

Examiner's commentary

Death is an inquiry that has concerned anthropological thought since its beginnings. In this case, this young student engages in an ongoing conversation with key ethnographers about death rituals in one of the most renowned and classic locations of anthropological research: the Trobriand Islands. Drawing from Malinowski's functionalist theory and Weiner's feminist perspective, and well supported by other relevant secondary sources – with a vigilant concern on issues of representation – the student asks about the purpose and meanings of funerary rituals in the light of social change in colonial and post-colonial contexts. Supported by detailed ethnographic examples, the student explores the diverse functions of death rituals within the social and economic structures of this society, with a clear focus on the cohesive functions of exchange, a concept that is explained in its multidimensional aspects. Emphasizing witchcraft and sorcery, the essay carefully explains how their role in conflict takes dramatic transformations in the modern context. The reproduction of kinship structures and recreation of relationships are at the foundation of the argument of this interesting, well-informed essay.

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Death rituals in the Trobriand Islands

Social and Cultural Anthropology
Extended Essay

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Introduction

Henry Abramovitch states that “In all human cultures there is a struggle to cope with the inevitability and mystery of death”¹. In different cultures people deal with the demise of a family member in multiple different ways such as death rituals. What is the purpose of death rituals? For whom are they addressed, living or the deceased? They are something we all experience at some point in our lifetime when attending a funeral or when experiencing the death of a person close to us. According to Victor Turner a ritual is defined as the social feature of religion, where religion is considered the structure of influence for the paranormal and the holy, about the afterlife and so on².

I have chosen to study the death rituals of the Trobrianders. This tribe caught my attention due to their belief in magic and witchcraft. Choosing the Trobrianders wasn't a random choice. It's a well-studied group about which data has been collected by different anthropologists (e.g. Weiner, Malinowski) over time. They have been studied from different perspectives through the years, but their death ritual and customs remain mostly unchanged.

In this essay I will analyze and discuss how the death rituals in the Trobriand Islands have stayed important in the face of much social change. My research question asks: what is their social function that allows them to continue?

The Trobrianders of Papua New Guinea are a matrilineal society. Their main mode of subsistence is horticulture. As a tribe they are well-known in anthropology for their Kula ceremonial exchange system. They also operate using reciprocity exchange system, in which they exchange yams, wild pigs, and also currently money. Their basic figure of hierarchy are Big men, and today they have been integrated in the state of New Guinea.

At the start of my research I decided to use mainly the ethnographies of Malinowski and Weiner in my study of death rituals in the Trobriand islands, because both anthropologists have done long term research. But they both were influenced by different theoretical approaches, Malinowski by Functionalism and Weiner by Feminist theory. As a result of their biased scopes they have contradicting conclusions and have overlooked certain elements of the Trobriand society, and so I have used the work of additional anthropologists to provide alternative viewpoints and theories into the purposes of death rituals. By taking into consideration multiple ethnographic studies it is possible to achieve a more complete understanding of the functions of the death rituals.

¹ Abramovitch, Henry, 2001. “Anthropology of death.” *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences*, pp.3270-3273..

² Victor Turner. *The Ritual Process*. Aldine. 2008 (1969).

Theory and Method

In this research I follow Erikssen's approach to understanding ritual: "Ritual has been defined as the social aspect of religion. If we may define religion as systems of notions about the supernatural and the sacred, about life after death and so on (with its obvious political implications), then rituals are the social processes which give a concrete expression to these notions. In conclusion we can consider rituals to be 'rule-bound public events which in multiple ways thematize the relationship between the earthly and spiritual realms'."³ Further, according to Victor Turner's theory we can also deduce that knowledge, religious or other, becomes significant to individuals exclusively when it becomes useful, solely when linked to their own personal experience; the social and personal usefulness of death rituals is central to my approach here.

Every death ritual, custom or tradition that follows the death of a person is very complex and differs from place to place and from time to time. Death rituals are interconnected with culture, society, beliefs, religion and symbolism. They are a rite of passage from life to afterlife. But also, as we shall see, the rites of death rituals among the Trobrianders are also very important for connecting the living who are left behind. They are also important for dealing with the fears and social tensions that arise as a result of death and death rites.

