Mortuary Ritual, Modern Social Theory, and the Historical Moment in Pacific Modernity

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Death and the Triumph of Moral Community

In the latter nineteenth century, two analytical approaches to death and mortuary ritual developed in social theory. The one had a broad "intellectualist" orientation that probed ideational aspects of death such as fertility symbolism or the nature of the soul (e.g., Frazer 1933). In part, this paradigm promised to solve a great puzzle in *fin de siècle* European thought, namely, the explanation of prelogical "primitive mentality" (Lévy-Bruhl 1975). The second, and far more influential approach, saw death rites as a mechanism in the maintenance of collective order. This school, known as L'Année sociologique, which was also the name of its flagship journal, came to dominate the anthropology of mortuary ritual.

Our introductory chapter is meant to develop a theoretical framework for the ethnographic chapters that follow. Basically, our position is that while we agree with the classic perspective of the L'Année sociologique school that death calls moral community into question, where we differ is with respect to the consequences of mortuary ritual, which we see as ambiguous, restorative yet inconclusive, rather than functional. Moreover, we will also argue that not only do mortuary rituals in the contemporary Pacific express personal loss, but they also reflect the fluctuating positions of moral communities in global modernity. In other words, as we will elaborate, Pacific mortuary rites comprise open-ended dialogues about loss as well as about the world, changing and shifting as it is.

Foundational for the L'Année sociologique circle was a premise we call "the triumph of moral community." By "moral community," we refer to an autonomous, largely static system of normative institutions and "collective representations" that prevail over individual experience and communal disarray (Durkheim 1965: 16). In this view, transgressive rites or subversive practices

do not undermine solidarity and threaten moral order. There was, as we might say today, no agency. Nor did any subaltern speak. Dissonance during ritual was both temporary and authorized and was ultimately harnessed to reinstate the *status quo ante*. Even suicide, as Durkheim (1951) so famously argued, a seemingly consummate act of antisocial individualism, affirmed that society was the basis for understanding behavior. The moral community always triumphed. Its "social facts" reigned supreme (Durkheim 1982: 52).

In *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (1965), written on the eve of the first horrific collapse of modern Europe, Durkheim understood death as an individual, hence, immoral violation of normative order. In consequence, mortuary rites, like all religious ceremonies, met this threat to social harmony by renewing "collective sentiments … which then lead men [*sic*] to seek one another and to assemble together" (1965: 399). We mourn, in this view, not to assuage personal grief, but, duty bound, to renew our commitment to and membership in moral community. Any society that "allows one of its members to die without being wept for," Durkheim declared, "shows by that very fact that it lacks moral unity and cohesion: it abdicates; it renounces its existence" (1965: 400). And any individual who rejects attending a funeral breaks "the bonds uniting him to the group … [thus] contradicting himself." The terror of death is bested only by the horror of what might happen if a community refuses to come together to weep for its loss.

It was left to Durkheim's student Robert Hertz to formulate fully the classic anthropological statement on death and mortuary ritual (1960).[1] Focusing on what he called "secondary burial" rites (1960: 75) among the Dayak or Olo Ngaju of southeastern Borneo, Hertz argued that death was a prolonged, multistaged process, culminating in rebirth, rather than an instantaneous biological moment of destruction and finality.

Hertz parsed death into the corpse, its spirit/ghost, and the survivors. All three components—somatic, cosmological, and social—run the same course during death because they are all part of one body (see Metcalf and Huntington 1991). The cadaver decomposes, becoming impure and polluted; the ghost, now "pitiful and dangerous" (Hertz 1960: 37), lingers between the living and the ancestors; and mourners vacate everyday moral life. This tense and uncertain interlude goes on, essentially, until the end of corporeal desiccation, at which time a "final feast" restores and celebrates moral order (Hertz 1960: 75–76).

The body, now reduced to bones, is permanently interred in a secondary burial; the ghost is dispatched to the ancestral realm, where it can assist, rather than haunt, the living; and mourners, now shaven and cleansed, rejoin society anew (see Metcalf 1982: 95). Death begins with the disintegration of body, self, and society yet concludes with the values of purity, closure, and the reintegration of moral community. In this way, Hertz avowed, "society, its peace recovered, can triumph over death" (1960: 86).

