Jottings from the Field

Student Journal of the Anthropology Programme,
Royal Thimphu College

Vol. 3, No. 1 (2023)

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For the cover photo, we would like to thank Pema Tshering, the winner of Journal Photo Competition.

Senior Editors: Tshering Choden and Jamyang Seldon.

Editors: Chhimi Wangmo, Namgay Choden, Sonam Zangmo, Surekha Subba, Rigzin Nima, and Sherab Wangmo.

Faculty Supervisors: Dr. Richard Kamei and Tashi Choden.

Jottings from the Field is a student lead journal intended to showcase the writings of Anthropology students in RTC. This is the third volume of the journal, which highlights some of the best ethnographic researches and valuable experiences of the students. It has also provided an opportunity for interested students to learn the skills needed to run a publication.

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Introduction to the Journal

From the journal's Faculty Advisors

We are back with "Jottings from the field" for 2023. This marks the third issue of the issue. As we cherish the accomplishment of this journal, we want to emphasise that the student-led journal is from the anthropology programme of Royal Thimphu College (RTC). Continuing the tradition of representing anthropology students' voices, this issue is filled with a range of anthropological topics, book reviews, reports of guest lecture and field visit, research abstracts and papers, opinion pieces, and interview with an alumna. They are simmering with students' ideas and knowledge from their learnings and how they make of their everyday lives.

The journal is not only an orientation of anthropology students to the academic world but also an opportunity to inculcate academic skills. The interests of anthropology students in this journal reflect their commitment to personal and professional growth and for the societies. As faculty advisors of the journal, we continue looking to ensure that the students' writings and contributions align with the values and ethics of academia.

We want to express gratitude to our strong editorial team: Tshering Choden, Jamyang Seldon, Chhimi Wangmo, Namgay Choden, Sonam Zangmo, Surekha Subba, Sherab Wangmo, and Rigzin Nima. Their dedication and efforts, despite their respective coursework and other work, are worth a mention for making this issue a successful one. We would also like to acknowledge the teamwork they exhibited from the start to the end. We hope that through this issue, the journal will lend voices to the anthropology programme at RTC.

We want to acknowledge and thank the authors who are current anthropology students at RTC and graduate anthropology students from RTC. We would also like to extend our gratitude to Dr. Dolma Choden Roder, Dr. Tiatemsu Longkumer, Dr. Kevingu Khate, Pheiga Amanda Giangthandunliu, Jigme Gyeltshen, and Jigme Tobdhen for their assistance and support.

With these notes, we are delighted to present this issue as they speak in volumes about the progress each writing journey embarked upon. Moreover, these assemblages of articles are an indication that the anthropology programme at RTC is scaling greater heights each semester. We hope that our students' writings find home in readers and beyond.

Warm regards,
Dr. Richard Kamei, and Tashi Choden,
Journal's Faculty Advisors

From the journal's Senior Editors

As senior editors for this journal, we are deeply grateful for the opportunity to address you all today. Our journey with this journal has been an evolving one, notably different from the time as graduates of this college when we held the same position. Unlike those earlier years, our interaction with the journal team and the dedicated authors has largely taken place through virtual networks. This journey has been a rollercoaster of experiences. At times, it felt a little hectic, but every moment has been incredibly worthwhile and rewarding.

As we embark on this literary journey, we would also like to extend a warm welcome to our readers. We invite you to delve into the diverse yet immensely important work contained within the pages of this journal. The authors have poured their expertise, creativity, and passion into their contributions, offering valuable insights that enrich our scholarly community.

This shift in our modus operandi has illuminated the remarkable diligence and commitment of our team. It is inspiring to witness how, despite their demanding academic schedules, they have adeptly managed every task and promptly addressed all issues that have arisen. The journal's success is a testament to their hard work, dedication, and unwavering commitment to scholarly excellence. The countless hours spent reviewing, editing, and collaborating with fellow students have been a true testament to the dedication of our team. While the path to this publication has been marked by tight deadlines and demanding schedules, the sense of accomplishment that comes with it is immeasurable.

In this endeavor, we must acknowledge the pivotal role played by our journal advisor and supervisor, Dr. Richard Kamei. His guidance, unwavering support, and expertise have been instrumental in the compilation, efficient task completion, and, ultimately, the successful publication of this journal. Without Dr. Richard's presence and the dedication of our team members, this achievement would not have been possible. We also extend our heartfelt gratitude to our fellow editors, contributors, and faculty advisors for supporting us on this journey. Your guidance and encouragement have been instrumental in making this editorial journey a success. We would also like to thank the team who helped us in making the cover page of the journal, and the students who submitted the pictures for the journal cover.

We look forward to the engaging and enlightening journey that awaits us within the pages of this journal.

Warm regards,
Tshering Choden and Jamyang Seldon,
Student Senior Editors.

Memorials for the Dead, Palliatives for the Living: Deconstructing the Multiple Aspects of Funerals in Trashiyangtse and Bumthang

Tshering Choden
Anthropology 2020 graduate
E-mail: tsheringcgyel@gmail.com

Selected Capstone Project Abstract of 2023 Anthropology Graduate

Abstract

This research paper explores the sociocultural implications and beliefs surrounding death and funerary practices in the Bhutanese communities of Bumthang and Trashiyangtse. The topic of death and its associated rituals holds great significance in these communities, as it plays a pivotal role in shaping their cultural identity and understanding of the world. Drawing upon interviews with people from these communities, religious figures, and psychological perspectives, the study examines the dichotomy of life and death, the role of religion, and the influence of cultural beliefs on funerary rituals. The findings highlight the significance of death as a transformative force and the belief in the continuity of existence in another realm. The religious practices of Buddhism, including prayers, rituals, and the construction of *chortens*, shape the funerary culture and emphasise the transmigration of the soul and the accumulation of positive karma for a better rebirth. Furthermore, cultural beliefs surrounding death, such as the fear of ghosts and the importance of purity, impact individuals' psychological experiences and the grieving process. The paper underscores the psychological benefits of funerals, providing closure, meaning, and social support for the bereaved. It emphasises the need to understand and respect diverse cultural beliefs while considering the psychological implications of funerary practices. This study contributes to the understanding of funerary practices and calls for cultural sensitivity and support in the context of death and bereavement.

Keywords: Bhutan, funerary practices, religion, cultural beliefs, psychological implications

Black Magic and Poison: The Beliefs and Practices in Lauri, Samdrup Jongker

Jigme Wangchuk
Anthropology 2023 graduate
E-mail: jigmewangchuk321@gmail.com

Selected Capstone Project Abstract of 2023 Anthropology Graduate

Abstract

This anthropological research focuses on the cultural phenomena of black magic and poison serving in Lauri village under Samdrup Jongkhar. It explores the different explanations offered by Lauripas on the beliefs and practices associated with these two occult practices. Various healthcare practices related to these two cultural phenomena are ethnographically analysed using the anthropological concept of medical pluralism. Additionally, the research also examines the interface between different social groups in the community and the punishments and humiliations suffered by the suspected black magicians in the community. The two-month-long ethnographic research in Lauri revealed that the Lauripas' perceptions and explanations for two cultural phenomena draw heavily on the Buddhist concept, *ley judrey* (karma) and other Bhutanese concepts such as *wangta* (charisma or luck) and *lungta* (fortune). In the same vein, the findings suggested that their social backgrounds belonging to lay people or religious practitioners informed their understanding and explanations of occult practices. The evidence of medical pluralism in the community came out strongly, with many community people consulting biomedicine, *sowa-rigpa* (traditional medical system) local healers and conducting religious rituals in the event of sickness believed to be caused by the black magic and poison. Moreover, it also underscored the incidences of community people punishing and humiliating the supposed black magicians in the past, with the concurrent legal implications faced by the perpetrators. Drawing insights on beliefs and practices entailing perceptions, explanations and medical practices linked to these two pre-Buddhist beliefs and practices in Lauri, this ethnographic account expands the

anthropological knowledge of folk medicine and its intersection with mainstream medical systems-biomedicine and *sowa-rigpa.*

Keywords: black magic, poison, health care practices, medical pluralism

Can a Motorbike be More Than a Motorbike? Values, Meanings, and Subculture

Tshering Dorji
Anthropology 2022 graduate
E-mail: tsheringdorji163@gmail.com

Selected Capstone Project Abstract of 2023 Anthropology Graduate

Abstract

This paper discusses the perspective and imagination, creating a reality of motorbike riders in Thimphu and their unique subculture. Bikers in Thimphu have recently gained prominence in terms of their presence and how they find their space among motorbike riders. The research examined bikers from an anthropological perspective to discover the relationship between bikers and their bikes. In doing so, the research mainly focused on how riders in Thimphu ascribe social values and meanings towards their motorbike.

It highlights how the way of the rider are learned and what influences individual rider. It also sheds light on how and why things are done in certain ways, such as how they dress up and specific riding group preference, description and attribution, developed through complex, personal experiences, outer influences and daily engagement with the motorbike. This research's outcome contributes towards the branch of cultural anthropology focusing on the cultural object (motorbike), which gives information about the culture in which it is utilised and its users.

This research topic was selected mainly from my own personal interest and curiosity. My deep enthusiasm and connection towards motorbike led me to do this research and to present about social values and meanings embedded around motorbike.

