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THE UNCOMMON SELECTION
OF AN IMAGE CLUSTER

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ABSTRACT

The Trobriand Islands, located in the Solomon Sea east of Papua New Guinea, are part of an area of the South Pacific rich in tribal art. More than 60 decorated Trobriand war-shields, collected between 1885 and 1914, are now housed in museums

and private collections. The front face of each wooden shield is ornamented with a variant of a design that is unique in the region. So far, there has been no agreement as to the meaning of the motif or how it might have originated.

INTRODUCTION

This study combines early anthropological investigations, particularly those of B. Malinowski, with an analysis of the design traits of 43 shield designs; this approach suggests a solution to a problem that has attracted the attention of a number of scholars in the field, beginning with Malinowski himself.

The Trobriands are a group of small islands in the Solomon Sea, east of Papua New Guinea (fig. 1). Anthropologists studying the culture of the inhabitants have noted particularly the extended trading voyages and the artistically ornamented boat gear and other objects. More than 60 decorated Trobriand war-shields, dated between 1885 and 1914, are maintained in the collections of museums and private individuals.

DESCRIPTION

The oval-shaped wooden shields average 75.5 cm in height; they were held vertically in active use with the larger end down. The entire face of each shield is painted with "magical" symbols which, although discretely positioned, combine to form a single intriguing and mysterious image. Anthropologists¹ and art historians have considered this image over the years, but its true significance remains to be established. The design elements making up the overall decoration are not clearly part of a human figure, but it is possible to imagine them as cross-sectioned arms or legs, digestive tracts, and sexual organs. Like some diagrams in Gray's *Anatomy*, there is often what looks like intimate fringes of hair. All of these are carefully worked in black paint on a white background with some additional detailing in red (fig. 2).

Occasionally, one of these shields, with its enigmatic graphic message, is included in an exhibit of South Pacific native art. What does this design actually represent, and how did it originate?

The decorated shields, with slight variations, share a single image formed of seven basic design elements. Since most viewers are confident that the drawings somehow depict a human landscape, it seems natural to refer to parts of the native design in anatomical terms. To picture how the decoration is organized, I will recreate the steps needed to locate its basic elements, which I have named and defined in the following text.

First, a circular *head* is placed top center upon an imaginary vertical center line. Descending from the *head*, a throat-band passes downward between four lashing-points that secure the rattan hand-holds to the back of the shield. The second design element, a pair of circular *belly-wheels* appears directly below the four lashing-points. On each side of the throat and above the *belly-wheels*, are raised two straight *arms*,² the third element. The *maze*, element number four, is a complex of looped lines swung under a rainbow-like arch. It fills most of the lower part of the shield. Its apex is centered beneath the *belly-wheels*, and it contains at its center the fifth element, the *anal anchor*. In the upper section of the shield, in the spaces between the *arms* and the sides of the shield, are located the sixth design element, two sets of double-bladed *magical knives*. There are also what I call

¹ Leach, 1954; Berndt, 1958; Tindale, 1959; Salisbury, 1959; Reynolds, 1962; Glass, 1986, 1988.

² A variant of the raised "arms" occurs when the upper ends of the arms are turned inward toward the centerline to join with the throat (fig. 8a). In my sample there are significantly more shields with raised arms than joined arms; for this reason and because I consider the raised arms a simpler concept, I believe they probably occurred earlier.

