

Anthropology Outreach

Final Report



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Anthropology Outreach 2010 was an initiative of 2nd year undergraduate students at the department of anthropology and was funded by the LSE Annual Fund

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Introduction

The student initiative “Anthropology Outreach” was organized in 2010 for the first time, and was funded by the LSE Annual Fund. The aim of the initiative was to allow students to bridge the divide between undergraduate teaching and anthropological fieldwork. The central component of the project consisted of seven fieldwork grants that were awarded on a competitive basis, and which allowed students to carry out their individual fieldwork project. To prepare for this experience seven bi-weekly seminars were organized, and which focused on research methodology, proposal writing, and preparing for fieldwork. After having returned from their fieldwork the awardees presented their findings in a workshop which was attended by a large audience consisting of fellow students and staff. Additionally the students have written about their experiences in the Beaver, and spoken about it on Pulse Radio. The initiative has been a great success, perhaps foremost for the students whose projects were funded, but it has also energized the department as a whole. During the preparatory phase Ph.D. students gave presentations in the bi-weekly seminars, students discussed their various plans with their teachers, and in doing so it contributed to the feeling that the anthropology department is not only a place for theoretical reflection, but also for engagement with anthropological practice. Perhaps the best indication of this is that a group of current second year students have been very eager to continue this program, and they have recently submitted their proposal to the Annual Fund. Given the positive experience of last year, I sincerely hope that Anthropology Outreach will be able to receive funding for an additional year.

This report provides a short overview of the activities that have been carried out, it includes the narrative reports of its participants, as well as the financial report of the program and the individual fieldwork projects.

Dr. Mathijs Pelkmans
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Overview of Activities

Fieldwork preparation seminars

The fieldwork seminars were convened by Mathijs Pelkmans, and were aimed at providing the necessary background training for carrying out a successful fieldwork project. In four of these seminars we invited PhD students from the department to talk about their experiences regarding the themes under discussion.

11 February 2010	How to write a research proposal
25 February 2010	Anthropological research methods: an overview
10 March 2010	Selecting and entering the field.
29 April 2010	Participant observation.
13 May 2010	Ethnographic interviewing.
27 May 2010	Fieldnotes, diaries, and other documentation.
10 June 2010	Analyzing data and writing ethnography.

Course pack and reference books

For Anthropology Outreach we created a course pack with essential readings related to the various topics of the seminar. The course pack provided the basis for many discussions during these seminars. It also, in addition to the books on methodology that were purchased and are available to all in the Seligman Library, served as a source of inspiration and guidance during the preparation of the individual projects.

Website

With the assistance of the departmental office, participating students created a website which contains a lot of valuable information about Anthropology outreach: http://www2.lse.ac.uk/anthropology/anthropology_outreach/anthropology_outreach_programme.aspx

Selection process and further guidance

After having attended the seminar on “how to write a research proposal,” students were asked to design their project, and to pay particular attention to the assessment criteria quality, relevance, and feasibility (additional guidelines were provided). To assess the research proposals we created a selection committee consisting of a permanent member of staff, one Ph.D. student, and one 3rd year BA student.

The eight students who were awarded a fieldwork grant (one project had two students) signed a “Mutual Agreement” and filled out a Risk Assessment Form. The students had individual tutorials with Mathijs Pelkmans to discuss issues to discuss ethical aspects of their fieldwork projects and issues pertaining to safety in the field.

Fieldwork projects

The actual fieldwork projects were carried out between July and September, in countries ranging from Italy to India, and Kenya to Kyrgyzstan. Details about these individual projects can be found in the narrative reports below.

Publicizing the results

We organized a two-hour workshop in which all students gave presentations of their fieldwork experiences and their research results. This event was particularly well attended and demonstrated to all the success of the program. It also served to instil enthusiasm in the current second year cohort, who are striving to have the programme renewed in this academic session. The students also published short stories about their experiences in *The Beaver* (<http://thebeaveronline.co.uk/2010/11/15/outreach-to-the-ethnic/>) and spoke about it on PuLSE radio.

Fieldwork Projects

The following seven fieldwork projects were carried out between July and September 2010.

1. Megan Davis: *Tibetan life in Dharamsala, India*
2. Joanna Bojczewska: *Pastoralism in Kyrgyzstan*
3. Sohninni Sanghvi and Eden Vance: *Santhara ritual amongst Jains (India)*
4. Priscilla Yeung: *Naming practices and gender in rural Hong Kong*
5. Antonia Savvides: *Ecotourism and identity among the Maasai in Kenya*
6. Arabella Ciampi: *Alternative medical systems in Italy*
7. Steph Linsdale: *The Lepchas in West Bengal, India*

As will be seen from the narrative reports, the fieldwork experience helped students to apply anthropological knowledge, to better understand how anthropological research is conducted, to gain interesting insights in the topics they focused on and, equally important, to learn from things that did not go according to plan.

1. Megan Davis: Tibetan Life in Dharamsala, India

With little knowledge of how I would go about it I arrived in Dharamsala, India, with the intention of researching how Tibetan culture was incorporated into life in this Indian hill station, which has, since 1959, been home to a vast majority of the Tibetan refugee community as well as its Parliament-in-Exile. Spending five weeks in the field I discovered that upholding and encouraging traditional Tibetan culture was of paramount importance for everyday life in the town; displays of this also being central to a wider political project. Many institutions with the aim of preserving this cultural heritage have been established, such as the Tibetan Institute for Performing Arts and the Norbalingka Institute, where Tibetan traditional crafts are manufactured.

I managed to find work as a volunteer at an online Tibetan newspaper- a grass-roots organisation ran by two Tibetan refugees, where I worked writing articles for the English section of the paper, which existed alongside a Tibetan and Chinese version. In order to use

my time in the most productive way possible I also gave a very informal English class for an hour a day at the request of two Tibetan monks with whom I stayed on my first couple of nights in Dharamsala. This was such an enjoyable part of my project and much of my interest in language stemmed from these encounters.

Dorje and Senge from the newspaper became my closest friends and informants as we spent a lot of time together working from Monday to Friday in the office. I was able to learn a great deal about political, social and cultural life in Tibet and Dharamsala, something which my informants were eager to discuss and that the job I was doing required me to find out.