Bronislaw Malinowski was central to the development of Functionalism in anthropology which is similar to the theory of Structural Functionalism, developed by A.R. Radcliffe-Brown. According to Alan Barnard, in Structural Functionalism Radcliffe-Brown supports that "all cultural 'traits' are functionally interrelated and form an integrated social whole. It's expressed (in Durkheim's spirit) that while structural functionalism stated that the function of the part was to maintain the whole, functionalism posited that all parts of a society functioned to satisfy the individual's biological needs."⁴ In my question concerning the staying-power of Trobriand death rituals in the face of social change, I am influenced by both Functionalism and Structural Functionalism, as I look at the personal needs being met by these rituals, but also the continuing relevance of their social functions. However, in looking at some factors that currently threaten death rituals, I also leave these to consider potential change. This is also one of the main criticisms of Functionalism and Structural Functionalism, that they are uninterested in understanding change and focus only on society's equilibrium.

Although my research is based on data collected by anthropologists who all conducted extensive participant-observation research as their own methodology, and who each seemed to follow the ethical standards required by anthropology (for their era, as ethical expectations change through time), I am still discussing death rituals in third hand, relying on published anthropological research.

³ Erikssen, Thomas Hylland. *Small Places, Large Issues-: An Introduction to Social and Cultural Anthropology*. Pluto Press, 2001, reproduced with permission of the Licensor through PLSclear.

⁴ Alan Barnard, *History and Theory in Anthropology*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge: 2004, p. 472, reproduced with permission of the Licensor through PLSclear.

The people to which my research is on, the Trobrianders do not have the opportunity to discuss, review, agree or disagree with my arguments and conclusions. Thus, they do not get the chance to represent themselves.

Death in the Trobriand islands

In the Trobriand community it is believed that death isn't something natural except if the person dies in a very old age and while asleep. Only then death is considered "natural". Even under circumstances where the person is severely sick, and everyone understands and knows that his/her death is near, it's still upsetting, and it comes as a shock. Mainly death is thought to be the outcome of sorcery (*bwgau*) which is executed by an expert "who chants magic spells into the victim's betel nut or tobacco"⁵. Due to this belief all villagers are very cautious and careful in their relations with each other. As Weiner discusses, mistrust and suspicion are expressed by the family of the deceased towards everyone after the death of a family member.⁶

When a Trobriander's death is announced there are mournful cries and all joyous activities stop immediately. Each individual has to play a role that will affect the direction of their work and daily life for the minimum of half a year. Mourning duties in the Trobriand society are complex and difficult. They are a display of wealth to honor the dead, a manifestation of relative's care for the dead and moreover for gaining social prestige. The announcement of a death is quickly spread to other villages in case there are friends or relatives there. When a death is announced the deceased's relationships in which he/she is centered are disrupted immediately due to suspicion. Even spouses are suspects of committing sorcery that is believed to be the cause of death.⁷

Frederick Damon stated that exhumation as well as secondary burial were once part of this region's mortuary rites, but the colonial government and the Christian missions disapproved and banned them. But mortuary feasting, and exchanges continued being vital in Trobriand societies.⁸ Weiner too notes that mortuary rituals have changed because of demands from the Australian government, who demanded that the mourning period before burial go from three days to only one.⁹ What continuing aspects of mortuary rituals still make them a main concern in the region? There are too many elements to Trobriand death rituals to address them all in this paper, but I will focus on the ones that help explain their greater continuing function in Trobriand society.

⁵ Weiner, Annette B. *The Trobrianders of Papua New Guinea*. Thomson/Wadsworth, 2002, p 34.

⁶ Weiner, Annette B. *The Trobrianders of Papua New Guinea*. Thomson/Wadsworth, 2002, p 35-43.

⁷ Weiner, Annette B. *The Trobrianders of Papua New Guinea*. Thomson/Wadsworth, 2002, p 42.

⁸ Damon Frederick, 1989. "Introduction," in F. H. Damon and R. Wagner (eds.), *Death Rituals and Life in the Societies of the Kula Ring*, Northern Illinois University Press, pp. 3-19.

⁹ Weiner, Annette B. *The Trobrianders of Papua New Guinea*. Thomson/Wadsworth, 2002, p 37.

