

"NOBLE SAVAGES" AND "THE ISLANDS OF LOVE":  
TROBRIAND ISLANDERS IN  
'POPULAR PUBLICATIONS'<sup>1</sup>

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*Ist einmal...eine recht handgreifliche Abgeschmacktheit zu Papier gebracht, so rollt selbige unablässig von Buch zu Buch, und es ist das erste, wonach die Büchermacher greifen.*

Adalbert von Chamisso<sup>3</sup>

*1. The "Savage" and the "Civilized"*

A closer look at the history and quality of the contact between European and Non-European cultures overseas from the early days of colonialism in the 15th and especially in the 16th century till now reveals that this contact has been characterized from the very beginning by the conviction of dominant superiority and supremacy of the Europeans with respect to the representatives of the overseas

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<sup>1</sup> This paper is based on field research on the Trobriand Islands in 1982 (5 months), 1983 (11 months), 1989 (4 months), 1992 (2 months), 1993 (1,5 months), and 1994 (1,5 months). I thank John Haviland, Ingjerd Hoem, Steve Levinson, Barbara Senft, and Wolfgang Wickler for helpful comments and critical remarks. I would also like to thank the National and Provincial Governments of Papua New Guinea and Milne Bay Province for their assistance with, and permission for, my research projects. I also thank the Institute for Papua New Guinea Studies and the Council of Chiefs of the Trobriand Islands for their support of my research. My deepest gratitude goes to the people of the Trobriand Islands, especially the inhabitants of Tauwema, for their hospitality, friendship, and patient cooperation. The aim of this paper is to join forces in fighting against all kinds of misrepresentations of the peoples, their cultures and habits that we as linguists and/or anthropologists study. This has always been a matter of real concern for Bert Voorhoeve, too; therefore I would like to dedicate this paper to him.

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<sup>3</sup> Chamisso is quoted according to Kramer (1981:74).

cultures<sup>1</sup>. This conviction manifests itself in between two extremes: Overseas cultures experience(d) either intolerant damnation or pitiful recognition of their forms of civilization as being inferior with respect to European standards. The claim of European cultural supremacy was first of all based on the undoubtable military superiority of European weapons and warfare. However, it was also the prerequisite and the ideological justification for turning the contacted cultures into colonies to be exploited commercially by the respective European power and nation. Finally, this European position also justified, and allowed for, activities to 'civilize' these inferior cultures<sup>2</sup>.

It is quite evident that this conviction of European superiority made any attempts to understand at least some of the characteristics of the contacted overseas cultures extremely difficult. Given this situation, it is quite interesting to note that with the very beginning of ethnographic reports on overseas cultures we find the picture of the 'good savage' emerging, a picture that was revitalized and made permanent for the discussion of representatives of overseas cultures by Bougainville's description of the 'noble savages' of Tahiti (Bougainville 1772: see also Kohl 1986:19). The 'civilized' European thus was not forced any more to deal with the 'savage' only: There was the 'noble savage' as well; and this other, this new 'ethnocentric' construction by overseas peoples' representatives allowed Europeans feeling somewhat uncomfortable within their own culture to project their ideals and wishes, their longings and hopes onto these 'noble savages' and their 'exotic' cultures that were assumed to be 'unspoilt' (so far) by all negative aspects of European civilization, its rules, its regulations, its powers, its repressions, and its moral standards.

It seems that this "Unbehagen an der Kultur", the "discontents" of civilization - to use Siegmund Freud's famous phrase - had been strongest with respect to European standards of sexual moral and behaviour - if we keep in mind how e.g. Cook's,

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<sup>1</sup> For detailed information see especially Bitterli (1991), but also Kohl (1986) and Kramer (1981).

<sup>2</sup> It goes without saying that all attempts to 'civilize' the 'savages' involved first and foremost Christian missionaries. However, I do not want to discuss this topic here, but refer the interested reader to Senft (1994 & in print).

Forster's, and especially Bougainville's travelogues with their descriptions of how the Tahitians enjoyed and lived their sexuality in their South Seas paradise of 'La Nouvelle Cythere' were received by the contemporaries of these explorers and scientists in Europe. Thus, with the myth of the 'noble savage' Europeans combined from the very beginning an utopian construction of the ideal exotic person living a natural life in a society that was imagined to be completely free from any kind of repression. However, 'noble savages' were also imagined to have no problems in coping with, and adapting to, European standards of civilized behaviour when being transferred from their 'exotic paradises' to European countries.

We are easily tempted to look at the 'noble savage' myth with the implications briefly described above as being a mere historical fact, a past phenomenon these days. However, I will try to show that this is not at all the case. On the contrary, it seems to me that we are far from having outgrown this 'noble savage Utopia'. We still seem to misunderstand certain patterns of public behaviour and self-presentation, especially if these behaviour patterns are perceived as being erotic or even sexually arousing - as Cook and his crew and other first visitors to the South Seas did - disregarding that a closer look at these patterns would reveal important differences between underlying rules and more often than not rather strict regulations and the perceived form of the respective behaviour. Marshall Sahlins has convincingly summarized such cultural misunderstandings in his "Supplement to the Voyage of Cook; or, le calcul sauvage" (Sahlins 1985: see also Rensch 1991). It seems that in the South Seas bare breasted women in short grass-skirts, or athletic men wearing their loin cloths, joking with, and making fun of, Western travellers and tourists still invoke in these foreigners the image of an erotic or sexual paradise - although we should all know better by now. In what follows I will use the Trobriand case to illustrate these points<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> For further excellent discussions of the 'noble savage' myth see Stein (1984a, b, c), Theye (1984), and Borsboom (1988).