Cattle and Herders of Peling Village: The Intricate Relationships

Passang Om

Anthropology 2023 graduate

E-mail: opassang109@gmail.com

Selected Capstone Project Abstract of 2023 Anthropology Graduate

Abstract

The people of Peling village, Dagana Bhutan, have maintained a close and mutually beneficial relationship with their cattle. Peling village serves as the chosen field site for this article due to its practical accessibility and my extensive prior engagement with the locale, which imbues it with a sense of personal affinity. Moreover, in light of Peling village's historical reliance on cattle herding for generations as a means of livelihood, my interest lies in comprehending the dynamics of their relationships and the strategies employed to maintain this connection. Thus, this article discusses their relationships, for instance, through the harsh winters and unforgiving summers, the people of Peling village remain steadfast in their commitment to their herds. They know the needs of each of their cows - which are prone to wander and which need special care. However, although the relationship that herders share with their cattle may be interdependent, there is still a complex gap. The herders assumed full control over all aspects pertaining to the cattle, ranging from their dietary intake to the selection of breeding, actively participating in every facet of their care and management. This research asks: How do the cattle and herders of Peling village relate to each other? In answering this question, it utilises multispecies ethnography to delve into the nuanced relationship between human and non-human species, focusing on the cattle. Anthropological research methods were used, including participant observation, semi-structured interviews and secondary sources as a reference.

Keywords: Multispecies ethnography, cattle, herders, ritual, relationship, entities, Peling

Interview with Alumna: Deki Yangzom

Anthropology 2021 graduate
E-mail: yangzomdeki47@gmail.com

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1. **Tell us about yourself, including your educational background, current professional status, and future goals.**

I am Deki Yangzom, and I am an alumna of the first batch of Anthropology programme at Royal Thimphu College (RTC). Shortly after graduating in 2021, I started working with the Tarayana Centre for Research and Development, a think tank and research arm of the Tarayana foundation. I am specifically engaged as a researcher with a programme called Bhutanese Knowledge for Indigenous Development (B-KIND), which is an action-oriented, trans-disciplinary, and citizen research focusing on themes of climate change, sustainable organic agriculture, natural resource management, and gender transformative change. Concurrently, I am also pursuing my Master's degree in Sociology and Social Anthropology at Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS) in India under the Indian Ambassador's Scholarship and generous research funding from B-KIND.

Upon completing my graduate programme, I am envisaging to take my interest in anthropology and research further by pursuing a career in academia.

2. How did you come to know about the anthropology programme at RTC, and what led you to choose it?

I learnt about anthropology programme at RTC around the time when I was applying for a scholarship(s) after my high school, and that's when I decided to thoroughly read the programme handbook on the RTC website. Upon doing so, I was convinced that it's the right programme for someone like me who has always been fascinated by the cultural and linguistic diversity I experienced growing up. Taking into consideration of my upbringing and the rigorous course structure that the anthropology programme offered, I took admission under full scholarship from the Department of Adult and Higher Education (DAHE), Royal Government of Bhutan.

3. Looking back at your time as an anthropology student at RTC, are there any reflections or thoughts you would like to share?

I can wholeheartedly say that choosing to study anthropology at RTC is one of the most worthwhile decisions I have taken so far. The programme, with its all-encompassing course structure and modules, along with excellent lecturers, has offered me the rigour and skill I need to prepare for my career pursuit(s) thereafter.

4. Could you share your experiences as an anthropology student studying outside Bhutan?

Deeply stimulated by my anthropological journey at RTC and also the hands-on grounding in ethnographic research I gained from my work experience, I was very motivated to pursue a graduate study in anthropology in South Asia. Hence, I applied to TISS along with NEHU and JNU, and to my delight, the admission was successful in all three places. However, I chose TISS since the programme offered is innovative, in that the dual disciplines of Sociology and Anthropology are merged and taught jointly. Therefore, my MA journey has been very fulfilling as well as humbling, as now I am also getting a grounding in Sociology along with Anthropology, which I trust will greatly contribute to my career.

Besides that, I am very grateful to be part of this diverse community within my campus, where multicultural experiences occur effortlessly.

5. Share insights into your research interests and what inspired you to pursue them.

Truly inspired by Dr. Jelle J.P. Wouters (faculty at RTC), an intellectual epitome, whom I consider my mentor/co-author, who has a profound impact on my research interests ever since I joined RTC. I am interested in the anthropology of the Himalayas, as an ethnographic field, and the themes of climate change and ecology, religion and ritual, livelihood and vulnerabilities in highland communities of Bhutan. More so, my current research engagement has been in the emergent fields of Environmental Humanities and Multispecies Studies in Bhutan's climate change context.

Drawing on my research work, I am also engaged as a Climate Advocate, working closely with various youth organisations in Bhutan. My advocacy is grounded in the lived realities I have witnessed firsthand during my fieldwork(s). Hence, it is gratifying to be able to complement and correlate my research and social engagement.

6. Do you have any advice for current anthropology students at RTC regarding career prospects and opportunities after graduation?

I think the sooner you build certainty on what you want to do with your anthropology degree as you graduate, the better it is. As far as I am concerned, there are ample of opportunities for anthropology graduates in Bhutan and beyond. The anthropology graduates can work in both governmental and non-governmental sectors in various capacities as a researcher, cultural officer, social worker, and socio-cultural analyst, to name a few.

I believe networking plays a key role when it comes to being informed about career and scholarship opportunities. Be actively engaged with the community and people who share similar interests with you. For that matter, I would encourage the current anthropology students to make good use of social media platforms to build their professional profile as well as their networks.

7. What advice or suggestions do you have for individuals interested in pursuing higher studies in anthropology?

As someone who wants to make a meaningful contribution to the anthropology of Bhutan, I would much encourage them to pursue higher studies in anthropology and any other related programmes, both regionally and abroad.

Based on my experience, I think it is very important for them to decide early on which field they want to specialise in along with the list of universities they might want to consider. More so, having a self-clarity on 'why they want to further pursue anthropology' would make the application process easier, especially while crafting the 'Statement of Purpose' most universities demand.

Besides that, I would also like to apprise them that the graduate programme in anthropology challenges you with a great deal of reading, so brace yourself now, and cultivate reading habits.

8. Is there any message or comment you would like to convey to RTC students in general and anthropology students, in particular?

I would like to urge each and every student to envision their stay at RTC with a sense of purpose — as an opportunity to find their career niche and interest. In those years, invest your time and energy into seizing every opportunity and gaining exposure regardless of how small they are. More so, take advantage of RTC as a place to develop networking within the community itself.

My humble advice to anthropology students, in particular, would be to take your dissertation writing(s) with the utmost tenacity. Pay heed and choose the research area you are most passionate about because, most often, it is your thesis that greatly shapes your intellectual thoughts and also the trajectory you pursue once you graduate.

Opinion Piece on Climate Change

Jamyang Choden
Anthropology 2023 graduate
E-mail: jchoden66@gmail.com

Introduction

In today's rapidly changing world, we face a paramount global challenge—climate change. Its impacts reach far beyond just the environment; they all have profound social implications. Climate change is not some distant phenomenon; it is deeply rooted in human activities. Furthermore, the dynamics of climate change have shifted from being solely influenced by climate to being influenced by human behaviours. Human actions now play a significant role in shaping and impacting the climate system, indicating a shift where human behaviour becomes the driving force behind climate change. After studying environmental humanities and climate change, I am convinced that to truly understand the complexity of climate change in Bhutan, we must blend together scientific knowledge and the knowledge of indigenous communities. Therefore, in this opinion piece, I will argue for the indispensable role of anthropologists in bridging these two knowledge systems and fostering innovative, sustainable solutions. By embracing a collaborative approach that combines anthropology and climate science, while also taking into consideration and valuing Bhutan's cultural heritage and sacred landscapes, we can pave the way towards a resilient future in the face of climate change.

Factors Driving Anthropogenic Climate Change in Bhutan

Although environmental stewardship is prioritised in Bhutan, where one of the pillars of GNH is the conservation of natural environments, we can all see materialistic development is in great force, degrading sacred landscapes and the local sentients. I have observed that industrialisation and the establishment of manufacturing industries and infrastructure projects in Bhutan contribute significantly to climate change. They lead to increased energy demands and rapid urbanisation, particularly on the western side of Bhutan, resulting in

higher energy consumption, transportation emissions, and infrastructure demands contributing to anthropogenic climate change. Furthermore, improper waste management practices, such as inadequate recycling, landfilling, and open burning, release substantial amounts of methane emissions and contribute to deforestation and pollution.

Additionally, when it comes to the impact of modernity on anthropogenic climate change, I have observed instances in the context of Bhutan where the exploitation of natural resources reflects a worldview that considers nature as a mere resource for economic gain. For example, during a visit to my village in Mongar last winter, I discovered that a small spring, which was not only a source of drinking water but also considered holy, had disappeared. My grandfather explained that the Indian labourers involved in road construction dismantled the catchment without considering the significance of the sacred landscape. This unfortunate incident highlights the disregard for both environmental consequences and the sentiments of local communities.

Hence, I strongly believe that it is crucial to recognize that the responsibility for such actions extends far beyond the labourers. The contractors and engineers overseeing the project should have undoubtedly considered the sentiments of the villagers and the significance of the sacred water source. This undeniable negligence vividly showcases the mindset perpetuated by colonial modernity, wherein nature is callously viewed as a mere resource to exploit for economic gain and focuses too much on materialistic and infrastructure development. Such a mindset blatantly disregards the potential long-term consequences on the environment and the overall well-being of the local communities. We must confront and challenge this perspective to ensure a more sustainable and respectful relationship with our surroundings.

