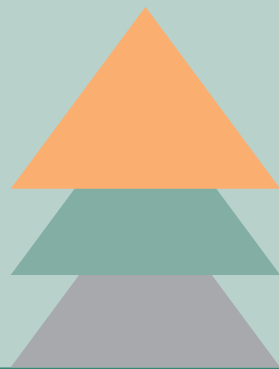


Religions and Development
Research Programme

The Relationships Between Religion and Development: Views from Anthropology

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Working Paper 5 - 2007

Rad

Religions and Development

Research Programme

The Religions and Development Research Programme Consortium is an international research partnership that is exploring the relationships between several major world religions, development in low-income countries and poverty reduction. The programme is comprised of a series of comparative research projects that are addressing the following questions:

- How do religious values and beliefs drive the actions and interactions of individuals and faith-based organisations?
- How do religious values and beliefs and religious organisations influence the relationships between states and societies?
- In what ways do faith communities interact with development actors and what are the outcomes with respect to the achievement of development goals?

The research aims to provide knowledge and tools to enable dialogue between development partners and contribute to the achievement of development goals. We believe that our role as researchers is not to make judgements about the truth or desirability of particular values or beliefs, nor is it to urge a greater or lesser role for religion in achieving development objectives. Instead, our aim is to produce systematic and reliable knowledge and better understanding of the social world.

The research focuses on four countries (India, Pakistan, Nigeria and Tanzania), enabling the research team to study most of the major world religions: Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Sikhism, Buddhism and African traditional belief systems. The research projects will compare two or more of the focus countries, regions within the countries, different religious traditions and selected development activities and policies.

The consortium consists of six research partner organisations, each of which is working with other researchers in the four focus countries:

- University of Birmingham, UK: International Development Department, Department of Theology and Religion, Centre for West African Studies, Centre for the Study of Global Ethics, Department of Political Science and International Relations
- University of Bath, UK: Centre for Development Studies
- Indian Institute of Dalit Studies, New Delhi.
- Nigerian Institute of Social and Economic Research, Ibadan.
- University of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania
- Pakistan

In addition to the research partners, links have been forged with non-academic and non-government bodies, including Islamic Relief.

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1 Introduction

Anthropologists are concerned to understand how people perceive their identity and the world around them. They also document processes of social change. Recent anthropological literature overlaps with the concerns of this research programme in three ways. These represent the main sections of this review. First, with respect to methodology, literature will be reviewed that examines how anthropologists conduct their research. This involves a focus on ethnographic techniques and the process of producing ethnography. The second concerns ethnographic research that focuses on religion. This research mainly focuses on understanding how religious beliefs and values impact on people's lives in terms of structuring their identities, actions and wider social and cultural systems. The last level concerns work that seeks to apply anthropological method to the work of development. There is a small emerging literature that takes an anthropological approach to examining religion and development, specifically the work of faith-based NGOs. Much of this literature is in recently completed doctorates. It will be reviewed in the third part of this paper.

The key themes of the programme will be referred to throughout:

- a. Values and beliefs, including conceptions of rights and duties, and how they affect actions;
- b. The posited relationships between values and beliefs, social change and religious organisations;
- c. How social groups function: in particular, the ways in which religious groups are constituted, understand themselves and act in the world;
- d. The adoption, implementation and outcomes of specific development policies and practices, tracing the relationships between these values and beliefs and the role of faith-based organisations.

The specific questions/issues relevant to the research programme and that are addressed by the literature will be stated at the start of each section. I will also highlight the specific regional and faith focus of each piece of research reviewed, with particular emphasis on the main religions and regions with which the programme is concerned.

The critical analysis of the literature will concentrate on the following:

- i. Commonly used theoretical frameworks, methodologies and the application of ethnographic techniques;
- ii. How religion is generally viewed and analysed by anthropologists;
- iii. Gaps in the literature will be identified throughout. In addition, a concluding section will offer a general overview of where research is lacking and offer reasons for some of these gaps.

2 Anthropological methods

Comments about anthropological methods will be made throughout this review. However, in this part, the specific methodological concerns of anthropologists will be considered. The discussion includes a summary of how anthropologists go about conducting their research. The distinctiveness of anthropological research in comparison to other social science research methods will also be examined. A further three areas will be covered: the accuracy of anthropological research, the ethics of anthropological research and the applied methodologies of anthropology.

Overall this section will argue that contemporary anthropological concerns have relevance to this research programme, as they aim to find accurate ways of documenting the heterogeneous nature of social change. The process of observing the dynamics of social groupings involves identifying the competing needs and concerns of individuals. Participatory development aims to apply techniques that allow for a community to identify its own needs. Ethnographic techniques can contribute to this venture and to the long-term setting and evaluation of development goals.

2.1 What is anthropology?

Anthropology is, in essence, the study of human behaviour. The research methods used by anthropologists have evolved in order to allow accurate observations about individuals and communities. Ethnography is the term used to denote a piece of full scale anthropological research into a community or group. Ethnographic research is micro-focused. The distinctiveness of anthropology as a discipline is its complete reliance on ethnographic techniques. The process of producing an ethnography is lengthy and involves a sustained piece of fieldwork (often stretching to a year or more). The most favoured anthropological research method is Geertz's 'participant observation', which involves the anthropologist attempting to blend as far as possible into the daily life of his/her research subjects, by participating in the events it is desired to document. The objective is to allow the anthropologist a close insight into the lives of his/her research subjects. The observations are recorded in a research diary, which forms a vital part of the research process. The ethnography is usually written up by the anthropologist following the fieldwork period and is taken from the diary.

2.2 How accurate is anthropological research?

Since the foundation of anthropological research is observational, many questions have been raised over its accuracy (Asad, 1973; Clifford and Marcus, 1986). Anthropologists themselves have been the most critical. Ethnographic research has been accused of being unscientific and biased. The critics argue that anthropological research is based on what the ethnographer chooses to see and record rather than being an objective process based around a hypothesis. Early ethnographies (for example, Malinowski, 1922; Radcliffe-Brown, 1922) are presented as definitive descriptions of community life. This homogenous perspective on recording the lives of others is challenged by contemporary anthropology (Ong and Nonini, 1997). James, Hockney, and Dawson (1997) recognise Clifford and Marcus's (1986) *Writing Culture* as a watershed moment in contemporary anthropology. *Writing Culture* was founded on the acknowledgement that traditional anthropology produced holistic representations that were fundamentally the products of western exoticised perceptions of the lives of eastern peoples. The conference out of which *Writing Cultures* emerged forced the development of new methods of representation that can include the multiple voices of a community. Traditional approaches that were authoritative and objectivist in style were rejected and anthropologists were asked instead to consider how anthropology itself is an institutionally, historically and politically situated writing genre. In short, *Writing Culture* forced anthropologists to address the question of who, what, how and why might we represent?

Feminist anthropology (Moore, 1988) has been influential in highlighting the tendency of traditional ethnographies to present communities as homogenous wholes, displaying only one view of why and how things operate. Feminist anthropologists state that any ethnography that claims to present 'a community view' is inaccurate because it is likely that only the loudest male voices will have been recorded. Today, anthropologists who take a feminist approach seek to analyse the inequalities of class, race and gender, emphasising how the specifics of such inequalities must be examined through ethnographic research that looks into the material dimensions of domination and oppression (Alexander and Mohanty, 1997; Ginsburg and Rapp, 1995; Ong and Nonini, 1997).

The concern to accurately represent others through ethnographic research is relevant to this programme of research. Representing the needs and concerns of others is central to processes of development. Criticisms of development practice (Appadurai, 1988; Hobart, 1993; Mosse, 2005;

Pottier, 1993) state that not understanding the needs of others is a primary reason for the failure of many development initiatives. Therefore, anthropological techniques geared at appreciating the lives and needs of others can make a significant contribution to development practice.

Anthropology needs ethnography in order to produce its research, yet the practice is heavily critiqued from within the discipline. Ironically, as Comaroff and Comaroff (1992) point out, anthropology's greatest weakness is also its major strength. The discipline refuses to trust scientific techniques that it perceives as giving an illusion of objectivity. Clifford (1988) has been at the forefront of developing contemporary anthropological method. He claims that ethnographic research involves producing representations of dialogue. Anthropologists today aim to capture the character of the worlds they study rather than offer a definitive representation. Ethnography, therefore, is: "a historically situated mode of understanding contexts, each with its own perhaps radically different kinds of subjects and subjectivities, objects and objectives." (Comaroff and Comaroff, 1992, p. 9-10) Ethnography is dialogical. The dialogue flows between the anthropologist and his/her informants. In other words it is dyadic.¹

Anthropological method is now primarily concerned with documenting processes of social change rather than producing detailed snapshots of a community. Understanding why and how changes occur allows for a deeper appreciation of the dynamics of human interactions and social organisation.

Since the realities of globalisation can no longer be ignored, they have become a central aspect of development studies and practice. Contemporary anthropological theory has developed to enable anthropologists to locate their ethnographies within a globalised world (Moore and Sanders, 2005). The focus of many recent ethnographies is how large scale processes impact on collective and individual identities and the material well-being of communities (Appadurai, 1996; Hannerz, 1992; James, 1995; Miller, 1995). Some of this literature, reviewed in the next section, considers the emergence of transnational religious identities. There is agreement between the ethnographies that globalisation has not produced cultural homogenisation, but is creating new cultural configurations through which people are living out new subjectivities and social relations. All anthropological research

¹ The work of Bakhtin (1981; 1990) has been significant in developing the idea of dialogue. However he uses dialogue as a means to examine social and cultural spaces and interactions rather than as a means to explain the anthropological relationship.

that emphasises the link between the macro and micro environments highlights the evolving nature of local responses to globalisation (see also Strathern, 1995). This material has direct relevance for development in its efforts to counteract the inequalities produced by globalisation.

2.3 Ethical considerations in anthropological research

The notion of ethics and anthropological research is a common thread running through all of the papers published in Clifford and Marcus (1986). This volume is thought to have influenced the subsequent preoccupation in contemporary anthropological methodology with research ethics. Ethics, and specifically the incorporation of a self-reflexive perspective, are now common in anthropological research (Gupta and Ferguson, 1997a, 1997b; Hammersley, 1992). Ethical considerations are linked to a discourse of responsibility and stress the need for self-reflexive awareness. The process of producing self-reflexive research involves the constant internal posing of questions such as who represents what for whom? Who, what and how do we represent? (Knauff, 1996). There is an embedded link in such literature between self-reflexivity and a heightened concern to produce research that is ethical in that it produces accurate un-distorted representations of people's lives. Such ethical considerations present development with a useful mechanism to evaluate both the ethics of its practice (how intrusive it is) and also to assess the effectiveness of interventions (by asking who benefits from them).

2.4 How has anthropological method been applied to other disciplines and purposes?

Traditionally the time commitment required of an anthropologist means that he/she focuses his/her research career on a single region or even community. Contemporary anthropology has seen the rise of applied anthropology, which seeks to explore ways in which ethnographic techniques can be utilised within other disciplines and for a multitude of practical purposes (e.g. in business, or with respect to the environment or tourism). Section 4 of this paper summarises the recent explosion of literature looking at how anthropology can be and is applied for the purposes of development. Arguing the usefulness of ethnographic techniques for development planning and evaluation is a preoccupation of many anthropologists (Mosse, 2005; Pottier, 1993). The distinct micro focus of ethnographic research means that it has the capacity not just to document social change but also to understand why change occurs and to unpick which groups and individuals benefit and identify those marginalised.

3 Anthropology and religion

Since the focus for this research programme is the link between religion and development, in this part consideration is given to the treatment of religion by anthropologists. The first section will consider how anthropologists approach the study of religion. This discussion will include anthropological definitions of religion. The link made by anthropologists between religion and culture will be examined. The rest of this section will review the various themes and issues researched by anthropologists of religion.

3.1 How does anthropology approach the study of religion?

Scholars who focus on the link between anthropology and religion in their research may position themselves as anthropologists who focus on religion for the purpose of contributing to wider debates within anthropology (Asad, 1987; Geertz 1973a; 1973b; 1975; Glaizer, 2003; Lambek, 2002). These academics are located in anthropology departments. In contrast, some researchers position themselves more centrally within the study of religions and regard their research as utilising anthropological methods in order to further discussions and debates within the discipline of religious studies (Gold, 1989; 1996; Gold and Raheja, 1994; Gold Grodzkins and Gujar, 2002; Harlan, 1992; Morris, 1987; Zene, 2002).

Interestingly, there seem to be more researchers who position themselves within anthropology departments, but whose research looks at religion, than the other way round. This may be due to the multi-disciplinary nature of the study of religion, in that most scholars of religion employ a range of research approaches and methods and therefore do not align themselves with a second discipline outside of the study of religion itself.

3.2 The link between religion and culture

Anthropologists agree that religion is inextricably linked to culture, to such an extent that religion and culture cannot be separated and studied in isolation. The very definition of religion requires the inclusion of culture. Few of the texts reviewed offer a definition of religion separate from culture. Rather than being direct quotations, the definitions of religion given in this section have been extracted from wider discussions of the relationships between religion and culture. The literature concentrates on describing the impact of religious spaces on the cultural. Religion is treated largely as a space within which ideas are expressed that detail how people should lead their lives. Culture takes these

religious beliefs into every aspect of life, thus ensuring the impact of religion on the political, economic and social spheres. Anthropologists are primarily concerned with everyday life and human interactions and behaviour. For this reason, anthropologists are less concerned with documenting religious spaces in isolation; this venture seems to be left to scholars of religion. Rather, anthropologists of religion look at how religious beliefs, specifically a notion of the sacred,

inform and determine the shape of everyday life. There has been a notable recent output of edited volumes focusing on the link between anthropology and religion (Angro, 2004; Bennett, 1996; Bowen, 2002; Bowie, 2000; Crapo, 2003; Glaizer, 2003; Hicks, 2002; Lambek, 2002; Morris, 1987²; Scupin, 1999; Whitehouse and Laiulaw, 2004).

The concern to document the link between religion and culture is clear in these volumes. All the texts root religion as one important foundation of cultural beliefs, identities and actions/practices. In short there is a broad consensus that religion impacts on socio-cultural relations and identities. This is apparent from the statements at the start of each volume that acknowledge the importance of religion in understanding everyday life and human behaviour.

