

SKILLS FOR THE FIELD / INTRODUCTION TO

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Skanda Vale

- Skanda Vale is a multi-faith ashram - home to a resident community of 25 monks and nuns. Every year we welcome over 90,000 pilgrims to our three temples.
- Skanda Vale is situated in a remote, wooded valley in South West Wales.
- An ashram is a secluded dwelling
- Conducive for spiritual reflection and practice
- Often associated with a central teaching figure (look at the history of Skanda Vale)



Pujas at Skanda Vale

- Puja =
- The act of worship
- Daily:
- Lord Murugan Temple: 05:00, 13:30, 21:00
- Maha Shakti Temple: 06:30, 18:00
- Sri Ranganatha Temple: 09:30
- Weekly:
- Lord Murugan Temple: Mahabishekam on Sundays at 13:30
- Lord Murugan Temple: Christian Mass on Sundays at 21:00
- Maha Shakti Temple: Mahabishekam on Saturdays at 18:00
- Sri Ranganatha Temple: Mahabishekam on Tuesdays & Fridays at 09:30

History of Skanda Vale

- Skanda Vale began in the summer of 1973 when founder Guru Sri Subramaniam, moved his small multi-faith temple from London to Wales
- in 1976, the community became a monastic order
- Monks and nuns took lifetime vows of poverty, chastity and obedience, as set out by St. Francis of Assisi.
- Skanda Vale was registered as a place of religious worship, and in 1980, was awarded the status of a charitable trust.



Valli

- The temple elephant



Anthropological Fieldwork

- What is the 'field'?
- Where does the field begin and end?

Conducting Anthropological Fieldwork

- Reflexive field journal
- Tell us what you think, feel, how things are developing, changing, growing

When conducting fieldwork

- Whilst in the field we will learn about:
- The 'social norms'
- The spoken and unspoken rules
- 'Esoteric' is a good word to think about here, secret-like knowledge, only a few understand, it is specialist, often meant for a select few

Anthropological Fieldwork

- Mini-ethnography
- What is an ethnography?
- 'Ethnos' people 'Graphia' write

Ethnographic 'Knowledges'

- Formal Interviews
- Material Culture
- Performances
- Images
- Texts
- Observation, Reflection, Learning

Think Ethnographically

- Descriptive
- Reflective
- Interpretive

Ethnography

- Rich description
- Detailed accounts
- What happened?
- 'Paint a picture' with words...

Important things to consider

- What is a 'social space'
- How do humans interact?
- How do humans create inclusions and exclusions?

Important things to remember

- Ethnographers try to understand 'lived experience'
- Different 'emotional worlds'
- Ethnographers value this type of knowledge

Methods

- Interviews
- Participant observation

Franz Boas (1943: 311)

- Consider his observation:
- "We know what we mean by family, state, government, etc. As we overstep the limits of the one culture we do not know how far these may correspond to the equivalent concepts. If we choose to apply our classification to alien cultures we may combine forms that do not belong together".

Working WITH your informants

- To produce cultural description (Spradely 1979: 25)
- As an ethnographer you want to hear your informants language or dialect (Spradely 1979: 25)
- Ethnography relies on the language of the informant and question's arise out of the informants culture (Spradely 1979: 31)

Ethnographic Interviews

- "Ethnography is the work of describing a culture"
- We seek to understand:
 - Meanings of actions
 - Meanings of events
 - A different point of view
 - A different way of life
 - We learn from and with people

Knowledge getting and sharing

- "The researchers job in an ethnographic interview [...] is to communicate genuinely, in both subtle and direct ways that 'I want to know what you know in the way that you know it' (Heyl 2001)

Transferable Skills

- By the end of this course you will be able to...
 - Identify regularities and varieties in human social behaviour
 - Write cultural descriptions
 - Think about cross-cultural comparisons

Assessment 1: Introduction to Fieldwork

A reflexive diary (2000 words)

- A diary with daily entries and reflection that follows the course lectures and time in the field
- You are expected to include daily entries
- Details how you are feeling about your experiences, the lectures, the lecture content and the process you are going through during the module
- Consider the part you play in the process (reflexive)
- We are looking for you to form a reflection of the process as a whole
- You should be thinking of yourself as an anthropologist
- As an anthropologists you can draw on other anthropological journals for inspiration