MALINOWSKI COLLECTED WORKS

Volume I

Malinowski Among The Magi

Bronislaw Malinowski

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The Natives of Mailu

Bronislaw Malinowski

Edited and with an Introduction by
Michael W. Young

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Malinowski Among the Magi
'The Natives of Mailu'

Bronislaw Malinowski

Edited with
an Introduction by
Michael W. Young
Senior Fellow in the Department of Anthropology,
Research School of Pacific Studies,
The Australian National University

Routledge
London and New York

In Memory of Bu'a of Mailu –
policeman, sorcerer, victim
(d. 1914)

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Malinowski Among the Magi
Editor's Introduction

Michael W. Young

I Mailu in Malinowski's Myth

In September 1914, when the world's attention was focused on momentous events in Europe, Bronislaw Malinowski – a thirty-year-old expatriate Pole and citizen of the Austro-Hungarian Empire – arrived in Australian Papua on the first of three anthropological expeditions. Although it was an inauspicious time to begin fieldwork, the single publication that resulted has some retrospective significance as the apprentice work of the consummate ethnographer who was to revolutionize social anthropology. Malinowski's Mailu expedition was greatly overshadowed by his longer expeditions to the Trobriand Islands between 1915 and 1918. It was the Trobrianders who received the limelight when he duly returned to Europe, became a powerful academic impresario (self-proclaimed 'godfather and standard-bearer' of functionalism), and, in a series of polemical treatises and influential monographs, displayed the ethnographic riches he had won. Thus was the charter myth of the British fieldwork tradition created, with an exile and prisoner-of-war as its culture hero.

The present decade has seen many attempts to evaluate this myth and place it in historical perspective.[1] The more serious purpose has been to debate it, not debunk it, and to this end many of Malinowski's writings – including his published field diaries – have been examined minutely. The task is unfinished, and since each generation of scholars must rewrite the history of its discipline and reassess the worth of ancestral figures, the task is interminable. Much attention has rightly been given to the circumstances and achievements of Malinowski's Trobriand work, particularly to that first expression of his mature genius, *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*. This remains the most celebrated of his monographs and the most artful demonstration of his 'ethnographer's magic'. Critical

demystification begins typically with his methodological Introduction (1922: 1–25). Here he had announced his credo: a mix of detailed prescription, personal experience, and mastery of the vernacular – all made possible by the essential 'condition of the performer', which entailed dwelling 'right among the natives', closely observing them and participating in their activities.

From this complacent later standpoint, the first expedition that Malinowski undertook, to the Mailu or Magi-speaking people of the southern coast of eastern Papua, was something of a failure. He was to speak of it condescendingly as a 'trial run',[2] and his field *Diary* gives blow-by-blow testimony to the manner in which the experience blooded him. Yet it was during the Mailu trip that Malinowski could learn from his mistakes, gain confidence as an ethnographer, and formulate the working strategies he was to deploy in the Trobriands. Mailu was important to him as his first military campaign is to any ambitious commander. Just as important, however, was the strategic decision to publish in Australia the report of his first field campaign. This enabled him to secure the funds and the government support which saw him through his first expedition to the Trobriands. In the sensitive political circumstances of 1915, his modest monograph on the Mailu was thus instrumental in advancing his career. To that extent, certainly, the discipline of social anthropology can be grateful it was written.

Malinowski's report on the Mailu appeared in the annals of an Australian scientific society, under the cautious title of *The Natives of Mailu: Preliminary Results of the Robert Mond Research Work in British New Guinea.* It was 'read' (formally presented) on 14 October 1915, by Sir Edward Stirling of the Royal Society of South Australia, and published in December 1915 in volume 39 of that body's *Transactions and Proceedings.* Despite its length (212 pages of text and 17 pages of plates), Malinowski's 'article' was not even the longest offering of that thick volume of some 900 pages. It is sandwiched between an article on exotic fishes of the genus Aracana, and scientific notes on an expedition to the outback regions of South Australia.

While not, strictly speaking, inaccessible, *The Natives of Mailu* has been less readily available than any other of Malinowski's English works, and partly by reason of its unlikely location it has remained a wallflower, if not exactly a Cinderella. It received no publicity and was assured of a limited circulation: a printing of about three

hundred, of which one hundred were received by members of the Society and perhaps a further hundred were procured by libraries throughout the world.[3] The *Transactions and Proceedings* is unlikely ever to have sat on the shelf of a bookshop, and only the most dedicated scholars of Malinowski or Melanesia would have sought to obtain it directly from the Royal Society in Adelaide. If not quite inaccessible, then, it was certainly invisible.[4]

Despite the obvious failings of *Mailu* when measured against his later work, it represents a considerable amount of industrious recording in a very short time. Malinowski's energetic intellect and keen powers of observation asserted themselves despite the lethargy, the sickness, and the 'poor circumstances' of which he complained in his *Diary*. *The Natives of Mailu* is deservedly less famous than any of his half dozen Trobriand monographs. We cannot claim it to be a neglected masterpiece, a forgotten classic. It is an apprentice work, conventionally structured, hastily written, and between the flashes of brilliance, clumsy in style. One could say it was an early product of his talent, not of his genius. For all that its re-publication is warranted, I believe, not only by the revival of interest in Malinowski during recent years, but equally by its intrinsic worth as the earliest study of an important cultural group in Papua New Guinea.

II Anthropologists and Administrators in the Antipodes

Why did Malinowski, a budding social scientist, publish his report in such an unlikely serial – one devoted almost exclusively to the natural sciences? The answer will emerge in a later section, but first I shall adduce some biographical details necessary to understand the circumstances of Malinowski's sojourn in the antipodes, particularly those of his fieldwork among the Mailu.

As is well known, Malinowski went to London in 1910 to study anthropology under Edward Westermark and C. G. Seligman at the London School of Economics. He had earned a doctorate in philosophy at his *alma mater*, the Jagellonian University in Cracow, then spent a year studying under Karl Bücher and Wilhelm Wundt in Leipzig. After completing *The Family among the Australian Aborigines* (a work which together with *The Natives of Mailu* earned him a DSc in 1916), he was eager to do fieldwork.

Seligman had tried, and failed, to get him funds to work in the

Sudan; but through his own influence in the University of London he succeeded in obtaining for Malinowski a Robert Mond Travelling Studentship and, commencing 1 January 1915, election to a Constance Hutchinson Studentship. The former was worth £250 a year for five years, the latter 100 guineas a year for two years. One of the stipulations of the Hutchinson scholarship was that its holder should present a thesis to the University within three years or forfeit the last two quarterly instalments. There was a further condition: 'When the thesis is completed it is to be understood that the School series will have the first option of its publication'.[5] As it transpired, Malinowski completed his 'thesis' within six months of being offered the scholarship, but his circumstances were unusual to say the least.

