ETHNICITY AND RELIGIOUS SYNCRETISM:
CELEBRATING DURGĀ PŪJĀ IN THE SUNDARBANS OF INDIA

ANGELICA MARINESCU*

The present research approaches the social aspect of the relationship between identity construction and social solidarity. I envisage the way the two major ethnic and religious communities (Hindus and Muslims) in the Indian Gangetic Delta share religious beliefs and everyday life. My research is an exploration in the academic literature about the Sundarbans region, the ritual of Durgā Pūjā and it is based on participative observation during the Festival of Durgā Pūjā in West Bengal, India. The perspective of research is that proposed by Atashee Chatterjee Sinha, starting from Durkheim's view on solidarity and social connection, stressing that religious phenomena are 'communal rather than individual (Sinha 2009, 81-101). From an anthropological perspective, 'the religious and the sociopolitical have always been inextricably connected, since it is our view that religion both expresses and organizes forms of sociality, regimes of power, historical struggles, and modes of production' (Isabelle Clark-Decès 2011, 1954). Rituals are total social phenomena that activate the deeper levels (Gurvitch 1963), constituting a privileged approach to reconstitute social logics, group identities and understanding the political, economical, social, symbolical issues, to understand the relationship between the individual and the collective, the profane and the sacred.

Key words: religious syncretism, ethnicity, policy, social solidarity.

INTRODUCTION

This article is the result of a (pre)field research conducted in Sundarbans (the Indian Gangetic Delta), West Bengal, India in the period from 9 to 29 October 2013, during the time of Durgā Pūjā, one of the most popular religious festivals in India, by its community participation, ritual complexity and visual splendor (Rodrigues [1953] 2003, 2). It is considered the most important yearly festival in West Bengal, beginning on the sixth day of *Navar*ā*tra* (the nine-night festival) and continuing for five days (from 9 to 14 October in 2013). I chose Sundarbans because it was a region where I knew an Indian family who was willing to host me. During the participation in the ritual in a village called Basanti, one villager

---

* Associate lecturer at Faculty of Sociology and Social Work, University of Bucharest. Corespondence address: Institute of Sociology – Romanian Academy, Casa Academiei, Calea 13 Septembrie 13, 4th floor, sector 5, Bucharest, Romania. E-mail: *angelica.marinescu@yahoo.ro.*

insisted to show me the representations on the space of the *pandals*[1] exterior to the main altar, explaining 'this means Hindu-Muslim friendship'; my guide and translator, Sourav Debnath[2], confirmed: 'Muslims also celebrate Durgā Pūjā with us, for friendship'. I found this could be an example of solidarity, social link and community participation in the multi-cultural, multi-ethnic and multi-religious context of India and I chose to organize my research around these concepts.

THE SUNDARBANS OF INDIA

Sundarbans is considered an isolated, remote region of India, the lack of proper communication system resulting in inaccessibility, with negative effects on economic, juridical, political and cultural life of the people (Mandal 2003, 26). Sundarbans is a vast space of mangrove forests at the mouth of the Ganga-Brahmaputra river-system in lower Bengal. The name 'Sundarbans' means 'a beautiful forest' (*sundar*-beautiful, *ban*-forest). The name may have its origin in *sundariban*, a forest of *sundari* (*Heritiera fomes*) trees or may have been derived from the Sanskrit word *samudrabana*, meaning a forest near the sea (Mandal 2003, 39). The tract covers about 435 km in length and includes an area of 72,727 sq. km, having parts from the districts of North 24-Parganas and South 24-Parganas of West Bengal of India and from the districts of Khulna and Bakhergunj in Bangladesh. Sundarbans is divided politically into two countries, since 1947: Pakistan, now Bangladesh side, and India (Mandal 2003, 27).
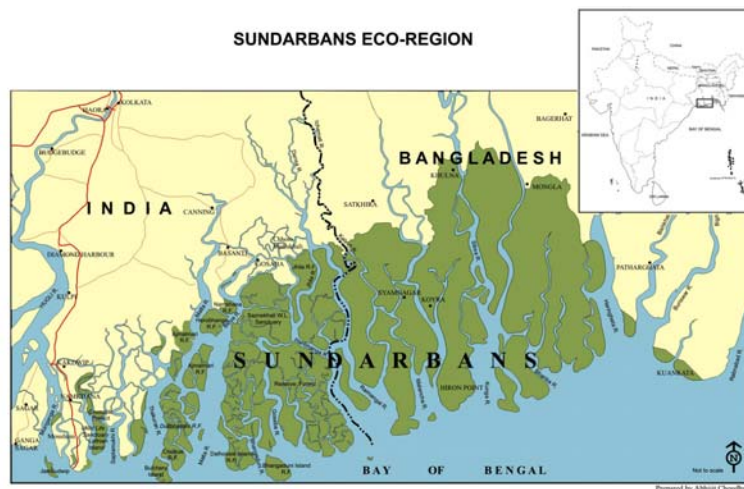
Map of the region of Sundarbans (India and Bangladesh). Source: assets.wwfindia.org

---

[1] *Pandals* are temporary wood shrines built on the occasion of Durgā Pūjā, that will be dismantled when *Navarātra* ends.
[2] Sourav Debnath is the youngest brother (17 years old) of Somen Debnath, an Indian activist and globetrotter who is on tour around the world from 2004 till 2020, promoting an 'HIV/AIDS Awareness Programme'. More information about Somen Debnath can be found on his site www.somendebnath.com.