Remaking Relationships Through Mortuary Exchange

One of the most significant parts of Trobriand mortuary rituals are the mortuary exchanges, a type of death ritual that aims to the reconciliation and repair of the relationship between the two sides of the deceased. As Liep highlights, “Their function is to regenerate the social fabric and reconstitute the web of social relations”¹⁰. This process may take years of exchanging valuable and lavish gifts between the two sides, repeatedly.

Weiner indicated that exchanges are needed to construct social relationships. The exchanges needed to construct such bonds are long term projects, in which people deprive some of their own resources to offer them to other people, for the social relationship to be created and established. Also, she argued that these relationships which are formed through the exchanges must be considered as “a reproductive model of society”. These exchanges “are part of cycles of reproduction that transcend the life of individuals.”¹¹ Death rituals then involve exchanges that help support the matriline of the deceased to continue.

One of the basic structures of the exchanges that occur as part of the death rituals are the roles of "owners" and "workers". The "owners" in the death rituals, i.e. "the owners of the dead person's things,"¹² have the important task of repaying people in other matrilineages who were close to the dead person (friends, wives, and children). The "workers" in the death rituals are theoretically those related to the dead person through marriage (the deceased's spouse's family) or through the patriline (the deceased's father's family), though many more people might end up being brought on as workers in practice. These individuals have multiple tasks to do, which characterize them as public mourners. They stay with the corpse, prepare it for the burial and they prepare the grave. Moreover, after the burial they publicly show that they are mourning by changing their appearance, they shave off their heads, “paint their bodies black with charred pieces of coconut husks, and wear mourning clothes.”¹³ Outside influence is seen in the adaption of black clothing and black armbands for the mourners, but the visible aspect of their role and the seriousness of their duties has not been diminished.¹⁴

As the workers do the work of mourning, the owners do the work of exchanging. According to Weiner, in giving these gifts, the owners are acknowledging and repaying all of the work that went into making the dead person a "social person", who was shaped by the efforts of others. They are remaking all of the relationships that were destroyed by death. “The physical attributes and characteristics of each person only provide the beginning--the raw material--that is culturally shaped by other people and things". Thus, such taboos and attention which are given to one's death are justified

¹⁰ Liep, John. "Massim mortuary rituals revisited." *Le Journal de la Société des Océanistes* 124 (2007): 97-103, p. 91

¹¹ Liep, John. "Massim mortuary rituals revisited." *Le Journal de la Société des Océanistes* 124 (2007): 97-103, p. 91.

¹² Weiner, Annette B. *The Trobrianders of Papua New Guinea*. Thomson/Wadsworth, 2002, p 36.

¹³ Weiner, Annette B. *The Trobrianders of Papua New Guinea*. Thomson/Wadsworth, 2002, p 38.

¹⁴ Weiner, Annette B. *The Trobrianders of Papua New Guinea*. Thomson/Wadsworth, 2002, p 126.

as they are trying to keep 'alive' some part of the deceased. The effort put into mourning is evidence that "the work of attending to the growth and development of the person has not been in vain."¹⁵

Weiner also gives further attention to a type of exchange that Malinowski missed, about women's wealth. Women have their own event in the death ritual where the owners distribute skirts and bundles made of dried banana leaves. With every payment, the deceased's connections "can be traced to friends, affines, *keyawa*, and patrilineal kin". After a man dies bundles are offered even to the men who participated in *kula* with him. These distributions summarize "each social and political relationship in the dead person's life."¹⁶

Even though the women's distribution takes place months after the burial, it isn't the last, and ties between the dead person's kin are still maintained through regular exchanges. Once a year the hamlet leader or chief is in charge of organizing an event for his dead kin, these events occur during the harvest season and "they commemorate other villagers, members of the same clan, who also recently died."¹⁷

Weiner stresses that political strength and matrilineal strength are a continuous concern to the Trobrianders, and the exchanges that occur in death rituals serve the function of highlighting and reestablishing both of those for the deceased and for their matrilineal relatives who still live.¹⁸ For men who are aiming for political power, these continued opportunities for demonstrating prestige through exchange and feasting also remain important today. Liep argues that "the last stage in the mortuary feast sequence is usually a 'great feast' honouring all the dead of a lineage during a period of a number of years [...] Its successful undertaking is an important step in the career of big men and a demonstration of the strength and external support of lineages."¹⁹ Again, we see that these exchanges continue to be important and adapted as an important part of Trobriander's modern society.