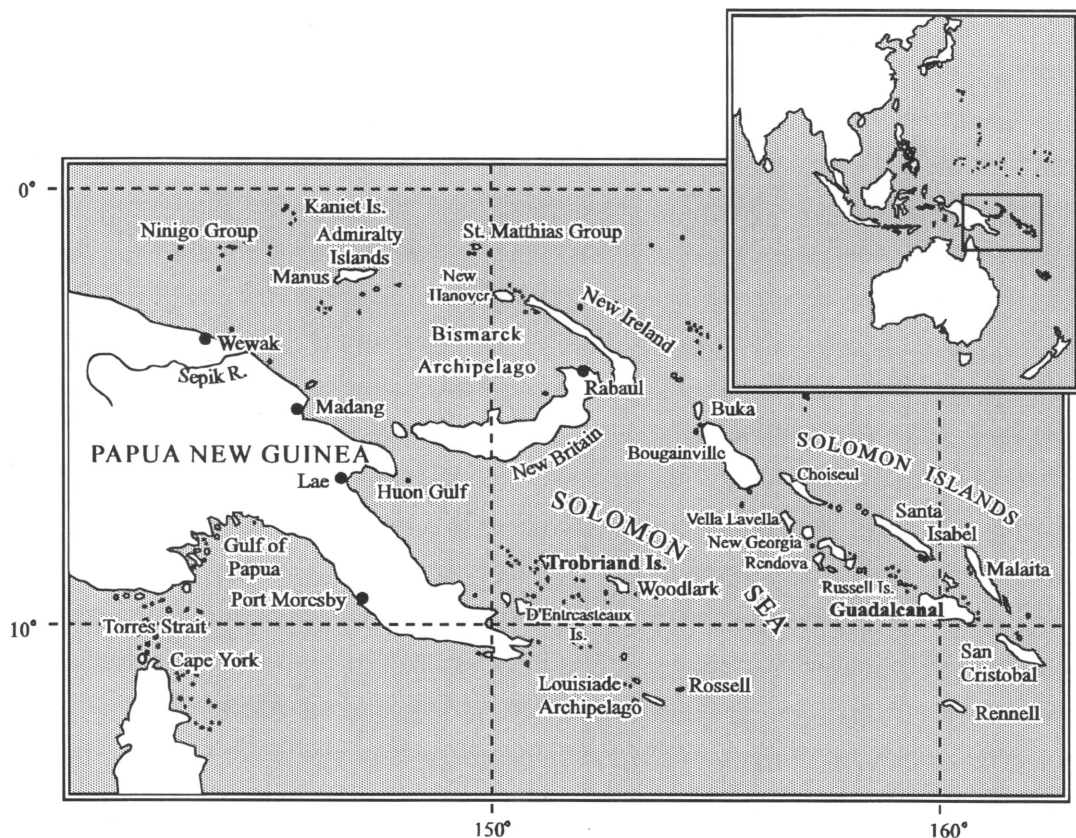


Fig. 1. Location of the Trobriand Islands.

fillers, the seventh and final element, small rectangular figures (E's or double squares) that are sprinkled across the design, filling the empty spaces. This cluster of seven elements appears on each of the Trobriand shield designs in my sample of 43 examples.

MALINOWSKI EXPEDITIONS

Bronislaw Malinowski began his three anthropological expeditions to the Trobriands in 1914. His published work presents a convincing portrait of an agricultural society saturated with a belief in magic. Besides garden magic, which helped produce edible wealth, there was boat-building magic, sailing magic, sorcery magic, love magic, and war magic. By the time Malinowski arrived in the Trobriands, 25 years of effort by the colonial government and the missions had managed to eliminate warfare. However, war had been

an important cultural feature earlier, when each district had its own war-magician. Plate 58 of Malinowski's *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* (fig. 3) shows one of the last Trobriand war-magicians demonstrating how he had bespelled war-shields before a battle. Crouching down, he has the shield balanced across his knees, with his chin resting on the decorated surface, so that his breath can implant the words of his spell directly into it. The magician who made the shields spear-proof in this way was involved in every aspect of Trobriand warfare. After the chief of his area had resolved on a conflict, the war-magician helped organize the forces, bespelled their shields, and charmed the 12-foot-long spears to make them fly true. He magically prepared the warriors of his own side, making their legs strong and nimble; he even blessed the battle area before the contest (Malinowski, 1920: 11).

Trobriand 1

Trobriand 2

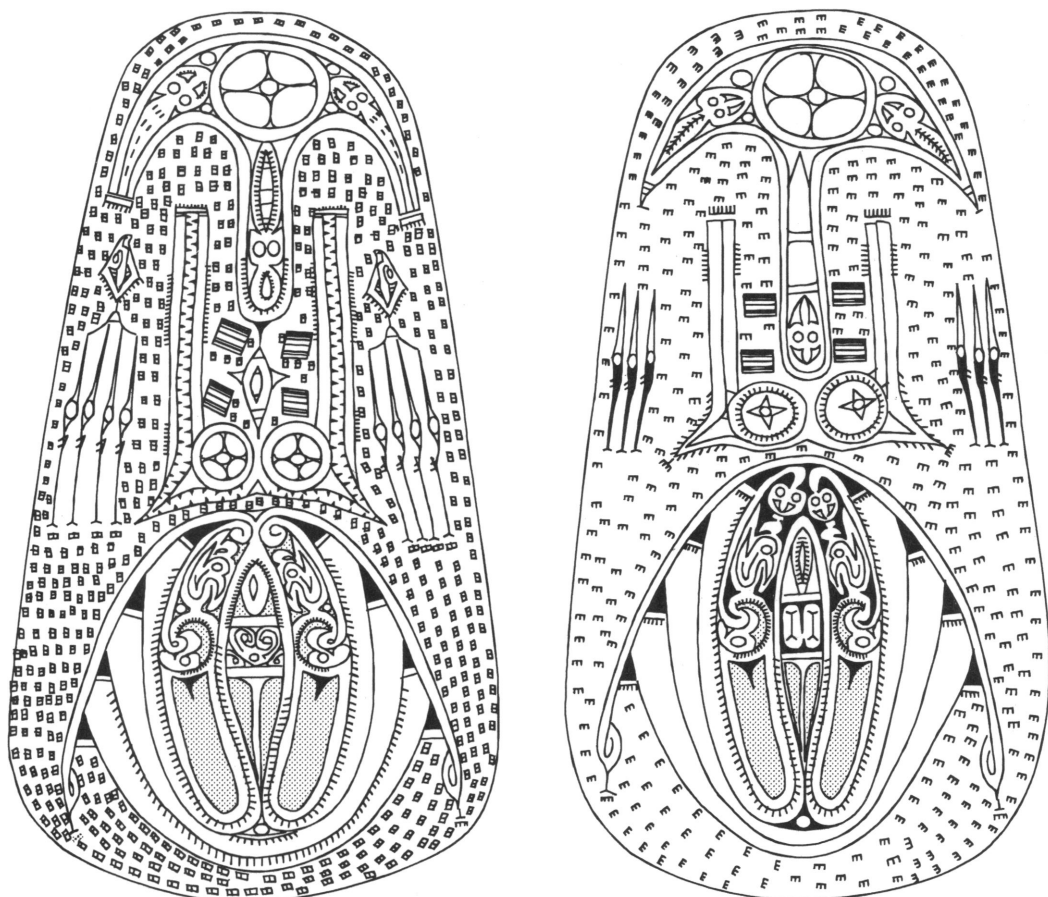


Fig. 2. **Left:** Trobriand shield, Buffalo Museum of Science, redrawn from illustration (b/w) in P. S. Wingert, 1953, *Art of the South Pacific Islands*, London: Thames and Hudson, p. 51. **Right:** Trobriand shield, Buffalo Museum of Science, catalog no. C-8163; height 70.9 cm; redrawn from illustration (b/w) in P. Linton and P. S. Wingert, 1946, *Arts of the South Seas*, New York: Museum of Modern Art, p. 148.

