The Medical Anthropology Forum Presents

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Conceptualizing local understandings of the relationship between health, environment, and agrarian change in rural South India

The large-scale intensification, industrialization, and commercialization of agricultural production under the “Green Revolution” and other policy measures have deeply affected the state of agriculture, nutrition, and the environment in many parts of India and thus also the health and well-being of large segments of the population. Based on long-term ethnographic fieldwork in Tamil Nadu, I describe how residents of a rice-cultivating village were affected by and interpreted some of these changes in the light of recent developments. I focus on how my interlocutors established a causal relationship between changes in rice cultivation and what they perceived as drastic transformations in the nature of the rice they consumed, the constitution of their own bodies and bodily health, and the condition of other animals and plants they recognized as part of the agricultural eco-system. I further attempt to contextualize and interpret these narratives from different angles by drawing on several recent theoretical approaches from anthropology and related disciplines. I then critically engage with the resulting plurality of analytical pictures in order to reflect on what a holistic interpretation of the processes and narratives I have described might look like.

Tuesday, November 27
17:15-19:00
Room Z10, South Asia Institute