Reducing Conflict Through Ritual

Another significant function of Trobriand death rituals involve the lessening of conflict. As discussed above, since Trobrianders do not believe that death is natural, suspicion, spite, and hatred are the emotions exhibited by the family of the deceased at first. Many of the rituals aim to reduce these suspicions. Other death rituals, such as the *wosi milamala* songs aim to the creation and stabilization of social relations, as well as to the control of human emotions.

There are two aspects to be addressed here in terms of lessening conflict. The first comes from sorcery beliefs, as outlined above. The sorcery behind a death is not just a successful attack on an

¹⁵ Weiner, Annette B. *The Trobrianders of Papua New Guinea*. Thomson/Wadsworth, 2002, p 50.

¹⁶ Weiner, Annette B. *The Trobrianders of Papua New Guinea*. Thomson/Wadsworth, 2002, p 128.

¹⁷ Weiner, Annette B. *The Trobrianders of Papua New Guinea*. Thomson/Wadsworth, 2002, p 134.

¹⁸ Weiner, Annette B. *The Trobrianders of Papua New Guinea*. Thomson/Wadsworth, 2002, p 135.

¹⁹ Liep, John. "Massim mortuary rituals revisited." *Le Journal de la Société des Océanistes* 124 (2007): 97-103, p. 93.

individual, but also an attack on the entire matrilineage. The purposes of these attacks are often thought to be an attempt to weaken the entire matriline.

Villagers are very cautious in their social relations with everyone. “Suspicion and danger are the underside of love and affection. Every death reaffirms this contradiction”.²⁰ Each death is attributed to an enemy and is considered as an attack against the matrilineage, whether they are a chief or a child. If the matrilineage dies out, its property and rank are claimed by others. Each death raises the Trobriander’s fear and suspicions.²¹

Weiner argues that sorcery beliefs did not drop after increased Western influence in the Trobriand islands, but rather continued and transformed. Young men have spread all across Papua New Guinea to work. It is now believed by villagers that when they come back home they bring chemical poisons with the intention of killing their enemies by poisoning them.²²

By having ritualized mourning practices as part of the death ritual, a structure is given that allows people who display the correct emotions and be removed from suspicion, reducing tensions all around. Every death celebrates the enemy’s deadly intentions and desires, as well as the danger ingrained in the enemy’s achievement. Suspicions of sorcery are removed by observing the way the person displays his/her grief, “either by singing and dancing outside or crying inside.”²³

There's even another mortuary exchange that's the opposite of the exchanges discussed above, where people from the matrilineage of the deceased person's spouse give gifts to the deceased person's matrilineage, in order to address sorcery. When a man dies each spouses' matrilineage kin has to show its innocence and prove their lack of participation in the cause of death. “

Alongside of the suspicion-reducing aspects of the mortuary rituals, there is also a second conflict-reducing practice. In his study of the *wosi milamala*, Senft uses the concept of ritual communication to explore how these songs promote harmony in this social context of hidden feeling and tension. According to Senft, by ritualizing communication, it provides an ease of tension and an increase of harmony in functions of speech that exists in vital social situations and in containing and controlling social differences, as well as decreasing disagreements that lead to discords. Ritualization of communication can be described as a kind of strategic action that promotes non-aggressive behavior, social bonding and the dissipation of any dangerous elements that will negatively affect the social harmony of a community.²⁴

²⁰ Weiner, Annette B. *The Trobrianders of Papua New Guinea*. Thomson/Wadsworth, 2002, p 35.

²¹ Weiner, Annette B. *The Trobrianders of Papua New Guinea*. Thomson/Wadsworth, 2002, p 35-36.

²² Weiner, Annette B. *The Trobrianders of Papua New Guinea*. Thomson/Wadsworth, 2002, p 40.

²³ Weiner, Annette B. *The Trobrianders of Papua New Guinea*. Thomson/Wadsworth, 2002, p 38.

²⁴ Senft, Gunter, 2009. “Trobriand Islanders' forms of ritual communication,” in G. Senft and E. B. Basso (eds.), *Ritual communication*, Oxford: Berg, 81–101, p.82.

