

Article 11

Youth and Sexuality

Annette B. Weiner

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The system of boy-girl relationships is well defined and regulated here. Everyone knows everything about everyone. Girls, as I already said, start sleeping with boys when they are about thirteen, but the stipulation is she may only sleep with boys from her village and the same is true with boys. A boy from our village had a girlfriend in Diagila village, and he was continually harassed by two girls from our village. I don't even know if harassed is strong enough. The other day they beat him up and cut him with a knife in three places. But the real reason was jealousy.

Linda Weiner

WAITING AND WATCHING

Bulapapa was the first person to tell me about his father. "When I was small," he said, "my father brought me food. He found fish for me and he collected firewood. Now I make a garden for him. I take care of him, because he always took care of me. That man is very good."

When villagers talk about giving, they are talking about caring and generosity. Giving also implies planning for the future; that is, giving expresses not only caring but also intention. Giving things communicates a person's desires and plans, but it also may be an attempt to control others by establishing a debt. A villager who brings yams to someone, in my informants' words, wants "to sweeten his thoughts" or "to turn her mind." Each act of giving is at once a pledge of caring and an act of obligating another person. A villager who presents someone with a basket of yams cannot ask for something in return. He must give and then wait. Perhaps later he gives something else and waits again, hoping that eventually he will receive more than he gave. Yet one villager's plans may not be what another villager desires. The recipient's mind may not be "sweetened" by the giving; he or she may not be persuaded to repay the debt. A degree of chance exists in even the closest kin relationships.

How one feels about someone else should not be expressed publicly with

words. To maintain one's autonomy, a villager keeps her or his thoughts about others private, but in the form and style of one's giving are messages about the giver's intention. Ruth told me that if her brother gave her yams that were small and soft, she would know that he did not truly want her to have them. Therefore, her brother spends a great deal of time cleaning each yam and arranging them according to size so that the presentation looks impressive. Ruth then recognizes his intentions and not only tells her husband "what a good man" her brother is but also remembers his efforts for the future. If a villager is angry, annoyed, or distrusts another person, it is poor strategy to express such feelings aloud, for as we saw in the fight between Michael and Vincent in the last chapter, hard words lead to dangerous confrontations.

When a person receives a basket of yams, she or he may be thinking, "Perhaps that person is hiding something from me and did not bring me the best of what he had" or "That man gives me so much, I know he must want me for his friend" or "When that woman brought me food her face looked angry. Maybe she did not want to give me anything." These thoughts remain private, but they provide the basis for waiting and watching. To influence or even to try to control another person is difficult, yet such efforts are a major preoccupation throughout each Trobriander's life.

With young people, the strategies for influencing others are sharply developed during adolescence. For them, however, the means of persuasion are not with yams and other kinds of material wealth because these are controlled by adults. Instead, adolescents learn to deal with the wills and plans of others through their own sexuality. Their abilities to negotiate their sexual desires and seductive intentions are backed by their youthful physical and social beauty, made even more potent with love and beauty magic. Clothes, decorations, even the flowers and herbs thrust into armbands and hair heighten the aura of seduction. For young people, intention is written on their bodies, in their walk, and in their eyes. The shell decorations that are worn point to a young person's social status, and the flowers and the coconut oil enhanced with magic spells, as Bomapota and other women and men said, "make somebody want you."

ADOLESCENT SEXUALITY

By the time children are seven or eight years old, they begin playing erotic games with each other and imitating adult seductive attitudes. Four or five years later, they begin to pursue sexual partners in earnest. Young people change partners often, experimenting first with one person and then another. A rendezvous may be arranged at the beach or in a secluded place away from the gardens and the village, but these are usually brief meetings without any

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¹ Homosexual Malinowski wrote "creates a setting the Allied soldier. Even more recent Kiriwina men in find little information it and women with prostitution with reproach or disapproval.
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commitment to further encounters.¹ During this time, young people usually do not sleep in their parents' houses. They move to a small house next door or a few doors away, the young boys of the hamlet living in one house and young girls living in another. In this way, they have the freedom of their own sleeping quarters to which they can bring their lovers.

During adolescence, young people are watched by older villagers, who evaluate their potential as productive adults. Is a young woman capable of making fine skirts? Does a young man demonstrate his increasing knowledge of yam cultivation?² While older villagers watch and wait for young people to come of age, they also give them great scope for participating in their own activities. Little pressure is put on them to engage full time in adult productive pursuits. Although they help with household tasks, their responsibilities are limited and they have much freedom to pursue their own adventures. Young people are called "small boys" or "small girls" until they are in their thirties. Only when villagers are married, have children, and are fully committed to economic and political endeavors will they be considered adults.