Similarly, van Gennep (1960) argued that ritual sustained order during times that might otherwise collapse into chaos and dystopic, Hobbesian violence. As individuals moved across indeterminate moral spaces, ritual protected society by affirming the continuity of collective values. Famously, van Gennep divided what he called "*rites de passage*" into three phases. Actors were, first, separated from ordinary moral status, then, second, isolated into a liminal or transitional phase for education, and, last, reincorporated back into moral life.

van Gennep's tripartite schema was anything but subject to improvisation. Predictability and repetition were its essential features. Thus mortuary ritual adhered to conventional scripts and symbols that solved the ambiguities death posed. The new ghost must be forced out of the world of the living and sent off to the afterlife, while mourners, disposed as they are to follow the deceased into the netherworld, must cease grieving and return to the community. For van Gennep, as for Hertz and Durkheim, these challenges were moral, not biological, existential, or psychological. And so they required a moral solution: a collective funeral.

The broad L'Année sociologique perspective on death and mortuary ritual exemplified the self-confident convictions of that phase of modernism often identified with so-called grand theory. For one, its single, analytic vision, namely, functionalism, would assuredly expose the essences of sociocultural phenomena. For another, moral community always triumphed over social and psychological conflict. That this confidence persisted through two world wars, including the Holocaust, remains an enigma of modern social thought. But persist it did.

The L'Année sociologique perspective entered Anglophone anthropology through Radcliffe-Brown (Stocking 1984). In his framework, each person "occupies" a specific role in a "network of social relations" (Radcliffe-Brown 1922: 285). Consequently, death disrupts "social cohesion" whereupon "society has to organize itself anew and reach a new condition of equilibrium." Funerals compensate for the loss of the deceased's "social personality," that is, "the sum of characteristics by which he [*sic*] has an effect upon the social life … of others." Funerals also promote "sentiments" that align the individual's "conduct" with "the needs of the society" (Radcliffe-Brown 1922: 275). Last, the funeral engulfs participants in the "moral force" of community—what, in regard to dance among the Andaman Islanders, Radcliffe-Brown described as "unity and harmony" (1922: 252). Otherwise, things fall apart.

Malinowski offered a similar, somewhat more psychological perspective (1916). The anguish of death, he argued, unless contained, might burst into overwhelming feelings of horror and abandonment, leading to flight and wanton destruction. Thus mortuary ceremonies soothe mourners by offering the prospect of an afterlife and immortality and by detaching the spirit/soul from

the Shakespearean "mortal coil."[2] The funeral denies the finality of death to prevent individual and collective psychosis. Additionally, the performance of the rite, per the reigning paradigm, renews moral cohesion.

Despite his Durkheimian orientation, Malinowski also conceded another important, albeit neglected, point about death. In the Trobriand Islands, the "actual feelings" of mourners *clashed* with "the official display of grief" and "the conventional sentiment and idea" pertaining to death (1929: 161–62). But few anthropologists, Malinowski included, followed up on this insight. As a result, analysis of mortuary ritual remained encumbered by the value of regenerating the *status quo ante*.[3]

Malinowski's view of death was likely influenced by Freud (see Stocking 1986). Normal mourning, Freud (1964) theorized, can turn into pathological melancholia, leading even to suicidal thinking. "In mourning," as Freud stated, "it is the world which has become poor and empty; in melancholia it is the ego itself" (1964: 246). In successful mourning, the desire to remain alive eventually leads to the withdrawal of attachment from the deceased. In melancholia or depression, however, the ego remains forever attached to loss and so is destroyed (see Robinson 1990).[4] Malinowski likely projected Freud's view of bereavement onto society as the ego writ large. In the absence of moral and psychological integration during mourning, then, it was not just the ego that would suffer annihilation, but community itself. Subsequent anthropologists often offered a similar argument.[5]

For much of twentieth-century anthropology, moral views of mortuary ritual took on two forms. One side, initiated by Malinowski, argued that funerals protected moral community by calming and containing individual anguish (e.g., Wilson 1939; Powdermaker 1931: 43; LeVine 1982). As Monica Wilson put it succinctly, the funeral prevented "madness," allowing the Nyakyusa of Tanzania to "express their grief and put it all behind them" (1954: 239). The bereaved were thus reintegrated back into society (Reid 1979)—or, as in Jewish traditions, never allowed entirely to depart the community (Heilman 2001). The funeral was therapeutic. The other side attributed the efficacy of mortuary ritual to the restoration of "social morphology" (e.g., Gluckman 1937; Firth 1951: 63–64). Thus Goody (1962) highlighted the ritual representation of political order among the West African LoDagaa and the orderly transmission of property. Other anthropologists saw the funeral as a "kind of climax" of the deceased's life (Powdermaker 1966: 313) or an idealized image of personhood (Hogbin 1970: 160; Pearson 1982). But whether viewed through psychology or sociology, both sides of this debate committed to a moral vision: the primary function of mortuary ritual was to enclose the individual within collective order, restore normative categories, and reintegrate society.