The introductory statements in these key texts place religion at the heart of life not only in terms of its impact on human relations, politics, economics and cultural identity, but also in regard to its role in shaping world views and beliefs. Religion is understood as providing beliefs relating to a spiritual or supernatural sphere. The source of these beliefs is a concept of the sacred. The sacred origins of ideas and values ensure that they possess an authority that restricts the degree to which they are challenged. The sacred is experienced by the believer and is often described in terms of a relationship with a divine being or spirit. Anthropologists seem to regard religion as fundamentally an experiential concept, rather than one that can be understood through mapping out a series of behaviours. Religion is regarded by anthropologists as providing a conceptual framework for understanding the world and the place of humans within it. Culture is the mechanism by which these beliefs are translated into social structures and practices shaping behaviour and determining how people relate to the world and to each other. For example, Bowie (2000) defines religion in her overview text on religion and

² Morris combines a philosophical, historical and social science approach to linking anthropology and religion. His work does not follow the usual thematic approach that most of the other recent texts on anthropology and religion adopt.

anthropology in terms of a supernatural realm to which people look for explanations for why and how human life came to be. Bowie describes religion as the arena through which spiritual and practical guidance is offered to people. Religious spaces look different across cultures. Culture determines the shape these spaces take and influence the specific identities that emerge from them. Bowie devotes a significant amount of her volume to shamanism and witchcraft, which she presents as two distinctly different religious arenas, each of which incorporates both a spiritual, sacred space and a set of actions and behaviours designed to guide believers through life. Both witchcraft and shamanism exist in many cultures, yet the practices that relate to them look different across the globe. These differences are explained by Bowie through a focus on culture. The religious beliefs on which shamanism and witchcraft are founded are similar cross-culturally, yet the practices into which they are translated differ. Culture adapts beliefs differently in different locations. Bowie asserts that religion is therefore “fundamental to human existence and a fascinating and central area of human experience” (2000, p.29).

Similarly, Lambek (2002) stresses the extent to which religion is interconnected with all aspects of human existence. Religion is embedded in human life because it provides an explanation for human existence. He claims that anthropologists see religious facts as parts or dimensions of larger social and cultural wholes. He does not believe that religion can be studied as a separate sphere. Instead, a holistic approach is required that allows for the analysis of religion’s embedded links with the social reproduction of families, gender, hierarchy and political organisation.

Glaizer claims that religion is a universal in so far as it exists in some form in all societies. Religion for this scholar encompasses the “hall marks of human creativity, [and is a] tribute to humankind’s infinite resourcefulness and adaptability in coping with the problems of daily existence” (2003, p.3). Lambek (2002) believes the main contribution anthropology of religion makes is its focus on symbolic constructions of the world, rather than a concern to document human responses to these constructions. In other words, the anthropology of religion attempts to deeply and comprehensively analyse human behaviour by attempting to uncover the roots of what motivates and determines beliefs that translate into actions. These roots are symbolically displayed but emerge from a conception of the sacred. The sacred is understood in the texts as divine authority possessing ultimate wisdom with respect to all matters of existence. Scupin (1999) stresses the interrelationship of religious traditions and particular cultural contexts, including the political economy of communities. He demonstrates the

connections between social structures, class, caste, gender, ethnicity, and religion. Scupin's approach is similar to that taken by Lambek, in that the origins of religious ideas about the sacred form the starting point of the study. From there he traces outwards in order to document the impact of religious beliefs in shaping everyday life.

Thus, religion to anthropologists is a multifaceted phenomenon with overlapping spheres, rather than a single 'thing' that can be readily identified and studied in isolation. The term 'culture' is not applied as a separate term denoting something other than what is considered religious. However, the terms are not interchangeable. Instead, culture represents a specific space that is shaped by religion and vice versa. In order to understand the power of religion.

in shaping not only culture but also political and economic affairs, it is necessary to understand the role that religion plays in shaping people's perceptions of the world and their ideas of how it should function. Actors exist in this world and their behaviour is therefore determined by their perceptions of its nature and character. This world is accessed and studied within the space created by culture.

Religion shapes worldviews and is therefore linked to matters of what it is to be human, including kinship, lifecycles and environmental beliefs, ideals of a human society, dignity, exchange, well-being, values and beliefs. This can specifically be seen in the work of Geertz (1973a; 1973b), Rappaport (1999), Bloch (1986) and Asad (1987), all of whom believe that religion is the space that provides those values and beliefs that shape and determine the cultural mechanisms which in turn produce those structures that anchor human daily life by offering contextualisation and regulating meaningful order.

Emphasis is placed by anthropologists of religion on viewing the world through a focus on symbols and performative rituals. It is thought that ritual and symbols are ways of understanding how meanings are attributed and order structured and transmitted. Meaning and order are, in this way, considered simultaneously at both conceptual and moral levels and with respect to questions of cosmological 'eschatology' (the 'study of the end of things'), power, authority, motivation and discipline. Geertz (1973b) highlights that symbols link religion and culture, as religious beliefs and practices imply that a particular style of life is the ideal. Cultural acts are embedded in symbols. Actions are legitimised by the religious ideals displayed by symbols. Systems of symbols are also, according to Geertz, patterns

of culture. Geertz's approach to exploring this link between religion and culture is coined 'symbolical anthropology'. The symbolic approach is still hugely influential in shaping ethnographic research on religion.

The integral link between religion and culture is explored in a different way in the work of Asad (1993), who deliberately shifts from an emphasis on symbols to a post-structuralist approach, characterised by a concern with how power and discipline impact on people's everyday lives. Asad, rather than stressing religion's link to symbols, highlights the links between religion and power. Asad argues that religious symbols are not only intimately linked to social life but also largely support the dominant political power (occasionally he acknowledges that they may oppose it). Religion projects beliefs about leadership and authority and the roles people should take on. The impact of religion on people's lives is profound. As well as outlining roles and expectations, religion is also influential in shaping how people perceive themselves and each other. Asad acknowledges that religious beliefs and practices are not static but change with history. The authority of religion is ensured through the adaptation of beliefs and practices, in order to suit the needs of a new emerging order. Religion, for Asad, is heterogeneous, with many of its elements varying historically and with the needs of the ruling group.

3.3 Approaches to studying the link between religion and culture

All the main readers of anthropology and religion cited in this review take an historical approach to exploring the links between anthropology and religion. Bowie emphasises how early anthropologists looked at religion in terms of what it reveals about a community and its rational or irrational perspective on the world. The Boasian tradition makes a connection between religion, language, poetics and an understanding of the practice of religion (Boas, 1966). Durkheim (1912) looks at the relationship between religious phenomena and the social sphere of life. Turner (1957, 1967) examines the links between function and meaning in religious ritual and between representation, religion and the social order. Evolutionist anthropologists focus on the ideal of rationality or irrationality in primitive thought (Douglas, 1970; 1973; Tambiah, 1985). The psychoanalytic tradition explores the irrational and rational mind within a religious sphere that includes explorations into the subconscious impact of religion (Gell, 1975; Obeyesekere 1981). Under the influence of Marx, anthropologists such as Bloch (1986) and Taussig (1987; 1997) explore notions of power and alienation resulting from religious ideas around fetishism and mystification. Weber (1922) examines in his work the idea of religious transitions, specifically how text-based religions adapt to change. His focus is on how text-based religions have

responded to modernity through different forms of political, social and economic action. Geertz (1973a; 1973b) and Hirschkind (2001) examine issues of theodicy or meaning - how meaning is generated and then how it impacts on social life.

The link between religion and culture has always been present in studies of anthropology and religion, although it has been explored in different ways. As noted above, a newly emerging strand in contemporary anthropology of religion is concerned with the impact of globalisation, specifically how religious ideas are globally transplanted and embedded into other cultures. Part of this process involves examining switches from local traditions to broader cosmologies. The impact of missionaries on local traditional practices and beliefs is a popular topic studied under this theme (Mosse, 1994a; Peel, 2000; Stirrat, 1992; Zene, 2002). A more recent focus is on how missionary Christianity has been replaced by Pentecostalism in West and East Africa (Caplan, 1987; 1991; Gifford, 1998; Meyer and Geschiere 1999; Soothill, forthcoming, 2007; Van Dijk, 2000). Other issues and questions linking religion and globalisation include:

- Islamic responses to globalisation (Eickelman and Piscatori, 1996; Hefner, 1998; 2000);
- The way ethnic, regional, or class conflicts come to be expressed in religious terms, or trying to understand the increasing ethnicisation or hardening of religious boundaries in places once known for being more open and tolerant (James, 1995);
- Religion as a form of social protest (Cunningham, 2000).

3.4 The main research topics studied by anthropologists of religion

Scholars within the study of religion who adopt an anthropological approach in their research have produced ethnographies of religious communities (Claffey, forthcoming 2007; Zene, 2002), congregations (Soothill, forthcoming, 2007) and religious events (Delaney 1990; Gold, 1989; Sax, 1991). This, and other research, is used in broader texts on the anthropology of religion to allow wider comparisons. The themes/concepts most commonly used to make cross-cultural comparisons include: spirit possession, healing practices, witchcraft and shamanism; politics and religious identity; religious beliefs and social organisation; violence, ethnicity and nationhood; myths, texts and oral traditions; rituals and rites of passage; religion culture and the environment; and gender, identity and personhood. These are discussed in Sections 3.5 to 3.12 below.

Many of these themes overlap, enabling considerable analysis into the key research questions of interest to this programme. Most specifically, the literature allows for consideration of how religious beliefs affect social action. A common focus of study is the impact of religious beliefs on identity and collective consciousness, which in turn shapes behaviours and actions. Links can be seen between beliefs relating to cosmology and the wider social structures of specific communities. Much of the research shows that religious and cultural beliefs provide a justification for forms of social organisation which, in turn, translate into gendered roles and identities (Bennett, 1983; Boddy, 1994; Bradley, 2006; Caplan, 1997; Ortner, 1974). In making this link between gender, religion and social organisation, it is possible to gain insight into why people behave in certain ways and adopt certain responses to situations. Sources that cover the direct relationship between cosmological concepts, beliefs and actions focus heavily on witchcraft, shamanism, spirit possession and related healing practices (Abrahams, 1994; Ashforth, 2005; Behrend and Luig, 1999; Bond and Ciekawy, 2001; Brain, 1983; Chesis, 1980; Dwyer, 2003; Feiderman, 1985; Geschiere, 1997; Gessler, 1995; Green, 2003; Jakobsen, 1999; Janzen, 1992; Kapur, 1983; Kramer, 1993; Lerner, 1985; Legerwerf, 1987; Lewis, 1971; Makris, 2000; Manji, 2003; Marwick, 1982; Mesaki, 1994; Thomas and Humphrey, 1994). There are many recent ethnographies examining witchcraft, spirit possession and healing practices in West and East Africa (Abrahams, 1994; Behrend and Luig, 1999; Brain, 1983; Feiderman, 1985; Geschiere, 1997; Gessler, 1995; Green, 2003; Kramer, 1993; Legerwerf, 1987; Mesaki, 1994; Rekdal, 1999; Rowlands and Warnier, 1988; Swantz, 1990). These highlight the strong and persistent influence of traditional beliefs on how rural communities understand themselves and their place in the world. Some of this recent literature shows that traditional beliefs do not have as much influence in urban settings.

Rituals are a common focus in ethnographies of religion and society (Bell, 1992; 1997; Bynum et al., 1986; Douglas, 1973; Eck, 1998; Erndl, 1993; Fruzzetti, 1990; Grimes, 1995; Hicks, 2002; Kumar, 1984; Lincoln, 1991; Parry, 1994; Turner, 1992; Whitehouse and Laiulaw, 2004). Rituals are thought to offer detailed, focused insight into an individual's sense of self and personhood, as well as offering appreciation of how collective cultural and religious identities are expressed (Bell, 1992; 1997; Von Mitzlaff, 1988; Fruzzetti, 1992). The relationship between rituals and gendered identities is also noted in many of the sources (for example, Douglas, 1973; Erndl, 1993; Fruzzetti, 1990). The literature (Grimes, 1995; Fruzzetti, 1990; Hicks, 2002) highlights the extent to which public rituals, such as rites of passage, serve to endorse socially and culturally prescribed roles and expectations. The material also shows that rituals themselves create spaces for personal reflection and expression (Bradley,

2006). Resistance to powerful discourses and feelings of frustration at the resulting repressive experiences may be recorded in personal and private rituals (Gold and Raheja, 1994; Harlan, 1992; Bradley, 2006; Von Mitzlaff, 1988).

The methodology section of this review has highlighted that contemporary anthropology acknowledges that a historic approach should be adopted in ethnographic research in order to give a sense of how communities are responding to the impact of globalisation and other developmental issues. This theme is present in the work of anthropologists of religion who show that religious subjectivities often form the platform for political mobilisation and result in the prominence of certain national and ethnic identities in reaction to change (Contusrs, 1989; Cunningham, 2000; James; 1995). Displacement as a result of violent conflict is a theme that emerges in relation to the experiences of refugees, who are forced to recreate a sense of home through affirming their ethnic and religious identities in new environments (Daniel, 1996; Jerman, 1997). The literature that covers the intersection between religion and politics documents the use of violence as a defence strategy and as an emotional response to change (Contusrs, 1989; Cunningham, 2000).

Political change is a strong focus in the literature on West and East Africa. Specifically, the impact of missionary Christianity on the reformation of new religious identities and social structures is assessed (Claffey, forthcoming 2007; Gifford, 1992; 1998; Peel, 2000; Zene 2002). The close ethnographic focus taken by many of the anthropologists allows for dynamic and inter-relational studies. The sources reviewed below (for example, Peel, 2000) highlight the extent to which the missionaries were changed by their experiences of living in Africa as much as they instituted changes in the social, political, cultural and religious structures of the communities in which they worked. Much of the contemporary literature on this topic is now turning its attention to the rise of Pentecostalism (Gifford, 1998). Soothill (forthcoming, 2007) specifically looks at the popularity of Pentecostalism among women. The literature looking at missionary activity in India (Mosse, 1994a; Zene, 2002) highlights the extent to which conversion to Christianity was popular among low caste people and dalits because it was seen as a strategy through which they could take a new Christian identity which brought with it greater respect than they previously commanded.

3.5 Spirit possession, healing practices, shamanism and witchcraft

The majority of the core texts on religion and anthropology cited in this section contain a chapter on spirit possession, healing practices, shamanism and witchcraft. In addition there are many ethnographies focusing on the impact of these practices in shaping local communities. They enable us to develop an understanding of values and beliefs and how they affect actions; how social groups function; and the ways in which religious groups are constituted, understand themselves and act in the world.