Bridging Climate Science and Indigenous Knowledge

I believe anthropology allows us to explore how scientific and indigenous knowledge intersect and complement each other. Moreover, I have come to understand the importance of avoiding false dichotomies and refraining from championing either scientific or indigenous knowledge alone. Instead, it is crucial that both forms of knowledge contribute to a deeper understanding of the complex issues that extend beyond human interactions through weather, modern meteorology and moral meteorology. This perspective emphasises the need

to appreciate and integrate multiple knowledge systems for a more holistic comprehension of the intricated relationship between social, cultural, economic and political aspects with climate change. From my standpoint, climate science, which is a scientific approach, has the potential to provide insights into climate patterns and their impacts in Bhutan. For instance, according to UNDP (2020), glacial melt is a significant concern in Bhutan due to its dependence on glacier-fed rivers for freshwater resources. Hence, climate science will play a crucial role in monitoring the retreat of glaciers and predicting future water availability. By understanding the dynamics of glacial melt and its implications for water resources, policymakers can develop sustainable water management strategies, such as building reservoirs, implementing efficient irrigation practices, and promoting water conservation.

I have learnt that the earth is a self-regulating system where living organisms and the environment interact to sustain optimal conditions for life. Babu Tashi's perspective aligns with this idea, emphasising the interconnectedness between human actions and the Earth's self-regulation. Similarly, an interdisciplinary approach should go hand in hand to attain sustainable intelligence regarding climate change. Since most of the socio-economic structure of Bhutan revolved around the concept of religion, ethics and moral values that have encompassed traditional ecological landscapes and practices that have long promoted sustainable living. However, colonial modernity is in great force due to Western values and ideas that marginalise humanity. Therefore, integrating climate science with Bhutan's traditional value systems allows for a holistic understanding of climate change impacts and identifying locally appropriate adaptation strategies. Climate scientists can collaborate with local communities to document and incorporate traditional practices into climate adaptation plans, such as agroforestry, water management techniques, and disaster preparedness.

Conclusion

In conclusion, anthropology is vital in achieving a holistic understanding of climate change in Bhutan. By embracing both scientific and indigenous knowledge, anthropologists can bridge the gap between these knowledge systems and foster collaboration. Studying anthropology specifically, contemporary issues of anthropology and anthropology of development has broadened my perspective of how anthropologists can contribute to the development of innovative sustainable intelligence that aligns with Bhutan's cultural values and promotes

resilience in the face of climate change. I see the importance of anthropology in shaping our response to this global challenge and working towards a sustainable and harmonious future for Bhutan and beyond. Furthermore, anthropology serves to contextualise climate science by exploring the intricate ways in which climate change impacts diverse cultures, societies, and livelihood.

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Red Chilli and its Agriculture Practice in Bhutan

Sonam Dorji

Second year Anthropology student

E-mail: sonamdors29@gmail.com

This research paper examines Bhutan's red chilli farming techniques and their role in Bhutan's agricultural landscape. The essay explores several facets of red chilli farming in Bhutan, including its historical context, production methods, difficulties, and contribution to the country's economy. The results represent the significance of red chilli as a crucial crop for both subsistence and earning money, as well as illuminate its distinctive farming techniques Bhutanese farmers use. This research essay will be on the importance of chillies, particularly the production of red chilli by different districts of Bhutan. I will discuss various articles on red chilli agriculture practice and link them to concepts of ecological anthropology.

Tshedup (2017) states that every home in Merda, a small rural community in Kangpara Gewog, Trashigang, has sacks of dry chillies stored in the basement in the fall. Later, the chillies will be available for purchase in Samdrup Jongkhar, Trashigang, and Thimphu. The chillies, often referred to as “Kangpara solo", are only picked after they have turned a fiery red colour. When the chillies begin to turn bright red towards the end of October, they are plucked and dried on roofs and in the open. One may observe the chillies' gorgeous scene from a distance. At this time of year, Kangpara is covered with the fiery tones of the autumn season. The chilli economy has expanded over time with the completion of farm roads. Kangpara is famous for producing chillies, and its favourable site and climatic settings have facilitated agriculturalists to make good revenue from the harvest. Production has marginally declined recently in regions like Pasaphu and Kangpar Chiwogs due to the changing climate. The agricultural administration is presently investigating the cause of the decreased production.

Gyeltshen and Tashi (2019) write that chillies are dried on a cane carpet set down on the ground using the traditional local sun drying method. Chillies are positioned on a bamboo mat that is 1.5 feet above the ground for the second technique. In the third technique, peppers were placed on a cane mat raised 1.5 feet over the ground, covered with clear polyethene tiling placed 2 feet over the mat, and in the fourth technique, peppers were placed on a cane mat raised 1.5 feet over the ground, completely enclosed by a polytunnel prepared of a cane edging sheltered in clear covering. Ueda and Samdup (2010) state that Bhutanese cuisine includes a significant amount of chillies, which are typically regarded as vegetables rather than spices. This is seen in the most popular cuisine of Bhutanese people, *Ema datsi*, which is made of cheese and chillies.

The importance of environmental determinism is shown in this essay from Kangpara village in the context of ecological anthropology. The climatic, geographical factors, and ecological conditions influence the favourable red chilli production from Kangpara Gewog. However, the production of red chillies has been hampered due to the effects of climate change. Political ecology is also seen as an important factor in helping farmers increase their yield production. For example, political power can shape environmental issues relating to red chilli agriculture by bringing modern technologies and ideas to solve the problems faced by farmers. In addition, power relations shape environmental knowledge and other resources to help farmers. The concept of cultural ecology is relevant to the traditional way of sun-drying chilli. The Bhutanese people are aware of the abundance of sun and dry winds, which they use it to their advantage in their food culture. This, I see cultural context playing its role in understanding our environment. Bhutanese culture of consuming chillies and practising different varieties of chillies cultivation is in conformity with the environment. In this context, an emphasis on the food culture of Bhutanese is worth noting. For instance, *Ema datsi* is present in every ritual, event, and ceremony, indicating that red chillies are offered to spirits and deities since the food humans consume is preferred by local deities and spirits.

In conclusion, red chilli agriculture in Bhutan relates to important concepts of ecological anthropology, drawing the connection to environmental and cultural determinism influencing the environment. Red chillies play a significant role in Bhutanese culture and diet. It is significant to emphasise that red chillies in Bhutan have ecological significance beyond their food use. Red chilli farming is an example of an agricultural strategy that works in harmony with the environment, promotes economic growth, promotes the importance of

the environment on food, including chilli, and reinforces cultural identities.

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Bhutan's Contributions to the Planetary Quest for More-Than-Human Justice and Ethics

Passang Om
Anthropology 2023 graduate
E-mail: opassang109@gmail.com

Introduction

Bhutan, located between two major economic powers, India and China (Gawel, 2014) has managed to maintain its cultural integrity and ecological abundance through a unique approach to development. That is why Bhutan is renowned for being the last Shangri-La on the planet due to its meticulously preserved and stunning landscape (Nordbye, 1998). Moreover, not only for its scenic landscapes but also because Bhutan has been praised for its unique approach to development, there is much more to learn from this country when it comes to advocating for more-than-human justice and ethics. The term "more-than-human" justice and ethics, according to Tschakert (2022), refers to an expanded and inclusive approach to ethical decision-making and justice that takes into account the interests and well-being of all living entities, such as animals, plants, and ecosystems. Therefore, this essay demonstrates the insights and perspectives that Bhutan provides in the planetary quest for more-than-human justice and ethics, given its unique approach to sustainable development focused on the Buddhist principles of compassion and interconnectedness, community-based conservation, and the Gross National Happiness philosophy (GNH).

Buddhist society and emphasis on a holistic understanding of human-nature relationships

Bhutan can contribute to the planetary quest for more-than-human justice and ethics because of its Buddhist society and emphasis on a holistic understanding of human-nature relationships. In Buddhist philosophy, all life is considered sacred and interconnected. This view is reflected in Bhutan's conservation efforts, where several Buddhist monasteries have become sanctuaries for animals such as snow leopards and takins (Jamtsho, 2019). This custom of using monasteries as sanctuaries for animals, such as snow leopards and takins, demonstrates Buddhism's dedication to causes other than human justice. The Himalayan region promotes compassion and ecological ethics and views protecting the natural environment and its inhabitants as a moral obligation, highlighting the interdependence of all living things. Additionally, Smyer (2023) discusses in his article how the values of compassion, nonviolence, and interdependence found in Sino-Tibetan Buddhism can advance environmental awareness and animal rights. However, he contends that while Sino-Tibetan Buddhism presents a distinctive and valuable point of view on environmentalism, it is insufficient to tackle the ecological issues the world is currently facing. He makes several criticisms, one of which is that Buddhist environmentalism frequently emphasises local or individual efforts rather than structural change at the global level. At the same time, he acknowledges that Sino-Tibetan Buddhism has the potential to aid in the global effort to achieve ecological sustainability, notably by promoting ecological ethics and recognising the interdependence of all beings. Moreover, in Tibetan Buddhism, animals are also considered sentient beings, which means they are capable of feeling and experiencing emotions just like humans. This perspective has led to the development of a thriving animal liberation movement in Bhutan (Miyamoto et al., 2021), where individuals and organisations work to promote animal rights and reduce animal suffering.

Banerjee et al. (2022) stated in their book that the black-necked cranes in Bhutan use the Gantey monastery as a landmark to navigate their altitude and flight patterns. This behaviour has been observed by the Bhutanese people, who have noticed the similarity between the crane's circling and human circumambulation around the monastery. Thus, the cranes are considered heavenly birds and are believed to be *bodhisattvas*, reflecting their intelligence. These convergences between the crane and human movements have led to the evolution of human rituals, including crane dances, which represent this sacred acknowledgement. Similarly, vultures are admired as role models of nonviolence, spiritual practitioners, and karmic judgment by the Bhutanese due to their nature of not killing

beings. To relate the aforementioned points with my chosen thesis, the spiritual ties between the Bhutanese people, vultures, and black-necked cranes are examples of how they deeply value and adore non-human life. These rituals and beliefs foster an ecological consciousness that aids in the search for global justice and ethics beyond humankind. The idea that animals have significance beyond their utility to people is reinforced by the Bhutanese belief that cranes are intellectual beings and heavenly birds. Such viewpoints can challenge ingrained human-centric worldviews that frequently put human concerns ahead of the environment and other living things. The crane dances and other traditions that vultures and cranes influenced help to bridge the gap between spirituality and science, which promotes ecological preservation.

