

Gunter Senft
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A very special letter

In the mid 1990s Professor Krystyna Pisarkowa and I started our long-term correspondence in connection with my periods of field research on the Trobriand Islands and our joint appreciation and admiration of Bronislaw Malinowski and his scientific oeuvre. At the end of May 2000 I found a very special letter by my esteemed colleague in our mailbox in Goch. Krystyna Pisarkowa had sent me a brief message – in an absolutely extraordinary and completely unthought of envelope. It was a so-called “first day cover” addressed to me which announced and celebrated in a very specific way the edition of a special issue stamp by the Polish Postmaster General in honour of Bronislaw Malinowski with the portrait of the famous founder of modern social anthropology. This gift not only surprised and flabbergasted me, but it also absolutely touched me. I was overjoyed to be in the possession of an envelope with Malinowski's portrait on it that was addressed to me: my great hero with respect to anthropological and ethnolinguistic field research and my name on one and the same document! I framed the envelope and until my retirement in January 2018 it hung in my office at the Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics in Nijmegen – and these days it brightens up my study at home – thanks to Professor Krystyna Pisarkowa.