The regional focus for these studies has mainly been West, East and South Africa, with some literature focusing on India. There is some material looking at Southeast Asia, but this has not been reviewed here in depth, as its regional focus is not of interest to this programme. Evans-Pritchard (1937) was among the first anthropologists to recognise how beliefs surrounding witchcraft and spirits directly affected the way in which communities perceive everyday situations, both good and bad. In turn, Evans-Pritchard recognised that these beliefs impacted on the way in which the Azande of the Sudan responded to everyday situations. His structuralist approach led him to believe that witchcraft beliefs acted to cement the Azande as a social group. Witchcraft beliefs brought with them notions of power and authority in that those members of the community thought to be able to control the spirits were deemed powerful. Contemporary studies of spirits, witchcraft and shamanism still hold to this link between the associated beliefs and a wider understanding of how groups function and act. The continued popularity of this topic is perhaps due to the way traditional beliefs influence responses to changing environments. Some recent material also suggests that witchcraft is increasingly given as an explanation for rising levels of poverty and social marginalisation.

3.5.1 Spirit possession and healing

The sources approach spirit possession and healing practices as reactions to problems and symptoms. They are calculated strategies but are also culturally shaped meaningful acts. Many anthropologists believe that spirit possessions and healing practices open up spaces for reflection. The space provided by the practice of spirit possession offers anthropologists the chance to glimpse instances of collective and personal identities, and the interpenetration between collective and inter-subjective aspects of identity. In other words, it highlights how collective identities become internalised and impact on the shaping of individual consciousness.

Boddy (1989; 1994) has been very influential in shaping the contemporary anthropological approach to the study of spirit possession. She builds on the work of Lewis (1971), whose book *A Study of Shamanism and Spirit Possession*, is considered a classic within the anthropology of religion. Boddy extends Lewis's work by applying a gendered perspective to the study of spirit possession. Boddy's work is centred on the female members of a Sudanese Islamic rural community. She treats the spirit cult as 'counter hegemonic' for women who otherwise exist in a male-dominated Islamic social order. Boddy's feminist concerns come through in her belief that Sudanese women are culturally 'over determined' to be fertility objects. Their socialisation deprives them of any sense of individuality and fails to provide them with a way of dealing conceptually and actively with infertility, or other significant contraventions of femininity. Rather than women being considered the controlling force of their own fertility, it is Zar spirits who are thought to assume responsibility for preventing pregnancy and causing premature stillbirths, and generally for disrupting human fertility. Boddy describes how possession by Zar spirits lifts from women's shoulders a measure of responsibility for reproduction. At the same time, by paying for the woman's treatment, her husband and kin are forced to acknowledge some liability.

Boddy treats trance episodes as 'texts'. Sudanese spirit possession is designed to promote free thinking, encouraging reflection on the taken-for-granted world of the possessed and promoting enhanced self-consciousness. Boddy concludes that oppressed women thereby enjoy more felicitous outcomes in their encounters with others. The main critical point directed at Boddy's work is methodological. Karp (1980) states that Boddy's work is not based on strong records of Sudanese women's views. In other words, it is not clear how the women Boddy talks about actually think and feel about the process of possession. Most significantly, do they think or feel any differently during the actual possessions?

Other recent work on possession in the Sudan includes Makris (2000), who traces the evolution of the *Tumbira* possession cult. He looks at how such possessions are entered into by men and women of slave descent in urban Sudan. His work, therefore, supports Boddy's argument that possession practices provide the possessed with a space to express and explore feelings of marginalisation and oppression. Furthermore, possession can, in fact, enhance a self-conscious realisation that certain forces are responsible for their oppression.

What becomes apparent in the literature on spirit possession is that anthropologists use a focus on possession as a medium through which they can study other aspects of community life. Further examples can be seen in Placido (2001) and Behrend and Luig (1999). Both these sources highlight the extent to which spirit possession can potentially offer insight into community conflicts and perceptions of power and marginalisation, as well as internal self-conscious struggles. The particular research methodology and approach adopted by individual anthropologists is crucial in determining how successful they are at providing a convincing and detailed account of these links. Crucial questions include: what do the women and men involved in the possession think about it? In what circumstances do people become possessed? What are the social and political implications of possessions? How do they demonstrably affect people's lives? All these questions have relevance for development, as they help construct a comprehensive and complex appreciation of how individuals and groups experience their social and cultural worlds. They also allow for insight into issues of personhood and community identity. The historic perspective taken by Makris (2000) reveals how long term studies of spirit possession can also act as indicators of social, political and economic change and, more significantly, can record how local people feel about these changes.

Further material that has direct religious and regional relevance to this research programme includes Kapferer (1983), who attempts to explain the prevalence of possessed female 'victims' in Buddhist Sri Lanka by what he calls 'cultural typification' which, he claims, "places women in a special and significant relation with the demonic" (1998, p. 34). In other words, women are symbolically linked to notions of demonism by cultural and religious depictions of their sexuality and its potential to become unleashed in dangerous and destructive ways. This symbolism has also been studied in Hinduism (Bennett, 1983). This literature can provide insight into the wider social marginalisation of women in Hindu and Buddhist cultures.

Nabokov (1997) contributes further discussion on this topic. He criticises Kapferer for not explaining why it is that not all women are considered at risk of demonic possession. Kapferer argues that it is only new young brides that seem to become possessed in this way. Nabokov argues that the emotional entrapment of marriage makes such women vulnerable to seduction by hedonistic spirits, who not only sexually enjoy their victims but also make them resist the sexual attentions of their new husbands. What this article highlights is that caution must be applied to those ethnographic accounts of possession that seem to produce a culturological account of possession by reproducing local

social representation and stereotypes, one of which is that all women are especially vulnerable to spirit possession. Such accounts do not in themselves explain the incident of possession.

Spirit possession also has a transformative aspect, in that it can offer cures for illness. Csordas (1994; 1987) looks at the therapeutic processes involved in healing. These rely heavily on religious and cultural symbols of evil. In order to be healed, the possessed must identify the cause of the illness and appease the spirit responsible. Similar themes are covered by Manji (2003). Those who have the power to heal are endowed by their communities with a great deal of authority. As such, their opinions count on issues that go way beyond matters of health. The link between healing, power and political, economic and social authority is evident from the work of Janzen (1992), Lambek (1993) and Erdtsieck (2003).

3.5.2 Shamanism and healing

All the sources reviewed on shamanism offer similar definitions of the practice, describing it not as a role but as a process of communicating between two worlds. Bowie (2000) emphasises how shamanistic practices are linked to notions of healing through the appeasement of out of control spirits. The shaman is therefore considered a healer to whom community members turn when sickness strikes. The link between shamanism and healing is clearly made in the following sources: Jakobsen (1999), Ter Haar and Ellis (1998). Studies of shamanism also emphasise the impact such practices have on the socio-political and economic spheres of life (Atkinson, 1992; Johansen, 1999; Taussig, 1987; Thomas and Humphrey 1994; Stoller, 1995) and suggest that the shaman, as with all healers, holds power that can impact on everyday life.

Contemporary anthropologists who study shamanism often do so through a gendered perspective. Sered (1994) and Kendall (1985), in their studies of shamanistic practices, highlight how it is mainly women who are endowed with the powers to carry out these rituals. In their analysis, they reflect much of Boddy's interpretation, arguing that both the shamanistic space created through possession and the role of healer offers women a way of subverting the roles expected of them under patriarchy.

Shamanism, spirit possession and healing practices all have roots in traditional beliefs and religious practices. They offer a way into understanding the world of those who observe them. Shamans are seen as problem solvers. Community members go to their local shaman to seek advice and

explanations for why things are happening to them and to work through solutions. The range of situations brought to a shaman include: illness, inter-community disputes, power struggles, concerns over resource allocation and economic concerns. Indeed Stoller, in his self-reflexive ethnography documenting his training and experiences as an apprentice sorcerer, clearly highlights the extent to which communities turn to shamans and sorcerers for solutions, even over regional power struggles. In fact it was the power of sorcery that attracted Stoller to take on this role in his fieldwork (Stoller and Oates, 1987).

3.5.3 Witchcraft

General texts that explore the relationship between concepts of witchcraft and socio-cultural beliefs often reinforce Evans-Pritchard's (1937) original thesis that beliefs are strongly associated with kinship structures and ideas of social order. This link is made, for example, in the following texts: Abrahams (1994), Chesis (1980), Horton (1994), Marwick (1982), which provide insight into how social groups understand their own lives and how they explain and react to processes of change.

In this section, material on witchcraft in Africa and India will be reviewed first, followed by some discussion of the links between gender and witchcraft accusations and the ways in which the literature links witchcraft with misfortune, power and the social order. Finally, the relevance of the material for development practice is briefly assessed.

Many of the studies of witchcraft in Africa suggest that the balance between the prevalence of witchcraft and the forces of modernity stems both from an obsession with power and from the increasing feeling of powerlessness among people. This can be seen in the following work: Akinnasi (1995), Brain (1983), Bond and Ciekawy (2001), Greschiere (1997), Larner (1985), Rowlands and Warnier (1988). Some sources document the impact of Christianity on traditional witchcraft beliefs (Gifford, 1998; Green, 2003; Legerwerf, 1987).

Much less contemporary literature exists on witchcraft in India than Africa. Kapur (1983) Saletore (1981) and Macdonald (2004) offer general ethnographic accounts of witchcraft cosmology and associated healing practices within rural Hindu communities. The general analysis applied in these texts links what is described as a supernatural malaise to a notion of vulnerability. In South Asia, affliction (caused by witchcraft) is commonly associated with subordination and marginality. This

specific focus on spirit possession in the Indian region, (also including Sri Lanka) links possession to oppression, especially that of women by men. As Gellner and Monk (1992) state, spirit possession is typified by socio-economic inferiority of the possessed, who cannot openly express their grievances. The space created by spirit possession relies on emotion. The possessed who seek to be healed must lay their emotions bare during the ritual if they are to be cured. For this reason, deep-rooted feelings around issues of marginality and social exclusion often come to the surface during these times. The most recently published text on this topic in India is by Dwyer (2003), who asks why certain categories of people are more prone to spirit possession or more attractive to supernatural forces than others. He argues that certain categories of individuals become the prey of capricious spirits and often become victims of sorcery or some other mystical force because they see themselves and are seen by others to be exceptionally at risk. In other words, the attribution of illness and misfortune to popular supernatural agents or occult forces is largely connected with perceptions rooted in common sense assumptions and beliefs about susceptibility (see also Kapferer, 1983, reviewed in the previous section). Dwyer highlights how diviners and diagnosticians are also instrumental in producing suspicions and accusations. In other words, they have the power to create categories of vulnerability and, thus, have a hand in shaping the socio-cultural landscape of their communities.

The relationship between the power of spirits, death and the social world is emphasised in Bastin (1996), Des Jarlais (1992) and Vitebsky (1993). In Cohen (1994), it is shown how healing practices rest in a person's subconscious, impacting on how they see themselves in relation to the rest of the socio-cultural world. It should be noted that there is a difference between a priest who offers spiritual, moral guidance and leadership and a healer to whom people turn when faced with affliction. The differences between these roles are highlighted in Parry (1994).

In both the African and Indian literature we find sources that look at the link between accusations of witchcraft and instances of violence, particularly against women. In these texts, a symbolic association is made between the female body and notions of weakness or vulnerability to spirit possession. Douglas's (1966) thesis on purity and pollution helps to unpack this symbolism. She suggests that the dichotomy between what is designated pure or polluted, in turn, structures cultural and religious practices designed to limit pollution. Cross-culturally, the female body possesses the potential to transcend its prescribed gendered boundaries and must, therefore, be subject to social control (Ortner, 1974). Witchcraft accusations and the violence attached to them is one such way of

ensuring female compliance. The following African ethnographies support this analysis: Auslander (1993); Ashforth (2005); Geschiere and Cyprian (1994); Mesaki (1994). If such controls are not used, then witchcraft practices can lead to illness, death and social disorder. In other words, if women do not conform to their gendered roles their communities will suffer disarray. Witches are often held responsible for illness (Pool, 1994). The link between witchcraft, gender, and a concept of evil is clear in Meyer (1992) and Strathern (2003).

Much of the literature on witchcraft (regardless of location) links death, diseases and general mishaps to misfortune. This misfortune is usually ascribed to tensions within the local kin group, which are expressed as personal grudges charged with mystical power of sorcery or witchcraft or as beliefs in the punitive action of ancestor spirits (Bjerke, 1981; Karp and Bird, 1987; Piferiffer 2002). In such situations, the healing practices that ensue not only aim to eradicate symptoms but also seek to clarify diagnosis and thus create a social consensus over the cause and cure of such ailments. Janzen (1987) and Whyte (1997) also observed that misfortunes were regarded by communities as the consequences of everyday events/actions. In other words, Whyte highlights how in Central and East Africa misfortune is dealt with through practices in community rituals called cults of affliction or drums of affliction. When the harmony of the social order has been threatened, the emphasis of many traditional therapies is to restructure social relations and to focus on the emotional context of the illness. Feiderman (1985), Janzen (1992) and Van Dijk et al. (2000) also argue that communal healing is at the heart of the African healing tradition. In fact, Good (1987) states that the phrase, "are you well?" refers to the health of the whole community not just the individual.

Traditional healers are considered attractive and successful in healing because they share with their patients a common cultural and social background, including their social networks, language and a common belief system (Gessler, 1995; Rekdal, 1999). Rekdal also highlights that some people choose to seek the help of healers who do not live near them, either because medicines from far away places are thought to be more powerful or alternatively because some people do not want to draw attention to their misfortune and so choose to travel to a healer where no one knows them.

3.5.4 Links to development: spirit possession, healing practices, shamanism and witchcraft

Some of the literature on spirit possession, healing practices, shamanism and witchcraft has direct relevance for development practice. Kamat (2004) looks at whether or not people turn to traditional explanations and healing practices when state welfare is withdrawn or does not seem to work. Kamat's research focuses on the post-1991 period in Tanzania, when the government formally abandoned its commitment to a socialist health policy and began to privatise health provision. He conducted fieldwork in Dar es Salaam and looks at the impacts these measures had had on rapid social transformation for marginalised people. He centres his research on three main questions:

- Has privatisation of the health sector resulted in a tendency for the poor to avoid seeking medical treatment?
- Do the poor seek alternative, cheaper forms of therapy such as traditional healers?
- Are the poor becoming more individualised in their treatment seeking behaviour?