Furthermore, Bhutanese consideration of sacred sites as Buddhist can also contribute to the planetary quest for sustainability by promoting conservation and preservation efforts that recognise their cultural and spiritual significance. According to Allison (2019), sacred sites are considered to have cultural and spiritual significance in Bhutan, and this recognition contributes to the country's efforts to conserve its natural heritage. Many of the country's sacred sites are also located in remote areas, providing important habitats for various species and ecosystems. Moreover, the spiritual connection that Bhutanese people have with their sacred sites and sacred citadels can inspire a sense of stewardship and responsibility towards the environment. Bhutanese not only seek permission from the government to bring development, particularly road construction, buildings and other infrastructures, but also believe that the land belongs to deities, known as deity citadels (Allison, 2019). Thus, the Bhutanese seek permission and guidance from deities prior to development (construction and mining) with the belief to avoid certain accidents and misfortunes in the future (Wouters et al., 2022). Therefore, Bhutan contributes to more than human justice and ethics globally by believing the earth as a whole is not only self-sustaining but also sentient (Yü, 2014). Understanding the environment as a sacred entity can foster a greater appreciation and respect for nature, leading to more responsible and sustainable practices. Moreover, these efforts can not only contribute to the planetary quest but also help in preserving the country's distinct natural and cultural legacy for future generations, reflecting the importance of balancing development with sustainability and cultural preservation.

Focus on community-based conservation

Bhutan's focus on community-based conservation provides yet another perspective on more-than-human justice and ethics. According to Rinzin et al. (2009), community-based conservation involves local communities in the management and protection of natural resources, which can help ensure that conservation efforts benefit both the environment and the people who depend on it. In Bhutan, community-based conservation programs have been developed to conserve forests, protect wildlife, and sustainably manage natural resources. These programs have been successful in promoting conservation and enhancing the well-being of local communities. Additionally, Bhutan's community-based conservation approach recognises the interdependence of human and non-human entities and promotes sustainable use of resources. Like the indigenous communities mentioned by Chao (2022) on the concept of multispecies justice and its potential as an alternative approach to traditional anthropocentric approaches to justice, Bhutan's conservation efforts prioritise restoring relationships with the land and biodiversity for the well-being of present and future generations as part of the planetary quest for a sustainable future. Furthermore, Bhutan's community-based conservation approach acknowledges the interdependence of human and non-human entities and promotes sustainable use of resources. This portrays how Bhutan's approach shows an understanding and appreciation of the interconnectedness between humans and other species. Moreover, Bhutan fosters a deeply ingrained sense of environmental stewardship, which is evident in its constitutional mandate declaring Bhutan to maintain a minimum of 60 per cent forest coverage.

Additionally, Bhutan's conservation efforts for the black-necked crane contribute to the planetary quest (Jenkins, 2020) for sustainability by promoting biodiversity and preserving cultural heritage. The black-necked crane is a critically endangered species that is also a symbol of good fortune and fidelity in Bhutanese culture. Bhutan's conservation efforts, such as the annual Black-necked Crane Festival, not only help preserve the species but also provide opportunities for education and awareness-raising on the importance of preserving biodiversity and cultural heritage. Moreover, preserving the black-necked crane's habitat provides important ecosystem services, such as clean water and air, which contribute to the planet's overall health. This appreciation for biodiversity and its associated resources reflects the country's ecological literacy, which has led to it being one of the leading conservation nations in the world.

Philosophy of Gross National Happiness

GNH philosophy can also contribute to the planetary quest for more-than-human justice and ethics. According to Kezang et al. (2016), Bhutan, a small country located in the Eastern Himalayas, is known for its development philosophy of GNH, which prioritises the well-being of its citizens and the natural environment. GNH emphasises the importance of promoting the well-being of people along with the environment. Thus contributing to the planetary quest for sustainability and promoting more-than-human justice. Bhutan's approach to development recognises the importance of equitable and socio-economic development. This means that GNH's development model can enhance the well-being of people and the environment alike. This is especially imperative in today's world, where social and environmental challenges are increasingly complex and interconnected. By emphasising social and economic justice, GNH helps to drive community-based conservation efforts and acknowledges the interconnections between social, economic, and environmental systems.

Additionally, one of the pillars of GNH emphasises environmental preservation, acknowledging the connectivity between human and non-human entities, which is a key idea in the conversation about justice that extends beyond the human. According to Tsing (2015), taking into account the multispecies community causes us to shift our attention from noting human problems to recognising the cultural contributions and cooperation of diverse creatures. This necessarily implies acknowledging the rights and interests of non-human entities and striving to create a more equitable and just future for all. The concept of environmental justice, which seeks to rectify the unequal distribution of environmental advantages and harms depending on socioeconomic circumstances, is consistent with the viewpoint of the multispecies community. Bhutan thus supports a just and equitable future for all living things by emphasising environmental preservation. Additionally, the GNH model considers the role of nature and non-human entities as crucial in promoting sustainable development. This recognition of the importance of the natural environment aligns with the concept of more-than-human justice and ethics. According to Wouters (2022), this perspective acknowledges the interconnectedness of all entities in ecological systems and emphasises the need to move beyond a human approach. Bhutan has been successful in achieving a balance between human needs and sustainable development,

reflecting the planet's well-being. Its approach underscores the significance of a more-than-human justice perspective, and it serves as a noteworthy example for other countries to follow in their quest for sustainability.

Conclusion

Bhutan's distinctive strategy for sustainable development offers important insights and viewpoints into the planetary quest for justice and ethics that transcend humankind. Bhutan's cultural and spiritual practices, which include its Buddhist society, community-based conservation strategy, and GNH philosophy, all show a knowledge and appreciation of how all life is interconnected. Bhutan has been successful in striking a balance between the demands of its people and sustainable development because it places a high priority on protecting the environment and its citizens' well-being. Its methodology emphasises the value of a more-than-human justice perspective, where moral judgment and justice take into account the interests and well-being of all living things. Bhutan's emphasis on compassion, interconnectedness, and community participation in conservation initiatives serves as a model for other nations pursuing sustainability. Moreover, Bhutan's efforts to preserve its cultural and natural heritage not only benefit the country's citizens but also contribute to the planet's well-being. Recognising the interconnectedness between humans and other species can foster a greater appreciation and respect for nature, leading to more responsible and sustainable practices. Additionally, Bhutan's approach emphasises the need to move beyond a human-centred approach (Wouters, 2022) and acknowledge the crucial role non-human entities play in promoting sustainable development.

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Deity of Nobding and its Significance to the Village

Thukten Dema

Second year Anthropology student

E-mail: teddey333@gmail.com

Nobding is a small, clustered village located in Wangdue Dzongkhag under Dangchu *geog* and was recently recognized as a satellite town. In this village, a local deity known as *Ngedag* or *Ngepo* is believed to harm people doing evil deeds and help to watch over the people doing good deeds. The deity is considered *Zhidag* (the lord of settlement) and *Pholha* (male god). Its *ngeykhang* (the deity's house) or citadel is located on a cliff in a dense forest 1km northeast of Nobding. The *ngedag* name was *Ngep Nguru Dorji* supports the village and residences, sharing a symbiotic relationship with the villager and the people residing there. If the people pluck even the small leaf near *ngeykhang*, the *Ngepo* would be exasperated, thus bringing destruction to the village with hailstones and heavy rain. This has, therefore led to people of the village to protect the environment and animals and plants species of Nobding (Tenzin, 2018). This has also helps helped balance the ecosystem and promote environmental preservation, thus enhancing a sustainable and equitable environment.

According to Phuntshok (2018), the belief in territorial deities provides a great deal of psychological stability, making locals feel protected from disasters and harm. The relationship between the deity and the people approximates to a vow to take care each other. Furthermore, the presence of the deity can provide a deeper understanding of the world hence defining the concepts of good and evil influencing social norms, laws, and rituals in one's community. The citadels of the deity located on the cliff fiercely protect themselves from people's over-exploitation of resources therefore the community's culture are bounded and influenced by annual rituals such as Seokha[1](Allison, 2019). Additionally, ones belief of deity shows that cultural beliefs and practices shape how people perceive and use natural

[1]Ritual held once or twice a year for a bountiful harvest and to have a prosperous life ahead. Includes the offering of foods such as wheat, rice, and different kinds of curry. See Phuntshok (2018).

resources as well as how they prioritize and allocate resources. Hence, using culture to adapt to the environment further displays the concept of cultural ecology. Thus, the presence of a deity often shapes a cultural worldview, moral framework, and the community's social structure.

The people offer *Seokha* to the *Ngepo* once a year to keep the village peaceful. If the *Seokha* is retard the house would be haunted every night until the ritual is performed. People pray for well-being, good luck, and a bountiful harvest to the residing deity once a year between autumn and winter. During *Seokha* numerous foods such as wheat, rice, and different kinds of curry were offered. Several more rites operated in the deity's name. The *bSang*[2] *(the purification ritual) and Serkyem* [3] *(golden drink)* are other rituals held for native residents of all ages and for the children born within the deity's territory. The *bSang* is the burning of pine leaves and cypress to cleanse bodily impurities every morning. The ritual of *Serkyem* is the offering of tea, wine, milk, butter, and incense to the deity for one's well-being. Additionally, as stated by Ura (2001), people offering the *bSang* and *Serkyem* should be clean without any defilement (*drip*) and pollution because the deity might impose poison, pollution, or diseases as an act of revenge on people and the village. Some people playing archery pray and seek help so that the archers would eventually win.

