

# Magical Conversation on the Trobriand Islands

Gunter Senft

**Abstract.** – The Trobriand Islanders of Papua New Guinea are famous for being great magicians. They differentiate among various forms of magic. This paper presents, translates, and comments on, a selection of various magical formulae that are used by expert magicians in different fields to reach various means and ends. It discusses – from the emic, Trobriand, point of view – the speech register represented and established by these formulae and points out that the speech situation between the magician and her or his animate, inanimate, or spiritual addressee is regarded by the Trobriand Islanders as a special form of conversation-like interaction. From the etic point of view, this interaction between magicians and their addressees is analysed as a special form of ritual communication that serves, among other things, the function of relieving the tension in critical situations of social interaction. [*Trobriand Islands, magic, ritual communication, Kilivila*]

**Gunter Senft**, Dr. phil (1982); senior research fellow at the Cognitive Anthropology Research Group at the Max-Planck-Institute for Psycholinguistics, Nijmegen, privatdozent in general linguistics at the University of Cologne. – Since 1981 research on the language and culture of the Trobriand Islanders, Papua New Guinea, including 28 months of field research. Before 1981 research and publications on the unguided language acquisition of foreign workers in Germany and on the language production of German workers. – Publications: see References Cited.

## 1 Trobriand Magic

The Trobriand Islanders of Papua New Guinea have always been famous for being great magicians – and with the publications of Bronislaw Malinowski (1922, 1935, 1974) and others like Powell (1957, 1960) and Weiner (1976, 1983, 1988) this fame has spread far beyond the borders of Milne Bay Province in Papua New Guinea. Until recently all Trobriand Islanders used magical formulae to reach certain aims with the firm conviction that they can thus influence and control nature and the course of, and events in, their lives. The Trobrianders differentiate between various forms of magic; they know weather magic, black magic, healing magic, garden magic, fishing magic, dance magic, beauty magic, love magic, sailing and canoe magic, and

magic against witches and sharks. There are specialists for certain kinds of magic. All magic is regarded as personal property. There is the basic belief that magic came to the Trobriand Islands together with the first ancestors of the four clans. In the matrilineal Trobriand society individuals inherit magic either, and most general, from their matrilineal relatives, or get it from their fathers or from specialists. In general, experts like for example master-carvers, weavers, canoe-builders, sail-makers, healers, etc., accept apprentices and pass their skills on to these apprentices together with the magic that goes or may go with their special skills.

The Trobriand Islanders differentiate between magicians in general, the *tomegwa* or *towosi*, and sorcerers, the *bwagau*, the experts in “black magic,” and the flying witches, the *munukwausa* in particular. The following phrases refer to the activities of magicians:

*epaisewa megwa*<sup>1</sup> s/he is working/doing magic,

*emegwa* s/he is doing magic,

*emigai megwa* s/he is whispering magic,

*ekauke'ula megwa* s/he is carrying/saying magic.

The first two phrases refer to the magical ritual as a whole and in general, and the last two phrases refer to the recitation of the magical formula in particular. Besides the noun *megwa* there are two other more archaic nouns *migavela* and *kema* that can be glossed as “magic,” and the Kilivila lexicon is very rich with respect to metalinguistic expressions that are used to refer to specific forms, rites, and parts of magic (see e.g., Senft 1986: 323, 522).

While reciting – or rather whispering and murmuring – magical formulae, the magician's accen-

<sup>1</sup> The Austronesian language of the Trobriand Islanders is called Kilivila. For a grammatical description and a dictionary of this language see Senft (1986). The orthography of the Kilivila examples presented here is based on Senft (1986: 14–16).

tuation of the words and phrases creates a special and characteristic rhythm. The short but clearly audible pauses the magician makes while reciting the formulae can be interpreted as text formation signals. Malinowski (1935 II: 213) and Weiner (1983: 703) rightly praised the phonetic, rhythmic, alliterative, onomatopoeic and metaphorical effects, the various repetitions and the thus prosodically so specific characteristics of the language of magic. It is especially the phonetic, suprasegmental and poetic characteristics that mark the special status of magical formulae as a text category of its own. Moreover, although parts of these formulae represent a variety of Kilivila that is easy to understand for every Kilivila speaker, the formulae contain a number of so-called magical words and loanwords from other Austronesian languages the meaning of which is unknown to the layman (– and sometimes even to the magician); there are also many words and expressions the semantics of which are only known to the owners of these formulae. The Trobriand Islanders refer to the specific register for magic with the metalinguistic expression *biga megwa* which can be glossed as “(the) language (of) magic.”

Expert magicians perform their rites on request and they expect betel nuts, yams, tobacco, and nowadays money for their services. Usually, magicians have to observe food taboos at least a day before they start with their rites and while they perform them. They get their compensation after they have finished their rituals. The fame of a magician depends on his or her success, of course. And this success is believed to basically depend on the magicians' strict observance of taboos that go with their magic and on the correct reciting of the respective formula: The formulae inherited from the powerful ancestors will not have the desired effect if the magician does not always recite them in the same unchanged wording in which they were passed to the Islanders by their first ancestors. The only other possible and acceptable explanation for a magician's failure is the fact that he or she may have worked unknowingly in competition with another magician's more powerful magic.

When I first came to the Trobriand Islands in 1982, magic still played a dominant role and the power of magicians and their magical formulae clearly pervaded everyday life on the Trobriands. In 1983 the chief of Tauwema, Kilagola, gave me parts of his canoe magic as a present, when he adopted me as one of his sons. His brother Weyei made me a similar present consisting of five formulae of his weather magic as a sign of his friendship (see Senft 1985a). And Vaka'ila, one of

the oldest men of the village, presented me with a number of formulae of his garden magic because I reminded him of his late brother Keyalabwala. These three men were the only persons who offered me such personal and secret information – and I was rather proud of being honoured by these men in this way.

In 1989, however, more than 12 women and men approached my wife and me and offered to sell magical formulae for money and tobacco. We felt as if we were in the middle of a big closing-down sale for magic. This is clear evidence for the fact that the magical formulae have lost their importance for the majority of Trobriand Islanders. This is certainly the result of a fight between traditional magicians and Christian missionaries which started in 1894 when the Methodist Church commenced work on the Trobriand Islands.<sup>2</sup>

In 1983 Trobriand Islands Christians lived in an interesting form of syncretism that combined traditional belief in magic and Trobriand eschatology (Malinowski 1974) with Christian ideas. In 1989 these syncretic features of Trobriand Islands Christianity had decreased dramatically. Belief in magic was not denounced directly as something heathenish. Instead, the strategy pursued to fight these “pagan” customs – according to the village priests' judgement – is much more subtle: the local village priests and catechists, the *misinari*, argue that there are two ways to live one's life. One way is the old, traditional way which includes magic and the eschatological belief in the immortal spirits of the dead living in the underground paradise on Tuma Island (Malinowski 1974). The other way is the new Christian way of life with its specific Christian beliefs and its own eschatological ideas. Both ways are mutually exclusive, or, to say it in the local priests' words: “one can either walk on the way of the ancestors or on the Christian way together with *Jesu Keriso*, the Lord Jesus Christ.” If people want to ensure a good yams harvest, if they need rain or want to have more sunny days, they are told to pray for it in the church (for European parallels in the 18th century see Wiemken 1980: 28, 95 f.). By now there are even some special public prayers for good harvests. Women especially accept this more recent way of Christian preaching and self-presentation, and the clear and simple alternatives – the traditional

2 For a discussion of the changes I observed in the Trobriand Islanders' culture and language and the role missionaries played with respect to these changes see Senft (1992, 1997).

magicians with their formulae and rites on the one hand and the *misinari* and their prayers on the other hand – cause much tension in families where the husbands of pious wives are expert magicians. Magicians, both female or male, are increasingly losing influence in the society, and accordingly the estimation of their magical skills and their knowledge of magical formulae decreases. Thus, magical formulae are also losing their value as personal property, and therefore many Trobrianders think that there is actually no need any more to bequeath the formulae to the members of the younger generation. In turn, the younger generation these days hardly sees any sense in learning these formulae in a number of long and tiresome lessons their elder (matrilineal) relatives, their fathers, or some experts used to teach them. This decrease in the importance of magic may indeed result in the loss of the text category “magical formula” in Kilivila, the Austronesian language of the Trobriand Islanders.

On the basis of this background this paper presents, translates, and comments on a selection of various magical formulae that were used by expert magicians in different fields to reach various means and ends. It also describes the rites the magician has to perform before or during the recitation of the various formulae. The paper discusses – from the emic, Trobriand, point of view – the speech register represented and established by these formulae and points out that the speech situation between the magician and her or his animate, inanimate, or spiritual addressee is regarded by the Trobriand Islanders as a special form of conversation-like interaction. From the etic point of view, this interaction between magicians and their addressees is analysed as a special form of ritual communication that serves, among other things, the function of relieving the tension in critical situations of social interaction.

## 2 A Selection of Magical Formulae

In this section of the paper I present 13 magical formulae that I purchased from my Trobriand consultants in 1989.<sup>3</sup> All my consultants allowed me

to publish these – formerly secret – formulae. The selection presented encompasses formulae of healing magic, weather magic, garden magic, and fishing magic. I analyse and comment on the formulae on the basis of the discourse-analytical question: What is said with these magical formulae, how is it said, and what is done with these formulae? The formulae are presented in the original<sup>4</sup> and in a translation that attempts to be as literal as possible. All translations were done after I had monolingual discussions together with the consultants who sold me the formulae. I checked the results of these discussions, i.e., my English glosses, by offering Kilivila paraphrases for the respective magical utterances. I have dispensed with a morpheme-interlinear translation of the formulae because of the specific features and characteristics of the *biga megwa* (which I characterized above). The long magical formulae in this selection are summarized with respect to their text formation. This kind of structuring of the formulae is based on their contents and on the pauses the magicians make in reciting them; these pauses can be interpreted as text formation signals.

### 2.1 Kasilasila's *kemakoda* Healing Magic

The first formula presented here represents healing magic. I got this magic from Kasilasila, a man of about 65 years of age, in July 1989. Kasilasila lives in Tauwema; he is a member of the Lukwasisiga clan. The name of the magic is *kemakoda* or *koda* magic. The health magician is obliged to always observe certain food taboos, so that he can immediately act whenever his services are necessary and requested. The *koda* magic works for lacerations, stab wounds (especially if inflicted by a spear), cuts, and shark bites. The formula is first recited over the water with which the healer cleans the wound. This water is called *lalakwia*. Then the healer takes a special stone called *dakwadakuna* which is his (or her) personal property, whispers the magic on this stone, wraps leaves around it and then places the wrapped stone for a certain amount of time he (or she) thinks to be adequate on various areas below and above the wounded person's heart (for the role of stones in magic see Frazer 1978: 43). The person with the wound(s) that have to be cured also has to sleep (at least)

3 My corpus of Kilivila encompasses more magical formulae than those presented here and in Senft 1985. I plan to publish these magical formulae in connection with a book on Trobriand eschatology. I also want to note here that the consultant's age in this paper refers to their age in 1989 when I bought all these formulae.