His main thesis argues that the transition from socialism to capitalism has led to an intensification of social and economic inequalities among households, feelings of relative deprivation among members of local communities and overall deterioration of health conditions. He concludes that in urban Dar es Salaam the poor are taking a more individualistic approach, relying on families and friends rather than on their community as a whole or on traditional healing practices. This urban trend towards more individualistic behaviour is also documented by Rekdal (1999) and highlights the need to separate ethnographies that focus on rural and urban settings. The link between the community and healing practices could well be largely rural. Beckerleg (1994), Swantz (1995) and Whyte (1997) also claim that in urban areas more individualistic behaviour can be seen. Health matters are no longer communal, instead individuals seek their own solutions. In contrast, the following sources both document an increase in rural poor people turning to traditional healers in the post-1991 period in Tanzania: Gessler (1995) and Swantz (1990; 1995).

Sanders (2001) records a rise of occult idioms and practices across Tanzania, which he believes are directly related to how structural adjustment policies have been implemented. He highlights a gap between local perceptions of recent changes in the social and economic environment and the declared positive benefits espoused by supporters of liberalisation under structural adjustment. This gap between macro and micro knowledge and perceptions is highlighted at length in the anthropology of development literature reviewed in section 4.

3.6 Politics and religious identity

Recent literature on the theme of politics and religious identity focuses on the emergence of militant or radical religious identities. Most of the literature argues that these identities are formed as political and emotional reactions to globalisation, which is blamed for causing marginalisation (Ranger, 1993; Shaharaw and Canfield, 1984; Van der Veer, 1996). As such, the literature has relevance for the research programme in understanding how religious groups are constituted, understand themselves and act in the world.

Van de Veer (1996) looks at the historical construction of Hindu and Muslim identities in India and the transformation of these identities in the colonial and post-colonial periods, in the context of nationalism. His argument is that religious identity is constructed through ritual discourse and practice. These identities are not primordial attachments inculcated by unchanging traditions, but specific products of changing forms of religious organisation and communication. Religious nationalisms combine religious discourse with discourses on and about the nation. However, nationalist identities rest on a notion of a community bound together by a shared religion and modes of communication (ritual practices). The nationalist community is characterised by a desire to resist the constant pressures of globalisation. Unity between all members of the community is achieved despite caste and class differences.

Van de Deer goes on to state that Hindu and Muslim nationalisms developed along similar lines and that each needs the other, as they are each formed in opposition to the other. He identifies a new form of transnational nationalism in which those who have migrated from their homeland are able to maintain their religious identities through nationalist causes. Van der Veer's work concentrates on a case study of conflict over the Hindu temple burning at Ayodhya in 1984. The temple was largely rebuilt with labour and money from Hindus outside India. The focus provided by the temple reconstruction allowed Hindus around the globe to unify behind a strong national identity and reconnect with their traditional culture.

Werbner (1998) makes a methodological contribution to the study of politics and religious identity through a critique of power in contemporary Africa. He calls for a new approach to understanding how political subjectivities are made. Werbner states that there is an urgent need to rethink our understanding of the moral and political force of memory in shaping subjectivities. This new approach

must involve delving more closely into how individuals respond to changing political climates and how these new climates result in altered subjectivities. Werbner's work could well be influenced by that of James (1988), who looks at this topic in relation to the Uduk of Sudan. She argues that although political and religious changes have impacted on the traditional beliefs of the Uduk, these changes do not necessarily replace all aspects of their cultural past. Her ethnography takes an historical approach that allows her to record a history of competing sources of power, often presented to the Uduk as a new authoritative religion. In other words, religion is used as a vehicle to impose discourses of power. Despite shifts in authority, she states that a "set of vernacular cultural elements . . . can persist at a partly hidden level . . . while the visible features of social practice and cultural discourse can accommodate themselves to a prevailing lingua franca, dominant religion and the regional demands of political and economic life" (1988, p.3).

James identifies a 'cultural archive' consisting of sets of notions and concepts relating to human experience that may not emerge as clear visible beliefs or theories but instead lie invisible and dormant until required to help shape a new discourse. This cultural archive represents a base line of reference to the past and a source of validation for the future. The elements of this cultural archive constitute the foundations of a moral world. Despite challenges to their traditional beliefs and way of life, such a cultural archive provides a stable source of knowledge against which all new claims to religious authority can be assessed and weighed up. James states: "I have distinguished this cultural repository as moral knowledge: a fund of implicit guarantees upon which they [the Uduk] have drawn both to meet and to counter the various claims of authoritative religious teachings which have confronted them" (1988, p. 7).

The work of Claffey (forthcoming 2007) also adopts an historical approach focusing on the impact of political change on social structures and religious identities of local communities in rural Benin. The study seeks to make a contribution to understanding the public role of Christian churches in Africa. The book sets out to examine the state in Benin as it has developed out of that country's history and the socio-political role of the Christian churches. In the Republic of Benin, there has been a remarkable growth of Christianity in the past two decades. Claffey seeks to unpack whether this growth is a symptom of socio-political collapse, as it has to be set against the backdrop of a period of immense stress in Africa. The research pays particular attention to the role of the Catholic Church, its relationship to the colonial enterprise and its role in the formation of the post-colonial elite. The study

concludes that the churches are, above all, a commentary upon the society in which they find themselves. While they may not articulate an overt challenge to the state, they *do* articulate social distress and the desire for a different future – *a breakthrough*. They provide quasi-communities that are in themselves a challenge to the state. In times of stress, they may prove to be the only viable institutional buttress, as well as an arbiter between the state and civil society.

Unlike the work on religious nationalism that highlights how nationalised identities unify people across class barriers, other ethnographies look at how struggles over differences (class and gender) give way to politically driven identities (Bloch, 1983; Scott; 1990). Contusrs (1989), Hale (1994) and Imam (1994) have produced research that locates new radical religious identities that are emerging as a result of social marginalisation on the basis of class and gender.

The idea of religious conversion as a political strategy to escape certain religious and social identities (associated with a lower, lesser existence and a general lack of dignity) is covered by Hefner (1985), in relation to cross-cultural conversions to Christianity, and Majahid (1989), in relation to *dalit* conversions to Islam in India. Zene's (2002) ethnography is based in what is now southwest Bangladesh, in the Catholic diocese of Khulna. He examines the relationship between the Catholic missionaries working in the area and the local Rishi population. The Rishi are classed as 'untouchables' and, therefore, lie outside and well beneath all Hindu castes. Zene believes the Rishi displayed a confidence in their ability to appropriate Christianity in order to meet their own objectives. Their primary objective was to shape for themselves a new Christian identity that would lift them out of their lowly status as untouchables. Zene's work makes an important methodological contribution. He highlights the importance of recording and identifying dialogues in ethnographic research. The Rishi and missionary groups were in dialogue with each other. This dialogue, despite the obvious power imbalance between the two groups, was in fact reciprocal. Both the missionaries and the Rishi changed as a result of their encounter with each other. The Rishi converted, taking on a new Christian identity, while the missionaries found themselves adapting to Rishi culture in order to make themselves more attractive to their 'target converttees'. The Rishi and the missionaries needed each other. The missionaries were able to justify their presence because the Rishi responded to them. The Rishi found in the missionaries the potential to affirm their dignity as human beings. However, evidence of a political struggle can be seen in the process of conversion. The Rishi resisted and negotiated the terms of their new 'Christian identity'. They did not adopt wholesale the religious authority of the Catholic discourse.

3.7 Religious beliefs and social organisation

Research in this category views religion in terms of its impact on cultural practices and social and political structures. It also looks at how religion interfaces with issues of class/caste, gender, ethnicity and age. Resistance, bargaining and struggle are themes that run through sources that historically track and document societal and cultural changes (Comaroff, 1985; Borer, 1998; Rosen, 1984).

Some material focuses on how beliefs are constructed and transmitted (Barber, 1981; Clark, 1990; Launay, 1992; Masquelier, 1994; Mosse, 1994). Mosse's (1994a) work examines the intersection between a 'global' religious tradition (Catholicism) and the 'local' (Tamil) social and cultural matrix in which it is embedded. His work mirrors the theoretical conclusions drawn by Werbner (1998), in that he describes a cultural 'bricolage' in which Catholicism does not replace traditional beliefs but instead Christian ideas and practices are incorporated into local cultural perceptions. Mosse quotes Wolf in describing culture as a "series of processes that construct, reconstruct and dismantle cultural materials" (Wolf, 1982, p.387). Religious synthesis may exist, but this is the result of ".. an active interplay between local Christians and the clergy" (Mosse, 1994a, p. 302). Mosse points also to a globalisation of religious constructs that dismantle aspects of local culture. The example he gives is of how missionaries managed to convert communities to Christianity by replacing village deities in local shrines with Catholic saints. The resulting belief system was a mixture of tradition, Hinduism and Catholicism.

This argument is also made by Caplan (1987; 1991) in relation to her work looking at how Protestant fundamentalism in Madras incorporates local and North American elements into an urban class culture of resistance, thereby challenging the dominant middle-class establishment. Mosse (1994a) argues that during processes of political change and instability, new cultural materials emerge. However, some cultural materials remain, acquiring their consistency from local Hindu beliefs.

Mosse (1994a) stresses that, in Tamil Nadu, the Church has never engendered new social or political identities. Rather, it has provided Christians with a distinctive religious identity superimposed upon, but largely secondary to, the social order of caste. Caste is the common structure that synchronises both Hindu and Christian beliefs. This shared identity in turn impacts on each specific religious identity: Christians absorb Hinduism and Hindus absorb Christianity. Interestingly, Mosse's research supports the argument made by Zene (2002). He records that lower caste people are more likely to convert to

Christianity than members of the higher castes, who remain Hindu. Christianity offers the lower castes a more dignified identity.

Another study that attempts to understand how lower caste groups understand the world and respond to their place in it is that of Gold Grodzkins and Gujar (2002). This source documents historic narratives of low caste groups in rural Hindu communities in Rajasthan. Many of these narratives contain religious figures that provide explanations for why certain changes have occurred. Gold Grodzkins argues that change has usually been viewed through a particular version of colonial upper class history. She attempts to construct a history through the eyes of lower caste Hindus by collecting ethnographic accounts of people's memories.

Peel (2000) documents religious change in Africa, specifically focusing on the impact of missionary Christianity on Yoruba identity. The work looks at the idea of religious conversion as a process of transformation from one identity to another (parallels can be drawn with the work of Zene, 2002). Religions for Peel are not just ways of explaining and modifying experience, but are formative in structuring both communities and the power structures within them. Missionary activities are strongly linked to colonialism and the embedding of new power relations between colonised and colonisers, but also in reshaping local community relations. However, Peel highlights the extent to which this process is not one-sided. In fact, Yoruba culture has been successful in shaping a distinct Christianity, partly due to the vibrancy of its traditional culture, but also because Christianity found itself in competition with Islam, which meant that the missions had to adapt in order to attract converts. The encounter between the missions and local people has historically been fraught. These tensions have been caused by misunderstandings between local people and the missions over different beliefs and cosmologies. As a result, the Yoruba may have become Christian, but Peel also argues that Christianity became Yoruba. Peel's work is useful in highlighting the extent to which people are cultural agents active in shaping new subjectivities. Rather than being a straightforward process of one cosmology replacing another, encounters with difference (religious, cultural or a new developmental state) result in a renegotiated identity.

This focus on the impact of missionary Christianity on Nigerian socio-political character is also present in Aigbe (1993), who argues that in recent years a decline in the role and influence of the Church on developmental issues is clear. This decline is partly due to the rise of Pentecostalism,

which is particularly attractive to the poor and, according to Aigbe, does not have the same significant institutional impact on the socio-political make up of Nigeria as did the early missions. Perhaps this is because Pentecostalism is not backed up by a political force as powerful as colonialism. Also, as suggested by Soothill (forthcoming 2007), in her research into the Pentecostal churches of Agra, Ghana, women are attracted to these churches because they acknowledge the spiritual power of women. Women in Pentecostalism have greater visible authority than in Catholic churches.

The sources reviewed on the impact of missionary Christianity in South Asia and West Africa do, however, reveal a gap. In relation to Nigeria, Islam, in particular, has had significant impacts on shifts in social, political and economic relations. These must have had similar effects to those of Christianity in affecting how people perceive their world and act within it. Peel (2000) acknowledges that historically Islam has been and is a dominant force in Nigeria, yet his study chooses to focus solely on the impact of missionary Christianity. This bias may distort overall perceptions of how social and political change has occurred in Nigeria.

Material that examines the link between religious beliefs and human behaviour has been influenced by Geertz's symbolic approach. Gottlieb (1992) explores ideology and social practices among the Beng people of Côte d'Ivoire. Employing symbolic and postmodern perspectives, she highlights the dynamically paired notions of identity and difference, symbolised by the kapok tree planted at the centre of every Beng village. Symbolism as a means of understanding and unpacking religious beliefs and as a way of mapping how communities weave together and function is used by a number of anthropologists (El-zein, 1974). This material also shows how notions of the sacred are often represented through objects imbued with symbolism. The tree is cross-culturally a common sacred symbol. For example, Hinduism also contains many references to sacred spaces defined by the presence of a tree (Fuller, 1992).

Symbols are used by many anthropologists as a means of mapping the social history of communities. Such an approach allows for an appreciation of how people understand their place in the world and why they behave as they do. Beidelman (1993) looks at the imagery used by the Kaguru of Tanzania in the construction of gender, time, authority and morality. He traces symbols throughout Kaguru oral history, rituals and everyday practices and thereby pieces together a broad study of Kaguru society. The focus of this ethnography is on how people relate to each other, cooperate, strive to achieve their

goals and adjust their strategic and symbolic interactions to changing circumstances. Symbols are imagined and form a set of ideas, images and practices through which people reflect on the nature of life in society and dream about ways of escaping it. Beidelman looks at:

- How people construct images of the world in which they live, both in terms of a cosmology that shapes their views of themselves and their surroundings and also in terms of the physical, social and cultural aspects of the world. This cosmology can offer a way of understanding the reality of people's lives and their experiences.
- How people imagine a world different from the one they actually experience. In this arena people extend the vision of what may or may not be possible or desirable.
- The anthropological view of this alien world. Here, Beidelman highlights the impact his own imagination has in shaping the Kaguru world he describes in his ethnography. He must, therefore, proceed in his ethnographic research with an awareness of the impact of his own imaginings on the world he witnesses and later describes.