British New Guinea (renamed Papua after Australia took over its administration in 1906) was an obvious country in which to do fieldwork. The very term 'field work' had been introduced into anthropology by one who worked there – Alfred Cort Haddon of Cambridge, who had begun his academic career as a natural scientist, and was largely responsible for generating a sense of urgency in the study of vanishing primitive cultures (see Haddon 1901, Quiggin 1942, Urry 1982). Arguably the most influential British anthropologist of the first two decades of the century, Haddon had begun survey work on the south coast as early as 1898–9 while leading the Cambridge University expedition to Torres Strait, and he planned to return for a further six months in 1914. Seligman had been a member of the Torres Strait expedition and had revisited British New Guinea for a longer period in 1904–5 to conduct the extensive survey that resulted in his monumental book, *The Melanesians of British New Guinea* (1910). W. H. R. Rivers, greatly admired by Malinowski and probably the most brilliant British anthropologist of his time, had also been a member of Haddon's Torres Strait team, though in August 1914 he was bound for a different part of Melanesia. In the immediate pre-war years, Diamond Jenness (a student of R. R. Marett's at Oxford) had worked on Goodenough Island in the D'Entrecasteaux group; Gunnar Landtman and R. W. Williamson (students of Haddon) had worked, respectively, on Kiwai Island in the Fly delta and among the Mafulu people of the interior. No other possession of the British Empire, then, had given such a head start to professional anthropology.

In the company of many of his colleagues from England,

Malinowski sailed to Australia in June 1914 to attend meetings of the British Association for the Advancement of Science, which was held like a travelling fair in one state capital after another. He went as Marett's secretary (who was Recorder to Section H) and at the expense of the Australian Government. News of the outbreak of war in Europe reached the itinerant scientists in Adelaide. Malinowski's status immediately became one of 'enemy alien' (or as he put it more dramatically, 'Austrian Subject, member of the Landsturm, or second reserve'). But well-armed with references from the University of London, and with Haddon's personal introduction to a top government official, Atlee Hunt, Malinowski was allowed to proceed to Papua as he had originally planned.

A. Atlee Hunt C.M.G. was Secretary of the Department of External Affairs of the Commonwealth Government of Australia. In view of all he did for Malinowski during the following six years he deserves recognition for what, indirectly, amounted to a considerable service to anthropology. The official file on Malinowski, covering the whole period he was in Australia and Papua (1914–1920), is a couple of inches thick, and most of the paperwork it contains was initiated by Hunt. He wrote innumerable letters of introduction for Malinowski, pressed his Minister for substantial grants when difficulties arose over the transfer of Malinowski's funds from England, arranged free travel passes for him whenever he could, defended him against rumours of his untrustworthiness and pro-German sympathies, protected him from a suspicious and hostile Sir Hubert Murray (Lt-Governor of Papua), smoothed over difficulties with military commandants, and generally eased some of the irksome restrictions which hindered his movements. Hunt even arranged for Malinowski to purchase photographic supplies at discount, to have his prints done at little or no expense, and to borrow from the Government a camera (3A Graflex fitted with a Zeiss Kodak Anastigmat F.6.5 lens) and a tent – the famous tent which was to become a symbol of the ethnographer's intimate style of fieldwork.[6]

Atlee Hunt did all these things not merely to oblige Haddon and Baldwin Spencer, another of Malinowski's eminent patrons, but because he held an enlightened belief in the practical value of anthropological research, and an unshakable faith in Malinowski's capacity to carry it out. No other public figure demonstrated such support for Malinowski. If Lt-Governor Murray had had his way, Malinowski would not have been permitted to return to Papua in

1915, except on condition that he was employed by the Papuan government. It annoyed Murray that the grant (£250 over a two-year period) Hunt secured for Malinowski was drawn against his own administration's budget; if Murray was paying for Malinowski's research he wanted some say in where he went and what he did. It was Hunt's intercession with his Minister that kept Murray at bay and ensured the continuation of Malinowski's fieldwork. While Malinowski was suitably grateful to Hunt for his patronage, he could not have known the extent to which he was being protected by him – all too often from the consequences of his own gaffes.[7]

III Fieldwork in Mailu: 'Covering the Ground'

Malinowski's plan to go to Mailu was not entirely his own. Seligman apparently urged him to investigate this area, one he had been obliged to neglect during his survey of British New Guinea in 1904–5. It was of particular ethnological interest to Seligman as a zone of transition between the two ethnic groups he had identified as the eastern and western branches of the Papuo-Melanesian stock.[8] Although there were a great many other peoples to be found in the Territory who had not yet been investigated, many of them temptingly exotic, Malinowski appears to have been content on this first expedition to follow Seligman's advice. It called for no great intrepidity or complex logistical plans, for Mailu had been in regular contact with Europeans since about 1885, had hosted a resident missionary since 1896, and was comparatively well-served by coastal steamers. Roughly midway between Port Moresby and Samarai, then the administrative and the commercial capitals of Papua respectively, Mailu probably saw as much sea traffic in 1914 as it does at the present day.

Although he eagerly anticipated his arrival in Papua as beginning a 'new epoch' in his life, Malinowski was worried about his status as an alien, his shortage of funds, and whether his health was equal to the ennervation of the tropics. He spent the first month in and around Port Moresby, visiting officials, learning Police Motu, and doing some ethnographic work on Motu and Koita peoples with considerable help from an experienced, even 'professional' informant.

In his first letter to Seligman, dated 20 September 1914, Malinowski wrote:

> Here I am at last in the Promised Land – and so far I find it in all respects better and promising more success than I had ever anticipated...
>
> I am so far entirely conforming with your orders and waiting for the first opportunity for going East to Mailu, where I propose to settle for my first period of work ... [He says he is learning Motu and working with Ahuia Oval] who after being started by you and tapped by Barton and others has become a passionate Anthropologist (by the way he ought to be made honorary Member of the RAI). At any rate I am learning much in the way of technicalities of inquiry and I am facing quite hopefully the future – even in the case I would not be able to find an interpreter half as good as Ahuia...
>
> I find investigation and description of technical details (technology) more difficult than anything else. When this reaches you, you will probably know how matters stand with my further monetary supplies. I am now much more eager to be able to extend my visit here than I was ever before. Of course, I have not yet really tried my forces and worked on my own; here I am still guided by you and undergoing a kind of practical training in your school. But I have a concrete idea of what the difficulties will look like and I have lost my original diffidence (SP 20.9.1914).

