magic spells. The words of the spell, known only by certain women, instruct the *baloma* to send a spirit child to the woman who wants a baby. To carry out the ritual, water is brought from a cave or from the springs along the beach and poured into a coconut-shell bowl. The owner of the magic spell chants the words into the bowl and the woman then drinks the liquid. Some of Malinowski's (1954: 216-218) informants told him that the *waiwaia* child was carried back to Kiriwina by a *baloma*, who placed the child in a woman's vagina while she was asleep. Women from coastal villages also reported to him that if a woman wanted to become pregnant she bathed in the sea, where *waiwaia* spirits often might be floating back to Kiriwina from Tuma.

These accounts are not necessarily contradictory, nor are they a reflection of the inability of informants to remember the "true" tradition. In any society, women sometimes have difficulty becoming pregnant and different facilitating techniques may be tried. Success produces increasing trust in the efficacy of certain methods and beliefs. Regardless of how different these versions may be, there is no disagreement among informants about the traditional idea that *waiwaia* cause conception. With the exposure that quite a few Trobrianders have had to primary and secondary education, many villagers now are well acquainted with the biological facts of procreation. Yet even among those who attend school, not all reject completely such traditional beliefs, which they often use to their advantage.

For example, great consternation erupted among some Kwaibwaga people when a woman received a letter from her husband, who had been working for a year in Port Moresby. He was returning home and she was six months' pregnant. When he returned and discovered the pregnancy, he angrily left his wife, shouting that he would report her to the government officers for adultery. The case was tried in the government court, but the woman's mother's mother testified that she had used magic to make her granddaughter pregnant. The local judge dismissed the case. In another example, a young unmarried woman found herself pregnant. Although most villagers gossiped about who her lover had been, there could be no claims made on any man and no stigma attached to the woman.

What is central to these beliefs is the notion that the matrilineal identity of each infant born is irrefutably linked to the past. Each dead person ultimately becomes the means for new life via the physical connection between women and the spirits of their matrilineal ancestors. In this way, each living generation is linked to matrilineal ancestors, who are perceived to play a continuing, active role directed toward future generations.

It is important to remember that not until the nineteenth century and the discovery of cell division did Western ideas about conception become biologically accurate. Until then, Western notions of how conception occurred

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varied widely; Trobriand beliefs on the subject are no more "primitive" or unusual than were those among early Western philosophers. In fact, Aristotle's theory of conception was very similar to the Trobriand view, except that he believed that all contributions came from the male; a woman served only as the receptacle for the growing fetus. What we find in the Trobriand case, however, is an attempt to define the cultural imperatives of matrilineal descent with absolute biological claims. I will now consider these complex matters in more detail.

THE OTHER MATRILINEAGE

Kopoi, the word used when villagers sit and care for a dead person before burial, also means "to feed" or "to nurse an infant." A woman nurses (*kopoi*) her baby for about a year and a half. But men as fathers also play roles of long-lasting importance in nurturing (*kopoi*) their babies. Similarly, when men take long *kuvi* yams to a chief, their presentation is also called *kopoi*, because they are helping to build the chief's power. Men contribute to the growth and development of their children in a way that complements rather than replicates what a woman bestows, and their contributions are directed toward enhancing the child's potential power.

The fundamental principle that shapes Trobrianders' ideas about matrilineal identity, as mentioned, revolves around the belief that conception occurs through women and their ancestral spirits. In this way, each infant born is both physically and socially identified with a particular matrilineage to which its mother and not its father belongs. As a right of birth, each child will have certain privileges and interests in the property of its matrilineage. The ancestral name that an infant is given marks the importance of claiming these rights and is the first public recognition of the infant's matrilineal identity.