4 The breaking up of the formulae into lines is arbitrary and is mainly dictated by space constraints. I numbered the lines to simplify reference to parts of the formulae.

a night on this stone. If the wound does not close and heal fast enough, the rite will be performed so long until the magic shows the desired effect. The formula runs as follows:

Kasilasila's *kemakoda*

(recorded in Tauwema, July 29, 1989)

- |                               |                                  |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| <i>matala dakwadakwa</i>      | its eye Dakwadakwa-stone         |
| <i>matala matala</i>          | its eye its eye                  |
| <i>lalakwa matala</i>         | Lalakwia-water its eye           |
| <i>keidauta matala</i>        | Kaidauta-feather its eye         |
| 5 <i>kemakoda kemakoda</i>    | Kemakoda magic Kema-koda         |
| <i>kagu pwolala</i>           | my scab                          |
| <i>seidididididi aleipatu</i> | seidididididi I close            |
| <i>yatala o la kemakoda</i>   | one in its Kemakoda magic        |
| <i>yegula Kasilasila</i>      | I Kasilasila                     |
| 10 <i>kanai</i>               | Kanai-fish                       |
| <i>sigulu</i>                 | dry banana leaf                  |
| <i>beba bouna bouna</i>       | butterfly good good              |
| <i>bouna bouna</i>            | good good                        |
| <i>sikeda</i>                 | their road                       |
| 15 <i>sikeda</i>              | their road                       |
| <i>sikedavau</i>              | their new road                   |
| <i>sikeda</i>                 | their road                       |
| <i>sikeda</i>                 | their road                       |
| <i>sikedamugwa</i>            | their old road                   |
| 20 <i>atem</i>                | I cut you                        |
| <i>buyai itamatam</i>         | blood it cures you               |
| <i>buyai itasuvalem</i>       | blood it stops                   |
| <i>buyai takadem</i>          | blood we clot                    |
| <i>buyai tagayem</i>          | blood we do not hurt you         |
| 25 <i>buyai kagu pwalala</i>  | blood my scab                    |
| <i>seididididididi</i>        | seididididididi                  |
| <i>mguvala</i>                | your well-being                  |
| <i>bigogova</i>               | it will get well                 |
| <i>bibwipam</i>               | blood will run through your body |
| 30 <i>mguvala</i>             | your well-being                  |
| <i>bigogova</i>               | it will get well                 |
| <i>e'ulitaboda</i>            | the wound closes                 |
| <i>mguvala</i>                | your well-being                  |
| <i>bigogwa</i>                | it will get well                 |
| 35 <i>epokonikani</i>         | it hurts                         |
| <i>mguvala</i>                | your well-being                  |
| <i>bigogova</i>               | it will get well                 |
| <i>e i yoku mguvala</i>       | eh ih you your well-being        |
| <i>bigogova</i>               | it will get well                 |
| 40 <i>kalusimalisi</i>        | we put a spell on you            |
| <i>mguvala</i>                | your well-being                  |
| <i>bigogova</i>               | it will get well                 |
| <i>matala siyakaila</i>       | tip of the siyakaila-wood        |
| <i>matala kasiyakaila</i>     | tip of the kasiyakaila-spear     |
| 45 <i>mguvala</i>             | your well-being                  |
| <i>bigogova</i>               | it will get well                 |
| <i>matala emiliukotu</i>      | tip of the Emiliukotu-spear      |
| <i>mguvala</i>                | your well-being                  |
| <i>bigogova</i>               | it will get well                 |

- |                            |                           |
|----------------------------|---------------------------|
| 50 <i>matala kemwayaka</i> | tip of the kemwayaka-wood |
| <i>mguvala</i>             | your well-being           |
| <i>bigogova</i>            | it will get well          |
| <i>bouna bouna</i>         | good, good                |
| <i>sikeda sikeda</i>       | their road, their road    |
| 55 <i>sikedavau</i>        | their new road            |
| <i>sikeda sikeda</i>       | their road, their road    |
| <i>sikedamugwa</i>         | their old road            |
| <i>atem</i>                | I cut you                 |
| <i>buyai tamatam</i>       | blood, we heal you        |
| 60 <i>buyai tamatam</i>    | blood, we heal you        |
| <i>buyai itasuvalem</i>    | blood it stops            |
| <i>buyai</i>               | blood                     |
| <i>kagu pwalala</i>        | my scab                   |
| <i>seididididididi</i>     | seididididididi           |
| 65 <i>kanaiya</i>          | [fast like] Kanaiya-fish  |
| <i>akipatumai</i>          | I hold it tight           |
| <i>yegula Kasilasila</i>   | I myself Kasilasila       |
| <i>o lu kemakoda</i>       | in its kemakoda magic     |
| <i>kanai</i>               | Kanai-fish                |
| 70 <i>sigilubu</i>         | dry banana leaf           |
| <i>beba</i>                | butterfly                 |
| <i>gala mwolisala</i>      | no pain                   |
| <i>gala kwasala</i>        | nothing remains           |
| <i>iputu iyausa</i>        | it closes, it stops       |
| 75 <i>tchchchch eee.</i>   | tchchchch eee.            |

The reciting or better the whispering of this formula in its specific rhythm lasts for 1 minute and 26 seconds.

In the first 2 lines Kasilasila refers to the "eye" of his magical *dakwadakwa*-stone with which he performs his health magic. *Dakwadakwa* is the magical name of the stone Kasilasila refers to as *dakwadakuna* in profane contexts. The very first lines reveal that this stone has a special status: it has an eye with which it sees the wounds it is used to close. However, the attention of the stone's eye is also directed to the *lalakwa* water with which the healer first cleaned the wound and over which he also recited this magical formula. In line 4 Kasilasila also mentions a feather called *keidauta* – however, the magician does not use this feather in his ritual and he himself does not know the meaning of this feather and its specific importance for the magic as a whole, either. In lines 5–9 Kasilasila first mentions the name of the magic twice and then foretells what he, Kasilasila, is going to do. He refers to "his scab" with which he will quickly close something flexible and open (*yatala* = "flexible-one") which is not specified but must be the wound. The scab is in the *kemakoda* magic that Kasilasila has put on the *dakwadakwa*-stone. The onomatopoeical expression *seidididididi* indicates the swiftness of this action – in profane contexts it is generally used by children to

describe a fast surf from the border of the reef to the beach. In line 9 Kasilasila mentions his own name and thus explicitly refers to his power that he has transferred to the magical stone. In lines 10–12 the formula refers to a fish, a butterfly and a dry banana leaf – two animals and a material that are small, light, and swift and quickly driven away by a strong current or a fresh gale. This is another means to emphasize the fastness of the healing process – and lines 12–13 point out 4 times that everything will be good again, soon.

In line 14 to line 19 the magician refers to the blood stream (the roads of blood) pretending in line 20 that he is cutting his patient (implied here is that he does this cutting with his magical stone). In lines 21–26 the formula expresses that this causes a new stream of blood that cures the patient and lets the blood of his or her wound stop and clot. However, this new “cutting” does not hurt; on the contrary, Kasilasila’s scab put on the stone with the spell will quickly close the wound. Again, the expression *seidididididi* indicates swiftness of the action.

In the lines 27–53 the formula conjures the healing of the wound: the addressing of the patient’s well-being (*mguvala*) and the statement that “it will get well” (*bigogova* or *bigogwa*) is repeated 9 times. In lines 43, 44, 47, and 50 three spears are mentioned. Kasilasila only knows that “Emiliukotu” was the name of his father’s spear – however, the magician again does not know anything about the meaning of mentioning these spears and about their specific importance for and in this magical rite. This part of the formula ends with line 53 that (like the lines 12 and 13 above) points out twice that everything will be good again.

Lines 54–65 repeat almost identically the part of the formula that was already recited in the lines 14–26. The only difference here is that the curing, the clotting of the blood, and the painfree treatment is not mentioned again. What is mentioned here twice, however, is the fact that Kasilasila and his spell (he put on the water and the magical stone) will heal the wounded person. Moreover, this part of the formula emphasizes not only with the onomatopoeitical *seidididididi* expression but also with the additional mentioning of the quick and swift *kanaya*-fish (a small reef fish I cannot determine biologically) the swiftness of the healing process.

In lines 66–68 the magician again explicitly refers to himself and to the *kemakoda* magic which he is holding tight in the magical stone. Mentioning the fish, the dry banana leaf and the butterfly in lines 69–71 conjures the swiftness of the

healing process once more, lines 72–74 assure the wounded person that there will be no pain and no permanent damage to his or her health and that the wound will close and stop bleeding.

The formula ends with onomatopoeic sounds that seem to resemble the transition of the spoken magical word into the water and the magical stone – the intermediate addressees of this magical formula – and from there into the wound and the patient’s body – the immediate and direct addressees of the *kemakoda* magic.

If we look at the formula as a whole again, we can summarize its text formation as follows:

- Part A: The magic, its components and the magician’s action.  
Lines 1–13.
- Part B: The bleeding will be stopped swiftly.  
Lines 14–26.
- Part C: The healing of the wound is conjured.  
Lines 27–53.
- Part B’: The bleeding will be stopped swiftly.  
Lines 54–65.
- Part D: The magician’s power and the effect of his magic: wounds will close and heal swiftly and completely.  
Lines 66–75.

## 2.2 Kasiosi’s *magaurekasi* Weather Magic

The next magical formula represents weather magic (see Frazer 1978: 82 f.). I got this formula from Kasiosi, a man of about 65 years of age, in July 1989. Kasiosi lives in Koma, a village that is about an hour walking distance southeast of Tauwema. He sold me this formula while he visited his daughter Tabakaya in Tauwema. On the day before he performs the magical rites, during the magic ritual and for the time the power and effect of the formula is to last, the magician has to obey a food taboo (Frazer 1978: 213, 266), that is to say, he is not allowed, for example, to eat yams, though he may eat sweet potatoes and taro (Senft 1985a: 69). Usually a weather magician acts at the request of an individual or a group of people. There are two basic categories of weather magic: one class encompasses magical formulae that cause the sun to shine – the “sun magic,” the other class encompasses formulae that cause rain to fall (for a certain period of time at a certain area) – the “rain magic.” Kasiosi’s magical formula belongs to the class of “sun magic.” With this formula the use of ginger is obligatory (see Senft 1985a, also Frazer 1978: 258). Before the magician recites his formula, he cuts a gingerroot into small slices and

collects them in a small basket made out of paper or out of palm or banana leaves. This basket has a very tiny opening. The magician whispers his magical formulae through a small channel that he forms with his fingers into this opening and onto the ginger slices inside the basket. Then he takes some ginger, chews it, spits it out, and recites the respective magical formula(e). Every time he or she repeats the formula(e), the magician has to first chew a bit of ginger and to spit it out while or before reciting the formula(e). The formula(e) may be repeated ad libitum. The name of Kasiosi's "sun magic" is *magaurekasi*, however the magician does not know what this name means. The formula runs as follows:

Kasiosi's *magaurekasi* magic  
(recorded in Tauwema, July 29, 1989)