The town itself is inhabited by Tibetans, Indians and also many Westerners who are either passing through on their travels or volunteering in the area. There is an obvious Tibetan nationalistic sentiment that prevails. For example, many organisations have been established for the Tibetans people, Buddhist prayer flags are draped over the landscape, and the *chorten* (Buddhist place of worship) and temple complex seem to be the central points of the town.

I found that for the Tibetans in the community, the lack of freedom to express traditional cultural values in Tibet is the reason for the upsurge in the encouragement of traditional arts and crafts in Dharamsala. Particularly with regard to the younger generations, who were born in India and have never seen Tibet, these institutions are of vital importance to ensure that they identify with their homeland and thus continue their political project.

Tourists appear to be a vital asset to the Tibetan political cause – one that seeks Independence or genuine autonomy from oppressive Chinese rule – and the manufacture of Tibetan crafts and traditional performances is also very much directed at these visitors . Western support and involvement in this cause has been vital for the projection of this movement onto the international stage (McClaghan 2007) and many talks and film screenings take place in the town to encourage such participation.

The English language is such a vital cornerstone for Tibetan activism as it is in English that those refugees seeking to fight against human rights abuses back in Tibet can reach out to the international community. It was interesting to see the complexity of use of the English language when I was talking to people about political matters, and its relative limitations when engaging in discussion in other areas.

Media coverage of campaigns for the elections of the 15th Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile was extensive and so I was given the unique opportunity to attend press conferences with Senge – although most of them were spoken in Tibetan. Dorje was in fact chosen as a candidate for one of the ten representatives of Kham region in Tibet, where he was born and grew up. It was very interesting to discuss his concerns about mixing politics with journalism, particularly in light of his emphasis on providing impartial information to the newspaper's audience.

Long and boring days where there was little to report led to very insightful discussions about politics and the Tibetan movement and also about my informants' experiences as refugees and what they had left behind. The majority of my data was collected through these informal chats, which I was able to guide in certain directions. A very interesting example of this was fears Dorje and his wife had over the visibility of the Tibetan issue on the international stage once the Dalai Lama has passed away. The Dalai Lama has come to represent far more than a revered Buddhist leader in the last 30 years – he is now somewhat of a celebrity in the Western world. After several years of opposing the idea, Dorje has finally given his wife permission to apply for immigrant status in Australia (a draw for which she was eligible as her father died as a political prisoner) for fear that the Indian government will be less hospitable once the Dalai Lama is off the public stage and international pressure has ceased.

Pictures of the Dalai Lama can be found in almost every room in Dharamsala and seem to be a very important symbol in opposition to their prohibition in Tibet where if found the owner of such a photo could be imprisoned and tortured on the grounds of inciting separatism. It appeared to be a symbol of resistance and a matter of pride as those in Dharamsala are free to follow their religion.

The Tibetan flag is also banned by the Chinese People's Republic, with similar consequences to those above if found in possession. These flags are visible all around the town and mass produced copies are available to tourists in local craft shops. On my final day at the newspaper, I had asked Dorje and Senge if I could take a couple of photos of them and Dorje insisted that we have a twenty minute photo-shoot in front of the huge flag in the office. It seemed as though the presence of such a symbol represents the continuing commitment of those in India to the Tibetan people that are still suffering under occupation and also seems to be a powerful political statement that Tibet is a nation whose flag should be recognised.

Long conversations with Dorje revealed his sense of obligation to the Tibetan cause, the main reason he set up the newspaper, which is strengthened due to the fact that he escaped into India at a very young age (in 1985). Although his sister has since moved over also, his four brothers remain in Kham region. This exemplifies one of the ethical issues that I came up against i.e. the sensitive issues that occur when discussing life histories with refugees.

To arrive in an unknown place with very few concrete plans was undoubtedly unnerving; however, the amount I learnt in Dharamsala and the friendships I made there in such a short amount of time seemed to make me forget the anxiety I felt on the bus journey there. The experience has given me confidence in my capabilities of doing research, something that I don't think you can know for certain until you are there. I have also learnt that although at first what you are doing may seem utterly chaotic and disorganised, everything does some together and perhaps in a more interesting way than if you were to plan your every move.

An understanding of the Tibetan language would also be paramount to improving the research as my inability here did undeniably constrain my research. Although it seems obvious given the limited length of time permitted for the Outreach Programme, if I was to return to the field it would be for an extended period as this could only lead to a further insight and understanding of life in Dharamsala and an extended group of informants

2. Joanna Bojczewska: Human-animal relationships among the semi-nomadic pastoralists of Tien-Shan mountains, Kyrgyzstan.

About the project focus. During my month-long fieldwork I lived and worked alongside a semi-nomadic, pastoralist, horse-herding family in rural Kyrgyzstan. My main interest lied in the relationships with animals, but also with landscape in general. The question, which guided my project, was «How do people relate to animals (and environment at large) and to what extent can we talk about intentionality or personhood of non-humans?» This question was inspired by anthropology of kinship, and more specifically, by perspectives on animism, relatedness and radical otherness. My major intention in doing the project was to try and develop observational, reflexive, descriptive writing, but I also envisioned exploration of the topic through film, (although due to technical constraints I shifted to still image entirely). Applying my language skills in Russian to practical research aspects, such as interviews and transcription of oral narratives, and exploring a post-socialist context along the ethnographic work, became also an important motivation in determination of the site for my fieldwork.