The people of Nobding were tended to protect the residing people informing travellers about the presence of the deity in the forest. The villagers also inform us not to disturb the deity because it might bring heavy rainfall and windstorms destroying the crops. People believed that waking the sleeping deities would make them angry bringing mishaps to the village. As Tenzin (2018) asserts that although the weather was cold which would hamper the growth of crops, with the help of the deity there was a bountiful harvest that was not suitable for the soil condition and weather. Tenzin's interviewee was one of the elders of the Nobding who was around 80 years and was frightened because, in the olden days, they dared not to say the deity's name aloud. Even if they do, they used a low tone.

To conclude, the presence of citadels of deities on the various landscapes such as cliffs, mountains, and rivers helps to balance the ecosystem and helps to promote environmental

[2] It is the burning of pine leaves or cypress to purify one's impurities. It is conducted every morning especially more during auspicious days. See Phuntshok (2018).
[3] It includes the offering of alcohol, milk, and tea. It was of two types, one offered every morning and another one offered to one's birth deities (*kay lha*) or protecting deities. See Phuntshok (2018).

preservation. I think cultural values play a vital role in shaping societal roles hence displaying the concept of cultural determinism and cultural ecology.

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Chele La

Tsheten Wangmo
Second year Anthropology student
E-mail: wangmotsheten28@gmail.com

Chele La is a breathtaking natural site found at a height of 31,083 ft above sea level between Paro and Haa which is known to be the highest motor-able pass in Bhutan (Druk Heritage, 2021, November 7, para.3). Chele La can be recognized as one of the natural tangible heritage sites found in Bhutan. The cultural and environmental significance that the place holds on the natural heritage site of Bhutan is a great asset to the country. The availability of various endangered species and many cultural locations nearby, with surreal sights and beautiful trekking trails with exotic birds, flowers, a vast forest and different species. It is likely to captivate those who travel to the site. It is a natural heritage that should be recognized and should be preserved and protected.

Chele La is home to different types of bird species such as the various types of pheasants like the blood pheasants, Kalij Pheasants, colorful Himalayan Monals and there are also Rosy-Finches, Grosbeaks, and Laughing Thrushers. Some of them are known to be endangered species in the world (Druk Heritage, 2021). Various flower and tree species can be found on the way such as rhododendrons, the national flower blue poppy, gentiana Sino-ornate, lomatogonium, juniper, and hemlock trees. The presence of the White Poppy at the Pass makes Chele La an important natural heritage since the White Poppy is the rarest flower species that is in breach of extinction as well as the existence of the Blue Poppy in Chele La. The Blue poppy is the national flower of Bhutan which holds symbolic importance to the Bhutanese because it represents happiness and Bhutanese values. According to the Royal Society for the Protection of Nature due to mishandling of the blue poppy known as the Meconopsis napaulensis might be extinct in the future (Daily Bhutan, 2022).

Traveling through Chele La Pass visitors will get to see the two temples, Lhakhang Karpo (White Temple) and Lhakhang Nagpo (Black Temple). There is a myth told by the 69th Je Khenpo Genden Rinchen about the two temples. A Tibetan King released two pigeons from

Lhasa which one was white and the other was a black pigeon, which landed on the place where the temples now sit (Asian Historical Architecture, 2021). There is a cultural value to the Chele La pass and reason for it to be considered as heritage.

Methods like ethnography that can be used for making analysis and documentation. Many ethnographers would first go to the site they have chosen for their research just like how I went to Chele La. In ethnography, the ethnographers will go and interview the locals, I learned about the existence of the two temples at Chele La. Through the use of methods such as aerial photography, I was able to see the topographical formation and the length of the path of Chele La giving a view of a bird's eye, and was able to detect a few bird species, also including the various different types of prayer flags. There are also methods such as GIS (Geographic Information System) or Geophysical surveying that can be used instead of aerial photography, which will assist in giving more detailed data about the location. Conducting research by looking through sources like the internet, articles, and libraries can also be used. After that fieldwork and research, I was able to find many flower species. Lomatogonium is known to be an endangered species (Edinburgh Journal of Botany, 2019). Additionally, Lomatogonium are thriving in the Chele la pass area that is clearly shown in the picture that I took when I visited Chele la pass. The methods mainly provide assistance in keeping a record and a document as a form of information for the readers. I was able to understand and see Chele La as an important heritage site with the assistance of the methods.

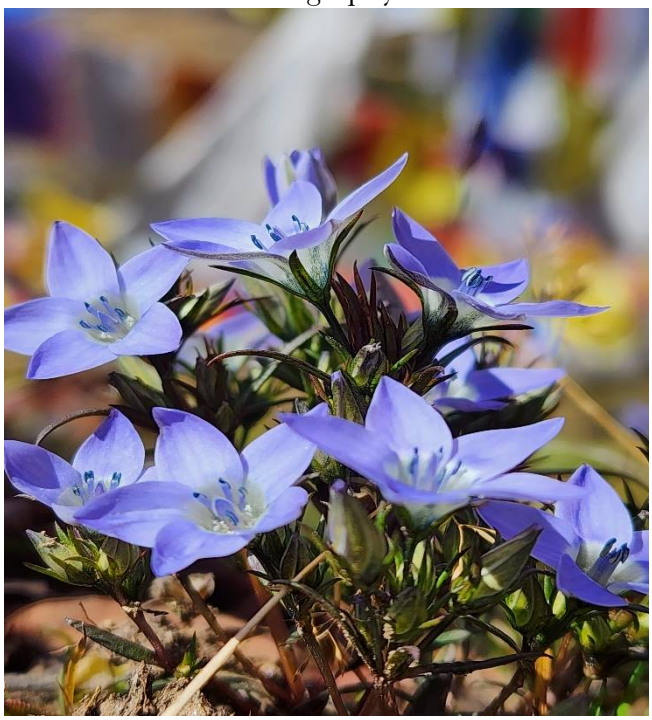

Figure 1 (Lomatogonium)

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A Report on Guest lecture

Kinley Dorji
Anthropology 2023 graduate
E-mail: dkinley895@gmail.com

Summary

Karma Tenzin is an Executive Architect in the Archaeology section of the Department of Culture. He delivered a lecture for us in the Spring semester of 2023. His presentation highlights the importance of archaeological sites in interpreting histories, culture, and political changes. He discussed the functions of Dzong based on their design and structure. For instance, the Dzong before Zhabdrung was used for defensive and political positions based on the central tower location and enclosed walls from the four directions. During the time of Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal[4], the central tower was in the centre, with the circumambulatory space surrounded by the walls. It was connected to religious, political, and defensive functions. However, in current times, the centre towers of Dzong are shifted to the edges for public gatherings and festivals. These findings reflected upon changes in socio-political functions based on the structure of Dzong. His results also portray archaeological sites that can be used to validate oral sources and alternatives for limited documented work in Bhutan.

Analysis

According to Penjor (2017), there is little effort from state and education institutions to study Bhutan's past through Archaeology and limited archaeological activities resulting from sites being unintentionally discovered while fields were being plowed or earth was being dug for new homes as most of the histories of our Bhutan comes from oral and folk narratives. However, his talk highlights that Bhutan has scope for articulating histories based on artefacts and archaeological sites. For instance, places such as Mount Phobjikha, Bumthang, Sarpang, and Lhuntse have the potential for archaeological examination. The provisions of archaeological training for the local profession are also one of the objectives of his talk in

[4] Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal is attributed the founder of Bhutan. See Tobgay's (2022) Bhutan: History, scholarship and emerging agency in the Bhutanese narrative.

which now the archaeological activity is concentrated not only on educated people but also the locals since they are mostly connected to the place. He emphasised the archaeological sites as symbols for interpreting socio-cultural and political change. However, Hamilakis (2011) stated issues of conventional archaeologist that acknowledges the linear and successive culture in which collaboration of archaeology and anthropologist is required to debunk the notion of both disciplines; there is a recent approach known as Archaeological ethnography.[5] Thus, it is essential to think that while archaeological sites have the potential to interpret changes and continuity, they also can undermine the past culture. For instance, in his talk, the Dzong before Zhabdrung was deemed as less advanced, although there may be chances of categorising people before Zhabdrung reign as uncivilised. The Department of Culture in Bhutan should adopt the principle of Archaeological ethnography while establishing an archaeological field in Bhutan.

It is significant to the ethnography of Bhutan since archaeological sites such as Dzong highlight the change in the political realm and the relationship between people and the state in the past. The ethnography of Bhutan also emphasises power dynamics within the society. For instance, our Bhutanese history of monastic and political rule can also be analysed based on archaeological evidence. Furthermore, archaeological examination enables the preservation of Bhutan's tangible and intangible heritage by complementing qualitative research or published articles about Bhutan. Fux et al. (2014) also mentioned that much of what is known in Bhutan comes from oral traditions, and the meaning of certain artefacts is articulated based on oral traditions. The Ethnography of Bhutan has depended upon the oral narratives of people in which archaeological sources, such as the interpretation of histories of socio-cultural changes, will contribute to different methodologies to study the human culture of the past in Bhutan.