Within this broad theoretical dichotomy, anthropologists over the past half century or so also argued that mortuary ritual resolved key sociocultural

tensions. Belief in the afterlife among the LoDagaa, for example, discharged the opposition between the mortality of the human body and the perpetuity of the body politic (Goody 1959). Among the Bara of Madagascar, the desiccation of female flesh leaves only masculine bones, resulting in an imbalance between "order" and "vitality." The funeral responded with a bacchanal, as a classic "rite of rebellion" (Gluckman 1954), to restore the "polar continuum of reality" (Huntington 1973: 82) Similarly, Danforth (1982) adopted a structuralist framework to analyze rural Greek funerals as mediating the contradiction between life and death. In all of these studies, funerals answer dilemmas that would otherwise subvert the solidarity and continuity of moral order.

We read a similar view of the funeral in Bloch and Parry's introduction to their 1982 volume *Death & the Regeneration of Life* (see also Bloch 1982). We acknowledge the contributions of this work toward rethinking and reviving the relationship between death and fertility that had long been consigned—unjustly, in our view—to the Frazerian dustbin of anthropological theory. Still, Bloch and Parry, following the lead of Goody (1962), also argued that mortuary ritual dissolves individuality and temporality in order to assert the primacy of an eternal, often masculine sociopolitical order. The funeral, in other words, responds to death by reinstalling normative canons of gender and leadership.

Among other ethnographic examples Bloch and Parry (1982) reinterpreted was Andrew Strathern's (1982) analysis of mortuary rites in Highland New Guinea. They saw these ceremonies as abrogating the deceased's exchange relationships, thus promoting the autonomy of corporate groups. Lévi-Strauss phrased this utopian eschatology or regression best: "Mankind has always dreamed of seizing and fixing that fleeting moment when it was permissible to believe that the law of exchange could be evaded, that one could gain without losing, enjoy without sharing … a world in which one might keep to oneself" (1969: 497). But this ritual message could never prevail, since moral life throughout the Pacific Islands and elsewhere pivots on reciprocity and marriage. At best, then, the funeral offers a compromise between everyday reality and ideology, thus subsuming anguished grief, despite Lévi-Strauss's infantile desire, under the imperative to uphold moral and political order.

Earlier, we made a brief reference to the "rite of rebellion" paradigm, a mode of ritual, said Max Gluckman, in which expressions of discontent about "particular distributions of power and not about the structure of the [political] system itself" are allowed (1954: 3). Our point is this: ritual was viewed to authorize moments of cathartic disorder but only for the purpose of restoring "social cohesion" (Gluckman 1954: 231). Ritual never seriously calls moral and political foundations of society into question. This view, with just a few exceptions (e.g., Helander 1988), has pervaded the anthropology of mortuary ritual (e.g., Corlin 1988: 73).

In this view, the funeral is provoked by a teleological vision Evans-Pritchard termed the "sociologistic metaphysic" (1956: 313). The funeral creates moral solidarity and largely speaks with one authoritative voice in support of what Ortner and Whitehead (1981) once termed the "prestige structure" of society. Hence, funerals that fail to foster moral order and emotional equanimity are ethnographically exceptional (e.g., Geertz 1959; Harris 1982). The funeral becomes a salvation, staunching the inevitable decline of the cosmos (Jorgensen 1985).

Death, Modernity, Dialogue

Today, perhaps, the cosmos is less becalmed. But neither is it in decline. Bloch's (1989) analysis of the Merina *famadihana* ceremony is a justly famous case in point. In the mid-1960s, the festival stressed culturally specific forms of disorder such as decomposition, individuality, and women precisely to strengthen the moral status quo that privileged continuity, corporate groups, and men (see also Dureau 1991). Today, one can view the *famadihana* ceremony on hundreds of YouTube clips; dozens of websites use the rite to promote tourism in Madagascar. Indeed, the ceremony is listed by Lonely Planet, the popular travel guide publishing house, as one of the "world's best festivals." All this suggests that, whatever the *famadihana* rite communicates about moral order, it now does so within a thoroughly globalized context. No longer are its meanings exclusively local.

In addition to acknowledging emerging references of mortuary ritual to modernity, we join a few anthropologists and social theorists who have also sought to refine the "triumph of moral community" view of mortuary ritual that we traced to L'Année sociologique. Particularly in societies, as in Melanesia, where exchange is central both to mortuary ritual and to what Fortes called the attainment of the status of "full personhood" (1987: 257), death rites do not so much as uphold ideology as provide a public arena for actors—again, usually men—to compete for prestige (e.g., Lincoln 1989; see also Goldschmidt 1973; Volkman 1985; Kan 1989). Or, as Roseman (2002) argued for rural Galicia, the sharing of personal memories of the deceased helps mourners move beyond "the loneliness and fear of solitude." But the constant public voicing of these memories also serves to critique the dominant classes by affirming that everybody dies. Death rites become as politically and ideologically divisive as they are solidary.

