WORKING SESSION 1

Dobu: a Paranoid Culture?

The paper will examine the representation of Dobu Islanders in the anthropological literature. Belonging to the famous kula ring and mentioned in various best-selling works of anthropologists (Malinowski, Benedict), Dobu is a well known ethnic group. Reo Fortune’s ‘Sorcerers of Dobu’ contributed to Dobu’s reknown as a fundamentally antisocial culture. I intend to dispute this image and claim that Dobu Islanders are not really different from other Melanesians. My argument is based on data collected during fieldwork on Dobu Island (1992-94, 1997). The notion of ‘paranoia’ will be examined and contrasted to the model of the Panopticon (see also Foucault 1977: plate3). In terms of the general discussion, the concept of sorcery as ‘antisocial otherness’ will be criticised.