

CHAPTER 53

SOCIOLOGY

Doctoral Theses

01. AFEEDA. K. T.
Mapping a Ritual Landscape : A Study of a Self-Infliction Ritual among Mappilas in Malabar, Kerala.
Supervisor : Dr. Radhika Chopra
Th25200

Abstract
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The thesis focuses on a pain inflicting ritual among Mappilas in Kerala. It proceeds in two directions. Firstly it studies the performative dimension of the ritual. Ethnographic study of the ritual performance analyses the meaning of sacred pain in the ritual from the perspective of both the performers and the onlookers. It analyses how the performance of Kuthurtheeb creates a sensorium of pain which is experienced and shared among the community. At a second level, it examines the significance of the ritual in concretising the formation of the community. It analyses how the piety of the Kuthuratheeb performance and its different forms of embodiment in different periods of time influence community formation and sensibilities. The thesis argues for attention to be paid to the symbolic and the performative as expressive forms of community. The study of the performance of Kuthuratheeb brings attention to the transfer of baraka (blessing) and shifa (cure) to the Mappila community. Among the repertoire of rituals, the performance of Kuthuratheeb is an expression of corporeal piety among the Mappilas. The ability of the ritual to 'show' a community to itself, through enactment, has been the focus of my argument.

Contents

1. Introduction 2. Rituals of pain infliction 3. An introduction of kuthuratheeb: Understanding the ritual of self infliction 4. Sacred Pain and its many meaning: Understanding kuthuratheeb as a corporeal piety 5. Conclusion: Mappila community formation and the ritual habitus of Malabar. Bibliography.

02. GHOSH (Nivedita)
Sociology of Documentary Filmmaking.
Supervisors : Dr. Sunil Babu C. T. and Prof. Abhijit Dasgupta
Th 25201

Abstract
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This study attempts to present a sociological analysis of the production culture of documentary films in India. Within the overall process of documentary production, the core focus of this study is on the materialisation of the film shoot, which is the moment in which the documentary image takes birth. The study argues that this moment unfolds within a complex of social realities allowing the social

scientist with an opportunity to explore, among other things, a variety of concepts within the field of sociology of work. By treating the location of the documentary film shoot as a site or place of work of the film practitioners, the thesis explores questions regarding: (i) permissions and accessibility; (ii) knowledge and skill-acquisition; (iii) hierarchy and decision-making; (iv) techniques of improvisation; (v) preferred tools and equipment (vi) embodiment and discursive filmmaking practices. The thesis addresses these concepts by drawing data from documentary films shot in Gujarat, Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra and West Bengal. Intermittent references are also made to fieldwork conducted in Manchester, UK and Sardinia, Italy, as sites for documentary film training. Rather than deciding on the basis of the genres of the documentaries, the final films from which the arguments for this study have been drawn are those with a larger film crew. This has been to allow for a more fruitful and comprehensive analysis of intra-crew dynamic and interactions. The theoretical premise of this study has been borrowed from Goffman's conceptualisation of 'focused gathering' and 'focused interaction' that enable an understanding of the composition of the documentary film crew. Cooper and Foster's thesis on 'sociotechnical systems' provides the basic framework for analyzing documentary film shoot workspaces. Finally, Foucault's understanding of discourse analysis structures the discussion on documentary making practices.

Contents

1. Introduction 2. Locating the object of sociological research: Theories and concepts 3. Understanding documentary filmmaking permissions 4. The process of film production- A Day in the life of documentary film shoot 5. Documentary as a discursive practice 6. Conclusion. Bibliography.

03. GILL (Kamalpreet Singh)
Landscapes of Devotion : A Study of the Devotional Worlds of Jatheras in Punjab.
 Supervisor : Dr. Radhika Chopra
Th 25199

Abstract (Not Verified)