What initially surprised me was that very few villagers, except chiefs, are called by their "true" ancestral names. If Trobrianders have such an elaborate biological and cultural explanation for securing matrilineal identity at conception, why then is a person's ancestral name so seldom used in daily social interaction? When a child is born, its father asks his sister to find an ancestral name from their matrilineage. In practice, a child is usually called by this name that it receives from its father. The bestowal of the name, however, is only a loan, and at no time can the child pass the name to her or his own child. Only women give ancestral names to their children, which their daughters in time may pass on to their children. The names women give to their brothers' children are regarded as their matrilineal property, which must be returned. The circulation of ancestral names illustrates the other side of matrilineality. A child has inalienable rights to an ancestral name and, as we will see later, other property from his or her matrilineage; but through his or her father, the child holds use rights in property from the father's matrilineage. So important is the circulation of a man's matrilineal property that a man's gifts to his children establish intimate bonds with them.

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The significance of this paternal tie is directly incorporated into procreative beliefs. Trobriand kinship, for example, is based on two concepts that are exemplified by two stages in pregnancy. The first concept defines matrilineal descent as an identity that is unalterable through time; it is illustrated by the belief that in the first stage of pregnancy a woman conceives exclusively by an ancestral spirit from her own matrilineage. The second concept involves the necessity to use property from another matrilineage, thereby making connections with members of that matrilineage, which can have important potential for the future. In this way, a child's father's matrilineal kin add to what the child already gains from its own matrilineal identity, strengthening what the child is and will become. The second stage of pregnancy, that after conception, reveals the importance of patrilineal kin. Trobrianders believe that following conception, frequent sexual intercourse helps to develop the fetus. Whereas a woman is therefore responsible for the co-mingling of her blood (*buyai*) with a *waiwai* spirit child, thus making the infant a "true" member of her matrilineage, her husband builds up and nurtures (*kopoi*) the fetus through intercourse without compromising its "true" (*mokiia*) matrilineal identity.²

A man, then, supplies the fetus with something more than its own inherited matrilineal substance, but his contribution does not in any way alter the basic physiological connection between a woman's blood and a spirit child. A man is not a member of his child's matrilineage, and his help in the growth of the fetus implicates his matrilineage in his child's future rights and obligations. Therefore, a man's part in his child's procreation is publicly acknowledged when he gives his offspring a name from his own matrilineage, but this is done only if he and the pregnant woman are married. For example, when Sara, an unmarried young woman, became pregnant, the role that her lover played in her pregnancy was not given public acknowledgement. Their relationship could not be discussed openly because recognition of her lover's role would make it necessary for him to meet certain obligations to his child. Not only are these his own personal obligations of care and love, but they also involve the property of his matrilineage and mutual obligations on the part of other members of his matrilineage and of Sara's matrilineage.

Consequently, a socially unrecognized or unacceptable man's procreative role in the pregnancy of his lover must be ignored, so that after the birth the child or its kin cannot make any demands on the members of his matrilineage and vice versa. Sara's pregnancy was ignored by everyone. She and her baby continued to live with her parents, and no one spoke publicly about her being

² Since Malinowski (1916; see also 1929) first wrote about Trobrianders' beliefs that a man made no physical contribution to his child, the question of whether or not Trobrianders were truly ignorant of physical paternity has been the subject of extensive anthropological debate. Did Trobrianders think that spirits could cause a woman to conceive and that sexual intercourse played no role in pregnancy, as Malinowski reported (see also, for example, Spiro 1968; 1982), or were these ideas only abstract theories that no one actually believed, as Edmund Leach (1966; 1967) argued? Each position, however, misses the important distinction that Trobrianders make between conception and pregnancy, which illustrates the complementarity between the roles of women and men in procreation.

husbandless or about her child being "fatherless." Yet the situation was not without emotion. Sara told me that she and her kin felt "deeply shamed." The shame, however, was not for herself but for her daughter. A child without a father, even though it will be well taken care of by its mother and matrilineal kin, is socially disadvantaged. Not to have a father is to lose the social potential to be gained from the kinship ties he makes available. To be "fatherless" is to be denied a socially essential part of oneself.