We agree with the L'Année sociologique that death promotes moral order. But we disagree that mortuary rites only result in collective and psychological closure. Instead, we argue that their complexity may resist any reduction to moral community, whether to sustain the status quo or to challenge it, as we

have argued elsewhere (Lipset and Silverman 2005). Equally important, we see contemporary mortuary rites as composed of contrary voices. Thus our key theoretical claim is that voices in these rites do not necessarily reach moral resolution. Mortuary rites *may* reproduce order in terms of local cosmologies, social processes, and concepts of moral community. But modernist voices asserting capitalism, Christianity, the state, and development are also heard. That is to say, the subjectivities of multiple stakeholders, situated in particularistic values amid global histories, find inconclusive and ambiguous expression.

To be sure, the crisis into which the moral community must succumb at the death of one of its members provokes impassioned expressions of grief. But the tears, dirges, chants, and oratory are plural—contradictory and disputed. Here, we adopt a Bakhtinian concept of "dialogue" among both official and unofficial voices into an egalitarian framework in which no single voice holds sway (Bakhtin 1984: 18). Mortuary rites do not necessarily move forward to synthesis or resolution. No chaos, psychological or social, is necessarily soothed. Rather, the ritual performances of personhood and moral community—we hesitate to label the ritual a "restoration"—remain "unfinalized," which is to say, open ended, amid a globalized polyphony (Bakhtin 1984: 53). Death provokes arguments, quarrels, and juxtapositions, but no last word.

Death in the Contemporary Pacific

In taking the measure of Pacific Islanders' mortuary ritual with regard to modernity, perhaps there is no better place to start than with Sahlins's reference (1985) to Frazer's famous image of the "dying god" (1900). Sahlins of course invokes it in connection with the arrival of Captain Cook on the big island of Hawai'i during the New Year's rite in 1778.[6] Interwoven, self-evident concepts of life and death that drove the meaning of the ceremony were sufficiently powerful to negate the utter distinctiveness of Cook's first contact and recast him as Lono, the spirit of fertility and object of annual commemoration. The avatar of mercantile capitalism was incorporated into Hawai'ian cosmology in terms of which the world was renewed by "a kind of periodic deicide" (Sahlins 1985: 113). Cook qua Lono represented a unified Polynesian body politic that was at once moral and timeless, triumphant and defeated, impenetrable yet very much part of global history.

In Melanesia, death finds no less of an indissoluble relationship with the regeneration of the modern, moral world. Such is the regional vitality of this ambivalent unity that James Weiner (2001: 56) eschewed the opposed categories "life" and "death" and preferred the single term, "lifedeath." Or, as Mimica put it in his peculiar Jungian voice: the "primordial, ouroboric unity of libido and mortido constitutes the ontological core of many New Guinea life-worlds"

(2003: 280). But kindred existentialist tropes remain underutilized in Melanesian anthropology. Instead, since the 1970s, most Melanesianists have followed the lead of Annette Weiner's restudies of Trobriand Island culture (e.g., 1976, 1980) and have looked more pragmatically to exchange theory (see Lutkehaus, this volume).

In the Trobriands, as we learned from Weiner, death rites were part of long-term exchange sequences that reproduced moral relationships. Not only men, Weiner pointed out, but women as well seek to expand their prestige during funerals by giving wealth to various kin. In fact, women were primary agents in this exchange process. Trobriand prestations, as throughout Melanesia, conclude the deceased's relationships while they also disperse and deconstruct his or her identity. Gifts, in other words, remove the deceased from moral life (see also Mosko 1985: 221; Strathern 1981).[7] Society in Melanesia does not regenerate through deicide. But mortuary exchange still transforms the individuality of loss into a model of personhood that repairs, rather than calls into question, moral community.

Melanesian mortuary exchanges are also often said to compensate kin for assisting the deceased during his or her lifetime and to formally declare their innocence from accusations of sorcery or neglect. Funerary gifts, too, are seen to restore normative gender and to thwart cosmological decay by celebrating fertility rather than decomposition.[8] In all these instances, however, mortuary rites, as Hertz theorized, complete a life so that the dead, the mourners, and the community as a whole can move forward (see Macintyre 1983; De Coppet 1981; Lindstrom 1988; Wagner 1989; Battaglia 1990; Barraud et al. 1994; Foster 1995; Aijmer 2008). Melanesian mortuary rites, as a function of the theoretical framework that makes sense of them, privilege the maintenance of moral community.