Even while involved in the daily village routine, young people are preoccupied with their own plans and negotiations. Throughout the day, lovers send messages back and forth to arrange evening meeting places. Conversations between young people are filled with sexual metaphors that express a person's intention. Questions such as "Can I have a coconut to drink" or "Can I ride your bicycle?" are Trobriand ways to say, "Will you sleep with me?" Dabweyowa once told me, "Women's eyes are different than men's. When I talk to a girl I watch her eyes. If she looks straight at me, I know she wants me." Young women are just as assertive and dominant as men in their pursuit or refusal of a lover.

On Saturdays it is difficult to find a young person in the village because everyone is either watching a basketball game in Losuia or visiting other villages. The harvest season provides an arena for all-night village dancing, cricket matches, and large feasts, where young people gather and seek new lovers. Even at the distributions of food following a person's death, young people who are not related to the deceased congregate together, wearing their brightest clothes and flowers, joking and teasing each other. Their beauty and excitement stand in sharp relief to the blackened bodies and shaven heads of the mourners.

¹ Homosexual practices between men seem to have occurred only rarely in the Trobriands. Malinowski wrote that such a prohibition "is well entrenched," but he also noted that colonialism "creates a setting favorable to homosexuality" (1929:472-473). During World War II, some of the Allied soldiers stationed on Kiriwina paid young Trobrianders to perform homosexual acts. Even more recently, there have been several cases in which European men engaged young Kiriwina men in homosexual encounters for payments of money and European food. I could find little information about homosexual relations between women. Men never commented on it and women were very vague about specific cases. But young women may willingly engage in prostitution with white male visitors, as they have done for over a hundred years, usually without reproach or disgrace.

² Although this is the most common division of labor, there are no taboos on women engaging in yam cultivation. Sometimes a woman even makes a large yam garden for a man.

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Both young women and men spend much time in adorning themselves in preparation for walking about. It is important to look attractive and to act in a manner that conveys independence and fearlessness. Often this attitude is carried to an extreme. Several times when I admired the beauty of a young woman from another village, Bomapota shook her head and told me that her beauty was marred because she acted "too proud." Disdain in one's walk and a look in one's eyes that conveys dominance carry the ideal of autonomy too far. Individual arrogance gives a message of overt competitive behavior. A person must learn to be strong without appearing to be competitive. Rather, a person's intentions are carried out covertly through magic spells that explicitly define the intensity of rivalry and the power of seduction, as in the following:

My flashing decoration, my white skin.
I will take the faces of my companions and rivals
And I will win out over them.
I will show my face, the face of Todarosi
I will get a compliment tied around my arm
For my beautiful shining, full-moon face.³

Even when a young woman (or a man) is complimented, for example, for her beauty, the compliment must be repaid so that the favored person does not become "too proud." At a dance, Weteli tied a string around Boiyagwa's arm, symbolizing her beauty and talent. Later, Boiyagwa had to give Weteli tobacco and betel nuts as payment for tying the string and publicly drawing attention to success. Even in village events that are obviously rival encounters, winners pretend that they lost. In cricket matches, regardless of the actual score, the host team must always win. In yam competitions, young men are given prizes of money or traditional stone wealth for growing the largest yams. Each winner usually makes a self-deprecatory comment such as "I did not really work hard in the garden" or "I am only a small boy and I do not know much about yams" when he receives his payment.

Even with such controlled attempts to submerge antagonistic and boastful behavior, yam exchanges exacerbate rivalry between villages. Sometimes during the harvest season fights break out because a few young men boasted too much about their big yam gardens. So on the one hand, an adolescent's days are free and much adult energy is invested in creating an easy milieu for sexual explorations; but on the other hand, the freedom accorded young people still has limits set by their peers, which sometimes are severe. Even at an individual level, to turn an initial attraction into a sexual liaison demands more than jokes and glances. Young men must give betel nuts and tobacco to the women they want, expressing their ability to continue to give presents as long as the relationship lasts. Yet a woman may tease a man, accepting these things and flirting but refusing to sleep with him. In seduction, giving is not enough; finally love magic must be used to overcome strong opposition.

³ See Malinowski (1929:368) for a discussion of the same spell.