The project consisted of two parts. First five days involved driving around the Issyk-Kul and Naryn Districts and stopping at sites of interest, such as collective farms (*kolhoz*), mine-towns, handcrafts cooperatives, different summer pastures (*jailoo*'s), etc. This has been very useful in terms of locating later fieldwork site in a bigger context. I have invited a Kyrgyz anthropology student from *American University of Central Asia* (AUCA) to join me, and her insights and ideas for our trip made it certainly more informed and enjoyable, as she spoke Kyrgyz and had done fieldwork in visited areas. Subsequently, I spent 20 days, with a family of herders on the *Son-Kul Lake*, at around 9,940 feet in the *Tien Shan* mountains. I also spent two days in total meeting with anthropologists at AUCA, discussing anthropological interests as well as current events in Kyrgyzstan - the post-revolution, and pre-election developments. I also consulted them about my project and their previous findings in the area. Another

Description of the fieldwork site. Son-Kul is a remote summer pasture area for families of herders from several villages. Fishing is a second most prominent wage-earning and

subsistence activity, although the water ecology has suffered from oversfishing. The lake is two hours and a steep mountain pass away from the nearest village in the south and out of the way of any major inter-city road. This relative remoteness makes herders rely primarily on their own dairy and meat products for food - -fresh, home-made white cow cheese, cream, butter and *koumus* – sour, fermented mare’s milk – Kyrgyz, national drink. Trips for other supplies are, however, occasionally made by one of the neighbours, while a tent-roofed shop offers a variety of luxury goods (alcohol, cigarettes, sweets). Transportation to and from the site is irregular and mostly private, mobile phone network, although in use, very limited, and no permanently built infrastructure can be found on the Lake, which freezes up to one meter deep in the winter. The government provides for a medical point. Families pay annual fee for the use of camp sites around the lake from the 1st of June to the 5th of October.

Major jobs involve herding sheep, horses and cows, but some families also look after and rely on donkeys and chicken. Entire families transfer nearly all belongings from their village households to the *jailoo* (summer grazing areas). Camps consist of 1-5 *yurta*’s (round, felt-covered dwellings), and are erected in the same spot every year, often close to a stream or lake's shore. In the past, caravans of camels were employed to transport needed homeware up to the *jailoo*, but today some of the herders own their own trucks. Neighbouring camps stand 300-500 feet away from each other. My host family, like few others in the proximity of few kilometers, was a member of nationwide *Community Based Tourism* and was prepared to host foreigners, which made move-in for them apparently easy. They relied on the sale of animals and dairy products, as well as on their hospitality services for cash income.



Some challenges in the field. My stay on Son-Kul was free from any major complications and I was very lucky to settle into the rhythms of daily life very quickly. Three moments, however, gave rise to some dilemmas. Firstly, although not daily, the consumption of alcohol was very common, and in situations

when I was accompanied by drunk men, especially while driving the car, I felt in a vulnerable position. Alcohol was also the cause of provocation to fights between men, and in one case, of violence towards the wife in my camp. Although these were rather *instances*, in the short span of my stay, and given that I was a single, *unmarried* (emphasized by people) female, they easily put me on the guard.

Secondly, my caution escalated due to implicit views of a *western woman* that men held, and which surfaced in a particular romance story from Son-Kul. Explicit questions about sexual culture in the West that I was addressed with on one occasion and a situation when someone suggested an intimate encounter, made me stick progressively to activities with women. It turned out that I was also notoriously observed by sheperds through binoculars, and it gave me a literal sense of surveillance, since you could never see where they were looking at you from. As a result, I was not prepared to go with any man up to the mountains to observe for myself, what was the actual herding like, and I surely got to know men's practices and ideas to a lesser extent than those of women.

The third concern which sprouted in my fieldwork was that, by affiliating with one family, I *happened* to miss several occasions of participating in broader life, such as extremely exciting and unrepeatable(!) horse-games. Given that the games were organized by neighbors who had a more attractive toursit base (sauna, fresh fish), it seemed very probable that I was not told about it, in case I wanted to change the camp. My stay was all in all a considerable income during an unusually dramatic fall in tourism after the April 10th Revolution. In fact, my family, charged me more than others (instead of 400 – they took 500 som/day). This became clear as neighbours rolled their eyes hearing about this *excessive* charges. On the other hand, it was through association with this particular family that I managed to meet many interesting people during Eid, birthday feast, and in their native village by the end of my stay, and I guess there is always some limitation connected to who you make friends with in the field.

Reflections on things observed. Although my stay was of short duration I feel I managed to gain a rich understanding of the daily practicalities in the pastures and could suggest some areas for further exploration of the topic. On the whole, tightly integrated lives of people and animals, implied by the pastoralist way of living, by unconditional care and intimate knowledge of livestock breeding, did not seem to have a consistent character. Sometimes, people worked in a mode of of a partnership with animals, especially horses or dogs; at others - the human world appeared in an exclusive and hierarchical relationship to the non-human.

A notion of animals, as exchangeable commodites, the entry point to broader economic circulations, surfaced, for example, during the celebration of the successful exchange of four horses for (cash for) a second-hand Volvo, finalized in Bishkek. Livestock served also as an incalculable, but important indicator of wealth and resourcefulness, a marker of family's history and standing in the context of the village. In this context animals seemed less separate to humans, more - as co-constituents of social identities. Reputation as skillfull *dziabun*

(herder, shepherd), as a man who mastered and continues the true Kyrgyz horse-breeding tradition, '*able to do everything*' in difficult mountain conditions – such reputation also seemed to draw a social distinction (vis-à-vis farmers, for example) in connection to the pragmatically developed, intuitive knowledge and relationship with animals and geography of the lake and mountains. So one strand of inquiry could regard animals and social identities.



More implicit insights about animal behaviour, came to light in interventions - such as searching for lost horses or rounding them up. In the cases of 'natural deaths' of livestock (5 during my stay, due to sickness, wolves and accident) the calmness and ordinariness with which these events were received was startling, and –

considering the frequency- understandable at the same time. If investigated, this area could reveal something about more existential ideas about life that people hold in relation to animals.

Equally interesting and suggestive of a interlocking between the world of animals and the religious sphere was the thanksgiving *oomin* gesture, which accompanied the slaughter of goats and sheep meant for feasts. Lastly, presence of animal and landscape imagery in beautifully, passionately sung songs, as well as the poetic lyrics praising the sacredness of Son-Kul Lake in specific, seemed to illuminate engagements with 'environment/nature' from a more imaginative point, to be explored perhaps with a (?)phenomenological approach. All these different areas seemed more blurry and undifferentiated from general observations during the time in the field; but being in Son-Kul for the first time, and concentrating my energies on developing firendly relationships with people, made the filtration of information somehow less immediate.