After hiring a young Motuan, Igua, to serve as his cook and factotum, Malinowski departed for Mailu, arriving on 16 October. He was immediately welcomed by the local missionary, William Saville of the London Missionary Society, whom Seligman had met ten years previously. Saville courteously offered Malinowski food and board, conducted tours of local villages and an introduction to Mailu culture. Malinowski, however, soon found himself in disagreement with the missionary. Early the next month he visited the mainland and met the local planter Alfred Greenaway, an English Quaker of 'working-class background' whom he found to be a more congenial source of information than Saville (Malinowski 1967: 31, 39).

On 3 November, Malinowski wrote a long letter to Seligman

detailing his progress. It is worth quoting at some length as it shows that he had already grasped the essentials of Mailu culture. This letter also reveals the extent to which he had expected to depend upon the local missionary (as his anthropological mentors had no doubt encouraged him to do) as well as upon bilingual informants.

> I am here for over three weeks already and I have gathered a nice store of information, though by no means as much as I could have done under less unfavourable circumstances. The missionary is really very busy; after 3 months absence he came back for 8 weeks and is soon starting on a few months leave. So that he is of very little help to me. No one else speaks two words of English. If not for the miserable shade [?] of Motuan I have got I would have to close shop, for my Motu boy is far too stupid to be used as an unchecked interpreter. But I picked up a certain amount of Motu before and I am rapidly perfectioning it [sic]. Thus, slowly but at a definite rate I am working out the material. There is however [?] a great scarcity of men just at present, as many have been making sago for the great feast, which in fact is not going to be very great this year. The war scare has upset even pig-trading in New Guinea and the Mailu (of Mailu Island) who depend on their *boraa* (pig)-supply from Aroma, have not gone there this year... I have, so far, seen only this village (Mailu on the island) and Unevi village on the coast, opposite Mailu. From what Saville says, they seem to be nearly identical in their social and cultural features. They do not seem to go far inland, some 10–20 miles inland there are villages speaking a different language.

Malinowski then proceeded to summarize his observations concerning housebuilding, clans, *dubu* (men's house), gardens, and trading. His comments on trade are interesting for he later reproduced them, with amplification but no major amendment, in his monograph.

> On Mailu Island gardens played a very little role and the community is not self-supporting. They trade for food with some of the adjoining coastline villages and for pigs with AROMA. They had a sago supply on the mainland, which they had an exclusive right to exploit and did it on communal principles. Their trading line extended from

> Bonabona east to Aroma west and was somewhat complex – I have got many details; thus f[or] e[xample], raw shells were bought in Aroma, made in Mailu and sold again as TOEAS [i.e. armshells] in Aroma. I could not... [?]... so for the overland trading line, though I am sure it must have existed, for various reasons.

He goes on to mention family life, kin terms, 'superstitions' of *vada* sorcery and ghosts, taboos and taboo signs, the absence of totemism, etc., indicating their similarity or otherwise to Koita practices as Seligman had documented them in his book. Malinowski concluded his survey with some notes on feasting, and these too deserve to be cited:

> Public feast system is developed as among the Koita and as much important in public life. Main features: dances and distribution of food (MADUNA), the collection of food for MADUNA governs the whole tribal life during the latter part of the S.E. trade and beginning of monsoon. Vegetable food supplied by clan giving MARU feast... Pigs supplied by other clans. The brunt of pig-giving falls to the men, who married girls from the clan giving [the] feast. Marriage usually settled when girl small, though no infant marriage used. A system of feasts and payments (details in Notebooks). Payments in pigs continued after marriage at MADUNA occasions. These returned at reciprocal MADUNA, but never with equal balance. (I have made some pig-statistics for a couple of MADUNAS and figures show, that the pigs given by a man to his people-in- law always outnumber the returned pigs.) I have got some notes on the disposal of the dead... on the division of the seasons and on some technical points (pot-making, house-building, canoes). But I feel I have not got yet into the 'heart of the people'...
>
> The weather is fair so far and I had no serious breakdown yet, though I have days of collapse, when I cannot work... (SP 3.11.1914).

Scrutiny of the relevant pages of his *Diary* (1967: 26–34) suggests that Malinowski could have put in no more than 14 days' work in Mailu by the time he wrote this letter. He had already collected and synthesized a good deal of information, yet was beginning to

reproach himself for not having seen into the 'heart of the people'. A few days later, Professor Haddon and his daughter visited Mailu during their tour of the southern coast; Haddon was investigating canoes, Kathleen collecting string-figures. Malinowski did not enjoy their visit (what novice would welcome the world's foremost authority on Melanesian ethnography in his village three weeks after starting work?), but he showed Haddon his notebooks and won some praise. Later Haddon was to write to Seligman that his protégé will 'make an excellent fieldworker'.[9]

On 24 November, after several days of sickness, depressed spirits, and a therapeutic immersion in Rudyard Kipling's *Kim*, Malinowski wrote again to Seligman. But the 'nervous disorganization, sentimentalism, agitation' he noted in his *Diary* (1967: 42) are scarcely evident in this reassuring letter:

> Just a few words, as there seems to be soon an opportunity for sending out mail. I am going on not at a tremendous pace, but steadfastly. Haddon was here for a couple of days and you will have seen him, before this reaches you. I think I have now got a fairly complete all round picture of the Mailu – but it is a rough sketch in black and white so far and the touches of colour are much more difficult to get. I am trying to *see* as many things done, as I can. I hope I shall be able to see a couple of feasts in the end of December or beginning January – the great annual feast. In the meantime I am going East – there is the mission launch going to Samarai – and I shall, on the way back, stop in one or two places, especially at the very point where the Mailu and the Suau touch. This will be only rough sounding, but it will be very helpful in discovering the touches of Eastern culture here. I have had no serious breakdown of health so far, though for a week or so I felt seedy and my work was very slow. My weakest points are photographs and phonographic records. I have taken very few photos so far – but I have ambitious schemes of recording much of their dances, children's plays [sic] and economic activities (fishing, making gardens etc.) and technology. But whenever skill comes into play I am not much good (SP 24.11.1914).[10]

As arranged, on 26 November, having spent five weeks in Mailu, Malinowski accompanied Saville on a trip to the east, visiting