Reflection

He had that privilege as an architect and archaeologist as he had prior knowledge about the sites and design, which contributed to the interpretation of artefacts. Similarly, his choice of career path has encouraged me to choose my field based on my foundational knowledge. However, his work has focused only on the general functions of Dzong based on significant

[5] Archaeological ethnography is introduced as an emerging transdisciplinary field that allows for multiple encounters, conversations, and interventions involving researchers from various disciplines and diverse publics (Hamilakis 2011 p.1)

figures. This further suggests upcoming archaeologists look at ordinary peoples, power dynamics, social organisation, and culture by examining the village infrastructure and artefacts. Even though archaeology has scope in Bhutan, religious restrictions, local beliefs, and sacred landscapes have still hindered archaeologists from excavating. To avoid these restrictions, one can adopt the measures of Kinga Wangmo[6] by consulting religious procedures before excavation activities. It provides ways to manage ethical concerns and pave the way for future archaeologists.

To conclude, his archaeological research on Dzong offers insight on the functions of Dzong before and after the Zhabdrung. Generally, the Dzong was used for defense purposes then later shifted to the use of political and social gatherings. This data was derived from looking at the design and placement of towers within Dzong. In that way, Bhutan has scope for archaeologists to understand the history of Bhutan and to complement the oral traditions.

[6] First Archaeologist of Bhutan, under Centre for Himalayan Environment and Developmental Studies

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Assessment of the Institute of Traditional Medicine in Thimphu

Jacob Lambert
Second year Anthropology student
E-mail: whitecloud777@protonmail.com

The Institute of Traditional Medicine comprises several buildings grouped together within a single ground located in the capital city of Thimphu. My field visit there was required as part of the medical anthropology class in order to obtain a greater understanding of traditional Bhutanese medicinal practices and as a demonstration of non-biomedical traditions in general. The two buildings which were the primary locations in which the observations were conducted were the museum section of the building in which the classes are conducted for the institute and the traditional hospital building. A building containing steam baths, herbal baths, and a hot stone bath was also observed.

The initial observations made in the museum were of various medical implements and medicinal herbs on display, as well as diagrams, tapestries, and sculptures, which served as visual aids to the principles of *sowa rigpa*. It is the Dzongkha term for the traditional Bhutanese school of medicine, which involves various practices, such as acupuncture, meditation, massage, and a myriad of herbal remedies. Namely, the sculpture entitled "Tree of Glorious Root" bears the purpose of explaining the causes of illness, how to diagnose an illness, and which treatments should be used for the illness. The explanatory model displayed by this sculpture is rooted in Buddhist thought; for example, the three causes of illness described by the first root of the tree diagram coincide with the three poisons described by the Buddhist philosopher *Nagarjuna* to explain the causes of non-virtuous actions, those being attachment, ignorance, and anger. As explained by the tree, these three factors lead to imbalances in the body's three humours: wind, phlegm, and bile. Imbalances in these humors cause physical, psychological, and spiritual illnesses, which demonstrate how *sowa rigpa* perceives the body as a singular holistic entity, in contrast to biomedicine, which generally isolates individual body parts and focuses treatments on only those specific parts, as well as

separating psychological ailments into a separate field altogether while entirely ignoring spiritual factors.

The second root describes the process a practitioner of *sowa rigpa* will use to diagnose an illness. The steps go as follows: examination of the tongue, examination of the urine, pulse reading, and finally, questioning the patient. Based on this process, the practitioner determines how the humours are imbalanced and then provides a diagnosis. The third root explains how to cure the ailment, which may involve herbal medicine, physical therapy, religious ritual, or the imbibing of certain animal parts, to name but a few. To summarise, the Tree of Glorious Root is the exact definition of an explanatory model, as well as a descriptor of the processes carried out in *sowa rigpa* to treat illness.

The museum also displayed various parchment and tapestry diagrams relating to *sowa rigpa*. One parchment acted as a diagram relating to pregnancy and birth, showing the different stages of pregnancy from within the womb. It was explained concerning the diagram that practitioners of *sowa rigpa* can determine the gender of a fetus by examining the shape of the pregnant stomach. If the stomach is lopsided to the right, then the baby will be male, while if the stomach is lopsided to the left, then the baby will be female. Additionally, there were several parchments, which held diagrams of the human body. One was a map of the veins within the human body to which a practitioner could refer whilst performing a bloodletting. Several others were maps of the human body relating to the spinal cord and the locations of the internal organs. It was explained that the locations of the organs shown in all of these diagrams were determined using a technique which was performed on living humans and did not involve dissection, thus not offending the Bhutanese taboo of handling cadavers. The precise nature of this technique was not made known, but it is noteworthy that, ideally, a practitioner of *sowa rigpa* ought to be so dedicated to the principles of Buddhism to the extent that any dissection or defilement of a corpse would not be acceptable conduct. Once more, displaying the deep connection *sowa rigpa* has to Buddhism, the largest display in the museum was a statue of the blue medicine Buddha surrounded by an entourage and mountains containing the specific herbs, minerals, and animal parts used in *sowa rigpa* treatments.

The next section of the museum was filled with display cases containing numerous dried herbs, tools, minerals, Buddhist and medical texts, and animal parts. Each piece was well-preserved and had it a label explaining what it was and how it was used in *sowa rigpa*. Among

the tools on display were medicine pouches, a grindstone for making medicine, gold needles, tools used in tantric rituals, and traditional hand-woven baskets made from bamboo. The presence of medical texts, as well as the organised documentation of what each implement is used for, shows to some degree how well documented the treatments of *sowa rigpa* are, which remains one notable difference between traditional Bhutanese medical treatment and Bhutanese folk remedies, which are often transmitted orally and remain undocumented.

Next, the traditional hospital, which is the active primary care facility of *sowa rigpa* in Thimphu, was examined. A range of separate rooms used for different functions exist within the hospital, the first of which was observed was the room used for gold needle therapy. This therapy involves heating a solid gold needle, which is then pressed against the skin to alleviate aches and pains, as well as skin blemishes. Treatment of aches using this method is long-lasting, removing the ache for up to a year, while treating skin blemishes requires continuous weekly visits for a certain amount of time. It was also stated that this treatment is dangerous if the patient suffers from too many aches and pains. Next was the moxibustion room, used for burning herbs close to the skin to bring the humours back into balance. In the past, the herbs were burned directly against the skin, however, a new technique was developed in which the practitioner places ginger root between the herb and the skin to prevent burns against the skin and to lower the discomfort of the entire process for the patient. This fact is a microcosm of how new techniques are being developed and used within the community of *sowa rigpa* experts, apart from those acquired through the diffusion of biomedicine and other forms of traditional medicine. There was also a room for herbal compression and massage, in which the patient received an oil massage, then gauss steamed in an herbal mixture wrapped around the region where the massage was applied, as well as another separate room used for massages in general. It was explained that the overweight should not use massage as treatment due to the strong pressure applied during the massage.

There was a room dedicated entirely to nasal cleansing, where the patient nasally applied five different herbal medicines, underwent five minutes of steam, and then received a head massage. A heat treatment room, which contained an array of implements to be used after being heated, as well as electronic devices used to heat said tools, was the site of a few different treatments, among them were heated wooden tools and heat therapy. A noteworthy observation from this room was the bag of medicine made from heated nutmeg, which was said to cure malaise and depression. This is interesting because it shows that *sowa rigpa*

sometimes uses ingested medicine to treat psychological ailments and not just therapeutic or spiritual treatment methods. The final room which was observed was the cupping room, which contained both traditional Bhutanese cups as well as modern Chinese cupping methods and tools. The cupping process involves an incision in the skin, which a heated cup is then placed over. The heat and the shape of the cup will then lead to a differentiation in pressure and thus draw out unhealthy, excess, or otherwise unwanted blood. While this technique is used to cure joint pain, applying the cups directly to major limb joints is dangerous.

Within the traditional hospital, it was clear to see the influences of biomedicine almost everywhere. Present in every room were the tools of biomedicine. Sterilised tools, surgical gloves and masks, and biomedical diagrams could be seen everywhere. The practitioners themselves were dressed in the same fashion as Western biomedical doctors. The influence of the modern form of traditional Chinese medicine can also be seen in the form of the plastic cups used in modern Chinese medical facilities where cupping is present. However, it can also be seen that these influences have been synthesised with traditional Bhutanese medicine rather than overtaking the original practices. Alongside the diagrams of biomedicine could be seen religious iconography and diagrams. The picture of the blue medicine Buddha was a constant throughout the facility. To even enter the traditional hospital at all, one must pass through a large, unavoidable prayer wheel. Rather than competing within the practices of the hospital, it would appear that biomedicine and traditional medicine are synthesised in such a way as to accept the practices which provide the best results for patients while remaining true to the original Buddhist principles that drive the entirety of *sowa rigpa*.

Field Report

Sherab Wangmo
Second year Anthropology student
E-mail: Sherabwangmo04@gmail.com

The first-year BA Anthropology students of Royal Thimphu College (RTC) visited the Faculty of Traditional Medicine in Thimphu on June 2, 2023, on an educational trip to learn about traditional methods of healing illnesses and curing diseases.

Description of the field visit

The Faculty of Traditional Medicine was founded in 1971 as an Indigenous Training Centre in Dechencholing, Thimphu. In 1992, the training centre was renamed the National Institute of Traditional Medicine and relocated to its current location in Kawang Jangsa, Thimphu. Today, the institute is a part of the Faculty of Traditional Medicine at Bhutan's University of Medical Sciences. Traditional medicine in Bhutan is called *gSo-ba Rig-pa*.