The “*wosi milamala* songs are a representation of a situation-specific, complex, sophisticated, and extraordinary form”²⁵ of ritualization of communication in the Trobriand Islands. In the Trobriand society during the year the most significant event is the “period of harvest festivals”, which is also a time for mortuary exchanges and thus the continuing of mortuary ritual. The *milamala* period could be threatening for the community, since there are rivalries that are expressed in these gatherings. But the songs do not allow such a development.

Senft did his research recently, 2006-2008, and recorded a number of these songs. He notes, however, as are they are sung in an archaic version of the language, at this point only a few of the older Trobrianders, and some of the interested younger ones, could understand their full content. As content-bearing messages, then, their importance has diminished. As reminders of the belief in spirits they continue.²⁶

These songs force Trobrianders to be in control of their behavior and emotions by reminding them that the *baloma*, the spirits of the dead, are present. Their presence indicates that Trobrianders must follow all social norms which “were valid even for the spirits of the dead.” Trobrianders respect the *baloma* and so do not dare offend them.²⁷ The songs are an audible reminder that the *baloma* are surrounding them during these mortuary rituals. As such, as reminders of the spirits they also assist in the pain of grieving. They are a reminder that death is just a rite of passage, passing from one world to the spirit world. Also, they “remind islanders that the present and the future are anchored in the past”, for the *baloma* future doesn’t differ from the past, as life in *Tuma* underworld never changes.²⁸

Yams

The importance of yams in Trobriand death rituals could have been discussed in the section of exchange, as yams are important to a number of the mortuary exchanges and feasts. They deserve their own discussion, however, both because yams are both important to Trobriand identity but also because they are now threatened by changes in the environment.

First, yams are essential in paying the workers, and the owners often need to draw on help to gather enough yams to do so. Being able to pay out these yams is important to defending the strength of the matrilineage that was attacked through death. In the mortuary exchanges, as Weiner says that this distribution is vital, because of its importance the owners call their supporters to help them collect

²⁵ Senft, Gunter, 2009. “Trobriand Islanders' forms of ritual communication,” in G. Senft and E. B. Basso (eds.), *Ritual communication*, Oxford: Berg, 81–101, p.83-4.

²⁶ Senft, Gunter, 2009. “Trobriand Islanders' forms of ritual communication,” in G. Senft and E. B. Basso (eds.), *Ritual communication*, Oxford: Berg, 81–101, p.92.

²⁷ Senft, Gunter, 2009. “Trobriand Islanders' forms of ritual communication,” in G. Senft and E. B. Basso (eds.), *Ritual communication*, Oxford: Berg, 81–101, p.94.

²⁸ Senft, Gunter, 2009. “Trobriand Islanders' forms of ritual communication,” in G. Senft and E. B. Basso (eds.), *Ritual communication*, Oxford: Berg, 81–101, p.95.

the required number of yams. In these events owners exhibit the power of their matrilineage for the first time.²⁹

Weiner also argues that yams determine the way that "women's wealth" is distributed during the mortuary ritual where the bundles and skirts are given, and yams are given away by men at the end of that ritual exchange as well. Yams are important to the work that links groups through marriage and patrilineal relationships to matrilineage ones, as men make yam gardens and give baskets of yams to daughters and sisters through their lives. This is the work that is repaid in mortuary exchanges.³⁰

Second, yams are important to the feasts that occur as part of the continuing death rituals in the years following death. At least one of these feasts must involve only yams. Events that are organized by hamlet leaders or chiefs during harvest period include additional distributions for five or ten years after the women's mortuary distribution and include other villagers, members of the same clan that recently passed away. These events take place only once a year.³¹

Third, the presence of yams in mortuary rituals is just part of their central place in Trobriand society. As Malinowski found in the turn of the century, Weiner found in the 1970s, and Michelle MacCarthy found in the 2000s, yams are a "special food" and central to obligations and exchange. In the Trobriand Islands an experienced gardener gains popularity by producing a significant pile of yams, every year. These yams are exchanged in order "to meet a variety of social obligations and extend new obligations."³²

And yet, yams are currently under threat in the Trobriands. Reduced yields in yams were being reported by the 1990s and studied in a pilot project in 1999. One of the reasons recorded for the decline was that some traditional ceremonies had become less important, that fewer people participated in the communal labor that was part of yam growing, and that many of the strict magic-related taboos regarding the yams were no longer followed (taboos which had the effect of maintaining soil fertility). The influence of missionaries was blamed for much of this.³³

Overpopulation is apparently also a concern, and MacCarthy found evidence that islanders were planting at non-traditional times in order to get two crops a year, which was partially explained to her as coming from the demands of the mortuary feasts. Clearly the feasts remained important, putting pressure on agricultural practices in a changed environment. Global warming and dramatic

²⁹ Weiner, Annette B. *The Trobrianders of Papua New Guinea*. Thomson/Wadsworth, 2002, p 48.