HISTORY

The decorated shields have a brief and imprecise history. We are told (Seligman, 1910: 684)³ that “formerly” shields were “uniformly blackened.” Malinowski reported that following this period, “Very seldom, and only in the case of very brave and distinguished warriors, were the shields painted” (1920: 11). These statements present a puzzling situation. Over five dozen variants of this singular

design must have been made and collected in an extremely short period, between the “early 1900’s” of Seligman’s informant and 1914, when Malinowski began his investigations. There is no record of precursors for the decoration and no reliable information of its significance by either natives or scientific investigators.

DISCUSSION

The idea that the Trobriand design is a human image raises a number of questions:

1. The *head*, a concentric circle, is usually

³ Information from R. L. Bellamy, a medical doctor resident in the area in the early 1900s.



Fig. 3. War magician bespelling a shield; redrawn from Malinowski, 1922: pl. 58.

divided into quadrants. Are these markings substitute features? And attached to the sides of the *head* are curious pendulous “ears,” which call for some explanation.

2. The smaller *belly-wheel* circles, copying the *head*, are quartered concentric circles with their own pendulous “ears.” What would be their human function?

3. Why do the *arms* project upward from the *belly-wheels* and not down from the shoulder region?

4. Does the *maze* somehow substitute for the creature’s legs?

5. The shield’s *anal anchor* has excited speculation. An old gallery label in the South Australia Museum identified it as “the tail of a bird of paradise.”⁴

⁴ Information attributed to Rev. S. M. Fellows; see Tindale, 1959; Glass, 1988.

6. The double-bladed *magical knives* at the sides of the Trobriand shield come in sets of two, three, or four and display considerable formal variety. The blades may be straight, curved, or angled. One blade may be fork-ended, and when so fashioned, the knives may be directed upward, downward, or in alternate directions. Usually a space separates the upper and lower blades. If these are indeed knives, they may be related to sorcery implements described by Malinowski:

Leaves of herbs are soaked in (coconut) oil and then wrapped round a sharp stingaree spine, or some similar pointed object, and the final incantation . . . is chanted over it . . . [The sorcerer] hiding himself behind a shrub or a house, points the *magical dagger* at [the victim]. In fact, he violently and viciously turns it around in the air, as if to stab the victim, and to twist

and wrench the point in the wound (Malinowski, 1922: 75).

Positioned at the sides of the shield, the *magical knives* are completely separate from other design elements. Are they a part of the main image?

7. The *filler* units are entirely unprecedented in Trobriand art. On the shields, they occur between elements (but never within the boundaries of these elements). What could these small figures represent and where did they originate?

The regular occurrence of the seven basic design elements attests to their importance in the shield decoration. Appearing on each of the shields in an unchanging order, they form a seven-part utterance string, like the unvarying word sequences of the war-magician's spells. Malinowski stated that the "essence [of Trobriand magic] is the impossibility of its being manufactured or invented by man [and] the complete resistance to any change or modification by him" (Malinowski, 1922: 400). This was thought necessary to maintain "traditional continuity with ancestral times" (ibid.: 401). To change the traditional war-shield from black to white, and to add decoration as well, must have impinged upon important magic-war-society relationships. Because of the nature of Trobriand magic and because war-shields were essential to the belief system of the community, I propose that only a war-magician would have had sufficient power or a motive to create the first decorated shield.

We know something about what the original looked like from the seven elements that appear on all the decorated shields that were copied from it. A glance at figure 2 shows how additional design materials can overlay the seven-element armature. These extra details ornament and complete the overall design. They vary from shield to shield, making each one unique. The design additions are often in a different style from the basic elements. I will survey these additional materials after the discussion of the basic elements is completed.

The seeming cultural impossibility of bringing about a major change in the Trobriand shield suggests that an extraordinary situation existed at the time, a cultural event

on the scale of the arrival of European colonial troops. It was a time when a dramatic response would have been expected from the war-magician, something to bolster his and his people's position. Based on the cluster of design elements just described, it is likely that this was the time when the Trobriand magician was first introduced to a shell-ornamented shield from the central Solomon Islands (fig. 4). The 20 or so known examples of this type of shield are probably from Guadalcanal. Averaging 85.6 cm in height, they have a basketry foundation strengthened by wooden struts attached to the back. The front face is coated with a reddish-black mastic, into which tesserae of mother-of-pearl have been pressed, mosaic-fashion, to form the design. Multiple-width shell lines make up parts of this decoration, notably the shield's border, the head and body of the main figure, a bow-form component parallel to the body on both sides, and a horizontal belt between the main figure and a maze area at the bottom. The contrast of the luminous shell decoration against the dark background makes these shields spectacular artistic achievements. They are also monuments to craftsmanship. On one typical example, the decorative pattern consists of nearly 2000 individually hand-shaped shell segments.

SOLOMON ISLANDS CONTACT HYPOTHESIS

A Trobriand legend tells that artists can gain inspiration sitting by the shore and listening to the sea. It is tempting to speculate about how contact was made between the magician and this unusual object, as he waited for the overseas spirits to deliver supernatural help. The Solomon shields were produced some 300 sea miles to the east. Was the magician's example found floating in the surf, resting inside a drift canoe, or did it appear indirectly as the result of trade? A European vessel may even have taken the war-magician to the Solomons, where he was dazzled by the shell-decorated shield and committed parts of its design to memory. The fact that some contact was made will become more certain as we see how the magician accepted important portions of this mysterious

Solomon 1

Solomon 2

Solomon 3

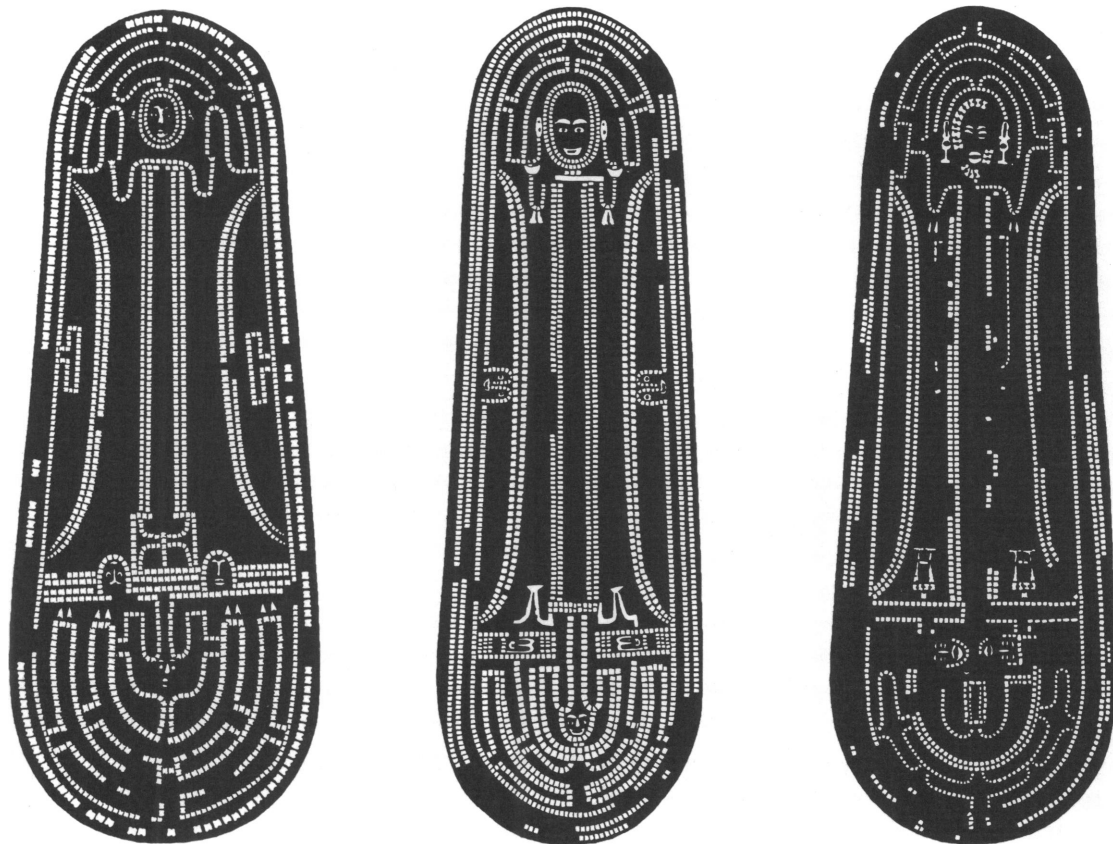


Fig. 4. **Left:** Solomon Island shield, Brooklyn Museum, catalog no. 59.63; height 83 cm; originally collected by Surgeon Captain James Booth, Royal Navy and donated to the Montrose Museum; thought to come from Guadalcanal; to Brooklyn in 1959; redrawn from a photograph. **Center:** Solomon Island shield, Chicago Natural History Museum, catalog no. 3276872; height 82 cm; acquired February 1932 by Captain A. W. F. Fuller; purchased by Chicago Museum in 1958; redrawn from a photograph. **Right:** Solomon Island shield, Musée de l'Homme, catalog no. 87.67.9; gift of Prince R. Bonaparte; formerly in the Musée du Trocadéro (their catalog no. 19385); redrawn from an illustration (b/w) in A. Calavas (ed.), 1922, *Decoration Oceanienne*, Paris, pl. 36.

foreign pattern, which required a considerable amount of creative work.

To judge from the design that resulted, the Solomon shield may have arrived in a seriously depleted condition. Looking at his cultural-drift gift from across the water, the war-magician saw its blackness relieved by bits of precious shell in a strange, broken pattern. Today, many Solomon shields of this type have lost portions of the shell segments from their decoration. The framing border almost never remains intact, and harsh treatment

causes other sections of the design to lose some of its original splendor. When parts of the decoration are missing, the process of identification becomes daunting. Solomon shield number 3 of figure 4 illustrates this situation. Besides dealing with missing tesserae, the magician may also have misunderstood parts of the Solomon decoration. The house-shaped Solomon skull cabinets found just above the belt area of Solomon shield number 2 and 3 could have been problematic, as could the ear and elbow orna-

ments of the same specimens. Still, the magician felt forced by circumstances to make a response. He determined to reconstruct at least a portion of this spirit manifestation on a shield of his own. A few of the elements suggested themselves for use immediately . . . the head of the figure, and the vertical body outlines that were to become the throat. Below the prominent belt was the maze, which enclosed the anal anchor. The two subsidiary heads embedded within the belt became the belly-wheels. Parts of the Solomon side-bows may have contributed the arms of the Trobriand shield design.

The first cluster element, the head, and the subsidiary Solomon heads, which became belly-wheels (element 2), were translated into three double-width circles in the Trobriand shield design. The concentric outlines recall the two rows of shell squares that make up the head of the main Solomon figure. The looping maze draped over the Solomon head (which grows out of the head itself in Solomon shield number 1, fig. 4) encloses both sides of the Trobriand head. As mentioned, the Solomon body outlines are probably the basis for the Trobriand throat, narrowed to fit between the hand-hold binding points, with the belly-wheels (element 2) located beneath. It is likely that the magician failed to notice the slender and ineffective arms of the Solomon image. (Notice that in shield 1, fig. 4, the arms become a part of the maze wreathing the head.) In the Trobriand design, the raised double-width arms (element 3) were probably the remains of incomplete bow-shaped members flanking the Solomon Islands figure. Many of the Solomon bow designs include an ornamental device at midheight, either a Greek fret or a small face (often incomplete). The war-magician's imagination allowed him to reconstitute the remains of this device as the sixth element of the cluster, the magical knives. The filler (element 7) may have been simply free-floating tesserae in groups of two (shield 3, fig. 4). Texturing the Trobriand shield design with this simple figure was a masterful artistic accomplishment. In treating the seven common elements, I have left the maze at the bottom of both shields until last. An explanation of this element involves Trobriand symbolism, which

is somewhat complex. The anal anchor (element 5) is obviously present at the center of the Solomon shield maze.

TROBRIAND LIME GOURDS AND SPATULAS

The magician was in more familiar territory when considering the maze that forms the bottom third of the Solomon Islands design. Designs similar to the maze decorated some spherical lime gourds in the Trobriands. Used by groups when chewing betel socially on a house platform, the lime was removed from the container through a narrow neck by means of a saliva-moistened wood spatula. Some pyrographically decorated gourds (fig. 5) featured multiple representations of yams. Extra-sized yams were displayed in Trobriand village yam houses and were an important cultural symbol. Graphic portrayals of prized tubers were often used to decorate a chief's property. They symbolized the food-wealth and power of the chief, his privileges in sponsoring feasts and dances, and his position as champion of his district, the man in charge of securing the peace or determining war. Special yams could grow to 2 m in length. Their representation on the lime gourd conveyed several meanings; for example, they were also seen as a symbol of male virility. The mazelike design on the gourd contained references to both male and female sex. The pair of opposed phallic yams at the center of the "proto"-maze join to form vulva, while the concentric lines below may refer to the overlapping layers of a woman's fiber skirt. The sexual intent of the gourd decoration is even more obvious if the container is seen as female, to be repeatedly penetrated by the probing spatula.

There are also phallic connotations on many Trobriand carved wood lime spatulas, where a pair of snake's eyes are found at the base of the blade. The blade is thus a serpent's tongue, and if the eyes are considered testicles, the blade could also be a phallus. The important snake symbol will be treated in a different connection later. Representing sexual themes on betel-chewing equipment is to be expected. Malinowski was so impressed with the Trobriand code of sexual behavior,

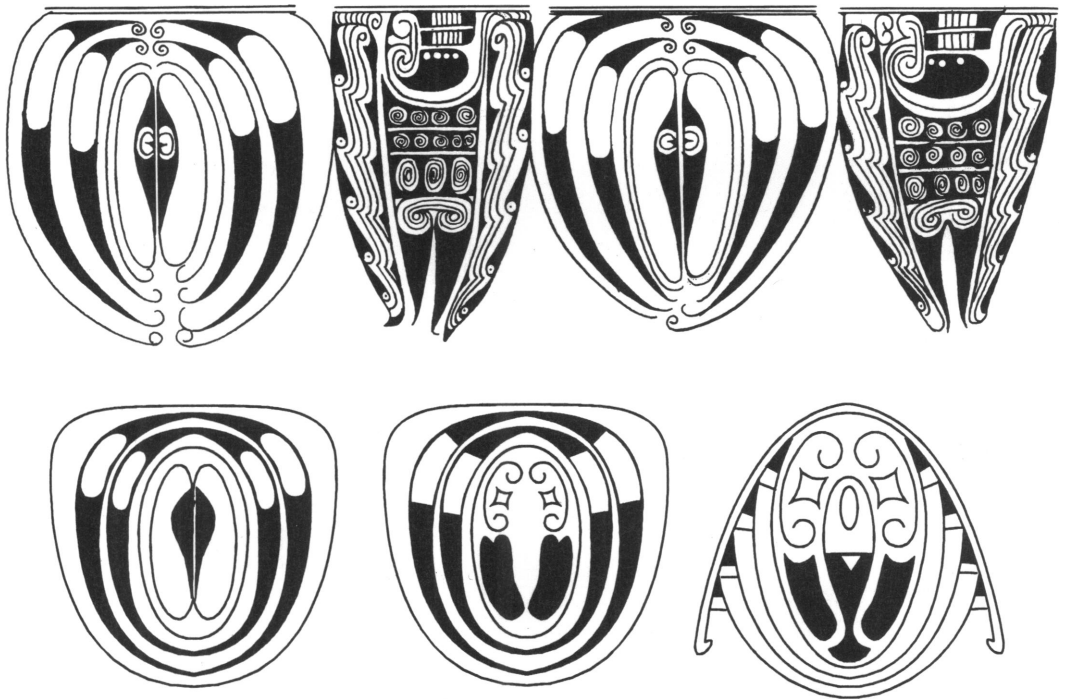


Fig. 5. **Top:** Trobriand lime gourd decoration; redrawn from Chauvet, 1930. **Bottom:** Possible maze development, gourd to shield.

which extended into every sphere of life, that he developed its description into a two-volume work, *The Sexual Life of Savages*. There may not have been the overwhelming and insistent concentration upon sex that filled the Trobriand days and nights of Malinowski's description, but the subject was bound to be discussed when good-natured groups of men and women gathered socially. The magician substituted the more familiar Trobriand lime gourd maze for his shield design, but made several dramatic alterations that entirely changed its character. He squared off the ends of the smaller side yams, making them closer in feeling to the rockerlike Solomon shield maze. He inserted the Solomon anal anchor at the center. And last, he forced the entire maze up inside the outline of a Trobriand yam-house gable roof (figs. 5, 6).⁵

In selecting and abstracting the complex of

Solomon elements, the war-magician was concerned with translating the patterns from white shell squares to painted black lines, and with organizing everything within the compass of the Trobriand shield. The outline of the yam-house roof was the first of a number of additions in a more strictly Trobriand graphic tradition. Unlike the Solomon-inspired trait complex, these were more realistic. The magician divided each of the vulvar yams of the Trobriand gourd maze in half, replacing the upper halves with recognizable snakes, crested white birds, and reversed parrot heads. He substituted a pair of elongated forms for the Solomon head-maze. These were directed toward the sides of the head and were variable, ranging from a featureless yam(?), to a segmented worm,⁶ and finally a

⁵ Glass (1988: 64) is among those recognizing the yam-house roof shape.

⁶ "... a long worm covered with rings of black armor ... mentioned because of its similarity to the spondylus necklaces, which consist of many rings" (Malinowski, 1922: 341). Or, many armshells strung on a cord, a symbol of wealth.

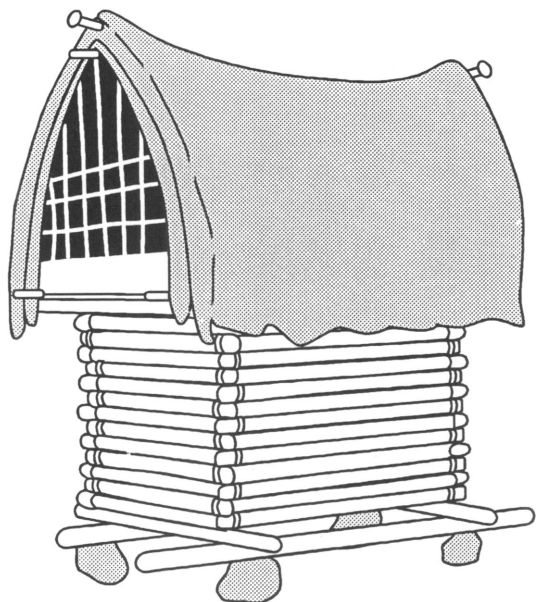


Fig. 6. Trobriand yam house, showing gable roof.

snake with a tapered body, nasal pits, and biting mouthparts.

THE TROBRIAND SPEAR

In assessing the symbolic qualities of these creatures, it is instructive to examine the Trobriand spear. Here there is a snake carved in relief at the balance-point of the shaft, with another on the opposite side. The snakes are joined at the back, where they share a single pair of enlarged eyes. When looked at from the side (fig. 7), they form the open beak of a bird. This combination of living creatures is a logical decoration for a weapon that flies silently through the air, like a bird, and strikes as suddenly as a snake. The straight and looped snakes on the Trobriand shield, together with the flying white bird and the parrot with its tearing beak, are a reminder that the Trobriand warrior was equipped for ag-

gression as well as defense. The presence of such symbols may also have been important negative magic, referring to spells the magician used to shunt aside incoming missiles.

INDIVIDUALIZING SHIELDS

The diversification of Trobriand-style details, as mentioned earlier, may have helped identify individual shields. It was important—as the number of decorated shields increased—that no two were exactly alike. Even a copy (fig. 8, right) of a book illustration⁷ carefully changed the number of magic knives.

If the war-magician and the region's paramount chief were involved in a crisis situation at the time the first decorated Trobriand shield was created, it is logical to suppose that this shield was made specifically for the chief. The decoration makes clear reference to the chief's wealth and position in its maze section. The overall style of the Trobriand shield also matched the painted decorations on the chief's house, being black on white with strictly symmetrical designs. Only a chief and his wives were permitted to have the gable skirt-boards and horizontal endplanks of their buildings decorated. In this preliterate society, such decorations advertised the owner as supreme in his community. These architectural embellishments had magical as well as personal significance, and were customarily defaced or destroyed upon the owner's death.

Because of the magical and social importance of the original decorated shield, it is likely that it was given a personal name during its construction, as was usual with boats and houses in the Trobriands. This name would have been repeated as part of the magic spells used upon it. Once the decorated shield

⁷ "The artist, interviewed ca. 1967 . . . copied the design from a book on Melanesian art, using the British Museum example . . ." Interview information from E. Carpenter, 1967.

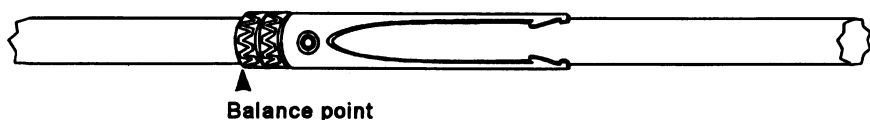
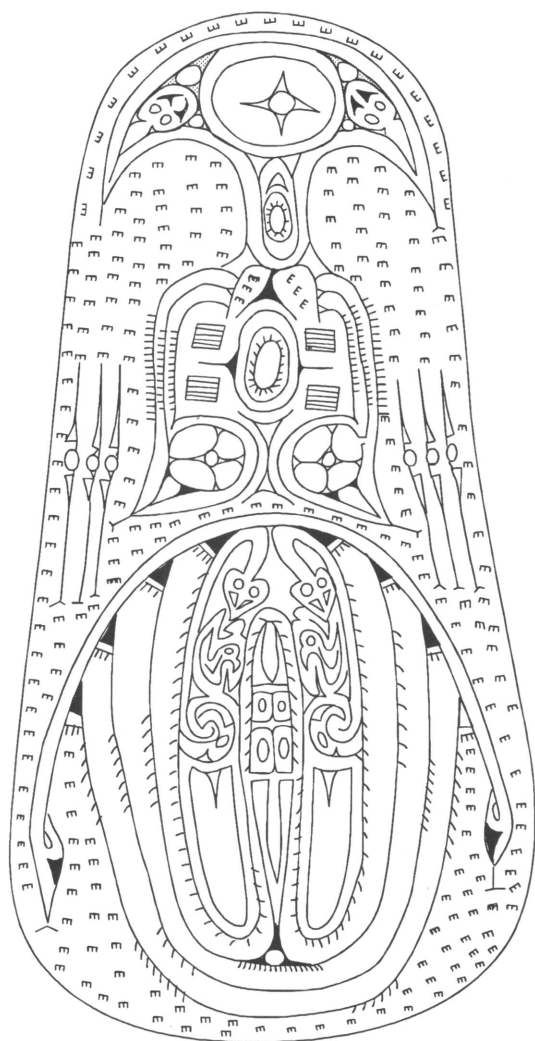


Fig. 7. Carved center section of Trobriand war spear.

Trobriand 3



Trobriand 4

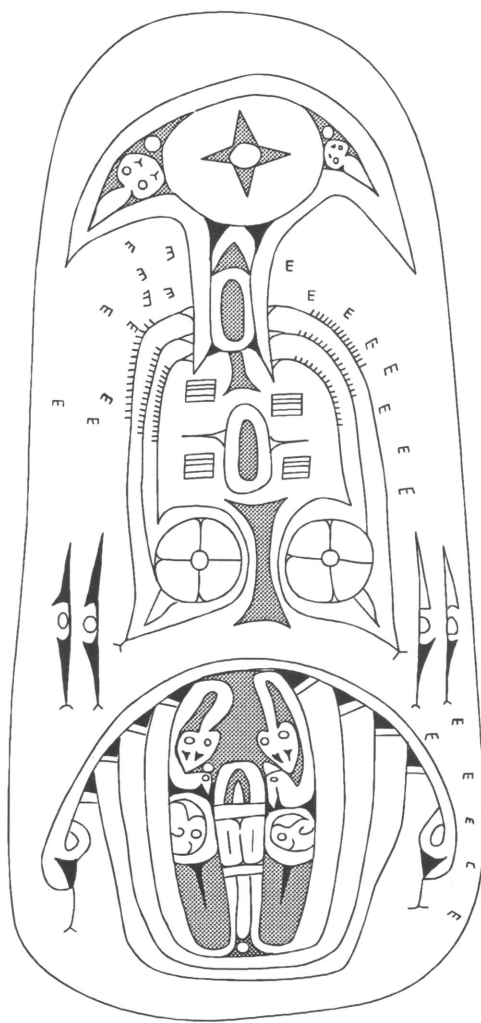


Fig. 8. **Left:** Trobriand shield, British Museum; height (approx.) 50.7 cm; illustrated (b/w) in *Handbook to the Ethnological Collections*, 1910, British Museum, fig. 111, p. 132; redrawn from illustration (color) in A. Buhler, T. Barrow, and C. Mountford, 1863, *The Art of the South Sea Islands*, New York: Crown, pl. 101. **Right:** Trobriand shield, Papua New Guinea Public Museum and Art Gallery; collected by G. Gerrits, catalog no. 3182; height 80 cm; redrawn from illustration (b/w) in *Guide to the Collections*, 1974, Port Moresby, opposite p. 47.

was deemed a success, the naming process could have continued upon succeeding shields. It is even possible that Trobriand shield designs differed in order to distinguish particular owners. The unique pattern on each named shield would thus serve as an insignia, a Trobriand coat of arms.

SOLOMON AND TROBRIAND DESIGN ELEMENTS COMBINED

The Trobriand shield has a number of ornamental motifs whose full significance is difficult to determine. One of these is the supposed hair, found on the arms, in the maze

area, and elsewhere in most war-shield designs. On the Solomon shield, the parallel dark lines showing between the shell sets and joined along one margin have the look of hair. Possibly it was used to emphasize particular features of the area to which it is limited. In the Trobriands: "Body hair [*unu'unu*, . . . a word also given to the growths on yam tubers, on the backs of leaves and so forth] is regarded as ugly . . . Only in myth . . . do certain people appear who are covered with *unu'unu*, to the natives a grotesque and . . . perverse characteristic" (Malinowski, 1929: 300). In another place, Malinowski stated that before a war, "coconuts would be distributed ceremonially and scraped . . ." (1920: 10). How shaving or scraping and myths are connected with war activities is unclear.

A second and possibly related hair motif is what I call "comb endings," a series of parallel hair lines joined by a backing line. These occur frequently in the Trobriand design across the ends of arms (fig. 2), the tips of ears and elbows, the triangular darkened patches in the maze, and the ends of the roof-arch. They add quite an elegant touch, blending so well with the fillers (E's or divided rectangles), that it is easy to attribute them to the same source, the Solomon Island shield.

There are also dots or small circles in different parts of the war-shield decoration, a design feature frequently found in Trobriand carvings, where such dots often perforate the decorated object. The most prominent shield dots are at the center of the head and belly-wheel circles and in the base of the anal anchor. They occur as the eyes of snakes and birds. Smaller dots in corners at line junctures⁸ suggest a tendency to avoid or correct sharp angles. The number and generalized locations of these dots make up an ornamental constellation of mock-punctured spear marks.

The use of red paint in the design seems to vary. Either the vertical or horizontal lines dividing the head and belly-wheel circles and the vulvar half-yams in the maze are always painted red. Other details in the maze may be red. Because the color is to some extent fugitive, and does not show to advantage in

photographs, its significance and the rules governing its use remain questionable.

Malinowski's Trobriand interviews suggest a partial answer to an important question: How did certain parts of a shell-decorated Solomon Island shield become a list of essential ingredients in the design of the Trobriand war-shield? Two of Malinowski's passages bear particularly on the magician's selection process: "When [a] spell is acquired by learning it word for word, it sinks down in the abdomen and there takes residence. When the magician recites it, the action of the throat, which is the seat of the human mind or intelligence, imparts the virtue [of the spell] to the breath of the reciter. This virtue is then transmitted in the act of recital directly to the object charmed" (1935: 445). On the same subject: "though [the magic formulae] enter through the larynx, naturally, as he learns them, repeating word for word, he has to stow them away in a bigger . . . receptacle; they sink right to the bottom of his abdomen" (1922: 409). In an interview with the last war-magician to the chiefs of Omarakana, Malinowski asked whether the man had any more magic to produce. "With pride, he struck his belly several times, and answered: 'Plenty more lies [is stored] there!'" (1922: 409). We can begin to see from this that parts of the cluster of seven Solomon elements form a cognitive map, a ritualistic ordering of reality. While not every item is explainable, the head-throat-belly-wheels complex obviously relates to the production of magic. The belly-wheels represent the storage area, "the tabernacle of magic force" (ibid.: 412), from which the spells rise up the throat and emerge through the head.⁹ The style of the Trobriand shield design, like ritual magic spells, was "condensed, disjointed . . . telegraphic" (Malinowski, 1922: 454). Major elements including the head, throat, and belly-wheels were shorthand references to matters of particular importance to the magician.

Reassuringly familiar details were also included, which the Trobriand public would have recognized. These parts of the design

⁸ There are between 15 and 46 dots on the "arms-up" position shields, and between 7 and 42 with "arms-joined" in my sample of 43 items.

⁹ The circular head and the wheels may also represent the decorated ends of prize yams; the head may equally be considered a mouth.

cast a Trobriand shadow. But the shield's air of profound significance, the mysterious unfamiliarity that the magician borrowed from the Solomon shield, was a characteristic he was at great pains to retain. Like a magic incantation, the decorated shield was an organized mystery, complete and including necessary materials in a correct order. The Trobriand war-magician had no desire to explain the source or the meaning of what he had created. The Trobrianders, with their allegiance to things magical, would never have asked, "What does it represent?"

The establishment of the new shield design provided an important contribution to Trobriand magic tradition. Everyone benefited from the decorated shield. The yam-house roof in the maze area called attention to the power and hospitality of the chief. The shield-owning warrior, when not the chief himself, had available for his protection a named, one-of-a-kind shield that recognized his warlike accomplishments. The people in general gained strength from the powerful spiritual possibilities in the decoration, accepting that the design must have been created according

to the established laws of magic. The magician reserved the area of the magical knives for himself, the contact-spot of communication when reciting his protective spells. And by making his magic-making visible in the enigmatic abdomen-throat-head chart, he provided a form of immortality for all magicians. His self-portrayal is part of every decorated shield.

Viewing these shields in exhibitions today reminds us of the importance mystery continues to hold in all cultures. The 100-year-old magical symbols of the Trobriand design also reflect some of the unaccustomed strangeness of men at war.

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