When my class and I went to visit the Faculty of Traditional Medicine, I expected the hospital to be in the style of a typical traditional Bhutanese home, but that was not the case. The hospital was massive, and before entering, there was a prayer wheel on the wall, indicating that this place holds traditional Bhutanese methods of healing that combine therapy and prayers. Following that, we went to observe different treatments utilised by traditional medical hospitals. Some of the treatments they showed us included gold needle therapy, which uplifts conditions like jaundice and skin diseases; nasal cleansing, which removes nose blockages and sinus issues; and hot compression which can cure stress, severe headaches, and insomnia.

This traditional medical hospital, unlike other hospitals, features a separate hall for meditation (*sorig*) and physical activity. As soon as we entered the chamber, it was filled with the fragrance of incense with an altar included. While there, our guide explained that there are exactly 32 steps of exercise to heal mental illness. With that, we proceeded to the hot spring spa where we could treat our body pains and skin illnesses. As we were beginning to

run out of time at the medical hospital, my class and I rushed towards the Sorig Museum, where the origins of traditional medicine are showcased. Within the museum, the medicine Buddha, *Sangay Mela*, the second *Melaripa*, is displayed, surrounded by healing herbs and animals with therapeutic properties. Since Bhutan is rich in various biodiversity, a variety of medicinal plants and animals have been kept in this museum for future generations to view. One of the most incredible things my class and I saw there was a dragon's forehead, which we surprisingly learned can be used as a form of medicine. My class and I had the unique opportunity of seeing a dragon skull in real at the Sorig Museum.

My reflection and analysis

We were able to view several traditional healing practices after visiting the National Traditional Medicine Hospital. Some specific class topics that I can relate to as a result of this visit is the explanatory model that discusses how medical systems comprehend the causes for illness and how it can cure those illnesses based on those specific reasons. For instance, there was a tree trunk in the Sorig Museum that demonstrated how conventional causes for illness or dysfunction could be described. To begin, it showed four causative sickness factors: seasonal change, the evil spirit, unhealthy food, and inappropriate behaviour. Then, the trunk demonstrated the root of the diagnosis, in which it diagnoses the specific illness visually by evaluating the eyes, checking the tongue, and taking urine and pulse readings. Lastly, it discusses the treatment of the illness in four different ways: diet, behaviour, medicine, and therapy.

Another class topic that I can refer to based on this visit is the professional sector, which is based on specialised knowledge, a legally sanctioned profession, and an organised body. On the second floor of the National Traditional Medicine Hospital, there was a huge board that showed the hospital's "organogram", which indicates the core positions of the main hospital work body. In the organogram, organised healing professionals were displayed that explained who all of them were, and confirmed that they were legally sanctioned professionals with experience and expertise in their respective medical fields. Finally, the implications of biomedicine are related to one of our class concepts, because we were shown how to sterilise needles and even wear surgical gloves when treating patients in a regular medical center. Not only that, but we even wore a surgical gown, which is often worn by Western doctors when they practice surgery.

In summary, the trip was tremendously beneficial, and we learned a lot about the uses of traditional medicine that are not covered in the medical anthropology program at RTC. My class and I are incredibly grateful to the Faculty of Traditional Medicine for providing us with their hospitality as well as free tea and food.

Book Review: 'The Nellie Massacre of 1983' by Makiko Kimura

Namgay Choden
Third year Anthropology student
E-mail: bionicnedohc@gmail.com

'The Nellie Massacre of 1983' by Makiko Kimura centres around the 'Nellie Massacre' event in Assam on the 18th of February, 1983. As the name indicates, it was a massacre (of nearly two thousand Muslims), mainly at Nellie, a village in central Assam. The perpetrators of the violence were the other ethnic minorities of the village, such as the *Tiwas*. This event was, among others, a byproduct of the long-standing issue in Assam of identifying 'foreigners' and their place in the Indian state. In this book, Kimura revisits the event nearly three decades later by speaking to the attackers and the survivors of the incident. She found that the stories told by survivors did not align with those told by the attackers and vice versa. This incident was distinct because of its severity and those involved in it (i.e., the local indigenous people). Her reasoning goes against widely accepted notions that it is mostly the social structures in place and the various grand ideologies that bring forth cases of mass violence. Kimura believed that the rioters had autonomously made the decision to riot and kill their neighbours. This is, thus, the main argument she tries to make in the book. Initially, I was driven to read the book due to this very argument that Kimura put forward, however, after having read it, I found it to be not convincing enough.

Kimura (2013) gave detailed accounts of the series of events that directly or indirectly- led to the massive bloodshed. In these, she stated that there was long-standing tension in Assam primarily due to the issues between the Muslim Bengali illegal immigrant residents and ethnic groups native to the area. This tension is indicated by the natives' use of the words *Miya* and 'foreigner' in addressing their Muslim neighbours (Kimura, 2013). This long-standing issue is what Kimura (2013) claims to have indirectly led to the ghastly event. The direct cause of the incident, however, was the forceful electoral rolls that took place in Assam (Kimura, 2003, 2013). The deletion of 'foreigners' from the electoral rolls agitated the non-Muslim Assamese

public, and among them, there were those who were very vocal with dissatisfaction with the Centre's decision. These groups led various boycotts and violent movements in order to prevent the elections. The specifics of these events were "…that between January 1983 and March 1983, 545 attacks took place on roads and bridges, and over 100 kidnapping incidents were registered" (Choudhary, 2019). However, these violent outcries were ignored by the Centre. It instead tried to suppress them by stationing policemen at the electoral stations to stop them from interfering. This decision by the Centre proved to be insufficient as on the morning of 18th February 1983, the most violent of killings took place: the Nellie Massacre. In stating this, Kimura (2013) put forward that it was largely due to the incompetence of the Centre and the Congress that the Nellie Massacre happened. I found this statement to be contradictory to her main argument, that is, the Nellie Massacre was not a result of the larger structures in place. The Centre and the Congress are institutions within the larger structure of the Indian Polity, to say that the Massacre happened due to their incompetence is to say that the structures in place were responsible for the Massacre.

In both 'The Nellie Massacre of 1983' (2013) and 'Memories of the Massacre: Violence and Collective Identity in the Narratives on the Nellie Incident' (2003), Kimura seemed to prioritise the insiders (i.e., both the attackers and victims) view on the incidents over the factual elements. In doing so, she can be said to be using 'thick description' and taking a part in the 'interpretive turn' in some sense. For instance, Kimura (2003, 2013) displayed the various, often contradictory, takes on the cause of the Nellie Massacre by all groups involved. Kimura (2003) stated that the victims (i.e., the Muslim immigrants) saw the cause as being an act of revenge by the non-Muslim natives for the few of the Muslims participating in the elections. The views of the *Tiwas* and other natives were divided, some saying that the violence and crime committed against them by the Muslim immigrants were the cause, whereas, some said they were influenced and led by the leaders of the movements to participate in the violence. The leaders of the movements, however, denied leading the movement and said that the cause was the long-standing underlying tension between the Muslim immigrants and the natives, they also claimed that the natives were not pleased with the presence of the Muslim immigrants and their spreading influence on their native land (Kimura, 2003). Seeing this, though one can argue that Kimura was indeed considering all insider perspectives, one could also counter-argue by saying that her inconclusiveness of these accounts dilutes her main argument. The reader would not be aware of what exactly she tries to prove by doing this. In this manner, her effort to be reflexive is not properly spent. In the

book, Kimura claims that the perpetrators of the violence had agency. They had consciously participated in committing the violence. So, one would think that they would have definite reasons for why they were involved, but as it turns out, that is not the case. There are multiple views, yet no definite motivations.

Another point of critique is her methodology behind the ethnography. The sample she took was rather small, she could have reached out to other relevant people, such as people from neighbouring villages. Additionally, she did not live among the subjects of her study which means that she could not have properly understood the natives' perspective as well as she tries to portray. Though she does empathise with her subjects as she considers them peaceful people (2013), it at times comes off as her siding with the 'oppressed' simply because they are 'oppressed.' Then she brings up the notion that language was one of the reasons for the incident, but that is irrelevant to her argument, and so is the fact that she is not conclusive on this.

Therefore, the book 'The Nellie Massacre of 1983' by Kimura (2013) came short of my initial expectations of it. The reason being that the main argument is not conclusively proven, that at times she contradicts herself, and there are some limitations to her methodology. However, in my search to find and compare other writings on the incident of the Nellie Massacre, I found that Kimura's (2013) book to be one of the few academically comprehensive writings currently present (i.e., there were not many ethnographic writings to be found on the incident; most were news articles-one of which I have included in this review- and literary pieces). Thus, by virtue of being one of few full-length ethnographic writings on the matter, I would recommend this book to those in anthropology or other social sciences who wish to study or do research on the 'Nellie Massacre.'

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Ethnographic Review on Akenfield, Ronald Blythe

Chhimi Wangmo

Third year Anthropology student

E-mail: cangmo24702@gmail.com

'Akenfield - Portrait of an English Village', originally published in 1969, is a clear-eyed portrayal of the village in the East Anglian county of Suffolk and its inhabitants spanning the decades from the 1880s to the 1960s. Akenfield is made up of the testimonies of forty-nine women and men, ranging from a blacksmith and a bell ringer to a local vet and a gravedigger, who talk to us directly, in honest and vivid monologues, about their lives and work in Suffolk's rural countryside. In the following review, I will talk about the portrayal of rural tradition right before it was swept away by modernisation. I will also highlight how these communities are coping with the rapid growth of the urban culture.