When a married couple has a baby, the claim to the father's contribution is so important that it is not only expressed as necessary to the growth of the fetus but also represented at birth by noting the physical similarities between infant and father. After Naseluma's baby was almost two months old, she left the seclusion of her mother's house and returned to her husband. This was the first time that villagers had a chance to see the baby. When they did, they commented on how much the infant's features resembled its father's. No one mentioned that the baby looked like Naseluma.³ In fact, to say such a thing is a dangerous insult that will never be forgiven or forgotten and could even lead to fighting. In the case of Sara's "fatherless" baby, there was no public discussion about whom it resembled, although in private I heard how much it looked like its mother's former lover.

A FATHER'S CARE

Trobriand babies receive an abundance of attention. Kissed, hugged, teased, and fondled, they are cradled constantly in their parents' and other villagers' arms. Women and men, young and old—even children—interchangeably become caretakers, lavishing continual affection on their small charges. Mothers nurse their infants on demand, never allowing them to cry if hungry. Men with young children walk around the village holding a baby or toddler straddled on their hips, often with another child in tow. Even very old men, who stay in the village while everyone else is working in the gardens, look after their grandchildren in this way.

In Trobriand eyes, however, public responsibility for the economic care of the child falls to its father. His capabilities and commitment to provide his children with food and wealth are observed by his wife and her kin and other villagers as well. No one can coerce a person into working hard, nor can anyone make demands of someone who elects to be lazy, but public recognition of a man's behavior in this regard is expressed in ways that have political consequences. It is therefore rare not to see men working hard for their small children, chopping firewood in the bush, buying fish in Losuia, catching small fish along the reef at night, growing yams and sweet potatoes in the garden, and occasionally butchering one of their few chickens or pigs.

³ Because Malinowski (1929:173-177) believed that Trobrianders had no knowledge of physical paternity, he found their insistence that children looked like their fathers to be contradictory.



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Photo 17. Men spend much time caring for their young children even while they are busy with their own work.

Long before Naseluma stopped nursing her baby, her husband was feeding his son yams and fish and, occasionally, even a taste of mashed betel nut. Weaning occurs abruptly when the mother simply leaves her baby in the care of others for a few days. This loss of physical closeness with the mother is immediately replaced by the father. Once a child is weaned, it sleeps with its father.

Men not only must provide food for their children but also are responsible for enhancing their children's beauty. When an infant is only a few months old, is still naked, and only beginning to eat a bit of yam, the baby is decorated with shells by its father to make it socially "beautiful." Of course, physical beauty is recognized, especially as children grow and begin their adolescent adventures of sexual liaisons and seductions. Light, unblemished skin is an important attribute, as is a round, smooth face; full but not bulging lips; and a nose that is not too broad or too long.⁴ Beauty magic, discussed in the next chapter, is used extensively to enhance a person's facial features.

When an infant is born, however, shell decorations add new potential to the baby's social beauty. A few shell decorations may seem insignificant, yet

⁴ See Malinowski (1929:288-303) for more details about physical beauty.

they symbolize the first important political step in a child's life. During a baby's first year its father tries to obtain a necklace of red *Chama* shells,⁵ which, ornamented with a few black, dried banana seeds in the center, is fastened around the infant's neck. These necklaces (*kuwa*) are very valuable if the tiny shell discs are thin and uniformly polished. Color is also a distinguishing feature of a fine necklace since the shells that are a pale reddish-pink are more prized than dark red ones.⁶ Access to these shells is difficult, for there are only a few islands in the southern Massim where men still grind and polish them. Today it is not uncommon to see children wearing necklaces that look like traditional *kuwa* but, on close examination, turn out to be imitation plastic.

The prestige attached to a particularly fine necklace comes from its relation to *kula* shells. The *Chama* discs tied around a baby's neck are the same shells used to make the long, elaborately decorated necklaces (*soulava* or *bagi*) that men from different islands exchange with each other through overseas *kula* voyages (see Introduction and Chapter 9). If a man is the owner of a few of these highly valued *kula* necklaces, he may take one apart and restring it into the shorter *kuwa* necklaces for his children.

