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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

RETHINKING THE KULA:

A SOCIAL COGNITION APPROACH TO ETHNOGRAPHY

by

DAVID RANDY JOHNSON

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

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David E. Young
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Date February 4, 1987

ABSTRACT

The kula is an exchange network made famous by Bronislaw Malinowski. He described the kula as a huge, complex, and pan-island institution where people exchange armshells for necklaces. The kula is ordinarily explained by positing one or more of three traditional explanations: resource re-distribution, social solidarity, and/or prestige competition. This thesis proposes that the three traditional explanations for the kula are deficient in their handling of the dynamic aspects of the kula.

A fresh, broader perspective on the kula can be gained when insights from anthropology, psychology, and sociology are combined to create a stronger dynamic dimension which can be added to the existing approaches to ethnography. Gathering the type of data necessary to add a stronger dynamic dimension would require a change in ethnographic procedures. Data would have to be collected on the kula participants' social cognition process. That is, on the motivational, cognitive, and decision-making processes of the individual kula participants, as well as the traditional ethnographic research areas (economics, politics, religion, social structure, etc.).

This thesis lays the groundwork for a more comprehensive approach to future kula ethnographic research. The new approach takes the picture presented in traditional ethnography and adds to it an emphasis on the analysis on the dynamic interplay generated by the teleological nature of human interaction. As well as providing

theoretical and conceptual support for a new approach to ethnography, this thesis reworks some of the available data on the kula from a social cognition perspective. Until more adequate ethnographic research is carried out on the kula, a full-scale analysis using the social cognition approach cannot be completed. In the meantime, however, even the inadequate data presented in traditional ethnographies can be used to illustrate some aspects of a social cognition approach. Reworking the empirical data shows that the traditional ethnographic picture of the kula can be expanded and made more comprehensive by adding insight into the dynamic nature of social interaction.

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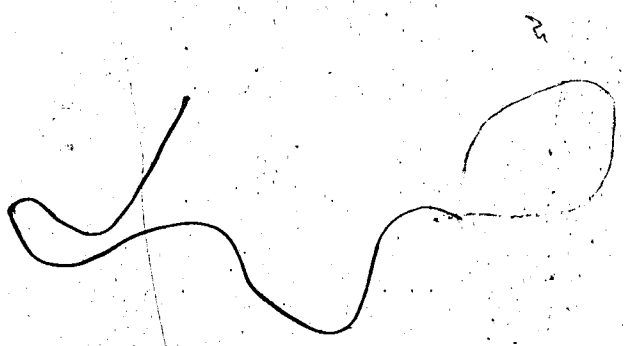

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INTRODUCTION

Bronislaw Malinowski was the dominant figure in social anthropology prior to World War II and he is still an important figure in the history of the discipline. Malinowski wrote several books dealing with divergent aspects of the lifeways of the Trobriand Islanders and this ethnographic collection is one of the most famous in anthropology. One of the books in the Trobriand collection, Argonauts of the Western Pacific, published in 1922, has become an anthropological classic. In Argonauts Malinowski described an exchange system called the Kula which is practiced by some of the people inhabiting a ring of islands off the southern tip of the main island of New Guinea. In the kula exchange system, shell necklaces (soulava), which must travel only in a clockwise direction, are exchanged for armshells (mwali), which must circulate counter-clockwise. The directions the two classes of valuables travel can be thought of as forming a "ring" when the pattern of movement of the valuables is viewed from a perspective high above the islands.

Argonauts exemplifies Malinowski's approach to ethnography, i.e., to demonstrate how a "primitive" culture is structured and how it functions. In the book Malinowski introduced many innovations in ethnographic procedures which have tremendously influenced many ethnographers (e.g., spending a long time with one group, remaining in close contact with them, working in their language). Malinowski (1922:25) summarized his approach to ethnography by saying, "the final goal, of which an Ethnographer should never lose sight . . . is, briefly, to grasp the native's point of view, his relation to life, to

realise his vision of his 'world." Malinowski's technique for accomplishing his goal was to detail the various aspects of Trobriand culture (e.g., myth, magic, tradition) and then demonstrate how they interpenetrate the institutions (e.g., social, economic, religious, political, etc.). Since he felt that the kula was one of the key Trobriand institutions, Malinowski used the kula as the nexus around which he could analyze Trobriand culture.

But in the introduction to Argonauts Malinowski appeared to be aiming at a broader kind of ethnography than he was actually able carry out. Malinowski (1922:11) says, "An Ethnographer who sets out to study only religion, or only technology, or only social organisation cuts out an artificial field for inquiry, and he will be seriously handicapped in his work." Unfortunately, Malinowski was handicapped by the conceptual and theoretical tools available to him (i.e., the discipline's focus on structure and function). Thus, Argonauts provides static, normative data on various aspects of Trobriand culture because Malinowski used a positivistic, structural-functional stance in his approach to study of the kula. A broader analysis of the kula would have included an analysis of the dynamic as well as the static aspects of the kula interactions.

In this thesis I suggest that a new, broader approach to ethnography would have allowed Malinowski to come closer to reaching his stated goal for ethnography. I also suggest that the methods of analysis used by Malinowski and subsequent anthropologists to study the kula tend to give only partial explanations of what is going on in the institution. There have been three broad categories of

explanation developed to explain the kula: resource re-distribution, social solidarity, and prestige competition. Two of the traditional explanations (resource re-distribution and social solidarity) are limited in their explanatory power and they make no attempt to handle the teleological nature of human interaction. The third explanation (prestige competition) does provide insight into the goal-directedness of human interaction, but it makes the simplistic assumption that all the kula men seek to maximize their prestige in each kula transaction. As well the prestige competition explanation is applied to studying the social dimension of kula and is not also applied to the private dimension of how the men think and feel about their interactions. All three types of explanations tend to be reductionistic and assume a high degree of uniformity in the institution itself and the individuals who participate in it.

A more encompassing explanation for the kula can be found by adding a much stronger dynamic component (derived from a social cognition approach using motivational and cognitive theory from anthropology, psychology, and sociology) to the existing techniques of ethnography. The ethnographer examines not only the cultural and structural constraints in a culture, but also examines how and why individuals use the constraints to achieve a multiplicity of individual goals. The approach being developed in this thesis calls for a new approach to ethnography, but the new approach does not discard the old. Rather, it adds a dynamic dimension (or strengthens the weak one that is sometimes used) to the standard ethnographic approach. In the new approach a sufficient amount of data on individual motivation, cognition, and decision-making is presented so

that the complex, dynamic nature of social interactions can be examined as well as the more normative areas of a culture.

To approach the kula from a social cognition perspective (one that presents data on the dynamic and static aspects of a culture), it is still necessary to understand the general cultural matrix of the people. Normative data provides information on how the group under study organize their lives and operate on their environments at a consensual, societal level. The information collected in a standard ethnographic study of kula exchanges gives information on how the people in any specific part of the Massim will tend to approach their exchanges. The first three chapters of the thesis describe the general cultural matrix of the people involved in the kula. This information is typical of the standard approach to ethnography. The first chapter presents data on the Massim cultural matrix with more specific data given for the Trobriand Islands and Dobu areas. The rules and regulations for how the kula functions are given in chapter two. The third chapter provides a critique of several explanations given for the kula.

The information presented in chapters four through six attempts to conceptualize the dynamic nature of the kula by focusing on the teleological aspects of the kula interactions. Chapter four details the history of changes in anthropology and psychology theory that bring theory to its present focus on cognition. This is a background chapter to set the context for the theory presented in chapter five. In chapter five I will describe the theory of social cognition (a three-part system involving cognition, motivation, and decision

processes). In the last chapter I show how the social cognition theory developed in chapter five could be applied to a study of the kula on the island of Vakuta. Building on a foundation of normative expectations, the teleological aspects of the people who kula can be studied. An ethnographic study does not need to be restricted to detailing the rules of an institution. It can go beyond a study of the rules and examine how the individuals who are in the institution are using the system for their own purposes. The nature of the interactions between the structural demands of the kula rules, the motivations of the individuals, the social responsibilities of the people involved, and the past history of the interactions between the specific people are all involved.

In many ways this thesis is an attempt to push ethnography towards Malinowski's ideal for it. Unfortunately, there is not enough information in the extant kula literature to do a full reanalysis of the kula at this time. None of the examples of kula exchanges given in the extant literature contain all the types of information required in a social cognition approach (e.g., the subjective meanings of the people involved, objective information on what actually transpired at the exchange, information on the previous history of interactions between the participants, historical information on the participants themselves, etc.). However, there is enough data to show that a social cognition approach can add new insight to kula analysis, and more generally to ethnography, through adding an emphasis on the dynamic nature of the kula.

Chapter One

THE CULTURE

The General Cultural Description

Geographically, the Massim area consists of the southeastern tip of the main island of New Guinea and the outlying islands such as the Trobriands, Woodlark, Fergusson, Goodenough, Tubetube, Rossell, Marshall Bennett, Laughlan and Misima. Some of the landmasses are of volcanic origin (e.g., Fergusson and Goodenough and some are coral atolls (e.g., the Trobriand Islands). Environmentally, the conditions are much the same throughout the entire region. Culturally, most anthropologists who have studied the Massim area have emphasized the inter-island cultural homogeneity (Worsley 1957, Uberoi 1962, Leach 1983). Jerry Leach (1983:25) says, "[The social] systems are, and have been, cognate with each other, sharing overlapping but not identical patterns of organization, belief, and exchange." Although there are unique features in the cultures throughout these islands, there are enough structural similarities to talk about a Massim cultural pattern. As well, the Massim area pattern shares many of the features of the broader Melanesian pattern.

The existing anthropological literature on the Melanesian area contains many highly detailed small-scale monographs, but few broad, comparative writings. Rogers (1970), Hogbin (1973), Brown (1978), and Johnson (1984) do discuss the broad general pattern for Papua New Guinea. The following section includes information on some of the aspects of the Papua New Guinean cultural matrix that are relevant to

the Massim area, as well as more detailed information on the specific Massim area cultural pattern.[1]

Papua New Guinean societies tend to be very small (Worsley 1957, Read 1959, Brown 1978). Most people have little knowledge of the world beyond a radius of a few kilometers from their home village and they tend to focus on their own local interests (Langness 1973:167). The Papua New Guinean societies can be analytically placed in a much larger cultural unit when grouped by language and shared customs. These larger cultural groups vary from a few hundred people to a few thousand. Individuals in the villages generally have little knowledge of the extent of the larger language and cultural group, and no name for it.

Papua New Guineans use two main organizing principles: kinship and a strong attachment to the land. Most groups maintain control of land through patrilocal residence and patrilineal descent. There are areas like the Trobriand Islands and Dobu in the Massim where descent is matrilineal, but in either case, the local groups are never exclusively unilineal. Young kinsmen can be readily adopted when they come to stay in a new village. As well, visiting affines can also be incorporated if they decide to remain in any particular village for a long time (Brown 1978). Whiteman (1981) states that the kin group is the foundation stone of Melanesian society, providing both security and meaning for the individual. de Lepervanche (1973) reports that people tend to view and express their relationships to each other in

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1. The chapter is narrated in the ethnographic present.

kinship terms, whether they are biologically (in the Western medical sense) related or not. Brown (1978:287) says, "Although ... descent concepts are very important in identifying groups, membership is demonstrated in participation, while genealogy may be forgotten." In traditional Papua New Guinean culture, institutions such as politics, kinship, religion, and economics are heavily interwoven in the social relationships (Harding 1973:109). Within the bounds of the kinship system, the individual has a great amount of freedom with respect to the group. Melanesian men can choose which groups and collective activities they wish to join or participate in (Valentine 1973:228, Sillitoe 1978:11).

The political power in villages is generally wielded by the "big men." The big man system, based on personal merit, is found in all but a few areas throughout Papua New Guinea. In some areas where there are no big men, political authority is held by elders and is based on their command of ritual knowledge (Gregory 1982). The big man position is generally open to all male members of society. Most of the Papua New Guinean societies are characterized by a high degree of status mobility, and a lack of fixed class structure. There are some exceptions to this rule such as the hereditary chiefs on the Trobriand Islands (Malinowski 1922:52, Reed 1943:50). Big men achieve their position largely through their own efforts, although it certainly helps to be the son of a big man (Strathern 1974:xvii). Prestige seems to be one of the primary benefits sought when the men are striving to attain this position (Groves 1973:104, Finney 1973:80). Wealth is also an important aspect of big man status (Amarshi, Good & Mortimer 1979:105). Finney (1973:124) concludes that "... most (of the peoples

of New Guinea) share the basic Melanesian values and institutions that link wealth, prestige and leadership."

The basic mode of production in the subsistence sector is swidden agriculture. The crops include sweet potato, yams, taro, coconuts, and bananas. The garden produce is often supplemented by hunting wild pigs and other game (e.g., small marsupials and birds), and on the coast by fishing. The people who live in the lowland swamps eat the starch obtained by processing parts of the sago palm as their staple food. The coastal people catch fish as one of their chief food resources.

There is little economic specialization in subsistence gardening, although there is a sex-based division of labor. As a general rule, men clear the brush for gardens, make fences and boundaries, and do the fighting and hunting. Women do the planting, weeding, and harvesting of the gardens, plus all the household duties which include carrying heavy loads of food, firewood and water. Some societies do have specialists for certain tasks, but these appear to be the exception rather than the rule.

One of the striking characteristics of Papua New Guinean societies is the ceremonial exchange. Although the kula is probably the most famous of the Melanesian gift exchanges, it is not the only one.[2] The Highlands are also well known for large-scale ceremonial

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2. See Strathern (1983:73-117) for a comparison of the Massim exchange (the kula) with the Highland (the Melpa Moka and Enga Tee), Northern New Guinea coast (Vitiaz Straits and Huon Gulf), and East New Britain (the Tolai and Siassi areas) exchanges.

exchanges involving pigs, food, and other valuables such as feathers and shells. Strathern (1983:73) says, "Since Malinowski's time we have been accustomed to speak of Melanesia as an area in which the principle of reciprocity, enshrined within elaborate and enduring forms of ceremonial exchange, is the major guiding force in local societies." Strathern (1974:xx) also comments that the exchange ceremonies take an enormous amount of time and effort to manage, thereby leaving little time for anything else when the exchange activities are at their peak.

Magic is an integral facet of life in Papua New Guinean societies (Lawrence 1971:4-5). There is no remote and transcendent supernatural world for the Papua New Guinean. Deities or spirit beings belong to the everyday, terrestrial environment. Many of the Papua New Guinean cultures practice ancestor worship and believe that man is dependent on the ancestors and other spirits for a good and successful life. Spirits are "persons" and full members of the community.

The traditional source of knowledge in Papua New Guinean society is thought to be the ancestors and other spirits. These spirits are responsible for the existing knowledge and also for passing on new knowledge. There is no explicit testing of new knowledge because its source automatically validates it. If knowledge comes from the spirits, then it has to be right. This concept of knowledge is a broader one then is used in Western society.

Traditional Papua New Guinean societies frequently make a distinction between true knowledge and everyday knowledge. This is especially emphasized along the coast. "True" knowledge is considered

to be religious knowledge acquired through special instruction at the age initiation, when the boys learn the origin myths, sacred songs, magic rituals and sorcery. Mastery of the sacred knowledge is a necessary condition for leadership in many societies (Lawrence 1971:222). There are magic rituals that need to be carried out to ensure success in almost all aspects of life: planting and harvesting rituals; rituals to mark the completion of a canoe or a house; funeral rituals to ensure good relations with the spirits of the dead; rituals to give success in warfare or in trading expeditions. The knowledge of the specific rituals and magic is usually inherited, but in some cases it can be purchased from other groups (Reed 1943:44,65-68).

Another important aspect of "true" knowledge is that it is secret and personal. A Bobuan man can boast about the power of certain roots, leaves, and plant fluids which only he knows about (Rogers 1970:100). "True knowledge" has a normative dimension to it. This type of knowledge has a moral imperative because it is to be used by the individual to exercise control over his conduct. A person is supposed to use his knowledge in a way that helps his village and does not interfere with its prosperity.