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SEDUCTION WITH MAGIC

Just as young people cannot become "truly" beautiful without the help of older people, so too, their access to magic spells is limited. Although Kiriwinians believe that no one can make up a new magic spell, many traditional spells circulate widely. The most common way for young people to obtain magic spells is to learn them from their older kin by giving food, tobacco, and money. This giving must be generous and must last for many years if the younger person hopes to learn all his or her mentor's spells. Older people teach the spells by giving away only a few lines at a time. When they die, they may not have taught the full spell or all the magic they knew.⁴ Therefore, spells are often lost in part or fully. Many villagers complained to me that a particular magic spell they had was weak because a mother, for example, only taught them part of it and when she died, the rest was lost.

A married woman sometimes may learn very important spells from a lover who is visiting from another island. The man gives the spells because he loves her very much and wants to give her more than betel nuts or tobacco. Magic spells may also be bought from others. When men travel to other islands, especially on *kula* voyages or to work in Port Moresby, they often return with magic spells they have purchased while away. Today, those villagers who are literate write their coveted magic spells in copy books, which they hide in the house's rafters or in a locked trunk.⁵

The words for beauty magic are chanted into coconut oil, which is then rubbed on the skin or into flowers and herbs that decorate armbands and hair. The spells are directed toward heightening the visual and olfactory effects of a person's body to create erotic feelings on the part of a lover. Certain spells are thought to make a person become so beautiful that even those recognized as physically ugly appear handsome in the eyes of the woman or man who wants them. This special beauty magic is recited while a pearl shell is passed over the person's face so that the face will take on the white, shiny qualities of the shell, making the person strikingly enticing. These spells, however, are not the property of young people but are practiced by women who use them only on their brothers' children. The performance of such magic links each young person to his or her father's sister in an important way: "Truly, Bogunuba is very good to me, because she made magic with a pearl shell for me when I was small."

⁴ When a person who was known to have many magic spells dies, a ritual takes place after the burial. Each person who formerly received a spell from the dead person now publicly recites part of it, thereby showing which of the spells in the dead person's repertoire have been given to others (see Weiner 1976:70-72) for details).

⁵ The rate of literacy varies within each village. The Methodist Mission, the Sacred Heart Catholic Mission (established in 1936), and the government each have small elementary schools on Kiriwina. Many young people have had at least a few years of primary schooling, although education is not compulsory; in 1981, only four Kwaibwaga children attended elementary school. Until a government high school was opened in 1982, all children wanting to go beyond sixth grade were sent to boarding schools in other areas.



Photo 19. No dancer would perform without first rubbing his body with sweet-smelling coconut oil prepared with magical chants to make his body glisten in a seductive way.

When young people reach their mid-teens, their lovers' meetings take up most of the night, and a new affair may last for several months or longer. About this time, some seriousness may enter into these meetings, for within a few years, marriage will be the next important step. To find someone for a long-term relationship is much more difficult than having a brief liaison at the beach. Small gifts and beauty magic will not be forceful enough to seduce the person one wants. As discussed earlier, Trobrianders believe that each person's mind is inviolate. No one professes to know what another person is thinking or why someone makes a decision in a particular way. Even politically, a person cannot demand that others follow one's desires or plans. To project one's own will over someone else necessitates exercising control over another person's feelings. For these reasons, young people may find it expedient to resort to the most powerful kinds of magic spells, known and practiced by only a few adults, who must be paid for their skills. So potent are these spells that villagers warn, "Be careful; it will destroy your mind." When the spell takes effect, the person will refuse to eat or listen to the advice of others and will do nothing but long for her or his lover.

The words of the strong love spells are chanted into betel or tobacco, the very things that continually are given back and forth among everyone.⁶ In

⁶ When a man decides that he wants a woman for his "good friend," he begins to send her small presents such as betel nuts and tobacco, using other young people as intermediaries. When my daughter Linda lived with me in Kwaibwaga, without my knowledge she acted as a messenger, relaying betel nuts and information between Ruth and Sylvester about their secret meeting plans.

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order to "destroy someone's mind" this agent, that is, the betel or tobacco, must transmit the words to the person. Therefore, to take effect, the agent must be ingested or inhaled. The force of the words is thought to enter a person's body so that the spell controls his or her thoughts. In this way, a person's autonomous behavior is interfered with by the will of another.

