

This thesis deals with poetics and politics of the annual worship of goddess Durga in Calcutta, India, and though it is not an ethnography as a genre, it is largely based on fieldwork.

In the first chapter of this thesis I reflect on the process of my partial enculturation in Bengal, on the process of understanding that cultural milieu as well as on the nature of understanding the Other in general. The second chapter deals with the concept of ritual. It summarises current state of discussion in the field and finally outlines Alfred Gell's concepts of secondary agency, technology of enchantment, distributed personhood and extended mind in order to examine the external and internal strategies of animation of images of deities. The third chapter is a short introduction into the goddess worship tradition in India with focus on mythological narratives of Devi -Ma ha tmya and portrayal of Durga pu ja in Bengali rendition of Ra ma ya a. The fourth chapter reverts to my first fieldwork on Durga pu ja and interprets the intersection of Durga pu ja and the " war on terror" with Marc Agué's concept of extended ritual technique. The fifth chapter is an elaborate survey of plant symbolism in Durga pu ja with plenty of comparative material. Its aim is to explore the ritual symbols within the Durga pu ja complex at the most detailed level, as opposed to the subject of previous and next chapters, and to look for an interpretive framework that could encompass ritual symbolism at both the levels. The sixth chapter recounts the nationalist remake of the Durga cult