## 2. Malinowski's "*Sexual Life of Savages*" and Reich's "*Invasion of Compulsory Sex-Morality*"

In 1929 Bronislaw Malinowski published his second monograph on the culture of the Trobriand Islanders under the topic indicating title "The Sexual Life of Savages in Northwestern Melanesia". In this monograph the master of Trobriand ethnography describes in his detailed and comprehensive style aspects of the Trobriand Islanders' sexuality, covering among other things topics like sexuality and sexual behaviour in children, adolescents, and adults, sexual innuendos in games and everyday verbal interaction, sexual taboos, rules and regulations for marriage and married adults, sexual aberrations (from the Trobrianders' point of view, of course), forms of, and variation in, sexual intercourse, and so on. Although many parts of this book present a sometimes rather dry sociological account of the more often than not extremely strict rules that regulate societal life on the Trobriands, those paragraphs that emphasize the sexual freedom granted to children and adolescents and especially the general promiscuity of young unmarried Trobriand Islanders immediately got a reception that very distinctly reached beyond the circle of oceanists and general anthropologists. First, it seems, this reception remained within academic and literary circles, that is to say, psychologists and literati<sup>1</sup> referred either in a very detailed way or just in passing to Malinowski's research results. However, these references were soon picked up by the more popular media, especially by newspapers and other periodicals, and up till now the Trobriand

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<sup>1</sup> I just want to mention Aldous Huxley here who mentions the Trobriand Islands in his novel "Brave New World" (1972:41). This novel was first published in 1932, four years after Malinowski's monograph. Like many anthropologists or laymen before and after him, Huxley quotes one of the few mistakes of Malinowski's: The field-researcher mistook myth for fact reporting that the Trobriand Islanders are ignorant of a man's role of "pater" as "genitor" (Malinowski 1929:3, 69, 148ff); the fact that Trobriand women have been using traditional contraceptives - some of which they just use(d) before having sexual intercourse being completely aware of why and for what biological ends they did, and still do, this - proves Malinowski wrong. In 1983 and 1989 my wife interviewed many elderly women in Tauwema who still enjoyed the joke that their mothers were said to be unaware of the man's role as "genitor". For another reference to the Trobriand Islanders see also the first chapter of Gore Vidal's (1969:7) novel "Myra Breckenridge".

Islands are usually referred to in these popular media with the epitheton ornans "the Islands of Love". What is most striking, however, is the fact that most writers referring to Malinowski's monograph or to the Trobriand Islanders' sexuality and sexual practices seem to have not read Malinowski at all or to have read him with such a biased point of view that they completely misrepresent Malinowski's insights into this part of the Trobriand Islanders' life and culture<sup>1</sup>.

One of the first, and probably one of the most influential, persons claiming to refer to Malinowski and his research results on the Trobriand Islanders' sexuality was Wilhelm Reich. In his monograph "The Invasion of Compulsory Sex-Morality", a first version of which was published in German just three years after Malinowski's monograph<sup>2</sup>, Reich explicitly connects his research with Malinowski's book and claims to have used the facts the anthropologist presented in 1929 to 'round up' his own research for which he collected material between 1920 and 1930. However, it is actually the first 84 pages of Reich's book (of 202 pages) that

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<sup>1</sup> One could discuss the question, of course, whether Malinowski was not playing the same game as all the recipients of his monograph and that he actually "started the whole thing". One could ask the question whether Malinowski used "science" as an excuse for talking openly about sex and sexual matters. This was not taken for granted at all in these days; we just have to keep in mind that a year before Malinowski's monograph D. H. Lawrence novel "Lady Chatterley's Lover" was published (in a limited edition in Florence). It was immediately banned as obscene in several countries; it was first published in Great Britain in an expurgated version in 1932; and the full text was only published as late as 1959 in New York. If one wants to argue like this, then Malinowski (like Geoffrey Pullum (1991) recently with his essay on Whorf and his reception) could be made responsible for having started a discussion that once it took off could not be stopped, corrected, or otherwise be influenced any more.

<sup>2</sup> This version saw a first revision in 1935; in 1951 Reich made a number of corrections and revisions and published this second revised and enlarged version together with a completely new preface in English under the title "The Invasion of Compulsory Sex-Morality" with Farrar, Straus & Giroux. In this paper all references are made to the German edition of this 1951 version which is given in the list of references.

I would like to add here a brief and rather personal note: It was with this book that the author of this paper as a student in Heidelberg first hit upon the name of the Islanders the language of which he was going to research some 10 years after this kind of 'first contact'. In the early seventies Reich was an extremely popular figure in the German student scene.

deal with, and topicalize, the Trobriand Islanders and their sexuality.

Although in his 1931 preface Reich explicitly expresses his hope to have not made some bad and obvious mistakes in reporting some of Malinowski's research results (1972:25), the very first page of the first chapter proves, unfortunately, that this hope was in vain. We notice many "changes occurring in the messages" (Voorhoeve 1979:196), and in what follows I will illustrate this with a few examples:

Although many chapters of Malinowski's "Sexual Life of Savages" deal with the rules and regulations that govern the Trobrianders' sexuality, Reich denies the existence of any of these rules to which he refers as "moral norms".

Thus, Reich (1972:30) denies voyeurism on the Trobriands - with special reference to voyeurism in childhood. I have not only observed and experienced voyeurism both in children and in adults on the Trobriands, I also collected at least four terms that refer to the act of "peeping" (Senft 1986:539) - and the expressions "totadoyai" and "natadoyai" explicitly refer to male or female "peeping Toms" - regardless of their respective age.

Although Malinowski (1929:433-451) describes in detail the most important taboo on the Trobriands, the so-called "brother-sister taboo", emphasizing that siblings must not know anything about each others erotic engagements or love affairs, Reich states that children are sexually instructed by their elder siblings and that their parents discuss their children's sexual affairs (Reich 1972:31ff). Up to this day this sounds just horrendous to any Trobriand Islander - and Reich certainly found no proof for this statement in Malinowski's monograph.

Reich denies any cases of suicides in puberty on the Trobriands because of sexual frustration - however, in Malinowski's days even an adolescent having had a sexual affair with a married person was forced to commit suicide once this fact became publicly known. By the way, this moral obligation to commit suicide if a married person's sexual affair with another partner became public knowledge is definitely a rather strong moral norm that supports the ideal of a monogamous life of married Trobriand Islanders (Malinowski 1929:97ff). Although the verbal expression that refers to this form of suicide ("-lou-") is still known on the Trobriands, this extremely strict moral norm is no

longer valid on the Islands these days. However, extra-marital affairs that become public knowledge are still regarded as something shameful and are looked at as really scandalous<sup>1</sup>.

Reich (1972:42) states that Trobrianders are rather direct in their courting behaviour. This is sheer nonsense (if we understand that courting behaviour finally results in seduction)! Trobrianders will always be quite indirect in their courting behaviour - which should not be mixed up with very light hearted, but sometimes rather direct flirting behaviour! In verbal flirting and banter Trobriand Islanders can always recede from what they have said by labelling it as "sopa", as something they did not really mean to say, as a joke in a joking - and not in a serious - relationship (see Senft 1991:237ff). As to courting behaviour, Trobriand Islanders still generally use the assistance of a go-between if they want to arrange first dates. The basic motive behind this is to keep face if their proposition is turned down by the desired person. The better adolescents court - and this holds for boys as well as for girls (on the Trobriands and elsewhere) - the better are their chances to have dates with desired partners. The most direct way and means to get a sexual partner up to this day is the use of love magic; however, to get this love magic (usually transported in a betelnut) to the desired person asks again for much discretion and clever courting.

