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Making place through ritual

Schulte-Droesch, Lea

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Stellingen

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Making Place through Ritual.

Land, Environment and Region among the Santal of Central India

Lea Schulte-Droesch

1. Place is culturally constructed.
2. Place and ritual are mutually constitutive. Ritual action articulates and creates notions of place and the properties of place enhance the efficacy of ritual.
3. The Santal make place on different levels through their rituals. They make place locally in close-knit social groups; they make place regionally in village federations; and they make place nationally and globally through their identity politics.
4. A more nuanced view of Central Indian tribal societies, based on long-term ethnographic fieldwork, is needed to move beyond the politically charged extremes categorizing them as either Hindus or “first inhabitants” of India.
5. Different from other tribal societies, commonly understood as kinship-based, stateless societies, the Santal do not distance themselves from the state. Santal political activists engage the state in their arguments of being a marginalized group worthy of support and political recognition.
6. Santal “religion” is inherently characterized by practice. The recent attempt to standardize this practice and the related coining of the term “*sarna* religion” (“religion of the sacred grove”) need to be understood in the context of the Santal’s position in India.
7. Due to its holistic nature, the study of place offers the possibility to view any social phenomenon in its relation to others. Therefore, place bears great potential for the social sciences.
8. It seems to be the nature of “tradition” – be it Santal rituals or Dutch academic stellingen – to lack written rules and evoke strong opinions.