Of course, the spell may fail. The words may not have been strong enough, and the lover may seek another expert who has access to spells thought to be even more powerful. In some cases, because the expert was not paid enough, he or she deliberately may not have chanted the words for the necessary length of time. Trobrianders believe that the agent carrying the magic only becomes effective when the words are chanted again and again throughout the night or for several days so that the betel nut or tobacco absorbs its power from the act of speech itself.⁷ Therefore, additional payments finally may produce success. Yet counters to this magic exist: For example, when a woman (or a man) finds herself totally lost in her longings for the man who wants her, a relative who knows an equally powerful magic spell may be able to remove the debilitating effects of the original spell. Even under the best circumstances, however, a suspecting woman simply may refuse the betel nut and remain free to choose someone else. In the final analysis, even the most formidable love magic can be averted, making love relationships as full of chance as any other relationship.

Attracting lovers is not a frivolous, adolescent pastime. It is the first step toward entering the adult world of strategies, where the line between influencing others while not allowing others to gain control of oneself must be carefully learned. The procurement of magic spells "that destroy someone's mind" leads to dangerous actions because effective spells collapse a person's autonomy and establish control over the other person's thoughts. Sexual liaisons give adolescents the time and occasion to experiment with all the possibilities and problems that adults face in creating relationships with those who are not relatives. Individual wills may clash, and the achievement of one's desires takes patience, hard work, and determination. The adolescent world of lovemaking has its own dangers and disillusionments. Young people, to the degree they are capable, must learn to be both careful and fearless.

CHOOSING ONE LOVER

When a young woman begins to meet the same lover again and again and rejects the advances of others, the affair takes on a measure of seriousness and everyone believes that strong love magic has been used. She spends the night with her "good friend" in his house. She must enter the house after dark and leave before other villagers awake and begin to congregate on their verandas. The first cock's crow, just before daybreak, is a signal to all lovers.

⁷ For a more extended discussion of magic spells and their power see Weiner (1983a); see also Malinowski (1922; 1929; 1931; 1954) and Tambiah's analysis (1968; 1973).

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that they must part. It is imperative that no one see lovers entering or leaving each others' houses. Several times I noticed that Mary was missing in the morning. She told me later how she slept too late in her lover's house and then had to wait until midday, when everyone was working in the gardens, before she could slip out of the house unnoticed and return to Kwaibwaga. Yet most Kwaibwaga villagers knew where Mary was spending the night.

A sensuous part of lovemaking is to bite off a lover's eyelashes or put scratches on each others' backs. Villagers watch for these signs, and then the news that Mary or her lover "lost their eyelashes" spreads rapidly. News such as this is gossip; no public statements about Mary's "good friend" can be made until they decide to marry. If Mary and her friend happened to be at the same village feast, they cannot share their food. Although there are no taboos on chewing betel or smoking together, lovers must never eat food in the company of one another. When Mary was trapped in her lover's house because she overslept, she had nothing to eat until late that day. Although lovers must hide the fact of their lovemaking and follow certain prohibitions, their liaison is being discussed discreetly by many interested parties. Peer constraints, however, may upset the privacy of the relationship. Jealousy is the most common problem. A confrontation suddenly may flare up because two young girls want to sleep with the same young man or vice versa.

On one occasion, Esther began sleeping with the young man that Ruth had been meeting each night. The problem was exacerbated because Ruth and Esther called each other "sister."⁸ One late afternoon, the controversy escalated into a public dispute when Ruth's anger got out of control: She screamed abuse at Esther and hit her for sleeping with her friend. That night a hamlet meeting took place, bringing great shame to Ruth's and Esther's matrilineal kin. Esther was accused by her mother's brother of acting like "a dog," an animal who cannot tell the difference between good food and rubbish because she sleeps with anyone, regardless of her kin relations. The meeting went on for about an hour, with many relatives making speeches about how the two should work hard learning to make women's wealth like their mothers instead of fighting over boys.

On another occasion, Claire's lover began sleeping with a young woman from another village. Early one morning, Claire and a few of her girlfriends hid along the bush path before sunrise and attacked him as he hurried back to Kwaibwaga. They cut him with their knives in several places on his arm and shoulder. Because the woman he slept with had no relatives in Kwaibwaga, the incident passed without public notice. He, however, stopped seeing his distant friend and continued his relationship with Claire. In another case, Lily, a young Kwaibwaga woman, was visiting Omarakana village every night to sleep with her new friend. Her former Kwaibwaga lover got angry that she was sleeping with someone from another village. He and some other

⁸ Although they were not "true" sisters, their mothers were sisters, which in anthropological terminology made them "parallel cousins." When two villagers call each other "sister," even if one of them is adopted or is a parallel cousin twice or three times removed, they both assume a sibling role with each other. This is a characteristic feature of Crow Kinship terms.