Reich (1972:52) also states that there is no homosexuality on the Trobriands. Again, this is not true. Malinowski (1929:395, 397f.) refers to cases of homosexuality, and his observation that this form of sexuality is discriminated and marked as aberrant by the Islanders still holds.

Finally, Reich (1972:56) postulates that the Trobrianders erotic fantasies are "relatively slothful" - for anyone knowing the Trobrianders this is so far off the point that it sounds extremely ridiculous. A short look at the data my wife and I have been gathering on songs, play accompanying verses, jokes, lullabies, stories, fairy tales, etc., show that the Trobrianders' erotic fantasies are far from being underdeveloped; they may be rather

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<sup>1</sup> This moral norm also holds for white persons who are known to be married. I know of cases where the Trobriand Islanders were just shocked by the fact that some Europeans visiting the Trobriands were either accompanied by a girl friend or had sexual affairs with (unmarried) Trobriand girls - although these men were known to be married.

blunt, sometimes, - however, they can also be extremely sophisticated, as documented for example in the ritualistic harvest-festival ("milamala")-songs (see e.g. Senft 1986; Eibl-Eibesfeldt; Senft 1986; Senft in Eibl-Eibesfeldt; Senft 1992; Senft 1993).

I will stop quoting Reich's misreadings of Malinowski here - his mistakes are much too obvious for anyone familiar with some facts about the Trobriand Islanders. However, I think I should point out again that Reich certainly has to be blamed for being one of the first writers who took the Trobrianders as representatives and proof for his ideals with respect to human sexuality: a sexuality that is completely free from any neurotic aspects. Reich obviously transformed and projected his ideals and visions into the "Savages of Northwestern Melanesia" - thus reviving the 'noble savage' myth and the imaginary ethnography of the 19th century (Kramer 1981) - an ethnography that had definitely, or at least should have, come to an end with Malinowski and his pioneering field research on the Trobriand Islands. I assume that Reich's referring to the Trobriand Islanders had at least the same results for the Trobrianders as Margaret Mead's "Coming of Age in Samoa" had for the Samoans: Reich's references to the Trobriand Islanders seem to have not been recognized as pieces of fiction but have been mistaken as fact - and, unfortunately, these 'facts' have been perpetuated by many others, as we shall see now.

### 3. *The 'Islands of Love' - Fact and Popular Fiction*

"A newspaper is a business out to make money through advertising revenue. That is predicated on its circulation and you know what the circulation depends on."

Raymond Chandler (1985:532)

Ever since I started my research on the Trobriand Islands in 1982, relatives, friends, and colleagues have been sending me copies of articles they have found that deal in one way or another with, or refer to, the Trobrianders - and I also do my very best to keep this collection up to date. In what follows I will present in



chronological order a rather random selection<sup>1</sup> of this collection to illustrate what some authors and/or journalists seem to have to say about the Trobriand Islanders - who in turn have - at least so far - hardly any means to protest against some of these propagated statements and 'news'.

It is to be expected that writers for the American "Playboy" company pick up something like these rumours about the 'sex-paradise' on the Trobriands for economic reasons - and indeed Roger Baker has done so. In 1983 he published a book on "Free Love" (in a German "Playboy" paperback series<sup>2</sup>), where - in a chapter on the Trobriand Islanders (Baker 1983:67-75) - he declares Malinowski's monograph as being "the bible" for all supporters of the free-love movement. Baker refers to the "bukumatula" as the house of unmarried girls where the Trobriand adolescents celebrate 'wild sexual orgies'. In Malinowski's time the "bukumatula" was a big house built by the male bachelors where they had dates with their girl-friends. It was not too long after Malinowski's staying on the Trobriands that these "bukumatula" were abolished - mainly under the influence of the Australian patrol officers (the 'Kiaps') on the Trobriands and because of rather strong pressure from Christian missionaries - especially from Lutherans of the United Church. When I first came to the Trobriands in 1982, the "bukumatula" was already history, even for the Trobrianders. As soon as a young man thinks himself to be old enough these days, he just builds his own small bachelor house - most often in the vicinity of the house of his family. Baker also refers to kissing - but he does not mention that the

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<sup>1</sup> There seems to be hardly any topic where you do not find some hints to the Trobriand Islanders' sexual behaviour. Even a (rather critical and well researched) sexual history of Christianity refers to some 'facts' about Trobriand sexuality (Deschner 1974:386). I also want to note here, that the label "Islands of Love" is used in articles published within PNG as well - with the rather unequivocal aim to attract tourists (see e.g. Halstead 1978; Croft 1978; Stocks 1984, Anonymous 1988, 1989). It is interesting to realize that some of these publications also give Malinowski the credit for having coined this label. Rumours seem to be taken up everywhere, indeed, - once they have been spread... - and no one cares whether or not Trobriand women are upset about this image - as an article by Linda Lomax in a 1989 edition of "The Times of Papua New Guinea" states (unfortunately I am not able to give the exact reference to this article).

<sup>2</sup> I am very much indebted to Gerd Engler for drawing my attention to this book. I am sorry but I am unable to refer the reader to the original American publication.

Trobrianders - at least at the time when Baker's book was published - did not kiss as Europeans do. They then had a form of sniff-kissing, which they still practise these days, by the way. Although Malinowski rightly pointed out that monogamy was (and still is) the ideal form of married life on the Trobriands, Baker does not hesitate to proclaim general promiscuity and exchange of sex-partners between married couples for the Trobrianders. Moreover, according to Baker the change of sex-partners by the hour is not uncommon at all for Trobriand adolescents. He denounces the Islanders not only as exhibitionists, but even worse as egotists who have no feeling of any kind of responsibility for their partners. Fantasizing like this he cunningly gives his readers the impression that his 'statements' were based on Malinowski's research. To sell this book in a country like America, however, where sexual explicitness is still tempered by Puritan ideas, Baker has to express - at the very end of his chapter on the Trobriands - his 'disgust' with respect to the described 'sensational' sexual practises, of course, and to file his caveat with respect to possible demands to take over these 'savage' forms of sexuality in America or Europe. Thus, the author is completely aware of the double-moral standards in his own culture and society - but obviously does not care at all whether or not his writings about another ethnic group may insult members of this culture and society.<sup>1</sup>

The publications by Reich and Baker were written by authors who never set foot on the Trobriand Islands. However, people who visited the Islands and then write in the popular media about their impressions rather rarely surpass the 'quality' of accounts like those quoted above.

