

## The Spatiotemporal Transformations of Gawa Canoes

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Examinant le cycle de la construction et de l'échange des pirogues à Gawa, île du nord-est de Massim, l'auteur l'analyse comme le déroulement d'un processus symbolique. Elle suggère qu'au cours de ce cycle qui va de la production à l'échange des pirogues, certaines transformations dans l'espace et dans le temps se produisent qui sont une recodification symbolique à chaque niveau des transformations de l'espace-temps « fermé » à l'intérieur de l'île à l'espace-temps « ouvert » entre les îles. Au plus haut niveau, quand les pirogues sont enfin converties en une catégorie d'objets de valeur « kula », un espace- temps idéal qui se perpétue de lui-même est créé. La deuxième partie de cette étude concerne le rôle de la décoration de la proue de la pirogue dans le cycle de la conversion. Il est suggéré que la décoration symbolise la construction de la pirogue dont le processus a créé une valeur, et que la nature de cette valeur est caractérisée par les transformations de l'espace-temps décrites dans la première partie.

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# The Spatiotemporal transformations of Gawa canoes.

The treatment of the object world as a "potential for making something else out of what is given" (Munn 1971) is a characteristic feature of human orientation. Man, as Marx (1961 : 102) put it, "sees his own reflection in a world which he has constructed." It is necessary, however, to expand the notion of construction to include not simply the physical reshaping of material media, but also verbal operations such as magical spells<sup>1</sup> and other modes of conversion such as exchange.

"Fabrication" taken in this broad sense has certain generic features : shifts of matrix or context are made (elements are separated from one context and entered into another), and shifts of organizational level ("new" objects or elements reformulate primary ones on another level).<sup>2</sup> This view of fabrication sets the stage for a study of making processes not simply as, for instance, technological construction, but rather as developmental symbolic processes that transform both socially significant properties or operational capa-

cities of objects, and significant aspects of the relations between persons and objects, between the human and the material worlds. Fabrication seen in this way, does not end with technological construction, but consists of the total cycle of conversions effecting significant changes in an object.

In the present paper, I examine Gawa canoes from this perspective. Gawa, an island of some 445 people in the northeast Massim region of Papua-New Guinea, is one of the main producers of seagoing canoes (*waga*) in the area, and an important link in the *Kula* trade ring.<sup>3</sup> I argue that to understand what is being created when Gawans make a canoe, we have to consider the total canoe fabrication cycle which begins in production with the conversion of raw materials into a canoe, and continues in exchange with the conversion of the canoe into other objects. Since production forms the grounds of exchange, we may speak of each mode of conversion as constituting a different plane, that of exchange representing

\* The present article is a revised version of a paper presented in the Art and Anthropology colloquia at Harvard University, 1975. Fieldwork on Gawa was carried out in 1973-1974 (twelve and a half months) and 1975 (two months). I am grateful to the National Science Foundation for supporting funds for both trips. I would also like to express my appreciation to the Gawan people for their help.

1. In a previous paper (Munn 1971), I examined Trobriand magic as a constructive process; a similar approach was suggested by Tambiah (1968). Bourdieu's (1975) recent, stimulating discussion of French high fashion considers labelling, signatures and other verbal processes as revaluations that change the socio-symbolic nature of an artifact. In the present article, I do not deal directly with Gawan spells as modes of reconstructing the object world, although I refer to them in connection with certain aspects of canoe production.

2. Some points developed by Turner (n.d.) in his important analysis of the Kayapo Jaguar myth are relevant to the general model I am suggesting here. Turner argues that the "detachment" and "generalisation" of fire constitute a fundamental process worked out in the narrative. Fire is detached from its fixed matrix in the sun, moved through a medial stage as the jaguar's single log of fire, and finally generalised through man's capacity to make fire, divide and reproduce it (pp. 154 ff.). I take these operations upon the fire to exemplify "fabricating" processes in the sense intended here : separated from its matrix in the sun (and subsequently the jaguar's house), the fire shifts organisational level as it is changed from sun to jaguar fire to human fire. In the context of myth, depiction of such cycles commonly represents an "original" fabrication : a transition from non-human modes of existence to the human mode in which displacement and reproduction of elements can continually take place, i.e., in which existence can be "fabricated" (cf. also Munn 1969 : 183).

3. Sea-going canoes for overseas trade are also produced on *Budibudi* (Laughlan Islands). However, in the immediate Gawan area other islands also build and trade some canoes (Kweawata to the north and Yanaba to the south of Gawa); Iwa, in the northern Marshall Bennetts, builds canoes of the smaller, northern type (*tadobu*, which are different from the high-sided Gawan type, *anagega*), but Iwan visitors on Gawa told me that they no longer regularly trade them overseas as do Gawans.

Gawa's overseas *kula* links encompass two separate, main routes in the southern section : shells may move to and from Gawa *via* Yanaba (*yaraba*), or *via* Woodlark (Muyuw). The northern portion is routed *via* Iwa to Kitava (and the Trobriands) or directly to Kitava (bypassing Iwa).

a higher plane than that of production, not simply a later sequence in the canoe's life cycle (see Fig. 1).

A production-exchange cycle of this kind is more usually the subject of socio-economic analysis, but I propose to examine it in terms of the symbolic framework suggested above. As the canoe cycles from production to exchange, certain changes of a spatiotemporal kind are entailed within the conversion cycle. I refer to these changes as transformations. They consist essentially of a symbolic recoding on each plane of a change from the clos-

ed, intra-island space-time of Gawa to an "open" inter-island space-time within which Gawa is included. The whole process is developmental in that on each plane the conversions yield objects, and relations between persons and objects, that engage a more powerful control of space-time than the previous plane (or level within a plane). Thus we shall find that at the highest level, where canoes are converted into a special category of kula valuable and can operate in kula exchange (see Fig. 1), the space-time created becomes ideally self-perpetuating.

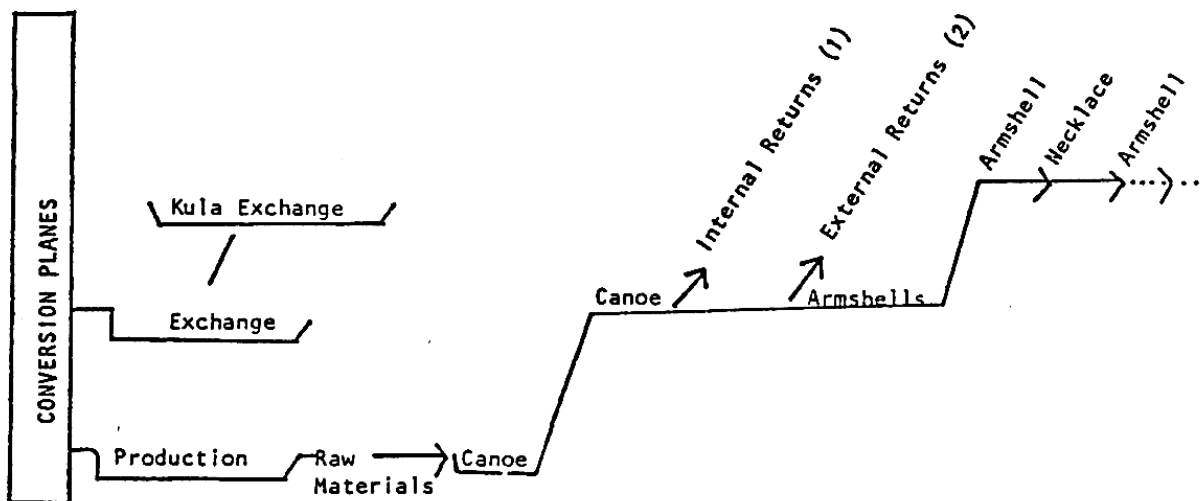


FIGURE 1. — *Conversion Planes of the Canoe Fabrication Cycle.*

→ = conversion. (1) Internal Returns : each Gawan recipient gives a sequence of raw food gifts, taro pudding and at least one pig. The raw foods include such items as coconuts, unripe mangos and bananas. (2) External Returns : a pig and smoked fish come from the overseas middlemen. Pots and Kula armshells (men say five or more, but the number varies) are the hard goods return from the southern part of the Kula ring.