Charles Abel's mission on Kwatou Island, and then Samarai, where he interviewed prisoners at the gaol. Between the 8 and 19 December he investigated some Suau coastal villages and visited the Riches', another L.M.S. missionary family. On returning to Mailu, alone this time, he spent the following five weeks doing his most intensive work (with a few days' break for Christmas at Greenaway's plantation). On 24 January he boarded the Lt-Governor's ship (to be greeted by Murray 'with a distinct blunt, cold reserve'), relieved and happy finally to depart Mailu ('a sense of freedom – as if I were starting a vacation' [1967: 74]). He immediately wrote a cheerful letter to Seligman from Port Moresby:

> Last night I arrived here from Mailu. My fortunes there, after the Rev. W. J. V. Saville B.B. (you know what those initials mean in NG), were very varied. In fact the missionary has done his best to interfere with my work... [with his?]... subterranean ways, and after he left I got on with the natives infinitely better than before. I got in fact a fairly good amount of information about Mailu. I am sticking to my previous plan to go South for 60 days and work out everything clean and neat before I proceed. I shall send you samples from Australia. I hope I have got some fairly good plates – though I didn't develop the last 2 dozen. I neglected only scandalously the purely anthropological side (measuring) of the business, but I may be excused that as on the one hand I really did work whenever I got the opportunity and on the other, I think I am much better fitted for the other work and I consider it more important – I shall send you a good deal of technicalities – in fact a short abstract of all I have got, when I go over my stuff (SP 25.1.1915).

After spending a week in Moresby, Malinowski sailed a little way down the coast to work with Ahuia among the Sinaugolo. They returned to Moresby after a productive stay of nine days in Rigo. A week later Malinowski boarded a ship which took him back to Samarai, and from there he made a week's excursion to Woodlark Island, which proved to be another fruitful trip. Then he sailed for Australia via Samarai and Moresby again, reaching Cairns on 1 March 1915.

IV Fieldwork in Mailu: Lessons of Experience

The recital of dates I have given above serves to establish that Malinowski was engaged, on this first expedition, in 'survey' rather than 'intensive' work – a methodological distinction which Haddon and Rivers had begun to make in recent years (see Urry 1972; 1984; Stocking 1983). As Stocking (ibid: 108) has noted in another connection, Malinowski's time reckoning was 'somewhat unreliable'. His claim to have been 'living quite alone with the natives' for 'the best part of December, January and February', can be seen to be a generous exaggeration. If the *Diary* presents an accurate record of his movements, then of the 73 days he spent among the Mailu proper, only 37 days were spent without some social intercourse with Europeans. ('I don't feel too cut off', he remarked in his *Diary* on 19 December after His Excellency and his entourage had stopped by and given him supper and 'free friendly conversation' aboard the Government boat, and before he listed all the 'well-disposed' and 'hospitable' white families he had met in recent days [1967: 58–9].)

He mentions the time he spent 'living quite alone with the natives' not in order to boast, however, but to establish a methodological point which had the force of a personal discovery. The importance of his Mailu research for him seemed to lie in such lessons. He had begun to articulate a couple of them even before he began work in Mailu, while he was conducting his 'ethnological explorations' in Port Moresby. 'They suffer from two basic defects', he noted, '(1) I have rather little to do with the savages on the spot, do not observe them enough and (2) I do not speak their language' (1967: 13). Following his Mailu trip he was to write: 'I found that work done under such circumstances [i.e. living alone with the natives] is incomparably more intensive than work done from white men's settlements, or even in any white man's company; the nearer one lives to a village and the more one actually sees of the natives the better' (p. 109).

If this prescription represented an ideal he did not live up to in Mailu, he certainly tried to achieve it in the Trobriands the following year. Meanwhile, a foretaste of life in the heart of the village was granted when he visited the Suau coast while a *Soi* feast was in progress. He was suffering a light fever and was 'greatly irritated' by the conditions: 'the stench, smoke, noise of people, dogs, and pigs'. The three or four nights he spent in the village exhausted him ('I awoke feeling as if just taken down from the cross'), and he later

rebuked himself for his limited powers of endurance: 'On the whole, these few days which might have been extremely fruitful... were greatly spoiled by my lack of strength' (1967: 53–5). As Stocking gently puts it, 'total immersion was not easy for him' (1983: 97).

Another important lesson Malinowski had learned in Mailu, one he raised to a fieldwork principle which he never tired of stressing, was the imperative need to speak the vernacular. Although his Mailu notebooks are sprinkled with Mailu terms, he made no systematic attempt to learn the language (leaving the field entirely to Saville, who had already published a grammar in 1912). But Malinowski was proud to inform his readers how quickly he had managed to learn Motu (though it was actually the simplified trade version), and he claimed to have found it 'a completely satisfactory instrument of investigation'. It also enabled him to eavesdrop: 'Over and over again I was led onto the track of some extremely important item in native sociology or folklore by listening to the conversation of my boy Igua with his Mailu friends' (pp. 109).

Other fieldwork lessons he learned in Mailu are more imponderable, though they include what Stocking has called 'a more intimate ethnographic style'. This was in part enjoined by the proximity he had sought ('living right among the natives'), but it also ensued from the simple fact of being present in the village as things were happening, of becoming caught up in an event and then turning it to ethnographic advantage. There is the example he gives of drawing out reticent informants by feigning concern about ghosts and asking their advice; he elicited in this way information which previously had been 'withheld' from him (p. 273; also Stocking 1983: 96). Pontifically, he generalized the lesson: 'My experience is that direct questioning of the natives about a custom or belief never discloses their attitude of mind as thoroughly as the discussion of facts connected with the direct observation of a custom, or with a concrete occurrence in which both parties are materially concerned' (p. 275). The recording of 'concrete instances' or 'actual cases' became another keystone of his method and laid the groundwork for both 'the statistical documentation by concrete evidence' and the 'imponderabilia of actual life and of typical behaviour' (1922: 20). 'Concrete illustrations' of the kind he later used to help bring Trobrianders to life make a more modest appearance in *Mailu*, most effectively as devices to explicate inheritance (p. 258–60) and mourning practices (pp. 312–14). But he mentioned them frequently,

obviously mindful of Rivers' first rule of method from *Notes and Queries*: 'the abstract should be approached through the concrete' (NQ 1912: 115).