For Beidelman (1993), morality is embedded in cosmology and emotions and affects our judgements and actions. A focus on how morality is formed can, therefore, inform us about how people understand their place in the world and what motivates their actions. Rituals, myths, stories, songs, riddles, beliefs about witchcraft and sorcery all express features of a cosmology that extends much deeper than language. Beidelman depicts the fluid social world of the Kaguru, which appears in varied and changing aspects, whose meaning, sense and value are constantly negotiated among the Kaguru themselves. The Kaguru imaginatively use symbols and ideas to stand for their way of life. To focus on one aspect, such as ritual, offers an intensely focused insight into one facet of the cosmology that shapes Kaguru society. Social life as a whole is informed by the changing and contended elements of these beliefs and values. The values and meanings attached to symbols are subject to constant negotiation depending on the social context within which they are evoked. Cosmologies also reflect inconsistencies which result in disquiet and hostility: for example, witchcraft and sorcery beliefs reflect inconsistencies or ambiguities, the presence of which does not, according to Beidelman, affect Kaguru peace of mind.

Fantasy is a particular focus of this ethnography, which offers a useful insight into how the Kaguru would like their world to be, in other words what changes they would like make. These imaginings may well be of use to development planners, allowing them to understand the changes desired by

communities. Beidelman examines how fantasy operates through myths and stories and allows the Kaguru to transcend boundaries in order to imagine other ways of being “Imagination evinced in stories and fables allows Kaguru to contemplate their ideas and experiences to extremes and degrees beyond the limits of the lives they live, yet this same imaginative experience can inform Kaguru of how they live and consider their working lives” (1993, p. 8).

Tales are part and parcel of everyday life. Social action requires a subjective interpretation of the experience and intentions of others, which can be transmitted through tales and stories. Furthermore, tales can present an imagining of a social self to others, one that might encourage them to join in. The link between religious beliefs and moral authority that, in turn, shapes the rules and laws that determine behaviour, has been examined in relation to the work of James (1988) in the previous section.

How religious beliefs translate into action and social expectations is effectively researched through a gendered perspective. Jeffery, Jeffery and Lyon (1989) show in their ethnography of a village in Uttar Pradesh, India, how Islamic beliefs link notions of women as child rearers and mothers. These beliefs impact on the societal relationships, rights and duties of each sex. Unnithan-Kumar (1997) shows in relation to rural Rajasthan how socio-cultural and religious beliefs feed into notions of rights and duties, which in turn affect the everyday lives of women. Saeed (2001) focuses on the lives of prostitutes in urban Pakistan and documents how Muslim women who choose to step outside of their religiously and culturally prescribed roles are treated. Her depiction of the lives of women in the red light districts of urban Pakistan is well-balanced. She highlights the women’s social marginalisation whilst emphasising the extent to which they exercise power over their futures. Saeed argues that the life of a prostitute could be seen by some as a way of escaping the usual path of a Muslim wife and mother (see also Bennett, 1983; Parpola and Tenhunen, 1998).

3.8 Violence, ethnicity and nationhood

Material focusing on South Asia has looked at links between religion and political mobilisation, nationalism and collective violence. In all these sources, religion becomes the vehicle that unites and motivates those involved in collective action. It is in relation to understanding the link between religion, identities and action that this material is useful to the research programme.

What is apparent in the literature reviewed in this section is that religion is not purely a matter of belief and worship. It also has social and political resonances and impacts on cultural identity, determining how groups understand themselves and the world around them. For example, Van der Veer (1994) looks at Hindu and Muslim religious violence and conflict in India; Tambiah (1996) looks at ethno-nationalist conflicts and collective violence in Hindu and Muslim South Asia; Mahmood (1991) interviews South Asian Sikh militants; and James (1995) looks at how ethnic, regional or class conflicts come to be expressed in religious terms.

The literature that takes an anthropological perspective on violence seems to focus on one of three themes:

- Some scholars, such as Tambiah (1996), are concerned to study forms of collective aggression in order to understand what characteristics are present in the aggressors. This kind of research consists of close studies that record the dynamics of groups, crowds and mobs.
- A second theme focuses on the experiences of people displaced by violence. This literature concerns how people go about forming new identities once their lives have been disrupted by conflict. This material also considers how displaced people deal with their feelings of dislocation (for example, Jerman, 1997).
- Lastly, research that looks at the anthropology of suffering seeks to document people's personal accounts of violence and the emotional content of conflict (Daniel, 1996).

Tambiah (1996) has conducted work on the contemporary increase in ethno-nationalist conflicts. He believes that these conflicts amplify collective interests and objectives. These interests often stem from anti-western feelings. Issues that form the focus of these conflicts include the failure of democracy to represent all people, the failure of the welfare state to meet the needs of everyone, and world economic processes that work against the interest of poor countries. Ethno-nationalist conflicts make claims to rights based on ethnicity and a collective concept of salvation, expressed through public rituals. This collective spirit allows for an internal energy to be generated that then erupts in violent protests. The process of creating ethnic identities involves the reification of certain characteristics that historically are claimed to have always been present in a particular group of people. These characteristics create separation between the group that can lay claim to them and others who cannot. A social space opens up, within which all those who share these characteristics feel unified. However, ethnic boundaries are not rigidly set and shift to allow for new groups to be

assimilated, thus ensuring expansion. Ideological causes and persuasions influence the fluidity of ethnic identities. “Ethnic identity unifies the semantics of primordial and historical claims of distinctiveness with the pragmatics of calculated choice and opportunism in dynamic contexts of political and economic competition between interests groups” (Tambiah, 1996, p. 21).

Ethnic affiliation and identity override other social cleavages (such as class and nationalism) as a basis of mobilisation for political action. Most significantly, according to Tambiah (1996), ethnicity has replaced class as a major paradigm for interpreting social conflict and change. Another author concerned with this first theme is Das (1990), who reviews the impact of community religious violence in South Asia. The first section of the book looks in general at the nature of violence during riots and contextualises this within social systems that comprise, for instance, religion, politics and the individual unconscious. The second examines particular riots - such as riots against Tamils in Colombo, Sikhs in Delhi and Muhajirs in Karachi - and seeks to understand each event in its distinctive peculiarity and concreteness, so that general arguments about communal or ethnic violence can be given body and form. The third kind of essay describes the experience of various survivors, their emotional states and the processes and strategies by which they have come to terms with, or slowly reconstructed, their shattered worlds.

The work of Daniel (1996) falls under the last theme, as it takes a focused look at the personal impact of violence in the Buddhist, Christian and Hindu communities of contemporary Sri Lanka. He considers the ethics of studying violence, as it impacts on those involved at a deeply personal level. He highlights the breadth of anthropological method in documenting emotional as well as material aspects of life, thereby contributing to an ethical self-reflexive methodology. He asks throughout his ethnography a number of poignant questions, such as: how does an ethnographer write about violence? How can the researcher make sense of violent acts, for him/her self and for his/her readers, without compromising their meaning? Explicit consideration of these questions aims at ensuring that his research accurately represents the experiences of others. The use of such a self-reflexive approach could also help those engaged in development activities to think more carefully about how they represent the needs of their target groups.

Morrell (2001) is a further scholar who uses ethnographic techniques to access the emotions resulting from violence. In this case, Morrell links notions of hegemonic masculinity, ethnicity and acts of violence in South Africa. Morrell bases his study on male behaviour that occurred during the unstable period of transition in South Africa which saw the end of apartheid. He lists three categories of responses by men to change: 'accommodating reactions' include rituals performed by men in order to endorse hegemonic masculinity (male circumcision); 'reactive or defensive responses' that are characterised by violence; and, finally, 'responsive or progressive reactions' comprised of other masculinities emerging as a reaction against the hegemonic ideal (gay man, house husband). In his discussion on the use of violence in the second category (reactive or defensive) Morrell discovered that instances of violence against women increased during this period. He describes how in the townships of South Africa rape is a tool to control women who are perceived as "getting above themselves": "we rape women who need to be disciplined (those women who behave like snobs), they just do not want to talk to people, they think they know better than most of us and when we struggle, they simply do not want to join us" (Goldblatt and Meintjes, cited in Morrell, 2001, p.14).

Under the second theme of dislocation as a result of violence, Jerman (1997) looks at ethnic group identification among Rwandan refugees living in Tanzania. She argues that people's perception of the present is a reflection of the colonial practice of dividing peoples into different tribes. A notion of commonality is central to ethnic consciousness. Methodologically, ethnicity must be analysed historically, as it is related to political organisation, ideology and the socio-economic structure of a specific country. Jerman treats culture as operating outside of ethnicity and the creation of ethnic consciousness. Culture is a system that allows social existence to be realised. It also develops through history and is accessible through perceptions as well as manifestations. Religion is a means of strengthening authority, in this case Islam, and was central to the nationalist struggle.

3.9 Myths, texts and oral traditions

Myths are common in all religious traditions and are one source of values and rules concerning appropriate action. Many myths emphasise notions of acceptable behaviour for men and women. Anthropologists believe that these myths translate into actual behaviour, shaped by the gendered categories of 'men' and 'women'. As shown in the next section, rituals then form the vehicle through which these ideals become embedded into people's lives. In many cultures in the developing world, oral traditions serve as the means through which stories are told and values passed through

generations. Oral traditions exist in both public and private spaces. Some traditions are highly prescriptive in that narratives remain the same year after year. In contrast, some anthropologists have recorded oral traditions that are more spontaneous and evolve over time, reflecting the feelings and opinions of their participants. These more private, personal narratives offer useful glimpses into people's inner motivations and attitudes towards a whole range of everyday issues.

3.9.1 Links between myths, rituals and gender roles

The link between myth, gender and ritual is directly made by Fruzzetti (1990). She argues that a particular image of the ideal women, Sita, depicted in the Hindu epic the Ramayana is enforced through the retelling of the Rama and Sita story, but is endorsed through the performance of rituals that set the boundaries for female identity. Fruzzetti stresses the importance of studying ritual as a way of accessing female identity. However, her work is limited by her focus on public rituals, which she interprets as a mechanism through which men can limit female activity. Ritual is seen by her as a vital way into understanding the links women have with their wider communities, and in helping us understand how women perceive their roles within the community structure.

“Through rituals women define and interpret the separate world of women, a world with its own hierarchy and meaning and ideology in day-to-day interactions. Yet, at the same time, women emphasize through ritual the complementarity of male and female as these relate to the indigenous principles of female and male divine power. Through rituals women enact the actual and expected roles of virgin, daughter, wife, daughter-in-law. The rites not only enact and express reality but represent the reality itself as women conceive of it and as society relates to it” (1990, p. 128).

According to Fruzzetti, these rituals confirm and maintain the parameters of women's social worlds, securing their commitment to specific roles. Fruzzetti describes how “women can only reach self through their husbands” (1990, p.113). She describes a sense in which women accept without resistance the roles placed upon them from birth. The ritual performances of women serve as society's way of regulating the process, assuring female loyalty to the roles they were originally prescribed. Fruzzetti ends her study by stating: “women understand, interpret, and symbolize their world - the meaning and significance of three lives - through *stri acars* and *bratars*: a domain of actions separate from, and yet complementary to the world of men” (1990, p.134). Further discussion on how public rituals reinforce women's socially ascribed role can be seen in the work of Jacobson and Wadley (1992), Tinker and Bramsen (1976) and Wadley (1994).

In his work, Sax (1991) looks at the link between mythology and society. Garhwal women in the foothills of the Himalayas in North India sing songs using the mythology of Nandadevi. These songs in essence are powerful reflections of their own lives. The songs convey, in particular, the stress and trauma of moving from their natal home to their husband's home. Through song, the women are able to deal with the anxieties this transition brings. The songs are coping mechanisms, enabling them to face the pain of unwanted change.

It is acknowledged that the women of the Garhwal region lead exceptionally hard lives. This region is severely depressed and survival even at a basic level is a struggle. Husbands must travel out of the region for work leaving their wives to support the rest of the family. Women are strikingly independent because of this. "Here in the mountains, a man without a woman will die of starvation or become a wandering renouncer. Why? Because women do all the work" (taken from an interview conducted by Sax, 1991, p.26). Sax describes how Garhwal women combine work in the field with domestic duties. They struggle to provide enough food to keep their families alive. If a woman cannot cope, there is no one who will take over: the family will starve. The pressure this places on women is enormous, so it is perhaps not surprising that cases of suicide are higher in the Garhwal than elsewhere in India. The songs that women sing are part of their survival strategies; they are a way of releasing concerns that might otherwise remain locked inside. In addition, songs convey a powerful perception of female sexuality. Most of the songs contain stories about goddesses who manage to triumph despite great obstacles. One such song features the primordial goddess Maya, who reverses the normal relations of male domination and female subordination. Maya creates male gods from a low pot containing menstrual blood, which is considered highly polluting. This story contradicts the classic paradigm, which depicts male sexuality as dominant and commanding. The strength of Maya in this story offers the women who sing about her a source of motivation. If women are to win their struggle for survival in the Garhwal, they must have mental and physical endurance.

3.9.2 The link between religious oral traditions and social, political organisation and expression

The oral traditions of Andhra Brahmin women studied by Rao (1991) highlight the link between oral traditions and social and political expressions. The songs Rao recorded do not represent an out and out protest over male control. This is clear, according to Rao, by the way the same women who sing the songs also participate in the public male-dominated performance of the popular Hindu epic, the

Ramayana, and in the way they conform (publicly) to expected female behaviour. Therefore, these songs do not reveal any desire to overthrow the male-dominated family structure. What is interesting is the way in which these songs create private space for Brahmin women: “room for themselves to move” (ibid, p.133). According to Rao, the songs provide a secure area in their lives in which they can freely voice their opinions and share experiences. “It is this internal freedom that these songs seem to cherish” (ibid, p.133). The songs reflect an internalisation of the myth and therefore provide insights into women’s personal worlds. The songs Rao recorded recount female experiences during certain life events.

According to Nilsson (2000), high caste women support their own system of domination and often express contemptuous opinions about lower caste women, who they feel should not be allowed (because of their low status) to sing about Sita. In effect, they have constructed an image of a women removed from the ideal. This image is laden with negative symbolic associations and is the figure of much disgust. In contrast, the songs sung by lower caste women contain resentment towards women of higher castes.