3. Sohinni Sanghvi and Eden Vance: From Starvation to Salvation: the assertion to the death of personhood amongst Jains

The 'Anthropology Outreach' programme was an instructive opportunity to explore an ancient practice amongst the Jains of India. I was inspired largely by my late grandfather. Aged 82, a diabetic, weak and exhausted from regular cancer treatment, he was told by doctors, in November 2008, that further treatment had no prospect of success. We brought him home to spend his last days in comfortable surroundings around the people closest to

him. One night, he uttered to my grandmother that he wanted to undertake santhara. Dissuaded by her, and still reliant on a strict regime of medication, he died peacefully on November 18th. The prospect of achieving freedom from his suffering, welcoming death peacefully and leaving the world without any regrets appeared to have been appealing to him.

After some research, I discovered that santhara was the practice of fasting unto death through the gradual, and eventually total, elimination of all intake of food, water and medication. The individual makes the decision to stop all forms of nutrition – and sometimes movement – essentially taking their own life. The phenomenon interested me at different levels. The parallels to suicide – and the universally accepted, often constitutionally sanctioned, right to life, but not the obligation to live - offered an interesting legal perspective, against the cultural significance of such a custom.

I discovered that the practice was not without controversy whilst visiting Jaipur where locals still reminisced about the 2006 santharo of Vimla Devi, a 61 year old woman who was suffering from a brain tumour and blood cancer. With sociologists arguing that the practice was gender-discriminatory, its glamourisation encouraging widows to relieve their families of the burden of looking after them, by committing religious suicide, the custom was obviously a contentious one. Mr Nikhil Soni, a Jaipur lawyer, presented a public interest petition against this “evil practice” on the ground that it was unconstitutional and should be criminalised under the Suicide Act. Another lawyer, Mr Rajeev Surana, told me that it was an ‘age old concept’, religiously sanctioned and should stand on a par with other exceptions in Indian jurisprudence: the legality of carrying the Kirpan (a small dagger), a religious requirement for Sikhs, under the otherwise prohibitive Arms Act, or of members of the Meena Community to contract second and third marriages despite the prohibition of polygamy in Hindu law.

The body is adorned and the social image and pride of the family is strengthened through a last procession with the deceased in an upright position bearing the social icon. He emphasised no correlation between the emergence of medicine and santhara and, contrary to popular opinion, santhara occurs more in the cities where people are more educated and spiritually aware of philosophical attainments, than in villages in the country.

Professor Pavan Surana gave me a feminist perspective. She rejected claims santhara was analogous to the proscribed practice of sati, the live cremation of a widow on her deceased husband’s funeral pyre. Sati, she explained, was a tradition observed mainly in the Rajput caste in small villages, and occasionally actually enforced by the community with the occasional administration of hallucogens in order to render the widow only half-conscious and/or give her enough courage to sacrifice her own life. Professor Surana argued that santhara and sati were divergent practices: the latter was a ‘socially pressured, barbarous act against women, open murder’; the former was the result of decision based on courage and

tolerance, made by the individual alone and gender-neutral in nature. Sati was practised only by, and enforced only against, women, and based almost entirely on the reputation of the family within society rather than on any objective of spiritual attainment, although often portrayed as such.

Hundreds of miles of travel by road brought me to a saadhvi bhawan (nunnery) of the Terapanth sect, one of seven Jain sects, in Jasol, Balotra District, western Rajasthan. Clad entirely in a single white sari and barefoot, making as little noise as possible, they floated in and out of the room in tranquillity. They spoke quietly from behind the mupatti, a rectangular piece of cardboard worn over their lips, so as to avoid harm to germs in the air.

They explained that Santhara is preceded by long periods of fasting which alter with age, experience and will power, called sullekhana. Giving up certain types of foods for 4 days a week, such as dairy products and oily foods, surviving on fruit and water alone for 4 years consecutively, or even eating only on alternate days of their lives constituted various types of fasts – Upvas, Telleh, Arampi and Aimbil Tap – which prepared the body and mind over a long period of time to survive without impulsive and habitual eating.

Further, santhara does not relate only to the intake of nutrition. It is accompanied by the strictest observance of the 5 core principles of Jainism: Ahinsa (non-violence), Satya (truth), Acharya (no theft), Brahmacharya (celibacy) and Aparigra (necessity and no excess). The individual ‘welcomes death with courage’ and meets it willingly, as opposed to being fearful of it and the afterlife. The santhara subject becomes exceptionally insular, shedding all negative karma and preventing any new karma from invading the body. Moreover, the subject becomes very weak, and necessarily stops talking due to the lack of energy. Emotions such as anger, jealousy and pride are controlled. Personal relationships are terminated and possessions relinquished.

A painful practice, physically and mentally challenging, santhara requires absolute tolerance. The principles adhered to when consciously meeting death are principles that the subject has striven to observe during life. Non-violence dictates all aspects of Jain spiritual life: the ‘rajorharan’ or a small stick made of wool is used to sweep away insects before the sadhu or saadhvi sits down so as not to hurt them; water is sieved before it is drunk so that the microorganisms are not killed; the mupatti’s main function is to prevent the death of invisible insects in the air when hot breath is exhaled. A further illustration is the loach. The tolerance of pain during the (forceful) plucking of lumps of hair from the scalp is used to discipline the mind.

An ashram in a rural village called Sardarshahar was another intensifying experience. A priest there rendered suicide an emotional reaction to something happening against a person’s will. It is an extreme impulsive reaction against what is considered by the subject to be a complete failure in life. Santhara is the diametric opposite, a well-considered, conscious

decision of a life led with complete success, faced with courage, and undertaken with complete mental and emotional control. Whilst sati is neither suicide nor santhara. It is based predominantly on culture or family tradition and village rituals. It is imposed by societal pressure, based on a cause and effects of social needs and pressures rather than individual ones.

He explained that the purpose of undertaking santhara is salvation – moksha - and peace, and the body is the tool, the “servant”, for achieving those objectives: if the body does not perform the duties required to achieve the purpose, then it is better to release the body. That is why santhara is undertaken only when death is within sight - the body is already dying. Santhara is thus the process of relieving the soul of the body becoming a pious, socially accepted way of dying.