It is necessary to emphasize that in this brief account, I concentrate only on spatiotemporal features directly implicated in the symbolic structure of the conversion cycle, leaving aside for the most part, those implicated in the activities of construction and exchange. These features consist of such properties as sequence, irreversibility (vs. reversability), motion and speediness (vs. stability and slowness), extension in social and socio-geographical space, etc. For instance, I examine the canoe exchange "path" (*keda*) to show how a certain kind of space-time is created through the formation of a sequence of recipients when the canoe is converted into other goods through exchange; but I do not consider the patterning of Gawan hamlet space and daily or annual time created by the activities of receiving and paying for the canoe. Obviously, both aspects are important in understanding the total spatiotemporal significance of the fabrica-

tion cycle, but I can discuss only the first here. Rather than giving a fuller account of these spatiotemporal dimensions, I attempt to show that the canoe's prowboard adornment plays a special part in the fabrication cycle, one connected particularly with symbolizing production as a value creating process.

#### I. THE PARAMETERS OF SPATIOTEMPORAL TRANSFORMATION IN THE FABRICATION CYCLE.

##### *Symbolic aspects of production.*

Gawan canoe production operates upon natural materials that have certain spatiotemporal properties fundamental to Gawan social symbolism. Gawans distinguish certain broad spatial zones on their island : the inhabited areas of the hamlets (*veru*)<sup>4</sup> on top of the island ; the bush (*nawuda*)

4. In my transcription of native terms, I use /r/ to transcribe the liquid (an alveolar flap which ranges from 'r'-like to 'l'-like in quality). My designation of a single phoneme is tentative, since there are some ambiguities in the evidence. Thus, I have some evidence of a contrast between an 'r' and an 'l', but it is not sufficiently clear-cut to identify two phonemes. David Lithgow, of the Summer Institute of Linguistics, who kindly helped me evaluate my tapes directed at this problem, has suggested that the distinction seems to be "sub-phonemic"; final evaluation, however, must await further work on the Gawan language (Lithgow, 1976). Muyuw, the language of Woodlark Island, has a single phoneme (which the Lithgows

extending from the upper level down the cliffs; the beaches (*unamata*) and the sea (*bwarita*) beyond. The distinction between the land (*pweipwaya*) as a whole, and the sea is symbolized in terms of qualities of motion and weight. Land is stable and heavy (*mwaw*); if made light through evil spells draining its heaviness, it becomes infertile. Sea or water, on the other hand, is associated with qualities of lightness (*gagaabara*), slipperiness (*damwariri*) and speed (*nanaakwa*), and has directional connotations of upwardness (*nakayowa*) and flying in contrast to the downward (*taginawa*) heaviness of land. Light-quickness is also a pervasive symbol of human bodily well-being and personal power, and of youthful vitality as opposed to the slowness of old age. In addition, performing requested activities quickly signifies cooperation, while being slow (*mwawutu*, cf. *mwaw*, heavy) conveys recalcitrance.

These associated pairs of binary oppositions (slow-heavy vs. fast-lightweight) constitute a symbolism of motion that synthesizes body time and spatial domains. Gawans want their canoes to be light and quick. They are made, however, out of materials drawn from the "heavy" land. Thus the conversion of materials into a canoe must effect a transformation along the dimension of motion that in crossing over spatiotemporal zones also redefines the relation between inanimate materials (the ideally heavy, stable materials of the land) and animate (ideally "swift") persons.

Canoe construction begins on the wooded cliffs above the sea, or sometimes near the hamlets. Before beginning work the builder should bespell certain tree sprites at the building site, sending them out of their habitations. If they remain, the canoe may deteriorate and crack<sup>5</sup>. The hollowed canoe log, and subsequently the planking, are then roughly hewn and logged down the cliffs to the beach where all final planing and assemblage takes place, and where, at a later stage, rituals are performed to make the canoe speedy. Other canoe parts, such as the prowboards and outrigger float are also brought down in a defined sequence I cannot detail here<sup>6</sup>.

The beach has many medial qualities : it is the

entry point for overseas visitors, but also for evil and sickness from overseas. Gawan purification rites, involving washing in the sea, are also performed here. Furthermore, the beach is associated with fish which are symbolically opposed to garden produce. Thus the conversion of wood into a canoe has some features of a passage rite in which transition takes place across spatiotemporal zones. The conversion process begins by separating wood from its matrix in the "heavy" zone of the bush and moving it to the medial beach where the transitional operations of assemblage take place. The completed canoe mediates between the beach and the sea. As some Gawans said (explaining to me the rationale for the name of a visiting canoe) : a canoe is like a sandcrab (*rakuma*, the visiting canoe's name) because it "goes into the sea, washes and then returns to its house on the beach".

The canoe carries persons and cargo back and forth between Gawa and other islands; the most prized cargoes are *kula* valuables, and Gawan canoe spells lay great stress on the loading of the canoe with these valuables. One man also compared the movement of shells in *kula* to the canoe's passage : like *kula* valuables, he said, the canoe "makes a path (*i-vaga keda*); it goes, carries and brings back." A more specific analogy between the canoe's movement and *kula* occurs, as we shall see, on the plane of exchange.

The canoe as an artifact thus forms a more comprehensive spatiotemporal level of material organization. This level concretely embodies the translatability of raw materials from the Gawan bush into a seagoing vessel that, as a carrier connecting Gawa with other islands, is itself able to yield additional goods.

The significance of this transformation must be considered in the light of Gawan canoe ownership. A canoe is owned by the builder and his matrilineal clan (*dara*)<sup>7</sup> who, with their spouses, also form the core of the construction team. While men do the actual building, women cook for the workers. The names of canoes belong to the clan. A standard way of naming a canoe is to draw on the names for plots of clan land. Not

transcribe /l/; see Lithgow and Lithgow, 1974). I use /r/ in my transcription, since Gawans distinguish their own language from that of Kiriwina and the Muyuw of Egum Island to the south of Gawa along lines of an 'l,' 'r,' and 'n' dialect difference : they call the Kiriwina language *mwala*; their own language (Rougaw), *maray* and the Egum Muyuw *manay*.

5. Malinowski (1922 : 129) cites a Trobriand spell for removing these tree sprites from the canoe log that explicitly aims at removing the heaviness of the canoe. My Gawan exemplar of this type of spell does not refer specifically to lightness and heaviness. The spell is used, however, with leaves chosen for their lightweight properties that are slapped against the trees to be cut. In other spells, slapping leaves against objects or persons to be bespelled is done to make them lightweight. In the present case, this procedure also probably combines this aim with the overt one of sending the sprites swiftly out of the trees, although my informant did not make this explicit.

6. On the basis of a Gawan listing of the named workdays and jobs, I estimate that it would take about three months to construct a canoe if work proceeded daily with what Gawans conceive of as an appropriate labor force for the different jobs. However, no canoe is constructed in this way since a man cannot totally neglect his gardens while constructing a canoe, and since various other events may intervene to slow up the process. A canoe may thus take some seven months, or considerably longer to construct.

7. This group is the unit that Malinowski (and also Weiner, 1976) in referring to the Trobriands, call the "sub-clan," reserving the term "clan" for the four, ideally exogamous marriage categories. The Gawans also divide their society into these four categories (*kumira*); since they lack any connection with notions of common descent, I prefer to label them "phratries", using "clan" for the smaller descent groupings.

all canoes are named in this way, nor is a canoe necessarily cut from trees on the clan's own land. What is important is the stressed *nominal* connection between canoe and land which draws attention to the bond between the *seagoing* canoe, the *terrestrial* source of its materials, and the *human* clan. As we shall see, the canoe is a form of permanent corporeal property, ideally transmitted in the matriline, despite the fact that as a major trade item, it ordinarily leaves Gawa soon after its completion.<sup>8</sup>

The bond between clan land and canoes is stressed in the canoe origin myth. The Gawan clan that owns this myth is called "they hollowed the soil," (*tatatu-pweipwaya*) because their male ancestors tried to build a canoe by hollowing the ground rather than a log. A clan sister, growing tired of cooking for the interminable canoe work, came to investigate. Seeing the pile of soil where they were digging, she said (according to one version) "that's no canoe, it won't sail on the sea." Going to the bush, she smeared one tree with blood from her genitals, another with her white discharge. The former, the *kosiray* tree, now furnishes the brilliant red wood for the canoe body; the latter provides the white wood for the outrigger float.<sup>9</sup> The term *kosiray* is often used metonymically to denote canoes, thus drawing attention to their material source.