3.10 Rituals and rites of passage

Anthropologists consider rituals to be key to understanding human culture. For example, Bowie states “rituals are fundamental to human culture. They can be used to control, to subvert, to stabilise to enhance and to terrorize individuals and groups. The study of ritual can indeed provide a key to understanding and interpretation of culture” (2000, p. 184).

Rituals allow for changes in collective and individual perceptions to be monitored. This is evident in ethnographies such as that by Gruenbaum (1998), who argues that through rituals a sense can be gained of how Sudanese women resist systems of power they feel limit and constrain them. This makes rituals an appropriate focus for studies attempting to understand how different elements in a social group negotiate an acceptable place for themselves. In turn, rituals can also offer explanations for why social, political and economic changes do or do not occur.

Rituals are also seen by anthropologists as a central vehicle through which socio/cultural values are transmitted (Nabokov, 2000; Ortner, 1978). As such, the study of rituals can enable a detailed appreciation of how communities understand themselves and their place in the world. Rituals

incorporate religious symbols, beliefs and meanings in the expression of deeply important aspects of human existence. In Horton's (1994) study of the Kalabari of Nigeria, he emphasises the importance of accepting that rituals and the religious beliefs they express are a vital means of understanding how communities seek to exert control over their worlds. His approach focuses on the symbols that make up rituals and how they link to wider perceptions of the socio-cultural world. Coppet (1992) focuses on the relationship between rituals and rites and how these in turn translate into social duties and expectations.

Udvardy (1990) examines the link between gender and ritual symbolism. She is concerned with a series of tensions embedded in basic symbolic oppositions: male/female, hot/cold, wet/dry, all of which are connected to elements of the natural world (fire, blood, water, sex). Udvardy emphasises the transformative power of symbol systems and their technological relation to the world. "Not all oppositional pairs have equal prominence in all social contexts, and each society constructs and lives out the particularities of its symbolism in a specific way. The major concern of ritual practice is to manage relations within and between these oppositions" (1990, p.6). In East and South African cultures, symbolic oppositions hold powerful meanings that are concerned with the maintenance of the social and natural worlds. Ideas about gender and reproduction encompass larger sets of symbolic oppositions. These ideas provide a mechanism for the externalisation of symbolic oppositions onto the structuring of the environment, social structures and the cosmos.

The work of Broch-Due (1994) takes a similar analytical approach to that of Udvardy. Broch-Due states that symbolism rests in a concrete relationship with a physical world, a world in which the fertility of humans, plants and animals has to be managed in rituals, in order to control the day-to-day activities of humans. Symbols and rituals can, therefore, be seen as a means to control the lived in world. This later work departs from early preoccupations with the meaning of symbols and rituals and is concerned primarily with how they impact on material life and social structures.

For direct analyses of the relevance for development of anthropological studies of rituals, see Bradley (2006). In this volume, ethnographic techniques are used that focus on rituals in order to record local perceptions, identities and motivations for action. Perceptions of environmental change were particularly poignant, given the ensuing drought in the area of study (rural Rajasthan). Rituals can be used to gauge both collective and individual feelings and contradictions in the expression of collective

and personal subjectivities. The focus on ritual allows for detailed insight into the experiences of domestic violence and the internal struggles of some Rajasthani women who were trying to come to terms with the realities of violence in their lives. Such material can provide development practitioners with a means of tapping into the complex array of experiences and subjectivities existing in any given community. Rituals can also be a means of monitoring shifts in feelings and can, therefore, be used to reassess development priorities.

3.10.1 Approaches to studying ritual

Bell (1997) states: “when made the subject of systematic historical and comparative cultural analysis, ritual has offered new insights into the dynamics of religion, culture and personhood” (1997, p.iv). However, Bell points out that ritual is itself a social construction, a category of analysis. She advocates that anthropologists approach the study of rituals through the use of categories and identifies six main categories of ritual action: 1. rites of passage or life crisis rituals, 2. calendrical and commemorative rites, 3. rites of exchange and communication, 4. rites of affliction, 5. rites of feasting, fasting and festivals, 6. political rituals. In practice, these categories overlap. They do not help us to understand the purpose or function of rituals in people’s lives. However, Bell does go on to pull out three main purposes that rituals fulfil. Firstly, rituals are expressions of paradigmatic values of birth, death and rebirth; secondly, rituals are a mechanism for bringing the individual into the community and for establishing a social entity; and, thirdly, rituals can be part of a process of social transformation that embodies symbolic values that define the social world but also allow for the expression of internal and collective struggles.

Grimes (1995), like Bell, has made a significant contribution to developing a methodology to study ritual. Grimes, rather than use categories, prefers to identify various ‘modes’. These modes include: ritualisation, decorum, ceremony, liturgy, magic and celebration. Each ritual examined varies in its emphasis on these modes. Grimes also pioneered a more self-reflexive method of studying rituals. He believes that a more personalised approach to documenting rituals is needed in order to explore the deeply personal contribution rituals make to people’s lives. To illustrate this approach, Grimes decided to make the rituals he had so far passed through the focus of a book. He takes this personal approach because he argues that anthropologists rarely look at what rituals mean to the individual that experiences them.

Turner (1992) also takes a self-reflexive approach to studying the 'healing tooth' *Ihamba* ritual of the Ndembu in Zambia. Rather than recording the ritual objectively, as her husband (Turner, 1967) aimed to do when recording the same ritual much earlier, she wanted to understand how participants experienced the ritual. In order to gain this insight, she felt she must experience at first hand the healing power described by the Ndembu.

For further methodological discussion on contemporary approaches to studying ritual, see Alexandra (1997), who argues that, although rituals involve participants literally acting out particular roles, they also reflect real sentiments – an argument also made by Strathern and Stewart (1998).

Rites of Passage are seen as a central mechanism through which religious beliefs become firmly embedded in the socio-cultural structure of community life. Cox (1998) examines how rites of passage are founded on symbols of the sacred that gain legitimacy through the transition marked out in the ritual. This link is also explored in Charsley (1992).

Richards (1982) links all initiation rites to symbolic elements that in turn relate to several domains of Bemba life in Zambia. The purpose of ritual is to teach girls and make them clever. Rituals allow roles and expectations to be embedded in the minds and lives of girls. Girls learn how to bear and bring up children, keep house and manage food supplies. What is interesting in this ethnography is that the girls are not taught about these things directly: in fact, they already know that these duties are expected of them. During the initiation ritual, the girls learn secret words and songs that contain multiple meanings associated with *mbusa* – sacred emblems. These emblems include clay figurines, wall paintings and small bundles of objects that represent the domestic and productive life of Bemba people. Girls also learn the language of taboos associated with relations between men and women, on which successful fertility of Bemba marriage and the fertility of society depend.

What is clear in the literature is that rites of passage involve a physical and symbolic manipulation of the body in relation to the world and of the world in relation to the body. Ritual is, therefore, considered necessary in order to ensure that the body is put to its correct use. The body of most concern and focus is female.

This can also be seen in the work of Lincoln (1991), who argues that women's initiation is about producing productive workers, docile faithful wives and good mothers. This theme of initiation rituals as means to secure conformity is present in Beidelman (1997) and Kratz (1994). Jacobson-Widding (1991) highlights the relationship between bodily processes and social processes in African cultures. The body functions to establish links with social structures and cosmological understandings of how the world should be. All identify a concern in African societies with sexual morality, the power of sex and issues of sexual access.

3.10.2 *Ritual violence*

Bloch (1986) looks at circumcision rituals in Madagascar. He traces the historical, social and symbolic aspects of Merina ritual and argues that it addresses basic questions about what it is to be human. Rituals convey key messages that are often hidden from all other modes of communication and expression. Bloch also examines the role of violence in rituals. He believes that violence in rituals serves to endorse social hierarchy. The violence present in female circumcision rituals is clear and reinforces cultural notions of social status. Violence is also present in the rituals recorded by Caldwell (1999), who highlights how rituals performed to the destructive and bloodthirsty Kali involve violent symbolism. The aggression is needed to match that of the goddess herself. The public appeasement of Kali is performed by men and seems to endorse the gendered ideology that projects the female body as the site for possible societal disharmony if not kept under control. The Kali ritual can, therefore, be seen as reflecting male / female relations within the communities that perform it.

3.10.3 *Rituals and masculinity*

Geertz (1973a), in his classic work, states that the Balinese cockfight reflects existing social hierarchy, economic exchange, group solidarity and rivalry. It also offers insight into the constructions of masculinity in Balinese society. As such, this ritual can offer insight into how men perceive their role and reveals any tensions that exist between men and the role expected of them. Other sources that emphasise the extent to which rituals reinforce notions of hegemonic masculinity include Gellner and Monk (1992). Rituals are the vehicles through which these roles are transmitted. Herbert (1993) argues that certain socially and culturally prescribed roles reveal underlying notions of power that exert control over how male and female bodies are used by society.

3.10.4 Pilgrimages

There is a great deal of anthropological literature that focuses on pilgrimage. Pilgrimages are thought to offer anthropologists the opportunity to study social dynamics in a more fluid environment. Internal tensions and power struggles are often played out during the journey involved in a pilgrimage. In addition, pilgrimages solidify religious and cultural identities, making them more visually apparent to the researcher. Pilgrimages are an important aspect of Hinduism (Gold, 1989; Sax, 1991) and Islam (Delaney, 1990; Van der Veer, 1988; Yamba, 1991).

3.11 Religion, culture and the environment

The link anthropologists make between religion, culture and the environment stresses that a cosmology must be maintained in a certain way through the enactment of rituals. Concepts of how the world should be are grounded in mythology, which in turn affects the way people are socialised into culturally appropriate ways of relating. Anthropologists understand the environment as having social and physical aspects, and the actions of individual humans and social groups both shape and are shaped by their interactions with their surroundings (Ellen and Katsuyoshi, 1996; Strang, 1997). Much of the contemporary material has taken a gendered approach to studying this link, identifying the ways in which social structures, in particular sex role patterns, develop in different environmental contexts.

Geertz (1973b) states that culture sets up symbolic templates or blueprints that define the limits of behaviour and guide it along predictable paths. Sex roles and gender are specific elements that determine the shape and character of these templates. Ortner (1974) has been very influential in making the link between gender, nature, culture and appropriate ways of acting. Sanday (1981) develops Ortner's work by highlighting societal divisions between inner and outer orientations. Men focus on outer orientations, as they hunt and seek eternal power in order to control nature and, because of their association with nature, women. Lepowsky (1990) challenges the universal application of this model, as she believes that Vanatinai society is sexually egalitarian, with no ethic of male dominance and significant overlapping female and male roles.

Research that documents local perspectives on the environment provides development practitioners with knowledge that can inform policy and interventions. Gardner and Lewis (1996) highlight the significance of religion's impact in shaping indigenous knowledge on environmental issues. Both argue

that this knowledge can offer valuable insight into why and how local people comprehend and respond to environmental changes. Development initiatives can build on these actions and at times offer alternative solutions. Croll and Parkin (1992) highlight the link between religion, cultural perceptions of the environment and traditional agricultural practices. They point to direct links between religious and cultural beliefs about the land and farming practices. Croll and Parkin, like Gardener and Lewis, argue that this knowledge is valuable to development planners.

3.12 Gender, identity and personhood

There is a significant amount of literature that examines how religion shapes identities. The research reviewed in this section is concerned to highlight how religion acts as a vehicle for the expression of both personhood and collective identities. This research uses a gendered methodology which highlights how men and women express both their own sense of self and perceive their places within their communities. In many of the ethnographies, religious spaces are presented as sites for the expression of identities.

Identities are both collective and personal. In order to accurately represent the identities of others, many anthropologists have developed a self-reflexive approach. As discussed in the methodology section, such an approach is thought to bring an openness and depth to the research process. This is necessary when personal aspects of the lives of others are being delved into. This section will incorporate a discussion of method and will show that self-reflexivity in research allows for an understanding of how individuals may shift between identities in order to achieve a particular goal (e.g. to highlight fidelity or humiliate a bad husband). Expressions of rights can be seen in these defiant collective actions, which can also be rooted in a sense of duty. Collective identities are formed momentarily in order to carry out strategies of resistance or to bargain for a better life. What is interesting in some of the sources reviewed is that, despite courageous actions often taken under the threat of violence, a sense of traditional duties is still preserved. Such actions should not be mistaken for demands for radical change.

Research conducted by Gold and Raheja (1994) has had a significant impact on shaping the way anthropologists approach studying women, religion and identity in rural India. Gold and Raheja recorded songs that Rajasthani Hindu women sing among themselves. Many of the songs invert traditional religious narratives. The songs display an exuberance that must be founded in an explicit

awareness of female sexuality and its potential to be destructive. In addition, the songs display positive images of femininity. The songs recorded by Gold and Raheja must be distinguished from the traditional forms of songs usually recorded by anthropologists, which are devotional in content and are sung at festivals. Devotional songs are prescriptive in that they retain their content and form year after year. Gold describes these songs as being “partially constrained by the performance context” (Gold and Raheja 1994, p. 56). In other words, there is little room for the performers to adapt or reinterpret them. The songs primarily reflect the voice of the dominant male group and reflect patriarchal concerns to maintain the status quo, hence the rigid pattern followed year after year. Women perform these songs in order to fulfil their obligations as daughters, wives and mothers, asking for the security of family members.

In contrast, by looking at the songs sung by women in private, a different picture is formed of the women who sing them. Gold and Raheja reveal crude and direct expressions of female sexuality in the private songs of Rajasthani women. The women who sing these songs are aware of the power they can wield through manipulating their sexuality, for example, by threatening to pollute the patrilineage by having an affair. The research gathered by Gold and Raheja suggests that women freely discuss topics such as sex (e.g. whether or not they get pleasure from it).

Many of the songs take the form of sung conversations. Gold argues that these conversations would never take place in public. She suggests that women may assert themselves through these songs in a way they cannot through publicly constructed and controlled dialogues.

“Through the songs imagined conversations, these stressful situations and relationships are eased and opened up: grievances expressed, dominance defied, love declared, contact established. At the same time, no risks are taken even on the level of imagined discourse, for the choral performance superimposes harmony over dissonance and the unemotional delivery inherent in the times and singing styles masks the emotional chords that may be struck by the words. Chorused conversations submerge discord between the sexes even while they suggest behavioral alternatives that may blatantly controvert dominant ideas about how women should act” (Gold and Raheja, 1994, p.42-3).