The nuns – many of them young and highly educated - had been initiated into the Sect and had taken ‘diksha’ (the vow). Shruti Vandana, 29, wanted to take diksha from the age of 7. Influenced by her local saadhvi bhawan. her parents initially refused to give her the requisite written permission for initiation. However, adamant and persistent, she was initiated at 23. The initiation process was somewhat like a marriage ceremony, a giving away of the bride, an auspicious occasion and much celebrated. Shruti Yesha explained that all students attended the Paramathic Shiksha Sanstha for 6 years before they would be considered for diksha initiation. Endorsing the practice of santhara, they informed me of the main 3 types of santhara: Prayogaman where the individual has absolutely no food or water intake, no physical activity and no speech. The body is like a statue and imitates the dead; Ingimaran where once again, the subject denies all food, water and speech; Bhaktapan with no food but water, speech and movement are optional.

This trip had given me a wonderful opportunity to explore an ancient, but not widely known, practice whose topicality is immediate. Apart from learning about the strict austerity of the life of the saadhvis, the experience I cherish most is having to survive alone in a different country entirely. In a world of unbridled commercialism and abundance, being brought down to essential and basic needs was both a shocking and an unforgettable experience. A religion which expressly prohibits any belief in a supreme being, Jainism is an extraordinarily individualist religion, santhara its most extreme and the most conscious act of individuality.

4. Priscilla Yeung: Restudy the names, naming practices, and gender in rural Hong Kong

Attempting to restudy Rubie Watson’s research with the Tangs on the women subordination through names and naming practice, I found a fundamental change of women status in the

everyday village life, despite the continuation of male-centred ritual practices in my 20-day fieldwork (research was suspended due to my health condition).

I believe the reason for change was largely due to the total suspension of self-subsistent agriculture industry and village schools, which has tremendously increased the interaction of villagers with the wider Hong Kong society as well as the general education level of both men and women. As women do not normally work after they are married, they dominate the everyday communal life in the village when men are working outside the village.

The other thing I found most interesting is their concepts of who is kin and who is not. Although they were all the 'Tangs', they assumed each family had a different 'ancestor', therefore my informant suggested that everybody else were 'friends' apart from the immediate family. I believe this division on the concept of relatedness in the village is largely related to the historical tradition of having a hierarchy of landlord-merchant and peasant class, which do not exist anymore as people work outside the village nowadays.

The actual fieldwork experience has allowed me to fully realise how ethnographers can never plan too much beforehand. It requires flexibility and a lot of negotiations and communications in face of unexpected problems and to gain access to certain topics and interests. Research interests shifts and has to be adjusted in a daily basis with the large amount of data collected every day. Nonetheless, I have appreciated the importance of participant observation as a unique methodology which is able to collect information and insights that none other research methods can gather. I would conclude that long-term fieldwork is very crucial when we want to comprehend a community 'in a native's point of view' (Malinowski 1922: 25).

My experience Professors and PhD students stressed the impossibility of following plans fully for an ethnographic research during preparation workshops, but it was not until I got into the field did I truly believe what they said. The Tangs had a reputation for being violent and rude to non-village people, and even my informants suggested me not to wander around the village on my own, which left me spending most of the time in my informant's home waiting for different Tang villagers my informants invited to visit and talk to me. This has placed me into a very passive role as they thought I was simply interested in their ritual practice but what I aimed at was to participate and observe their everyday interaction and activities.

Another unexpected difficulty lies in language barrier, it was not until the second week of my research did I realise the older generation preferred to speak the local dialect. This created huge difficulty when I attempted to overhear their gossips over the mahjong table in the communal centre, which could have been an important piece of information in terms of how they viewed kin and non-kin, and the way the women addressed each other.

In general, I believe fieldwork experience involved a lot of skill in trying to maintain and build friendship as well as to negotiate to gain access to things informants do not expect a researcher would be interested in, since they have taken them for granted. Doing fieldwork was much more exhausting than I thought, having to think carefully and respond immediately to what my informants said, and simultaneously paying attention to what everybody else was doing. It was also very hard to negotiate with informants or ask the right question to lead to the information I truly wanted, as their behaviour and thinking appeared to be natural to them. And such information is surely cannot be obtained by any other seemingly 'scientific' methodologies from other disciplines.

My findings. The Tang men nowadays mostly worked outside the village in the Yune Long district, where the Tang village was located, as a result, the village was largely dominated by women, elderly and children in the daytime, and the communal hall which was once used by men for discussing village issues were now a recreational place for women to play mahjong. The communal area created a strong women community where, as Watson suggested, they were more 'extrovert' in the village than the men (Watson 1981: 609). During my fieldwork when we were about to have dinner, my informant's dad was late from work, his wife expressed her anger publicly because her mahjong date with other women was delayed as a result. In my interview with my informant's father, he expressed his love to his wife, and suggested that although there were still male-centred practices, women were no longer subordinated in everyday life practice.

Although both Wu (1927) and Watson (1981, 1986) suggested that Tang men in their life obtained several names and nicknames tied to their genealogy and success, my informants all found this practice outdated and weird. Unable to investigate further, I shifted my focus on how people addressed women. A lady suggested their own names were not very important, younger people normally addressed them as 'A niang', which means 'auntie' in the local dialect. To distinguish among the 'a niang', villagers normally placed the last name of the husband before 'niang', my informant's mother was known as 'quan niang' because her husband's name is 'Quan'. This has confirmed Watson's observation that women were addressed by teknonyms (Watson 1986: 627).

The social stratification of landlord-merchant and peasant classes within the Tangs (Watson 1981: 591) paved how villagers saw the relation of kin nowadays. As there was a divided community of rich and poor, informants suggested that their 'ancestors' were not the same despite they shared the same surname. I would be interested to study further on how these villagers viewed their ancestors, especially in relation to ancestor worship practice and kinship organisation.