The redwood is thought of as feminine in the context of the myth because it is bloodstained; blood in general is a key symbol of matri-bonds. The white wood is male. Since the term for discharge (*naw*) denotes both semen and female discharge, it may mean here the male substance given to the woman in intercourse.

According to one man, the woman could instruct the men because she had recently given birth. Canoes, he felt, are productive like women: on the one hand, they carry people, on the other, when traded, they return goods to the builder who distributes them to his matrikin. In this way, he said, a man "creates" (*i-vaga*) kin (i.e., he makes kinship support for himself).

Thus the canoe's mobility is mediated through the sexual-reproductive powers of a clan woman who, in effect, teaches men that canoes must be both detachable from clan land, and carriers of the message of their bond to the human clan.

Staining the trees with her creative substances, she marks them with their potential for spatio-temporal transformation from land to sea and non-human to human (i.e., slow-unmoving to mobile-fast). These stains also prefigure a change in the kind of continuity engaged by the material, giving it, as it were, a productive potential that, on the one hand, relates to its carrying capacity and, on the other to its capacity to yield multiple returns. Furthermore, this potential suggestively parallels the reproductive continuity of the clan, a feature to which I shall return later.

### *The plane of exchange.*

On completion, a canoe enters the second stage of its existence in which it is converted into other goods through exchange. The conversions on this plane construct a space-time that can translate segmented marriage exchange units *internal* to Gawa into a continuous exchange sequence extending *beyond* Gawa to other islands. On this plane *canoes* are converted into other goods, and *canoe exchanges* convert other exchanges into a more comprehensive level of order.

The internal exchange sequence is built on marriage links as shown in Fig. 2. A builder and his clan may decide to give the canoe to the builder's wife, who in turn gives it to one of the men who has been making raw yam and taro gifts for her as part of her marriage payment. Neither the woman nor her husband may eat this food, which must be given to a designated male or female kinsman of the husband (usually, though not necessarily, of his own clan) for his or her own use. As shown in 2A, the social exchange unit marked off by these gifts consists of a married couple as its node, the food donor on the one hand, and the consumers on the other. The return gifts from the husband and his kin are hard goods, especially *kula* valuables and canoes.<sup>10</sup>

A canoe may be given to male recipients along a chain of overlapping marriage exchange units. In 2B the canoe has been given from a man A to his wife B who gives to her brother C; C gives to his wife D who gives to her father.<sup>11</sup> There is no specific rule about the number of marriage links involved, but it will be seen that about half the cases in Table 2D, category 1, contain at least

8. Canoes may, on occasion, be immediately given overseas, or they may stay on the island for a period (up to about two years) before being traded away. There are always some operative canoes on Gawa at any given time.

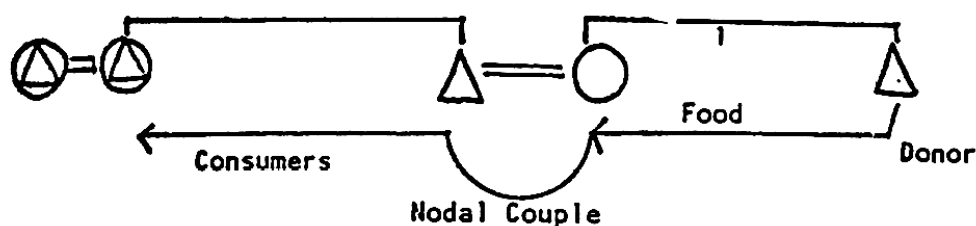
9. In one variant, it is only the *kosiray* tree to which she applies her substances. The red wood of this tree (a red cedar?) is rimmed by a white strip next to the bark. The role of women in the canoe fabrication cycle is important in a variety of ways, some of which become apparent in later sections of this paper. I do not, however, attempt a detailed account or interpretation of this role here.

10. It is common for a builder to give his canoe to another man of his clan (for example, a younger brother) to give to the latter's wife. In a case of this kind, the builder is often the consumer, and the male canoe recipient the food donor, in an exchange unit. The canoe then repays the builder's obligation to this donor, rather than his obligation to his own wife's kin. In either case, the canoe recipient has been making marriage gifts that are going to the building clan (that is, one of their members is usually the consumer). It may be noted that the term for marriage payment, *buwaa-ra* (his or her marriage payment) refers to the hard goods from the husband's side as well as to the food gifts from the woman's kin.

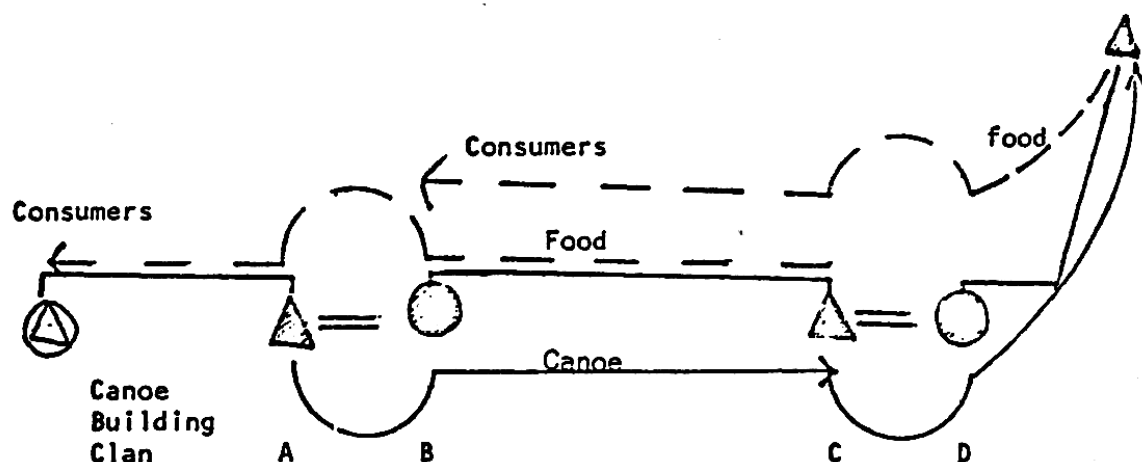
11. A woman's own or/and adoptive father (*tama*) is one of the key men who initially support her marriage with food gifts. In my data, *tama*, *nureta* (woman's brother) and *kada* (mother's brother) are all common canoe recipients. The text states the primary structure and basis of exchange, but variations occur.

two marriages, while more than two is relatively uncommon. When there are two or more such links, the canoe gift gives overt form to the latent continuity of overlapping but separate exchange units — in Fig. 2B those of which A-B and C-D are respectively the nodal couples.

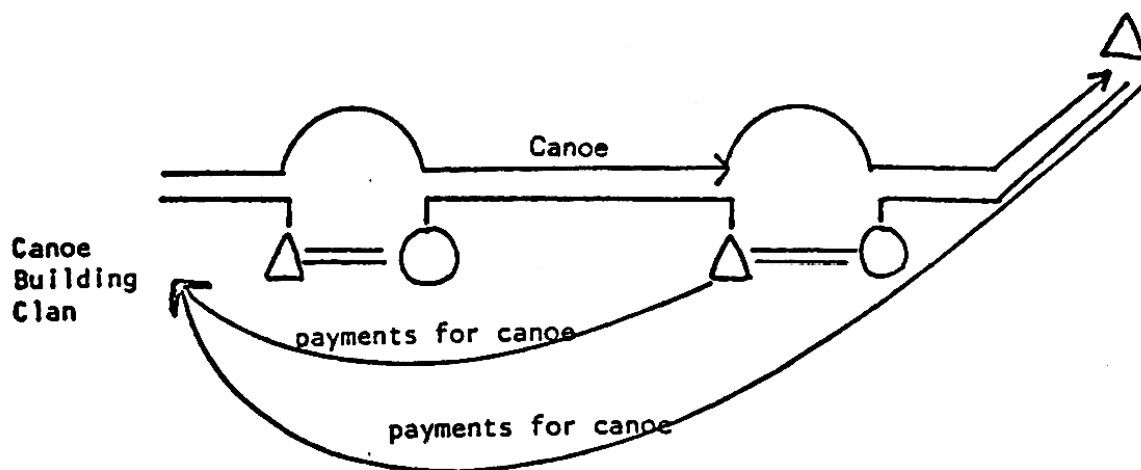
FIGURE 2. — *Marriage Exchange and Internal Canoe Exchanges.*



A. *Marriage exchange unit.* Food from the wife's kin goes to a man or a woman of the husband's kin. This person and his/her spouse are regarded as the consumers, those who "eat" the marriage payment, although they may of course, give it to others.