To give his child a highly valued necklace, a man either must be powerful enough to own *kula* necklaces or, if he is unable to travel to where the shells are made, know other men who will find such shells for him. Because shells are ranked according to their value, the kind a man has indicates his wealth and his political connections with other men. When a child wears a necklace, its value is attached to the child as a representation of not only the child's father's political worth but the political potential of the child as well.

Before a necklace is given to an infant, however, its father must first present his child with tiny tortoise-shell earrings. This is an easier task than finding a *kuwa* necklace because the techniques for polishing the tortoise-shell rings are known by many villagers. For a girl, however, the earrings are elaborated by addition of flat red *kaloma*-shell discs fastened to the tortoise rings. These discs used to be made in the southern part of Kiriwina, but they are no longer produced there and they, too, must be found elsewhere in the Massim. Earrings are valued according to the number of shells inserted in the earlobes, and as children grow, more rings are added. Today, although many older boys have routinely stopped wearing earrings, they may put them on again when dressed in traditional style for the festivities during yam harvests.

For many years the mission teachers considered the wearing of earrings by children an unhealthy practice and tried to stop it because it tends to elongate the earlobes. Old people often have dangling split lobes, the result of pressure from too many shells. The missionaries probably never understood the deeper symbolic significance of earrings, for to Trobrianders they represent much

⁵ Malinowski (1922) reported that these shell discs were made from *Spondylus* (thorny oysters), but recently Liep discovered that most of the shell discs probably are from the *Chama pacificus*, a different subclass than *Spondylus*, both from the class Bivalvia (see Liep 1983:85-86).

⁶ For an excellent discussion of the principles of ranking *kula* shells see Campbell (1983a: 229-248).

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more than ordinary ornaments. Like the necklaces, earrings are recognized as signs of a man's wealth and of his presence in the life of his child. If its ears are not pierced, a child is called *gudukubukwabuya*, an expression that means the child is "fatherless." The term is just as pejorative to a Trobriander as "bastard child" is to an American. If the child has pierced ears but no earrings, people think the child is "poor" (*namakava*).

Before I realized the significance of earrings, I noticed that although Sara's daughter was only six months old, she had more shells thrust into her earlobes than any other child in the village. Yet as mentioned previously, her mother was not married. Sara, with some embarrassment, quietly told me one day that her mother's brother gave the earrings to her baby so that she would not be shamed. Now, at least publicly, no one could point a finger at her daughter and say the painful and humiliating word that means you have no father.

Wearing earrings and necklaces emphasizes that a baby is indeed socially beautiful. Such attention to beauty is more than cosmetic. In writing about the Kaguru people of East Africa, T. O. Beidelman (1971: 30-31) sensitively noted the important association between the word *cosmetic*, meaning "attractive," and *cosmos*, meaning "the ordering of the world or universe." Both words derive from the same Greek root, and as Beidelman pointed out, the aesthetic element is an essential feature of the way social relations are ordered. Although individuals are constrained in their relations with others, these others provide a constant source of gratification that is both aesthetically and materially important.

For Trobriand children and young people to be made culturally more beautiful means that they have powerful and wealthy relatives. Even for an infant, the potential for social and political advantage is already established through the messages that decorations convey about the infant's father. Without a father, a child must depend on the support of the members of its matrilineage, who help to disguise the true situation. Once a child wears shell decorations, it has entered, if only minimally, into the world of politics.

"HARD WORDS"

The earrings that Sara's baby wore certainly did not fool other villagers into thinking the baby had a father, but the truth of such matters is not appropriate for open discussion. As long as the subject is not mentioned publicly, the situation is of no consequence. Yet no one forgets. If, for example, a man becomes angry at Sara, her daughter, or any of their matrilineal kin, he might scream out the truth in a public debate. The truth would not be that Sara got pregnant without being married but that her daughter has no father. By using these "hard words" (*biga mwau*) he would create a tense situation that would have to be resolved only by fighting, suicide, or sorcery.