<i>Kaluvasi kaluvasi</i>	you go, you go	40 <i>o labukuma</i>	away in the black clouds
<i>kaluvasi kaluvasi</i>	you go, you go	<i>bulumesisi</i>	you will be scared and go
<i>Kapakapa Kapakapa</i>	Kapakapa, Kapakapa	<i>o labaketakela</i>	away in the white clouds
<i>kaluvasi kaluvasi</i>	you go, you go	<i>bulumesisi</i>	you will be scared and go
5 <i>kaluvasi kaluvasi</i>	you go, you go	45 <i>o labaketakela</i>	away in the white clouds
<i>Kapubiyoo kaluvasi</i>	Kapubiyoo, you go	<i>bulumesisi</i>	you will be scared and go
<i>kaluvasi kaluvasi</i>	you go, you go	<i>o la busibusi</i>	away towards his sea
<i>kalosimelili</i>	you go and rain	<i>bulumesisi</i>	you will be scared and go
<i>bimelili Tubukulau</i>	it will stop, Tubukulau	<i>o la luvalauwa</i>	away towards its horizon
10 <i>Tubumokapeta tubugu</i>	Tubumokapeta, my uncle,	<i>bulumesisi</i>	you will be scared and go
<i>Metaiwa tubugu</i>	Metaiwa, my uncle,	50 <i>o lugauvata</i>	away from heaven
<i>Topiala tubugu</i>	Topiala, my uncle,	<i>bulumesisi</i>	you will be scared and go
<i>Tovapwela Tobibida</i>	Tovapwela, Tobibida –	<i>bulitabai bulitabai</i>	give way, give way
<i>bulumavau</i>	young spirit of the dead,	<i>bulitabai bulitabai</i>	give way, give way
15 <i>tubugu Mwulamwesi</i>	my uncle Mwulamwesi	55 <i>o la kadumalagila</i>	at the path of his village
<i>ilausa o dabala</i>	they go to the peak,	<i>bulitabai</i>	give way
<i>kweyaveaka</i>	[the] big [one]	<i>o la tumkeda</i>	at the path to his house
<i>itututu</i>	it is spitting with rain	<i>bulitabai</i>	give way
<i>u'ula kariga</i>	because it dies [death]	<i>o la kaukweda</i>	at his veranda
20 <i>ekaliguwaya pfft</i>	it soon stops pfft	60 <i>bulitabai</i>	give way
<i>bulumesisi</i>	you will be scared and go	<i>o la vitavata</i>	at his platform
<i>bulumesisi</i>	you will be scared and go	<i>ekadebi</i>	it assembles
<i>bulumesisi</i>	you will be scared and go	<i>bulitabai ekapupwali</i>	give way, it breaks up
<i>bulumesisi</i>	you will be scared and go	<i>bulitabai</i>	give way
25 <i>bulumesisi</i>	you will be scared and go	65 <i>o labukuma</i>	[go] into the black clouds
<i>bulumesisi</i>	you will be scared and go	<i>bulitabai</i>	give way
<i>bulumesisi</i>	you will be scared and go	<i>o labaketakela</i>	[go] into the white clouds
<i>o la kadumalagila</i>	away from his village path	<i>bulitabai</i>	give way
<i>bulumesisi</i>	you will be scared and go	<i>o labaketakela</i>	[go] into the white clouds
30 <i>o la tumkeda</i>	away from his house path	70 <i>bulitabai</i>	give way
<i>bulumesisi</i>	you will be scared and go	<i>o la busibusi</i>	[go] into his sea
<i>o la kaukweda</i>	away from his veranda	<i>bulitabai</i>	give way
<i>bulumesisi</i>	you will be scared and go	<i>o la luvalauwa</i>	[go] towards its horizon
<i>o la vitavata</i>	away from his platform	<i>bulitabai</i>	give way
35 <i>bulumesisi</i>	you will be scared and go	75 <i>o lagauvata</i>	at heaven
<i>ekadebi</i>	it assembles	<i>bulitabai buliyaeta</i>	give way, stay away
<i>bulumesisi</i>	you will be scared and go	<i>buliyaeta buliyaeta</i>	stay away, stay away
<i>ekapupwali</i>	it breaks up	<i>buliyaeta</i>	stay away
<i>bulumesisi</i>	you will be scared and go	<i>o la kadumalagila</i>	from his village path
		80 <i>buliyaeta</i>	stay away
		<i>o la tumkeda</i>	from the path to his house
		<i>buliyaeta</i>	stay away
		<i>o la kaukweda</i>	from his veranda
		<i>buliyaeta</i>	stay away
		85 <i>o la vitavata</i>	from his platform
		<i>buliyaeta buliyaeta</i>	stay away, stay away
		<i>buligalegisa</i>	stay away
		<i>buligalegisa</i>	disperse
		<i>buligalegisa</i>	disperse
		90 <i>buligalegisa</i>	disperse
		<i>buligalegisa</i>	disperse
		<i>o la kadumalagila</i>	at the path to his village
		<i>buligalegisa</i>	disperse
		<i>o la tumkeda</i>	at the path to his house
		95 <i>buligalegisa</i>	disperse
		<i>o la kaukweda</i>	at his veranda
		<i>buligalegisa</i>	disperse
		<i>buligalegisa</i>	disperse
		<i>buligalegisa</i>	disperse

100	<i>bulilevaga</i>	disappear
	<i>bulilevaga bulilevaga</i>	disappear disappear
	<i>bulilevaga</i>	disappear
	<i>o la kadumalagila</i>	at the path to his village
	<i>bulilavaga</i>	disappear
105	<i>o la tumkeda</i>	at the path to his house
	<i>bulilavaga</i>	disappear
	<i>o la kaukweda</i>	at his veranda
	<i>bulilavaga bulilavaga</i>	disappear, disappear
	<i>bulilavaga</i>	disappear
110	<i>o la vitavata</i>	at his platform
	<i>bulilavaga bulilavaga</i>	disappear, disappear
	<i>bulilavaga</i>	disappear
	<i>o la – kaluvasiga</i>	at his – you go
	<i>kaluvasiga kaluvasiga</i>	you go now, you go now
115	<i>kalosi</i>	you go
	<i>pakapaka pakapaka</i>	listen, listen
	<i>kaluvasi kaluvasi</i>	you go, you go
	<i>kaluvasi</i>	you go
	<i>kalosu biyooo</i>	you go over there
120	<i>kaluvasi kaluvasi</i>	you go, you go
	<i>kaluvasi kalosu</i>	you go, you go
	<i>bimelilibimelili</i>	it is clearing up, indeed
	<i>tubugu Kulau</i>	my uncle Kulau
	<i>tubugu Mokupeta</i>	my uncle Mokupeta
125	<i>tubu Mitaiwa</i>	uncle Mitaiwa
	<i>tubugu Topiala</i>	my uncle Topiala
	<i>tubugu Kulau</i>	my uncle Kulau
	<i>tubugu Mokapeta</i>	my uncle Mokapeta
	<i>tubu Mitaiwa</i>	uncle Mitaiwa
130	<i>tubugu Topiala</i>	my uncle Topiala
	<i>tubugu Tovapwela</i>	my uncle Tovapwela
	<i>bilimavau</i>	young spirit of the dead
	<i>tubugu Tobibida</i>	my uncle Tobibida,
	<i>itututu</i>	it is spitting with rain
135	<i>u'ula kariga</i>	because it dies [death]
	<i>bulumamgwa</i>	the old spirit of the dead
	<i>tabugu Mulamesi</i>	my uncle Mulamesi
	<i>ilausi o dabala</i>	they go to the peak
	<i>kweveaka</i>	[the] big [one]
140	<i>itututu</i>	it is spitting with rain
	<i>i'ula kariga</i>	because it dies [death]
	<i>ikariga ikaliguvaya</i>	it dies, it soon stops
	<i>pffft.</i>	pffft.

The reciting of this formula lasts for 1 minute and 23 seconds.

In the first two lines, as well as in lines 3–7, the magician addresses the clouds. Although the magical formula uses the personal-pronominal prefix *ka-*, the inclusive form of the first person (together with the plural marking suffix *-si*), Kasiosi insisted that this verbal expression directly addresses the clouds (such an address generally has to use the

second person [plural] form of the personal pronoun *ku-* in profane contexts) and orders them to go. In line 3 the magician refers to the first known owner of the magic, the woman Kapakapa, and in line 6 he names the first man, Kapubiyoo, who actually used the formula as a weather magician. In lines 8 and 9 the clouds are ordered to go and rain elsewhere, and from line 9 to 15 this command is supported and enforced by naming all previous weather magicians, male predecessors of Kasiosi, that used the magical power of these words.<sup>5</sup> According to Kasiosi, this listing of the previous weather magicians – who are believed to live an eternal life as *baloma* as “spirits of the dead” in the underworld of Tuma Island (see Malinowski 1974; Senft 1985b) – serves two functions: first, the magician calls them and asks for their support, and second, Kasiosi demonstrates his power in his interaction with the clouds and the rain by naming those magicians to the magic of whom the rain and the clouds had to obey already in former times and to which they will have to obey again now (see also Frazer 1978: 355). Moreover, Kasiosi mentions that the (*baloma* of) the former magicians go to a big peak (lines 16–17) – the location of which he does not know. However, from Weyei’s weather magic I know that there are two big mountains on Goodenough Island that have – according to some weather magicians – a special relationship with the sun (Senft 1985a: 77–81, see also Frazer 1978: 102), and a story I documented in 1996 has the sun live on Goodenough. The sun is the antagonist force to rain – and referring to a special location of the sun in the formula indicates the magicians’ close relationship with the natural forces of sun and rain. Given the similarity of the two formulae of Kasiosi and Weyei this inference seems to be justified. Lines 18 and 19 foretell again what will happen soon: The rain will increase, but only because it is doomed to “die.” Line 20 marks the end of the rain and the onomatopoeical sounds there indicate that the weather magician is so powerful that he can blow away the clouds with the rain (Frazer 1978: 106).

5 This list of names includes Tobibida – a man who is also mentioned in one of Weyei’s weather-magical formulae (Senft 1985a: 71). Tobibida was Kasiosi’s uncle and Weyei’s grandfather. In general, Kasiosi’s formula is so similar to Weyei’s magic, that it could be regarded as a variant of it (Senft 1985a 71–78). Kasiosi, however, strongly refuted such a comparison. I cannot go into further detail here, because I promised Weyei in 1983 never to publish his magic or parts of it in English.

Given this information, it is no wonder that the magician tells the clouds and the rain in lines 21–52 that he will finally scare them away – from the village path (line 28), from his house path (line 30), from his veranda (line 32), and from his platform where he gathers with friends in front of his house (line 34) – the magician's address here certainly has the form of a command. From line 36 onwards Kasiosi also describes what is going to happen with the clouds: they assemble (line 36), they break up (line 38), rain will first go with the black clouds (line 40), then with the white clouds (lines 42–44); they will go out to the sea (line 46), vanish at the horizon (line 48) and from heaven (line 50). The direct address *bulumesisi* – “you will be scared and go” is repeated 20 times.

Lines 53–76 repeat the part of the address that lists the places the clouds and the rain will leave and go to, with the slight alternation that the clouds are now ordered to “give way.” This order *bulitabai* is repeated 15 times.

Lines 76–87 repeat those parts of the magician's previous orders that listed places where he lives (see lines 28–34, 55–61). This time, however, the order is modified: the rain has to “stay away.” The order *buliyaeta* is repeated 10 times.

Lines 88–99 take up the order again, but modify it so that the rain has to “disperse.” The order *buligalegisa* is repeated 9 times.

Lines 100–113 vary the order again – the rain has “to disappear” now. The order *bulilevaga/bulilavaga* is repeated 12 times.

Lines 113–143 repeat in a slightly altered version the first part of the formula (lines 1–20). The first command of the magician is repeated in lines 113–122. Kasiosi orders the rain and the clouds to go and he requests obedience (line 116) with the magical expression *pakapaka*.<sup>6</sup> The order “you go now” *kaluvasiga* is repeated 9 times, moreover, the simple order *kalosi* – “you go” is given 3 times. This part again ends with the statement that the weather is clearing up. Kasiosi (lines 123–133, 137) repeats the names of his predecessors who used this formula as weather magicians (the names of the four eldest magicians are mentioned twice).

He refers to the big mountain as their meeting point again (138–139) and foretells twice (lines 134–135, 140–143) what is going to happen now: The rain will increase, but only because it is doomed to “die.” Line 143 ends the formula with onomatopoeical sounds that indicate the weather magician's power that simply blows away the clouds with the rain (see also line 20).

If we look at the formula as a whole, we see that the various orders or commands are weighted and seem to follow a certain pattern when the magician first makes them: With the exception of *kalosimelili*, a command which is only made once (line 8) and *bulumesisi* – which is repeated 7 times when it is made for the first time, all other commands (*kaluvasi/kaluvasiga/kalosi*, *bulitabai*, *buliyaeta*, *buligalegisa*, and *bulilevaga/bulilavaga*) are repeated four times when they are newly introduced. The most important command is obviously the first command *kaluvasi* which is repeated again at the end of the formula in its variants *kaluvasiga/kalosi* (it is made [10+9+3] 22 times – see lines 1–7, 113–121). The second most important command is *bulumesisi* (it is made 20 times – see lines 21–53), then follows *bulitabai* (it is made 15 times – see lines 54–76), *bulilevaga/bulilavaga* (it is made 12 times – see lines 100–112), *buliyaeta* (it is made 10 times – see lines 76–87) *buligalegisa* (it is made 9 times – see lines 88–99), and *kalosimelili* (it is only made once – see line 8).