The most intensive period of his work began, as I have noted, when he returned to Mailu on 19 December after his trip to the Suau coast. Saville had remained in Samarai, shortly to go on furlough, so Malinowski moved into 'a disused mission house, not far from the present Mission Station' (p. 272). But he was unsure of how to begin: '... I really do not know, or rather I do not see clearly, what I am to do. Period of suspense. I came to a deserted place with the feeling that soon I'll have to finish but in the meantime I must begin a new existence' (1967: 49). (In the event, he spent the day usefully enough by catching up on his diary of the previous week.) He was still living outside the village and observing its activities at set times each day rather than continuously. As before, he made a morning and a late afternoon visit to the village in search of informants and scenes to photograph. Occasionally he strolled to the village in the evening if there was any dancing to watch. The names of Mailu informants recur in the *Diary* and the monograph: Papari, Kavaka, Dagaea, Velavi, Dimdim, Puana, Omaga, Pikana. Malinowski paid them tobacco for enduring lengthy, openended interviews. His highest praise for an informant (as in all his subsequent monographs) was 'intelligent', which he occasionally qualified with 'very', 'extremely' or 'exceptionally'. But there were many occasions of frustrated communication, which he was peevishly inclined to blame on the stupidity of his interlocutors.

Two days before he was to leave Mailu, he wrote in his *Diary*: 'I am "*covering the ground*" of my territory more and more concretely. Without doubt, if I could stay here for several more months – or years – I would get to know these people far better. But for a superficial short stay I have done as much as can be done. I am quite satisfied with what I have done under the poor circumstances' (1967: 76). Why the circumstances were 'poor' during his last month in Mailu he does not explain. Discounting the bouts of sickness and depression, his material circumstances appear to have been tolerably good. He refers to no shortage of supplies, no impediments to collecting information (save for a period of nine or ten days when the men were absent on a trading trip), and he was within easy reach of a white planter's haven at Mogubu (where he spent Christmas). Notwithstanding his brave claim that Motu was a 'completely

satisfactory' medium of communication, one must infer that 'the poor circumstances' were due to his inability to communicate as well as he would have liked with his subjects.

We must not forget the emotional circumstances. The forays into the village were sometimes made in the teeth of an inner resistance. An index of his misery is the frequency with which he succumbed to the escapist lure of 'trashy novels'. On 6 January a crisis of sorts developed, when the wind changed and 'absolutely everybody left Mailu' to sail to Domara on a trading voyage. (Some women presumably remained behind, but Malinowski was unable to speak to them [p.173].) He had tried to accompany the men but refused to pay the £2 demanded by the expedition leaders, so they sailed without him. Malinowski was 'infuriated'. It was a unique fieldwork opportunity missed, and a few days later he was to regret not having paid the sum – exorbitant though it was.[11] For solace he turned to a Dumas novel and read without respite for six days – 'as though I were reading myself to death' (1967: 62–9).

Under the 'poor circumstances' that prevailed in Mailu, even throughout the period of his most intensive fieldwork there, it is astonishing that Malinowski managed to amass as much information as he did. And when he came to reflect upon his achievement (modest though it was to seem compared to later ones), there is a mood of self-congratulaton in the retrospective *Diary*. One also hears a great sigh of relief:

> At moments I was very exalted; I have been in N.G., I have accomplished a good deal. I have prospects of far better work – fairly certain plans. And *so* – it's not as hopeless as I thought when I arrived here. Moreover I don't feel a bit worse than when I came. I am a better sailor and I walk much better – the distances no longer terrify me. – Gazing at the sea I have a strong feeling of happiness. True, it's not all over yet; but in the light of old fears and uncertainties I have decidedly won a victory (1967: 97).

V An Adelaide Autumn: The Politics of Publication

Aboard the *Marasina*, nearing Cairns in northern Queensland, Malinowski admonished as well as congratulated himself:

> The most important thing now is not to waste my stay in Australia but to use it carefully in the most productive way. I must write an article about Mailu – maybe a few others in addition, but Mailu first and foremost. I must check the museums insofar as possible. So there won't be time for nonsense! I must give a detailed account to Mr Atlee Hunt and try to impress him (1967: 93).

During this interlude of less than three months Malinowski somehow managed to do almost all of these things – and evidently also found time for some 'nonsense': he fell in love.

The providential suggestion to publish his first report in Australia appears to have been made well before Malinowski had finished it. Most closely involved were his two most influential academic patrons, Sir Baldwin Spencer and Sir Edward Stirling. Spencer was Director of the National Museum of Victoria in Melbourne and a seasoned fieldworker in his own right. Like his friend Haddon, he was a zoologist turned anthropologist, and Malinowski had become thoroughly familiar with his ethnography while writing *The Family among the Australian Aborigines*. Stirling was Professor of Physiology at the University of Adelaide and Curator of Ethnology at the South Australian Museum. He too had done field research (some of it with Spencer) into the physical anthropology and material culture of Aborigines in Central Australia. Although he built up the largest museum collection of Aboriginal artifacts in the world, he published very little of his ethnography.[12] When Malinowski returned to Australia following his Mailu expedition he stayed as a guest in Stirling's Adelaide home (having narrowly escaped imprisonment for failing to report to the military authorities in Melbourne), and it was there that he wrote up his Mailu research.

Malinowski must have written his report at a furious pace. He appears to have begun it while still aboard the *Marasina* (1967: 97–8), but he is unlikely to have written much until after he had arrived in Adelaide on 18 or 19 March. Yet he had substantially completed it by the end of April, when he was back in Melbourne reporting in person to Atlee Hunt. On 7 May he was in Sydney ordering supplies and arranging his finances, and two weeks later in Brisbane, waiting for the boat that would take him back to Papua. He penned the Preface to his 'memoir' on 9 June in Samarai, *en route* to Kiriwina.

The speed with which he dashed off *The Natives of Mailu* is all the

more remarkable in view of the fact that he was sick with malaria for some of the time he was in Australia; he was also obliged to write official letters to Hunt and others, and spend time reassuring the local authorities that he was not a security threat. Not only did he write a full-length monograph, prepare 34 photographs and sketch 50-odd figures during those six or seven weeks, but he found time to captivate Stirling's daughter Nina, to whom he became unofficially engaged (Wayne 1984: 194). The sole half-page entry in his *Diary* for the first year he spent in the Trobriands – dated 1 August 1915 – focuses precisely upon this event: 'If in the end I marry N., March and April 1915 will be the most important months in my emotional life' (1967: 99).

As his Adelaide host, Edward Stirling must have exercised a persuasive influence on Malinowski during this brief period of intensive writing. Stirling had been elected F.R.S. in 1893 (South Australia's first), and in all probability it was he who urged Malinowski to offer his report to the Royal Society of South Australia. He even undertook to edit it for publication, though this proved to be no light task. By 4 May Malinowski had finally decided to place it with the Royal Society, and on that day he wrote to Seligman from Melbourne, with a mixture of apology and defiance, seeking his supervisor's approval. One section of this lengthy letter is worth quoting in full, since it shows how finely balanced Malinowski saw his immediate and long-term obligations to be, and how accurately he had perceived the political advantages of publishing in Australia:

> I came down here [i.e. Australia], among other reasons, also to write my results into a final or semi-final form, and thus to check my methods of fieldwork thoroughly. As I was mainly working among the Mailu, I went straight to a monograph of these b.bs. I wrote it as if I were going to print it, and when I got the stuff typed, I be-thought myself that it looked quite printable. But it will be about 120–150 pages octavo and there would be not the remotest chance of it seeing the light under the grey skies of England, in the present troubled times. I thought the easiest [thing] to get it through somewhere here. The Royal Society of S.A. (Adelaide) opened its arms to receive the new born Papuan infant (excuse bad taste) – on one word they said they will

print the stuff at *once* as a separate memoir, with plates etc. a *discrétion*. I got it through Stirling, who has been as kind to me here – nearly as you have been over there. He read my M.S. and corrected the English and the stile [sic] in its logical aspect and took great interest in the stuff. He was very good to me in general – I was very seedy in Adelaide, he took me up to his house in the hills and I stayed there for over a month, most awfully kindly treated by the whole family. Another man in Adelaide did the typing for me in his office, free of charge. When I came here to Melbourne, I produced some of my stuff to Baldwin Spencer, who seemed to have thought it quite worth printing – he even suggested that I ought to send it over to England in order to get a better *résonance*. He backed me up energetically at the External Affairs and undertook to read the proofs and see the book through. So he has been also extremely kind – and I gather that Spencer is not a soft person – I think he would be fairly critical with fieldwork. So I feel encouraged and I hope that my next [?] will be much better, Insh' Allah! But I want to tell you emphatically that all the real kindness I have received here, has not blunted for a moment my genuine gratitude for you and that I consider my stuff as always being under your supervision. I have made all arrangements for the thing being printed here, and I consider that under the present circumstances, the conditions I have obtained are perfectly advantageous: 1) I'll have my stuff ready printed, say in September, October next – and you and I will be able to say and show that something has been done – and I may be at a very bad pinch, because the external affairs have cut me down to £150 from £200. So that I'll have £250 for the year, which will not allow me to do inland work, on which I am very keen. 2) I'll have my work printed in Australia, and as I am pumping money from this soil, it is only fair (and what is more, it's wise for the future) to let my sweat manure the same soil. 3) I would have not been able to discuss with you matters and give you the same hints and data as to technicalities, as I was able to do Stirling and Spencer who will kindly see my thing through. But in spite of all that, I have not finally decided, whether I shall have my things printed here, because the final decision rests with

> you. I wrote to Stirling that if he receives a cable from you: 'Stop Malinowski Printing' (the cable money I would return to you with all my other debts – if you trust that I shall not die etc.) – my stuff is not to be printed. At the same time I shall forward to you a set of T.S. of the stuff as soon as it is ready. If you, however, for any reason should not agree, I shall not feel in the slightest offended, or hurt, or touchy, though I may swear at you a little bit. If Stirling does not get the cable before end of June, I'll tell him to let things go. Title: 'The Natives of Mailu, British New Guinea: Preliminary Account of the Robert Mond Ethnological Investigations in Papua'. I think I better put R.M. in the subtitle. He gave the coins awfully nicely – and I'll write to him from Papua, though I of course, don't expect him to shower any more money on me.
> ... As a matter of fact my stuff about the Mailu was the poorest I got. Sinaugholo, bits of Koiari, scraps of Woodlark, much better quality though small quantity. I expect I shall be able to get some really good stuff if I don't get seedy or something else.
> ... Another point: The School, which stipulated first option on publication of my results, has no claim on this lot, as I did it without their assistance (SP 4.5.1915).

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Malinowski appears to have been banking on Seligman's amenable nature as well as on the fact that it took several months to exchange correspondence with England. When he wrote this letter, Malinowski had already committed himself to publishing with the Royal Society, and had Seligman withheld his approval it would have been embarrassingly difficult to withdraw the T.S. Indeed, a great deal more was at stake than Malinowski himself guessed, and from one point of view his *Mailu* monograph was a political document. A week before writing the above letter to Seligman, Malinowski had submitted to Atlee Hunt a brief but formal report on his Mailu research. He carefully pitched his account for government approval:

> In the investigation of the natives I have paid special attention to the economic and sociological aspects of native

> life, as well as to their beliefs and general psychological features. I did not neglect the sociological problems, arising from the transitory stage of the native society and I studied the extremely interesting (both theoretically and practically) process of adaptation to their new conditions. I was unable to pay serious attention to physical anthropology and to broad racial problems as well as to speculations about origin (AA 28.4.1915).

Here Malinowski was not merely distancing himself from the ethnological concerns of Haddon and Seligman, but positively stating his interest in social change and the 'sociological problems' of direct concern to the colonial administration. In subsequent paragraphs he outlined his future plans for research (see Young 1984: 12) and justified his request for funds. He referred to his 'monograph' on the Mailu: 'Parts of it are ready for print and have been favourably commended by such authorities as Professor Stirling, F.R.S. of Adelaide, and Professor Spencer, F.R.S. of Melbourne...' (ibid).

Acting with an alacrity uncharacteristic of modern bureaucracies, Hunt sent the report to his Minister. Hunt's accompanying memorandum makes it clear that the local availability of Malinowski's writings was a substantial argument in favour of granting him government money for research. It is also a loud (and quite early) hint of the potential value of an applied social anthropology for colonial administrations. The implication of this memorandum, moreover, is that if Malinowski had been more engaged in the kind of 'technical' ethnological investigations that Seligman had wanted him to carry out, and less committed to developing his own 'sociological' interests, then Hunt's advocacy would have been that much less forceful. Again, without Hunt's active support, Malinowski would have been most unlikely to have been given any money at all:

> I have spent some little time with Dr Malinowski and have been greatly interested in the very practical work on which he has been engaged. It will be noted from his letter that the class of investigation which he has been conducting is one likely to be of much use to the Government in our dealings with the natives. He has not concerned himself with the more technical branches of the science such as are involved in the

> measurement of bodies, etc., but deals with the mental attitudes and peculiar customs of the people.
>
> I have glanced over the monograph to which Dr Malinowski makes reference. It will be found of great interest by all connected with the Government of the Territory. It is to be published in Australia by the Royal Society of Adelaide.
>
> Dr Malinowski is especially desirous of pursuing his enquiries already commenced into the native ownership of land ignorance in regard to which has frequently caused considerable trouble. His request for £200 to cover all expenses, transport, carriers, assistance, provisions, etc., appears extremely moderate.
>
> I have consulted Professor Spencer who has made himself conversant with Dr Malinowski's work and he speaks in the highest terms of him and regards him as one well worthy of getting assistance. In this view I understand he is confirmed by Professor Stirling of Adelaide.
>
> As all the results of his investigations are made available for this Government I recommend that a grant of £200 for the current year be made (AA 28.5.1915).

By 1 May the Minister had given his approval, and on 4 May (the same day that Malinowski wrote to Seligman) Hunt wrote to Malinowski, informing him that he would get his £200:

> I am to add that in approving this grant the Minister understands that your investigations will include careful examination of the system of native ownership of lands and will generally deal with aspects of all native life any records of which will be of practical advantage to officers carrying on the government of the country and, further, that all papers prepared by you will be made available for the Government of the Territory and will be published in Australia or Papua (AA 4.5.1915).

When he placed his arguments before Seligman, Malinowski was doubtless unaware that Hunt had made publication in Australia a condition of his government's further support. But writing from Sydney on 7 May, Malinowski warmly thanked Hunt and dutifully acknowledged the conditions under which he was being financed:

> In accordance with the instructions given me in your letter, I shall pay special attention to the sociological, legal and economic problems of native life, which might be useful for practical purposes of administration and legislation, and I shall make a report on the results I obtained. As far as the purely theoretical results of my work are concerned I shall consider it my duty in the future to offer them to Australian Scientific Journals etc. for publication, as I have done with my first M.S. There might be technical difficulties with the publication of a large volume in this country, however, unless financial subsidy were forthcoming (AA 7.5.1915).

In case his *Mailu* monograph set an awkward precedent, Malinowski shrewdly left himself a loophole. And indeed, he was later to excuse any attempt to publish in Australia his book on the Kula by grossly exaggerating its proposed length and likely expense. With the sole exception of an article he was invited to contribute to the *Australian Encyclopaedia* (1926a), he published nothing more in Australia – least of all in Papua.[13]

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Fortunately, Seligman was agreeable to Malinowski's plan and replied favourably: though Malinowski appears not to have received his letter until September, by which time he had been in the Trobriands for three months. 'I am delighted you are getting your Mailu stuff printed in Australia', Seligman wrote, and he expressed his appreciation at the 'friendliness and delicacy' Malinowski had showed in allowing him the final veto. 'I shall write to Stirling, thank him for all he is doing, and tell him how grateful I am to hear that he has been able to arrange for you to publish at once. Probably I'll suggest smoothing out your sub-title a little...' Seligman told Malinowski he had written to Reeves, Director of the L.S.E., informing him of the publishing arrangements and pointing out 'what a good omen it was for the work you would do on behalf of the School' (SP 16.6.1915). Only three days before, Malinowski had written yet again to Seligman : 'I have spent two weeks of my time – or rather lost them in a way – in Samarai. I was finishing my Mailu M.S. Yesterday I posted the finished thing for Adelaide, where, if it has your sanction, it will be, Insh' Allah, printed' (SP 13.6.1915).

Malinowski had good reason for feeling pleased about the outcome of publishing in Australia. It gratified his local academic patrons and promised to advance his cause. It was instrumental in securing him the financial wherewithal for almost a year (as if he had actually sold *The Natives of Mailu* to the government for the price of £200). It might even have mollified Hubert Murray in Papua if only he had been sent a personal copy. Not least, perhaps, it was also an honourable way of paying a debt forced on Malinowski by the circumstances of the war.

To demonstrate the political importance of his *Mailu* monograph we must follow the story one stage further. Volume 39 of the *Transactions and Proceedings* duly appeared in December 1915. Malinowski returned to Australia from his second expedition (his first Trobriand trip) during late March 1916. In August, Lt-Governor Murray wrote to Hunt suggesting that the Papuan Government 'be supplied with say a dozen copies of all books or pamphlets which may have been published in connection with that gentleman's work in the territory'. The government secretary of Papua, H. W. Champion, had been sent a copy 'as an act of personal courtesy', but Murray had not (AA 10.8.1916).

Baldwin Spencer wrote to Hunt on Malinowski's behalf, explaining that although the author had received 25 copies of the 'pamphlet' he had distributed them 'to various Scientists and Scientific Bodies', and therefore could not comply with the request for more than one copy; besides, the Mailu work had been done before Malinowski received any funds from the Australian government (AA 14.9.1916). (As we have seen, Malinowski had used the same argument to Seligman, in reverse, to justify his printing in Australia rather than in England.) Hunt conveyed this information to Murray and thereby defended Malinowski, adding that his Department too had received only one copy (which he duly forwarded to Murray). But Murray was not to be put off, and his reply was corrosive:

> I have the honour to suggest that as this Government paid Dr Malinowski's salary more than one copy of his book should be supplied to us. I do not think that this gentleman has ever realized that it was the Papuan Govt. that was paying him, and I feel certain that if this is pointed out to him he will readily admit that he owes us some return (AA 30.10.1916).

The record does not state whether Malinowski complied with this request. The following year, one copy of his *Baloma* article was sent to Murray by Hunt with the explanation (given by Malinowski) that 'a number' of them had been 'lost at sea' (AA 29.8.1917). By the time he came to write his acknowledgements to *Argonauts*, Murray's name had been dropped from the list of his benefactors; but then, so too had Baldwin Spencer's and Edward Stirling's, notwithstanding the sincerely warm thanks he had given them in his Preface to *The Natives of Mailu*. Patently, of all his eminent Australian patrons only Atlee Hunt remained high in Malinowski's esteem.[14]

VI *Notes and Queries* and the Writing of *Mailu*

Now that we understand something of the personal and political circumstances under which Malinowski wrote his monograph, we can return to the work itself and examine it as an ethnographic text. *The Natives of Mailu* is essentially a survey report of the kind that Haddon or Seligman would have been pleased to author. It treats of many of the visible and some of the less visible aspects of Mailu culture. It has none of the textual richness of his best Trobriand ethnography, however, and there is an awkward juxtaposition of discrete areas of enquiry: a consequence of following too slavishly the format of *Notes and Queries*. The monograph has no institutional focus, no functional plan, no unitary topical theme, and it does not narrate a story as, in the most exemplary case, *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* was designed to do. Such literary and theoretically informed devices of presentation were to appear later in Malinowski's corpus, beginning with his extended essay on *Baloma*.

Comparison with *Argonauts* is invidious but inescapable. Historically speaking, if *Argonauts* is a window on the future (post-1922), *Mailu* is a window on the past (pre-1915). As is well known, it was through *Argonauts* that Malinowski began to publicize his 'revolution': radical changes to the practice of ethnography in the field and, no less important, to the writing of ethnography in the study. *Argonauts* was written for – made readable for – a far wider audience than were the spare, technical reports such as Haddon and Seligman approved. Though many of their generation came to mistrust Malinowski for 'popularizing', the fact could not be ignored that *Argonauts* inaugurated a highly influential mode of

ethnographic authority. As James Boon nautically pictures it, 'the Malinowskian monograph was launched as the flagship *Argonauts* on Frazer's literary vogue' (1982: 13).

Such self-proclaimed, heroic authority is merely latent in *The Natives of Mailu*, with which its relatively unknown author took few chances. It had, after all, to be acceptable to the anthropological establishment in Australia and England, as both a useful factual report and a respectable academic thesis.

A large proportion of the text is technical description; this, along with the diagrams and photographs, carried its own authority. But Malinowski was on shakier grounds when he reported custom, conduct and belief. Then he frequently cites his indigenous or European sources, sometimes by name and sometimes by reference to an anonymous 'intelligent native'. This is one of his means of establishing credibility, but it also has to do with persuading himself of the accuracy of his facts. He tends to cite local authorities (whites with so many years' experience of the district or 'exceptionally intelligent' natives) when he senses the possibility of dispute about his findings. When the information is uncontentious he need cite no one (the reader is not told, for example, that many of the observations on toilet and cleanliness at pp. 151–2 were recorded from Alfred Greenaway). But let us note too how tentative and diffident Malinowski is on many matters, how willing to admit that his information is incomplete. The author who confesses his ignorance in this way is all the more trustworthy about what he does claim to know. Malinowski is also scrupulous in telling the reader what events he has or has not witnessed (see p. 110 for his statement of this point of method, and Chapter V for several examples).

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The influence of the 4th edition of *Notes and Queries on Anthropology* (NQ 1912) on the textual construction of *Mailu* is pervasive and easy to demonstrate (Urry 1972: 52; Langham 1981: 173; Stocking 1983: 96). Malinowski carried a copy of this handbook with him on all three of his expeditions. He mentions it in the Introduction to *Mailu* (p. 110), and occasionally alludes to it in his *Diary*; 'Reading Rivers' (1967: 64ff) almost certainly refers to the important central section, 'A General Account of Method', contributed by Rivers. Malinowski's personal copy survives,[15] and there are some interesting marginalia in his hand, a few of which I refer to below.

The 'fairly systematic division' of chapters ('Geography, Sociology, Economics, Magico-religious matters, etc.') that he adopted (p. 110), bears close comparison with the topical organization of *Notes and Queries*. Chapter II of *Mailu* (Social Divisions) takes its main cues from the section on Social Organization written by Rivers (NQ 1912: 143–9). Chapter III (Tribal Life) is a more composite chapter; thus, section 1. (Daily Life) begins with 'divisions of daytime' (cf. ibid: 140), but the remainder of the section (on sleep, toilet, dress, cleanliness, food preparation, cooking, narcotics etc.) closely follows the categories of the Technology chapter of *Notes and Queries*. Section 5 of this chapter, on 'legal institutions', is only notionally based on the *Notes and Queries* section titled 'Government: Politics'. The proof of this connection is the pencilled 'III.5' that Malinowski had written at the head of this section in his personal copy (NQ 1912: 172). He was obviously dissatisfied with these unhelpful pages, and there is a revealing comment in the top margin of the following page on Morals (ibid: 175): 'Neither here, nor foregoing paragraph, do they give hints for study of *sanctions*, of binding force; of underlying ideas' (see also 1926b: 4, where he published a restated version of this criticism). In Chapter IV, Economics, Malinowski put together several headings from the Technology and Sociology parts of *Notes and Queries* (i.e., notably on hunting and fishing; on canoes and sailing; on land and labour; on industry and trade; on property and inheritance – the last by Rivers). In his personal copy Malinowski had bracketed (and marked with 'Ec.') the relevant items on the contents page, items distributed between Technology and Sociology. Chapter V is another composite one, but it reveals throughout the influence of Marett's methodological strictures on 'The Study of Magico-Religious Facts' (NQ 1912: 251–62). Malinowski explicitly acknowledged this influence (p. 110). Section 2 deals with the *Maduna* festival as ceremony, though it fits uneasily in this chapter and would have been better placed in the previous one. Neither feast nor festival appears in the *Notes and Queries* index; nor does the text suggest any category into which they might be placed. (Malinowski's treatment of this important topic warrants further comment, see section XII of this Introduction.) The final section, on death, burial and mourning, takes its cue from the pages on 'Death and Funeral' (NQ 1912: 137–40). Finally, Chapter VI, Art and Knowledge, which Malinowski seems to admit is his weakest chapter, was guided by Part IV of the handbook.

Quite evidently, then, Malinowski relied heavily on *Notes and Queries* for the categories which structured his text. While he used it intelligently, regrouping various sections to suit his own purposes, the skeleton of the report is plainly visible beneath the flesh of description. The frame was also procrustean: some sections are too abruptly begun, others too suddenly terminated. Had Malinowski not been so constrained by his 'adopted' model he would surely have written a more interesting report. It is precisely at those junctures where he departs from the tight structure that his ethnography is most lively and characteristically Malinowskian in its rhetorical combination of vivid observation, elicited native comment, reflexive anecdote, and theoretical aside. The sections on 'legal institutions' and 'the feast', for example, are unconstrained by *Notes and Queries* guidelines for the simple reason that there were none, and these pages are arguably the most original in the report. He presented the material in a thoughtful and challenging way, and it matters little that his theories of law have been dismissed or that his interpretation of the *Maduna* feast now seems unbalanced in its over-emphasis on the ceremonial aspects.

There was, of course, one important practical consequence of using *Notes and Queries* the way Malinowski did. It saved him much time. If, as I have argued, it was diplomatically important for him to write a report as quickly as possible (and to publish it in Australia), then the guide played a modest role in getting Malinowski to the Trobriands. However we may deplore the haste with which he wrote *Mailu*, a haste which left him so little time to cogitate on his data and none whatever to polish his prose, the task was immensely facilitated by *Notes and Queries*. Notwithstanding his disclaimer on p. 110, the structure he derived from *Notes and Queries* was riddled with, indeed founded upon, 'preconceived ideas'. He was thereby spared a great deal of the time and effort otherwise needed to think about that other kind of ethnographic experience – 'writing up'.

VII Field Notebooks and the Writing of *Mailu*

Three of Malinowski's Mailu notebooks survive (of an original four or five). They were written in English in a fairly legible hand, with proper names and Mailu terms printed in block capitals. It is instructive to examine them for further clues as to how he composed