B. *Canoe exchange path.* The movement of food in the reverse direction to that of the canoe shows the overlapping exchange units built up through female links along which the canoe moves.



C. *Payments for a canoe.* All payments are made to the owning clan. These payments are given directly (see Note 12), but when the canoe yields returns from overseas, informants say that they should go back through the path. In fact, to my knowledge, Gawans do not adhere to this technicality.

As Fig. 1 indicates, each male recipient of a canoe must make a lengthy series of raw food gifts, at least one pig, and a ceremonially cooked taro pudding to the builder's clan in payment for the canoe whether or not he uses it before handing it on. The owning clan distributes these returns primarily to its own members ostensibly in payment for the canoe work.<sup>12</sup> The payments

12. Members of the same phratry as the owning clan, as well as any additional persons who gave special aid in the canoe work, also receive payment. Although there is an approximate sequence in which the gifts should be made by each canoe recipient, there is some variation, as a man makes each gift when he is able to muster sufficient supplies from his own resources, and those of his matrikin and other helpers; this depends in part upon when the trees they own are ripe. One

create a unifying centripetal pattern of gift-giving (Fig. 2C) in contrast to the segmentary pattern of marriage exchange units.

The canoe exchange makes possible a "new" synthetic level of organisation summed up in the Gawan notion of the canoe "path" (*keda*). This term denotes the sequential, *irreversible* move-

ment of the canoe to one recipient after another. It encodes the kind of mobility the canoe acquires as an exchange object detached from its clan owners.<sup>13</sup> The irreversible movement along a path engenders the centripetal pattern of the canoe-returns from separate recipients to the owners.

FIGURE 2. — (Contd.)

	No. of canoes	No. of marriages
(1)	10	1
	7	2
	2	3-4
(2)	3	None. Given directly overseas.
	3	Irregular (No. uncertain)
Total No. of Canoes	25	

D. *Number of marriage links in canoe exchanges.* Category (1) shows the number of canoes in my record that moved on marriage exchange paths, and for which the number of marriage links is clear. It seems probable that two is the most frequent upper limit for these links because this marks the extent of the building clan's debts (to affines for marriage payments and the affines of affines for food given to the wives of clan members as consumers). Category (2) : not all canoes are given as marriage returns; some are traded directly overseas.

The last Gawan recipient of the canoe gives it overseas to a Woodlark or Yanaba middleman through whom it travels along additional links to the southern part of the *kula* ring. Since a crucial part of the overseas payment to the clan owners consists of *kula* armshells (*mwari*) that must travel to Gawa from the correct *kula* direction, the canoe path cannot go north. Gawans sometimes speak of the canoe as being "kula'd"

(*i-kura*) much as *kula* valuables are moved along a path (*keda*) of *kula* partners.

The *kula* path consists of a man and a single exchange circle of overseas partners.<sup>14</sup> In *kula*, as in the overseas but not the internal portion of the canoe path, a fixed *geographical* direction is encoded in the path sequence. Thus when the canoe journeys in exchange beyond Gawa, its path takes on an actual directionality that resituates

gift of coconuts, however, should be made immediately after the transmission of the canoe. The canoe returns thus involve a complex sequence of gifts articulated with natural growth cycles, as well as with social factors.

All the canoe payments are made in public processions from the hamlet of the recipient to that of a member of the building clan. (The clan member who has given the canoe as marriage payment to his wife cannot receive any of this food for his own consumption; the canoe builder, if different from the former, is similarly prohibited. (See Note 10 above). In contrast to the canoe payments, the raw food given for the woman's marriage payments is *not* transmitted in public, ceremonial form. Furthermore, raw yams and taro are not part of the sequence of canoe payments. Although I cannot adequately develop the point here, these differences in the media and modes of activity through which payments are made reinforce my general thesis that canoe exchange has to be understood as transposing marriage exchanges onto another organisational level.

13. The term *keda* has a more general use in the context of exchange : it may refer to any movement of a gift along a sequence of one or more middlemen to a final destination. The middlemen need not themselves be recipients. For instance, a person who is not of the *nukubay* phratry (one of the four exogamous phratries into which the clans are divided) may wish to give a pig for the dance feast to the *nukubay* clan that owns the community dance entertainment and must supply the pigs; he or she then gives it along appropriate kin/affinal links to reach a member of this clan (or other *nukubay* clan). The donor thus makes a *keda* across clan and phratry boundaries.

14. A man may have more than one such "path" (exchange circle) of partners so that he may obtain shells travelling to him on different paths. Malinowski's (1922 : 81 ff.) descriptions of *Kula* partnerships do not seem to take this feature of separate paths into account.

The stability of a path over time derives from the regular movement of shells along it; an unused path atrophies. The temporal implications of paths are thus complex and relate directly to the nature of the political process engaged in *kula* exchange. While not all *kula* shells in the inter-island exchange arrive in Gawa on paths, it is the path exchanges that develop the potential for social relations enduring beyond the immediate reciprocal transaction. Path transactions, moreover, have higher prestige on Gawa than the "non-path" exchanges.

the Gawan segment within a sequentially ordered inter-island space like that created by a *kula* path. Unlike the latter, however, the canoe path does not establish partnerships that will ideally be continued beyond the single exchange, and it does not create a closed circle of transactional movement. Similarly, in internal exchange, the canoe path in itself has no long-term implications for further transactions, once the returns are all made.<sup>15</sup> In this part of its life cycle the canoe takes on some but not all of the spatiotemporal features of *kula* exchange.

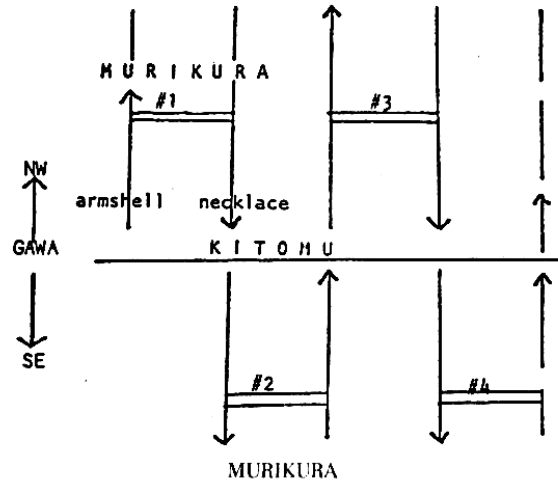
This second plane of the fabrication cycle, like the first, creates an integrating inter-island order out of intra-island elements through a transformation outward along the dimension of motion. Within the island itself, the canoe's exchange power can integrate internal marriage exchanges, transposing them onto the unifying space-time of the "path". Continuing beyond the boundaries of Gawa, the canoe path articulates these internal exchanges with the wider island world producing an inter-island space-time that comprehends Gawa within it.

Unlike the first conversion plane, in which the product can move back and forth between Gawa and other islands, the second plane produces an irreversible space-time in the sense that the canoe as an object of exchange *never comes back*. This irreversibility does not specify that the canoe cannot sail back to Gawa with its new recipients (indeed, this is common), but it is never *given* back, and eventually, will be given beyond ordinary sailing distance of the island. Nevertheless, the canoe's *irreversible journey as an exchange valuable* does not alienate it from its producers: all its conversions return to the owning clan.

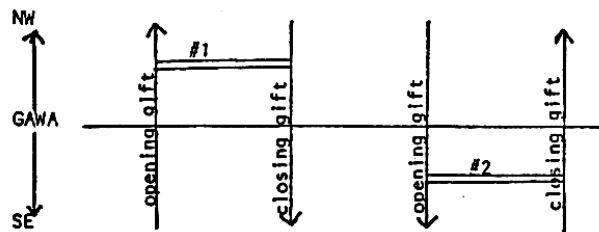
As Fig. 1 indicates, *kula* armshells and cooking pots<sup>16</sup> are the only durable canoe returns. These artifacts come back from the southernmost canoe recipient *via* the middlemen. The most durable conversions thus mark the maximal extension of the canoe path. It is only through the *kula* armshells, however, that the canoe embarks upon a new and final phase of its life-cycle. Armshells become the *kitomu* of the building clan. This term designates a class of *kula* valuable over which the possessor has absolute proprietary rights. Although obtainable by other special means<sup>17</sup>, Gawan *kitomu* derive mainly from canoes. Canoe *kitomu* are distributed to male members of the

building clan who may do what they wish with them (for example, they may use them as marriage, gifts, or even sell them to Europeans). Frequently, however, a man puts his *kitomu* on a *kula* path, where it functions in a unique fashion: it can perpetually reproduce itself. Moreover, this capacity gives it the power to increase in value, as if it were capital.

FIGURE 3. — "Kitomu" Exchange and Ordinary "Kula".



A. Ideal structure of "kitomu" exchange cycle. → = direction of movement. — = is exchanged for, "pierces." The numbers indicate the sequence of exchanges. As the first *kitomu* is exchanged for a necklace it becomes *murikura* (part of ordinary *kula* path transactions). Moving southward, the necklace of transaction number 1 will be exchanged for an armshell that becomes the Gawan's *kitomu*. The necklace becomes *murikura*, etc.



B. Ordinary "Kula" exchange (*murikura*). Ordinary path transactions require a new opening gift to keep the cycle going. This gift is supposed to come from the man who gave the closing gift for the previous transaction.

Fig. 3A explains these features. When a man puts his *kitomu* armshell into *kula* exchange, he attempts to place it on a path of *kula* partners whose exchange reliability has been demonstrated.

15. Estimates as to the time span typically involved in the exchanges are difficult to make; however, internal exchanges may be estimated as lasting from one to about two years, after the receipt of the canoe (possibly longer on occasion), it usually takes some years (at least three or more) from the time of transmission overseas to obtain the final overseas goods returns.

16. The cooking pots are distributed to women of the clan or to its men for their wives. They do not have any further role in the canoe exchange cycle, in contrast to the armshells which are given to men. As we shall see, this is consistent with male-female differences in the control of inter-island social space.

17. Within Gawa a man may obtain a *kitomu* as payment for land used in the burial of a person of another clan; *kula* shells taken from the dead by a man of the dead person's affinal or paternal kin also become the taker's *kitomu*. On occasion, *kitomu* may be obtained by trading a pig overseas, but trade in pigs is a standard means by which Yanabans and the peoples south of Gawa obtain their *kitomu*, while for Gawans canoes are the essential means for replenishing them from outside sources.



The necklace (*veiguwa*) returned for his armshell along this path becomes his *kitomu*, while the original armshell becomes an ordinary *kula* armshell over which he has no rights. Since the necklace is now his *kitomu*, it becomes an opening gift, even though it has been given as a closing, return gift for the original shell (transaction 1 in Fig. 3). This feature contrasts with ordinary *kula* which requires a third valuable to open exchanges again (Fig. 3B). Sending the necklace along the path, the *kitomu* owner receives a return armshell that is again his *kitomu*, and for which he may again receive a *kitomu* necklace in exchange. As one man put it : the *kitomu* "doesn't finish (*gera beikous*)". The ideal result of this conversion pattern is that the *kitomu* perpetually reproduces itself. In actuality, this process, as in *kula* generally, is uncertain due in part to the often questionable reliability of partners.

Nevertheless, some *kitomu* of canoes whose builders are dead, still return to the Gawan matrikin of these men, thus continuing the bond between the canoe and the matriline<sup>18</sup> on a level at which it could, in theory, be maintained in perpetuity. But canoe *kitomu* are not only a matrilineal inheritance, they also create a type of temporal continuity with certain parallels to the reproductive continuity of descent : i.e., as in descent, one individual generates a *different* individual of the *same* category in an ideally unending sequence. In this sense, *kitomu* are "reproductive", and so give maximal expression to the change in the temporal potential of wood hinted at in the canoe origin myth.

Men emphasize that *kitomu* are personal possessions, sometimes describing them metaphorically as "navel (*pwasora*)" to emphasize their inalienability from their owners. Significantly, this term also expresses the physical bonds of matriliney. If a *kitomu* is wrongly given off a path, the owner has the right to retrieve it without the recipient's objection, for it is his personal possession, like a part of his body. On receiving his *kitomu* a man may, if he wishes, withdraw it entirely from circulation.

Thus the canoe that has disappeared southward has been converted into an object that ideally can

both travel away from Gawa forever, and — as a permanent possession — always return home. This capacity is in fact predicated on the power of possession, since a man's special control over his *kitomu* is what makes it infinitely reproducible in exchange. Spatiotemporal transformation synthesized with its negation — stability and non-detachability — produces an ideal, reversible space-time.

This self-perpetuating structure is the basis of the increment possible in *kitomu* exchange. In ordinary *kula*, an armshell and necklace exchanged for each other must be of equivalent *kula* value categories. A partner may, however, be willing to give a valuable of the next higher category to "pierce" a lower-valued *kitomu*<sup>19</sup>, because he knows a second shell can come back to him of equal value to his original gift : each *kitomu*, as we have seen, yields still another shell moving back along the path. In this way, a man can increase the value of his *kitomu*.

Canoe *kitomu* therefore model in their conversion structure the power to reproduce for the individual (or the matriclan) and for Gawa, the value generated by detaching materials from Gawa and sending away the objects so produced, i.e., the value created by spatiotemporal transformations which translate Gawa into the inter-island order. *Kitomu* represent the level of this operation at which the space-time generated becomes able to generate itself, and as a result able to generate the symbol of its own value : namely, the capacity of such an object to move up through the *kula* value categories, to maximize value for its Gawan owner.

## II. CANOE ADORNMENT.

As *kula* valuables, *kitomu* are, of course, a form of ceremonial body decor. Gawans, like Trobrianders (Malinowski 1922 : 87) wear *kula* valuables on certain public ceremonial occasions.<sup>20</sup> Canoes are thus converted into beautifying adornments that are exchange valuables coming into Gawa from the external island world rather than objects produced by Gawans themselves. They

18. In actuality, those who inherit the *kitomu* could be men of other matriclans (usually within the same phratry) that have special bonds with the builder's clan. However, the basic principle is inheritance within the matriclan, a principle that applies as well, it may be added, to *kula* paths.

19. If a canoe *kitomu* is initially the lowest value category of armshell (*gwasi*), the owner cannot attempt to get a higher valued necklace for it unless he makes it seem of better quality. He may either polish it and add decor so that it appears attractive to his partner and can be called a *minamwari* (an intermediate rung between *gwasi* and the next highest of the three major category distinctions); or he must substitute a *mwari* of this intermediate value for the original shell, pretending that the former rather than the latter, is his *kitomu*. This "sleight of hand" is facilitated by the fact that ordinary *gwasi* are not named or kept track of, and generally do not arrive on established paths.

20. Both women and men wear the necklaces; armshells are worn by men only, but they use them for decor less commonly than the necklaces. Women display their male kinsmen's necklaces in a special woman's play-dance associated with *kula*. At such dances women make up chants (*butura*) celebrating the men whose necklaces they are wearing. In addition to ceremonial dances, certain other public contexts such as the canoe bespelling discussed below provide contexts in which *kula* necklaces may be worn by particular individuals (for example the ritualist in the case of canoe bespelling).

The colors of the *kula* valuables parallel the triadic color patterns of the decorative canoe boards discussed in the text. While the armshells are white (*pwapwaakaw*) and the necklaces reddish (*bwaabweira*), both have additional attachments that may include red, white and black (*bwabwaw*) elements.

synthesize adornment (enhancement of the body or person) and exchange (objects detached from the person and given to or received from others).

Canoes are also adorned to make them beautiful.<sup>21</sup> This adornment, which Gawans compare to festive human adornment is concentrated primarily on the prowboards (*ragima*, horizontal board, *tabuya*, vertical board) and ends (*pusa*) of the canoe (Plate 1). The prowboards themselves are adorned, and taken as a whole, they form the key adornment of the canoe. Verbal labels for human body parts are also playfully transferred to prowboard parts. Primarily through this adornment, the canoe acquires virtual properties of form that synthesize the non-human and human domains. This beautification, as we shall see, also encodes subjective human reference within the material form of the canoe. In my account I consider only prowboard adornment, although there are also other less focal elements relevant to the canoe's beauty.

The relation between canoe adornment and *kitomu* in the fabrication cycle can be defined by considering the transformational effect of prowboard beautification. I shall argue that the cosmetic process entails a spatiotemporal transformation which models that occurring in the wider canoe construction process. The role of adornment and beautification in the fabrication cycle may then be considered from this perspective (Fig. 4).

#### *Prowboard carving and painting.*

The preparation of the prowboards begins in the hamlet area where they are carved by a professional carver (the builder and/or appointees of his own or other clans); when finished, they are brought *unpainted* to the beach.<sup>22</sup> Skillful carvers are said to have been bespelled in childhood to purify their minds so that designs can, as one spell puts it, "emerge outside", clearly delineated (*murakata*, outside, in the light, clear). As we

shall see, there is a sense in which the entire cosmetic process is one of giving delineation and light, and moving towards the outside.

The carved elements are all denoted by names (many of which are descriptive), but not all the visual elements themselves denote. For instance, two circles on either side of the horizontal prowboard, always denote moons (each with a star inside it), connected with vision and light; a small canoe is regularly depicted at the base of the curved upper section of the board; the spiral on the upper section, however, is usually treated as non-denotative (see Plate 1).<sup>23</sup>

The labelling of all elements (irrespective of any denotative function of the element), gives verbal emphasis to the breaking up of space into separate units. From the Gawan perspective, this "detotalisation" is a key function of the carving: Gawans stress that carving defines the spaces to which the contrasting red (*bwaabweira*), white (*pwapwaakaw*) and black or dark (*bwabwaw*) paints are to be applied.<sup>24</sup> Internally carved spaces are always white; red and black are assigned alternately to the other spaces. Two contiguous units should not be painted with the same color.

Elements on the boards, and certain aspects of board shape may be metaphorically described by human labels. For instance, the moons are the canoe's "eyes"; the ends of the small canoe, its "ears". On the vertical board, the outer curve may be the "chest"; the inner curve, "shoulders". A separate carving of birds at the top of the vertical boards is the "head" or "hair"; the small extension of the vertical board to which it is lashed is the "neck" (see Plate 1). The forms delineated by the carving and shaping of the boards are thus anthropomorphized.<sup>25</sup>

Prowboards are washed in the sea and painted on the day before the lashing of the canoe hull. Washing before painting parallels the cosmetic preparation of the human body for ceremonial

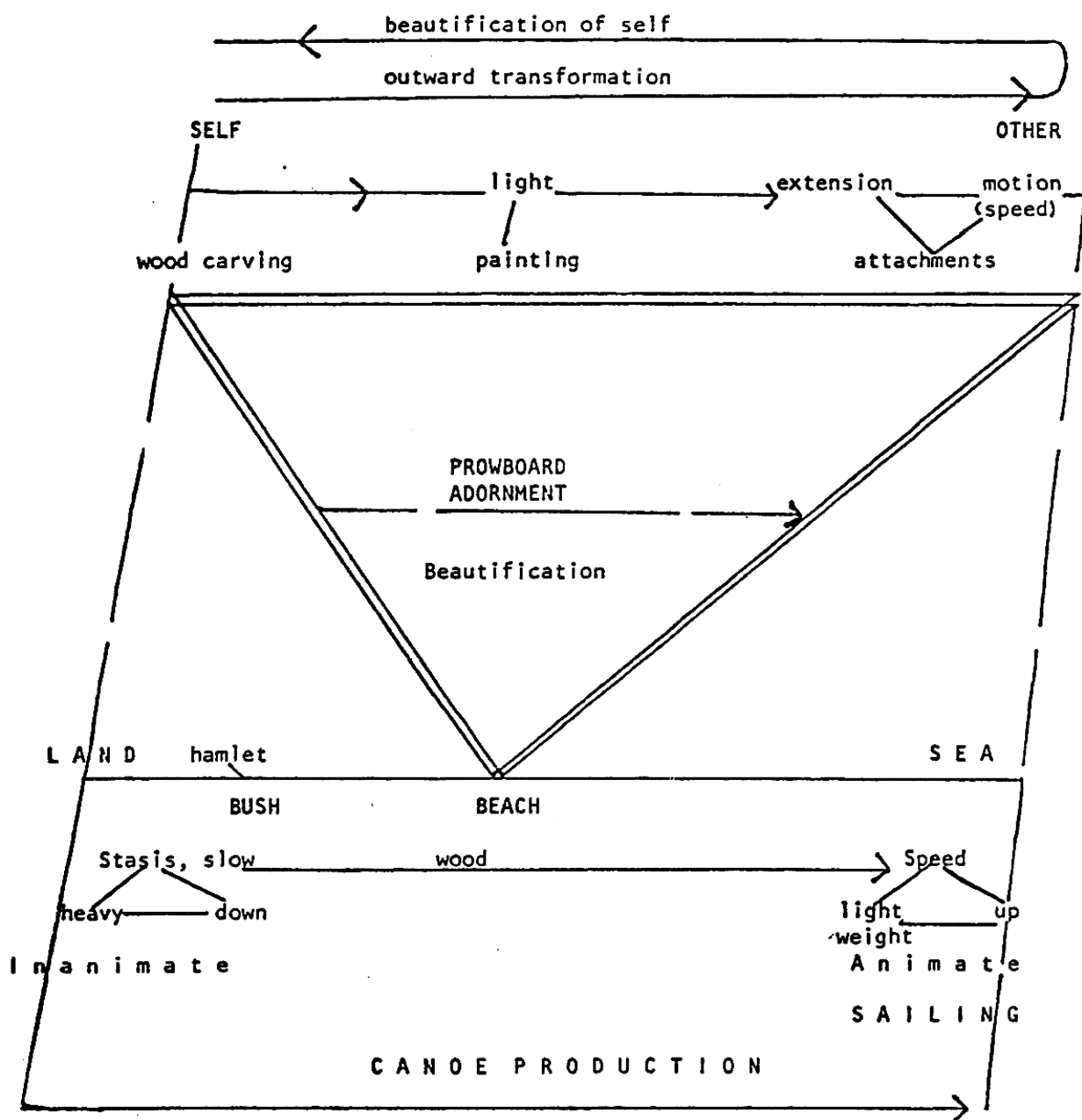
21. Gawans have a number of terms relating to beauty; *bweita* (with appropriate prefixes for male, female and neuter categories) meaning "pretty" or "beautiful"; *mamaadaga* also means "very lovely," or "beautiful." The term *buneka* meaning "to enhance", "suit" or "decorate" something may be used to refer to adornment or its effect. Adornment is *bubura* or *kay bubura*, and there are various specific terms for different aspects of adornment, some of which are indicated in the text.

22. There are four prowboards (two at each end); certain standard design features differentiate the front (*dabwara*) and the back (*wowura*) vertical prowboards of the canoe. Two carvers commonly work separately on the boards for one canoe, each carving one set.

23. Certain representations on the boards are standard (for example, the canoe and the moons) but others depend on the carver's choice. Representational meanings may include not only the items mentioned, whose association with the sea and the sky are apparent, but on occasion, other items such as coconut husks, limesticks, or snakes. Fish are never represented on the prowboards or canoe ends, but are prominent on the body of the canoe; furthermore, the ends of the canoe are always carved into the shape of a pigeon (*babuna*) that is said to sight the land, and also to be a very fast-flying bird. The crane (*buoy*), regularly carved on the vertical prowboard, is also medial between sea and land (it is associated with the beaches, and in Gawan thought, is opposed to the gardens). Thus the standard representational elements on the canoe ends and prowboards tend to be elements associated with the sky (birds, the moon), and mediation of sea and land (the small canoe, the particular birds chosen), although, as I have indicated, this semantic association is not uniform. It is not my intention to consider the details of board elements here. An analysis of the carving is currently in preparation.

24. Currently, European paints are regularly used for pigments. The traditional red is an imported ochre; white is a powdered coral, still in use. Some of my informants told me that the traditional black was not made from charcoal, but came from a (cuttle?) fish.

25. There are some minor variations in the particular metaphors, but the general principle of the applicability of human metaphor to the prowboards is stable.

FIGURE 4. — *Canoe Adornment as Spatiotemporal Transformation.*

The diagram summarizes the argument in the text. The bottom half of the diagram indicates the transformation from land (stasis-heavy) to sea (speedy-light), and from inanimate to animate, effected by the conversion of wood into a canoe. The process of canoe production also moves from bushland to beach, culminating in a product that moves on the sea. The inverted triangle represents the prowboard adornment which brings about a parallel transformation through wood carving (done in the hamlets), painting and mobile attachments (done on the beach). The transformation into motion is coordinate with a cosmetic extension of the surface that is also a movement from "self" to "other" in social space. The arrow at the top swings back from the "other" to the "self" indicating that the "outward transformation" enhances (returns value to) the "self".

decor. The body is washed and rubbed with coconut scrapings to make it fragrant. These ablutions are a purifying process also linked with light : the body is made *pwapaakaw* (white) or *murakata* (clean, clear).

Only unmarried youths should paint the boards ; senior men would make them "ugly" (*gagera*) and "dark" (*dadubu*, dusky, *bwaw*, dark), because they themselves lack beauty. Painters must not eat on the day of the painting lest they also "darken"

the canoe boards. Eating makes the body *heavy and slow* while painting must impart vital beauty to the boards making them "bright" (*kata*).

In the context of painting, the negative evaluation "dark" implies a blurring of the sharp triadic color contrast. While red and white epitomize light within the set, black is also regarded as a necessary component giving internal contrast to the boards. From this perspective, the basic function of the carving is to lay the spatial foun-

dation required for the painting to give an overall affect of visual clarity and light.

It is, however, not simply "light" that defines the beauty of the painted boards, but more specifically, the brilliance of lightening (*kavikawra*). Gawans particularly associate red and white with lightening, but the notion applies to the affect of the painted board as a whole. Spells for the red paint (the only prowboard color that Gawans bespell)<sup>26</sup> are intended to make all the paints glitter (*kata*). Moreover, when the boards have been repainted before the new canoe sails north for *kula* necklaces, a lightening storm is supposed to light up the prowboards as an omen of the canoe's beauty.

To describe unusual personal beauty, Gawans say the person "shines like lightening" (*i-kavikawra*, literally he/she lightnings). The notion has particular associations with men. For instance, in some folktales young men of unusual powers emerge from the sea or the bush shining like lightening; their marvelous beauty captivates all the women of the village.

It is notable that the red and white prowboard painting does not evoke associations with blood or semen, in contrast to the associations of the canoe wood suggested by the origin myth. Rather, connections are made with flashing light from the sky; storms, moreover, have special associations with the sea. The sea and inter-island mobility tend to have masculine associations for Gawans, who point out that men do most of the sailing and make inter-island contacts for Gawa, while women stay at home.

In the canoe color symbolism, the redness of the canoe hull keys the separation of the canoe from the bushland which (according to the myth) is mediated by feminine reproductive sexuality, but the red (and white) painting in the prowboards evokes mobile light from the sky—expressing movement outwards and upwards towards the sea with its predominantly masculine associations<sup>27</sup>.

Painting lays a new cosmetic surface on the prowboards, but is not yet an extension beyond that surface. Nevertheless, the emphasis upon beautification as brilliant light suggests a sense in which painting extends the surface beyond itself: light both conveys a synopsis with the external natural world, and also extends the surface with radiance. As Simmel (1950 : 342) has insightfully remarked, flashing light in body decoration "carries the social meaning... [of the

decor] the being-for-the other, which returns to the subject as the enlargement of his own sphere of significance." This "enlargement" is the pivot of personal power and social relationship summed up in the idea of "being attractive".

For Gawans also, light conveys powerful attractiveness as the folktales referred to above indicate. Young persons wash and adorn themselves to attract the opposite sex; senior men (not in themselves beautiful, according to Gawan stereotypes) perform spells that contain symbols of personal beautification in order to "move" *kula* partners to give desired valuables. Conversely, an unpainted canoe might negatively affect *kula* partners, so that they would refuse *kula* shells.<sup>28</sup>

### *Decorative appendages and symbolic motion.*

The day after the board painting, the body of the canoe and the prowboards are permanently assembled (*yora*, the day of the lashing). In the morning, the hollowed canoe log, its end already carved and decorated with white cowrie shells (*buna*), is carried into the canoe shed to be bespelled by the builder or his aid. Shells will also frame the boards on a finished canoe, and will then be attached, along with pandanus streamers, to staffs extending from each end of the canoe (Plates 1, 6). Gawans call these shells the canoe's *roubu* comparing them to shell decoration (including *kula* shells) worn by human beings. The term can also be used to denote additional shell ornaments attached to *kula* armshells; these ornaments are visual indicators of value (Plate 2). Armshells with a very small attachment are said to be in the lowest *kula* value category. Extension in space here explicitly signifies value increment.

Gawans also compare the canoe staffs to men's feather head-dresses (*dagura*) worn in dancing; these head-dresses range from a few white cockatoo feathers to an elaborate, thickly feathered formation radiating from the hair (Plate 3). Gawan women do not wear such extended, feather head-dresses, a feature consistent with men's greater "radiation" in social space.

It is significant that canoe shells and staff ornaments are detachable. For example, the staff of a new canoe (like the feathers from a man's head-dress) may be snatched by an admirer and the owner must pay for its return. In detachable ornaments — that are and are not part of the

26. This contrasts with usage in the Trobriands of Malinowski's time where all these colors were bespelled, the most important spell, however, being that for black (Malinowski 1922 : 140). In Gawan symbolism, red is the "power" color — the one with the strongest sexual connotations, that also mingles most immediately the experience of heightened beauty with that of dangerous potency. The emphasis on brilliant light in Gawan symbolism is, of course, not unique to this area of New Guinea (cf. Strathern 1971).

27. It is significant that in internal exchanges, as I have shown, canoes move through female links, but beyond the island, Gawan men ordinarily give their canoes directly to other men. Thus intra-island female links initially "move" the canoe, but masculine links typically transfer it beyond Gawa.

28. It is particularly important to repaint the prowboards of a new canoe if its first sailing is on a northern *kula* journey, since Gawans regard the necklaces as more difficult to acquire than the armshells.

body — adornment begins to blend with exchange, in which possessions can be separated from the person and yielded up to others.

The canoe on the morning of the lashing is already beginning to acquire a surface that extends beyond itself, but it is not yet in motion. This requires the work of a senior man (usually of the building clan) whose spells and related operations are aimed at making the canoe speedy. The visible outcome of these acts is the attachment of decorative leaves, red hibiscus and pandanus streamers to the prowboards (Plates 4, 5).

The ritualist swiftly rubs certain leaves, notable for slippery, lightweight properties, along the canoe log from stern to bow; banana leaves soaked in a coconut oil preparation are then attached to the ends of the canoe along with other lightweight leaf decor, and a red hibiscus, commonly used in human hair decoration. This flower has additional associations with flying witches (the fastest human beings in the Gawan universe), who use it in their “take-off” spells<sup>29</sup>. After bespelling an adze to impart speed to the canoe, the ritualist rocks the hollow log to make it lightweight. Finally, long pandanus streamers are bespelled and hung on the prowboards (Plates 4, 5).<sup>30</sup>

All these operations result in the canoe acquiring decorative, “moving” appendages. Whereas youths can impart vitality and light to the surface of the canoe, because the surfaces of their own bodies are “beautiful”, a senior man can animate the canoe through verbal spells and associated operations, knowledge of which is thought to be stored inside the body. This *interiorized* knowledge gives the prowboards their *exteriorized*, *mobile* attachments.

In this respect we may note that it is senior men, not the young, who have influence in *kula* exchange, and perform the main *kula* spells. Just as their power derives from *interiorized* sources, so it *extends further out in space* than the power of the young.<sup>31</sup>

The meanings of pandanus streamers (*bis ita*, themselves closely associated with *kula*)<sup>32</sup> demonstrate the connection between animated movement and the extension of control in social space. Spells for canoe streamers and for armlet streamers with which men decorate themselves for

*kula* have a similar content. Canoe spells may aim both at making canoe speedy, and at “exciting” the *kula* partner to give “quickly” so that the canoe returns laden with valuables. In one spell, pandanus streamers “call” (*dow*) the *kula* partner, “turning his mind” (*i-tovira nanora*) to the Gawan. As a result (my informant explained) the Gawan’s fame (*butura*) “climbs” like blowing pandanus.

Overseas fame (a primary political value on Gawa) can be achieved only by giving Gawan wealth — for example, in food hospitality — to overseas visitors, who in turn are influenced to give *kula* valuables, and who circulate abroad a man’s good name. Fame — the social circulation of the self in the form of one’s name (*yagara*) — epitomizes the ideal that the highest prestige accruing to the individual and to Gawa derives from transactions with the external, inter-island world. The canoe pandanus climbing in the wind condenses this outward transformation and the value it returns to the self.

### Conclusion.

As shown in Fig. 4, the prowboard adornment symbolically models the spatiotemporal transformations that occur in canoe construction as a whole. The beautification process resurfaces the prowboards (and ends of the canoe) by a sequence of conversions: carving, painting and the attachment of appendages. I have suggested that these conversions express a transformation outward (an extension in social space from ‘self’ toward ‘other’) that is also a change from static to mobile. Moreover, taken as a whole, the decorated boundaries of the canoe give the appearance of extending it, since the area within which beautification (or visual properties of kinesis) is concentrated goes beyond the body or hold of the canoe (see Plate 6).

Adornment directly figures on the canoe the fact that transformation from static materials to mobile objects is also a transformation from inanimate *material* to *human* animation. Not only does the decor “humanise” the visual properties of the canoe, but kinesis itself is treated as a potency given by humans to wood through the application of other media (verbal spells as well

29. Canoe spells owned by one clan also equate the canoe with the flying witch (*murukwawsi* in the spells, which may have a northern origin, but *bwagaw* in general Gawan usage). Witches themselves embody a symbolism of excessive speed as an expression of disorder in the inter-island world; this is an aspect of speed symbolism that I do not discuss here. When metaphorically identified with the canoe in spells, however, the witch provides an effective rhetoric for speedy power.

30. At the present time, not all canoes are publicly bespelled on the “day of the lashing”, but in cases I observed where there was, apparently, no magic, the builder nevertheless decorated the canoe with the additional leaf and hibiscus decor.

31. A similar point has been made by Weiner (1974 : 356) for the Trobriands. She says : “In youth, the center of power lies on the surface on [sic] one’s skin. After marriage, the beauty begins to diminish. At the same time, one’s power is slowly transformed into objects external to the self” (cf. also Weiner, 1976 : 226).

32. Further direct associations with *kula* may occur in this part of the adorning procedures. Not only may the ritualist decorate himself with *kula* necklaces, but the ritual may also optionally include the insertion of sweet-smelling bespelled leaves (of the kind that Gawans regularly insert in their armlets) at the base of the prowboards : these leaves are aimed at influencing *kula* partners to give the desired valuables. New canoes (*yeyay*) may also be adorned with the *kula* valuables obtained by those who sail in them.

as non-verbal materials such as paints and leaves) that are felt to possess kinetic and related properties. Moreover, as we have seen, it is in the context of prowboard adornment procedures that Gawans directly connect properties of the artisans' own persons to the qualities of what they make.

In expressing the relation of the canoe as artifact to its human producers, adornment represents the space-time produced by converting raw materials into canoes as *human* space-time. "Art", as Aristotle (1947 : 276) put it, "is a principle of movement in something other than the thing moved". In this sense, the canoe adornment represents movement as "art".

It is also specifically in the context of prowboard adornment that the creation of mobility is treated as "beautification" — i.e., as a qualitative change that gives positive, perceptual value to the canoe. We may say that adornment symbolises spatio-temporal transformation as value transformation, and refers the value created "back" to the canoe as its enhancement. The message of this symbolism is that the canoe's "beauty" lies precisely in its capacity to transform the Gawan world outward and to bring back into Gawa the value thus produced — in effect, to refer what is achieved by outward transformation "backward" to the self.

The relation between canoe adornment (on the plane of production) and canoe *kitomu* (on the plane of exchange) can now be clarified. *Kitomu* are in a sense the "beauty" of the entire fabrication cycle : they condense and symbolise the whole cycle as being one of producing and maximising value for Gawans through a process of detaching materials from Gawan land, converting them into seagoing vessels that connect Gawa and other islands, and then again sending these seagoing vessels away from Gawa on irreversible exchange paths. Finally, like reputation, the canoe comes back to Gawa as an adorning object produced by others. This object represents the value created by the entire process in that it has a special capacity to synthesise outward transformation and personal possession ; i.e., to return to the self the value generated by the cycle of outward movement.

In these respects, *kitomu* and canoe adornment are structurally as well as formally homologous. Not only are they both forms of adornment, but each constitutes on its own plane the condensed symbol of canoe fabrication as a value creating process that returns this value to the self.

Finally, we may note that the ultimate conversion of the canoe (and its humanising adornment) into *kula* body decor converts the canoe back from the sphere of the material artifact separated from the human body, to the more immediate personal sphere where value can be directly demonstrated on the body, rather than on an artifactual correlative of the person. These various articulations of the relation between the human, and material-

artifactual spheres point to further senses in which fabrication can be seen as a multiplex, symbolic process that continually redefines the human relation to the object world.

In this paper, I have attempted to suggest that fabrication viewed as a transformational process can provide a framework integrating the study of artifacts, esthetics and social systems. From this perspective, questions of art and esthetics (for example, the study of adornment or of perceptual qualities such as the Gawan symbols of light, speed, etc.) do not remain peripheral to those of social structure and process. Rather, man's interaction with the object world and the symbolic transformations this entails are seen as fundamental to both. The general problem of constructing models of the human social order which comprehend person-object relations thus underlies the more specific aims of this account of Gawan canoes.

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## RÉSUMÉ

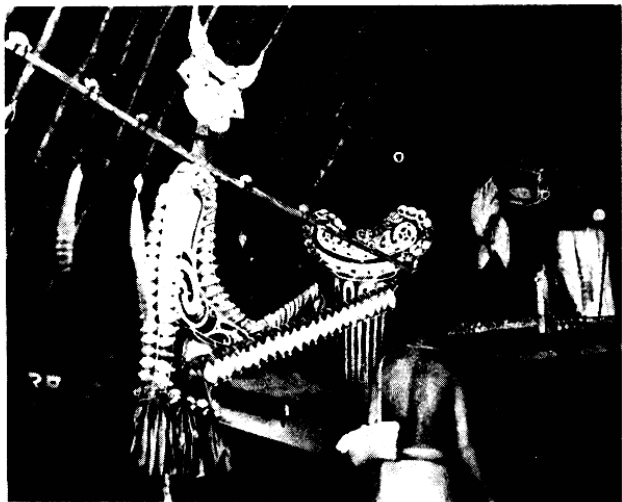
Examinant le cycle de la construction et de l'échange des pirogues à Gawa, île du nord-est de Massim, l'auteur l'analyse comme le déroulement d'un processus symbolique. Il suggère qu'au cours de ce cycle qui va de la production à l'échange des pirogues, certaines transformations dans l'espace et dans le temps se produisent qui sont une recodification symbolique à chaque niveau des transformations de l'espace-temps « fermé » à l'intérieur de l'île à l'espace-temps « ouvert » entre les îles. Au plus haut niveau, quand les pirogues sont enfin converties en une catégorie d'objets de valeur « *kula* », un espace-temps idéal qui se perpétue de lui-même est créé. La deuxième partie de cette étude concerne le rôle de la décoration de la proue de la pirogue dans le cycle de la conversion. Il est suggéré que la décoration symbolise la construction de la pirogue dont le processus a créé une valeur, et que la nature de cette valeur est caractérisée par les transformations de l'espace-temps décrites dans la première partie.

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PL. 1. A completed canoe, still in the shed, but readied for launching.

PL. 2. Young Gawan boy carrying a *kula* armshell. The decorative extension to the shell consists of cowrie and other shells, European-introduced beads, and nutshells.

PL. 3. Young Gawan man with elaborate cockatoo feather head-dress. Paper "pin-wheels" are also currently used as decor in the Trobriands.



PL. 4. The owner of the canoe, one of Gawa's most important senior men, bespells a pandanus streamer. The dried leaf is accordion-pleated as the spell is said into it.

PL. 5. Attaching the bespelled pandanus to the vertical prowboard. Below the board can be seen the leaves and hibiscus earlier affixed by the ritualist, and the cowries attached to ends of the canoe log before the lashing rite.

PL. 6. A canoe afloat with pandanus sail as yet unfurled.