In addition to "true" knowledge, there is also everyday knowledge. The everyday knowledge that women and children have is not held in very high esteem. Much of the common knowledge is acquired informally through modeling. The children are around adults all the time: the boys go hunting with the men; the boys and girls go to the gardens with the women; and both sexes are in the general area during village meetings.

To summarize, as is true for much of Papua New Guinea, the Massim people are heavily involved in swidden agriculture raising yams as the basic food crop. The villages tend to be small in size and the people village-oriented. In the Massim there is a greater emphasis on larger and more structured political entities (based on a grouping of villages) than is generally true throughout Papua New Guinea. An unusual feature of the Massim area is the matrilineal social organization of some of the groups such as the Trobriand Islanders and the Dobuans. Magic, a major preoccupation of the people, is employed frequently in many activities such as gardening. Among the people of the Massim area, the world is inhabited by supernatural forces that can be controlled by magic.

Two Specific Cultural Descriptions

In spite of the overall similarity seen in the cultural matrix of the Massim area, there are differences from island to island (e.g., social organization, the role of women, and morality). I have provided more detailed descriptions of the Trobriand Islanders and the Dobuans because these two groups have been given the most prominent positions in the anthropological literature. Cultural differences between the Trobriand Islanders and the Dobuans, as well as the other groups in the Massim area can be expected to generate differences in attitudes and understandings of how kula activities are to be carried out. For example, Trobriand Islanders and the Dobuans consider the Amphlett Islanders to be stingy and difficult to deal with in kula exchanges.

3
The Trobriand Islanders

Of all the groups in the Massim area, the Trobriand Islanders have received the most intensive study. The Trobriand Islands are a group of flat coral islands that surround a broad, shallow lagoon. The archipelago consists mainly of one big island (Boyowa), two smaller islands (Kayleula and Vakuta), and a number of smaller islands. The northern plains of Boyowa are covered with fertile soil and the lagoon teems with fish. Some of the interior of Boyowa is swampy and there are large stretches of mangroves in the west. The southern part of Boyowa varies from exposed coral to brackish swamps.

Trobriand Island villages vary in size, shape, and the degree to which the buildings are finished and decorated. All the villages are located close to the gardens, a water hole, fruit trees, palm groves, and in most cases have their own access to the seashore. There is a central public plaza surrounded by one or two rings of storehouses and dwellings. This central plaza is the scene of most public life.

The Trobriand Islanders divide themselves into four matrilineal totemic clans, each associated with an animal. The most important social units are the sub-clans which are ranked and tied into land tenure and magic. Each village is composed of one or more sub-clans. There are three other social groupings of importance to Trobrianders:

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3. Malinowski (1922) is the main reference for the section on the Trobriand Islanders.

the household (husband, wife, children), which is dominant in daily life; the "real kindred" or lineage (a woman, her children and her brother who is the legal head of the group); the village, where the people jointly cultivate their gardens within the same enclosure, carry out the food distributions and other enterprises together, and hold festivities together.

The Trobriand Islanders use a system of chieftainship that involves a combination of two institutions: rank and headmanship. The highest rank is that of paramount chief who performs rain and sunshine magic and is in charge of tribal fertility. Next is the military chief who has the rights to certain ornaments, which the paramount chief cannot use. There are other chiefs below these two and although they all belong to the same sub-clan as the paramount chief, their power and prestige are much less. The way in which a chief exercises his power is largely economic, and in the long run, all the wealth he gathers goes back to his subjects because he has to pay for all services rendered. A chief's wealth comes from two sources: his numerous wives grow the considerable agricultural produce which is the basis of his economic strength; and he receives tribute from his subjects through various economic monopolies.

Rank is very important to the Trobriand Islanders. A man of high rank is addressed as "chief" and is entitled to wear certain ornaments. The most important indication of a chief's rank are the taboos he must uphold. These taboos are both a burden and a mark of distinction -- the higher the rank, the more stringent the taboos.

Descent, inheritance, and succession are matrilineal, i.e.,

children inherit through their mother's line and belong to her sub-clan and clan. Her daughters inherit any positions and privileges which she may possess due to either her rank or her relationship to the headman of the community. Her sons inherit from her brother.

The Trobriand Islanders are prolific gardeners who annually harvest twice as much produce as they can eat. Usually the family (husband, wife, children, and dependents) work together clearing the land, preparing new gardens, and harvesting. Land clearing and planting, which continues from July through to the middle of September, is a communal activity. Yams, the main Trobriand crop, are the foundation of wealth throughout the area. Even districts like Kulumata where fishing is important still depend, economically, on their agricultural neighbors. Rogers (1970:88) summarizes the importance of agriculture to the Trobriand Islanders, "Fishing is prominent in some districts but agriculture is paramount in all."

Several villages in the Kuboma district have expert carvers, an art which is encouraged. Wooden platters, hunting and fishing spears, staffs, combs, wooden hammers, and bailers are all produced in large quantities. There are also villages in the district which manufacture plaited fibre items and certain forms of basketry for export. Some of the Tilataula villages are known for their skill in polishing stone.

Magic is of extreme importance to the Trobriand Islanders. Garden magic is performed by a magician using commonly known rituals. No secrecy is involved in garden magic since this type of magic is regarded as normal and proper. The magic is quite simple and direct, devoid in most cases of any formal ceremony. The performer looks like

an ordinary person doing mundane, everyday work. Special magic, concerned with things like fishing for mullet, is carried out by the headman of each community with the appropriate taboos and ceremonials. Black magic is performed by sorcerers. It is employed when an individual feels that he or she has a grievance against another person that cannot be settled any other way. Interestingly enough, no magic whatsoever is connected with the manufacturing of goods for trade. The lack of magic is surprising given the importance of magic throughout the rest of the culture.

4
The Dobuans

The Dobuans inhabit the north-east coast of Fergusson Island and the island of Dobu. Malinowski (1922:38) describes the Dobuans as, "one of the most important links in the chain of kula and a very influential centre of cultural influence." Young (1979:176) says the area of Fergusson Island that the Dobuans inhabit is flat with fertile shores containing coconut, betel-palm, mangoes, and bread-fruit trees. Fortune (1932:103) describes the island of Dobu as basically an infertile volcanic cone:

> The natives go through an annual season of privation when the yam supply is running low, when they live mainly on roots and wild leaves of certain trees with small remnants of yams or early yams taken from the new gardens before they are grown and with the usual rare pigs taken hunting or small fish that are caught with much trouble and scant reward in the poorly stocked seas.

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4. Malinowski (1922) and Fortune (1932) are the primary sources for the section on the Dobuans.

Dobuan villages consist of about a dozen huts placed in a circle and facing inwards. Each village has a set of linked totems: the bird ancestress, a fish, and a tree. All the villages with the same totem will claim descent from the same bird ancestress, and use the same origin legend. The village, consisting of several matrilineal kin groups, is the most important social unit and is usually composed of several women, their nuclear families, and their brothers (Dobuan society is matrilineal). The nuclear family is another important social unit to the Dobuans.

Women are given a more prominent place in Dobuan society than is generally the case throughout the rest of the Massim area. The Trobriand Islanders think that the importance given to the role of women in the Dobu area is "peculiar (Malinowski 1922:41)."

Dobu villages, varying from four to twenty in number, band together to form larger, named political units which are hostile to each other. In each locality, composed of several villages, there are one or two men of outstanding influence who fill the role of big man.

The natural resources on the island of Dobu are not sufficient to support the population through activities such as gathering sago and fishing. The Dobuans live on what they can grow in their gardens. Men and women have their own distinct, separate garden plots and they own the yams grown. The gardens are cleared and planted communally using swidden agriculture. Bush clearing is done by both sexes, but only the women attend to the growing plants.

After finishing with their preliminary garden rituals, the men

leave on their inter-island overseas expeditions. The Dobuans consider trading an important activity, but it is secondary to gardening. The trading voyages, normally in March and April, occur just before the northwest monsoon season gathers its full force.

Among the Dobuans, a knowledge of magic gives power and status. A person's reputation is built upon successful magic. Ritual is central to much of Dobuan life: in making canoes and fish nets, in the annual kula exchanges, in love affairs, in causing wind and rain, in bringing disease, and in causing death. Plentiful gardens, success in love affairs, and good health are all evidence of a powerful person. Malinowski (1922:41) says, "The flying witches, so characteristic of the Eastern New Guinea type of culture, here have one of their strongholds." Everyone in Dobu practices magic to steal the crops from the other people's gardens. This type of magic is carried on in private and as a matter of course. The incantations are often supplemented by the use of certain parts of specific plants (leaves, roots, and sap) because these items are believed to have their own power. Magic knowledge is kept secret even within the matrilineal line, i.e., a man never passes on his magical knowledge to all his sons or his sister's sons. One is chosen, usually the primogenitor, and the others are left out.

Summary

The information presented in this chapter is normative and organized into two major sections. The first section described some

of the general social structure and cultural conventions used by the people of Massim area. The second section gave more specific detail about the Trobrianders and the Dobuans. The Trobrianders and the Dobuans received a more thorough treatment because the kula examples used throughout the rest of the thesis come from the literatures on these two groups.

Chapter Two

THE KULA

The Valuables

The Kavataria and Kayleula people are heavily involved in the manufacturing of the armshells (Malinowski 1922, Strathern 1983). The people of Sudest and Rossel Islands (Fortune 1932), and Wari, Misima and Panayati (Malinowski 1922) are also important manufacturers of the armshells. A secondary source of armshells are the Mailu people who are located on the Papuan mainland (Strathern 1983). The people of Kavataria, which is in the south west part of Boyowa, dive for the shells that will be fabricated into kula mwali. Because the armshells travel in pairs, when an especially good shell is found a man will continue to dive to look for a mate. If he cannot find a mate for the shell himself, he might be given the mate by a friend, in-law, or kinsman. After a suitable shell has been found, the narrow end is broken off and the remaining cylinder is polished to complete the transformation of the shell into a bracelet. The armshells vary considerably in size with some of them being too small to be worn and others quite large. Malinowski (1922:88) reports that, "easily 90% are too small a size to be worn by young boys and girls. A few are so big and valuable that they would not be worn at all, except once in a decade by a very important man on a very festive day." The armshells are also highly prized outside the kula area in the adjacent mainland Papuan areas.

The Sinaketans, together with the people of Vakuta, collect the

discs that are made into kula necklaces (soulava) (Malinowski 1922, Strathern 1983). At the southern section of the kula circuit there are several locales that make the necklaces. The soulava, usually from two to five meters in length, are composed of flat, round discs strung together by a cord which passes through the hole drilled through the middle of each disc. The discs can be colored anywhere from a muddy brown to carmine red. Malinowski (1922:88) reports that, "Though all the shell-strings can be worn, some of them are again considered too valuable, and are cumbersome for frequent use, and would be worn on very exceptional occasions only."

Being a manufacturing center does not seem to be an important factor in how successful a community's members are in the kula exchanges. Strathern (1983:83) points out that there is "no one-to-one correlation between control over the manufacture of these objects and dominance within the kula ring as a whole." At the time of manufacture, the kula articles have not had time to acquire a history and reputation.

The armshells and necklaces exchanged in the kula are regarded as being among a person's most valuable possessions (Seligmann 1910, Malinowski 1922, Fortune 1932). The largest and oldest valuables are very famous and bring their temporary possessors great renown. A kula valuable's main perceived worth is the social value attributed to it by the people. Malinowski (1922:511) describes the social role the kula valuables play by saying:

> Each piece of vaygu'a of the Kula type has one main object throughout its existence -- to be possessed and exchanged; has one main function and serves one main purpose -- to circulate round the Kula ring, to be owned and displayed.

The individuals in the kula say the vaygu'a are system-communal property and are not to be alienated from the kula circuit by becoming anyone's personal property. As well as being prized within the kula, the armshells and necklaces are highly valued outside the kula. Although the kula valuables are not supposed to be traded in non-kula exchanges, this does happen. Malinowski (1922:505) reports, "some of the less valuable articles ebb away into the jungle, which in its turn, gives its produce to the coast." The most important leakage point seems to be in the southern area around Tubetube and Wari. Armshells are also passed westwards towards Port Moresby and out of the kula.

Malinowski (1922:94) estimates that it takes from two to ten years for a given valuable to make a complete circuit. Firth (1983:96) estimates that there were roughly 3000 pairs of armshells and 3000 necklaces in the circuit when Malinowski did his study. At that time there were approximately equal numbers of the most pre-eminent kula valuables, but an imbalance occurred at the lower end of the value scale where armshells outnumber necklaces (Firth 1983).[5]

The armshells are ranked against each other in an ordinal fashion and the same is done with the necklaces. Size and color are the two main criteria for judging kula valuables on their physical merits. The armshells are white, except for those in the lowest classes, and the necklaces are red.

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5. Campbell (1983b) details the classification system for kula articles.

The value of a kula item increases over time as it moves around the ring as it is exchanged between partners. Firth (1983:96) says, "physical criteria (size and color), age and a history of kula circulation, linked with the individuality of a personal name, have marked the more important valuables." The most prestigious valuables in each category have names. During Malinowski's stay in the Trobriands, a pair of armshells called Nanoula were highly prized. Another famous pair, Bulwida, were named after a type of fish that was found inside one of the shells. Malinowski (1922:509) reports that children are sometimes named after the famous vaygu'a. The valuables in the top classifications also have extensive histories attached to them detailing who has held them and the interactions in which they have been involved.

The Institution

The kula is a rule-governed set of interactions and as such is amenable to a static, normative form of analysis. Except for some minor details, the transaction rules of kula exchange are considered to be the same in all the kula communities of the Massim by the participants and by the observer-analysts. But there is more to the situation as well. O'Keefe (1979:187) states, "To say interaction is rule-governed activity ... is to say that interactants are guided by, take note of, pay attention to rules in their production of action and utterance." O'Keefe's statement highlights the dynamic dimension present in the teleological nature of human interaction where people manipulate rules to achieve their personal goals. Both the static and

the dynamic dimensions are amenable to analysis.

Knowledge of the rules of an institution is necessary for a person because it enables him to behave in an appropriate, or at least intelligible, manner in any given kula situation. Central to the concept of a rule or social norm is the normative injunction to obey or follow it (Meldon 1970). This normative dimension gives social reality the appearance of being fixed and objectlike. The internalized rules and norms seem to take on the stature of natural forces. Rules channel the behavior of the kula participants, lending pattern and predictability to social interactions and a sense of solidarity to social reality. Rules of some nature are necessary to keep social interactions from becoming destructive because the norms and rules give some protection from disruptive elements. But, "rules are not abstract, fixed, and unchanging. They are open to continual reinterpretation, depending on the actor's goals, the setting in which the action takes place, and who else is involved in the encounter (Wilson 1983:113)."

The two critical valuables (armshells and necklaces) are circulated in opposite directions against each other. The armshells are exchanged for necklaces and vice-versa, but never armshells for armshells or necklaces for necklaces. For example, person A comes to visit person B in B's village where B presents A with a necklace. Next year B goes to A's village where A presents B with a pair of armshells, of at least equal value, to reciprocate for last year's

gift. When a whole series of exchanges like those between A and B are viewed from above, the armshells always move counter-clockwise and the necklaces clockwise around the Massim area generating the idea of a "kula ring."

The kula is a very complex institution and its existence has ramifications throughout much of the rest of the cultures of which it is a part. Even though the kula is only one of the cultural institutions in any group, it is a very important one. Malinowski (1922:83,85) says:

> The Kula is ... an extremely big and complex institution, both in its geographical extent, and in the manifoldness of its component pursuits. It welds together a considerable number of tribes, and it embraces a vast complex of activities, interconnected, and playing into one another, so as to form one organic whole. ... The Kula is not a surreptitious and precarious form of exchange. It is, quite on the contrary, rooted in myth, backed by traditional law, and surrounded with magical rites.