5. Antonia Savvides: Ecotourism and Identity amongst the Maasai

One wears a red shuka, armed with a spear. The other wears a suit, armed with a briefcase. One has elongated lobe piercings and is missing his bottom-middle tooth in customary fashion, features neither of which the other has. One bathes in a river, the other in wealth and influence. One drives cattle and the other drives an expensive car.

What do they share? Their passion and identity with their cultural heritage as Maasai. Their education and world experience. Stereotypes are a sad but inevitable product of human tendency to categorise and compartmentalise. More sad still, is the infectious ignorance they spread.

Portrayed as relics of the past, the semi-nomadic Maasai have lived in East Africa for millennia and on a superficial level it seems they have remained unchanged since. These Maa-speaking people are very much the face of Kenya as are the Big Five. As though scouting the latter, safari jeeps and minibuses weave through Maasailand game reserves to catch a glimpse of this natural wonder and incredible case study of human nature. This is the myth of the Maasai tribe of warriors, who live on the hearts of the lions they kill in the bush, somewhere in Africa. Tourists travel from far and wide to experience to see and experience this myth in its natural habitat, when in reality the roots of this myth stem from the Kenya Government and sold through its tourists offices. Glamourised and gift-wrapped with exoticism, the eco-tourist buys an irresistible package of palatable lies that culture is a commodity to be bought and sold in the open market. One does not blame the tourist for buying the image for it has been sold to him by. The image has been marketed by tour companies, hotels and other tourism merchandising concerns.

The Maasai on their part have learned to take advantage of their commodification. They turn out in front of their kraal as if in Hollywood. For a small fee, the tourist can both see this timeless creature, photograph it, be invited into a prehistoric hut and witness an age-old tribal dance. At Maasai markets and tourist hotspots, they charge the 'muzungu' sometimes three times up to the worth of the hand-crafted Maasai-style trinkets, jewellery and accessories they sell. Members of other tribes too have learnt to capitalise on the Maasai identity, posing as Maasai and performing their traditional warrior jumping dance at hotels in prime locations. So long as they wear their shukas, the tourists will keep coming. So now turning back to the two contrasting Maasai figures I described at the start of this report. These truly fascinating examples of Maasai, whose stories are both intriguing and relevant to my topic of study.

Together, these case studies are not intended to portray the complete picture but are unique examples that give an interesting perspective to the idea of Maasai identity and the practice of ecotourism.

James (Tuleto) the Tour Guide. James is a Maasai from the Rinka village. After finishing school and attending guide school, he has worked as a safari guide at Offbeat Mara tourist lodge (Koyiaki Group Ranch) for some years. It is difficult to determine how long since Maasai have no real concept of dates. His love of wildlife and the camp's convenient location to his village drew him to this occupation, which he enjoys. For every three weeks he works at the camp, he returns home for one week to tender his cows and spend time with his wives and family.

Being the first of his generation to be educated, his parents initially were suspicious, fearful and dismissive of James' untraditional life choice as a young Maasai man who they expected to become a warrior. Nevertheless this opinion was quickly reversed after James was able to greater provide for his family. His income from employment has enabled him to buy more cows, increasing the family's wealth and prestige in the community.

I asked James if he had ever killed a lion, as his father and his grandfather did. He replied, when lions kill Maasai cattle, the Maasai naturally wish to eliminate the lions to protect their livelihood. However, if the same lions produce profit through tourism, the Maasai may realise that it is best to co-exist with them. The Maasai now see the benefit of having wildlife on their land, so they protect the animals.

James shared with me his experience of travelling around 10 different states of the US with the tourism agency he is signed with. For the Maasai it is uncommon to leave Kenya, even trips to the capital of Nairobi are rare for most.

I was fascinated to hear he underwent the entire expedition wearing his traditional Maasai shuka and elaborate beading. Just as in Kenya though, he was confronted by a swarm of cameras, questions and curious faces about who he was and where he had come from. He enjoyed going to Hollywood, yet he could not name a single star or really understand the concept of celebrities. In Seattle he could not understand how to work the elevators and needed help unlocking his motel room with his card-key. Even in the rolling countryside of Louisiana, he found it difficult to sleep with the constant drone of the motorway which he could pick up 10 miles away. In Miami, he fell sick upon trying seafood for the first time, and did not care much for burgers, but did love pasta and chips. Passing through security at US airports was a daunting and intimidating experience. James also told me he felt sorry for the unhealthily overweight children that he saw, a stark contrast to his lean and long figure.

His family did not contemplate just how far James had really travelled until they telephoned him in the morning and he received the call at night. Upon this realization they feared he would never return. It was apparent that although he greatly appreciated his time, for James, this vast, diverse cosmopolitan continent could not compare to his home in Maasailand. Though he did say if he could, he would take the buildings back with him, for he

considered them 'beautiful', he much preferred the relaxed, comfortable Maasai lifestyle. The US was 'too much, too crazy'! While a dynamic, educated and culturally-aware man, he identified too closely with his roots and identity back in the Mara to contemplate migrating anywhere else.

Titus, MD of Kenya Airways. My first impression when meeting Titus was how un-Maasai he looked. While 6ft 4", he was the first Maasai I had met who did not have the bottom-middle tooth missing and un-pierced ears and very much looked the epitome of Western capitalism dressed in his suit with briefcase. Nevertheless, the longer we spoke, the more I realised that beneath his outward appearance lay very much a Maasai man, embodying all the traditional Maasai values I had come to learn about: honesty, condemnation of thievery and respect for the elderly.

After graduating from the University of Nairobi in 1979 with a degree in Mechanical Engineering, he lived in the UK for two years and worked for ICI prior to joining Kenya Airways in 1986. After completing his PMD, a business program, he was promoted to Managing Director and holds sway as one of the most successful businessmen in Kenya.

Titus sees himself as very much still a Maasai. He spends every weekend in his Maasai village in Tanzania, where he has built a slightly modernized metal 'manyatta' for himself and his wife. He still speaks Maa fluently as well as English. His daughter, a qualified lawyer in the UK married to a Spaniard, returned to the village to have a traditional Maasai wedding service.