In 1985 Marianne Oertl reports on a short visit of the Trobriand Islands in a German semi-scientific magazine under the heading "The Trobrianders' natural eroticism: What will become of the 'Islands of Love'" - and here we hit upon this epitheton ornans which is to be found as a part of the title of many articles on the Trobriand Islands in the popular press (therefore, I also used it in the title of my paper). Oertl, who claims to be a biologist

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<sup>1</sup> Of course Baker's book was published before any discussions in the States of what is "politically correct" started. I wonder why there was never before any discussion as fervent as the one we observe with respect to "p.c." these days that dealt with a writer's ethics...

with anthropology as her hobby, does not only get some of the basic facts about canoes, kinship and status wrong, she also perpetuates the myth of the Trobrianders' being unaware of the role of the father as 'genitor' and states that the famous 'Kula'-exchange is endangered. However, these quite obvious mistakes could be excused, keeping in mind that she only claims to be an 'amateur anthropologist'. Some of the things she reports must be based on hearsay only - like her reference to the "Melanesian Explorer" - a tourist ship that visited the Trobriands regularly on its cruises in Milne Bay Province. This ship, like the "Melanesian Discoverer" that replaced it in 1989, could not carry more than 32 tourists - Oertl reports that whenever the Explorer dropped anchor, hundreds of tourists were invading the Trobriand villages. She gives the impression that this kind of tourism is as responsible for finally destroying and perverting basic characteristics of Trobriand culture as the sex tourism of the worst kind that we also find on the Trobriand Islands. However, the owners of these ships, Jane and Peter Barter, who also run the Melanesian Resort Hotel in Madang, have been extremely careful from the very beginning of their tourist business activities in PNG to not influence and disturb the villages and the people they visit with tourist groups in Milne Bay, in the Highlands, and in the Sepik. I actually think the Barters have established an exemplary way to run a tourist business in a developing country.<sup>1</sup> What cannot be excused with Oertl and her article, however, - at least to my mind - is the patronizing attitude with which she views down on the Trobrianders from an extremely arrogant and a presumed superior European point of view. At the beginning of her article she speaks of some features of a minority complex she observed in some Trobrianders (a feature, by the way, that neither I nor Annette Weiner - not to speak about Malinowski (see e.g. Malinowski 1967) - have ever had the opportunity to observe with the Massim), and at the end of her contribution she tries to protect the Trobrianders from civilization - opting for careful European support for the Islanders on their 'long and winding road' to civilization. Oertl's weird

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<sup>1</sup> I would like to emphasize that the Barters cannot be made responsible for the strange ideas their customers may utter about Melanesia in general and PNG in particular - such as ideas very ironically documented in Dennis O'Rourke's film "Cannibal Tours".

attitude culminates in the unwittingly revealing statement "But the Trobrianders are human beings"! A few paragraphs before this statement of the biologist, Oertl had no problems to denounce some of the Trobriand women and girls as prostitutes who could not resist the temptations of the white men's money - and who - with their bare breasts, their sexy grass-skirts, and their free attitude with respect to sexuality are themselves responsible for attracting sex-tourism. It does not seem to occur to Oertl - in a kind of European naiveté? - to ask who has been establishing, housing, and fostering prostitution on Kiriwina Island. Moreover, it does not seem to occur to her, either, that it is exactly publications like her own article - with glossy pictures of Trobriand girls, innuendos about the 'Sexual Life of Savages', with headings like the title and subheadings like "Why Tourists Call the Trobriands the Islands of Love" or "Trobriand: a Market even for Love", and with the information where to find the brothel that helps unscrupulous tourist agents to foster a tourism that promises the experience of the "Sexual Life of Savages" on the "Islands of Love".<sup>1</sup>

That this image of the Trobriand Islands is indeed something tourist and traveller magazines use for their clientele is documented by a contribution of Harald Ludwig to the German "Erlebnis Magazin abenteuer & reisen" in 1987. The title of Ludwig's article together with the label "South Seas", which has always been full of romantic and adventurous connotations in Europe, is also mentioned on the cover of the magazine - and by now we may not be too surprised to learn that it runs: The Trobriands - Islands of Free Love". The author urges the interested tourist to rush as soon as possible to this paradise before it is lost. The article is full of mistakes: Thus Ludwig gives Denis de Trobriand, D'Entrécasteaux's second officer who had the honour to have his commander give his name to the group, the credit for the discovery of the islands, the writer has John Wayne and Bob Hope visited the islands during World War II - which they never did; he overestimates, and incorrectly reports on, the role, status, power and influence of a white member of the PNG parliament who owns

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<sup>1</sup> It is indeed somewhat depressing to state that this beautiful epitheton ornans - "Islands of Love" - has only negative effects for the Trobriand Islanders. It goes without saying that the Trobrianders are completely aware of these negative aspects of tourism (see e.g. Senft 1987:192).

the guest house on Kiriwina, turns 'good old Malinowski' (as he refers to the ethnographer) into a German, states that there are no betel-nuts on the islands (which, if correct, would be terrible for the Trobrianders, by the way), and ignores apart from Malinowski's 'standard publication' with the title "Sex Life of Savages" the existence of any other literature on the Trobriand Islands. Ludwig celebrates the Islands as presenting European tourists with all the romantic feelings that they may have dreamed of ever since they had been reading "Robinson Crusoe" and "The Bounty Mutiny", and praises the Trobriand girls as having 'the most beautiful breasts in the world'. According to him Trobriand girls 'seek to sleep with as many men as possible' and (therefore?) most often walk around topless without wearing anything below their mini-grass-skirts. The group this article aims at is certainly not too difficult to define; whoever dreams of some wild sexual romance on a South Sea island - with beautiful young half-naked women taking over the active part in these hoped for affairs - will try to follow Ludwig's advice and visit these islands as soon as possible (and it is here that one may be thankful for the fact that this trip is extremely expensive!).