Jathera worship is a popular devotional practice of Punjab in which obeisance is paid to ancestors of the *gotra/got* (exogamous clan lineage), marking it out from other ancestor worship practices prevalent in north India such as *pitr-puja* or the worship of *kul-devta/kul-devi* that are not centered on the unit of the *gotra/got*. The practice faces proscription from the dominant orthodox religious traditions of the region. In my thesis I present a case study of a particular jathera known as Jathera Baba Kala Mehar Sandhu who is worshipped in Punjab as well as in adjoining districts of Haryana and Rajasthan. Its worship is marked by heterodox rituals such as offering and consuming liquor as *parshad* (oblation) to the deity, digging earth from the bed of a sacred pond, and paying obeisance to a headless deity, Kala Mehar Sandhu, who is believed to have continued fighting his enemies even after being decapitated in battle. Like other practices of folk religion, jathera worship is syncretic and assimilative in nature, borrowing elements of Hindu, Sikh, and Muslim traditions to construct its own devotional landscape, allowing jathera devotees to straddle multiple religious identities. I argue that the continued persistence of the practice into the twenty-first century, despite facing proscription from orthodox religion, is on account of the complex modes of negotiation that the jathera undertakes and the potentialities for subaltern resistance that the practice of jathera worship offers to its primary cultural agents. These cultural agents are a caste of genealogists-musicians known as Dhadis and Mirasis, who as the authors and preservers of the jathera's hagiographies insert themselves as the spiritual intermediaries controlling access to the jathera deity, thereby displacing the Brahmins and other priestly castes who traditionally occupied this role in rituals of ancestor worship. The Mirasi's craft is oral and as a result stands in a relation of marginalization to the written scriptural traditions of Punjab. Just like the practice of jathera worship itself, that, with its syncretic, assimilative nature threatens normative categories of religious identity, the fluid and malleable character of oral texts, with their potential for mutating endlessly into multiple

narratives and polysemous texts threaten the order and presumed immutability of the written text. I argue that this potential for overflowing boundaries, and the resistance offered to being confined to normative categories by both the jathera's praxis and its oral lore is embodied in the headless body of Kala Mehar Sandhu himself, that, existing in a liminal state of death-in-life represents disorder, chaos, and a lack of identity; the head being a necessary marker of identity in Indian tradition. This study thus attempts to understand the devotional life of Punjabi society through the medium of its transgressors and their many transgressions.

Contents

1. Introduction: Studying the devotional world of jatheras in Punjab 2. Literature review 3. Introducing the jathera: The many lives of Baba Kala Mehra Sandhu 4. The ritual life of jathera Baba Kala Mehar Sandhu 5. Dhadia and mirasis: The performative life of jathera Baba Kala Mehar Sandhu 6. The tongue makes a good book: Oral and written traditions of Punjab 7. Negotiating proscription: Jatheras, rehitnamas and religious identity in Punjab 8. Conclusion: Missing heads and liminal identities. References.

04. MUKHOPADHYAY (Prama)
Fisherman of the Forest: A socio-Anthropological Study of the Landscape of the Deltaic Sundarbans in Bengal.
 Supervisors : Dr. Sunil Babu and Prof. Abhijit Dasgupta
Th25519

Abstract (Not Verified)

The global nature of climate change, in this epoch of the Anthropocene, poses a challenge towards our age-old Cartesian idea, which promotes a dualistic concept of the inert and external 'nature' subjected to autonomous laws set in opposition to the arbitrariness of the 'all powerful' 'human culture'. Thus it is imperative to advance an 'ecological sensibility' by moving away from this artificially created dichotomy by being attentive to the 'agentic' contribution of the nonhuman forces that circulate around and within us (Bennet, 2009). Using a case study from the Indian side of the deltaic Sundarbans, this research exhibits an alternative ontology of 'beyond human relationality', as it is revealed through the life philosophy of the fishing communities residing there. To conserve this ecologically fragile region, the area has been brought under several State endorsed protection plans, which restrict extractive activities of the locals inside the 'core areas' of the forest. These policies however fail to understand the local ways in which the fishing communities make sense of their surroundings, as they see an inherent 'continuity' between the realm of the human and the nonhuman. Using ethnographic details from the fieldwork, conducted in one representative village from the Sundarbans, this research aims to highlight the worldview of the fishing communities of the region, and to explore their perceptual openness towards non-human vitality. The research then goes on to engage with the 'conservationist debate', thereby discussing how traditional occupations like fishing slowly loses its popularity, leading to large scale out migration of the erstwhile fishers from the Sundarbans to other parts of the country. This research would therefore see the fishers of the Sundarban not as homogenous groups of people stuck in a stagnant time and place, but as communities evolving and changing.