We can summarize the formation of this magical formula as follows:

- Part A: *kaluvasi* and *kalosimelili* commands, invocation of magicians and description of weather change.  
Lines 1–20.
- Part B: *bulumesisi* command and detailed description of the retreat of the clouds and the rain.  
Lines 21–52.
- Part C: *bulitabai* command and detailed description of the retreat of the clouds and the rain.  
Lines 53–76.
- Part D: *buliyaeta* command and short description of the retreat of the clouds and the rain.  
Lines 76–87.
- Part E: *buligalegisa* command and short description of the retreat of the clouds and the rain.  
Lines 88–99.
- Part F: *bulilevaga/bulilavaga* command and short description of the retreat of the clouds and the rain.  
Lines 100–113.
- Part A': *kaluvasiga/kalosi* command, invocation of former magicians and last description of weather change.  
Lines 113–143.

6 In profane contexts the verbal expression for listen is *-le-ga-*. There is a word *paka* that refers to “a celebration, a feast,” but Kasiosi denied that the expression *pakapaka* has anything to do with this form.

I also want to note here that the parallels between Trobriand ideas of weather magic and European ideas about this form of magic as they are to be found, for example, in Rabelais (1964: 173 [= Book IV, chapter 61]) are quite striking!



### 2.3 Kasiosi's Magic for a New Yams-Garden

The following magical formula is the first of 10 formulae that belong to Trobriand garden magic. Kasiosi uses this formula in his inaugurative magical ceremonies for new gardens (see Malinowski 1935 II: 156–162) – he is the *towosi*, the officiating garden magician of the Koma community (Malinowski 1935 II: 147). This formula does not have a special name. It is especially used for new yams-gardens. Towosi recites the magic when the garden plots are ready for planting the yams. When he puts this spell on the land, he is sitting in the respective garden plots where the members of his village will plant their yams. Kasiosi stated that he only knows the names of two former owners of this magical formula, namely Kalavatu, a woman, and Kasiosi's uncle Tobibida (whose name was already mentioned above in Kasiosi's weather magic). The formula runs as follows:

Kasiosi's garden magic  
(recorded in Tauwema, July 29, 1989)

<i>gosaaa... gosa gosa</i>	come ... come come
<i>mwaleee</i>	big male yams
<i>mwaleee</i>	big male yams
<i>gosaaa gosaaa gosa</i>	come come come
5 <i>vilaaa</i>	small female yams
<i>vila</i>	small female yams
<i>avaka kuvagi</i>	what do you do?
<i>yegula Kenabuya</i>	I myself, Kenabuya,
<i>Dodau Kalavatu</i>	Dodau, Kalavatu
10 <i>baiyavaga</i>	come here and stay
<i>baiyatuna</i>	come here, stay and wait
<i>batunatuna kabala</i>	I wait its bed
<i>kaguu banei</i>	my food [= yams] I will find
<i>monokatoli kikebwauwa</i>	spiders, centipedes,
15 <i>kwetakweta velata</i>	black maggots, worms,
<i>igabisila igadaya</i>	white maggots, caterpillars,
<i>dabauvovo dabaukwa-</i>	banana sprouts, yam
<i>nada</i>	sprouts,
<i>dabouligeliga</i>	taro sprouts
<i>ekalopwasapwesiga</i>	they will sprout quickly
20 <i>ekalivi kokopa</i>	it is a big garden,
<i>kuma kumwalalaa</i>	blossoms
<i>lakutitamala</i>	come you big male yams
<i>kumwalalaa</i>	you small female yams
<i>lakutitamala</i>	you big male yams
25 <i>malala.</i>	you small female yams
	come and stay.

The reciting of this formula lasts for 35 seconds.

In the first 6 lines the magician addresses the yams that will be planted in the garden. He orders

the yams to come to the garden plot and differentiates big – male – yams from small – female – yams. The expressions he uses in his order *gosa* (lines 1, 4) and for addressing the yams *mwale* (lines 2–3) and *vila* (lines 5–6) are magical words that are not used in profane contexts – at least in this meaning: *mwale* may be a variant of *mwala* – “husband,” and *vila* is the inalienably possessed noun that in other contexts has to be glossed as “her genitals.”

Line 7 asks a question – and this line is extremely interesting with respect to the speech situation in which magicians recite their formulae: The question is asked in ordinary Kilivila, and the verbal expression in second person singular addresses only one person. Before this line the magician had addressed two varieties of yams – and in the line that follows this question the magician's first reaction to the question is to answer it with the emphasized personal pronoun *yegula* – “I myself.” The formula individuates the yams, of course – and it first addresses two big groups of yams. Thus, line 7 cannot address these yams, but it presents the question the invoked yams ask the magician.

And in lines 8–16 the magician answers this question: Kasiosi first refers to himself and mentions the names “Kenabuya, Dodau” and “Kalavatu” (lines 8–9) – obviously the names of former owners of the magic (although Kasiosi himself only mentioned Kalavatu together with his uncle Tobibida as his predecessors). Mentioning these names again has the function to demonstrate the magician's power over the yams that had to obey these commands before. However, Kasiosi interrupts his answer and orders the addressed groups of yams to “come,” “stay,” and “wait” (lines 10–11). After this command he continues his answer stating with verbal expressions in first person singular that he is waiting – implied here is: for the yams – in the bed of his food (lines 12–13), i.e., in the garden plot where he is sitting and reciting the formula, and that he will find (and destroy) all possible vermin – implied is: he will make this “bed” as comfortable for the yams as possible (lines 13–16).

In lines 17–20 the magician gives an outlook on the garden describing it as a good, big, and fertile place where bananas, yams, and taro plants will quickly sprout and blossom.

The formula ends with the orders to come and stay (lines 21, 25) that are addressed to the two groups of yams – and the big “male” and small “female” yams are directly addressed twice with further “magical” expressions (lines 21–24).

Because of the special feature of this magic to be found in line 7 I will summarize the formation of this relative short formula here as follows:

- Part A: Order to come addressed to the yams.  
Lines 1–6.  
Part B: The yams ask the magician what he is doing.  
Line 7.  
Part C: The magician's answer interrupted by another order.  
Lines 8–16.  
Part D: An outlook on the quality of the garden.  
Lines 17–20.  
Part E: Order to come and stay addressed to the yams.  
Lines 21–25.

## 2.4 Yoya's *kevamwena* Yams Magic

This formula is part of Yoya's garden magic and belongs to what Malinowski (1935 II: 163–169) calls the "Magic of Growth." Yoya is a man of about 52 years of age; he lives in Tauwema and is a member of the highest-ranking Malasi clan. The formula is called *kevamwena* – "shooting-magic." The magician recites the formula in the garden when the yams shoots have broken through the soil and start to climb up the poles the gardener has provided for them. As former owners of the magic Yoya lists Tokumdadava's father (whose name he does not know), Tokumdadava, and Tokumdadava's children Tolagala, Weyei, and Kilagola. Thus, this formula was passed on – at least over three generations – in the patrilineal line. Yoya himself, however, got this formula from his uncle Weyei. The formula runs as follows:

Yoya's *kevamwena* magic  
(recorded in Tauwema, July 29, 1989)

<i>kumwena kumwena</i>	climb, climb, climb
<i>kumwena</i>	
<i>kumwenakei dabwa-</i>	climb and come back yam
<i>nakwepwa</i>	sprout
<i>kwepwa am kwesili</i>	sprout, your tendril
<i>kuluvalova gala tub-</i>	twine up, no binding
<i>wawam</i>	
5 <i>tubwawam webitu</i>	binding, good growth
<i>galayagavanem gala-</i>	many [yams], many [yams]
<i>yagavanem</i>	
<i>yokaoma galakukuvam</i>	very good, masses, masses
<i>kukuvam</i>	
<i>uveaka galadubalem</i>	strong, countless, countless
<i>dubalem</i>	
<i>dubilakwaiyai</i>	abundant growth

10 <i>kevamwena kevamwena</i>	shooting, shooting
<i>am kwatatoya</i>	your growing
<i>am kwabwabwesi</i>	your quick curling,
<i>kabwesi</i>	curling
<i>kumwena tetu kuyo-</i>	climb yams blossom
<i>bwana</i>	
<i>kumwenakei dabwana</i>	climb and come back,
	wither
15 <i>kumwena kumwena</i>	climb, climb, climb
<i>kumwena</i>	
<i>kumwenakei dabwana</i>	climb and come back,
	wither
<i>kukwakipwa</i>	sprout [rotting away]
<i>am kwesili kuluvalova</i>	your tendril twine up
<i>gala tubavam tubavam</i>	no binding binding
20 <i>webitu galayaguvanem</i>	good growth, many [yams]
<i>yagavanem yoka'oma</i>	many [yams], very good
<i>galakukuvam kukuvam</i>	masses, masses
<i>uveaka galadubalem</i>	strong, countless
<i>dubalem dubilikwaiyai</i>	countless abundant growth
25 <i>am kwamamalu kwa-</i>	your fast growth, growth
<i>mamalu</i>	
<i>am kwatatoya katoyem</i>	your growing, growing
<i>am kwabwabwesi</i>	your quick curling,
<i>kabwesi'em</i>	your curling
<i>kumwena tetu iyobwa-</i>	climb yams, it will be
<i>nabwana</i>	good
30 <i>tetu kuyotilevau tetu</i>	yams, excel yourself yams
<i>yumnukwasa tetu</i>	fly like a witch yams,
<i>kuyova</i>	fly
<i>tetu olamalegasi</i>	yams, right in the garden
<i>okadaledasi</i>	left in the garden
35 <i>bimesi</i>	they will come
<i>isivelakusi</i>	they will grow big
<i>dabagulasi</i>	in our garden
<i>tommwaya Kaseva la</i>	old man Kaseva his magic.
<i>goba.</i>	

The reciting of this formula lasts for 42 seconds.

The magician addresses the yams sprouts and orders them to climb up and twine around the poles the gardener has provided for them (lines 1–4). After these first orders the formula describes the quality and the success of the yams' growing, shooting, and curling around the pole (lines 4–12). Lines 13–18 again give the orders that the yam plants have to climb, to sprout, and to twine up around the pole – and the quality and success of this growth is described once more in lines 19–24. The remaining lines of this formula directly address the yam plants and their growing process again. The orders are intensified. They are no longer only directed to the yam plants in the garden that are urged to excel themselves in growth; from line 29 to the end the formula addresses all yam plants in general and orders them to come, or rather to fly like witches, from wherever they may be to

the gardens for which the magician performs this rite. These lines characterize this formula as highly competitive because it exerts its power not only on the seedlings in the garden where the magician utters his spell, but also attracts other yam plants so that they leave their gardens and come to the magician's plot. Thus, this formula certainly represents a special form of garden magic. The formula ends with the mentioning of "the old man Kaseva"; it states that this formula was his magic. Yoya does not know this person, but it seems to be plausible that Kaseva was a famous garden magician and one of the most powerful owners of this magic. This formula is short; thus, to avoid unnecessary redundancy I do not summarize it with respect to its text formation.

## 2.5 Tokunupei's *kapisikoya* Yams Magic

The following formula is part of Tokunupei's garden magic. Tokunupei is a man of about 62 years of age; he lives in Tauwema and is a member of the highest-ranking Malasi clan. The name of the formula is *kapisikoya* – but Tokunupei does not know what this name means. After the planting of the yams-seedlings Tokunupei whispers this formula over a "magical" stone which is called *tutabida*. Then this stone is buried in front of his garden. The stone continues to exert the power of the magical spell on the yams. The formula runs as follows:

Tokunupei's *kapisikoya* magic  
(recorded in Tauwema, July 19, 1989)

<i>kobila bilabilava</i>	yams it will grow
<i>kobila bilabilava</i>	yams it will grow
<i>kobila bilabilama</i>	yams it will come together
<i>kobila bilabilama</i>	yams it will come together
5 <i>gala iveaka tapwala</i>	not will it grow [for] its side
<i>yapila ivakegaga</i>	[the side of the] full moon,
<i>tapwala</i>	[it is] very big, its side
<i>ula tetu tetunaviya</i>	my yams – Tetunaviya-yams
<i>itomwa Inoma</i>	she stays Inoma
<i>itomwa Topikiguyau</i>	he stays Topikiguyau
10 <i>ilosu ikopipilisi</i>	they go they fill in [yams]
<i>va mesi</i>	into the conical heap
<i>imeyesi.</i>	they [the yam-tubers] come.