Anthropologists who study the southwestern Pacific agree on the supreme importance of death in local experience (e.g., Stasch 2009: 208; Damon 1989: 3). But they have not adequately situated or conceptualized mortuary rites either in colonial histories or the postcolonial present—with the exception, really, of the impact of Christianity (e.g., Brison 1998; Lohmann 2005; Schram 2007; Tomlinson 2007).[9] However, even in the context of missionization, it is fair to generalize that the project of contemporary Melanesian ethnography has been to show that a century-long history, as John Barker wrote about the Maisin, has "by no means Westernized" death (1985: 273). As recently as 2007, in fact, all the papers in a theme issue of *Le Journal de la Société des Océanistes,* which honored the centennial anniversary and "continued relevance" of Hertz's classic essay (Venbrux 2007: 6), briefly acknowledged globalization (e.g., Gnecchi-Ruscone 2007; Liep 2007; Revolon 2007). But modernity was not seen to demand a retheorization of mortuary ritual.

It is true that a few studies have foregrounded plural, if not plainly contradictory, discourses that answer Western religions, commodities, and the state.

Beginning in the 1960s, for example, Samoan immigrants in urban California circulated fine mats and conspicuous gifts of money during funerals, not only among the deceased's kin but also as donations to the church minister (Albon 1970). In the Kingdom of Tonga in the 1990s, moreover, beer bottles and cans, used as grave decorations, paralleled the form of a traditional chiefly tomb and also expressed concerns about local status in relationship to modernity (Burley 1995; Teilhet-Fisk 1990; Kaeppler 1993; see also McGrath 2003). These two cases begin to give us a glimpse of how Pacific Islanders, drawing from their own cosmologies, stake out their identities in voices and practices that answer both death and the historical moment.

A brief digression to postcolonial Africa, we believe, will bring some of the broader features of the relationship of mortuary ritual to Pacific modernities into sharper focus. There are no walking dead in the contemporary Pacific, no liminal spaces wherein the "'un-mooring' of social ties" has ruptured "the division between life and death" such that the dead freely intrude upon daily life (Lee and Vaughan 2008: 357). Ghosts do sometimes visit kin in the Pacific, mainly during dreams and in dreamlike cargo cults. But urban streets and rural paths do not "resonate with stories and rumors of returning dead" who have sex with spouses, dig for diamonds, and attend concerts, as in Kinshasa (De Boeck 2005: 18).

Even in the aftermath of collective trauma, such as nuclear testing in the early 1950s, the force and capacity of traditional death and mourning remained, if not intact, at least possible (see Carucci, this volume). Horrific road accidents in Papua New Guinea (PNG), graphically featured in local newspapers, have not given rise to beliefs in malevolent, "twice dead" corpses that cause further fatal crashes on the way to and from burials and funerals (Lee 2012). Nor are the sites of vehicular tragedies imbued with dangerous significance. In the Pacific, the dead continue to exist adjacent to, but do not supersede, the living. Death, in other words, remains a part of life—but has not become, as in parts of Africa, life itself.

Corpses in the Pacific are present and identified, not missing and unrecovered as in Zaire (White 2005). We are aware of no politically charged disinterments. By contrast, disputes in Southern Cameroon between local and immigrant groups, or between urban elites and rural villagers, may result in violent struggles over corpses and nighttime exhumations, partly since burial is a claim of "belonging," with legal implications for election polling (Geschiere 2005). No comparable violence occurs in Pacific states, even where burial signifies contested loyalties, as several chapters in this volume attest. And although funerals have become expensive in some Pacific communities, and quite large, death has not become commercialized. No Pacific businesses cater to, say, popular desires for custom-made coffins that often fantasize modern commodity desires, as in Ghana (see Griffiths 2000).

In many African states, the work of death and mourning is performed by specialized experts (e.g., de Witte 2003). For most Pacific Islanders, local kin still tend to and inter the corpse and arrange and stage the funeral (see, e.g., Wilson and Sinclair, this volume). Indeed, Port Moresby, the largest city in the entire postcolonial Pacific, hosts just two Western-style mortuary businesses. That the prime minister paid his personal respects when Dove Funeral Services opened in March 2012 indicates something about the overall novelty of the enterprise in the region. The business, according to a newspaper report, aims "to provide affordable … service to the people of PNG so that they could give their relatives and loved ones a dignified send off" (*The National,* March 29, 2012).

As such, Dove Funeral Services promotes modern, decorous death, which only it can offer, and then only for payment, not gift exchange—all of which implicitly contrasts with "customary" rites. In another advertisement, this time for The Funeral Home, two hands appear to be releasing a white dove; and the caption reads, "caring people in your time of need." Here, the effort is made to appropriate death within the wider iconography of Christianity.[10] However, few Papua New Guineans or Pacific Islanders seem content to transform death in toto into Cartesian expressions of Christian, state-sponsored modalities of modern identity.