Contents

1. The Sundarbans fishers: In the age of the Anthropocene 2. In search of the fishers: A story of the 'receding Sundarbans' 3. Vibrant 'lives': The 'beyond human' perspectives 4. Living with the forest babus: Making of the 'environmental subjects' 5. Into the lands of tigers. Crocodiles and the sundari trees 6. Cyclones pandemic and thereafter: What the future holds for the Sundarbans. Bibliography. Appendices.

05. RAWAT (Ayushi)
Researching Children's Experiences in Kashmir: Perspectives on Conflict and Resistance.
 Supervisor : Dr. Vikramendra Kumar
Th 25518

Abstract
(Verified)

The purpose of this ethnographic study was to explore and understand the sociology of childhood in a conflict zone, with specific focus on children growing up in Indian-Administered Kashmir. In the present study, I have attempted to place the experiences of children living in a conflict zone, within the larger domain of childhood studies. This is done by exploring the social construction of childhood, the structure and agency of children within systems of power and resistance, and the lived experiences of conflict and resistance in the children's everyday. The fieldwork for this study was broadly conducted in parts of Central and South Kashmir and Srinagar city. I accessed children through an NGO and at home settings. The child respondents included children between the ages of 9 to 12 years in institutional settings. For the home settings there was no age bar set for children and I interacted with and observed children who were available in the households that hosted me during my time in Kashmir. The study made use of tools such as group discussions, semi-structured interviews using interview guides, participant observation, self-report methods by introducing images and vignettes, recording children's naturally occurring narratives, drawing and mapping. Apart from this, I have also woven the notes in my fieldwork journal into the analysis of the data as this brings out the significance of reflexivity in this particular ethnography. The central idea of the sociology of childhood, that renegotiates and challenges the established concepts of power and generational difference in the society, are used to further the questions of children's political subjectivity and agency. This work attempts to build critical perspectives on conflict and resistance in Kashmir through an analysis of children's experiences in the conflict.

Contents

1. Introduction 2. Studying children and childhood 3. Children and armed conflict 4. Researching 'Experience': Methodology, tools and research issues 5. The subjectivity of children's experiences in Kashmir: Comprehension, coping and the construction of childhood 6. Lived experiences, Perspectives, and the political socialisation of children in Kashmir 7. Concluding remarks. Bibliography. Appendices.

06. VIJAY BAHADUR
Life After Bail of Children in the Juvenile Justice System and Interventions by the State : A Case Study of Delhi.
 Supervisor : Dr. Janaki Abraham
Th 25198

Abstract
(Not Verified)

This thesis is titled 'Life after bail of children in the Juvenile Justice System and interventions by the State: A case study of Delhi'. It attempts to explore the working of the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2000 from the perspective of the children accused of being in-conflict-with-law. The fieldwork for this study was done between 2013-14, over a period of 15 months and covered three sites: the Juvenile Justice Boards in Delhi where cases of children are heard, with the lawyers who handled the cases and in the homes and neighbourhoods of the children. Here, I also bring in my experience of working as a probation officer in a Juvenile Justice Board in Delhi for almost four years between 2009 and 2012. I have used this experience to build up an implicit comparative

perspective across time. I was able to study the cases of 35 children in detail, all of whom were boys in the age group ranging from roughly 13 years to just below 18 years of age. A majority of cases that come to the Juvenile Justice Board involve children from the marginalised working class populations – Scheduled Caste/ Other Backward Caste Hindus and Muslims. This was reflected in my sample of 35 cases. A study of the functioning of the Board shows the indifference of the state towards these marginalised working class children and thus, points to the class nature of the state. Contrary to the law that stipulates that the Juvenile Justice System must be 'child-friendly', we see hierarchy, power, control and surveillance being clearly played out in the Board. This work contributes to the field of sociology of law, with a prime focus on the juvenile law in India.

Contents

1. Introduction: Children-in-conflict-with-law and the juvenile justice system 2. The working of the juvenile justice board 3. Juvenile justice and the practice of bail 4. Understanding rehabilitation under the juvenile justice act 5. Conclusion: Justice by formula. Bibliography. Appendices.