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Kwaibwaga boys talked about fighting with her, but finally they did nothing. Her lover was Chief Vanoi's relative, and the Kwaibwaga boys were intimidated by Vanoi's power.

The choice of a lover can be difficult, and at times, one's freedom to have the person one wants is curtailed by public reprimands and peer retaliation. Certain limits are imposed on adolescent sexual behavior even though it may appear that boundaries and rules do not exist. High status and rank provide added support for exerting one's will, but even young people who are members of chiefly lineages face rejection. Magic remains the strongest support and also the most deadly obstacle. As young people get older, however, and their interests turn to marriage, their independence becomes more restricted. Not only peer pressure but also adult interference is more prominent because marriage is about adult productive concerns.

LOOKING FOR A SPOUSE

Whenever a man thinks that his son is becoming serious about a particular woman, he decides whether or not the woman is an appropriate choice. When Mark wanted to marry Mary, his father warned him that she was not a good worker, that she was lazy, and that he did not want Mark to marry her. He had another woman in mind for his son, so Mark followed his father's decision. A few years after his marriage, Mark told me, "Anna, I will always remember Mary. Whenever I see her on the Main Road, I always stop and give her betel nuts or some tobacco." Mark is a talented guitar player and he composed a beautiful, sad song about unrequited love.

In most cases men like Mark follow their fathers' advice and do not marry a first or even a second love. Despite all the emphasis on beauty and love magic during adolescent years, marriage is rarely considered only as a love match. It is an important political step that involves not just the two young people but many other villagers as well. Through each marriage new affinal alliances are formed or old ones are reestablished between the members of the new husband's and new wife's matrilineages. It is men as fathers who provide the critical link in these alliances since the marriage of a man's children has important political consequences for him.

To understand the kin and affinal connections that are linked through each marriage, it is important first to understand the *kumila*, a matrilineal clan composed of many matrilineages. In the Trobriands, as discussed in Chapter 2, each person born is a member of his or her mother's matrilineage (*dala*), tracing descent through women to named ancestors. Each person at birth is similarly a member of his or her mother's clan (*kumila*), but unlike matrilineages, there are no clan ancestors. Clans and lineages have different functions; a clan is not, as Malinowski reported,⁹ merely a larger representation of a

⁹ Malinowski (1922:71-72) glossed *dala* as "sub-clan" and *kumila* as "clan," and conflated the important differences between the two by assuming that the subclan was a local division of the clan.

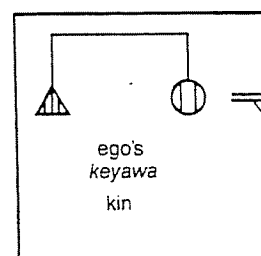
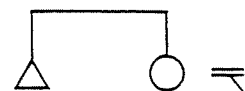
lineage. Unlike matrilineages, of which there are hundreds, there are only four Trobriand clans: Malasi, Lukuba, Lukwasisiga, and Lukulabuta. Each clan has its own set of identifying totems, such as a particular animal, bird, tree, or flower, but it owns no property in common—for example, shell decorations, land, magic spells, or other valuables—nor does it have a specific place of origin, as a matrilineage does. Consequently Trobriand matriclans are of little overt economic importance to their members, who never unite for a specific cause or event. When discussions occur about clan membership, no one uses the expression “same blood,” for this refers to lineage membership.

Yet so unchangeable is a person's clan identity that villagers believe the lines on a person's palms can show the clan to which one belongs. In the beginning of my fieldwork, whenever I visited a village that was new to me, someone always asked to see my hand to check my clan membership. At first, I thought curiosity made villagers want to identify me in this way. Later I learned that when a person travels to a village where he or she has no matrilineal kin or affines, the only villagers that can be asked for food are those who belong to the same clan.

Clans are also important in helping to distinguish whom a person can and cannot marry. Clans are exogamous; that is, a mate must be a member of another clan. Occasionally, two people do marry who belong to different lineages within the same clan. No one mentions this fact because marriage within the same clan is considered incestuous; public mention of such a case not only is considered shameful but may lead to fighting. When I was collecting genealogies, I was warned by my close friends not to question certain villagers about their clan membership because of their endogamous marriages within a clan. Clan membership, however, plays a more far-reaching role than the establishment of exogamous marriage rules. The best marriage for any villager to make is to marry someone who is a member of her or his *father's clan*.¹⁰