The fictional settlement of Akenfield is based on the Suffolk community of Charsfield[7], according to Blythe in his introduction, "but with the surrounding countryside and Blythe himself dragged into it." The book is mostly subjective as it depends on the interviews and especially the ethnography depends on the memories and experiences of the villagers. Subjectivity[8], for the most part in the history of geography, has meant comprehending the impact of various social locations (such as class, gender, ethnicity, and sexuality) on the development of the individual's relationship with the world, which shapes their knowledge and understanding of the world (Luhrmann, 2006). However, Blythe did not know what an oral historian was when he started writing Akenfield, and thus, he did not set out to create an oral history but rather "the work of a poet." In fact, this poetic history of the community both honours its citizens' unrecorded lives and constantly references the incomprehensible world in which we all participate (Blythe, 1973).

[7] In the Potsford Valley, 5 kilometers (miles) upstream of Wickham Market, is Charsfield. With patches of woodland and primarily arable farming, the region is distinguished by a gently sloping topography. The valley was once dominated by fruit fields, but many of the orchards have now been converted to arable land.

[8] The idea of subjectivity is believed to have its roots in the writings of Descartes and Kant in Western philosophy, despite the possibility that it has its roots in Aristotle's writings on the soul.

This depiction of country life in England highlights the locals' perspectives. The voices here range from those of Great War veterans reflecting on bygone times to the worries of a younger generation of agricultural laborers as well as the other fascinating and personal memories. Akenfield creates a special record of a way of life that has, in many respects, vanished by offering insights into farming, education, welfare, class, religion, and death in the countryside. Akenfield is a straightforward and, at times, too honest portrait of changing rural life and how it evaporated in the heat of technology, and it is never sentimental or romanticised.

The people in the book were interviewed in 1967 when this little town was transitioning from a mechanised to a manual labour-based way of life. Each Akenfield resident whom Blythe interviews discusses many elements of his or her life openly, sincerely, and spontaneously. Blythe uses twenty distinct categories of individuals to organise the book, some of which are 'God', 'The Craftsmen', 'The School', and 'The Survivors' (Blythe, 1973).

The oldest generation is the subject of the book's opening chapter, 'The Survivors'. This section appears to be focused on those members of that generation who, despite all odds, returned after World War I. They got through the conflict. However, it soon becomes clear that Blythe is operating on multiple layers. These people are survivors, at least in some ways, because they survived the war. These people are also survivors, though, as they defied all odds by surviving the brutal working conditions in the village, any freak accidents or injuries that left them permanently disabled, and whatever diet their meagre salaries allowed them to eat. Additionally, they are survivors in a rather melancholic sense because they have survived the loss of loved ones. For instance, in her lifetime, the 79-year-old Emily Leggett lost two husbands—one during World War I and the other in the closing stages of World War II (Blythe, 1973).

The craftspeople in the ethnography, including the wheelwright, the blacksmith, and the thatcher, were one group that had a particularly lasting impression on me. Given the decreasing reliance on horses and wagons for transportation, it would appear that such skills would no longer be required with the development of vehicles. The determination of these hard-working lads to adapt to the circumstances and find new applications for their crafts was encouraging. The ability to adapt to where and what they are now.

The second section, for instance, is titled 'God', and while we do hear from the Rural Dean and the Baptist Deacon at this point, we also hear from the Doctor, a Teacher, and an Orchard Worker as they share their thoughts on God, giving us a varied, rich glimpse at the village's perception of God and religion over the troubled century. When Blythe speaks with The Rural Dean, the Rev. Gethyn Owen, who is sixty-three years old, he says that he struggles to get people together to discuss their faith, but he also makes an effort to help them break free from their "cruel and horrible taboos." He concludes by suggesting that leaving Akenfield for a while and then returning is beneficial for people (1973). Thus, as a result, our understanding of this town is further enhanced as we realise that it is a combination of its people as well as its customs and taboos.

'Not by Bread Alone', which is about The Poet (Blythe, 1973), was one of my favourite portions and enabled me to understand the Akenfield as a place with its history and powers. This piece, which is truly important to the village and the nation as a whole, has a great impact because it comes so late in the book after we have read so much about the struggles of village life, the sorrows and failures people faced there, and the suffering the nation can cause. Additionally, I have read the passage from 'The Young Men', who either leave the community or inherit the property and its problems from the older generation (Blythe, 1993). Again, all of this makes Akenfield a stunningly complicated location, and we can sense how the terrain affects the inhabitants.

Land and identity are linked in ways that are difficult for a time, let alone itself, to easily impact. This effect seems to reach deep through the generations. The ethnography opens with some broad strokes about the residents of Suffolk: Blythe introduces various foreigners from Scotland toward the end of the book in a section titled 'The Northern Invaders', including the elderly farmer Jamie McIver (1973). The odd thing is that after living in Akenfield for forty years—along with others in this part who immigrated to Suffolk between the wars— McIvers' identity still seems to be based on their Scottish heritage and has not changed through time.

As one might imagine, some people express desires to leave the village, but for the most part, they appear satisfied to remain in their tiny corner of England. Many of them note that their families have lived inside Akenfield's limits for many years. But there are also some residents

that we hear from residents of Akenfield who, although having lived there for a long time, are viewed as "outsiders" because they were born elsewhere (Blythe, 1973).

Some of the information provided by the Akenfield locals is unique and cannot be found in a typical history book. For instance, the orchard worker describes in great detail the apple varieties that do well in the English environment as well as the ideal picking season for each type. The thatcher gives a detailed explanation of the ideal methods and materials to utilise while thatching a roof. The bell-ringers segment fascinated me; these young men, who could be viewed as great musicians, visit local churches to hone their bell-ringing skills (Blythe, 1973). Before reading this ethnography, I had no clue that the ringing of church bells[9] was such a high art form.

While examining village life, Akenfield delves deeply into the foundations of the connection between identity and location. The final chapter, 'In the Hour of Death', is about the irritable gravedigger William 'Tender' Russ. Since he was twelve, he has spent forty years excavating graves. He is familiar with the ways that people in Suffolk face death, both similarly and differently. Dust to dust, they say, he says. I find it funny, more like mud to mud. However, they continue to reside in Akenfield, connecting the earth to the body to the earth (Blythe, 1973).

To conclude, Akenfield by Blythe is an interesting and unprejudiced look into the lifestyle and personality of a little English community in the middle of the 20th century. It is the portrayal of rural tradition right before it was swept away by modernisation and also highlights how these communities are coping with the rapid growth of urban culture. This ethnography is essential for anybody interested in British, oral, or social history.

[9] A church bell is a bell that can be heard outside and rung inside a church for several religious purposes. They are traditionally used to summon worshipers to the church for a group service and to announce the canonical hours, or set periods for daily Christian devotion.

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Ethnography Book Review on Nine Dayak Nights by Geddes (1957)

Sangay Chezom
Third year Anthropology student
E-mail: chezomsangay03@gmail.com

"Nine Dayak Nights" by Geddes (1957) presents a captivating journey into the heart of Dayak culture in Borneo. Narrated through a collection of nine unique folktales, one gains insight into the rich oral tradition of the Dayak people, particularly the village shamans, whose role is preserving these tales. These stories bring alive the various aspects of Dayak life, including their work, play, headhunting practices, courtship rituals, family dynamics, and their intricate belief system centered on their folk hero, *Kĩpachi.*

The account of headhunting in Geddes' work is one important highlight that requires careful reading. While this may come across as violent or to borrow the colonial stereotyping, barbaric to outsiders, Geddes delves deep into this practice. It becomes evident that headhunting is not merely an act of violence, but a complex cultural practice tied to achieving social status, seeking revenge, and even winning the affection of women. Thus bringing forth the intricate societal dynamics and motivations present among the Dayak people. Depiction of their way of life in the book is lucid. Geddes' monograph indicates that the Dayak people are deeply connected to the environment and heritage. The book includes reflections on his time spent among the Dayaks. Geddes employed meticulous research methods, including keeping a detailed diary, capturing the physical surroundings, and engaging in meaningful conversations with the Dayak people. This immersive approach allowed him to provide a rich and detailed account of their culture.

This ethnographic monograph is a valuable resource in our course as it aligns with the systematic study of people and cultures, enabling us to comprehensively understand human experiences. Additionally, it provides learning for anthropology students particularly as it exemplifies qualitative research, using fieldwork and participant observation to immerse

researchers in the lives and cultures of their subjects, ultimately leading to a profound understanding of their world and experiences. "Nine Dayak Nights" is a significant contribution to anthropology, being one of the earliest ethnographies about the Dayak people of Borneo. It provides a detailed account of their culture and way of life using innovative methods like participant observation and photography, making it a pivotal work in anthropological methodology.

However, there are a number of limitations and criticisms regarding this work. Geddes primary focus on a certain set of ceremonies and rituals restricts its applicability and poses the risk of ignoring other significant aspects of Dayak culture. In addition, readers may find it difficult to interpret the practices described in the book since it lacks the larger cultural background necessary to fully understand their significance. Given that the book was written in the 1950s and that cultures evolve through time, it is possible that the portrayal of Dayak culture in it is not entirely accurate now. Furthermore, Geddes' involvement in important ceremonies raises ethical difficulties and casts doubt on the accuracy of his observations. In order to understand Dayak language and culture, Geddes relied on translation and interpretation and this put him at risk of misinterpreting the Dayak people, which would have affected the accuracy of his descriptions. Additionally, Geddes' viewpoint is mostly presented throughout the book, with the voices of the Dayak people themselves being marginalized. Despite these limitations, "Nine Dayak Nights" offers a thorough glimpse into Dayak beliefs and customs, making it an invaluable resource for comprehending Dayak society during Geddes' time.

In conclusion, "Nine Dayak Nights" is a captivating journey into the Dayak world. It offers valuable insights into their culture, beliefs, and practices while shedding light on the evolution of anthropological research methods. Through Geddes' narrative, we connect with the Dayak people on a deeper level, fostering a greater appreciation for their unique way of life.

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2021 anthropology cohort