³⁰ Weiner, Annette B. *The Trobrianders of Papua New Guinea*. Thomson/Wadsworth, 2002, p 131.

³¹ Weiner, Annette B. *The Trobrianders of Papua New Guinea*. Thomson/Wadsworth, 2002, p 134.

³² MacCarthy, Michelle. "Playing politics with yams: Food security in the Trobriand Islands of Papua New Guinea." *Culture, Agriculture, Food and Environment* 34, no. 2 (2012): 136-147, p 136.

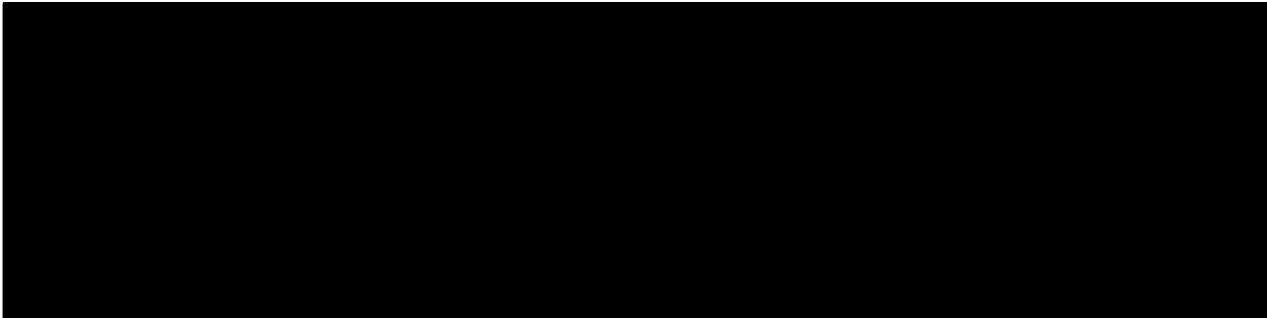
³³ MacCarthy, Michelle. "Playing politics with yams: Food security in the Trobriand Islands of Papua New Guinea." *Culture, Agriculture, Food and Environment* 34, no. 2 (2012): 136-147, p 138.

changes in the seasons were also explained to her as reasons for overall decline in production that caused such great concerns and misguided attempts to grow even more yams.³⁴

MacCarthy finds that Malinowski's argument about the centrality of yams as related to values still stands. As Malinowski said, owning and exhibiting food is vital for the natives. There is pride in owning a great amount of food, "its one of their leading characteristics".³⁵ Thus the loss of yam production threatens both mortuary rituals but also Trobriand dignity. What changes have occurred as a result of the decline in yam production?

The role of yams in exchanges is traditionally established and its not restricted by the fact that yams are the main nutritional element that provides the Trobrianders with their caloric needs. If there is lack of yams other goods can replace them, such as rice, calico, or house wares. These are store goods that require money, not traditionally locally produced. Given the fact that wage jobs are difficult to find and cash is not easily available these goods mostly concern Trobrianders working in urban centers. The islanders who work far from their families are the ones who mostly care about keeping tradition and living the 'old way'. MacCarthy finds that the problem of adequacy of "yams and cash" for social need and the practice of *sagali* is a current topic of debate in all Trobriand communities, both in islands and urban centers.³⁶

Conclusion



Mortuary rituals have continued to serve the function of reproducing kinship structures over time and reducing psychological distress and social conflict. We can see that Malinowski's original argument about death rituals, that they alleviate anxiety and rebond the group together, still holds decades later when Weiner was writing, and decades after that when Senft was writing. And that Weiner's argument that mortuary ritual exchanges are important to recreating relationships is still relevant decades later when MacCarthy and Liep were doing their research too, as their writing shows.