Once the true story of a shameful incident is revealed publicly, the words go on record and become a threat that must be answered. At one level,

villagers act as if they had great freedom in their behavior. If a woman says she is "tired and does not want to work hard," no one objects or tries to change her actions. Her neighbors simply remark, "We do not know what is in her mind." Yet at another level, this freedom may be sharply curtailed when someone's present practices without warning trigger the occasion for someone else to recall a past "mistake." The circumstances that involve land controversies, adultery, sorcery, or extensive fighting remain part of each person's history, and each shaming incident always encompasses the threatening potential for severe repercussions.

The danger in such confrontations became dramatically clear to me early one evening as I sat in my house chatting with a few neighbors. The situation developed not over Sara and her baby but around a similar use of hard words. On this particular night, Bunemiga, who was regaling us with the story of how he got his new *kula* shell, suddenly jumped up and rushed outside. He returned quickly, demanding that I hurry to the next hamlet. Bulapapa's relative Vincent had an axe and was threatening to kill Michael. Only five minutes before, Michael stood in front of Vincent's house and accused him of using a plot of garden land that belonged to Michael. When Vincent denied the charge, answering that the plot was his, Michael retorted with hard words, shouting, "Bwadala (Michael's mother's sister's daughter) has no father." At this point, Vincent bolted into his house and emerged with an axe. Everyone, including me, followed him as he pushed his way through the people who tried to stop him. In the meantime Michael had gone to the far hamlet to get a spear from his relative's house.

When the two men confronted each other, women and men screamed warnings to them not to fight, but no one got near Vincent. It was the most fearful scene I witnessed during my fieldwork. It seemed for a few minutes that Vincent could not be stopped, that he would smash Michael with the axe unless Michael speared him first. Suddenly, instead of moving in to attack, Vincent allowed himself to be pulled off to the edge of the plaza. Villagers still screamed warnings, and finally he heeded the exhortations yelled at him. Quickly he broke away and ran up the path away from Kwaibwaga to another village, where he stayed for a week. Later Bunemiga told me that if there had not been so much intermarriage among Michael's and Vincent's kin, making them closely related to each other, Vincent surely would have fought.

What the villagers feared most was that a killing would have escalated into more fighting, since Michael's relatives would have demanded retribution. This situation then would affect marriages between many people. From each person's individual perspective, the violent death of either Michael or Vincent would destroy the long-term relationships between their own matrilineal and affinal kin. The potential destruction of so many relationships concerned the children of these marriages even more than the adults. Because of the pivotal role that children play in linking the affinal relationships between the members of their mothers' and fathers' matrilineages, their own future is tied to the



lasting strength of relations in which Michael illustrates claims of others.

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Photo 18. A young girl shows off the decorations given by her father.

lasting strength of these relationships. Children intensify the political negotiations in which their parents are involved. As the example of Vincent and Michael illustrates, villagers know the danger they face when they ignore the claims of others.

A Trobriand child's decorations symbolize the social importance of the child's father's matrilineal kin, but the shells also underscore the fundamental dynamics of Trobriand social interaction. Each Trobriander attempts to seduce others into his or her orbit of social relations. Men engage their children, who later will work hard for them. As later chapters illustrate, chiefs entice followers, *kula* men negotiate for exchange partners, and women attract men who eventually as husbands must work hard for them. Attraction, however, is not easy or automatic. The ability to influence the mind of someone else when the minds of others are perceived to be inviolate must be worked at continually, and not everyone is successful. Physical beauty must be heightened and expanded by the work of others. With the proper magic, even "ugly" faces become handsome. In this way, the cultural construction of beauty depends on the strength of social relationships.

In the next chapter we will look closely at the transition from adolescence

to marriage and how each person must learn to play out her or his own desires to attract someone against the often conflicting influences and plans of others. Among young people, their decorations and beauty are not only political statements about their parents' matrilineages but also symbols of their personal sexual powers in the seduction of others.

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