Care should be taken in how the kula is studied. Analytically isolating the kula from the cultural matrix in which it is embedded can be misleading. By taking the kula out of the wider cultural matrix it is possible to miss important aspects of how the kula interpenetrates other institutions and how the people use these connections. For example, at one level a man's personal success or failure in his agricultural pursuits has a big impact on his kula endeavors. At a different analytical level, kula valuables are used in marriage and mortuary ceremonies and these uses of the <u>vaygu'a</u> would not be apparent in a study of kula exchanges only. Weiner (1976) feels that Malinowski has downplayed the role of women in the kula because he focussed on the exchange aspect. Women are not

ordinarily involved in kula exchanges, but they are heavily involved in mortuary ceremonies which often have a direct effect on kula activities.

Malinowski (1922:83,93) states that there are two distinct types of kula: overseas and inland. The overseas kula exchanges have received the most analysis in the past, but recently the inland kula has been receiving more attention. The annual overseas exchanges involve many people traveling from one island to another. A considerable number of valuables (1000 or more) can change hands during an overseas kula expedition. Although the actual exchanges occur between individuals, the kula men from one village or area will ordinarily travel together as a "kula community" when they go on an overseas kula exchange. Malinowski (1922:93) describes a kula community as:

> ... a village or a number of villages who go out together on big overseas expeditions, and who act as a body in the Kula transaction, perform their magic in common, have common leaders, and have the same outer and inner social sphere, within which they exchange their valuables.

The second type of kula is the inland kula. In this form of kula there is a constant trickling of exchanges all year long. These exchanges usually take place between people in the same village (e.g., between two friends or a father and son) or villages that are fairly close. The motivational factors of the people are probably different in inland kula exchanges and they usually expend much less time, energy, and resources in the inland kula than they do in the overseas kula. The overseas kula, with all its preparations (extensive magic rituals, canoe preparations, accumulation of trade goods and gifts,

etc.), involves many people working together to plan and organize the trip. On the other hand, many inland kula transactions involve only a single pair of partners sometimes living in the same village, exchanging kula valuables.

There are also other minor valuables, which are used as gifts, involved in the kula interactions. These minor valuables are of secondary importance and consist of items such as food, betel-nut, stone blades, and lime (Malinowski 1922:362). These preliminary and intermediate gifts also need to be repaid, just like the armshells and necklaces.

The people can and do carry on ordinary commodity trade by bartering when they are not involved in kula exchanges. When a kula exchange has not been handled properly, Young (1979:170) reports people saying, "He conducts his kula as if it were gumwali (ordinary trade)." A large amount of utilitarian trade in essential and luxury resources does take place on kula expeditions, but these exchanges are conceptually and behaviourally separated from the kula by the participants.

Malinowski (1922:98) describes a typical kula exchange sequence by saying:

> Let us suppose that I, a Sinaketa man, am in possession of a pair of big armshells. An overseas expedition from Dobu ... arrives at my village. Blowing a conch shell, I take my armshell pair and I offer it to my overseas partner, with some such words as "This is a Vaga (opening gift) -- in due time, thou returnest to me a big Soulava (necklace) for it. Next year, when I visit my partner's village, he either is in possession of an equivalent necklace, and this he gives to me as Yotile (return gift), or he has not a necklace good enough to repay my last gift. In this case he will give me a small necklace -- avowedly not

> equivalent to my gift -- and he will give it to me as basi (intermediate gift). This means that the main gift has to be repaid on a future occasion, and the basi is given in token faith -- but it, in turn, must be repaid by me in the meantime by a gift of small armshells. The final gift, which will be given to me to clinch the whole transaction, would then be called kudu (clinching gift) in contrast to basi.

Within the overall framework of rules, there are minor, local variations on how to kula. Although analysts recognize that there are inter-island differences in the kula, the differences are usually minimized. In describing the kula exchange system, Jerry Leach (1983:25) says:

> (The) local (social) systems are, and have been, cognate with each other, sharing overlapping but not identical patterns of organization, belief, and exchange. The Kula too shares this characteristic. An analogy is the game of bridge which now internationally has a small core of common rules everywhere but wide variations from nation to nation in point counting, bidding, signaling, and even reasons for playing.

Each kula valuable can be kept by an individual for a period of time, but this time period must not be perceived as being excessive by his kula partners. The timing of how long a man can hold onto a vaygu'a is an area where a specific individual has some degree of control. The rules say that it is not to be "overly" long, but this time frame is only loosely defined. As well, a man can use other rules (e.g., giving an intermediate gift instead of passing on the specific valuable) if he wants to retain a specific article for a while longer. The kula men are aware of the structural constraints and how they can manipulate them. Malinowski (1922:94) says, "A man who is in the Kula never keeps any article longer than, say, a year or two. Even this exposes him to reproach of being niggardly, and certain districts have the bad reputation of being 'slow' and 'hard'

in the Kula."

With rare exceptions, only men kula and they stand to gain considerable prestige from being successful in the kula system (Malinowski 1922:280). There are some women who kula, but they can only be physically involved in an exchange in the inland kula and must use a male substitute for their overseas interactions. Even among the men, only some choose to participate in the kula system. For example, in the north of Boyowa in the Trobriands there are whole districts where nobody is involved in the kula system. Conversely, all the men in Sinaketa, Vakuta, and Gumasila areas of the Trobriands kula. As well, it is only the headmen in some of the villages of the Kiriwina district that kula. Jerry Leach (1983:121) estimates that only 18% of the men in Kiriwina kula. In the Dobu area there are villages where only the headmen kula (Young 1979:183).

Gregory (1982) says that the kula flourishes in the egalitarian areas of the Trobriands and that there is an inverse relationship between the amount of people involved in the kula and the degree of chieftainship in their social structure. He uses Vakuta as an example because all the Vakutan males kula and they do not have a strong chieftainship system operating. Malinowski (1922) found that the Kiriwina district was highly active in the kula and Kouta'uya, the paramount chief of Omarakana, was the major kula figure in the Trobriands.

A man is brought into the kula at adulthood by a kinsman, usually his father or his mother's brother. He starts with small armshells and necklaces and gradually handles larger and more

prestigious valuables as his skills and reputation grow. Malinowski (1922:279) describes how a son of a famous kula man, Kouta'uya, might get started:

> Supposing one of the sons of Kouta'uya has reached the stage where a lad may begin to kula. The chief will have been teaching him the spells for some time already. Moreover the lad, who from childhood has taken part in overseas expeditions, has many a time seen the rites performed and heard the spells uttered. When the time is ripe, Kouta'uya, having the conchshell blown, and with all due formalities, presents a soulava to his son. This latter, soon afterwards, goes somewhere North. Perhaps he goes only to one of the neighboring villages within Sinaketa, perhaps he accompanies his father on a visit as far North as Omarakana, and in any case he makes Kula, either with one of his father's friends and partners, or with a special friend of his own. Thus, at one stroke, the lad is equipped with magic, vaygu'a, and two partners, one of whom is his father. His northern partner will give him in due course an armshell, and this he will probably offer to his father. The transactions once started continue.

Before a kula man dies he can pass his "road" on to his nephew or his son. In the Trobriands it is usual to pass the "road" on to a nephew because of the matrilineal descent. The decision of whom to give his kula "road" to is an area where an individual has control over how he wants to operate. A man can follow the cultural norm and pass the road to his nephew or he can decide to give the "road" to his own son if the man's nephew has ~~been unsatisfactory~~ in fulfilling social obligations.

According to Malinowski (1922) the kula exchanges occur between kula partners who are linked to each other in fixed, lifelong relationships. Fortune states that the partnerships in Dobu are more fragile (Fortune 1932:214):

> Partnerships between the most powerful men who exchange the finest valuables are the most stable. But the

> majority of partnerships are not more stable than marriage partnerships in Dobu. They frequently break up, and new partnerships are contracted owing to one of the partners failing to meet his just obligations.

But generally, throughout most of the Massim, it requires a major breach in kula etiquette to destroy a kula partnership. A partnership is a formal agreement involving gift exchanges and a number of mutual duties and obligations (these vary with the respective status of the individuals involved). The overseas partner plays the role of host, patron, and ally when his partner is visiting him. The host provides food, presents, housing, and safety to his visitor. The visitor provides his host with some gifts when he arrives.

A man stands to gain or lose considerably in how well he can function in the kula as a result of the quantity and quality of his partners. The people manipulate their interactions and show flexibility in deciding what constitutes a major breach of etiquette and whether or not to sever a partnership. A man with few partners has little control over who to pass valuables to and he cannot afford to alienate his partners because he has so few of them. A successful man with a large number of partners has much greater control. He has several options for who he can pass any given valuable to, as well as how he wants to interact with his partners. A man with only one partner in a particular area finds himself in a much more restricted situation. He may decide to keep an unsatisfactory partner until he can make other arrangements with another man in the same area. This situation arises when a man needs access to a particular village or area (e.g., for trade).

A man requires a minimum of two partners to operate in the kula

(e.g., one on either geographical side of him). There is no set limit on how many partners he may acquire over the course of his kula career. But there are restrictions on how far afield a kula man can go in building his kula networks. An individual man exchanges only with partners on each side of him, and not with everyone around the entire chain of which he is only one link. On average, a man would have between four to six partners (Malinowski 1922:276). Multiple sets of partners, up to one hundred or more, have been documented. Malinowski (1922:276) reports that the Trobriand chief, Kouta'uya, the paramount kula man during Malinowski's time, had 55 partners in the northern part of Boyowa (Luba, Kulumata, and Kiriwina), 23 partners in Vakuta and the southern part of Boyowa, 11 in the Amphlett Islands, and 27 in Dobu. It is individual partnerships like Kouta'uya's that form the links in the kula chains that stretch all around the Massim area.

Kula partners do not trade or barter in a utilitarian sense with each other. Their relationship is based on the concept of gift rather than commodity exchange. There are, however, ways for partners to bid for a specific vaygu'a a partner is holding. Kula participants solicit particular shells from each other with preliminary gifts of valued items, such as the axe blades quarried in the Woodlark Islands. Malinowski (1922:352-353) reports:

> Although haggling and bargaining are completely ruled out of the Kula, there are customary and regulated ways of bidding for a piece of vaygu'a known to be in the possession of one's partner. ... If I ... happen to be in the possession of a pair of armshells more than usually good, the fame of it spreads, for it must be remembered that each one of the first-class armshells and necklaces has a personal name and a history of its own, and as they circulate around the big ring of the Kula, they are all

> well known, and their appearance in a given district always creates a sensation. Now, all my partners -- whether from overseas or from within the district -- compete for the favour of receiving this particular article of mine, and those who are specially keen try to obtain it by giving me pokala (offerings) and kaributu (solicitary gifts). The former (pokala) consists as a rule of pigs, especially fine bananas and yams, or taro; the latter (kaributu) are of greater value: the valuable, large axe-blades (called beku), or lime spoons of whale bone are given.

Magic is a very important part of all kula activity. When an overseas kula expedition is underway, tradition dictates that there be two ritual stops along the way: a preliminary stop on a beach close to the departure point and a second, shorter stop at a point close to the final destination of the trip. The magic performed at the first stop focuses on the canoes and is performed by the canoe owners. The magic performed at the second stop is done by each individual to make himself more successful in his exchanges. Malinowski says that there are three types of magic associated with a kula expedition. Malinowski (1922:102) states:

> The belief in the efficiency of magic dominates the Kula, as it does ever so many other tribal activities. Magical rites must be performed over the sea-going canoe when it is built, in order to make it swift, steady and safe; also magic is done over a canoe to make it lucky in the Kula. Another system of magical rites is done in order to avert the dangers of sailing. The third system of magic connected with overseas expeditions is the mwasila or the Kula magic proper. This system consists in numerous rites and spells, all of which act directly on the mind nanola of one's partner, and make him soft, unsteady of mind, and eager to give Kula gifts.

After the exchanges, black magic can be used to settle perceived injustices such as when one person has considerably more success in his exchanges than the others. Magic is another area in which the kula participants have latitude and choose how they want to conduct

themselves. Fortune (1932:209-210) reports:

> One neighbour is jealous of another in the acquisition of ornamental valuables in the places to which they journey together. It is true that the owner of the canoe performs, certain ritual (on an expedition) for the entire canoe's crew. But the important charms and spells in the kula are those calculated to influence overseas strangers or partners to be generous in giving. These, no man does for another. Each man hopes to secure for himself supremacy and pride of place. That is why it is said of the valuables 'many men died because of them' (Malinowski 1922:359). Such men are believed to have been killed by the sorcery of their own canoe fellows, who were enraged at another obtaining so much more success than they, maybe obtaining the very valuable that one other considered his right.
>
> Jealousy and striving for pride of place does not occur powerfully between two organized groups standing over against each other. Such jealousy and striving, leading often to the use of the black art on each other, takes place powerfully within the uvalaku, kula fleet, within the one tribal group, even within the small group that form a single canoe crew.

The Key Kula Concepts

There are two main principles operating in the kula. The first principle says that the valuables are not to be alienated from the exchange network or become anyone's personal property. A man achieves honor by the number and value of the vaygu'a he handles over the course of his kula career and not by keeping any of the valuables. A man is to keep one of the valuables for a while then give it to one of his partners. Thus, a man will have a large number pass through his hands increasing his personal renown. Malinowski (1922:510) calls this passing sequence of vaygu'a, "cumulative possession." Fortune (1932:214-215) says:

> A man is judged esaesa, rich man, or not, by the size of the valuables which he keeps in continuous possession exchange in the kula. His reputation in native eyes is in very great measure estimated by his success in it.

Many authors have challenged Malinowski on the issue of the private ownership of kula valuables (e.g., Campbell 1983a, Gregory 1983, Leach 1983, Strathern 1983, Weiner 1983). Two types of valuables can be used for purposes not associated with kula exchanges: (1) newly manufactured valuables that have not been placed in circulation; (2) those that are in circulation, but are at a stasis point where all the reciprocal claims against them have been balanced. Jerry Leach (1983:24) says, "A major deficiency of Malinowskian kula analysis has been the absence of the concept of the private or person-tied kula shell (Kitom or cognates)." An individual uses a vaygu'a as a kitom when he gives it as a marriage gift, a mortuary gift, a land gift, etc., instead of using it as a kula gift. The recipient of the kitom can choose how he will use the Vaygu'a. He can also use it as a kitom or he can place it back into kula circulation (Leach 1983:24). When a vaygu'a is at a stasis point the person holding it has a great deal of control over the disposition of the valuable. The individual can choose to treat the valuable as a gift or as a commodity. He makes the decision based on how he thinks he can best meet his own personal goals. The concept of kitom is found throughout the Massim, but varies from island to island in exactly what a person can do with a kitom valuable (Jerry Leach 1983:25). As well as being used as gifts in non-kula exchanges, the valuables have been known to be sold to visitors and other non-kula people, thereby permanently removing them from kula circulation.

The second principle operating in the kula is that a kula valuable is a gift which must be repaid. The valuables are gifts, not commodities, when they are used in the kula and are exchanged according to the principle of reciprocity, i.e., like value for like (Malinowski 1922, Mauss 1925, Gregory 1982).[6] Since kula partners are not allowed to haggle with each other over relative values in exchanges, there is a normative expectation that a partner will return full-value for the kula valuable he was given. The matter of equivalences gives the kula men room to maneuver in their quest of obtaining their personal goals.