The target market of the funeral industry in the Pacific, such as it is, remains limited. With the exception of expatriate communities, funeral homes are used mainly by middle-class elites, such as government figures, who, unlike most rural and even urban dwellers, can afford the considerable expense.[11] At best, mortuary services are most commonly utilized to prepare a body for air transport back to the home community. And to afford the fee, people typically make claims on the collective assets of kin, thus fusing the modern memorialization of the individual with a broad network of social obligations. Even at its most modern, that is to say, death and burial in the Pacific engenders open-ended dialogue between the global and local.

In viewing mortuary rites in the contemporary Pacific as less subject to anomie than in parts of Africa, we do not mean to diminish colonial and postcolonial upheavals such as settler colonialism in Hawai'i and New Zealand/Aotearoa, political instability in Fiji, or "civil war" on Bougainville. Nor do we deny the presence of AIDS (see Butt and Eves 2008; Hammar 2010), episodic calamities like the 1994 explosion of twin volcanoes in PNG (Martin 2013), or the damage of rising sea levels to coastal communities (Lipset 2011; Rudiak-Gold 2013). But in the absence of genocide[12] and pandemics, as in Rwanda (Donovan 2002), our view is that Pacific mortuary rites have not become unrecognizable to the ancestors. Deaths and funerals throughout the Pacific evidence a measure of a persisting moral coherence—at least an ongoing plausibility—even as they reveal extensive transformation and revision. Or, as

we prefer, anthropologists can best understand death and the funeral in the contemporary Pacific not in terms of sheer disruption or dogged continuity but as answers to contradictory moral forces, both local and global.

Another instance, this time terribly tragic, illustrates this quality of mortuary dialogue. In January 2016, a terrible road accident resulted in the death of five young women returning from a Seventh Day Adventist youth crusade in PNG. The accident, made known largely through newspapers and social media, such as the "Loop PNG" Facebook page, occurred near Wewak, the municipal town of the East Sepik Province, where the sole X-ray machine in the only hospital in the province was broken. While one girl's body was flown to her natal village, four were flown to Port Moresby, where their bodies were kept in one of the funeral homes mentioned above. They were then flown back to Wewak for a collective funeral, and will be interred in their home communities, scattered about the country. At the collective funeral in the modern church, the four bodies were encased in identical black coffins, and adorned with identical garlands and same-sized portraits. In other words, the young women were encompassed by the singular body of a globalized Christ and memorialized as equivalent souls. To assist with the expenses, elected officials donated money, and a "GoFundMe" appeal was launched. In their home communities, we are confident that kin will mourn them in both ancestral and modern, Christian voices.

Recently, one of our Melanesianist colleagues protested that cultural anthropology, particularly in studies of religious change, often amounts to little more than a "science of continuity" (Robbins 2007: 9). We disagree. Rather, we affirm the vital importance of our discipline at this moment in history, especially as practiced in the Pacific Islands, in identifying and defending local agency *through* encounters with global modernity. To do otherwise is to join the very hegemonic, universalizing institutions that would seek to mute local voices. Ever since Cook's arrival in Hawai'i, indigenous actors have responded to foreign interlocutors by asserting the cosmological autonomy of their beliefs and practices.

We are reticent to view Pacific communities as inferior, passive, defeated, or lost—even as we highlight discontinuities that Robbins claims our discipline largely neglects. Indeed, the Pacific Islanders who appear in the chapters to follow resoundingly answer global avatars, desires, and goods in discourses that are neither wholly continuous with the past nor wholly assimilated to Christianity, the cash economy, or the state. Death in the contemporary Pacific provokes multiple voices that express rival perspectives in support of, on the one hand, countercolonial or antiglobal, culturally conservative views of body, spirit, and community, and, on the other hand, modernist convictions about the person and society. Mourners and the dead, it might be said, are both subjects of, and subjects to, their own signifying discourses as well as objects of

the universalizing sermons of Christianity and the values of capitalism. Death, as we overhear it, is thoroughly dialogized.

Where the Bodies Are Buried

Our theoretical compass is no less varied. That is to say, not one but several theoretical projects and empirical themes play out in this volume. Some authors deploy psychoanalytic frameworks, reference exchange theory or focus on the impacts of colonial history, capitalism, and development. While acknowledging biomedical and other universalist constructions, all chapters respond to the Hertzian paradigm that sees death in cosmological terms. In other words, death is seen to provoke debate about the autonomy of the ancestors and kin in the context of three modern dualisms: the separation of the body from the Christian soul, the separation of capitalist from local value, and the separation of the centralized state from the local community. At its most basic, our argument is that death compels voices that debate the reproduction of moral community in a historical moment that articulates with modernity in no single way.

Some locales in the volume have experienced a *longue durée* of missionary Christianity and petty capitalism yet still bury their dead in relative isolation from the state; other communities, dwelling in bicultural legal systems or transnational diasporas, devise funerals that involve multiple bureaucracies. Inflections of gender run throughout the volume, as men and women, sometimes separately, at other times together, stage vigils to deliberate causation, debate meaning from the passing, sing, play guitar, contest burial sites, and vie for status. Men and women, in other words, each express moral agency in what Clifford (1988: 228) dubs the "present-becoming-future." Several of our ethnographers, too, in the reflexive tradition of Rosaldo (1993) and Powdermaker (1966), make analytic use of personal grief to critically further their anthropological project. Death, as the other of reason, calls their authorial boundaries into question.

No fewer than seven of the nine chapters in the volume concern Papua New Guinea. The other two focus on Marshall Islanders and the Māori of New Zealand/Aotearoa (see Figure 0.1). But we mainly cluster the contributions according to how they are in dialogue with Pacific history.

In the five chapters making up the first section, local cosmologies assume a dominant voice in response to modernity. The tone of this assertion is not exactly triumphant. But neither is it subdued. Rather, the sentimental and narrative invocation of "tradition" or "custom" offers a sense of agency amid the upheavals of modernity.

This section begins with Laurence Carucci's epical account of death rites among Marshall Islanders, focusing on the colonial history and eventual exile of the people of Enewetak Atoll after US nuclear testing in the early 1950s. Repatriated in 1980, their dreams of a vibrant, emotionally satisfying, embodied return to the land of their ancestors came to naught. Some then resettled in Hawai'i in the early 1990s, where they began to insist upon a funerary relationship to a moral center through values that emerged in the course of that violent encounter.

Similarly, Che Wilson and Karen Sinclair, in their discussion of contemporary Māori death rites in New Zealand/Aotearoa, draw our attention to the complex role women play in overseeing the transition of the spirit to the afterlife. Although Māori today identify themselves as Catholics, women's voices and practices go on asserting the autonomy of Māori concepts of the moral person in the legally bicultural state.

Doug Dalton's chapter on the Rawa people of PNG also illustrates a degree of cultural resiliency amid modernity in Papua New Guinea. In their cemeteries, Rawa grave markers combine Rawa terms for death with Christianity. Yet some Rawa erect wooden shrines to the dead on lineage property rather than in the cemetery, thus staking a claim to land and, more broadly, challenging the modern and Christian dualism that divides the community from death.

David Lipset then analyzes dying and burial practices among the Murik Lakes people of PNG over seventy-five years. Despite changes, such as ritual abridgements and the waning of the Male Cult, a distinctively Murik concept of moral personhood, according to which the spirit is knotted to a "canoe-body" persists in the course of this period of time. The Murik erect crosses and recite prayers at cemetery gravesites. But, without apology to modernity, they still tie knots during mortuary rites, thus answering modern personhood with this cultural gesture of self-assurance.

In the last chapter in this section of the volume, Nick Bainton and Martha Macintyre compare the effects of recent mining revenues on death rites among the Lihir and Misima Islanders in PNG. When large-scale mining began pouring huge sums into a few rural communities in the Lihir Islands during the late 1990s, Lihirians began to practice ever more elaborate and expensive mortuary rites. The purpose of the funeral shifted away from celebrating the transition of the embodied person to the afterlife and started to focus on competitions for prestige through displays of wealth. On Misima, by contrast, the boom times of the local gold mine ended and left people with very little to show for them, other than massive ritual obligations and a society divided between haves and have-nots. In acrimonious dialogue, people argued in favor of abridging mortuary rites, or halting them altogether. Mining money, in other words, created an efflorescence of mortuary rites on Lihir, but only gave rise to rancor on Misima.

The second section of our volume is of a piece with the bitterness of Misima Islanders by offering glum appraisals of the fate of the dead amid Pacific modernities. In these four chapters, all of which focus on rural communities in PNG, mortuary rites do not culminate in a Hertzian ethos of triumph of moral community over the dead. Instead, we hear disconsolate expressions of personal and collective losses of power.

This section begins with the return of Nancy Lutkehaus to Manam, a volcanic island off the north coast of PNG, after long absence. In the years since her last visit, a huge eruption had forced the islanders into temporary, state-sponsored quarters on the mainland. In the meantime, however, a few people began to make their way back home, where they revive their old practice of homestead burial. With their island and future under threat, Manam Islanders valued physical closeness to the dead and their land. But their funerary petition for a unity of place and ancestors remained fraught and anxious.

A regretful mood pervades Alexis von Poser's account of mortuary rites among Kayan villagers, who live on the mainland opposite Manam Island. In the past, Kayan mortuary rites mirrored male initiation. Today, however, the elegant symmetries between these two ritual processes have all but vanished, most villagers having acceded to Catholicism, individualism, and linear temporality—that is, to modernity. Death no longer leads to rebirth but to signifiers of permanent loss: for example, to graves covered with cement. von Poser professes a bittersweet feeling about a fading culture, one he shared with a dwindling constituency of aging villagers.

In the penultimate chapter, Eric Silverman questions the extent to which contemporary mortuary rites among the Eastern Iatmul, who live along the middle Sepik River in PNG, reintegrate mourners back into moral community. Today, Eastern Iatmul mortuary rites do not seem to provide mourners with the "closure" they are expected to do. Grief persists, and this lack of resolution resonates with, and expresses, angst about their position in postcolonial modernity that is largely perceived as a grand failure. Mortuary rites remain informed by intricate Eastern Iatmul cosmology, to be sure. But at the same time they lay bare a sense of loss that is aggravated by modern concepts of personhood and global marginalization.

Lastly, Joshua Bell discusses mortuary rites among the I'ai people of the Purari Delta in PNG. Like the Manam, although for rather different reasons, the I'ai have also started to prefer homestead burials. The observation of mourning taboos and the very meaning of death now commemorate mistrust and misgivings within the community as well as powerlessness amid rural modernity. Death for the I'ai, no less than for Eastern Iatmul, has become an occasion for despondency, rather than triumphant closure.

Whether the tone is one of resolve or uncertainty, affirmation or anguish, continuity or rupture, or some combination therein, our argument is that death

and mortuary practices constitute dialogue about the reproduction of moral community in the historical moment of locally constituted modernities. We have thereby revised the hoary theoretical question posed by the L'Année sociologique school, which was, how do people in communities go about repairing themselves from the moral damage done by what Malinowski once called the "supreme and final crisis of life" (1948: 29)? By situating the question in Pacific histories, each chapter demonstrates that persons and communities not only answer death in terms of local cosmologies and social structures but, in doing so, their multiple, rivalrous voices simultaneously answer the ongoing challenges of modernity.

Notes

1. For critiques of Hertz, see Miles (1965), Metcalf (1977, 1981), and Evans-Pritchard (1960).
2. Earlier, Malinowski explored Trobriand reincarnation (1916).
3. Similarly, the psychological work of mourning was the cathartic sublimation of sorrow and anxiety (see also Wellenkamp 1988; Brison 1998). Thus death, the great disruptor, was made moral.
4. For similarities between Freud and Hertz, see Lemonnier (2007).
5. Thus attention to the details of mortuary feasting on New Ireland, argues Bolyanatz (1994), much like Lieber (1991) for the Kapingamaringi of Micronesia, restores order and serves to defend against internal grief.
6. Of course, one could find confirmation of this sort of dialogicality in the cargo cult literature as well (see Schwartz 1962; Ogan 1972; and Lawrence 1964).
7. In Kaliai, West New Britain, the first stages of the funeral may be staged long before the honoree's death, "so that he can see before he dies how much we honour him" (Counts and Counts 2004: 894). For aging in the Pacific, see Counts and Counts (1985).
8. In the Massim, funerary ritual also enacts potent images of amorality within the matrilineage, such as witches and homicides (Thune 1989: 170), with the killer himself sometimes sponsoring the funeral (Montague 1989), and avuncular cannibalism (Young 1989: 198). For the role of cannibalism in an Amazonian funerary complex, see Conklin (1995) and McCallum (1999).
9. We note, with considerable ethical qualms, the ongoing interest of missionaries and indigenous catechists in Pacific funerals as entrée points "to recognition of the greater power of Christ over that of their former gods and spirits, including their ancestors" (Thorp 1997: 22).
10. Our source for the sign is http://www.panoramio.com/photo_explorer#view=photo&position=11213&with_photo_id=59480461&order=date_desc&user=2405290.
11. The Embassy of the United States in Port Moresby lists the fees in 2012 for The Funeral Home: embalming was the equivalent of US$2,800, standard casket $750, outfit for the corpse $750, viewing $250, funeral director's fee $500, administration fee $750, and so forth. http://portmoresby.usembassy.gov/dipositionpng_091112.html.
12. Having said this, we note the common use today of the term "genocide" in regard to the conflict in West Papua between indigenous Melanesians and paramilitary Indonesian forces. We neither endorse nor challenge this usage here.

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