For example, Dabweyowa, a member of matrilineage A and the Lukwasisiga clan, married a woman who belongs to matrilineage C in the Malasi clan. Dabweyowa's father is a member of matrilineage D in the Malasi clan. By marrying this woman, Dabweyowa provides the link between the members of the two matrilineages, D and C of the Malasi clan which, as we shall see, has important consequences for his father. Dabweyowa's wife's mother and mother's brother are now related to his father almost as if they were members of the same lineage. They call each other *keyawa*, which means “like the same matrilineage,” for the word *yawa* is a synonym for *dala*, the more common term for matrilineage. When visiting, villagers who are *keyawa* to

¹⁰ Malinowski (1929:86–87) reported that informants told him that a man should marry his father's sister's daughter, but he found that no one followed this preference. I was told the same thing and also found that no one married one's true father's sister's daughter. When a man marries a woman from his father's clan, however, he calls her *tabu*, the kin term for father's sister's daughter, and therefore, most marriages do follow the preference that informants talk about. In fact in many cases, ego marries his patrilineal second cousin (see Weiner 1978b).



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- ▩ = member of matriline

Figure 4. The clan relationship

each other are obligated now must help each other kinds of wealth for important transactions that take place after some time. The relationship is watched over very carefully by the father's clan, his children, and his children's children. The same close relationship continues through his children.

Figure 4 diagrams how a man has his daughter marry. For the figure, and she marries as her father, her husband to him. Each marriage creates a new close kin relationship between the matrilineages within the

undreds, there are only and Lukulabuta. Each particular animal, bird, on—for example, shell or does it have a specific y Trobriand matrilineal members, who never unite about clan membership, refers to lineage mem-

at villagers believe the ch one belongs. In the ge that was new to me, n membership. At first, ie in this way. Later I he or she has no marked for food are those

hom a person can and must be a member of to belong to different fact because marriage ntion of such a case . When I was collecting estion certain villagers nous marriages within eaching role than the marriage for any vil- of her or his *father's*

re A and the Lukwas- eage C in the Malasi D in the Malasi clan. between the members hich, as we shall see, a's wife's mother and if they were members hich means "like the i for *dala*, the more s who are *keyawa* to

t a man should marry his rence. I was told the same s daughter. When a man the kin term for father's ence that informants talk in (see Weiner 1978b).

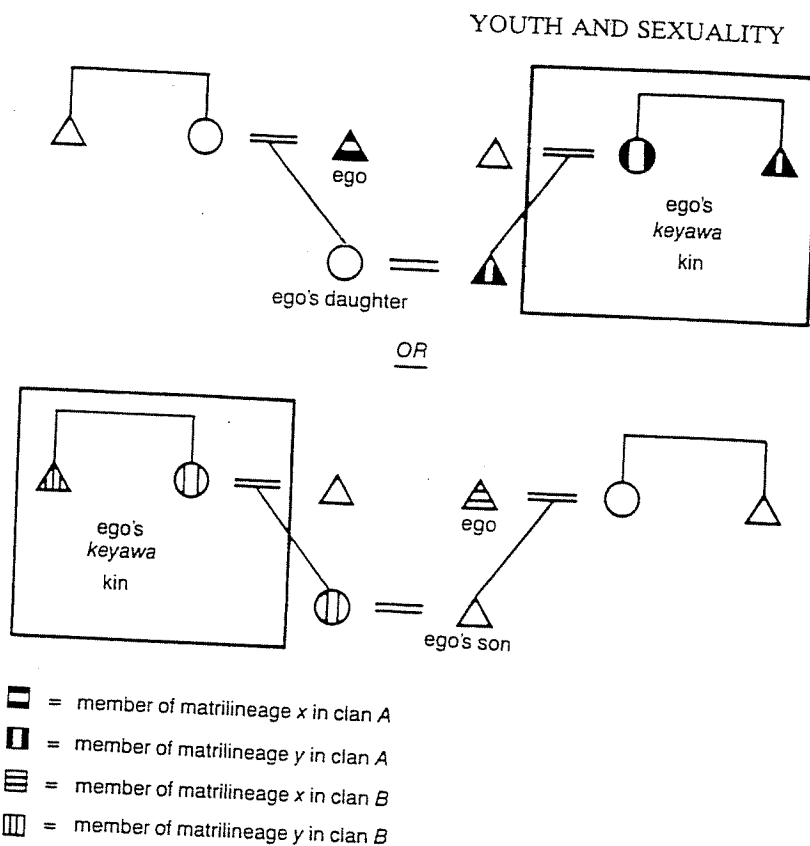


Figure 4. The clan relationships between a male ego and his *keyawa* kin.

each other are obligated to do much more than give each other food. They now must help each other when either needs to give away yams and other kinds of wealth for important exchanges. These *keyawa* kin, as Chapter 8 illustrates, are especially vital to the massive transactions of women's valuables that take place after someone dies. Therefore, a man's choice of a spouse is watched over very carefully by his father. If a man marries a woman in his father's clan, his children also will be members of his father's clan and the same close relationship between his father's matrilineage and his wife's will continue through his children into the next generation.