Part of the principle of the reciprocating of gifts is that the return gift is to be delayed and not simultaneously presented to the original gift giver. If the delay in repayment becomes overly long, the debtor is to give intermediate gifts to his partner to show good faith and mark time until he can properly repay the first gift. As a general rule the exchanges involve fair dealing, but this is not always the case. The delay feature in kula transactions gives a man the opportunity to plan a strategy for taking advantage of another person. For example, he can give his partner a return valuable that he does not consider to be the equivalent of the one he received. Because the two exchanges are separated by a year in time the return gift cannot be directly compared to the original. Another ploy is to play two or more partners off against each other. This is

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6. Gregory (1982:19) defines a commodity exchange as one involving a relationship between two objects where the transaction is terminal. A gift exchange involves a relationship between two subjects where the person who receives the gift owes a debt that must be repaid.

accomplished by misleading them into bidding for a valuable that the man knows he will not be able to give them.

Fortune (1932:217) gives an excellent example of an individual's strategy and planning for a set of kula exchanges:

> Suppose I, Kisian of Tewara, go to the Trobriands and secure an armshell named Monitor Lizard. I then go to Sanaroa and in four different places secure four different shell necklaces, promising each man who gives me a shell necklace, Monitor Lizard in return later. I, Kisian, do not have to be very specific in my promise. It will be conveyed by implication and assumption for the most part. Later, when four men appear in my home at Tewara each expecting Monitor Lizard, only one will get it. The other three are not defrauded permanently, however. They are furious it is true, and their change is blocked for the year. Next year, when I, Kisian go again to the Trobriands I shall represent that I have four necklaces at home waiting for those who will give me four armshells. I obtain more armshells than I obtained previously, and pay my debts a year late. The three men who did not get Monitor Lizard are at a disadvantage in my place, Tewara. Later when they return to their homes they are too far off to be dangerous to me. They are likely to attempt to kill their successful rival, who did get the armshell, Monitor Lizard, by the black art. That is true enough. But that is their own business. I have become a great man by enlarging my exchanges at the expense of blocking theirs for a year. I cannot afford to block their exchange for too long, or my exchanges will never be trusted by anyone again. I am honest in the final issue.

Kisian's recital epitomizes the dynamic nature of the kula. One man manipulates the rules on bidding and returning valuables, his ecological position of being separated from his partners because he lives on a different island, his knowledge of the other men's options, his understanding of human motivation and his unwillingness to totally jeopardize his standing in the kula. Kisian knows the rules of the kula and he knows how he can manipulate the structural constraints. His partners also know the rules and they can see what he is doing and what their options are after Kisian tells them that he cannot give

them Monitor Lizard.

As demonstrated above, there can be considerable planning and strategy involved in seeking to obtain a particularly fine vaygu'a. Austin (1945:27) was given the following description of how one kula man approached his transactions:

> One goes fishing. One takes a shellfish and puts some of it on the hook. Some of it is put in the water to let the fish smell. By and by one hooks a good fish. So with kula; one has kula wealth for exchange -- but that is not all. One must attract one's partner, and therefore one gives him food and other things and he will soften his heart. Then one may catch a priceless vaga, or if the partner has been good towards one, he might be given kudu slightly more in value than the kudu was worth.

There are two major structural considerations built into kula exchanges that can easily rupture kula relationships. The first is that the receiver of a kula gift cannot discuss its quality with his partner who gave it to him. Because he cannot discuss the quality of his gift with his partner, he cannot directly coerce his partner into changing the gift to improve on it. Thus, a man has no direct recourse if he feels cheated. The second consideration involves the soliciting of gifts. Since only one man, of what can be several competitors, can be successful in obtaining a particularly fine kula valuable, there can be several unsuccessful partners. These unsuccessful men may feel "thwarted" and be "full of malice" when they do not receive the particular valuable (e.g., Monitor Lizard) they were bidding on. Malinowski (1922:359) summarizes the effect of these two kula considerations when he says:

> As only one can be successful, all the others will be thwarted and more or less offended and full of malice. Still more room for bad blood is left in the matter of equivalence. As the valuables exchanged cannot be

> measured or even compared with one another by an exact standard; as there are no definite correspondences or indices of correlation between the various kinds of the valuables, it is not easy to satisfy a man who has given a vaygu'a of high value. On receiving a repayment (yotile), which he does not consider equivalent, he will not actually make a scene about it, or even show his displeasure openly in the act. But he will feel a deep resentment, which will express itself in frequent recriminations and abuse. These, though not made to his partner's face, will reach his ears sooner or later. Eventually, the universal method of settling differences may be resorted to -- that of black magic, and a sorcerer will be paid to cast some evil spell over the offending party.

Summary

The kula exchanges are formal events and the entire exchange system is governed by two general, normative principles: (1) the valuables are gifts, not commodities, that are to remain in the system and not be removed from the kula; (2) the gifts are exchanged according to the norm of reciprocity where, after a suitable time delay, a valuable of the complementary type is to be returned to the original giver. Also, there are two structural considerations that make kula exchanges challenging for the people who kula: (1) a person cannot discuss the quality of the gift he received with the gift giver; (2) the system of bidding for valuables is not tightly structured. The people who are involved in the kula require considerable knowledge concerning what is and what is not appropriate behavior.

Chapter Three

EXPLANATIONS OF THE KULA

The Three Traditional Explanations

The kula is usually treated as a system of socio-economic exchange where two types of valuables, armshells and necklaces, are traded for each other. There is a considerable degree of similarity from island to island in the rules for how the people involved in the exchanges go about their business. Because of the similarity in the kula rules and the cultural homogeneity of the region, analysts from Malinowski onwards have tended to approach the study of the kula from the perspective that the kula is a single, huge, and pan-island exchange network.

Analysts have used a rags and patches approach to study the kula. Information from the Trobriands is put together with information from Dobu, the Amphletts, and the other islands in the network to develop an overall pattern. The piecemeal technique, which comes from the inter-island homogeneity assumption, has generated three broad explanatory mechanisms for kula: resource re-distribution, social solidarity, and prestige competition.

All three of these interpretations have many good points, yet none of them nor any combination of them can capture more than a small part of the dynamic nature of the kula. Jerry Leach (1983:5,8) says:

> Even if one has an omniscient understanding of the rules and patterns of the transactional complex called the kula, the question of the motive force underlying it all remains. ... (N)one of the existing interpretations offer more than a partial explanation for the kula and the

academic debate badly needs rekindling with fresh evidence and insight.

7 Resource Re-distribution

Many analysts begin with the assumption that the kula exchange system is needed in the Massim because the area lacks a centralized authority structure. The kula, functioning as a self-renewing, treaty-like contract between the various cultural groups, keeps the peace and permits trade between the normally hostile groups (e.g., Rivers 1926, Fortune 1932, Malinowski 1935, Uberoi 1962, Lauer 1970, Rogers 1970, and Brookfield & Hart 1971). According to the resource re-distribution explanation, the kula acts as a protective umbrella under whose cover the people of the Massim area can trade with each other. The kula provides the people with the security they need, in an otherwise hostile region, to trade for the ecological resources which are differentially distributed throughout the varied island ecologies.

The islands do have varied ecologies. Some of the islands are of volcanic origin and some are coral atolls. Many of the islands lack clay for pottery or proper shells and feathers for ornamentation. Other islands lack the best types of trees and lashing-vines for building and repairing canoes, and a few islands are deficient in some types of food resources. Within the Trobriand Islands, for example, there is an absence of such indispensable raw

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7. The first three sections of this chapter rely primarily on Jerry Leach's (1983:5-8) analysis of the kula.

materials as clay, rattan, bamboo, and sago which they acquire from the Dobuans while on the kula expeditions (Young 1979:178). Murua is dependent on Kitava for yams. Vakuta, Dobu, and Dumasila trade with each other for sago and yams. The Amphlett Islanders earn their living by pottery manufacturing, but since their island lacks clay suitable for pottery they must import the clay from the Fergusson Island people (Rogers 1970:88). On many of the smaller islands the population density is high in relation to the amount of cultivatable land which can lead to a food shortage when the island is struck by one of the periodic droughts of several months duration. During droughts the people on the islands that lack sufficient food resources must trade for food with the people on the other islands that have plenty.

The resource re-distribution explanation for the kula has many weaknesses. There are regular occurrences of non-kula trade between communities within the kula network, as well as between the kula communities and their neighboring non-kula peoples. Thus the necessity for trade should be sufficient impetus in and of itself to allow the trade to take place without the overhead of a massive exchange system in "useless" materials. There are also other islands in the Massim that also lack crucial natural resources (e.g., Fergusson and Normanby Islands), and yet the people choose not to take part in the kula.

Another difficulty for the resource re-distribution explanation is the involvement in the kula of people who do not need to trade and yet take part. The resource re-distribution explanation does not

account for the presence in the kula system of some islands rich in indigenous resources with little need to engage in inter-island trade.

The resource distribution also cannot explain the participants' central concern with the "useless" armshells and necklaces, as well as being unable to explain many of the other structural constraints in the kula, such as why the valuables must be traded in only specific directions.

The resource re-distribution explanation is static and cannot handle the dynamic nature of the kula. There is no room left for individuals to be involved in the kula to pursue non-economic goals and aspirations. The function of the kula is to allow the people to trick themselves into doing what is best for themselves. They are using the kula as a cover under which they can trade for the natural resources that their own islands lack. This explanation may be useful for some of the overseas exchanges, but it probably does not work for many of the inland kula exchanges.

Social Solidarity

The social solidarity explanation is similar to, but much broader than the resource re-distribution explanation. Both explanations focus on the lack of a centralized authority structure in the Massim and state that this lack is a serious difficulty for the people of the region. The kula allows the people of the Massim area to interact with each other in ways that would be impossible without

it. The social solidarity explanation is, in Jerry Leach's (1983:7,8) words:

> ... Durkheimian. It suggests that the exchange of kula valuables is an externalized, concrete expression of an abstraction, the valued network of person-to-person relationships which constitute the social order. The prestations exhibit an ongoing dialectic: on the one hand the oppositions Ego and Alter, We and They, Value-givers and Value-receivers, Living and Dead; on the other the temporary mediation of these oppositions through the assertion of mutual relationship.

This line of argument states that the exchanges of "useless" but symbolic objects help to hold society together. The kula makes the social world safer and allows the people of the Massim to accomplish a wider range of human ends than would otherwise be possible. Malinowski (1922), Mauss (1925), Fortune (1932), Evans-Pritchard (1951), Firth (1957), Polyani (1957), Uberoi (1962), Blau (1964), Ekeh (1974) and Weiner (1976) use this theme for interpreting kula exchanges.

The social solidarity interpretation explains the high social value given to the shells by the participants. The Trobriand Islanders feel that the valuables have great intrinsic worth, as well their system-communal value. This interpretation also explains why the valuables remain in the system to be reused in kula exchanges which in turn explains the constant-circulation attribute of the kula and the strong tendency to conserve the objects being exchanged. The symbolic load of each of the named kula valuables is so heavy that trying to make substitutes for these named and honored valuables would be unacceptable. The internal social-exchange uses of kula valuables (e.g., at marriage and mortuary ceremonies) are also explained when a

valuable's intrinsic worth is combined with its community level significance.

One weakness of this interpretation is that it can run counter to seeing the kula as a mode of prestige acquisition (the next explanation) where the valuables and the interactions are manipulated for personal gain. A second weakness is the assumption that all the kula participants place as high a value on the kula articles as everyone assumes they do. Also, there are many kula valuables that are not among the most valuable and these would not have the same social value as the top-ranked vaygu'a such as Nanoula or Bulwida. Expansionary transactions, chicanery, competitiveness, and sorcery are not uncommon, but would all seem to be "deviant" activity in the social solidarity framework. All of these aspects of kula exchanges are salient to the participants and their occurrence is not that uncommon. Furthermore, this interpretation provides no explanation for the ranking of the shells. There is no need for one shell or necklace to be perceived as much more valuable than another.

The social solidarity explanation also cannot explain why there are neighboring non-kula peoples in the kula region. The non-kula people should have the same need of social solidarity as those who are part of the kula and in many instances they interact with the kula people, yet have chosen not to become part of the kula. If one of the driving forces behind the development of a system such as the kula was to maintain social solidarity, then it should involve the Fergusson Island people because of their high level of interaction with the Dobuans. This interpretation does not explain why almost all women as

well as many men who live in the kula area do not participate as transactors in the system. The social solidarity explanation is a static functional explanation that does not do justice to the dynamic nature of the kula.

Prestige Competition

The prestige competition interpretation states that the kula is an outlet for the competitive nature of the people in the Massim area. Jerry Leach (1983:6-7) says that the people of the Massim require the kula to act as a release for their competitive natures. The kula gives the people a safe forum to compete against one another without running the risk of open violence. Mauss 1925, Uberoi 1962, Belshaw 1965, Ekeh 1974, Weiner 1976 have also used the prestige competition explanation.

The kula exchange system is very competitive and does seem to be about prestige or "name" everywhere, although in varying degrees and possibly with differing cultural purposes, from community to community. This interpretation fits well with the participants' investment of time, energy and resources, the striving after the highest-ranked shells, and the continued maintenance of the kula system. Since the competitive forum will always be needed, then it must be maintained. The prestige competition interpretation fits well with the tendency in kula communities for the village leaders to be the major participants handling more shells with more partners. The village leaders would be the ones with the most reason to want to

maintain their positions at the top of the prestige pile by being the best in this competitive arena.

The prestige competition interpretation explains why some kula transactors expand their place in the system, their number of partnerships, and the flow of valuables through their hands. The prestige interpretation also helps to explain the almost exclusively male participation in the kula system. It places the kula in the familiar arena of male competitive systems for the acquisition of wealth, power and prestige.

The prestige interpretation suggests an explanation for the complex inter-ranking of shells and for the problem of why men tend to enter the kula with low-ranking valuables and move up the rank hierarchy over time. There needs to be some way to keep score and the acquisition or loss of the variously ranked valuables does this very well. Finally, the competition interpretation fits with the common Melanesian egalitarian social premise that each man is as powerful as every other. This explanation is the only one of the three traditional explanations that captures some of the dynamic nature of the kula.

The prestige competition interpretation also has limitations. It does not explain some of the structural rules of the kula such as: the opposite-flow rule for the direction of travel of the kula valuables; the delayed exchange with continuous-debt partnerships; or the ideal of reciprocal equivalence in kula transactions. All of these key elements of the kula would seem to hinder the pursuit of maximum prestige by slowing down the velocity of the status-acquiring

transactions.

A second major problem with the prestige competition explanation is that many men in kula areas choose not to participate and many of the men who are active practice a non-expansionary, steady-state mode of exchange over long periods, even their entire kula careers.

This interpretation also presupposes that kula prestige stands at the apex of all modes of prestige acquisition in the entire kula region. Jerry Leach (1983) says this is an assumption rather than an established fact. For example, there is a gardening competition over who can grow the biggest and best yams and this competition is highly competitive. It has not been empirically demonstrated that the kula is a better forum for status acquisition than the gardening competition. The fact that there are other places such as gardening where the people can play the face-to-face competitive games that the kula is supposed to prevent is also problematic for this explanation. Death by sorcery can be involved in kula and gardening when one person is more successful than a rival so neither institution prevents violence, but simply changes how the game is played.

Moreover, this interpretation has difficulty explaining why the formation of alliances among partners who are geographically distant is a more efficient mechanism for generating competitive prestige than alliances with people who are much closer at hand. Intuitively, it seems that bonds closer to home might be expected to produce more support, more resources, and more valuables faster than alliances with remote partners. Also, there are some kula exchanges where prestige does not play any role such as when an older, established kula man

exchanges with a young man to help him get started in the kula. Overall, this explanation starts to capture some of the dynamic nature of the kula, but it is too simplistic in assuming that prestige is the main or single motivating factor in kula exchanges. People get involved for a variety of reasons as they strive to achieve a multiplicity of personal goals. Prestige acquistion is probably only one of them.

The Social Cognition Explanation

Multi-dimensionality

In this thesis I propose that a social cognition approach can be utilized to gain new insight and understanding into the kula by looking at the participants as dynamic individuals. Some analysts who follow the ecological explanation for why the kula exists tend to treat the participants at a simplistic, superficial level as dupes who require a cultural subterfuge to protect themselves from themselves while pursuing their economic interests. The social solidarity theorists tend to treat the kula participants as social organisms who are seeking a means of drawing closer together. The prestige competition theorists tend to depict the kula men as single-minded prestige maximizers. None of these three explanations captures the multi-dimensionality of the kula as Malinowski presented it in the concluding chapter of Argonauts.