His personal history and success has vested in him a belief in the power of education, a vehicle which he sees as while changing or 'modernising' the Maasai culture, it has opened up a world of opportunities to the people. Since President Moukibaki made primary education compulsory for every Kenyan child (2002), more and more Maasai children are being educated, opening up opportunities for them in the future. Some Maasai emigrate to Nairobi city to take on a wide diversity of jobs in the city, including guarding and nursing. Education stimulates the economy and individual prosperity. Education is the only solution for the Maasai since they have been prohibited from accessing water sources and pasture land in game reserves, fundamentally forcing them to change their traditional means of subsistence.

Titus believes the transformation of the Maasai culture and way of life is already underway, catalysed by education and globalisation. This fact while sad, is at the same time inevitable and integral to the survival of the Maasai. Maasai are embracing Western influences, particularly in the ecotourism sector. The city is spreading towards Maasailand. One example, for instance, is the new availability of alcohol to young people in Maasailand, which was traditionally prohibited until they had reached a certain stage in their lives and

with the permission of their parents. Nevertheless, a stubborn refusal to prioritise cattle and the traditional way of life at the expense of quality education will not empower the Maasai to compete with other communities that are moving with the times.

The Value of my Project. From a methodological perspective, I felt it was valuable to learn the fluidity and unpredictability of conducting research. It was fascinating as I really had no idea what I was going to learn each day, who I was going to meet and what I was going to see. Prime examples of this unpredictability being witnessing the biggest migration that our Maasai guide had ever seen and fully understanding his passion for wildlife, and arranging the interview with Titus, the MD of Kenya Airways.

The value of this project for me was that it showed me in the field how culture is fluid, not fixed. Culture is not a plastic thing. It is about real life. There is no such thing as a stagnant 'pure' culture. People living in the world's cultural metropolises are no less culturally diverse than Maasai living in manyattas. Culture can mean different things to different people. It can be seen as a commodity to be made money out of emasculated to the point where the Maasai have the same camera value with a buffalo. It can be seen as a source of pride, a constantly changing fusion of a people's way of life, an expression of their totality.

Culture is dynamic and the Maasai are not exceptional to that rule. The shuka-wearing Maasai man is at home with a Coke, watching the news as the urbanised man from Nairobi City. The eyes of the tourists must, however, be tinted so that they see a tribe caught in a time warp.

The myth of the Maasai has led to this presumption that "exotic" tribes are the only culture worth being seen in Kenya has led to the short changing of visitors. They arrive at the airport, head for the game drives and the Maasai and their manyattas. There is no time to watch the culture of Luo football fans; the culture of nyama choma; the fisher man's culture and that of the clay pot maker. There isn't a moment to listen to that Shauri Moyo band that plays benga or watch an African play at Miujiza Theatre.

What I might do different next time. I would have met Titus much earlier in the project as he offered to take us to his village and his 'modernised' Maasai 'hut', an aluminum version of a manyatta next to his ancestral village. Would have offered an interesting perspective. He also offered to show us around the Maasai community projects he sponsors, including a local Maasai school.

While I don't know how to overcome this, I would have tried to think of more ways to integrate myself with the Maasai and try to dissuade them from seeing me as an outsider and a tourist. While I did achieve a great rapport and trust with many of my participants, some were more concerned with trying to sell me their merchandise. Others, when I did offer to buy

something from them in exchange for an interview about their thoughts and experiences, I felt like I was being given a very optimistic perspective that they probably thought I wanted to hear or that they wanted me to hear, rather than their honest thoughts.

6. Arabella Ciampi: Alternative health approaches in a predominantly biomedical setting such as Rosignano Solvay

When I set off for Rosignano Solvay, a town of 16000 inhabitants in the province of Livorno, Italy, I was planning to research how alternative medicines are accepted (or not) in a biomedical context. The alternative medical system in question was the practice of Raja yoga by pregnant mothers instead of the use of traditional painkillers before and during labour. What I experienced when there went completely beyond my expectations, I interviewed around 60 people including mothers, fathers, doctors, nurses, midwives and therapists who all agreed they had rediscovered themselves through this project of using yoga as an alternative medical care for pregnant women. Whilst there I decided to slightly change my research question. Everyone I interviewed spoke very positively of this programme, and all spoke of a change in their view of pregnancy, so I thought it would be interesting to research what this different viewpoint was. What was specific to the Rosignano health clinic, was that this programme had been free for five years, meaning paid by the state. Last year it had stopped due to lack of funding. This enticed me to look at the more economic side of the programme and made me ask the question, wouldn't it be cheaper for hospitals and health insurance companies to make the practice of yoga during pregnancy public and free so that mothers make less use of epidurals and medical treatments that are expensive to the hospital? My interviews showed that even if women who practiced yoga in their prenatal courses were not necessarily less prone to complications during pregnancy, the benefits they gained were substantial especially during and after labour as they established a new connection between mind and body. This connection enabled them to understand and trust their bodies better therefore declining procedures such as epidurals.

During my stay there, there were many experiences worthy of a mention. However, since I cannot fit them all here, I will concentrate on the one that I believe best sums up my stay in Rosignano. On one of my last days there, I decided to organise a meeting of (mostly) all of the mothers I had conducted informal interviews with. This meeting had the purpose of not only getting everyone together to thank them and say goodbye but also to make a video documenting the experiences of these women, so that this could stay in the archives of the health clinic. During this meeting it became clear how these mothers and all the medical staff that had participated in this programme had formed their own community within the wider

community. People from all different backgrounds had come together, and the mothers which had done the course felt united by the fact that they had all undergone the same process which they felt not only helped with their pregnancy but also with their outlook on life in general. They had discovered themselves through maternity. They had discovered their own, as Nancy Scheper-Hughes described, “mindful body” (1987) by which the mind and the body are inseparable when it comes to an alteration in the human body, be it sickness or pregnancy. The women were taught how to listen to their own body and understand the impending feeling of separation they will feel when they give birth.