Figure 4 diagrams how these *keyawa* relationships are constituted and also illustrates how a man has the same opportunity for creating *keyawa* kin when his daughter marries. For example, if Ipukoya represents the ego's daughter in the figure, and she marries someone who is a member of the same clan as her father, her husband's mother and mother's brother will be *keyawa* kin to him. Each marriage with a spouse from ego's father's clan gives ego's father new close kin relationships with villagers who are members of different matrilineages within the same clan. With a daughter, however, a man can-

not be as direct in discussing her choice of a husband because of the taboos associated with incest. An incest taboo prohibits sexual intercourse between a woman and her father or her brother, but the taboo equally prohibits a woman's father or her brother from having any discussion with her about her love affairs. Nor can other villagers say anything to either man about his respective daughter's or sister's sexual relationships. In the hamlet debate over Ruth and Esther, villagers felt even greater shame because both girls' fathers and all their brothers had to leave the village while the meeting took place. It was the burden of their shame that these men had to be privately told of the offense, so they could leave, that made the situation so unfortunate.

Initially it was difficult for me to recognize how deeply these taboos are felt and how far-reaching the restrictions extend. Once without thinking, I asked my neighbor, Helen, what girl Jacob was sleeping with, forgetting that Jacob was her parallel cousin and that their relationship was the same as if they were "true" siblings. When she heard my question, Helen stood up and without saying a word walked out of my house. Helen's mother finally explained that my mistake was so terrible that if I had not been "new," Helen would never have spoken to me again. After that incident, I was repeatedly reminded to be careful in my conversations each time two people visited me who called each other "brother" and "sister."

The sister-brother incest taboo is the most serious rule about social relations that exists in the Trobriands. Not only is the rule about mentioning sexual matters in front of a brother and sister an intensely dangerous one to break, but also infringement of the sister-brother sexual incest taboo is perceived to be so horrifying that its occurrence in a famous myth forced the couple to commit suicide.¹¹ Yet as the next chapter illustrates, the social relationship between a woman and her brother is extremely close. Once they each find a spouse, their relationship provides the foundation for a strong matrilineage. Even though a woman's marriage has great consequences for her brother as well as for the other members of her matrilineage, her brother plays no role in discussions and decisions about selecting a spouse. He only learns of the marriage after it happens, when his mother privately tells him. On hearing the news, he remains in his house or leaves the village and goes alone to the beach or into the bush for a day or two because he is shamed that his mother had to tell him about his sister's lover, even though she now is married.

The rule of incest between a woman and her father, however, follows a different pattern. Stories of sexual relations between a father and daughter are widely known, and villagers make fun of the men who found themselves overwhelmed by the beauty of their daughters. In fact, one of the songs chanted at cricket matches is about "the mistake" a father made when one night he entered his house in the dark and thought his daughter was his wife. He was ridiculed as "crazy" rather than ostracized because the incest taboo

¹¹ See Malinowski (1929:310) for a recounting of the myth.

between fathers and daughter and brother.¹²

Just as the incest taboo is perceived, so too is a man's relationship to his daughter. A man's relationship to his daughter is different from that of her brother. Politicians have his daughter marry so that her husband's mother and mother-in-law will be young women. A young woman's marriage is important because once she has children, it connects with ancestral and matrilineage events. For this reason, men have a primary interest in their daughters in decisions about her daughter's choice, she argues that to announce their marriage is continuing to sleep with his

EAT

In the Trobriands, there is a custom of leaving her love in his hamlet. In the morning, the mother to bring them coconuts. This custom exists about lovers being together is because these are sitting on the veranda to know that she wants to be

If the girl's mother and mother-in-law quickly cooks yams and can yams together, the marriage is disapproved of the choice. They demand that their daughter go, they pull her out of the house. The girl can still have the one girl, Isupolu, stayed in refusing to eat any food. The girl Weteli finally agreed to be so unhappy that after two years she went to her own hamlet. After her choice, she can arrange a house on the beach and live there.