According to Malinowski (1922:513) the kula is, "a new type of phenomenon, lying on the borderland between the commercial and the ceremonial and expressing a complex and interesting attitude of mind." In the final chapter of Argonauts Malinowski (1922:509) says, "We shall now put aside the magnifying glass of detailed examination and look from a distance at the subject of our enquiry, take in the whole institution with one glance, let it assume a definite shape before us." It was not just the ecological, social, or psychological dimensions of kula analysis that interested him, although he spent most of the book detailing these dimensions. The picture that Malinowski presents in his final chapter is one of a multi-dimensional institution where complex people are involved in many types of interactions with each other. Malinowski's people are not one-dimensional economic rationalizers, but are complex and multi-facetted as he demonstrated throughout his eight book Trobriand corpus. In the concluding chapter of Argonauts he argues against the flattening out of people (Malinowski 1922:516):

> At one or two places in the previous chapters, a somewhat detailed digression was made in order to criticise the view about the economic nature of primitive man, ... the conception of a rational being who wants nothing but to satisfy his simplest needs and does it according to the economic principle of least effort. This economic man always knows exactly where his material interests lie and makes for them in a straight line. ... Now I hope that whatever the meaning of the Kula might be for Ethnology, for the general science of culture, the meaning of the Kula will consist in being instrumental to dispell such crude, rationalistic conceptions of primitive mankind, and to induce both the speculator and the observer to deepen the analysis of economic facts.

Not all the analysts who have followed Malinowski and studied the kula have followed his injunction against making one-dimensional

assumptions about the nature of the kula people.

The multi-dimensionality of the kula is seen in the interdependence of each individual's action and the social structure in which the interaction takes place. Social structure enters into all interactions because it gives the history and rules that individuals use to govern their interaction. At the same time as people are using the rules of interaction, these rules can be either regenerated or changed by the people involved in the interaction. Structure enables the people to replicate old interaction patterns while not preventing them from innovating new ones; yet it constrains the interaction to help maintain intelligibility for the participants. The structure is not simply a barrier to action, but rather it is essential to the production and reproduction of action by the kula men in their exchanges.

The social structure does not work behind the backs of the actors who produce and reproduce it, but is reconstituted and/or can be modified in each kula exchange. This duality of structure (both reproduced and generated new) is one part of the rules and resources that are drawn on by the kula men in the production of their interactions. The kula exchange system is an abstraction and as such does not have purposes, reasons or needs -- only the kula participants have these. Thus, the kula, a "key cultural institution,"[8] is a forum iocatable in time and space where people exchange vaygu'a by

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8. The concept of a "key cultural institution" has been developed over the past few years by D. Young, University of Alberta, as a way of relating historical, structural and psychological variables within the context of a specific situation.

playing a very personally involving game.

For the people in the kula their exchanges are concrete situations where they can try to achieve their own self-interests by meeting some needs that they feel are unsatisfied in other cultural interactions. The men in the kula are assumed to be competent members of their cultures who know how to kula just as they know how to be involved in their other cultural institutions. They have the ability to actively seek to manufacture situations that will allow them to be highly engaged and involved. The competence assumption does not imply that the kula men have a complete understanding of all aspects of the institution and their interactions. There is room left for unintended consequences of their actions. The competence assumption simply means that the kula participants know the rules and are moved by a variety of motivating factors to act in a manner that each individual feels will satisfy some need or desire he has. For example, one transaction may be best explained as a man trying to win great prestige while another transaction may be best interpreted as a man helping his son to get started in the kula. Both transactions are kula exchanges, yet the motive force underlying them is different.

Individuality

In place of Malinowski's (1922:511) confident assertion that the kula is "an exchange of an entirely novel type" Edmond Leach (1983) says that while the various systems which the inhabitants of the Massim area (as well as many anthropologists) lump together under the

label "kula" bear a family resemblance to each other, there is probably no single feature which is common to them all. I agree with Edmond Leach's (1983:536,537) summary:

> There is no such thing as "The Kula." It is rather that in the geographical zone which has come to be regarded as the kula area there is a certain general similarity about the ways in which non-utilitarian 'valuables, consisting of such things as armshells, shell necklaces, boars' tusks, stone adze-blades,' and the like are 'traded around'. ... The Kula 'game' is played in different ways in different parts of the map even though the "pieces" with which it is played are, for the most part, the same.

For Edmond Leach (1983:530) the ethnographic contributions in the kula literature demonstrate that the kula, as observed by Malinowski and others, is actually "part of a huge spectrum of possible ways of doing more or less the same kind of thing" and not a single, unified, and pan-island institution. The extant kula literature does not show that there is anything necessarily fundamentally the same about all the institutions that have been lumped together and called the "kula ring."

Edmond Leach warns us not to assume, as Malinowski did and many other anthropologists do, that a synthetic totality, THE KULA, can be pieced together from components derived from reports from different islands. For Edmond Leach the assumption that the kula can be treated as a thing-in-itself derives from the reification of Malinowski's model of a "kula ring." Many analysts not only assume that the "ring" really exists, but that this existence is somehow crucially relevant for our understanding of the kula. This assumption of the importance of the "ring" aspect of kula analysis seems to me to be a fallacy.

I agree with Edmond Leach that the belief in the existence of a

"kula ring" by the participants is primarily the expression of a model of asymmetrical exchange; whether the "ring" really exists or not is for the most part irrelevant. No one doubts that certain high-ranking kula valuables do indeed move around a circular path as Malinowski (1922) describes and Damon (1980) demonstrates, but it is the underlying structures in the participating cultures that are of importance and these individual island cultural structures do not necessarily bear any relation to each other.

Because there are cultural differences on the islands where people kula, there can be differences between the kula participants from different cultures (Trobriand Islanders are not the same as Dobuans) in the meanings they perceive and attribute to the exchanges. Historically there is some reason as to why some Trobriand Islanders are in the kula and others are not, or why the people of Fergusson and Goodenough Islands are not of the exchange system. Edmond Leach (1983:531) says anthropologists should be interested in identifying "which particular differences between Trobriand and Goodenough culture (which are in many ways very similar) tie in with the fact that Trobriand men engage in kula and Goodenough men do not."

To explain the surface similarity Edmond Leach uses the game of chess. Leach (1983:530) asks the question, "Why is chess played like that?" He answers his question by saying, "Not because it was specially efficient for any particular purpose but because people found it was fun to play." If an analyst wants to understand why the rules of kula exchange exist in their present form, the answer can

only be found in history. To Edmond Leach it makes no sense to ask why the various Massim people play the game of kula as they do while continuing to invent new variations. The rules are in their present form simply because people have found it fun and/or convenient to have them this way and not because this set of rules makes for the most efficient kula exchange network.

The configuration of rules that exists at any given time, is the result of a trapping condition generated by the forces inside and outside the kula. A chance set of circumstances happens, and this set of circumstances equilibriates at some point where the internal and external forces are dynamically balanced. This balance of forces has boundaries and borders which are the conservative elements in the system. The dynamic processes are maintained in the trapped state by feedback loops. The same trapping principle that works to keep the kula active and functioning can be seen in the interactions between people at the level of culture.

Cultures are an example of a trapping phenomenon, i.e., they represent a specific configuration of self-sustaining forces. The forces are dynamically balanced and the boundaries are elastic. As long as no inside or outside forces are able to cause a change in the boundary conditions of the cultural unit (stretch the boundary beyond its elastic limit), the culture remains viable.

Changes that result from a shift in forces can have unintended consequences (good or bad). When an insider of the group innovates a change, the other people can accept or reject the change. They make this decision on the basis of their understanding of the change and

its consequences. They can decide to reject the innovation and maintain the status quo, or they can try to assimilate the innovation. If the innovation is too major a strain for the existing matrix, then the configuration of forces inside and outside the group will shift into a new balance. As well, if a group of people that represents one configuration of forces is impacted by a stronger group with another configuration of forces, then the first group is in danger of having their existing cultural matrix destroyed and may collapse as a semi-autonomous unit.

Although he did not call it such, Kroeber (1948:51) described culture as a trapped state when he discussed how cultural propensities become established and then effectively exclude alternatives, even when some of the alternatives appear to be viable from a practical standpoint. In other words, the mechanism of trapping is such that the inner tension of the trapped system resists outside forces such that the inner forces conserve and defend the established cultural patterns and practices.

Summary

In the first half of this chapter the three traditional explanations for the kula were presented. The resource re-distribution explanation states that the kula acts as a self-renewing, treaty-like contract which protects the people so they can move throughout the Massim area to trade for the ecological resources they need. The social solidarity explanation is similar,

but broader in that it allows the individuals in the Massim freedom to interact in many ways that would not be possible without the kula because there is no central governmental structure in the Massim. The prestige competition explanation says that the people of the Massim use the kula as a forum for venting their aggressive, competitive tendencies in a situation that can diffuse face-to-face competition and violence. I have argued that each of these explanations does have strengths and weaknesses, but overall they leave a considerable amount of kula behavior and interaction unexplained.

In the second section of the chapter I argued that the kula is a multi-dimensional institution. The three traditional explanations tend to reduce the kula to a uni-dimensional institution and this over-simplifies what is involved in the kula. I also argued that the kula is not necessarily the same throughout the Massim.

Chapter Four

BACKGROUND THEORY

Anthropology

Freud is generally considered to be a founding father in the motivation area. His psychoanalytic theory of personality gave researchers a specific structure to work with. One of the main cross-cultural elements in his theory was the primacy and universality of the Oedipus complex. In a book called Totem and Taboo, Freud (1919) developed a theory that accounted for the origins of the incest taboo. His scenario involved a primitive group of people at some time long, long ago. The sons had banded together and killed their father who had been keeping all the women for himself. Later the sons felt great remorse for their crime and renounced their claim on the fruits of the murder, giving rise to the incest taboo. Some anthropologists like Malinowski (1927) questioned both the historic facts and the universality of a communal complex like the one Freud had delineated.

Malinowski's findings from the Trobriand Islands seemed to challenge Freud's Oedipal complex. Hostility was directed against the maternal uncle instead of the father, and the dominant incest taboo was not toward the mother but to the sister. Malinowski said that this rearrangement could not result in the Freudian Oedipus complex, but in a different kind of nuclear arrangement. One of Freud's disciples, Roheim (1932), challenged Malinowski's interpretation of the Trobriand data. Roheim felt that Malinowski was not a trained psychoanalyst and that Malinowski's data did, in fact, fit the

Freudian model which requires two things: rebellion against an authority figure (the role the maternal uncle plays in Trobriand society), and an incestuous longing for a socially unattainable sex object represented by the strongest taboo (the sister in Trobriand society). The Roheim/Malinowski debate raised the issue of cultural relativism (all cultures are different and need to be analyzed within their own frames of reference) versus the psychic unity of mankind (people are fundamentally the same the world over).

In Freud's model, culture is a device to manipulate the environment in order to satisfy instinctual drives. Culture is the projection of the individual's blocked instinctual drives. It is a secondary system that allows the id impulses to be expressed through the ego in a manner that is approved of by the superego. Data is collected on people's dreams, slips of the tongue, casual remarks -- all the standard techniques utilized by Freud in his studies in Europe. Data is also collected on general cultural aspects such as art, myths, language, early child-rearing techniques, etc. Childrearing practices and the symbolic systems are observed in various cultural milieus and are analyzed to see how they help the individuals in the various cultural settings to satisfy their instinctual drives. A gradual shift can be seen in the early 1930's in the anthropological literature as researchers began to see culture as a more powerful force on the individual. In reviewing the area of cross-cultural psychoanalytic studies, Kline (1977) notes that there are both successes and failures.

The psychoanalytic perspective continued to be the major

theoretical stance for theorists interested in motivational questions after the 1930's, but with a twist. Kardiner (1939, 1945) added the concept of basic personality to anthropological theory while working with anthropologists like Cora DuBois. He felt that the individual's early childhood experiences were of crucial importance in determining adult personality. It was assumed that everyone in a given culture was exposed to similar types of child-rearing experiences. Therefore, the same basic personality type should be found in all adults in any given culture. Kardiner's basic personality was this shared configuration of personality traits resulting from shared early childhood experiences and attitudes. Singer (1961:29) considered Kardiner's concept of the basic personality structure as, "an important milestone because it was one of the first systematic and explicit attempts to apply a modified psychoanalytic approach to different cultures." The researchers during this period were also interested in studying all the institutions in each culture. These institutions were assumed to have two purposes: (1) anxiety reduction (in the psychoanalytic sense) to help the individual satisfy his instinctual drives in an acceptable manner; (2) the socialization of the individual to mold him or her into the desired form.

Kardiner's theory was applied by anthropologists like Margaret Mead, Ruth Benedict and other cultural configurationists in their "National Character Studies"[9] of both small and very large societies. It was assumed that each society could be characterized in terms of a

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9. See Inkeles and Levinson (1968) for a review of the National Character Studies.

typical personality and that these characterizations could be compared. Benedict said culture was a learned solution to the problems that confronted a particular group, and that each cultural solution was unique. It was not considered sufficient to merely catalogue the details of cultural diversity. Collecting a trait list was just a step toward determining the flavor and pattern of the culture. This patterning or "cultural configuration" was expected to be found in technologically simple and advanced societies. Mead and others devised methods for analyzing literature, films, newspapers and government propaganda. Recent immigrants, refugees etc. could be interviewed and psychologically tested because it was assumed that any member of a society was an equally good source of data about his or her culture.

Around 1950, the study area of culture and personality went into a decline. It was realized that some of the fundamental principles underlying this research were not valid.[10] There had been a growing realization that the relationship between culturally mediated socialization experience and the resulting personality is neither as powerful, nor as simple, as the enthusiasts of the culture and personality approach had supposed. They had envisaged a single personality type characteristic of a single culture. The simplistic notion is questionable even in its application to small-scale, nontechnological groups (Wallace 1970), and is easily reduced to absurdity when extended to the cultures of the large-scale, modern,

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10. Bock (1980) gives a good discussion of the five invalid assumptions that were common in the field prior to 1950: continuity, uniformity, causality, projection and objectivity.

nation state like Canada, Italy, Japan, etc. Obtrusive reality in the form of intragroup variability within all large-scale national cultures, including such countries as Canada and the United States of America, did much to dampen the enthusiasm for and to usher in disenchantment with research on national character.

As well as overestimating uniformity in their dependent variables, personality dimensions, and patterns, the early proponents of the culture-personality approach probably erred in their estimates of the uniformity of the effects of socialization. The traditional view proceeded from the assumption of one set of culturally prescribed socialization practices. This assumption may have been acceptable in the Alorese (Du Bois 1944), but is questionable in its application to Great Russians (Gorer & Rickman 1949).

The cultural configurationists also fell prey to a more subtle difficulty -- to what Wrong (1961) calls the "oversocialized conception of mankind." This is the lost distinction between what is intended by the socialization process and what is the final result. This gap is particularly true in the case of modern ideologically governed societies. There is a great deal of "slippage" between the cultural blueprint for creating a new "Soviet Man" (Bauer 1952) and the means of bringing about this goal. The relationship between culture and personality can only be approximated, probabilistic and complex; yet it was expected to have results that were definite and simple.

The recognition of these difficulties and of the inaccurate assumptions was the impetus for researchers to develop new methods to

study personality, behavior and culture. These new methods encompassed an increased awareness of biology and ecology, as well as the situational and linguistic determinants of behavior.