The reciting of this short formula lasts for 11 seconds.

As mentioned above, this magic is addressed to the *tutabida*-stone. The stone has to absorb the power of the magical words and must ensure that

the things described in the formula come true. Thus, the stone with the formula is a kind of go-between for the magician and the yams to grow in the garden. The formula just states that many nicely shaped (see line 5) and very big yam-tubers (see line 6) will grow in the garden (lines 1–6), and that they will grow for the magician (line 7). He addresses the tubers twice with a special, magical name, *kobila* and *tetunaviya*, however, before he mentions the second magical name the formula also uses the noun *tetu* that is used in everyday speech to refer to the Trobrianders' favourite yams variety (see line 7). Lines 8 and 9 indicate that this formula is indeed very personal: here the magician refers to his eldest daughter Inoma and to his eldest son Topikiguyau (whom he calls Tokwakuva in other more profane contexts). The formula states that the magician's children still live in Tauwema, that they will finally come and harvest the yams and pile the tubers up in typical conical heaps in the garden. The formula ends with the assertion that the yam-tubers will come. Tokunupei could not provide any information about the meaning of the lines 5 and 6, where the full moon is mentioned; thus, I cannot interpret this part of the formula. These few remarks should suffice for the purposes pursued in this section.

## 2.6 Tokunupei's *kwisubiya* Magic for Long *kuvi*-Yams

The following magic also belongs to the repertoire of Tokunupei's garden magic, and again this magic involves another object, particles of which have to absorb the power of the magical words and must ensure that the *kuvi*-type yams will grow long and big. The magician recites the formula over the tooth of a dolphin. This tooth is called *tumadava*. The father of Tokunupei's mother, Mokulayoyu, found it on Tuma Island. When the magician plants the seedlings for the long *kuvi*-type yams, he scrapes off small particles from this tooth, rubs them onto the yams-seedling and then plants the seedling in the garden. The magic runs as follows:

Tokunupei's *kwisubiya* magic for long *kuvi*-yams  
(recorded in Tauwema, July 19, 1989)

<i>gala-anaga</i>	I do not look out
<i>ganem ganem</i>	I see you, I see you,
<i>mwe'uya kupipile</i>	Mwe'uya, get big
<i>mwe'uya kupilakai</i>	Mwe'uya, get very big

- 5 *nasayam gala-anaga* day breaks I do not look out  
*ganem ganem* I see you, I see you  
*nasayam kupilakai* day breaks, get very big,  
*nasayam kupilakei* day breaks, get very big,  
*mweuya gana-asasona* Mwe'uya, I do not plant,  
10 *gana-asasona* I do not plant,  
*gana-akitaki* I do not hold you,  
*gana yam gana bogi* I see day, I see night,  
*gana-apipila* I do not come again and  
whisper magic,  
*gala iveaka tapwala* it does not grow big, its root  
15 *kaga evakegaga* Kaga-wood it gets hard and  
bad  
*tapwala agu kuvi* the root, my kuvi-yams,  
*tobigabaga gala-* Tobigabaga-Kuvi I do not  
*asasona* plant  
*gala-asasona gala-* I do not plant, I do not plant  
*asasona*  
*gana-akitakei* I do not hold you,  
20 *gama yam gama bogi* I see day, I see night,  
*gama-apipilou* I do not come again and  
whisper magic,  
*gana matam matam* I see your eye, your eye,  
*pwayem gama matam* your hair, I see your eye,  
*matam matam sona* your eye, your eye it climbs  
25 *gala tabwam tabwam* I see your fruit, your fruit  
*tumadava ikalivi* like a dolphin it shoots into  
the ground  
*dukumaga* Dukumaga-tooth  
(*[[ikalivisi dukumagi]]*) (they find the Dukumaga-  
tooth)  
*ikalipusagi dukumelosi* they track down the Duku-  
maga-tooth  
30 *makena makena* this [kuvi-yams] this [one]  
*esoki-igowai.* it goes inside it vanishes.

The reciting of this formula lasts for 38 seconds.

The hyphens between similar vowels with which one word ends and the next word starts indicate that these vowels – and thus the two words involved – are contracted; this contraction follows specific allegro rules that can also be observed in everyday speech.

The magic starts with a kind of contradictory address to the seedling for the long *kuvi*-type yams: Although the magician does not look out for the *kuvi*-yams, he sees it – this address implies that the yams just must obey the central order of the formula, namely to “get big” (see lines 1–4). The name of Mwe'uya precedes this order. Tokunupei informed me that Mwe'uya is the name of a village on Kiriwina Island, however, this must be either the name of an old village that no longer exists or a kind of secret or magic name, because today there is no such village on Kiriwina. The magician does not know why this village is mentioned here.

In lines 5–9 the first part of this formula is repeated – with the addition that the order is combined with the statement: “day breaks” and the modification that the name of the village Mwe'uya is uttered only once after the order to grow which is addressed to the seedling. Again, Tokunupei has no idea what the reference to the new day implies – it may just refer to the time the process of growing will take. This interpretation is supported by lines 12 and 20 that also refer to time that is passing. Line 12, however, is preceded by a rather strange statement: The magician addresses the seedling stating that he does neither plant nor hold it (lines 10–11). With this the magician emphasizes that once he has put the spell on the tooth particles and has rubbed them onto the seedling he is going to plant, things will take care of themselves, because the power of the magic is so strong. This fact is pointed out over and over again in the lines to follow. The formula states that it is not necessary to perform additional magical rites (lines 13, 21), that the magician does not care whether the seedling may not grow or whether the root may get hard and bad as wood – he is sure that this will not happen (lines 14–15), and that he no longer looks after the yams (lines 17–19). Moreover, the seedling is addressed directly again in lines 16–17 with a special magical name (*tobigabaga*) and with a possessive pronoun that expresses the magician's property rights for the yam-tuber that will grow out of the seedling.

The magic ends with the description of what will happen to the seedling: its sprout (i.e., the seedling's eye) will climb up its pole (line 22), and the hairy tuber (its fruit) will grow big – shooting into the ground like a dolphin. All the other seedlings planted with this magical formula will do the same (see lines 23–29). The formula here refers to the tooth of the dolphin with a different name: Tokunupei told me that *dukumaga* is the name the *tumadava*-tooth has in the underworld of the *baloma* – the spirits of the dead – at Tuma Island. The father of Tokunupei's mother found this tooth on Tuma, and he took it as a gift of the *baloma*. The seedlings with the tooth particles rubbed on it will grow so big and go inside the ground because these particles will track down the place where the tooth from which they were scraped off came (lines 26–29). The seedling with the particles helps them getting inside the soil to finally reach the underworld – and magicians will perform this magical rite so long till the tooth has vanished and returned to the underworld of the *baloma* (line 31). As a final comment I would like to mention the following: This formula is of special importance

because of the function of the *kuvi*-type yams as a means of conflict solving in the framework of the *buritila'ulo* harvest competition (see Malinowski 1935 I: 181–186). These comments on Tokunupei's formula should suffice for the purposes pursued here.<sup>7</sup>

## 2.7 Nakivila's *nasagwagusa* Magic for Sweet Potatoes

The following formula is part of Nakivila's garden magic. Nakivila is a woman of about 36 years of age; she lives in Tauwema and belongs to the Lukulabuta clan. The name of the formula is *nasagwagusa*; this is also the name of a magical calcareous tufa stone that serves the function of a whetstone for the bushknife with which the seedlings for sweet potatoes are cut. The formula is whispered over this stone and the stone itself is pressed against the cut seedlings. Nakivila got the formula from her mother Bomgetula, she got it from her sister who got it from her uncle Gwanumyuna. Gwanumyuna got it from his uncle Toyduku and he got it from an uncle whose name Nakivila does not know. The formula runs as follows:

Nakivila's *nasagwagusa* magic  
(recorded in Tauwema, July 29, 1989)

<i>nasawagusa isawa-</i>	nasawagusa-stone, isagwa-
<i>gusa</i>	gusa-stone,
<i>inai gogona</i>	my mother, her valuable
	possession,
<i>inai gogona</i>	my mother, her valuable
	possession,
<i>narada nabwibwi</i>	seedlings, disc with the seed
5 <i>ne'ureyo ne'uvegebila</i>	it shoots up, it spreads out,
<i>nesimogebila neguba-</i>	it grows, it gets huge,
<i>gebila</i>	
<i>akavaya agu simsim-</i>	I harvest my sweet potatoes,
<i>waya</i>	
<i>asomata ililaki</i>	I get tired, it piles up,
<i>tuatau</i>	a tremendous lot,
10 <i>balilola bavakuva</i>	I go I tear off the sprouts,
<i>bavasegi imiliaki</i>	I scrape [them], they pile up
<i>lopola ula bagula</i>	in the middle of my garden,
<i>tala yuva tolu vasi</i>	one, two, three, four, five
<i>lima</i>	
<i>peta agabi</i>	baskets – I carry on my
	head,

<sup>7</sup> I just want to note that Tokunupei's first recitation of this formula did not include line 28. In the process of transcribing the formula from the tape the magician realized – with a mild shock – that he forgot this line; therefore it is given in brackets here.

15 <i>ameya o valu</i>	I bring them to the village,
<i>iseki ula bwala imi-</i>	I put them down in my
<i>liaki</i>	house, they pile up,
<i>ikamsi sigwaya</i>	they eat my friends,
<i>isomutasi akam aso-</i>	they get tired, I eat, I get
<i>mata</i>	tired,
<i>ipusaki imiliaki.</i>	they rot away, they pile up.

The reciting of this formula lasts for 31 seconds.

The formula starts with addressing the stone with its names together with a reference to its former possessor, Nakivila's mother (lines 1–3), and with the naming of the seedlings that are individualized as the cut off disc with the seed in it (line 4). The next two lines briefly describe the growth of the seedling into many sweet potatoes. The tiresome process of harvesting all these potatoes is described in lines 7–12, and lines 14–16 describe how the magician brings her sweet potatoes from the garden to the village and how she fills them into her house. The harvest will be so good that the magician's friends and relatives and Nakivila herself will get tired eating all these sweet potatoes (see lines 17–18). Nevertheless, all these eaters will not manage to eat up all the potatoes – piles of them will just rot away (line 19). Thus, this formula again consists of an address of the objects (and persons) that are (or were) involved in the magical rite and of a description of the results of this magic. The following formula presents another example of magic for sweet potatoes. These two formulae represent types of garden magic that are almost exclusively performed by women.

## 2.8 Bomtarogu's Magic for Sweet Potatoes

This formula is also whispered over a whetstone – called *iyanaurina* – where the magician sharpens the knife with which she cuts the sweet potato seedlings. Then the formula is whispered over these seedlings again. I got it from Lona Bomtarogu, a 24 year-old woman of the Malasi clan who lives in Tauwema. The first owner of this magic was Lona's aunt Iloseva; she gave it to Kaliga'ila who passed it on to Motukwebela – an uncle of Lona's who learned this magic only to pass it on but never used it. From this man the magic came to Lona's aunt Igidagada, then it came into the possession of Bwodugasava, Kadakwapu, Isakapu, Iloseva, and Esaguna, and she passed it on to Lona Bomtarogu. The magic does not have a name of its own; it runs as follows:

Lona's sweet potato magic  
(recorded in Tauwema, July 29, 1989)

<i>iyanaganurina garigarina</i>	iyanaganurina-stone, garigarina-stone
<i>silagugu moyadoga</i>	sweet potato, sweet potato,
<i>kukipudenaka sim-simwaya</i>	sweet potato, sweet potato,
<i>ito'isisi itopopu</i>	they grow, they multiply,
5 <i>itolamila</i>	they get big,
<i>bogi kusakaula</i>	night, you are running,
<i>yam kuyovaiyowila</i>	day, you are incredibly big,
<i>prrr uh.</i>	prrr uh.

