

# SOCIETIES AND CULTURES IN CONTACT

- While this anthropological theme is not as prevalent throughout this chapter as the others, it is important to recognize minor themes that contribute to our understanding of the chapter
- This theme deals with the positive, negative or neutral relationships that are created when two groups (i.e. the Trobrianders and the Australian Government) interact
- This theme is exemplified when Annette Weiner writes,
  "Traditionally, at a chief's death,

villagers gathered for three days and nights to mourn. However, after colonization, the Australian Government demanded that burial, for sanitations reasons, occur more quickly, and now it takes place on the day following the first all-night vigil." **patrilaterally**. **Matrix** The "owners" are not allowed to touch

the dead body, nor are they

resources to those close to the

deceased and help repay any

shaving their head, painting

for digging the grave and

other such related tasks.

their body and sitting with the

suspicion will fall upon them

for having caused the death.

that the deceased's spirit,

body. They are also responsible

allowed to partake in

debts he may have.

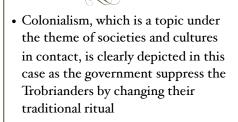
**M** The "workers" act as mourners by

If one did not mourn well enough

**I** Tuma is the island where they believe

baloma, will go.

mourning, but they are required to give up their



### THEMES WITHIN THE CHAPTER

### **Belief Systems and Practices**

- · Belief systems and practices include religion, religious movements, myths, rituals, witchcraft, magic, and sorcery
- According to the Trobrianders, sorcery plays an integral role in the cause of death
- Sorcery is the only fear instilled into the minds of Trobriand children and it is a grave matter that is carried on from generations to generations through the matrilineage line. A mistake of an ancient ancestor can cause the death of an entire matrilineage.
- · Belief systems play a large part in determining rituals and practices, as well as greatly affect social relations and interactions
- Sorcery also affects the practices during death, forcing the Trobrianders to mourn unstoppably in fear of being accused as a suspect of the death.

### **Individuals, Groups and Society**

- This theme deals with the discussion of socialization, status and role, the realm of public and private and social and group identity (among other things as well)
- The status of the individual is showed within the burial ceremony as those of higher rank are buried with more valuable possessions, such as Uwealsi who was buried with a yam.
- The event of death is a communal one as villages of different matrilineages come together to mourn the loss, and even compete during the singing of the ancient repertoires, an event that helps bring the groups together
- The death of an individual also stalls the activities of society as during the mourning period, there is to be no celebrations even if it is the harvest season
- The realm of public and private is further explored in the theme of death as there are both public mourning sessions and private mourning sessions (i.e. the isolation of the spouse) which both serve their respective purposes

•In all, through the death practices of the Trobrianders, the power and

# Anthropological Terms(cont'd) **Balanced Reciprocity**

Definition: A mode of exchange whereby the giving and the receiving are specific in terms of the value of the goods and the time of their delivery

• The first set of exchanges, sigiliyawali, involving yams, taro, and small amounts of money, takes place the day after the burial.

# **Taboo**

Definition: A social or religious custom prohibiting or restricting a particular practice or forbidding association with a particular person, place, or thing

• Burial is only the initial part of the obligations surrounding a death. The heaviest taboos involve strict seclusion and

Not only do mourners stay secluded or cover their bodies in black, even their own names become

practices/rituals affect both groups and society on a whole

role of individuals in society is shown and

### **Prestige**

Definition: The social esteem others hold for an

Kinship as an Organizing

**Principle** 

Definition of Kinship: The people we

(consanguineal) and marriage (affinal)

Kinship is the key factor in defining the

part in the ensuing drama that each

The members of the matrilineage are

responsible for organizing the burial

The members of the matrilineage also

of the deceased through shaving their

heads and blackening their faces.

him in chieftaincy

have responsibilities to mourn the death

When a chief dies, it is a member within

his own matrilineage that will succeed

The members of the patrilineage and

responsibilities of becoming "workers"

in the customs and traditions of death.

marriage (affinal kin) have the

categorized as "owners of the deceased's

person will play during a death

person's belongings." They are

and the exchanges that follow

are related to through blood

- If the dead were a chief he would be buried with a large yam so when he reaches Tuma he can show it as part of his political power [the average person is buried with nothing].
- Even when a chief is ill, he is adorned with cultural symbols that express his past seductiveness and fame (his

# Matrilineal Descent

- Definition: Descent traced exclusively through the female line to establish group membership
- The relevance and importance of matrilineal descent is highlighted through the "owners" and

Anthropological Terms

# **Rituals**

- Definition: A religious or solemn ceremony consisting of actions performed according to a predetermined order.
- The news about the death must first be spread and reach the rest of the family and friends of the deceased
- The villagers then begin making the corps look youthful and beautiful by dressing it in the traditional garments worn by village youth.

### Acculturation

**Definition**: Major cultural changes people are forced to make owing to intensive firsthand contact between societies

- Australians changed the practise of mourning into 1 day the death of a man his wife would be required to stay in solitude in a hut, for about half a year. The Australians changed the practice so that the widow would be allowed out to excrement waste.
- Witchcraft

Definition: An explanation of events based on the belief that certain individuals possess an innate psychic power capable of causing harm, including sick-ness and death. Also includes beliefs and practices of benevolent magic.

• Flying witches are individuals who are believed to have the ability to leave their bodies while asleep. In an invisible state, they can attack someone by destroying a vital organ; however, a flying witch can also recite spells that will counter the attack and cure the patient. Whenever an old woman who was said to be a flying witch was met, young men and women gave her their last betel nuts as they did not want to anger her.

# Religion

Definition: A set of rituals, rationalized by myth, that mobilizes supernatural powers to achieve or prevent transformation of state in people and nature.

• Trobrianders believe in the afterlife: after death, the spirit baloma will travel to the island of Tuma and will be rejuvenated.