If we may hope to find a different portrait of the Trobriand Islands and their inhabitants in more serious publications than those we have dealt with so far, we are more often than not disappointed. Thus, in 1989 Jean-Michel Cousteau and Mose Richards published a book with the title "Cousteau's Papua New Guinea Journey" in which we find a chapter on the Trobriands. Although the style in which this book is written cannot be compared at all with the articles and the book I referred to so far, it is frustrating to stumble even here over a number of misnomers, cliches, and mistakes. I will just list a few of them: The authors speak of "sacred yam dances" (Cousteau, Richards 1989:57) - as the accompanying pictures indicate, they refer to the dances of the "milamala" harvest ritual period. If this would have been the case, the missionaries would not have fought against them some years ago (but - (thanks God?) - their efforts were in vain). Even these two authors cannot refrain from quoting the cliché of "the Islands of Love", stating at the same time that "the Trobriands have been the subject of anthropological studies prompted by the permissive sexual mores of the islanders" (Cousteau, Richards 1989:65). Still worse, referring to the matrilineal society of the Islanders they

state that the Trobrianders have a "male-dominant society" where a nephew of the paramount chief, to whom the authors refer to as "an island prince", is said to have "abundant sexual opportunities among young single island girls" (Cousteau, Richards 1989:65); however, they do not mention that this man, because of his status, has to follow all the taboos and the rules that regulate his choice of possible sex-partners even more carefully than a man of lower status, who may be forgiven if he breaks one of these rules now and again. In connection with this Trobriand consultant the authors also refer to "the stories of sexual permissiveness in the Trobriands" where girls "scheme together, waylaying certain men and gang-raping them"; the authors allude to what Malinowski (1929:231ff) reports about the "yausa"-habit to be found in a few inland villages at the time when the yams is harvested and brought from the gardens into the villages. As already stated, the "yausa" is not a habit to be found all over the islands, and for the majority of the Trobriand Islanders this habit is just abhorrent and abominable. What Cousteau and Richards refer to as "gang-raping" are actually some rather horrible forms of sexual abuse. As Malinowski already reports (Malinowski 1929:231ff), during the "yausa" a band of women may assault their victim, undress him, defecate and micturate all over his body, try to masturbate him, and, if he fails to have an erection, torture his genitals. One of my consultants on Kiriwina Island told me about a case where women had one of their victims bound naked to a pole, with a special string around his testicles and penis. They carried him into their village like a pig to be slaughtered for a festival. All the time they threatened to castrate him, wildly tearing at the strings strung around his genitals. It is no wonder, I assume, that this kind of sexual abuse hardly result in the women actually having sexual intercourse with their victim (if he is not a masochist, of course). However, this habit is something extremely exotic, - even for the majority of the Trobriand Islanders, but especially for some men, I presume, - and thus, it seems, it has to be reported as a form of "gang-raping", even in a all in all serious publication like Cousteau's and Richard's book.

After this excursus to a more serious publication we now return to the popular press again, and this time we deal with an article published in a journal that claims to support feminism: in 1990 Ursula Pittroff and the photographer Regine Körner published

their article "eine insel für die liebe" in the German edition of the "cosmopolitan" magazine as part of an "adventure series". A brief summary of this contribution offers especially the female reader information about 'secret sex-cults'. The article begins with what the authors assume to be a funny innuendo, and then has its first culmination in stating that 'this island is completely oversexed'. The authors claim that during the yams-festival all Trobriand women, regardless whether they are married or not, indulge in completely free love and general promiscuity. By now it should be clear that the Trobriand Islanders grant this sexual freedom - that seems to really fascinate all these male and female European authors - to unmarried (or divorced and single) men and women only, but not to married persons - not even during the period of the harvest-festivals (see Senft 1993). Like Cousteau and Richards, Pittroff and Körner also refer to the "yausa" - however, they present Malinowski as their source. Unfortunately, they must have read Malinowski extremely superficially - they spell his name as "Malinowsky", have him live on the Trobriands during World War I as a banned German anthropologist who was - in Pittroff's words - 'bookkeeping' the Islanders' sexual practices. The "cosmopolitan" authors also make Malinowski (or rather Malinowsky?) responsible for the fact that the Trobriands are called "the Islands of Love" these days. They finish their 'adventure report' with the somewhat cryptic remark that the Trobriands represented for them a 'dream' with permanent shades of 'nightmares'. With this they probably allude to the briefly topicalized danger of AIDS in this rather promiscuous society of adolescents. This, finally, may be at least something to praise the authors for, if their allusion may result in keeping sex-tourists away from the islands.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> In my collection of articles referring to the Trobriands I also have an contribution published in the German women's weekly "freundin" - unfortunately I cannot verify the year and the edition of this article (it seems to have been published in 1989 when I and my family stayed for half a year in the Trobriands and in Australia). In her contribution "Einmal in die Südsee" Petra Giffhorn reports on her honeymoon-experiences on the Trobriand Islands. Her article aims especially at a female readership. The contribution is written by a completely uninformed and extremely ethnocentric author who certainly mistook the Trobriands as a South Sea paradise. Giffhorn compares Kiriwina with Ibiza - and it is a pity that she did not report about her honeymoon experiences there... However, what holds for Pittroff and Körner's article may also be true for Giffhorn's piece: articles like these may have some

The myths of Trobriand women, that "lie in wait for (male) victims whom they ambush and rape" and of the Trobrianders who at the time of the annual yams harvest "are more than keen to bestow sexual favours" are also transmitted in Isabella Tree's article "Yam bam, thank you, ma'am"<sup>1</sup> published in the Evening Standard on November 11th, 1992. Tree also features another exotic detail of Trobriand love-play, the women's biting off of their lover's eyebrows and eyelashes - however, she has not read her Malinowski carefully, either. Malinowski (1929:286ff) already states, and my consultants confirmed, that the biting off of eyebrows and eyelashes is a sign of deep affection for a good and skilful lover, and thus proudly presented by the respective man - therefore, bitten off eyebrows and eyelashes do not at all provoke the kind of teasing of the respective man to which Tree refers. Moreover, this is only part of the sexual play of loving partners and by no means occurs when during the "yausa" a band of females abuse their male victim. Tree refers in her article to Malinowski and his 1929 monograph, but accuses him of having "got virtually all wrong". However, this does not prevent her from perpetuating one of the few of Malinowski's mistakes, stating - like the ethnographer - that the Trobriand Islanders do not "associate the sexual act with conception" - she even goes so far as to point out that therefore contraception on the Trobriands is "meaningless". Tree boldly states that there are "none of the usual taboos about the sexual act", that "mothers ... act as unpaid pimps" (an outrageous idea for any Trobriand mother, indeed!), and that making love in the gardens is "believed to bring good fortune on the crop" - actually, it is a great and important taboo for a Trobriander to have sexual intercourse in the gardens. I do not want to list all the other shortcomings and mistakes of this article, but just want to mention one positive aspect of Tree's article: like Pittroff and Körner she emphasizes at the end of her contribution the disastrous impact a disease like AIDS would have

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positive effects - they may prevent people with wrong ideas about the South Seas to realize their "dreams".

<sup>1</sup> I want to thank Thomas Widlock for a copy of this article. I just want to note that I wonder whether the author wants to allude with the title of her article to the phrase "Wham, bam, thank you yam" in Tom Robbins novel "Even Cowgirls get the Blues" (Robins 1977:208). Contrary to Tree, reading Robins is really fun.



on the Trobriands. To bring this paragraph to an end, I am afraid I have to disillusion Ms. Tree: She proudly finishes her article by mentioning that during her stay on the Trobriands a young man handed her a garland of white frangipani flowers. She interprets this as 'a token of love'; however, this is just one of many forms with which Trobriand Islanders express their appreciation for another person.

That it is not only mainly travellers and journalists that publish quite a lot of nonsense about the Trobriand Islanders is sadly documented by Paul Theroux, a rather well known American novelist. In 1992 he published an article with the title "Under the Spell of the Trobriand Islands" in the July edition of the highly respectable "National Geographic" - most probably as a kind of advertisement for his book "The Happy Isles of Oceania" which he published the same year, and which also contains two chapters on, and many references to, the Trobriands (Theroux 1992a&b).

In his National Geographic article the American "best-selling author" states: "...the islands were little changed... Not even missionaries with their threat of hell-fire for sinners have altered the Trobrianders' view that their islands are a paradise, full of magic and sensuality.... Most islanders claim to be Protestant or Catholic, but Christian theology does not impinge very much on their traditional beliefs..." (Theroux 1992a:119f.). In the same article the author also states that the Trobrianders eat yams only at feasts (p. 123), that there are still bachelor houses (i.e. the "bukumatula") on the Trobriands, that the birth rate on the islands is low (p. 123), and that during the yams festival spouses are given licence for sexual adventures (p. 128).<sup>1</sup> Everyone familiar with the Trobriands knows that all these statements are absolutely unfounded and ridiculous. For the last 12 years in which I have been doing research on the Trobriand Islands I have been observing tremendous changes that affect Trobriand culture and society (see e.g. Senft 1992:in print a&b; Weiner 1976, 1988). Theroux's mistakes with respect to what he reports about Trobriand sexuality should be evident by now. And the birth rate has exploded in the last years - certainly also because of the

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<sup>1</sup> Theroux also published a shortened and slightly altered, but not corrected, version of his National Geographic article in the German magazine "GEO" (Theroux: 1993). I will briefly refer to this publication at the end of this section.

(catholic) missionaries' opposition against (almost) all forms of birth control.

In his article Theroux does not use the phrase "the Islands of Love" - but we hit upon it at the very first paragraph in the first of his two chapters on the Trobriands in his book - together with the reference to Malinowski's monograph on "The Sexual Life of Savages". Malinowski, his 1929 monograph, and the Trobriands are first referred to on page 9 of this book, and then Theroux mentions them over and over again - as if they were leitmotifs for him (see e.g. Theroux 1992b: 13, 43, 48, 98, 129-195, 197, 221, 255, 277, 330, 337, 346, 350, 352f., 402, 404, 573, 585, 631, 672). Given this observation one may infer that the author was deeply and positively impressed by the Trobriands - however, this is far from being the case. On the Trobriands Theroux feels offended, and even threatened, by the Trobrianders' jokes about him and his kayak and quotes from Malinowski's diaries how the anthropologist - staying for a long time and completely on his own with the Trobriand Islanders - sometimes felt about some of his consultants or acquaintances - and Theroux does not choose friendly passages in Malinowski's personal diary. It soon becomes evident that the writer does not like the Trobriand Islanders at all.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, it is also evident that he does not care very much to learn something about them, either. His book presents the same mistakes as his National Geographic article and even adds some more: Here are just a few of these additional mistakes:

- Theroux states (as boldly as incorrectly) that every Trobriand Islander speaks English;
- he mixes up the "kosi" (Theroux writes 'khosa') - the evil spirits that survive a deceased if s/he is not bewailed properly - with the "baloma", the actual "spirit of the dead" (see e.g. Malinowski 1974; Senft 1985),
- he introduces the Polynesian concept of "mana" to the Trobriands (p. 156),
- he refers to the severest insults to be found in Kilivila as "jokes" (p. 173),

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<sup>1</sup> Theroux's whole book documents that he generally does not like the people of the Pacific - "Aussies" and "Kiwis" included; he grants just one exception: he very much feels at home and happy with his fellow Americans on the islands of Hawaii..

- he lets the Trobrianders (and not only a Seventh Day Adventist pastor) speak Tok Pisin (p. 182ff),
- he gives an extremely weird and completely incorrect report (p. 193f.) about a fight between Kaisiga and Giwa (and not Koma, as Theroux has it),
- he claims that the Trobrianders thought of themselves as being white (p. 197), and
- he describes a meeting with the paramount chief Pulayasa (p. 188ff), although the description of the person Theroux is talking about does not match at all with this impressive and powerful Trobriand chief.

Moreover, like almost everyone who talks about the Trobriand Islanders, Theroux makes only slightly veiled sexual innuendos on the "yausa" (p. 149f.) and the "Yam Festival" (p. 140) - to which he earlier referred to as "the orgasmic yam harvest" (p. 48). He reports that during this time some tug-of-war games between boys and girls end up in public mass-'fornication' (p. 151); but this is nothing special for the Trobriand islanders - at least according to Theroux: a few pages later he even quotes a Seventh Day Adventist pastor stating that during this time people generally have sexual intercourse in public (p. 159f.).

Given all these mistakes, rumours, cliches and blunt lies that Theroux presents to his reader, I cannot but agree with his statement that at the end of his stay - which, by the way, lasted for a few days only - he could "see the utter impossibility of [his] ever understanding the place". It would have been better for him, for the Trobriand Islanders, and for Theroux's readers who may think of him as a serious writer if he would not have visited the islands at all...

In one of my footnotes to my comments on Theroux (see page 133, footnote) I mentioned that the author also published a shortened and slightly altered, but not corrected, version of his National Geographic article in the quite highly respected German magazine "GEO" (Theroux 1993). As a further German comment on this article we find a brief contribution of an author whom we already hit upon in this paper: Marianne Oertl comments in an article with the title "Von den Trobriandern lernen" (Oertl 1993) on the Trobriand Islanders and gives a rather idiosyncratic evaluation of Malinowski (on which I cannot refrain from briefly

commenting in a footnote<sup>1</sup>). However, she also mentions that Tomalala, one of the inhabitants of the village Tauwema on Kaile'una Island, where I myself are doing my field research, lived for three months in Andechs in Bavaria. Invited by the Research Unit for Human Ethology within the Max-Planck-Society,<sup>2</sup> Tomalala helped his host Wulf Schiefenhövel to translate film-accompanying soundtracks. Tomalala did this by translating Kilivila into Motu, a lingua franca of Papua New Guinea with which his host, who does not speak Kilivila, is familiar. Then the human ethologist translated these Motu versions of the Kilivila utterances into German. Tomalala's visit to Germany and his cooperation with Schiefenhövel, analysing film documents of his own Trobriand culture, are praised by Oertl as "another culmination of participant observation". I would like to discuss this

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<sup>1</sup> Among other things Oertl states that some of Malinowski's central observations on the Trobriand Islanders do not hold any more. However, she does not present any proof for this statement. When I met Annette Weiner on the Trobriand Islands in 1989 we both agreed on the fact that Malinowski really has to be regarded as the master of Trobriand ethnography and that it is extremely difficult to find important faults with his research results on the Trobriand culture and society. However, Oertl seems to know better - though she makes the mistake of giving English (not Australian) colonial officials, and not the United Church missionaries from Fiji, the credit for having introduced cricket to the Trobriands. Oertl, as if herself experienced in field-research, also criticizes the pioneer of this form of anthropological research for having made a basic methodological mistake in living in Omarakana, the village of the paramount chief. Oertl also accuses Malinowski of not being a sociobiologist (one wonders how he could have been one, given the fact that sociobiology is a rather recent subdiscipline of biology) and of having had no feminist approach (again, Malinowski certainly did not live at a time where feminism was en vogue). But Oertl, referring to the master, mentions orgiastic festivities, of course, and claims that they regularly interrupt everyday life on the islands.

<sup>2</sup> I feel forced to note here that at the time of Tomalala's visit in Andechs I was no longer affiliated with the Human Ethology Research Unit, where I started my Trobriand research as the linguist in the project "Ritual Communication on the Trobriand Islands" (which was sponsored by the German Research Society). I actually was consulted about my views with respect to a possible visit of a Trobriand Islander in Bavaria. I argued strongly against the realization of such an idea. Given that in the last years I have been facing a number of situations where people asked me whether I was also responsible for what they had heard of, and/or read about, Tomalala's visit in Germany, I am glad to be able to deny any kind of responsibility for, and involvement in, this visit.

visit and some further reports about it in the press in the following section of this paper.

#### *4. Aotourou, Omai, Tomalala - Islanders from the South Seas visiting Europe*

Ever since Europeans had been in contact with so-called "savages", we observe with them a rather strange urge to bring some of the representatives of these newly "discovered" cultures back to their own European cultures. Thus, in 1441, the first 10 Africans were brought to Portugal as a special present for Henry the Seafarer (Bitterli 1991:97) - and Hans Plischke (1960:94) rightly observes that ever since then some unfortunate human beings were kidnapped to serve the Europeans as "specimens" in a gradually growing "collection" of foreign and 'exotic' races! However, it was the first visits of Islanders from the South Seas that got what we now would call "the real publicity". After his visit of Tahiti in 1768 Bougainville took with him - on a voluntary basis - one of the islanders whom the French called "Aotourou". Aotourou stayed in Paris for 11 months, but died on his way back to Tahiti in 1770. After James Cook's unsuccessful attempt to bring a Tahitian back to England in 1769 - the 'native' Tupia died in Batavia - the commander of the second ship in James Cook's second expedition to the South Seas, captain Furneaux, succeeded in bringing the Tahitian "commoner" Omai back home to 'dear old England' in 1775. J. R. Forster noted that Omai served the British aristocracy, especially the ladies, as a "Gegenstand thierischer Begierde" (Plischke 1960:99). After two years in England Omai returned to Tahiti where he died three years after without getting any kind of special acknowledgement from his fellow countrymen for his sojourn in Britain. Aotourou and Omai, however, were both extremely interesting objects for scientists in France and in England - and it was also partly because of their visits that a new scientific discipline called "anthropology" was born (see Plischke 1960:100f.,103).

However, the visits of Omai and especially of Aotourou also stimulated a lot of criticism in intellectual circles (see Bitterli 1991:186ff). It is quite interesting - also for self-critical purposes - to realize that this criticism is not too different from the criticism

I have to express myself in the final section of this paper and with which I have been confronted (as a researcher who incidentally happens to do his field research in the same village as Tomalala's host) by critical intellectuals in connection with Tomalala's visit in Bavaria. But before I will come up with this criticism, I will briefly outline how German newspapers reported about Tomalala's visit.<sup>1</sup>

In October 1992 Sabine Bader reports in the "Süddeutsche Zeitung" on Tomalala's "excursion in a land without sun and moon". This romantic title is explained by the fact that Tomalala's "Stammesbrüder" warned him that if he would accompany Wulf Schiefenhövel to Germany he would come to such a country. This is a really nice bit of fiction; at my first visit to the Trobriands in 1982 I had a number of books on Germany with me to give to the Islanders and to show them something about the country and the place I came from - and ever since then I have been having many discussions with my friends and consultants about life, climate, agriculture, etc. in Germany. But back to the article in the "Süddeutsche Zeitung": After a brief outline of Schiefenhövel's research on the Trobriands, Tomalala's visit is explained in this newspaper article as a necessary further step in the cooperation between Schiefenhövel and his "logical partner". Tomalala is said to be the only person in his Trobriand village who speaks Motu. And because Schiefenhövel is familiar with this language, but does not speak Kilivila, the "island language", his research depends on Tomalala: He is the only person Schiefenhövel can communicate with in this Papua New Guinean lingua franca.<sup>2</sup> Tomalala is

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<sup>1</sup> I would like to thank many of my friends and colleagues, my students at the Technical University in Berlin, and many well-informed tourists visiting the Trobriands as passengers of the Melanesian Discoverer for sending me newspaper-clips on Tomalala's visit. With many of them I nearly got engaged in an argument before they realized that I was not responsible for what they had learned in these newspaper articles about Tomalala, the man from Tauwema - my field research site on the Trobriands - visiting Bavaria.

<sup>2</sup> I just want to note that I know of a number of persons, especially men, living in Tauwema that know the lingua franca "Hiri Motu" or "Police Motu" as it was called until 1971; this lingua franca should not be mixed up with the language "Motu" that is spoken by the Motu-people living in the vicinity of Port Moresby, the national capital of PNG (see also Voorhoeve 1979: 183,202; Dutton, Voorhoeve: 1974). For a grammatical description of the Kilivila language and a Kilivila/English dictionary see Senft (1986).

claimed to have developed into a researcher himself during his work as translator of film accompanying sound-tracks at the Human Ethology Research Unit in Andechs. I do not want to comment on some blunt mistakes reported in this article about Tomalala and aspects of Trobriand culture and history. What I want to point out here is the fact that Bader emphasizes that it is not too difficult for a South Sea Islander said to be a farmer (not a yams-gardener) and fisherman to become a scientific researcher at a Research Unit of the Max-Planck-Society, and that this new researcher from the Trobriand Islands obviously enjoys his new role and his life during his visit in Germany.