The formula is repeated once, and reciting it lasts for 14 seconds.

The first line of the formula addresses the magical stone – with both its name that can be used in profane contexts (*iyanaganurina*) and its magical name (*garigarina*) that is to be uttered in the formula only. After uttering these two names of the whetstone, the magician then (lines 2–3) addresses four times the sweet potatoes; the formula does this with three magical names besides the noun used to refer to sweet potatoes in everyday speech. The following four lines describe what is going to happen with the seedlings: they grow, multiply and get big, time will pass quickly and soon the potatoes will be incredibly big. The formula ends with onomatopoeic sounds that seem to resemble the cutting of the sweet potatoes into seedlings with the knife sharpened with the magical whetstone.

These few comments should suffice for the purposes pursued here. In what follows I present a completely different form of garden magic.

## 2.9 Tobwabwana's *ketabwala* Magic and Magic against Wild Pigs

The following four formulae are part of Tobwabwana's garden magic. They represent a special, though personal form of magic. Tobwabwana, a man of about 40 years of age and a member of the Malasi clan, lives in Tauwema. He got the formulae from his father Bwa'ina and from his mother Kedava.

The first formula is called *ketabwala* magic. Tobwabwana did not say anything with respect to the meaning of this expression; however, it could be parsed as *ketala bwala* and glossed as "wooden-one house." This interpretation makes some sense, because the sticks of wood, over which the magician whispers the spell, protect the piece of garden land the corners of which the magician

marks out with them finishing the performance of his rite. Thus the garden plot may be regarded as a kind of wooden house (not a yam-house) in which things are safe. The sticks are made out of the *kukubwake'i* wood (which I cannot define with its proper botanical name). The Trobriand Islanders believe that dwarf-like spirits, the *tokwai*, live in trees and rocks. They are believed to steal crops from the field and from yam-houses (see Malinowski 1922: 77; also Frazer 1978: 152, 155). However, the *tokwai* living in the *kukubwake'i* wood will guard the garden plot that is marked by the magician with sticks from this wood and frighten away other *tokwai* who may want to steal crops in this garden. The magic runs as follows:

Tobwabwana's *ketabwala* magic  
(recorded in Tauwema, July 29, 1989)

<i>kukubwa naga</i>	Kukubwa bird naga [magic word]
<i>kukubwam kukubwam</i>	Kukubwa bird, Kukubwa bird,
<i>nukuvalu kukubwam</i>	in the middle of the garden, Kukubwa bird,
<i>nukuvalu kukubwake'i</i>	in the middle of the garden, Kukubwake'i wood
5 <i>kukubwa naga</i>	Kukubwa bird naga
<i>kukubwam kukubwam</i>	Kukubwa bird, Kukubwa bird
<i>nukulaodila</i>	in the middle of the bush
<i>kukubwam nukuvalu</i>	Kukubwa bird in the middle of the garden
<i>kukubwake'i</i>	Kukubwake'i wood
10 <i>nukuvalu kukubwa</i>	in the middle of the garden
<i>ikipwa</i>	Kukubwa bird
<i>u'una agu kwali</i>	he [tokwai] gets frightened [at the] crossing of the borderlines of my garden
<i>okupwa ikipwa</i>	Kupwa bird he gets frightened
<i>u'ula toliudila</i>	[at the] crossing of the wood of the bush
15 <i>okupwa ikipwa</i>	Kupwa bird he gets frightened
<i>u'ula nukuvalu</i>	[at the] crossing in the middle of my garden
<i>okupwa ikipwa</i>	Kupwa bird he gets frightened
<i>agu gadoi</i>	my garden fence posts
<i>okupwa ikipwa</i>	Kupwa bird he gets frightened
20 <i>olopola ula bagula</i>	in my garden
<i>okupwa ikipwa</i>	Kupwa bird he gets frightened
<i>kukupwa naga</i>	Kukubwa bird naga
<i>kukupwam kukupwam</i>	Kukubwa bird, Kukubwa bird

	<i>nukuvalu kukupwam</i>	in the middle of my garden, Kukubwa bird
25	<i>nukuvalu kukubwake'i</i>	in the middle Kukubwake'i wood
	<i>nukulaodila</i>	in the middle of the bush
	<i>kukupwa naga</i>	Kukubwa bird naga
	<i>kukubwam kukubwam</i>	Kukubwa bird, Kukubwa bird
	<i>nukulaodila kukubwam</i>	in the middle of the bush Kukubwa bird
30	<i>nukulaodila kukub- wake'i</i>	in the middle of the bush, Kukubwake'i wood
	<i>nokuvalu okupwa</i>	in the middle of my garden, Kupwa bird
	<i>ikipwa.</i>	he gets frightened.

The reciting of this formula lasts for 31 seconds.

The formula starts with addressing a bird (9 times) and the *kukubwake'i* wood (twice) with its *tokwai* inside (lines 1–10). The *kukubwa* bird must have a special relationship with the *kukubwake'i* wood – as can be inferred from the form of the two expressions that refer to the animal and the wood; however, Tobwabwana could not say anything about such a relationship. Moreover, the name of the bird is twice followed by a magical word, *naga* (lines 1, 5), the meaning of which is also unknown to the magician. The bird is addressed as being in two places – in the middle of the garden and in the middle of the bush. The wood, however, is only addressed as being in the middle of the garden; this is the place where the magician recites the spell over the wooden sticks he uses in this rite.

This first part of the formula is followed by the description of what will happen to the *tokwai* who wants to steal crops from the magician's garden: He, the *tokwai*, will get frightened at the border-lines, the fence posts, and inside the garden. This description is accompanied by 5 invocations of the *kubwa* bird. This second part of the formula starts (line 11) and ends (line 21) with the statement that the *tokwai* will get frightened – this emphasizes the effect of the magic.

The third part of the formula (lines 22–31) is an almost identical repetition of the first part of this magic, and the formula ends with its central statement that describes and emphasizes its effect, the frightening away of the *tokwai* (line 32).

The next three formulae in Tobwabwana's repertoire protect his garden against wild pigs that are roaming in the bush. The first of these formulae invokes a crocodile that will scare away the wild pigs. The formula runs as follows:

	<i>uligova naga</i>	crocodile naga
	<i>uligova uligova</i>	crocodile, crocodile
	<i>vam va'ela</i>	vam river
	<i>kutebwa va'ela</i>	come and guard the river
5	<i>kutebwake'i vayanaki</i>	do come and guard the Vaya- naki-river
	<i>uligova naga</i>	crocodile naga
	<i>uligova uligova</i>	crocodile, crocodile
	<i>uyanaki kutewa</i>	Uyanaki-river come and guard
	<i>vayanaki</i>	the Vayanaki-river
	<i>kutebwake'i vayela</i>	do come and guard the river
10	<i>uligova misimesisi</i>	crocodile they were afraid,
	<i>mesisi</i>	afraid
	<i>ulupola ula bagula</i>	in the middle of my garden
	<i>uligova misimesisi</i>	crocodile they were afraid,
	<i>mesisi</i>	afraid
	<i>ivatela ula bagelu</i>	inside my garden
	<i>uligova misimesisi</i>	crocodile they were afraid,
	<i>mesisi</i>	afraid
15	<i>uuna agu kwali</i>	[at the] crossing of the border- lines of my garden
	<i>uligova misimesisi</i>	crocodile they were afraid,
	<i>mesisi</i>	afraid
	<i>olopola ula bagula</i>	in the middle of my garden
	<i>uligova misimesisi</i>	crocodile they were afraid,
	<i>mesisi</i>	afraid
	<i>uli toliudila</i>	[at] my wood of the bush
20	<i>uligova misimesisi</i>	crocodile they were afraid,
	<i>mesisi</i>	afraid
	<i>ula ketaki</i>	[at] my stack of wood
	<i>uligova misimesisi</i>	crocodile they were afraid,
	<i>mesisi</i>	afraid
	<i>agu gadoi</i>	[at] my garden fence posts
	<i>uligova misimesisi</i>	crocodile they were afraid,
	<i>mesisi</i>	afraid
25	<i>uligova naga</i>	crocodile naga
	<i>uligova uligova</i>	crocodile, crocodile
	<i>vayela kutebwake'i</i>	[from] the river do come and guard
	<i>vayanaki uligova</i>	[from the] Vayanaki-river, croc- odile
	<i>uligova naga</i>	crocodile naga
30	<i>uligova o vayanaki</i>	crocodile from the Vayanaki- river
	<i>kutebwake'i vayela</i>	do come and guard the river
	<i>uligova misimesisi</i>	crocodile they were afraid,
	<i>mesisi.</i>	afraid.

The reciting of this formula lasts for 41 seconds.

The structure of this formula is similar to the structure of Tobwabwana's *ketabwala* magic described above. The first part (lines 1–9) addresses (6 times) a crocodile – with the two magical words *naga* and *vam* as part of this address – and orders it to guard a river. The river name represents probably a metaphor that is used to refer to the magician's garden (though Tobwabwana could not

give any such interpretation). In the second part of the formula (lines 10–24) it is described where the wild pigs will have been afraid if they manage to get into or close to the garden which is protected by this spell (and thus by the crocodile). The central effect of the magic, the frightening away of the wild pigs, is repeated 8 times together with the addressing of the crocodile (lines 10, 12, 14, 16, 18, 20, 22, 24); this kind of “frames” the locations where the formula says it will have its effect. The third part of the formula (lines 25–31) is an almost identical repetition of the first part of this magic, and the formula ends with its central statement that describes and emphasizes its effect, the frightening away of the wild pigs.

The second formula of Tobwabwana’s pig magic is used to attract a wild pig that has previously damaged a garden. The spell attracts the animal to the magician who is waiting in the vicinity of the garden with a group of hunters that will help the magician to kill the wild pig. The formula runs as follows:

<i>bulivaleva bulivaleva</i>	wild pig, wild pig
<i>bulivaleva bulimalema</i>	wild pig, wild pig come
<i>bulimalema bulimalema</i>	wild pig come, wild pig come
<i>badududem</i>	I will charm and kill you
5 <i>basobalem kwapusiga</i>	I will call you over and kill you at your flank
<i>pusigam asamla</i>	your flank I kill
<i>asamla asamla</i>	I kill, I kill
<i>amwala asamla</i>	your head I kill
<i>asamla kudum</i>	I kill your tooth
10 <i>asamla asamla ampola</i>	I kill I kill your brow
<i>asamla asamla togitem</i>	I kill I kill your loin
<i>asamla asamla tobulumalem</i>	I kill I kill your belly [streaky bacon]
<i>asamla asamla lopem</i>	I kill I kill your stomach
<i>asamla asamla katem</i>	I kill I kill your innards
15 <i>asamla asamla kopuvem</i>	I kill I kill your lung
<i>asamla asamla sile’um</i>	I kill I kill your belly
<i>asamla asamla sileveaka</i>	I kill I kill your large intestine
<i>asamla asamla silekekita</i>	I kill I kill your small intestine
<i>asamla asamla kaikem</i>	I kill I kill your hind leg
20 <i>asamla asamla yamam</i>	I kill I kill your foreleg
<i>asamla asamla bulivaleva</i>	I kill I kill wild pig
<i>bulivaleva bulivaleva</i>	wild pig, wild pig
<i>bulimalema bulimalema</i>	wild pig come, wild pig come
25 <i>bulimalema badudulem</i>	wild pig come, I will put a spell on you and kill you
<i>basibalem</i>	I will call you over and kill you

<i>pwapu pusigam</i>	[at your] shoulder, your flank
<i>asamla</i>	I kill
<i>ema kudokeva</i>	it comes, you are bleeding from your mouth
30 <i>kuditilava</i>	you are bleeding your heart’s blood
<i>ikapitoki</i>	it closes the mouth
<i>atakubila</i>	I raise the spear to strike
<i>akoluma</i>	I stick you
<i>yegula</i>	I myself
35 <i>Tobwabwana pss.</i>	Tobwabwana pss.

