



- A "X-ray view" of ejaculating penis
- B Testicle
- C Fallopian tube
- D Symbolic fish
- E Anus
- F Shaven pubic hair
- G Clitoris
- H Vaginal tattoo
- I Labia
- J Vagina
- K Outline of female genitals as seen from behind

- a Womb
- b Fallopian tube
- c Decorative lines (*saina*)
- d Small fish (*sasaona*)
- e Flat fish (*siwai*)
- f Testicle
- g Snake tattoo
- h *Vikia* or frigate bird tattoo
- i *Haia* shell rings
- j *Sikwaikwa* bird tattoo
- k Labia
- l Spear markings
- m Clitoris

Fig. 2: An interpretation of designs on the Trobriand war shields based on the native account (Fig. 1). The left shield drawing is from Edmund Leach's interpretation (1954).

ic representations of male and female genital organs, but significantly more besides. While there are parallels with both Leach's (1954) and Berndt's (1958) interpretations, there are also important differences. The manner of the genitals' depiction is surprising. The conjunction of the Trobrianders' alleged "ignorance of paternity" with the fact that male and female genitals are observable on the shields led to the expecta-

tion that paternity, in some way, may be implied in the design. And this appears to be the case. The hidden meanings of the design arise from a fusion of the totemic-mythological and biological elements and together these constitute a code which can be read on three levels:

- (1) the native explanation: totemic and mythological designs of stars, birds, fish, and so on;
- (2) an X-ray or anatomical cross-section of human copulation from two distinct angles; and
- (3) a representation of *Topileta*, the deity, in *Tuma*, the Trobriand heaven and underworld of the spirits.

As key elements in the native explanation relate to stars and this was exclusively men's knowledge, the full meaning of the shield design may have been men's knowledge:

Women do not know the names of the moons. It is exclusively men's lore ... the star names are also not known by women (Malinowski 1915: 897).

MacGregor relates that the initiated male Laughlan Islanders knew every line and corner of their decorated shield design (1897: 61). The Trobriand shields were the hereditary province of ritual specialists who invested them with protective magic (Malinowski 1922: 406, Plate LVIII).

The shield examination will be set out in relation to the native explanation (Fig. 1; level 1 above) and I shall clarify hypotheses 2 and 3 in relation to it, starting with hypothesis 2.

3. The Representation of the Sex Act

Malinowski emphasized that the Trobrianders made much use of plays on words: puns, alliteration, onomatopoeia, particularly in relation to the language of magic, and spells (Malinowski 1922: 448, 452). Father Baldwin, who tried to document the language of song relating to *Tuma*, found the Trobrianders "... have a secret language that they will never divulge" (1945: 202). It is possible to see links between the terms associated with the totemic-mythological elements and human genitalia and