Emotions are often expressed during silent moments. Gold and Raheja define such moments as those consisting of non-verbal gestures. These spaces are important as they are generated by the need to express feelings that sharply contrast with the vocal public dialogues structured by hegemonic values that demand female compliance. Songs are not just used to articulate experiences that relate to social identity but have other functions too.

Gold (1996) identifies *the notion of change* itself as a concept that causes women concern and which has resulted in a genre of song - *khyal*. Gold feels that *khyals* reflect changes in the economic and social contexts of women's lives. She describes how they speak of women's determination to find new footings for their lives, as their external environment changes economically and socially. The songs reveal the strategies women put into play to cope with these changes. Although *khyals*, as with rituals, do not supply concrete answers to women's problems and act mainly as expressions of feelings, they do attempt to relay alternative visions towards which women would like to move. Within these visions are solutions to the problems women face. For example, a connection with a new and attentive partner is suggested by the performers of one *khyal* as an alternative to a destructive domestic situation. Solutions to the problem of male migration are also explored. One possible solution advises the nuclear family to move to the husband's new workplace.

Von Mitzlaff (1988) emphasises the need to move away from studying the public operation of gender relations in isolation from other important and often private aspects of women's lives. She claims that Maasai women display a strong sense of the power of their own sexuality; however, this can often be hidden from researchers because of their focus on the public sphere. Since Maasai women only express their self-perceptions in private, Von Mitzlaff focuses her ethnography in this domain. Whilst conducting her field research, she observed that rituals performed by and between women represented an important form of personal expression. "Rituals and ceremonies contribute significantly to the way women and men perceive themselves as individuals and social beings. The women's rituals are an opportunity for the self-determination of the women's 'cultural space'. They serve to reaffirm time and again, their position within society and the significance of their lives" (1988, p. 127).

What Von Mitzlaff discovered through studying the rituals of Maasai women was that they use their sexuality to bargain for greater authority for themselves. It is an accepted practice for Maasai women

to take lovers (*murani*). This practice is institutionalised through a public ceremony where women, even before their marriage, will select a lover (*eokoto ooukipot*). What Von Mitzlaff emphasises is the extent to which the girl remains in control of the whole process. Even the public choice of a lover does not entail agreement to any sexual activities. Girls make the decision for themselves “when and with what partner they will sleep” (1988, p.129). After marriage, Von Mitzlaff describes how it is accepted that women will have secret affairs. Husbands watch their wives closely but they are powerless to prevent these relations from occurring and feelings of jealousy ensue. Parakyo men believe that it is only through fear of a husband’s brutality that a wife will obey his commands. This accounts for the high level of wife beating that occurs. Husbands often suffer from intense insecurity over their wives’ fidelity, which they vent through violence. Von Mitzlaff describes how Maasai women organise themselves into groups as a conscious strategy in which solidarity is used to defend each other against their husbands’ physical attacks. Collectively, they deny accusations of infidelity, regardless of the truth. Von Mitzlaff is keen to make the point that men may beat their wives, but ultimately they have limited control over them and they know it. This solidarity between Parakyo women is a powerful weapon against the control of male elders. In addition: “The women’s solidarity in keeping love affairs secret strengthens their self confidence; by sheer defiance they obtain a piece of self-determined personal life beyond the power and control of their husband” (1988, p. 145).

Abu-Lughod (1993) takes a similar approach in her ethnography *Writing Women’s Worlds*. Abu-Lughod is concerned to record as many different narratives as she can. Her research among Bedouin communities in Egypt focuses on women-only spaces and consists largely of personal accounts and women’s oral traditions, including songs and stories. She argues that the experiences contained within such accounts are usually missed by traditional research methods, which focus on the dominant (male) voices.

Barber (1991) presents a study of Yoruba oral poetry from Nigeria set within the context of the daily life and past history of a small town, Okuku. It describes how the women of the town learn the traditions of the ‘*oriki*’ and gives an account of a wedding and a funeral in the town where the women perform. Also discussed are the importance of the ‘*oriki*’ and the women’s performance for the town’s identity, social organisation, political processes, lineages and the hierarchy of ‘big men’ throughout Yoruba history.

Obseyskere (1981) is a well-cited source who looks at the relationship between religion and personhood. This is mainly due to his psychoanalytic approach which, he believes, enables him to gain deep insight into the subconscious minds of the South Indian female ascetics he studies. His objective is to understand what has motivated them to pursue lives as ascetics. He wants to understand why they would choose lives that marginalise them from their communities and label them as deviants because they have rejected their traditional gendered roles.

Some anthropologists studying issues of personhood have developed a reflexive approach. This transparency and openness is considered necessary in order to improve the accuracy of the accounts they give in their ethnographies. Shostack (1982) is upfront about her reasons for wanting to study !Kung women. "I explained that I wanted to learn what it meant to be a woman in their culture so I could better understand what it meant in my own" (1982, p. 21). It is through one relationship with a woman named Nisa that Shostack gains glimmers of what life is like as a !Kung woman. Shostack records the dialogue she has with Nisa in such a way that the reader can clearly see the issues that concern Shostack (since she introduces the topics for discussion with Nisa). However, in recording Nisa's responses as a narrative it is possible to gain a glimpse into the perceptions held by a woman whose life is very different from that of any western woman.

A focus on a single personal narrative is also present in Caplan (1997), who explores the life of Mohammed, a Swahili peasant living on the coast of Tanzania. The ethnography records Mohammed's own words and thus allows a close intimate glimpse into the world he inhabits - how he perceives his own sense of self and his relations with other members of his family and community. His wife's voice is also recorded as it intersects with that of Mohammed's.

A similar approach is taken by Harlan (1992) who has conducted work into the practice of *purdah*. Harlan focuses on the personal narratives of Rajput Rajasthani women who articulate that the values of 'modesty' and 'dignity' are important to them. In fact, they feel that it is these values that set them apart from other Indian women. The practice of *purdah* is a visible symbol of their unique social identity, from which they derive much pride. Harlan argues that the forceful way in which a mother will teach her daughter about the practice shows how deeply she feels that it reflects on her abilities as a mother. Harlan's perspective challenges negative descriptions of the practice, and suggests that the veil is an important symbol of female courage in Rajasthan. The importance of the practice to

Rajasthani women explains its persistence despite the efforts of various NGOs working in the area who believe the practice contributes to women's inequality (Bradley, 2006).

Synder (2005) applies a gendered methodology in order to understand why the Iraqw women of Northern Tanzania take on the roles they do. Her work could potentially help development practitioners understand the complexities of social change in this region. She looks at the relationship between religion, fertility, cosmology, social organisation and cultural practices. The community relies on a balance between male and female qualities. Female qualities relate to mothering and gentle, soft characteristics, which contrast with the anger and revengeful aspects of men. The social roles of women are therefore linked to fertility, while men have control over decision-making. This analysis does not differ from material reviewed earlier (Ortner, 1974). However, Synder goes further in highlighting how today women are involved in income earning activities, even heavy labour and agricultural work. Such work was traditionally the domain of men. Synder asks if such changes in economic activities translate into a decline in pollution beliefs, giving women more power in the public domain, but concludes that such shifts in the local economy do not signal any changes in decision making power, as women are not considered 'male' even if they are now doing men's work. Her ethnography examines how men and women approach resource allocation. She highlights how women spend money more carefully, devoting large sums to their children, while men prioritise their own needs, spending more on drink. As in the work of Von Mitzlaff (1988) and Morrell (2001), Synder identifies that violence is used by men against women as a means to register their disapproval at women's behaviour. Clearly women should not behave like men but they can do male activities if these bring economic benefits to the household.

As touched on earlier, in Tanzania witchcraft accusations are used as a means of control. Any woman who does not conform to what is expected of her may be accused of being a witch. For example, a woman who does not give birth may be considered a witch. Pentecostal churches are attractive to women (particularly young women) who find themselves accused of polluting their communities. Conversion in this context is seen as a means to purify the soul. Links can be made to Zene's (2002) work on conversion reviewed earlier, which emphasised the political nature of conversion as a means to escape one life for another that offers more respect.

Interestingly, Synder's analysis shows that a woman's concerns with household welfare translate into concerns for the well-being of the community. Household and community needs are closely equated. In a crisis, women are more likely to collect together and protest. This is seen as part of their role as caretakers of the community. Their effectiveness in this role relates to the respect they command as good wives and mothers. Their public profile mirrors their domestic power and is an extension of the mothering role.

The work of Iyam (1995) in Nigeria endorses much of what Synder writes about. In Iyam's work, women may be excluded from politics but this does not mean they do not take active economic roles. In this ethnography, churches are again identified as being popular with women as they allow them to take on more public roles. Similarly, Soothill (forthcoming 2007) argues that Ghana's Pentecostal churches are popular with women, as they are able to achieve a public status otherwise denied to them.

4 Anthropology and development

During the 1990's, anthropology and development emerged as a distinct branch of applied anthropology. Much of the literature published from this period onwards applies an anthropological perspective to development, in order to highlight the problematic engagement between development policies and practices and societies. A second body of literature exists that seeks to construct ethnographic techniques that may be useful to development practitioners. Participatory techniques are closely associated with an anthropological perspective on grass-roots development. A third set of material seeks to understand how development processes work at a micro level. This material consists of ethnographic research that documents the reactions of individual communities to development projects and processes of social, political and economic change. Lastly, the most contemporary strand of material within anthropology of development shifts its focus solely from the micro impact of development to the link between global macro processes of change and their influence over people's lives.

4.1 The relevance of anthropological approaches to development

Olivier de Sardan (2005) aims, in his volume, to re-establish the relevance of anthropological approaches to development. He believes that contemporary development should be the principal concern of anthropologists. He advocates a socio-anthropology of change and development that is deeply empirical and multi-dimensional. Ethnographic studies should, he argues, focus on social groups and their interactions by combining analysis of social practices and consciousness. This source reviews the new approaches to anthropology that emerged in the 1990s. He emphasises the complexity of social change but believes social anthropology is best placed to study it. His analysis identifies the leading variables in development: relations of production, logics of social action, the nature of knowledge, forms of mediation and political strategies. He raises the significant point that practitioners of development and those that conduct research into development rarely enter into fruitful dialogue. Many social science researchers become swallowed up as experts. However, Oliver de Jardin believes that anthropologists have a key role in training development workers. This view is supported by Arce and Long (2000), who argue that ethnography should be the guiding force shaping development priorities. Ethnographies can show how people's own agency transforms, recasts and complicates the modernities they experience. But in order to do this, focus must be placed on appreciating local beliefs, images and practices that may in fact run counter to the dominant discourses of development and institutions of modernity. The failure of the development discourse to

engage productively with local knowledge is identified as the reason success stories are not more numerous.

4.2 Anthropology as a critique of development

An early critical analysis of western development practice was offered by Mamdani (1972), in which he argues that if a project fails, development practitioners will often blame the local community's lack of appropriate knowledge. In other words, failure is the fault of the local community, members of which are not educated or skilled enough to appreciate the benefits of the project. Mamdani argues that local knowledge is dismissed. Anthropologists such as Richards (1993) have argued that local knowledge is impoverished by the development discourse. Some literature takes this a step further, arguing that those targeted to receive aid are not involved in decision-making (Black, 1991); instead, western constructions of knowledge determine the nature and course of development interventions.

Pottier's (1993) edited volume contributed significantly towards the emergence of this critique of development. He aims to make an over-arching critique by identifying patterns within development discourse that he feels highlight the extent to which the discourse assumes that macro-level economic, political and social changes can be achieved through the framing of particular projects. Through a collection of case studies, Pottier's contributors argue that aid is tied to certain prerequisites which the developing country must meet before aid is handed over. Through the application of ethnographic techniques, Pottier's volume highlights that many western NGOs lack local knowledge and often display a lack of interest in getting to know their 'target communities'. The evidence is a series of studies of cases of failure in which both local informants and NGO workers have been interviewed on their perceptions of what went wrong.

Subsequently, anthropology has generated many more analyses of failed development projects (Crewe and Harrison, 2000; Gardener and Lewis, 1996; Hobart, 1993; Mosse, 1994b; 2005). All these sources state that a development project's lack of success usually arises from inadequate consultation with the target community. When NGOs do not consult with their target community they are suggesting that they already 'know' what is needed.

All of the scholars who critique development practice agree that it is the failure to access the views and opinions of local people that have resulted in the current poor statistics on global development. Chambers (1996), Escobar (1988), Esteva (1993, p.90), Hobart (1993), Mosely (1987, p. 21) and Tucker (1999) all describe how the overarching discourse of development functions to prevent a local sense of reality from shaping global development policies and practices. Furthermore, it is argued that communities are often treated as homogenous wholes and differences of opinions and perspectives are ignored. De Groot describes how women, in this discourse, are understood to be “.. exotic specimens, as oppressed victims, as sex objects or as the most ignorant and backward members of ‘backward’ societies” (1991, p.115).

This line of critique is expanded further by research that pinpoints the emergence of ‘experts’ on development. Parpart (1999) emphasises that these experts share the same background in terms of class, ethnicity and education. Their backgrounds are used to justify their positioning as experts on what changes are required in any given developing community.

Gardner and Lewis (1996) argue that ‘target communities’ in the developing world are unlikely to perceive NGOs as experts, especially when no consultation is entered into. Burghart (1993) points out it would be naïve for any outsider to assume that a community will happily accept all interventions imposed upon them. In particular, communities will be resistant to working with NGOs that do not adequately liaise with them.

4.3 Anthropology’s contribution to participatory development approaches

Anthropology has made a positive contribution to the practice of development in formulating a variety of ‘participatory techniques’. As Pottier et al (2003) observe, ethnography, in its attempt to get close to the everyday lives of people through field research, has much to contribute to the practice of development. Chambers was one of the earliest anthropologists to try and create ethnographic tools to aid the process of grassroots development. His methods are referred to under the label ‘participatory rural appraisal’ (Chambers, 1992).

In recent years, Chamber's PRA techniques have been open to criticism from other anthropologists. Scholars, such as Mosse (1994b) and Welbourn (1992), Nelson and Wright (1995), have voiced concern that PRA uses inappropriate methods to extract local knowledge and fails to increase community participation in any real sense. They claim that the main problems are rooted in the fact that PRA exercises are constructed and controlled by western development planners. Locals are unfamiliar with the practices they are asked to use and, therefore, cannot articulate a realistic picture of their knowledge and concerns through them. Mosse (1994b) identifies further problems in that these techniques are all used in the public sphere. However, in public, many sections of a community may lack the confidence to express their views.

