

Chapter 7: Men Working for Women

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Authority & the Exercise of Power

- Yams play a prominent role in the display of **conspicuous consumption**, used to impress others in hope of acquiring status and **prestige** in the Trobriand society.
- Yam competitions are held to “announce fame and renown” (111) where one must provide guests with large quantities of yams.
- Competitors can make “good friends” (112) with members of a different clan.
- The distribution of yams allows chieftains to contract marriages create **affinal relationships** with other **matrilineages** outside of their own clan. The **polygynous** practices of the chieftains of the Trobriand society, gives him authority within his clan.
- The female that has produced the most yams may claim her matrilineage is “strong” allowing her to receive a greater number of marriage candidates.

Adaptation & Economic Organization

- Trobrianders are a **subsistence society** specializing in slash and burn **horticulture**.
- Yams serve as a “bank account” = contribution to the economic system
 - Those that produce the largest quantities are often rewarded with valuables such as the stone axe-blade or money, known as **balanced reciprocity**.
- Role of women in the economy is evident in the process of yam harvests and mortuary distributions (If you are associated with the deceased you are given banana-leaf bundles).
- Men supported women by trading resources for bundles whenever women needed them. This enforces reciprocity by creating a debt that may only be repaid in a women's wealth.
- Yams may be used to purchase several objects (i.e. Arm shells, shell necklaces, earrings, pigs, chickens and locally produced goods).
- A chief's polygynous relationship = more wives → increase in number of banana leaf bundles → increase in individual wealth (**power & wealth**).

Kinship as an Organizing Principle- family and conflict

- A chief = aided by members of his **matrilineage** and keyawa kin during a yam harvest.
- Women = aided by their keyawa kin married daughters of men who are members of the dead person's matrilineage during a death & mortuary distribution.
- Some men burn down village houses in retaliation for their loss to regain their 'honour.'

Individual & Society- Status, Gender Relations and Groups

- The chief/hamlet leader success will reflect the **status** of his matrilineage.
- Dances = sexuality, youth and fertility [ie “slapping their hips as they thrust the lower part of their bodies forward” (112)]
- Female are in control of wealth distribution = *lusaladabu*.
- **Division of labor**: Men rely on other men “because a man cannot fill his own yam house” (122). Women create bundles and skirts = not entirely dependent on others

Belief Systems & Practices- ritual, magic and sorcery

- July-September is the time for celebration called *mwasawa*, meaning “play”.

- 3 types of competitions: yam, dance and cricket
- Dances are believed to be hundreds of years old through **enculturation** dances were handed down by ancestors, which can be loaned to others in exchange for money.
- Magic is used to transform adults into youthful, seductive performers. Monobogwa once saw his mother dancing and told her, “I always thought you were old but today you are young and beautiful” (113).
- The “overturning” of yam houses mark the ending of competitions.
- Losers of the measuring of the yam competition are believed to want to “destroy the members of the other lineage through sorcery” (115).

Moral Systems- *ethnics and emotions*

- Dance competitions are known for “sexual excitement” (112). It is “decidedly indiscriminate when seen against the more usual rules governing adolescent behaviour throughout the year” (112).
- “When you give too much, people worry.” The distribution of yams can cause jealousy because others try to “proclaim their own fame” (115).
- During cricket competitions the host’s team “by common consent must always win.” Thus, opposing teams “who actually are winning, get angry at the umpire’s calls” (115).
- If a death occurs during the year, the village is “closed to all playing” and yam houses are emptied to feed the mourners.
- Imkitava had to “transform each crushed bundle into a clean one because, “if you give women dirty leaf bundles that are flattened out they will scream at you: You only want to eat; you do not care about the customs for bundles” (118).

Cognitive Systems- *arts and expression and symbolism*

- Through dance and cricket competition aspects of sexuality is shown.
- Cricket player were “sensually dressed and magically decorated...Each is known for their chants and dance formations...The words are sexual metaphors used as one team taunts the other and exhibits their physical and sexual prowess to...young women” (114).
- Banana leaf bundles symbolize women’s wealth as “subsume all of men’s resources” (122). There are 4 types of bundles: yawovau (new), migileu (clean), yabwabogwa (old) and yapagatu (dirty) with new bundles being valued the most.

Societies & Cultures in Contact- *colonialism and conversion*

- After **colonization**, the creation of trade stores allowed Trobrianders to buy materials such as rice. Resources from stores could be traded for banana leaf bundles.
- Missionaries introduced cricket “as a substitute for village fighting and as a sport that would replace the harvest dancing and open sexuality.”

Globalization- *globalization and acculturation*

- Trobrianders **adapted** cricket and competitions would be held with other villages.
- Men decorate themselves with dancing gear and women are no longer treated as equal dance partner but have adapted the older British tradition as spectators.
- Trobrianders started to use money in order to pay school fees, government taxes, trade store goods, and airfares to the capital of Papua New Guinea.