Half a year later, in April 1993, Tomalala's story is taken up by another newspaper that is published in Munich. Gerhard Merk, in an article in the "Abendzeitung (AZ) München", comments on "Tom in High-Tech-Land" and emphasizes that the "Naturkind" - a man of 50 years of age - astonished scientists. Tomalala is again praised for his skills in translating film accompanying sound-tracks that were recorded by the ethologists. However, what is emphasized in this article is the fact that Tomalala was not too much impressed by the German way of life in our "High-Tech-Land". The article also points out that according to Schiefenhövel Tomalala's visit was not at all problematic for visitor and host - with the exception, however, that the host had to keep an eye on Tomalala's love of beer...

Tom's story then seems to have spread further north-east. In June 1993 the former official paper of the communist German Democratic Republic, the "Neues Deutschland", published an article by Dieter Hannes on "The fisherman from the Trobriand Islands". Tomalala, the 'guest from a different age' is introduced as his host's research partner on the Trobriands who during his fellowship at the Human Ethology Research Unit astonished the German scientists there because of his skills and because he did not experience a "culture shock" in Germany. The article sheds some strange light on the quality of archaeologists: Tomalala visiting some excavations, is reported to have been the only one to identify a presumed stone-axe as a whetstone. Thus, as the article phrases it, he helped these archaeologists with his 'prehistoric' knowledge and expertise...

Two months later, Lutz Göllner writes in the Berliner Zeitung about Tomalala's visit in Germany and reports that the

archaeological excavations (Hannes referred to in his article) took place in Sweden. Göllner promotes the "South-Seas native" to Professor Schiefenhövel's scientific assistant, praises - like his other fellow-journalists - Tomalala's skills and emphasizes that during his visit the Trobriand Islander lacked any form of culture shock: as the headline of the article indicates, Tomalala had "no problems with civilization"...

These examples should suffice for the purposes pursued here. All these articles illustrate more or less that Tomalala's visit is met and reported with what I would like to call a certain form of arrogance with which representatives of a presumed superior culture look down on members of a so-called "prehistoric" or "primitive" culture. Although all these articles mention that Tomalala astonished even the researchers who acted as his hosts, it is always implied that the encounter between "the visitor from a different age" and the Europeans is clearly dominated by the latter because of cultural, and not out of economic, reasons (the hosts paid for their guest's expenses and provided him with a fellowship). Moreover, a critical reader (especially a reader who would be labelled as being "ideologiekritisch", i.e. someone who is critical of all kinds of ideology) easily gets the impression that the reported astonishment is only feigned. Do not readers as well as reporters of such a visit - and even the hosts of the visitor themselves - tacitly assume that a "native" will have no problems to acquire European skills and forms of behaviour during his stay away from home, and is it not exactly this process that is keenly observed and documented in minute notes on how fast and how well the visitor makes progress in his process of cultural adaption? That such a visit and the reports about it also provokes a discussion about the ethics of field researchers is to be expected. In the final section of my paper I want to discuss such questions that have to be raised by a field researcher who is confronted with issues like those I briefly outlined in the preceding sections.



### *5. The Savage and the Civilized - and not to forget the Field Researchers' Ethics...*

One of the first and probably most important questions that have to be asked in connection with a visit like that of Tomalala's is what kind of consequences this visit may have for the visitor both in his host country and back home. I will stick to the Trobriand example and briefly outline what I think one has to take into consideration when one invites a Trobriand consultant to Europe. First of all it is well known that the Trobriand society is highly hierarchically stratified. Thus, the first factor one has to consider is whether an invitation does neither clash with the social status, role, and position of the invited person nor upset, or cause feelings of rivalry and envy, in other consultants or persons with a higher social standing than that of the invited. In the Trobriand society a person who has, or is believed to have, more goods than someone else is forced to generously distribute his or her surplus to maintain his status and to keep his face as a good and caring member of the community. Thus, before someone is invited the host-to-be has to check whether he can ensure that the guest - after returning from his journey to the scientist's country - can fulfil these obligations. It goes without saying that such an invitation asks for a lot of understanding and extremely good relations between host and guest. The host must be prepared to bother with problems that may seem to him to be of a most trifling nature. To give just one example: One of the things my consultants and friends in Tauwema just cannot imagine is how they would manage to survive in Europe without their yams and without their beloved betelnuts. Researchers who plan to invite consultants for a visit in their countries should always act on the basis of the general principle of professional responsibility that asks them to "clarify the potential conflicts between doing science, and protecting and promoting the physical, social, and emotional safety and welfare of the people with whom (they) work" (Skomal 1994:4). I would not dare to invite one of my consultants to visit me in Nijmegen, because I think my yearly one-to-two-months visits would not suffice to guarantee this consultant's "physical, social, and emotional safety

and welfare" after this consultant's returning to Tauwema.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, I would have difficulties to justify such an invitation, because I cannot see the difference in the kind and quality between the information I could get from my consultants in Nijmegen and the information I can get preparing, organizing, and doing my field-research properly on the Trobriand Islands. However, this is of course a decision every researcher has to come up with on the basis of his or her own field site, field research experience, and personal principles of ethics.

Another question field-researchers have to ask themselves is what kind of influence they have on reports in the media like those referred to in this paper, namely reports that deal with their field-sites and with the people with whom they do their field-research. One should always keep in mind that one may never know what happens if newspapers get hold of what some journalists may think to be a good story. To attempt to correct at least some of the worst mistakes and misrepresentations in the media sometimes resembles Sisyphos's task. However, I think we all have to try to see our field-sites and the people we do our research with not wrongly represented there. Thus, I am afraid, we have to continue to write letters to the editors (- some even get published -) or papers like the present one in the hope that we can change at least something by pointing out the problems and by creating a forum for discussing them. I believe this to be part of our responsibility for our field-sites and the people whose language, culture, and behaviour we research. To act and try to do something if we see that the image of the people we are studying and working with is discoloured by tabloid treatment and that they are defamed, slandered and libelled is part of our professional ethics.

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<sup>1</sup> To come back to Tomalala: As reported elsewhere (Senft 1987) Tomalala always had a rather peculiar status in Tauwema. Ever since his coming back from his trip to Germany at the end of 1992 he has been having even more problems to (re-)integrate himself into his own community and culture in Tauwema. For a discussion of the situation someone like Tomalala may experience coming back home to his or her village see e.g. Bitterli (1991:201f., also 186, 203).

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