More recent material, such as Mosse (2005), looks to move the anthropology of development into a more practically focused context. Mosse is concerned to look at how ethnographic tools and methodologies can be utilised within the development process in order to aid more constructive evaluation of projects. As such he is keen to bridge the gap between theory and practice that currently divides anthropologists who critique development and development practitioners in the field.

4.4 Understanding social change in developing countries

A high proportion of the anthropological literature on social change consists of ethnographic studies of rural communities. A common focus of study includes changes in traditional gender relations and shifts in livelihoods. Connected to the issue of livelihoods and sustainability is the impact of migration on traditional community structures and gender relations. There is some material on this topic in urban locations, most of which seems to provide case studies of slum settlement projects. For example, Sultan (1991) conducts longitudinal research on squatter upgrading projects in Karachi and Wit (1992) focuses on slum upgrading in Madras.

With respect to rural livelihoods and the issue of sustainability, research conducted by Spencer (1998) presents a longitudinal study into the ways of life of the cattle-herding peoples of East Africa. According to Spencer, this region is a prime example of a traditional culture resisting the inevitability of change. Pastoral peoples were once dominant in the East African interior, but development of the market economy has progressively polarised the region and forced them into the most marginal, drought-ridden areas; in this ecological trap they have become a peripheral underclass. The 'pastoral continuum' examines the richness and resilience of their cultures and illuminates the role of

indigenous practices and institutions in adaptation and survival. The pastoralists' systems of age organisation, in particular, are notable for their resilience: it is demonstrated that these are bound up with problems of family growth and succession in family enterprises. Marriage is a critical link in the web of alliances that govern the problematic relations between old and young. Similar conclusions, in relation to the resilience of local communities in resisting changes to their traditional practices, are drawn by Gould (1997) in research conducted in rural Zambia. See also Galaty and Salzman (1981) and Moran (1996).

Das (1995) identifies certain moments in the history of contemporary India. These events concern partition, *sati*, minority rights, the Bhopal industrial disaster, the nature of the Indian state and various sociological issues. Das re-describes these events and their implications within the framework of anthropological knowledge. She produces an ethnography of contemporary India which is sensitive to both world historical processes and the inner life of individuals. She shows that various social transformations have resulted in new configurations of relations between the local and the global within India. The critical events that Das analyses have all instituted new sorts of action which have, in turn, redefined traditional categories such as codes of purity and honour; the meaning of martyrdom; and the construction of a heroic life. The author shows how these new forms took shape and were appropriated by a variety of political actors such as caste groups, religious communities, women's groups, and the nation as a whole.

As I have already discussed, gender is a common dimension in much of the recent literature within anthropology that is relevant to development concerns and considerations. For instance, Gajananayake and Gajananayake (1993) in their cross-cultural study believe gender relations are the key factor responsible for women's continuing inequality, which they argue persists even after poverty has been reduced. The empowerment of women, according to Kabeer (1990), must involve a change in relations between men and women "so that women have greater power over their own lives and men have less power over women's lives" (1990, p.8). However, Kabeer, in her work in South Asia, goes on to argue that women must, therefore, be made aware of the specific constraints their society places on them (1999).

Within the literature dealing with gender themes, a focus upon women and land rights is common. Increasing women's access to land through changes in inheritance laws is a popular development strategy. Research conducted by Rao (2005) in rural India and Razavi (2003) suggests that, whilst women are in favour of raising their profile with respect to their economic activities, they often resist abrupt changes to inheritance laws that undermine traditional gender relations in which men control all material assets. This is partly due to the recorded violent backlash from men to women as a result of women's increasing autonomy in relation to land rights. Jassal (2001), in her study of women and land issues in Uttar Pradesh, problematises women's relationship to land from historical anthropology and socio-legal perspectives.

An African focus is provided by Wanyeki (2003). This edited volume brings together research into rural African women and land rights, with the aim of contributing towards gender equality and the economic independence and human rights of African women. Important commonalities emerge, including the dualism between customary and religious land law and statute law; the gap between women's rights in theory and practice; and the superior rights, power and control of men over land, decision-making and household income. The situation is not static and the contributors argue that new customary and religious interpretations are needed which recognise that today's communities are urban and rural, multi-ethnic and pluralistic, and that women's equal status and full enjoyment of rights are things to be welcomed and enshrined in customary, religious and statutory law.

The theme of women resisting traditional practices they feel to be unjust can be seen in Kandiyoti's (1988) work. However, she also points out that women often strike 'bargains with patriarchy' in order to maximise what they consider to be their own best interests. In her article, *Bargaining with Patriarchy*, she concludes that: "Bargaining with patriarchy represented an uneasy compromise since it suggested that contestation and resistance were possible but always circumscribed by the limits of the culturally conceivable" (1988, p.12). Although Kandiyoti's regional focus on Turkey is not of relevance to this programme, her analytical framework that incorporates a notion of bargaining helps understand why gender and development projects may or may not succeed in altering traditional gender relations (see also Kandiyoti 1990; 1991). Her general thesis highlights how women manipulate situations in order to carve out the best deal for themselves - they will not accept change just because it is suggested by a development organisation.

Research that takes a different view on why gender relations are not easy to alter includes that of Sen (1990), who claims that India's female rural poor are not shouting their demands from the rooftops for a significant economic reason. The organisation of life around the joint family in India means that women live in close proximity to those in whose favour male bias works. Whilst the joint family may seem to the outside world to constrain the possibilities for women, it in fact offers them a certain security which they would otherwise struggle to maintain. Sen describes the joint household in terms of a process of 'co-operative conflict'. Women and men gain from co-operating with one another in joint living arrangements in so far as this increases the capabilities of the household as a whole and maintains a consistent standard of living. Agarwal (1994) disputes this interpretation and instead adopts Kandiyoti's framework and presents women as rational agents who work as best they can within an overall system that limits them. The focus of her study is not women's perception of their interests, but the structures that limit their ability to bargain.

Further ethnographic material that highlights the need to regard women as agents in their own process of change and development is provided by Ong (1987). In her study of Muslim factory women in Malaysia, she identified the techniques they employ to cope with their harsh working environment. These women work long hours, in poor conditions and for little money. Onlookers could easily conclude that they are vulnerable targets in a system biased against them, a system designed to limit their independence in the work field and to deny them access to the means of production. Ong does not accept this interpretation. Instead, she tries to appreciate how the women themselves perceive their employment situation. For example, do they in fact see themselves as powerless victims? Her research reveals a fascinating insight: according to Ong, these factory workers view their employment as short-term. They take up factory employment in order to acquire skills that they can then replicate in other situations for their own benefit. For example, they hope through the help of credit schemes to later set up their own businesses, utilising their newly acquired skills.

Influenced by Ong's conclusions, Zaman (1999) draws similar conclusions in her article on the lives of Muslim female garment workers in Bangladesh. Zaman states that the multiple identities of these women and their specific social locations as women and garment workers create distinctive forms of activism and political consciousness. She describes how these workers network with other women both in their factories and through their membership of the network of labour organisations. These two networks result, according to Zaman, in a double consciousness: that they are both women and

workers. This, in turn, increases the possibilities for them to act and resist exploitative structures as individuals. She describes how, in the factory in Dhaka where she conducted her fieldwork, women workers encourage each other to seek union support in individual instances of wrongful treatment: for example, the non-payment of sick pay or delay in payment of overtime. The support they offer each other as women is vital in motivating them to challenge the patriarchal operation of the factory.

4.5 A macro/micro focus

The most recent material has shifted from taking a micro approach to understanding development to studying processes of global change. Ong and Collier (2005) cross-culturally analyse the ethical and political implications of global technological changes. This text takes a comparative approach and consists of case studies from a range of developing countries. Rankin (2004) focuses on the impact of global markets and economic liberalisation on culture and tradition in Nepal. Kikuchi (2004) continues with the theme of the first two cited sources by emphasising the need for anthropology to make links between the local and macro processes of change. In other words these authors believe that it is the role of the anthropologist to study and make visible the direct impact processes of globalisation have on people's everyday lives. Chaiken and Fleuret (1990), in their edited volume, illustrate the contribution of applied anthropology to understanding the social problems that result from the political, technological and economic upheavals of the 20th century. Cross-cultural examples, from both community-level case studies and macro-level policy analyses, are looked at. These combine a global perspective with a more localised view.

4.6 Anthropology, religion and/or faith and development

Only a very small amount of literature exists that addresses the relationship between religion and development viewed from an anthropological perspective. Literature, such as that written by Stirrat and Henkel (1997), is largely theoretical, contributing to the critical analysis of development practice. They describe development aid as a 'gift', which may be understood theologically through equating the offering of a 'gift' and the offering of 'salvation' from a lifetime of suffering. In other words, these scholars believe that in 'giving' to the poor, development workers are in fact offering them salvation from a destitute life. They draw parallels between Christian missionary organisations, which offered material goods in return for which locals were expected to convert to Christianity. Similarly, contemporary NGOs offer aid that is subject to preconditions, which often involve the recipient changing behaviour in order to conform to the ideals of the NGO.

Further work that develops a similar critique of development includes Bradley (2005). In this article, the researcher explores the relationship between the Christian concept of compassion and the work of faith-based organisations in the developing world. The article focuses on the work of a UK donor NGO whose members express a Christian faith. The membership of this NGO is highly motivated and they have maintained a long-term commitment to the communities they help in rural Rajasthan. However, the success of this NGO is constrained by its construction of a poor underdeveloped 'Other', who is the focus of staff members' prayers and towards whom all interventions are directed. This image of a suffering Rajasthani villager, Bradley argues, is fictitious and blocks the emergence of a complex picture of life in this region. This article stresses that, whilst faith has much to offer development practice, it can also render people blind to the experiences and needs of others.

A different link between anthropology and religion is made by Diesel (2002). She argues that religion (Hinduism) should be the vehicle through which cultural/social norms that marginalise women are challenged and should, therefore, be examined more carefully by development practitioners. She focuses on the image of Kali as a powerful and fearful Hindu goddess. Diesel believes that this image offers Indian women a strong role model. If development planners were to emphasise to Hindu women Kali's self-determination and autonomy as admirable qualities, then perhaps they would adopt these characteristics in their own behaviour and become empowered enough to challenge the structures that repress them.

A text that takes a multi-disciplinary approach to development that incorporates both anthropology and religion is Bradley (2006). In this book, original links are made between development studies, anthropology and religion and the work of grass roots non-governmental organisations. It examines the effectiveness of NGOs in delivering social equality for women in the developing world, with specific reference to rural Rajasthan, North India. This research shows that in rural Rajasthan a picture of a poor, vulnerable, silent woman is the focus for many development initiatives. This homogenous image blocks development workers from responding to social reality in which inequality operates through a complex web of processes and structures. The evidence to support the arguments does not come from presentation of an ethnography; instead, ethnographic techniques are used to collect material that allows Rajasthani village women to be presented as self-conscious actors whose sense of personhood is optimistic, but whose subjectivity is constrained by patriarchy. The book argues that it is within a religious space that the most personal glimpses of others can be seen. The book ends by

advocating an open dialogue between development workers and those who are targeted to receive aid, emphasising the importance of listening to the needs of others. The role of the development worker is to respond to the experiences of injustice articulated by others and therefore to respect and endorse the goal of freedom for all.

5 Conclusion: overall gaps

The gaps highlighted in this review have been identified through a systematic research process. While inevitable time restrictions may have resulted in some relevant literature not being identified, and the review is restricted to the English language literature, the following discussion presents an indicative account of areas that would benefit from future research.

First, there are regional gaps. Little literature could be found that looks at anthropology and religion and/or anthropology and development in Pakistan. Most research has been produced in relation to India, Sri Lanka, Nepal, West Africa and East Africa. Most of the religious focus centres on Christianity in East and West Africa and Hinduism in India. To a lesser extent Buddhism is present in ethnographies that have a South Asian regional focus (predominantly Nepal and Sri Lanka). There is an influx of recent material that looks at Islam, particularly in relation to nationalist and fundamentalist identities and the idea of trans-national religious identities. This material does not necessarily have a specific regional focus. The regional focus for material on Islam seems to be West Africa. Relevant material that looks at Sikhism could only be found in relation to militant identities in South Asia.

This review notably contains more regional material from South Asia. This is largely due to the longstanding popularity of India as a focus for British and other European anthropologists. The nature of anthropological research has been described in Section 1 as entailing long periods of fieldwork, during which the time the anthropologist lives with his or her chosen community. The practical aspects of conducting ethnographic research limit the areas and regions in which an anthropologist can conduct his or her work. These restraints may explain some of the gaps in research. Barley (1983) vividly demonstrates the obstacles anthropologists face when trying to conduct ethnographic research and suggests that colonial imprints are influential in determining where and who anthropologists study.

Second, as previously highlighted, there is little research that specifically links anthropology, religion/faith and development. This review has made clear the contributions that anthropological literature makes to the grassroots practice of development and to the theorising of development issues. Section 3, looking at religion and anthropology, shows how this material can help understand the link between beliefs and actions and, furthermore, highlights the role religion plays in shaping these beliefs.

Anthropology has the potential to make a significant contribution to the methodology of development practice and research. The approaches currently applied to analyse processes of development were reviewed in the fourth part of this paper. What is obviously missing is a significant body of work that is

able to link the impact of religious ideas and beliefs to resulting actions and behaviours and further connect these to development issues and concerns. In other words, more research is needed that highlights religions' influence over beliefs, values and actions and identifies how this understanding could be of use to development practitioners. This material would be of benefit to development both in terms of aiding greater understanding into why and how people react to change, but also in terms of introducing practice and policy that sensitively build on people's beliefs and actions.

Lastly, the anthropological literature that focuses on religious organisations and their impact on societies is uneven. There is a significant literature that looks at the role of missionary organisations in West and East Africa and in India. However, this literature concentrates on Christian missions, despite the strong Islamic influences in these regions. What is also missing is a more contemporary focus on the role of faith-based NGOs in development processes. A useful contribution could be made by anthropologists through the production of ethnographies of faith agencies, in order to understand if they go about the processes of development any differently from their secular counterparts. The close focus of ethnographic studies could help to uncover subtle differences in how these two categories of aid agencies approach and practically go about their work. Further analysis could then be conducted to assess the contributions that faith-based organisations make to development processes.

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