³⁴ MacCarthy, Michelle. "Playing politics with yams: Food security in the Trobriand Islands of Papua New Guinea." *Culture, Agriculture, Food and Environment* 34, no. 2 (2012): 136-147, p 139.

³⁵ Malinowski, Bronislaw. "The Primitive Economics of the Trobriand Islanders." *Economic Journal* 21 (1921): 1-16, p 8-9.

³⁶ MacCarthy, Michelle. "Playing politics with yams: Food security in the Trobriand Islands of Papua New Guinea." *Culture, Agriculture, Food and Environment* 34, no. 2 (2012): 136-147, p 145.

³⁷ Malinowski, Bronislaw. *Magic, science and religion and other essays*. Beacon Press, 1948, pg 35.

The rituals have changed because of interference by the state but also internal factors, like fewer people following agricultural taboos. However, they have not been replaced, rather altered. However, it does appear that external threats, like soil fertility and climate change, may fundamentally alter the availability of yams for these rituals. They are perhaps replaceable, as other aspects have also changed, but we see that they are also closely tied with Trobriand identity, values, and political power too.

Malinowski, from his Functionalist perspective, believed that the institutions of societies tended towards equilibrium, allowing the societies to deal with external threats and maintain their integrity. We see that in some instances this is the case; many changes in Trobriand society have been adapted into the mortuary rituals without diminishing their role. However, we see that some external threats may be too devastating for society to deal with, and the disappearance of yams may be this threat.

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EE/RPPF

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Extended essay - Reflections on planning and progress form

Candidate: This form is to be completed by the candidate during the course and completion of their EE. This document records reflections on your planning and progress, and the nature of your discussions with your supervisor. You must undertake three formal reflection sessions with your supervisor: The first formal reflection session should focus on your initial ideas and how you plan to undertake your research; the interim reflection session is once a significant amount of your research has been completed, and the final session will be in the form of a viva voce once you have completed and handed in your EE. This document acts as a record in supporting the authenticity of your work. The three reflections combined must amount to no more than 500 words.

The completion of this form is a mandatory requirement of the EE for first assessment May 2018. It must be submitted together with the completed EE for assessment under Criterion E.

Supervisor: You must have three reflection sessions with each candidate, one early on in the process, an interim meeting and then the final viva voce. Other check-in sessions are permitted but do not need to be recorded on this sheet. After each reflection session candidates must record their reflections and as the supervisor you must sign and date this form.

First reflection session

Candidate comments:

My initial idea was to study the concept of Death in a society, it is something that occurs in all societies. But how is a society affected by the death of one of its individuals? For whom are death rituals really addressed, for the living or the deceased? To narrow down which societies death rituals my research would be based on, I went to both Musée de l'Homme and Musée du quai Branly in Paris, France in order find information on death rituals which would help me narrow down my research, and possibly to decide on which tribe/ society my research would be based on.

Date: [March 2018]

Supervisor initials: []

Interim reflection

Candidate comments:

Following my initial idea, I'm going to study what is the social function of death rituals. Unfortunately, the information collected from both museums in France couldn't be used in my extended essay as the artifacts weren't derived from ethnographic anthropological research but belonged in private art collections. But even though that information couldn't be used, I still gained a more holistic approach to the term death rituals, by learning about different death rituals in different tribes through my visits in the museums. I chose to study the Trobrianders, since they have been studied by many different anthropologists (e.g. Weiner, Malinowski, etc.) through the years. And so, I decided to discuss the death rituals in the Trobriand Islands, and how they have stayed important in the face of much social change, what is their social function that allows them to continue?

Date:

Supervisor initials:

Final reflection - Viva voce

Candidate comments:

During the process of completing my Extended Essay on Social & Cultural Anthropology of the IB program I have gained numerous skills, such as: how research should be done, how important is the process of choosing appropriate data according to my research question, structuring a research paper, etc. It was challenging yet rewarding experience since it was the very first time I had full control over what my research is going to be on. Also, I gained a different understanding on death rituals since I gathered information from anthropological research that was conducted on different approaches (e.g. Functionalism, Feminism, etc.). Furthermore, I learned the importance of deadlines, how to time manage, organize my time, and how detailed analysis in specific topics is qualitatively better than general analysis on a broader theme.

Date:

Supervisor initials: