

Death as a Biological or Social Process

Look at the short film by Kelly Swazey (*Life that doesn't end with death*). Afterwards in small groups I would like you to discuss the film and how this relates to your own understanding (and experiences, where applicable) of death. Think in particular about the following:

1. Do you find the funerary practices of the communities of Tana Toraja unnerving or uncomfortable? Or do you have other reactions? Why – what is informing your response to the short film clip and images?
2. What similarities and differences do we share with the communities of Tana Toraja in our attitudes to death, the dead, funerary rituals?
 - a. Attitudes to death
 - b. Attitudes to (dead) bodies
 - c. Consumption of wealth as part of the funerary ritual
 - d. Location of the dead
 - e. The meaning(s) of the funeral ceremony
3. Kelly Swazey describes very clearly the transition from living individual to the afterlife (Puya). This she also equates with an individual's life cycle. How should we articulate this within van Gennep's notions of rites of passage?
4. Can we essentialise whether death should be considered a biological or a social process? To think about this you might also want to look at Webster's article on the twice-hanged man in *Body Matters* to see how western conceptions of the materiality of death have been transformed since the middle ages.