

## Reading Response Module 2

The author is doing an ethnography of the people who live in the Trobriand Islands. The first thing that shocks the author is that there is a variety of physical looks among the people. Some have more 'intelligent', lighter skin and are well formed while others have wider mouths and narrower foreheads. There is a definite rank among the people, especially with regards to the chief. No one is allowed to be higher than the chief physically when he is around.

Women are treated differently in this community than in others. At young ages, girls and boys participate in sexual relations and single women are allowed to be with whoever they would like. Weddings are not celebrated as extensively as in other cultures. Generally, women initiate relationships and their families are responsible for providing economic support/financial gift as a wedding present. Women are free to leave their husbands as well. Rank passes through the mother and the village/clan that a child belongs too is determined by the mother's brother.

In the middle of the island, there is a circular area that is surrounded by yam houses. There is another concentric circle that has smaller huts. Both the huts and yam houses are for living. Living quarters are decorated with symbols of someone's rank.

Men spend much of their time working in the gardens. The men work quite hard and generally produce a surplus. Even though they receive no direct benefit, the men compete with each other to see who can put in the most amount of work.

Every community has a chief, who is also part of a group of elders who generally decide on important matters together. There is a ranking of sub-clans in the Trobriand Islands. Chiefs are able to expand their powers to nearby villages as well and can force them to pay tribute to him as well. Chiefs are expected to pay for anything that happens to him. They gain their wealth by taking at least one wife from each village (and gets the financial benefits associated with that). The wife's family has to give him crops every year. Chiefs are allowed to punish people as well which he does by using sorcerers.

The Trobrianders believe that the dead have spirits, ghost, witches, black magic and a possible return of dead. In every community, there are several black sorcerers who are able to perform bad spells on the community.

Communities interact in the Kula, which is a type of trading between several islands. There are two routes that run in opposite directions in the Kula. One has long red necklace shells and the other has white shell bracelets. On every island, a group of people hold onto the goods. The most important part of the Kula is the actual trade between the necklaces and the bracelets. Kula is a long-standing tradition that occurs at certain dates and is conducted in public. While the actual bracelets and necklaces are not expensive, they are deeply rooted in historical tradition. Every person only kulas with several others. There are many rules regarding Kula and an extremely important one is that the necklaces and bracelets are never traded back or in the wrong direction.

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