In a social setting such as Italy, where as soon as a woman is pregnant she is immediately scheduled in for tests, told what she can and cannot do and monitored by the hospital – in a certain way her body is being “medicalised”; it was inspiring to find a situation where the body was not treated like a commodified entity. At first it seemed surprising how well this state of affairs had been accepted by the community, everyone seemed to have a good word to say about it. However, after some time I realised that only the people that had experienced its benefits had a good word to say about it. Most mothers that had not gone to yoga lessons during their pregnancy were not interested in it, and when asked felt that it might just lead to a waste of time. Some midwives felt it took away some of their authority in pregnancy issues. After five years the health clinic had actually stopped the programme, meaning the people in charge were not interested in it. Unfortunately I could not get an interview with one of them, however when I asked the medical staff why they thought the programme was cut everyone always said the problem was money. Unfortunately offering yoga lessons for pregnant mothers for free does not bring any benefits to the health clinic. All these things point to the fact that although it is accepted by the people involved in the programme, these are only a limited number and therefore alternative medication is not accepted in Rosignano, contrarily to what I had at first anticipated.

It was hard to find mothers that had had negative experiences of the pre-natal yoga programme. One mother I spoke to on the phone said she didn’t enjoy it but refused to meet me for an interview or explain why. When there it was hard to make my informants understand that I was an impartial observer and that I was not working on behalf of the health clinic. Most names and numbers of people I interviewed were given to me by my contact in the clinic and most had somehow been involved with the programme. Because of this it was hard to find a balance between them and people that knew nothing about it. It would’ve been interesting to interview more people that didn’t have any connections with it as only then I could’ve really seen if the use of yoga as an alternative care for pregnancy women had been accepted by the community or not.

Next time I might work harder to find more informants of my own. This opportunity was valuable for me as it introduced me to new experiences, especially the value that yoga

can have in a Westernised setting. However it also showed me how alternative health approaches are hard to implement: in our world it is not enough that a natural health approach is proven by experience to be better for the body as a whole. I had never done yoga before, however I am now enrolled in a weekly yoga class. Although at the start I had been very uncertain about the value of alternative health approaches, after having seen their benefits with my own eyes, I now know that when I do get pregnant I will look for a pre-natal course that focuses on my mind as much as my body.

7. Steph Linsdale: The Lepchas of West Bengal

A film maker and I lived with a tribe, the Lepchas, for five weeks in the Indian Himalayas near Darjeeling from July to August 2010. Using the medium of film, we explored the issue of Language with tribe members. We focused on the importance of both the local tribal Language, Lepcha, and the English Language. Our two main informants were the tribal leader, L.T., and a Lepcha villager, T.L. We spoke to people of three different generations in local villages, schools and at the Headquarters of the Lepchas in Kalimpong, West Bengal. We encountered three main challenges. We firstly faced difficulty in attempting to marry the two disciplines of anthropology and film. A second significant challenge was presented by the presence of the camera in the field. It also proved difficult to gain informants' trust. We overcame such challenges through trial and error, enabling us to shoot thirteen hours of footage in five weeks that we hope to make into a forty minute film.

I found there to be vast differences between the approach of an anthropologist and a film maker. I found that as an anthropologist, I was more likely to adopt an organic approach whereas film making required greater planning and less spontaneity. With film, conversational content would be planned to tie in to the overall aim of the film, and interviews had to be formally arranged in order to meet the technical requirements needed to make useable footage (we had to ensure there was enough light and little background noise, for example). This planned nature of film making created difficulties for me as an anthropologist. I found that more relaxed, spontaneous conversations produced greater insight into how an individual understands the world and ultimately leads to more interesting and deeper theoretical issues being raised. Nevertheless, our aim upon leaving the UK was to make a film and half way through the trip, having yet to find a way to marry our disciplines succinctly, I committed myself to the process of making a film. For my ethnographic project I wrote about how the process of film making compromised my role as an anthropologist. In short, we overcame our initial problem of differences between the two disciplines by giving

film the “upper hand” and observing how the anthropological approach is consequently affected.

Not only did the camera’s presence dwarf my ability to act as an anthropologist, it also raised ethical issues in the field. When we initially arrived in the village, it was near impossible to address the anthropological content that I had planned to explore. The attention of all informants was immediately diverted to the presence of the camera. People were taken aback by its technical ability. Ethically, we felt immediate unease about putting the camera in front of people’s faces in their own home. As a result, we adopted a sensitive and interactional approach to the process of film making. We did not ever do anything that felt wrong as a gut feeling. Throughout our time in the village, informants learnt to operate the camera, shoot footage, play back footage, help carry our equipment and even helped fix any technical problems we had with the camera. We spoke explicitly about our aims and intentions for being there as it felt uncomfortable to hide anything. Informants knew who was going to watch the film and what it was going to be about. To hide anything felt ethically uncomfortable. By the end of the trip, informants were very comfortable with the camera being used.

Gaining trust from informants proved to be a significant on-going challenge for us. When we arrived, the head of the Lepchas seemed incredibly anxious about our intentions. He had pre-conceived negative ideas about the conclusions we may reach based on past scholars’ actions. We adopted the most sensitive approach as possible and felt sure that we would not do anything that felt ethically problematic. It took three weeks of experimentation to gain his full trust. Initially we filmed exactly what he told us to. Unfortunately, we found that his own anxiety was reflected in the footage that he was directing us to shoot. We then had a series of lengthy conversations with him, being as open as honest. Through such explicit openness and mutual understanding, he felt secure that we were not there to upset anyone or write the Lepchas off. On the second of August, we had a revelatory moment when he said that he completely understood our intentions and alternative approach. Trust had been gained and not only did he himself, but T.L who was interestingly under his direction, become significantly more relaxed in front of the camera. Footage bursting with honesty began to shine through.

Anthropology Outreach was one of the most valuable things I have ever been involved with. It was a self-driven project in the field which inevitably led to an increased sense of personal achievement upon completion. It is difficult to articulate quite how much I learnt along the way, what a struggle I went through, and how elated I feel when I watch the footage back. The thought of creating a finished film is so exciting. Despite doing limited preparation prior to the trip, I do not regret this. As long as initial in-field contacts are in place, I see little wrong with allowing unplanned events and moments drive your project. This no doubt leads

one to make a vast amount of mistakes but it inevitably leads one to learning a great deal more in comparison to working within a safe and secure plan. An incredible opportunity!