In the 1950's, psychologists Clark Hull and John Dollard and anthropologists George Murdock and John Whiting were instrumental in developing the cross-cultural correlational approach. Hull had worked on a systematic theory of learning and Dollard wanted to tie Freud's insights into this general theory of learning. Murdock initiated the Human Relations Area Files at Yale through his interest in worldwide comparisons of technological and social systems. Whiting felt that anthropology needed an adequate theory of how culture was learned and that anthropologists had failed to gather the kinds of data on which a theory of socialization could be tested. He wanted to apply Murdock's cross-cultural methods to the study of socialization as a solution to the crisis in culture and personality studies.

In Whiting's model, personality is treated as an intervening variable that comes between cultural customs like child-rearing practices and the adult behaviors as described in ethnographies. An analog for this view would be the learning experiments in psychology which use a stimulus-response or "black box" apprbach. Since most of these learning experiments are done on animals, it is usually impossible to measure ideational or any other cognitive processes which intervene between the organism's perceiving a stimulus and making a response to it. The analogy for Whiting's work is that child-rearing customs are regarded as being the stimuli, adult beliefs as the ultimate response, and personality as the intervening black box

which cannot be directly assessed, only inferred. If cross-cultural data could be used to test hypotheses about the relationship between child training and adult personality, it might be possible to validate the continuity assumption and to decide between equally plausible theories of causation.

It was in the 1960's and 1970's that "cognition" became one of the main theoretical orientations in anthropology. Researchers began using models borrowed from linguistics to study how people organize, categorize, and structure their knowledge. Ethnosemantics was one form of cognitive study that was developed in anthropology. This approach holds that the most fruitful study comes through understanding native systems of meaning through language - ethnosemantics. Spradley, Hymes, Goodenough, Frake, and other ethnosemanticists set themselves the goal of understanding how cultural knowledge is organized through studying semantic domains (e.g., kinship terms, disease categories, color terminologies) and attempting to explain the relationships among terms. The ethnosemantic researchers were also comparing the structure of semantic domains within and across languages, seeking to understand how people used cultural knowledge to interpret behavior and make decisions. One of the techniques used was called componential analysis. The principles of contrast and inclusion are applied to a given domain to determine a person's cognitive categories. Opponents of this linguistic approach felt it was sterile and time-consuming, while yielding only static and normative results.

Starting in the early 1970's, anthropologists like Spradley started modeling people as actors and game players who follow flexible rules. These researchers merged static cognitive anthropology with dynamic sociological theory such as symbolic interactionism and ethnomethodology. People were now modeled as rational game players who could and would manipulate their cultural systems. People were no longer seen as determined by their cultures (cf., Mead, Benedict) or by unconscious and irrational forces within themselves (cf., Freud). Information processing models became popular as did the research into people's subjective meanings. Socially constructed reality, and culture as a human invention that constantly undergoes change became common assumptions.

Researchers like Michael Cole and his colleagues have pioneered several lines of investigation that are helpful in unravelling the complex relationship between culture and cognition. This line of research has strong implications because cognition and information processing are very important in anthropology at the present time. Cole's approach can be categorized as either experimental anthropology or ethnographic psychology. He and others like him have formed a bridge between psychology and anthropology where both disciplines can benefit.

This review brings anthropological theory up to the point of having a cognitive focus. It is now time to switch to psychology and trace the development of motivational and cognitive theory in the

discipline.

Psychology

Psychology has also been developing various models for motivation and cognition. In the early 1950's psychologists assumed that people were consistency seekers who were internally motivated to rationalize. People were thought to use cognitive means to justify their actions to themselves. That is, people were motivated to maintain consistency within their belief systems, as well as between their belief systems and their actions. Festinger's (1957) cognitive dissonance theory is an example of this consistency model. According to Festinger (1957) people hold a number of cognitions simultaneously and these cognitions form one of three relationships with each other: (1) consonant: one cognition logically follows from the other (e.g., it is raining, take an umbrella); (2) irrelevant: one cognition has no bearing on the other (e.g., it is raining, it is Tuesday); (3) dissonant: one cognition follows from the opposite of the other (e.g., it is raining, do not take an umbrella). Festinger states that people feel an unpleasant psychological tension when they realize they hold dissonant cognitions. This tension has drive-like qualities motivating a person to seek to reduce his or her inner tension. People can reduce their cognitive dissonance (the inner tension) by: (1) changing one of the dissonant cognitions (e.g., it is raining, take an umbrella after all); (2) adding another cognition (e.g., it is raining, do not take an umbrella, I like to walk in the rain); (3) alter the importance of one of the dissonant cognitions (e.g., it is

raining; do not take an umbrella, it is only a little way to the car). The consistency seeker model is motivational and cognitive: motivational in that it assumes purposive behavior to generate the tension reduction; cognitive in that it represents the social world in the form of cognitive attitudes.

Researchers began to question the consistency seeker model when they questioned the consistency principle itself. Researchers found that people can maintain high degrees of inconsistency between their attitudes and behaviors. For example, Taylor (1981:191) says, "People compartmentalize sufficiently that they simply fail to perceive inconsistencies where, to an outside observer, an inconsistency clearly exists." Other theories such as self-perception, self-presentation and other impression management theories explain the same data.

The next model of motivated cognition in psychology was a much tighter formulation than the broad-spectrum consistency theories. The new model assumed that people were naive scientists and rational problem-solvers instead of rationalizing face-savers. Social behavior results from rational, although not infallible, thought processes that use information processing strategies. Mistakes can be made in the process, but these tend to be caused by motivational and emotional interference in the rational cognitive system. Kelley's (1967) attribution theory is a good example of a theory of this type. Kelley's attributional theory says that people sift the data they abstract from the environment to try to determine the causal relationships in the phenomena they witness. People infer causation

to behavior (both their own and the behavior of others) based on one of two criteria: stable dispositions within people themselves (e.g., "he is dumb" or "she is smart"); stable properties in the environment (e.g., he failed the examination because it was very difficult -- everyone else in the class also failed the same examination).

The attributional theories assume that people are impartial scientists who objectively abstract data from the environment, but Tversky and Kahneman (1974, 1981) have demonstrated that this is not always the case. In their work, Tversky and Kahneman have documented examples of how people use mental shortcuts and heuristics to make judgments. Taylor (1981:194) says, "individuals seem to make judgments much more quickly using much less information and showing much clearer biases than had been thought." Miller and Ross (1975) and Ross (1977), as well as others have done work during the period in psychology that Taylor (1981:194) calls, "the errors and biases period."

The third model of how people organize and utilize their knowledge assumes that people are cognitive misers (Taylor 1981). People are not naive scientists who optimize their information processing situations, but rather are people who seek a "satisfactory" explanation. The explanation a person provides himself or herself does not have to be the "right" one, as might be given by an objective third-party observer to an interaction. The answer need only satisfy the individual. People use cognitive short cuts that produce decisions and judgments efficiently and fairly accurately. It is thought that people use these short cuts (heuristics) when faced with

too much data to handle or when they do not have enough time to process the data properly. Dawes (1976) reports that people believe that they are combining a great deal of information in a complex way, when they are in fact making decisions on the basis of one or two highly salient cues, which they do not weigh in the ways they report they are weighing them. Taylor and Fiske (1978) show that in an impression formation task, people seem to latch on to one or two salient cues which swamp all the other cues and form the basis for the impression.

Summary

Anthropology and psychology theorists have tried a variety of motivational/cognitive models during the twentieth century. In general, the models began with a strong motivational component, but this element has tended to be reduced and the cognitive component has been strengthened in its place. For example, the cognitive miser model works well and explains a great deal of the data on how people seem to process their cognitive worlds, but it lacks a strong motivational dimension. The social cognition model proposed in the next chapter adds the motivational element to the information processing and decision-making cognitive miser model, to round it out.

Chapter Five

SOCIAL COGNITION

Overview of Social Cognition

That there should be an interface between motivation and cognition (a person's desire to operate on the world and his understanding of it) is not a new idea (e.g., Lewin et al 1944, Bruner & Tagiuri 1954, Kelly 1955, Zajonc 1980, Jung 1981, Lazarus 1982, Showers & Cantor 1985). Showers and Cantor (1985), in reviewing the social cognition literature, say that much of social cognition is motivated. They report that motivational elements such as mood and goals affect people's ability to see the possibility of multiple interpretations of an event or situation, to take active processing control, to make changes in their knowledge repertoires, and to be responsive emotionally and cognitively to situational contingencies.

Zajonc (1980) makes a case for the existence of separate, parallel, and interacting processes of cognition and affect. He states that people have a dynamic mental system composed of cognitive and affective parts that operate on different types of data: discriminanda are processed by the cognitive system; perferenda are processed by the affective system. For Zajonc, the output of this dynamic mental system is a function of the interconnections between the affective and cognitive processes. Reykowski (1982:148) says Zajonc's model is really one system with two modes of operation: "it operates as an information-processing device and as a source of affective states (and desires)." At any moment the system can be

operating in either mode.

Reykowski (1982) is correct about cognition and motivation being two modes of one system,[11] but he needs to push his argument further. He needs to add the decision process as an integral part of the information-processing and affective processes, with feedback between all three. The decision-making process should not be a separate segment that merely receives the output from the interacting cognitive and motivational systems. An individual's mental process, social cognition, is a three-part system of cognition, motivation and decision all interacting with each other. People are cognitive managers of this three-part mental system.

Many studies have demonstrated the interactions between the three internal processes that comprise social cognition (Showers & Cantor 1985). People use specific self-presentation and communication strategies to gain the particular goals they are motivated to reach (Higgins 1981, Jones & Pittman 1982, Schlenker 1982). The motivational factor of mood states affects decision strategies such that those strategies which will perpetuate the mood are picked (Abramson et al 1978, Isen et al 1982). Decision strategies can and will change in line with situational contingencies and individual goals (self-control, Mischel 1983; achievement strategies, Kuhl 1984; self-defeating and depressive strategies, Lewinsohn et al 1980).

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11. A car with a four-speed stickshift transmission is an example of a system with more than one characteristic way of operating. The output of the car, measured as speed and power, can vary greatly depending on which of the four gears the car is in. The highest speed attainable in first gear is much less than when the car is in fourth gear, but the power available in the first gear is greater.

In stating a general theory of action, Jung (1981) posits the three-part complex mental system that has been described above.[12] It is through the process of cognition that people orient themselves and acquire their understanding of the world. During the motivational process the internal and external forces acting on an individual are considered. The decision process is the decision-making system where risk factors are calculated, assigned to the various behavioral options and a decision made on which option to use. Each of these three processes has the output of the other two as inputs which it uses cybernetically for dynamic regulation. At any given time a person's behavior results from the interlocking responses of these three processes. All three aspects of the social cognition process are highlighted by Campbell (1983a:205) when she says:

> Playing the "game" of kula involves men in a multitude of choice-situations. Each man who handles a shell in the kula makes choices about relationships with other men; relationships with shells, economic and political relationships, advantage-situations for a man's individual gain. Kula also involves each man in a gamble, resulting from the potential choices available to other men outside his influence.

Process in Social Cognition

It is a truism that people are not born with a specific, complete, and instinctive understanding of their environments (e.g., the social, psychological, ecological, etc.). Their understanding of

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12. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to go into formal explanations and elaborations of each of the three processes.

the world comes as a result of interaction and learning (Piaget 1952). Definiteness (form and structure imputed to the environment by the individual) is a product of the interaction between a person and the environment.[13] By the time children are three or four they are beginning to master a particular language, prefer to eat specific foods and avoid others, are learning to use stereotyped gestures and other forms of acceptable non-verbal behavior.[14] They have internalized a fit among the relationships in their environments that generates harmony, order, and regularity. The underlying process is not limited to children. Although the things that happen to people when they are young have a disproportionate effect on them, people continue to learn throughout their lifetimes. They will have new roles to fill and new skills to acquire (e.g., being a child and then a parent, learning how to walk and then how to handle a kula exchange).

Harris (1975) calls the process of acquiring the specific set of behavioral constraints that typify a "Canadian," "Trobriand Islander," or "Dobuan" enculturation. He defines enculturation as "the process by which individuals -- usually as children -- acquire behavioral patterns and other aspects of their culture from others, through observation, instruction, and adaptation (Harris 1975:662)." Spencer calls this same process socialization. She defines socialization as,

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13. I am making no claims as to the ontological nature of the world. My argument is an epistemological one.

14. There are two sets of tools that people use to operate on the world around them -- didactic and genetic. This thesis is mainly concerned with the didactic set and much less concerned with the genetic set.

"the process of learning the rules for performing in one's society and of acquiring the motives and ambitions to perform properly (Spencer 1976:10)." The process of enculturation heavily impacts on people's cognitive processing. As people gain experiences while growing up, these experiences (both their own and those of others they witness or are told about) are processed, categorized, and stored (Bandura 1969, 1977). It is the process of socialization that shapes people's behavioral repertoires. Consider how people learn to judge what is the appropriate space to leave between themselves and others. There is no biologically pre-determined "proper" space, but people do have a culturally defined category of "proper distance between people" which they fill in with some value. For most North Americans the proper distance to leave between themselves and a business associate they are talking to is about two feet. Latin Americans would feel that two feet was too great a distance and would want to stand closer (Hall & Whyte 1966).

An individual's behavior is constrained by what is a permissible action from the behavioral repertoire he or she has learned. A constraint on action allows greater predictability of future interactions for the individuals themselves and the others they interact with. The interaction rules that people learn while growing up have a strong impact on how they perceive and interact with their surroundings. Even within the fairly homogeneous culture of the Trobriand Islanders, there are differences in enculturation. Malinowski (1935:34,39) reports that generally throughout the province of Kiriwina bush-pig and stingaree are considered to be abominations and are forbidden to the chiefs as a food source. Yet the chiefs of

Sinaketa (the second most important village in the province) eat bush-pig and stingaree and are still accepted as almost equals by the chiefs of Omarakana (the major village in Kiriwina). Across cultures the differences are larger. For example, Trobriand Islanders and Dobuans grow up in different social systems. The Trobriand Islanders have a system of rank and status which the Dobuans do not have in their system. The role of women is given a more prominent place in Dobuan society than it is in the Trobriands. The two groups have very different languages.

After being enculturated (having properly internalized the rules and situations that characterize interaction in that group) a considerable part of a person's cognitive processing can be carried out without conscious cognitive intervention on the part of the individual. Durkheim (1895:6) explains how a person's enculturation process can lead to automated processing:

> (It) becomes immediately evident that all education is a continuous effort to impose on the child ways of seeing, feeling, and acting which he could not have arrived at spontaneously. From the very first hours of life, we compel him to eat, drink, and sleep at regular hours; we constrain him to cleanliness, calmness, and obedience; later we exert pressure upon him in order that he may learn proper consideration for others, respect for customs and conventions, the need for work, etc. If, in time, this constraint ceases to be felt, it is because it gradually gives rise to habits and to internal tendencies that render constraint unnecessary.

People learn a rich symbolic system that structures their social cognition process and constrains their behavior into patterns that are characteristically "Canadian," "Trobriand Islander," or "Dobuan." On a within-group basis people's actions are guided by the meanings given objects (social and physical) as interpreted by others. People

continuously indicate what they intend to do, and what they expect others to do. Meaning arises as individuals interpret the indications of others. The manner of speech, the cut and style of a person's clothes carry meaning for other people. Kultgen (1975:373) says:

> Most actions are social in that the agent interprets others and anticipates how they will interpret and react to this action. Reciprocal responses, cooperative and conflictive, are what bind agents into social units. Consciousness of such relations constitutes situations as social. ... Similar subjective meanings in the separate consciousnesses of interacting agents are the ground for shared definitions (of objects, actions, values, etc.) central to their culture. They are the ground for similarities and complementarities in behavior that compose institutions. Social structure thus is immanent in multiple individual consciousness.

It is this immanent quality to social structure that makes it possible for people to create order and pattern in the social environment. People do not react to the entire environment, but only to specific aspects of it. Culture is, in part, the cognitive schema that enables individuals to abstract information from the environment and endow it with meaning.[15] People look at one another's behavior and impute to that behavior intelligibility, warrantability, and justifiability after imputing meaning to the behavior (Jung 1965). Jung (1965:68-69) says:

> In most theories of behavior, it is regarded as axiomatic that the organism does not respond to the total environment, but to some selected subset of it. It is further assumed that every organism takes an active part in constructing its action-world; it not only selects from the ontological world, but also adds some elements and

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15. The concept of "culture" is possibly one of the broadest concepts in use in the social sciences. Authors like Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1952) have written extensively trying to define and refine it. The way the term culture is used in this thesis is only one of many and not all anthropologists would agree with the definition given.

imposes some, if not all, relations.

People's daily experiences are the raw data from which they piece together their understanding of reality. It is in the arena of social interaction that an individual's experiences become "real" to them. Berger and Kellner's (1970:50), "Marriage and the construction of reality" is a classic example of this line of argument on reality construction. They show how the individuals involved in an institution like marriage "create for the individual the sort of order in which he can experience his life as making sense." Berger and Kellner say that personal experiences only make sense after being mediated socially.[16] A particular cultural system has been developed by its members to provide people with the necessary conceptual tools, like language, to create the coherence and predictability in their world needed by themselves and those with which they are interacting. This arbitrary structure (culture) gives a sense of ontological reality to the daily lives of the people within a given system and this structure is acquired and maintained through social interaction with others within the system.

A cognitive schema like culture is useful to people because it removes some of the freedom of action from the environment. For example, consider a billiard ball, a pool cue, and a person who wants to play billiards. The shooter uses his or her fingers as a constraint to prevent the cue from sliding laterally during a shot.

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16. Making reality constructionistic and problematic raises two questions that are beyond the scope of this thesis: how much active agency do people have in "constructing" social realities, and secondly, how malleable are most "realities" to the activity of the people who are trying to construct them?

The constraint given by the player's fingers is necessary because the shooter wants to have the cue strike the billiard ball in a particular spot. The cue must be constrained if it is to make the ball follow the trajectory the shooter envisions for it. Similarly, an individual's behavior is constrained by culture to the permissible actions which he or she has learned. A constraint on action allows greater predictability of future interactions and gives some protection against disruptive elements, but it does not guarantee that people will not override the constraint and act inappropriately or attempt to change the constraint.

The social structure and social norms that people internalize are not mechanistic determinants of social behavior. Sometimes people choose to disregard norms. Society is not mechanistic to the point where social norms should be treated on the level of natural forces directing the flow the human interaction (Wilson 1983). Behavior is generated by the interplay among multiple factors, including the active motivational elements from within each person, each individual's understanding of the world, the interaction rules of their respective social systems, and the specific context in which the interaction takes place. Economic, political and social structures are ideas and not physical entities. Social roles are not physical pieces that exist ready-made at the start of an interaction. Wilson (1983:107) says:

> Rather, they [social roles] grow and change during the course of the interaction. They might <u>appear</u> to preexist because we normally take role requirements for granted. But if we think about it, we realize that roles are but ideas in our minds about how people in certain situations should behave. The exact meaning of the role, the idea, is always being negotiated.

Berger and Kellner (1970:51-52) summarize the nature of human interaction by saying:

> The process ... is one that constructs, maintains, and modifies a consistent reality that can be meaningfully experienced by the society in which it occurs. Every society has its specific way of defining and perceiving reality -- its world, its universe, its overarching organization of symbols. ... The socially constructed world must be continually mediated to and actualized by the individual, so that it can become and remain indeed his world as well. The individual is given by his society certain decisive cornerstones for his everyday experience and conduct. Most importantly, the individual is supplied with specific sets of typifications and criteria of relevance, predefined for him by the society and made available to him for the ordering of his everyday life.

Structure in Social Cognition

The structural task that faces people is learning how to organize discrete sensory details. Cognitive structuralists (e.g., Piaget 1960, 1971, Piaget & Inhelder 1969, Fodor 1975, Taylor & Crocker 1981, Isen & Hastorf 1982) say people impose meaningful organization on the flux of stimuli they receive from the environment.

People operate on the environment by means of a repertoire of complex cognitive mediators[17] called schemas.[18] A schema is an abstract cognitive structure consisting of large, complex units of

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17. These mediators are separate from language acquisition and language use (Cole & Scribner 1974; Clark & Clark 1977, Slobin 1979).

18. Taylor & Crocker (1981) give descriptions of various conceptions of schema theory as well as experimental evidence for these various conceptions.

knowledge that organize much of what a person knows about general categories like objects, events, and people. Schemas contain all three aspects of the social cognition process: orientation -- general knowledge, specific examples, and information about the relationships among the attributes of a category; motivation (goals, mood, etc.) -- the affective side of the past interactions, the present feelings and the future aspirations; decision -- the behavioral options and their associated risk factors. It is by way of schematic mediators that a person manages his or her cognitive processes -- acquires information about the world, processes it, stores it, and plans actions. People use schemas to organize and categorize knowledge into cognitive structures as they undergo enculturation.

Schema acquisition and modification continues throughout a person's life. As people gain experiences (both personally and vicariously), these experiences are processed, categorized, and stored in and by schemas. People continuously acquire information from the environment and code it (give it meaning) through the complementary processes of assimilation and accommodation (Piaget 1952). The schemas that each individual uses are personally-created (idiosyncratic) and culturally-given (normative).

A person uses schemas to structure the information gained in the social cognition process because the schema minimizes the amount of new information that needs to be processed by bringing old information readily to the man's conscious processing. Schemas have a dual effect on a person: the individual acquires and modifies his or her schemas based on experience, but also and at the same time, the individual's

thinking is heavily influenced by the schemas he or she has already acquired. The new information is perceived and processed through the old schematic filter. Interactions do not happen in cognitive isolation from each other. People have schemas that function to integrate the present with the past and future. If a person has a bad experience where he feels cheated by his kula partner, this will affect the next interaction. This experience with its negative motivational factor of a bad feeling will probably be readily available to the man the next time he sees his partner. The negative experience will slant his interpretation of his partner's actions.

Meaning in Social Cognition

People do not merely react to each other's actions, but respond on the basis of the meanings they attach to each other's actions. Meanings are social products, formed through social interaction in which people construct the social world, then regard their construction as if it were ontologically real (Mead 1934, Blumer 1969, Lauer & Handell 1977). They have internalized conventions and behavioral norms concerning social categories (e.g., social status and roles) which carry enormous cognitive weight. Barrett (1984:56-57) says:

> This is ... one of the outstanding features of human society, this ability to bestow arbitrary meaning on things or acts that the individuals of that society then abide by -- or are constrained by -- just as if the meanings were a part of the "real" world.

According to symbolic interactionists (e.g., Cooley 1902, Mead

1934, Blumer 1969), the meaning that people ascribe to objects develops out of the way the objects are defined for them by others in social interaction. However, situations can and do arise in interactions where actions and their meanings have not previously been defined. Blumer (1969:86) notes:

> ... many other situations may not be defined in a single way by the participating people. In this event, their lines of action do not fit together readily and collective action is blocked. Interpretations have to be developed and effective accommodation of the participants to one another has to be worked out. In the case of such 'undefined' situations, it is necessary to trace and study the emerging process of definition which is brought into play.

Neisser (1976) draws an analogy between a format statement in a computer program and schemas. If there is no format statement for any piece of information, then that piece of information cannot be incorporated into the computer. If there is no commmon interaction schemas between cultural groups, they will not be able to effectively interact with each other. Lauer and Handell (1977:117-119) describe this interactive process of mutual accommodation as achieving a "working consensus." Through negotiation and compromise the individuals or groups in the interaction come to a common definition.

Although the symbolic interactionist perspective emphasizes shared meanings, some research indicates that a consensus on the meaning of roles may not be as common as was previously assumed. Biddle et al (1966) describe a situation they call "pluralistic ignorance" in the role of teachers. Their research on teachers, parents, and pupils revealed that all three groups held a distorted view of public opinion. All three groups stated that members of the

public had more conservative norms than the general public actually reported (Biddle et al 1966). Biddle et al (1966:302) comment:

> ... social relations may often be designed around or benefit from inaccuracies of role perception. At the very least, inaccurate and non-shared perception are not only indigenous to certain forms of social relationships, they are often necessary or desirable.

In an ethnographic study, Braroe (1965) examines the differences in perception by two groups of people. He uses symbolic interactionism to study the interaction between Cree Indians and whites in a southern Saskatchewan community. Braroe reports that the whites perceived the Indians as being childish, unreliable, and worthless. Because of their view of the Cree, the whites tended to excuse and tolerate the Indian's "irresponsible behavior." On the other hand, the Indians saw themselves as smart operators who could successfully exploit the white men. The Cree did not see themselves as childish, unreliable, and worthless, but rather saw themselves as shrewd dealers who were often able to take advantage of whites in business transactions. The two groups interpreted their interactions with each other very differently primarily because they were using disparate meanings and definitions developed through undergoing different enculturation processes.

But what degree of sharing of perceptions is necessary? For Wallace (1970) all that is necessary is that people think they understand enough of what is going on to predict each other's behavior. Wallace (1970:34,35) states that there are times when non-sharing of perceptions and goals is necessary:

> Ritual, for instance, is often differently conceptualized by viewers and performers; public entertainment similarly

> is variously perceived by professional and audience; the doctor (or shaman) and patient relationship demands a mutual misunderstanding. ... If sociocultural organization is not necessarily dependent upon a community of motives or cognitions, then by what psychological mechanism is it achieved and maintained? This mechanism is evidently the perception of partial equivalence structures. By this is implied the recognition -- as the result of learning -- that the behavior of other people under various circumstances is predictable, irrespective of knowledge of their motivation, and thus is capable of being predictably related to one's own action.

Young (nd:3) elaborates on Wallace's point of the necessity of some degree of non-sharing:

> What then <u>is</u> necessary for successful interaction in a given situation? One answer is what might be called <u>congruence</u>. If the individual goals and perceptions of the actors in a given situation are relatively <u>compatible</u>, the situation is characterized by congruence.

Through negotiation and compromise the Trobriand Islanders visiting the Dobuans in a kula exchange come to hold congruent definitions with the Dobuans they are visiting. They have, to some degree, the "congruence" that Young says is necessary for them to interact successfully. The whole area of how people work out their meanings can be studied using the new ethnographic approach and may yield some insight into what is happening in intercultural interactions.

<u>Summary</u>

People cognitively operate on their environments by using a three-part system of social cognition (orientation, motivation, and decision). For people to successfully interact with others (either within or across cultural groups) it is necessary for the people

involved to share some common conceptual ground, i.e., to be able to express their intentions and also to understand the intentions of the other people. There needs to be some commonality in the orientation data bases and decision interaction strategies. The people in an interaction need to be able to: scan the environment; select the important stimuli; retrieve the required data; process the data (attach meanings); use and/or store the data. All these functions happen according to an organized set of rules which must be learned. People acquire these rules (and much more) through the process of enculturation and structure it in abstract cognitive schemas.

One result of enculturation and schematic processing is that people develop hypotheses about how to interact and how interaction works. Their selection criterion are set up in accordance with their hypotheses, which can be culturally based. In general, all members of specific cultural groups know how to interact within their own groups -- they all attend to the same overall kinds of factors. Interaction becomes more difficult when people from different cultures come together because they may be attending to different sets of interaction cues. Some individuals must retrain in order to incorporate a common set of cues into their schemas. At least one of the people will need to revise and develop new interaction hypotheses that will work in the cross-cultural setting.

Chapter Six

SOCIAL COGNITION AND THE KULA

The Traditional Approach

Malinowski's (1922:25) goal for ethnography was, "to realize his (the native's) vision of his (the native's) world." In the introductory chapter of Argonauts he specified three tasks that an ethnographer needs to accomplish to study a culture. The first task is to obtain a general outline of how a culture is structured and how it functions, "the first and basic ideal of ethnographic field-work is to give a clear and firm outline of the social constitution, and disentangle the laws and regularities of all cultural phenomena (1922:10)." Accomplishing the first task gives the ethnographer the "skeleton of the culture, so to speak, of the tribal constitution, but it lacks flesh and blood (1922:17)." The second task is to flesh-out the skeleton by collecting data on the "imponderabilia of actual life (1922:18)." The ethnographer is to give data on "typical details of intercourse, the tone of their behavior in the presence of one another (1922:20)." The third task is to collect data on how the people think and feel. "The third commandment of field-work runs: Find out the typical ways of thinking and feeling, corresponding to the institutions and culture of a given community (1922:23)."

Malinowski's Argonauts study of the Omarakanans[19] is a classic

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19. Although Argonauts deals with all of the Trobriand Islands, the main focus is on the village of Omarakana in the province of Kiriwina which is located on Boyowa, the largest island in the Trobriand group.

in how to apply his three-task approach to ethnography. Campbell's (1983a) Vakuta study[20] acknowledges Malinowski's work, but she reports several areas where the Vakutans she studied differ from the Omarakanans Malinowski studied. The Vakutans have a more egalitarian approach to Trobriand social structure than do the Omarakanans who are at the heart of the chieftainship system. Although the Vakutans acknowledge one man as chief, the chief derives few extra advantages and privileges from his position. Campbell says that the egalitarian premise is reflected in the fact that all Vakutan men kula, whereas only a few high-ranking Omarakanans do.

Campbell states that the Vakutans treat the kula simply as a competitive forum and that they do not have the reverence for the vaygu'a that Malinowski reports the Omarakanans to have. The Vakutans treat the valuables as objects for accumulating wealth and power and not as the Omarakanans, who see the valuables as icons of great intrinsic worth. Kula partnerships are much more fragile on Vakuta than for Omarakana. Kula roads open and close with partnerships being broken and reformed fairly easily. The Vakutans are also more explicit in their exchanges. They tell their partners the name of the shell they are expecting in return for their gifts.

There are also other differences. The Omarakanans participate in inland kula, but there is no inland kula on Vakuta. Although the vaygu'a are part of the internal exchange system on Vakuta, they are exchanged as kitoms (kula valuables that are at a stasis point where

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20. Vakuta, Boyowa, and Kayleula, together with a series of smaller islands, form the Trobriand Islands.

there are no outstanding obligations attached to them) and not kula gifts for opening or closing a kula transaction. I have introduced Campbell's work for several reasons. Her study was carried out on Vakuta which is part of the Trobriand Islands and as such there is considerable cultural overlap between the Vakutans Campbell studied in the 1970's and the Omarakanans who were the focus of Malinowski's work in Argonauts fifty years earlier. A second reason for choosing Campbell's Vakuta work is that she reports areas where there are important differences in how the kula works in the two locations. These differences demonstrate that the kula is not a single, complex, pan-island institution and emphasize the importance of studying the kula within a specific cultural setting rather than generalizing and oversimplifying the institution by assuming greater inter-island homogeneity than actually exists. Lastly, because Campbell uses the prestige competition explanation of the kula she is interested in the kula at the level of actual transactions. Because she is using a theoretical approach that deals with the teleological nature of kula transactions, she gives some of the kind of data that would be needed if the social cognition approach were used to study the Vakutan kula. Unfortunately, there is not enough information given in her paper to do a re-analysis, but she does present enough data to show how the social cognition approach can extend present kula analysis. I will try to show that a social cognition approach to ethnography (in this case the data Campbell (1983a) gave in her paper on how Vakutans kula) can add a new dimension to kula analysis -- an analysis on the private dimension of how and why specific individuals kula.

The Social Cognition Extension

In the concluding chapter of Argonauts, Malinowski (1922:513) says, "I believe there is a complex, emotional and intellectual attitude at the bottom of it (the kula)." Unfortunately, Malinowski's approach to ethnography hindered him from presenting more than a shadow of the "complex, emotional, and intellectual attitude." Instead of showing the dynamics of human beings interacting with each other, he de-personalized people, by fitting them into homogenous roles. He did not consider it important to report people's private feelings, fears, and triumphs in their kula exchanges. Malinowski (1922:23) states, "we are not interested in what A or B may feel *qua* individuals, in the accidental course of their own personal experiences -- we are interested only in what they feel and think *qua* members of a given community." Malinowski stripped away the dynamic interplay of hopes and fears within each kula participant and presented only their shadows as recorded in the social dimension of normative values. For Malinowski to accomplish his stated goal for ethnography of capturing the "complex, emotional, and intellectual attitude" a fourth task needs to be added to the existing three -- an analysis of the private world of specific individuals.