The reciting of this formula lasts for 46 seconds.

The formula starts with the magician ordering the wild pig to come to him (lines 1–3) and the announcement that he will put a spell on the animal and kill it (line 4). The noun the formula uses to refer to the wild pig is a magical word – in everyday contexts the noun *bwarodina* refers to this animal. Moreover, the verbal expressions *badududem*/*badudulem*, *basobalem*/*basibalem*, and *asamla* are magical expressions as well.

The second part of the formula (lines 5–21) directly addresses and lists 14 body parts of the wild pig and reiterates with every part that the magician will kill it. This list starts with the pig’s flank – the place where pigs are usually killed with a spear that is driven via the flank into the pig’s heart. This part of the body that is so important for the killing of the pig is mentioned twice (lines 5–6), and then the list names the body parts of the pig, starting with its head till it is coming down to the pig’s legs. The verbal expression *asamla* that refers to the act of the magician’s killing of the pig is repeated 28 times in this part of the formula.

The third part of the formula (lines 22–25) is the identical repetition of the first lines of the formula, and the fourth part (lines 26–28) almost identically repeats the first two lines of the second part of the formula (lines 5–6) – mentioning the flank of the pig again that is so important for the actual killing of the animal.

The last part of the formula starts with the statement that the pig comes (line 29), continues with the magician’s direct address to the pig in which he describes what will happen to the animal after he has struck it with the spear in the process of its dying (lines 29–30), and a neutral description of the pig’s last action in its death (line 31). It ends with the reference to the magician’s actions in killing the pig and the explicit and emphasized mentioning of the magician’s name. The final onomatopoeic sounds “pss” are uttered to distribute



the spell into the air so that it will reach the pig wherever it is.

The third and last formula of Tobwabwana's magic against wild pigs is also a kind of hunting magic. The magician here addresses a wild dog in the bush that will start the wild pig for him. The magician as hunter then will kill it. The hunt will be somewhere in the bush and not in the garden or in its vicinity. Like the other two formulae against wild pigs, this magic does not have a name of its own. The formula runs as follows:

<i>molugivagi molugivagi</i>	wild dog, wild dog
<i>molugivagi molugivagi</i>	wild dog, wild dog
<i>ave tau meva'egu</i>	who [what man] is the hunter
<i>otumkeda yegulai</i>	on the way – I myself
5 <i>Tobwabwana mevayegu</i>	Tobwabwana the hunter
<i>okumkeda amila</i>	on the way I hide
<i>vai amila</i>	[like a] stingray I hide
<i>kosi amila</i>	[like a] ghost I hide
<i>pusa akatupala</i>	[like a] cat I lie in wait
10 <i>akatupala akatupala</i>	I lie in wait, I lie in wait
<i>am mwaku akatupala</i>	[for] your head I lie in wait
<i>akatupala kudum</i>	I lie in wait for your tooth
<i>akatupala akatupala</i>	I lie in wait, I lie in wait
<i>sibuvatum akatupala</i>	[for] your ham I lie in wait
15 <i>akatupala togitem</i>	I lie in wait [for] your loin
<i>akatupala akatupala</i>	I lie in wait, I lie in wait
<i>tobulumalem akatupala</i>	[for] your streaky bacon, I lie in wait
<i>akatupala</i>	I lie in wait
<i>molugivagi molugivagi</i>	wild dog, wild dog
20 <i>molugivagi molugivagi</i>	wild dog, wild dog
<i>ave tau meva'egu</i>	who [what man] is the hunter
<i>otumkeda</i>	on the way
<i>atakubila</i>	I raise the spear to strike
<i>akoluma ema</i>	I stick you, it comes
25 <i>kudakeva ema</i>	you are bleeding from your mouth
<i>kudutilava</i>	you are bleeding your heart's blood
<i>okapituki</i>	it closes the mouth
<i>idudubila matam</i>	it becomes blurred your eye
<i>idudubilakauita</i>	it becomes blurred and glazed in death
30 <i>psss.</i>	<i>psss.</i>

The reciting of this formula lasts for 39 seconds.

The formula starts with addressing the wild dog (four times) with a magical word (lines 1–2) and the question and answer that clarify the identity of the hunter – the magician himself (lines 3–5).

The second part of the magic (lines 6–18) can be subdivided into two subsections. The first subsection (lines 6–9) describes with three similes

how the hunter is hiding himself for the wild pig. The second subsection (lines 10–18) lists the body parts of the pig to be hunted and killed and repeats 11 times that the hunter is lying in wait for the pig. This part is very similar to the second part of the previous formula.

The third part of the formula (lines 19–21) repeats almost word by word the first part of the formula: The wild dog is addressed again. It is interesting that the function of the dog, namely to start the wild pig for the hunter, is not mentioned at all in the formula.

Like the previous magic, this formula ends with the description of the killing of the pig and its death (lines 23–29); the final onomatopoeic sounds "psss" (line 30) distribute the spell into the air so that it will reach the dog and the pig wherever they are.

## 2.10 Yoya's Fish Magic

The last magical formula I want to present here belongs to Yoya's fish magic. I have introduced Yoya above in connection with his yams magic (2.4). The magic is whispered over a leaf of any tree that stands close to the beach. The magician as fisherman takes the leaf with him on his fishing expedition, whispers the magic once more on the leaf when he is at sea and then places it onto the waves beside his canoe at the spot where he wants to fish. The leaf and its magic – together with the powers of the *tokwai*, the dwarf-like spirits that live in trees and rocks (see 2.9 above) – attract fish. Again, Yoya lists as former owners of this magic Tokumdadava's father (whose name he does not know), Tokumdadava, and Tokumdadava's children Tolagala, Weyei, and Kilagola. Like the yams magic, this formula was passed on – at least over three generations – in the patrilineal line. Yoya, himself got this formula from his uncle Weyei. The formula does not have a name of its own; it runs as follows:

Yoya's fish magic  
(recorded in Tauwema, July 27, 1989)

<i>tokwaieee</i>	Tokwai
<i>kubusi kuma kulova</i>	come down, come, come inside
<i>o bwalita bavaga</i>	to the sea I will return
<i>o laodila tokwaieee</i>	to the bush, Tokwai
5 <i>kubusi kuma kulova</i>	come down, come, come inside
<i>o laodila a'ulova</i>	in the bush I put a spell on [the leaf]

- o bwalita a'ulova* at sea I put a spell on [it]  
*o laodila aulova* in the bush I put a spell on [the leaf]  
 [pause] [7 seconds pause]  
*aulova* I put a spell on it  
 10 *aulova* I put a spell on it  
*pulakela numwaya* the speech [of] the old woman  
*aulova* I put a spell on it  
*aulova* I put a spell on it  
*pulakela tomwaya* the speech [of] the old man's  
*vadola* mouth  
 15 *aulova* I put a spell on it  
*aulova* I put a spell on it  
*aulova* I put a spell on it  
*aulova* I put a spell on it  
*aulova* I put a spell on it  
 20 *aulova o bwalita* I put a spell on it at sea  
*alitoboda* at the entrance of the house  
*aulova* I put a spell on it  
*aulova* I put a spell on it  
*aulova* I put a spell on it  
 25 *aulova* I put a spell on it  
*aulova* I put a spell on it  
*aulova* I put a spell on it  
*ala katukwasa'i* his [the Tokwai's] swearing  
*aulova* I put a spell on it  
 30 *aulova* I put a spell on it  
*aulova* I put a spell on it  
*aulova* I put a spell on it  
*aulova* I put a spell on it  
*aulova* I put a spell on it  
 35 *ala tobilola* his taboo  
*aulova* I put a spell on it  
*aulova* I put a spell on it  
*aulova* I put a spell on it  
*aulova* I put a spell on it  
 40 *aulova* I put a spell on it  
*aulova* I put a spell on it  
*tokwaieeee kubusi* Tokwai come down  
*kuma kulova* come, come inside  
*o laodila kuma* in the bush come come inside  
*kulova*  
 45 *o bwalita bogwa* at sea already you came inside  
*kulova*  
*o laodila* in the bush  
*aulova* I put a spell on it  
*o bwalita* at sea  
*aulova* I put a spell on it  
 50 *o laodila a'u lei.* in the bush I speak magic.

The reciting of this formula lasts for 50 seconds.

The formula starts with the magician ordering the *tokwai* to come from his place – either a rock or a tree – down to him, to accompany him on his fishing expedition, and to return with him after the fishing is over (lines 1–5).

Then the formula briefly refers to the magician's whispering the spell over a leaf in the bush

and at sea (lines 6–9). After these first two introductory parts of the formula Yoya made a rather long pause: it lasted for 7 seconds. He claimed that this is what he always does when he performs this magic.

The third part of the formula (lines 9–41) consists of the magical verbal expression *aulova* – “I put a spell on it” that is repeated 28 times and is combined with lines that refer to the speech of an old woman (line 11) and to an old man's mouth (line 14), that mention the sea and the entrance of a house as places where the magician performs his magic (lines 20–21), and that refer to the *tokwai's* swearing (line 28) and to his taboo (line 35). The *old woman and the old man that are mentioned* here are former owners of the magic, the house mentioned refers to the place where the *tokwai* lives, and the swearing describes the *tokwai's* reaction to this magic: he does not want to help the magician, he is swearing, but the magic is so strong that he has to obey the power of the formula. Yoya could not give any interpretation as to what kind of taboo the formula refers in line 35.

The formula ends as it starts: lines 42–50 repeat almost identically what is said in lines 1–8.

These 13 magical formulae that belong to various forms of magic will serve as the basis for the discussion of the speech register represented and established by these formulae and for the analysis of the interactive speech situation in which Trobriand magicians engage themselves.

### 3 Magic as Conversation and Ritual Communication

If we look at all the observations and notes made and presented together with the 13 magical formulae in the previous subsections, we realize that although the magical formulae are quite different from each other, they nevertheless share a number of similar features. We can summarize these features as follows (see Senft 1985a: 86):

- All magical formulae are personal property of the individual magician. The magician may use a formula for his or her personal use only, but usually magicians also offer their magical knowledge to their fellow islanders who then pay for the magicians' efforts in one way or the other.
- Usually, magical rites are performed by specialists who often have to obey certain taboos (mostly food taboos).
- The magical formula is the most important part of the magical rite(s). Besides the knowledge of

how to perform the magical rite, the possession of the magical formulae guarantees that the desired effect of the magic will come true.<sup>8</sup>

– To be effective, the magical formula must be recited without any changes in its wording.

– The formulae presented are clearly structured with respect to their text formation.

– All formulae – even the very short ones – are characterized by a number of stylistic features and devices like for example alliterations, anaphora, rhymes, repetitions, metaphors, allegro rules, onomatopoeic words, and by a very special rhythm of their own.

– With the majority of these formulae we find so-called magical words (– *magical* and not “sacred” words as Tambiah (1985: 25) refers to them in a strange mixing up of “paradigms” –) and components of the formula that are only known to the owner of the magic. However, with most formulae we also observe a number of magical words, names (of the formula or its former owners), things (like feathers and spears), and references (to the moon, to animals, to rivers, and taboos) the meaning of which are completely unknown even to the magicians themselves. This is the reason why Malinowski pointed out the “two-fold character” of the language of magic characterized by “the coefficients of weirdness and intelligibility” (Malinowski 1974: 231). Thus Tambiah’s (1985: 35) claim that “Trobriand magical language is intelligible language” has to be refuted as only partly true (see also Malinowski 1935 II: 224; Schmitz 1975: 97 f.). If the magical language reads intelligible for someone who is not familiar with Kilivila and therefore only reads and relies on the field researcher’s glosses, it is the merit of the field researcher and his (or her) familiarity with the language and his (or her) cooperation with the consultants that made it possible to come up with intelligible glosses.

– With a few exceptions only the magicians refer in almost all the formulae presented above either to themselves or to relatives (Malinowski 1974: 74).

