The Medical Anthropology Forum presents

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Like a Fruit without a Skin: Life Forces and their Protection in Tamil Siddha Pharmacology. Perspectives from a Family Tradition

Siddha medicine, one of the medicinal systems recognized by the Indian state, is known for its focus on Alchemy and its use of mineral-metallic medicines. The role of medicinal plants in Siddha medicinal practice, however, has mostly been overlooked.

This talk will focus on the life-giving dimension of plants in Siddha pharmaceutical practices. Drawing from ethnographic data, the conceptualization of medicinal plant efficacy as part of Siddha pharmacology, will be discussed and shown how it centres around the life-giving properties of medicinal plants.

Taking examples from a family practice, the talk will show how plant life forces are accessed and protected in a variety of steps, which are both related to spiritual practices as well as to pharmaceutical processes. The talk will compare parallels between life-force-management in tantric as well as pharmaceutical practice and argue for their crucial interrelation in the presented case study. To do this, the talk will focus on the concept of "uyir" (life) and the related terms of "kappu" (protection) and "kattu" (control).

In this way the talk will sketch human-plant-relations as interwoven with and emerging from a contemporary Siddha cosmos and highlight their importance for understanding Siddha pharmacology as a whole.

All are cordially invited

Tuesday, July 23
17:15–18:45
CATS, Room 110.02.05