The complexity of human behavior is ignored in the traditional approaches to the study of the kula. Kula activities are shrouded in structured, institutionalized behavior involving a considerable investment of time, energy and resources. A kula participant's behaviors are generated by the interplay among multiple factors, including the motivational elements from within each person, the kula

men's understanding of their worlds, the rules of the kula system and the specific context of each exchange. But it must be kept in mind that kula exchanges are not the mechanistic unfolding of structurally pre-determined outcomes. Society's structures (economic, political, social, etc.) are ideas and not natural forces. The rules of the institution allow individuals room to maneuver as they seek to achieve their own goals. Taking part in a major kula exchange is a highly engaging activity for each participant who pays close attention to what is transpiring in the exchanges. The kula exchanges result in positive and negative repercussions for the participants because everything is not mechanically cut-and-dried.

To show how studying social cognition can extend traditional kula ethnography I will begin by quoting a passage in which Campbell (1983a:213-215) details a specific series of interactions:[21]

> Sawekuku from Gawa received an armshell named Tomadava through an internal exchange. He converted it into vaga (first gift) and began its keda (path) by giving to Isaac from Kitava. Isaac gave Tomadava to Kunabu in Vakuta, who gave it to Anton in Dobu, who gave it to Alfred in Duau where I was when I recorded the keda's progression. Alfred (Duau) took the necklace called Gerubara and gave it to Anton (Dobu) as basi (intermediate gift), with the implicit message that he wanted the keda to live and not die with only one transaction, providing all other members were agreeable. However, as Gerubara was equivalent in value to Tomadava and thus an appropriate kudu (closing gift) for Tomadava, Alfred (Duau) thought he had better hold on to Tomadava in case Sawekuku (Gawa) and the others

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21. There are several terms used in the passage that may not be clear: "vaga" is the first gift that opens a kula series; "keda" is the name for the kula road or path that the valuable travels on from person to person; "kudu" is the return gift of equal value that closes the series of transactions; "basi" is an intermediate gift that shows good will and a person's intention to keep the kula road (the keda) open; "mwari" is the Vakutan equivalent of Malinowski's "mwali" which is the term for the necklaces.

> of the keda membership decided to take Gerubara as kudu of Tomadava and thus end the kula keda. Anton (Dobu) gave Gerubara to Kunabu (Vakuta), who gave it to Isaac (Kitava), who gave it to Kelabi of Iwa (a new member in the keda), who gave it to Sawekuku (Gawa) where it remained. Sawekuku realising that Gerubara could be considered kudu of Tomadava, was somewhat confused by the term basi given to Gerubara by Alfred. He wondered where the kudu for Tomadava was. He held on to Gerubara as potential kudu of Tomadava until he could find out. He did this by sending another armshell called Masisi as ... basi for Gerubara to let the keda know that he was willing to keep it alive and consider Gerubara a basi instead of kudu. The mwari Masisi was in Vakuta when I recorded its keda. It was subsequently passed on to Anton when he and other Dobuans came to Vakuta in November, 1977 to kula. I was told that once Masisi reaches Duau, Alfred will release Tomadava to continue making its keda and attracting other valuables to its membership, while Gerubara will be released from Gawa to attract basi down the keda.

Campbell does not present enough information to allow me to do a full re-analysis, but she does present enough data that I can demonstrate how studying part of the social cognition process (motivation) could give more insight into what is transpiring in a kula exchange. The social cognition approach would utilize a question-based research design where the ethnographer would go into a culture with a specific set of research questions or problems in mind. Malinowski (1922:9) refers to the question-based approach as one that uses, "foreshadowed problems." But, the research design would also follow the Glaser and Strauss's (196?) "grounded theory" approach which treats these hypotheses as initial research guides. The ethnographer adapts the hypotheses as he or she collects and analyzes the data. New hypotheses would arise out of the patterns the ethnographer would find in the data which would, in turn, reflect the categories and relationships that the ethnographer found to be relevant. For example, I could study the effect of motivation on kula

behavior. Psychologist have developed several theories concerning the nature of human motivation (one of the three processes that interact together and form the social cognition process). Because I am trying to demonstrate how the social cognition approach can be applied to the study of the kula I will make some simplifying assumptions that will better enable me to show the principle with the minimum amount of extraneous information. In this analysis I am assuming that the decision process is constant, i.e., no new strategies are added to anyone's decision processing. I will also assume that the cognition process is functioning in its normal range of convenience (i.e., people properly scan their social environments, abstract information, and code it in a normal fashion).

Motivation can be thought of as the engine that supplies power to a person -- the internal something that causes a person to act. These inner mechanisms come in many forms such as incentives, goals, moods, impulses, emotions, desires, drives, needs, etc. People act on their environments and in turn are acted on by them. This interaction creates transient imbalances in the internal and external forces acting on a person. For example, something happens (external force: Alfred receives the armshell Tomadava from Anton his kula partner from Dobu) that stimulates some inner mechanism inside the man (internal force: Alfred wants to keep the kula road open) to respond and act on his environment (response: Alfred devises a strategy for keeping the road open and acts on it).

Psychologists have examined motivation from a variety of theoretical positions. Freud (1924) views motivation as a homeostatic mechanism. For example, people have physiological needs that create inner tensions. They require food when hungry and sleep when tired. Hunger and tiredness create tension that is relieved by eating and sleeping. Maslow (1954) says people are motivated to act as they do because they want to grow and self-actualize, as well as to reduce their physiological tensions. People strive to reach their potentials even at the cost of increasing their inner tension (e.g., mountain climbers, hang gliders, overseas kula participants). White (1959) says that people are motivated to act effectively in their environments. People want to deal competently and adequately with their environments (be perceived as good kula men). People take pleasure in increasing their tension or excitement and then being able to respond well. Campbell (1983a:205) says that the Vakutans are motivated to be involved in the kula because it is, "the route for fun and play, and the path to power, fame, and immortality."

In trying to explain a given action on the part of an individual there are two sources of motivation to consider: the learned cultural contingencies comprised of the various societal roles and obligations; the goal-directed nature of human interactions. The learned cultural roles and obligations in and of themselves can sometimes be sufficient to explain an interaction. Sawekuku gave the armshell Tomadava to Isaac who accepted it. It is quite possible to explain this interaction by appealing to cultural norms. Sawekuku was acting in accordance with the social norm of taking a kitom (a valuable with no outstanding obligations against it) and starting to build a kula

road. Isaac's actions in receiving the armshell can also be explained simply by appealing to social norms. Most traditional kula ethnography would stop at this point and not seek further for explanations for why Sawekuku and Isaac acted as they did.

But the men's actions can also be explained by saying that the men were not simply acting in accordance with some social norms, but were actually acting to accomplish a specific goal. Goal-oriented behavior is determined by two factors (Reykowski 1982:125): (1) the expectation that a given performance will lead to accomplishing the goal; (2) the incentive value of the goal to the person. The major precondition of social motivation is the value assigned to the social object which can include other people, social groups, institutions, symbols, etc. (Reykowski 1982:125). As can be seen from the list, there is a great deal of flexibility in what a person can decide is a social object. Social objects possess a valence since they are able to satisfy various needs of the individual (to be fed, to gain acceptance, to have prestige, etc.) and the social object evokes preferences, attraction, or repulsion. It is not unreasonable to assume that a kula road probably has a strong positive valence for Alfred. As such, putting the social norm that a Vakutan male is to take part in kula exchanges together with the Vakutan norm that a kula road is the route to power, wealth, etc. would also generate an explanation for why Alfred was acting the way he was. Alfred was motivated to become involved in the kula exchanges because he was required to be part of the kula and he saw potential gain for himself in having a kula road kept open.

It is possible to be even more specific in giving reasons for Alfred's action of seeking to keep the road open. For example, the longer the road is kept open the more likely it is that Alfred's name will be added to the history of any of the important valuables that circulate along that road. But we do not know precisely what Alfred hoped to gain -- what his goals were. There are many possibilities for why Alfred was motivated to try to keep the road open: it could give him more wealth; (2) he might enjoy the challenge of matching his wits with the other kula men; (3) Alfred may be motivated by both 1 and 2; (4) there could be some other reason all together. Without asking Alfred why he wanted to keep the road open it is not possible to know what he was trying to accomplish and why.[22] Different motivations can be imputed to Alfred, and by asking him the ethnographer can better understand what Alfred had in mind when he devised his plan. By talking with Alfred the ethnographer might be able to gain some insight into Alfred's private dimension: Alfred's own attitude to the role he has just played as a kula participant -- was he just complying with a social norm and did he like it or hate it? Could psychological factors affect Alfred's motivation and role performance? Answers to these types of questions will extend ethnography. Normative data alone can not capture the flavor of the kula, but examples of people's feelings and motivations will help to do this. Studies on even a few significant individuals would help

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22. Talking to an individual will not necessarily provide insight into the "deepest" or most "real" motivations, as these may be inaccessible (or consciously camouflaged) by the actor. But talking to an individual will usually provide information about at least some of the cognitively salient variables which enter into the decision-making process.

round out the ethnography.

By adding an analysis of individuals motivation processes to the more standard social analysis which attributes social norms as explanation for behavior, an ethnographer can present a more complete statement of what the kula is and how it functions. To accomplish Malinowski's three tasks, Malinowski advises the ethnographer to collect data on people's personal experiences: expressions of indignation, examples of how they take sides, a wealth of definite views, moral censures, etc. - (Malinowski 1922:12). This data collection technique would have allowed Malinowski himself to get closer to his goal for ethnography, had it not been for his overemphasis on structure and function.

Summary

By adding a few extra questions while collecting data from individuals about their kula experiences, the ethnographer can gather the type of data that can then be used to present the private dimensions of kula transactions as well as the social ones ordinarily given.[23] Collecting data by the case study method and then subjecting the data to analysis based on social cognition theory would extend the traditional approaches to kula ethnography. This simple extension of an already established data collection principle would have helped Malinowski himself to come closer to his goal for ethnography.

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23. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to delineate a detailed methodology for using the social cognition approach.

CONCLUSION

Ordinarily, analysts of the kula use one or more of three basic explanations to understand the kula. One explanation is that the kula is used as a cover mechanism to carry on trade in resources that the various islands require to be habitable (resource re-distribution). A second explanation is that the kula system acts as the glue which holds the area together (social solidarity). A third explanation is that the kula provides a safe arena for the release of the competitive natures of the Massim people which could otherwise lead to civil disruption.

The perspective on how to study the kula presented in this thesis is based on four points. The first point concerns the nature of the kula. I argue that the kula is a different cultural institution in each of the cultural areas. That is, there is no synthetic totality that can be called the kula. Rather there is a collection of similar institutions located in the Massim. To support this view I presented empirical data (Campbell (1983a) on Vakuta, Malinowski (1922) on Omarakana) that shows major differences in the nature of the kula in two important parts of the Trobriand Islands.

The second point deals with the three traditional kula explanations. Although each of the explanations does explain some aspect of what could be going on in the kula, none of them, singly or in any combination, offer an adequate description of the kula and the people who operate in it. They are inadequate because they have internal weaknesses in logic, they leave data unexplained that they should be able to handle, and they make simplistic assumptions that

reduce the kula participants to homunculi. They tend toward an over-socialized view of people and an over-integrated view of society. An adequate explanation of the kula needs to incorporate an understanding of how each kula participant uses knowledge of the kula to achieve his individual goals and desires.

The third major point concerns the extension of standard kula ethnographic methodology by the addition of a social cognition emphasis. The social cognition emphasis is not to study cognition as a psychologist would, but rather to show how a variety of motivations can co-exist within a given set of cultural constraints. The social cognition emphasis could show how the participants manipulate the cultural and structural rules in a variety of ways and for a variety of ends because they are being influenced by various motivational factors to strive to achieve certain goals. Some of the motivational force for their actions will come from learned cultural contingencies and some from personal goals and aspirations. If an ethnographer were to collect data from the transactors concerning why they act as they do, new insight into the kula may be gained. In any event, the rules of the kula are loose enough to allow individuals to pursue their own needs and goals, as well as seek to meet their social responsibilities.

The last major point concerns the nature of society, i.e., the interplay between social structure and individuals. Human behavior should not be viewed only as the product of the external forces or factors playing on an individual. People respond to each other on the basis of the <u>meaning</u> they attach to each other's action in a kula exchange and not in a stimulus/response way to the action itself.

People construct the social world, then regard their construction as if it were ontologically real. Using a process of social cognition, an individual selects, processes, and transforms meanings in light of his present situation, past knowledge, and experience. A person decides what significance the exchanges will have for him and his behavioral options. During this interpretive and decision-making process people are influenced by motivational factors such as their moods and goals.

The perspective that I put forward in this thesis is to treat each kula exchange as an example of cognitively complex people interacting. It is the people and not the kula that have purposes, goals, and needs. The people are knowledgeable, but fallible, and there can be unintended as well as the intended consequences to their actions. Data can be collected from people on how they interpret what is happening in the exchanges and their predictions concerning what will transpire. For example, it may be found that some people who are competitive are striving to be the best kula men in their area. It may also be found that some of the other people who are less competitive are seeking other goals. The ethnographer should gather information on the constraints the people are dealing with, but he or she should not stop before gathering data from the transactors themselves concerning their personal feelings, reactions, and understandings of what is going on in actual exchanges. Gathering data on only the structural or functional aspects of the exchange will yield a static picture of the kula. This picture can be brought to life by adding the personal perspectives of the participants and how they generate their social realities.

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Appendix 1: THE EARLY HISTORY OF THE KULA

Information on the early history of the kula is sketchy. It consists of a few written records from the nineteenth century and a small amount of archaeological work that has been carried out around the Massim area (e.g., Egloff 1971, Lauer 1974 cited in J. Leach 1983:11).

The oldest actual observations of a kula exchange goes back 125 years and involve some of the missionary residents of the Massim area. These missionaries noted that there was trade in boar's tusks for "coral" necklaces (Thomassin 1853:294 cited in J. Leach 1983:9). As far back as the 1880's the German academic Finsch (1888:205-210 cited in J. Leach 1983:9) realized that the materials traded in these exchanges had socio-economic importance, but he did not elaborate on the structural pattern in the exchanges. In the British New Guinea Annual Report for 1904-5 Rev. Gilmour (cited in Uberoi 1962:2) mentioned the existence of the kula exchange system. It was in the early 1900's that Seligmann added considerable ethnographic detail about the trade routes in the east and south of the kula area (Seligmann & Strong 1906:235-242, 347-369; Seligmann 1910:226-240). Malinowski was the first analyst to treat the kula as an institution requiring closer study. Initially even he did not treat the kula as a major institution when he was working in the Woodlark area (1920:97-105, 1921:1-16). While he was aware of the kula, he did not focus on it until his 1922 classic, Argonauts of the Western Pacific. Mauss (1925), Fortune (1932), Uberoi(1962), and many others since have all dealt at length with various aspects of the kula.

On the archeaological side of kula studies, Irwin (1983:29) reports that "within the kula area itself, there are no excavations of substance." He goes on to say that digs have been carried out in Mailu which is an island about 25 kilometers away from the western boundary of the Massim. Irwin (1983:71) states that 2000 year old kula-type armshells and necklaces have been recovered during excavations on Mailu. Egloff (1978:434) has found evidence (pottery remains) for the attenuation of trade between the Goodenough-mainland zone and the kula-area sometime after 1500 AD which shows that there have been interactions between at least some of the peoples of the kula region for that long.