– All magical formulae are directed towards special addressees. Among these addressees are the

following things, natural powers, substances, spirits, and animals: water, magical stones and whetstones, bodies, clouds, yams-seedlings and -plants, sweet potatoes, tooth of animals, pieces of wood, *tokwai*-spirits, crocodiles, wild pigs, and wild dogs. All these addressees are personalized in the respective formulae. Some of these addressees are mediating substances (Tambiah 1985: 41) that – like go-betweens – take up the verbal assertions of the formulae, pass them on, and convey them to, the final recipient of the magic.

– All formulae pursue certain aims which they will reach either by ordering and commanding their addressees to do or change something, or by foretelling changes, processes, and developments that are necessary for reaching these aims, or by just describing the conditions and effects at which the formulae aim. Malinowski (1974: 74) characterized this aspect of magic as follows: “... it is the use of words which invoke, state, or command the desired aim.” About 60 years later Tambiah (1985: 60, 78) connected this observation with Austin’s speech act theory (Austin 1962) and rightly called these verbal acts “illocutionary” or “performative” acts. With respect to the magicians and the addressees of their magical formulae I want to point out the following: We observed with one formula (see 2.3 above) that the magician engages in a question-answer sequence in a thus especially marked conversation situation with his addressee. We have to come back to this observation below.

– The effect of the formulae is based on the power and the will of the magician and his or her magical formula. Most formulae therefore emphasize these powers explicitly. Thus, the magicians control the powers of nature by their own magical power and expertise which are manifest in the magical formulae they inherited from their ancestors. With respect to magic on the Trobriands Tambiah’s (1985: 81) statement that it “is *inappropriate* to subject these performative rites to verification” is completely off the point. The work of magicians, especially when they perform their magical rites for the community or for an individual, are minutely monitored – and status, prestige, and “face” of magicians are solely dependent on their success.

– Because of the specific features of the magical formulae the Trobriand Islanders regard them as constituting not only a specific text category but also a specific register of their language to which they refer with the metalinguistic expression *biga megwa*. This Kilivila expression can be glossed as “(the) language (of) magic” (see Senft 1986:

<sup>8</sup> This is completely in accord with what Malinowski (1974) and Cassirer say about magic (see e.g., Cassirer 1994a: 65; 1994b: 253, 265; see also 1994c: 79, 127, 142). For a discussion of Malinowski’s understanding of magic see Kippenberg (1987: 23–31). See also Tambiah (1985: 28). I do not understand why Tambiah (1985: 33 f.) criticizes Cassirer’s views. However, in what follows we will have to come back to some of Tambiah’s interpretations of, and views on, Trobriand magic.

126; 1987: 124; 1991: 243 f.). Again it was Malinowski (1935 II: 225), the master of Trobriand ethnography, who referred to this metalinguistic expression first; he quotes it using its syntactic variant *megwa la biga* ("magic its language") in the second volume of "Coral Gardens and Their Magic." Thus, the indigenous Trobriand concept of magic manifest in this metalinguistic expression settles the issue "whether magical speech ... is a different genre from ordinary speech" as it was raised by Tambiah (1990: 80). For the Trobriand Islanders the *biga megwa* is certainly different from ordinary speech, otherwise they would not mark it explicitly in their metalanguage. Moreover, this concept also proofs what Tambiah (1985: 34) attempts to deny so vigorously, namely that "the primitive has in fact ... the magical attitude to words" – Malinowski rightly "affirmed the truth of this classical assertion" – and both linguistic and ethnographic facts here confirm Malinowski's insights and at the same time contradict once more one of so many theories that finally aim to criticize the findings of the great pioneer of ethnography.<sup>9</sup>

I hope that this summary together with the presentation of the formulae given above document convincingly that magic is (or rather was) a cultural phenomenon that is extremely important for the Trobriand Islanders' "weltanschauung," that the magical rites have to follow and obey clearly defined conventions and rules, and that the magical formulae, the central components of magic, are (or were) to be stereotypically recalled, remembered, and verbally reproduced by the acting magicians.

9 Tambiah's argument that I am refuting here runs as follows: "The basic fallacy of linguists and philosophers who search for the origins of the magical attitude to words is their prior assumption and acceptance that the primitive has in fact such an attitude. This axiom they have derived principally from Frazer, and indeed from Malinowski, who had affirmed the truth of this classical assertion on the basis of his fieldwork" (Tambiah 1985: 34). I cannot refrain from thinking that here as well as with his rather unqualified statement quoted and already refuted above that "Trobriand magical language is intelligible language" (Tambiah 1985: 35). Tambiah sounds like an "armchair" anthropologist who tries to criticize the fieldworker on the basis of an assumed better theory. Although we all know that this famous anthropologist can look back to long periods of field research in various and different fields and has contributed widely to anthropological theory, it remains a mystery to me why he – like so many outstanding anthropologists – tries to find faults with Malinowski by all means and at any costs. The master may have interpreted this as a kind of Freudian patricide ...

Many of the structural and stylistic components of Trobriand magic and especially the claims that the formulae have to be stereotypically reproduced, remind us of the biological concept of "ritualization" (Huxley 1966). However, before I discuss this aspect of Trobriand magic, I will first try to describe the speech situation in which magicians on the Trobriand Islands find themselves engaged.

According to my consultants and to all the magicians that presented me with, or sold me, their formulae, the act of "whispering, carrying, or saying the magic" (see above) is not a monological activity. On the contrary, the magician engages in a kind of conversation with his or her addressee(s). For the Trobriand magicians the addressees of their formulae have to behave like partners in a conversation (Senft 1985a: 88), at least they have to take over the function of listeners – because the power of the magical words just force them to do this. Thus, as already stated above, all formulae personalize their addressees. According to my Trobriand consultants the interactants in the communicative situation of magic are the magician on the one side and the intermediate and/or mediate addressees of the magical formula on the other side. The magicians address their "vis-à-vis" verbally – and the addressees then have to react nonverbally (if, as in the formula in 2.3 above, the magic does not encode a verbal reaction of the addressee in an explicit question-answer sequence within the formula itself). That is to say: the addressees of the formulae either have to support and to fulfill the orders and commands they hear in the formula and they have to see that the described aims of the formula will be reached, or they will not react to the magician's formula because the addressees either have to obey the power and will of another magician's stronger and more powerful formula or because the magician has broken a taboo or made a mistake in reciting the formula and therefore could not succeed to force the power of his or her magic on the respective addressees. Thus, whether the communication between the magicians and their addressees is successful or not – from the point of view of the magician, of course – is completely dependent on the nonverbal reaction of the verbally addressed. From the Trobrianders', the emic point of view, the performance of magic is always a communicative event characterized by a verbal-nonverbal conversation between magician and personalized addressee (regardless whether the addressee is animate or inanimate). To summarize this – emic – view once more: the Trobriand magician talks to an addressee, the addressee listens

and reacts, and therefore both are engaged in a special type of conversation.<sup>10</sup> Thus, Trobriand magic uses language "as a symbolic means of inducing cooperation in beings that by nature respond to symbols" – as Burke (1969: 43) pointed out (see Tambiah 1990: 82). However, for the Trobriander the definition of these "beings that by nature respond to symbols" encompasses a broader set of (animate and inanimate) entities than Europeans, for example, may include in the category of these so described "beings." And for the Trobriand Islander it certainly is "a dialectical and dialogical pattern of activity" – as Tambiah (1985: 22) in his classic paper "The Magical Power of Words" (this time) so rightly points out, however, I hope that the data above illustrate that it is by no means a "primitive" one (Tambiah 1990: 63). In another paper the same author also states (– this time agreeing with Malinowski [1974: 90] –) that "magical acts are ritual acts" (Tambiah 1985: 60). This brings us back to the concepts of "ritualization" and "ritual" at which we already briefly hinted above.

The – rather general – definition of ritual as "institutionalized, expressive action" (Werlen 1984: 81) certainly encompasses Trobriand magic with its emphasis on speech-action. Like many other rituals Trobriand magic serves the function "to ritualize man's optimism, to enhance his faith in the victory of hope over fear" (Malinowski 1974: 90) – especially with respect to his fear of nature and its forces.<sup>11</sup> Given the fact that we take Trobriand magic as a form of ritual, is it also possible to characterize the magical formulae, the verbal manifestations of this ritual, as a form of ritual communication?

In the preceding paragraphs I have described that the Trobriand Islanders themselves take the interactions of the magicians with their addressees as a communicative event, as a form of a special verbal-nonverbal conversation.<sup>12</sup> I have pointed out elsewhere (Senft 1991: 237) that it is characteristic for Trobriand discourse and communication to use linguistic vagueness and ambiguity as a stylistic means to avoid possible distress, confrontation, or too much and too aggressive

directness in everyday speech situations.<sup>13</sup> If we look at the magical formulae presented above, it is obvious that they clearly contradict this observation. With their formulae Trobriand magicians attempt to force their will on their addressees – and even far-reaching requests are expressed verbally without any moderation. Such a directness that strips away ambiguity and vagueness with which one normally can disguise one's own thoughts is characteristic for a variety the Trobriand Islanders call *biga pe'ula* or *biga mokita* – "heavy language" or "true, direct language" (Senft 1991; see also Weiner 1983: 693, 696). The use of this variety inevitably demands action that for either party involved in such a speech event may be dangerous or even fatal. However, as shown and pointed out in the preceding sections, the magical formulae themselves are regarded by the Trobriand Islanders as constituting a language variety in its own right, and they refer to this variety as *biga megwa* – the "language of magic." The explicit stylistic marking of the magical formulae as something extraordinary is a means to signal the addressee that these speech acts are different from speech acts that constitute general everyday speech situations, that they will and inevitably must put a great strain on the communicative interaction between the magicians and the addressees of the magical formulae. Thus, as pointed out elsewhere (Senft 1991: 244), the formal characteristics of the formulae serve the function of a pronounced signal: By the means of the formal verbal domain the license is sought to strain the communicative interaction in the verbal domain with regard to contents. The *biga megwa* concept utilizes this licence to relieve the tension in this critical situation of social interaction and to ward off any possible consequences of the strains that affect the communicative interaction which takes place in magic rites and rituals – according to the Trobrianders' conviction, of course. If we define "ritual communication" as a type of strategic action that serves the functions of social bonding and of blocking aggression, and that can ban elements of danger which may affect the community's social harmony within the verbal domain just by verbalizing these elements of danger more or less explicitly and by bringing them up for discussion (Senft 1991: 246), then magical formulae are indeed a form of "ritual communication."

10 This emic view is responsible for the title of my paper. See also Cassirer (1994a: 124): "Um die Eigentümlichkeit irgendeiner geistigen Form sicher zu bestimmen, ist es vor allem notwendig, daß man sie mit ihren eigenen Maßen mißt."

11 It goes without saying that Trobriand magic also serves other important – and sometimes clearly political – functions. See for example Weiner (1976: 30, 204, 224; 1983: 700).

12 Note that rituals in general are characterized by their communicative functions (see Huxley 1966).

13 In fact, the Trobriand Islanders distinguish local and socially stratifying and stratified varieties as well as varieties that I have called – from the etic point of view – "situational-intentional" varieties. These varieties are used in a given special situation and are produced to pursue certain intentions. See Senft (1986: 124; 1991).

There is no metalinguistic expression in Kilivila that can be compared with this – etic – concept of “ritual communication.” But the preceding paragraphs have shown that the forms and functions of this concept are specially marked and even codified as metalinguistic expressions in the Kilivila language. I think the etic considerations that lead to the characterization of magical formulae as a form of “ritual communication” have their emic equivalents – they are expressed in the metalinguistic knowledge and in the situationally and intentionally adequate linguistic behaviour of the Trobriand Islanders (see Senft 1991: 246).

To summarize, the speech situation between the Trobriand magicians and the addressees of their formulae is regarded by the Trobriand Islanders as a (special) form of conversation; this conversational interaction constitutes a special form of ritual communication.

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