¹² Sexual relations between a man and his daughter are never recounted any incidents to brother-sister incest is deeply taboo. Weiner (1985) for a rebuttal.

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father, however, follows a between a father and daughter men who found themselves. In fact, one of the songs "a father made when one at his daughter was his wife. and because the incest taboo

between fathers and daughters is far less rigid than that between a sister and brother.¹²

Just as the incest taboo for a woman and her father is more loosely perceived, so too is a man's response to his daughter's marriage not at all like that of her brother. Politically, as discussed, it is to a man's advantage to have his daughter marry someone who is a member of his clan so that her husband's mother and mother's brother will become *keyawa* kin to him. A young woman's marriage is also of paramount importance to her matrilineage because once she has children, especially girls, the continuity of the lineage and its connection with ancestors is assured, as is a future economic base for matrilineage events. For these reasons, her mother and her mother's brother have a primary interest in her choice. A girl's mother plays the central role in decisions about her daughter's marriage. If she disapproves of her daughter's choice, she argues that "the boy is lazy and ugly." Until the couple tries to announce their marriage, she cannot, however, stop her daughter from continuing to sleep with him.

EATING YAMS TOGETHER

In the Trobriands, there is no traditional marriage ceremony. One day, instead of leaving her lover's house before sunrise, the young woman stays in his hamlet. In the morning, the two sit together and wait for the bride's mother to bring them cooked yams. The reason that such a strong taboo exists about lovers being seen together in the same house or eating food together is because these acts make a marriage official. The news that a couple is sitting on the veranda travels quickly, and only then do the girl's parents know that she wants to be married.

If the girl's mother and mother's brother approve of her choice, her mother quickly cooks yams and carries them to her. When she and her lover eat these yams together, the marriage is officially recognized. If the young woman's kin disapprove of the choice, her mother and father hurry to the hamlet and demand that their daughter leave with them. If the young woman refuses to go, they pull her out of the house and drag her away from the village. Yet the girl can still have the final word. In one such situation, I was told how one girl, Isupolu, stayed inside her parents' house like a widow, crying and refusing to eat any food until they acquiesced. In another case, the young girl Weteli finally agreed to marry a man that her mother chose, but she was so unhappy that after two months she ran away from her husband and returned to her own hamlet. Often, if a woman is determined to marry her original choice, she can arrange a secret meeting with him. Then together they go to the beach and live there for several days. Once they live openly with each

¹² Sexual relations between a woman and her son are also considered incestuous and no one ever recounted any incidents to me. Malinowski's (1926b) reports agree with mine that only brother-sister incest is deeply tabooed and feared. See Spiro (1982) for a reinterpretation and Weiner (1985) for a rebuttal.



Photo 20. Naugwayawa tries on the new skirts given by her husband's sister so they can be cut to the proper length for a married woman.

other, their parents must accept and respect the marriage. Even chiefs, whose marriages are arranged for political alliances, enter into some marriages for love in just this way.

On the day that a marriage is announced, after the couple eat yams together, the young man's sister brings three long skirts to her new sister-in-law. First she ties each one around her brother's wife's waist, and then with a knife she cuts the fibers until the length is just below the knee. No longer can the woman wear the short, provocative miniskirts that adolescents wear. Her days of adolescent sexual freedom are gone. Both she and her husband take off their red shell necklaces, for to continue to wear them indicates that they are still looking for lovers.

Gaining lovers is not merely a frivolous adolescent pastime. It is the first step toward entering the adult world of marriage; and as we will see later, it is no accident that on the first day of married life, yams and women's skirts figure centrally as the symbols of a couple's changed status and their life ahead. By analyzing the details of adolescent sexuality we begin to understand the kinds of constraints and limitations placed on individual behavior at the very time that individuals must come together in marriage. The struggle between individual independence and the demands of others is clearly articulated in the way magic is used to influence and seduce someone. Sexual

freedom and independent emotions of others. She negotiates their intent that even as adults they in political endeavors, on the power of beauty illustrates, sexual freedom interactions for women

freedom and independence of choice run counter to jealousy, pride, and the emotions of others. So important are the lessons adolescents learn about negotiating their intentions and desires against the will and longings of others that even as adults they return from time to time, as we will see, at harvests, in political endeavors, and even in the reversal of mourning taboos, to draw on the power of beauty and sexuality. After marriage, as the next chapter illustrates, sexual freedom is curtailed, but the style of social and political interactions for women and men remains the same.

20. Naugwayawa tries
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