Ganga'a Delta reveals an intricate history of different ethnics coming to the region. Mentions of the territory are supposed to be in the *Mahabharata* and also in the *Puranas*, as the *Samudrabana;* also in ancient literature as *Byaghratati*, 'the shore inhabited by the tigers' or as *Bhati*, 'lowland overflowed by the tides' (Mandal 2003, 39). Inscriptions are attesting the Muslim rule in the region, starting with 1559 - 1658; in the 18th century East India Company became the new power in the Bengali region: the Sundarbans was acquired in 1757 with the 24 Parganas (Hunter [1874] 1973, 327); a full proprietary status was conferred to Clive in 1759 by the Emperor of Delhi. In 1814, East India Company decided to distribute land directly to cultivators and in 1817, the land of Sundarbans became government property (Mandal 2003, 39-46). In 1830 the Company framed a policy to distribute forest area among European settlers in India and in 1878-79, 4856 sq.m.were declared protected forest area (Bera and Sahay 2010, 3).

Das, Mukherjee and Chowdhuri (1981) explain that many tribal people (*Bhumji, Munda, Oraons* tribes), were displaced from Chhotanagpur plateau of Jharkhand, West Bengal and Bangladesh to clear the forest and make it habitable. Bengali Mahisya population (from Midnapur District) and Muslim people (*Malo, Rajbanshi, Poundra Kshatriya, Swarnakar, Vaisyakapali*) also came from the Midnapur district, in pursuit of agriculture (1920) (Das et al. 1981). During the post-independent period (1947) and after the Bangladesh War (1972), the region also experienced an influx of Muslim migrated population: a 'handful of Malo and Rajbanshi, the fishermen, immigrated to this island as refugees from East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) during 1948-49 and later in 1952-53 as a result of political exodus during the post-independence period' (Bera and Sahoy, 3) and also during 1856-66 and 1971-72 as post-war consequences.

The population of Sundarbans is divided into four religious groups: Hindu, Muslim, Christian and Tribal or Animistic. In a survey from 1998, of the 400 households surveyed, 87% were Hindus, 8% Muslims, 21% tribals practicing animism (tribals are found only in Eastern Sundarbans, in Gosaba). In terms of castes, 59% of the households surveyed belonged to scheduled castes, 5% are scheduled tribes (Banerjee 1998).

ANTHROPOLOGY AND RELIGION

For anthropologists, 'the religious and the sociopolitical have always been inextricably connected, since religion both expresses and organizes forms of sociality, regimes of power, historical struggles, and modes of production' (Clark-Decès 2011, 1954).

Max Weber is among the first to write about Indian religion and social organization, in his *The Religion of India: The Sociology of Hinduism and Buddhism* (1916)*,* as well as about popular religiosity. Clifford Geertz studied the

religion and culture of Asia and the Islamic world and he suggested that 'religion is a symbol system that is created by human beings in such a way that it is modelled *from* the social reality and becomes a model *for* the social reality. This symbol system pervades human moods and motivations and becomes one of the ways by which human beings find meaning in times of crisis, such as when confronted with their own mortality or intellectual or moral bafflement. Human beings then clothe this 'symbol system' with an aura of ultimacy to give it legitimation. […] religious ideas, practices, phenomena etc. are not derived in a vacuum, but do reflect the social and cultural phenomenon in which they arise.' (Geertz 1973, 89)

For this research I chose to follow the Indian anthropology perspective, consulting rather Indian authors. Although 'some scholars argue that anthropology is a Western discipline that developed alongside specific historical processes and a particular configuration of values.' (Berger and Heideman 2013, 10) Patricia Uberoi and *alii* show that Indian anthropology developed on its own distinctive and critical style due to local influence and factors (Uberoi *et al.* 2007, 33-46). Two major influences mark the Indian anthropology: American (British) cultural anthropology and French tradition – the works of Louis Dumont (see Dumont and Pocock 1957, 1970), but the anthropology as discipline had to adapt its field techniques and theories to the study of a 'civilization' such as India (see Kroeber 1953, Redfield 1957 in Clark-Decès 2011, 1950). The anthropology of India has its origins in the study of what was called 'cultural area', a concept that allowed for the reduction of the subcontinent into smaller territorial and homogeneous social units[3]. It was the Indian village that, in the end, became the center of anthropological analysis for a generation (see Srinivas 1955, Dube 1955, Bailey 1957 *in* Clark-Decès 2011, 1950). Dumont (1980) situated the anthropological understanding of Indian civilization at the confluence of ethnography and classical Indology (the study of Sanskrit literature and Hinduism), yet 'the moment at which anthropologists working in India began to theorize about historical change and incorporate historical perspectives in their research can be situated around the 1980's (Appadurai 1981, Dirks 1987 in Clark-Decès 2011, 1954).

For my theoretical approach, I start from Atashee Chatterjee Sinha's observation regarding Durkheim's approach of religious phenomena, that of 'social connection' (Sinha 2009, 81-101), according to whom the religion has the function of promoting social solidarity. Harry Alpert emphasized that four major functions of religion can be derived from Durkheim's view: 1) disciplinary - religious rituals prepare people for social life by imposing self-discipline and measure; 2) religious ceremonies bring people together and thus serve to reaffirm their common bonds and to reinforce social solidarity; 3) religious observance maintains and revitalizes the social heritage of the group and helps transmit its enduring values to future generations; 4) religion has an euphoric function in that it serves to counteract

---

[3] The variously termed 'scheduled tribes', 'aborigines', 'adivasis', 'animists', 'backward Hindu', see Verrier Elwin, in Isabelle Clark-Decès (editor), 2011, *A Companion to the Anthropology of India*, Wiley-Blackwell, p. 1950.

feelings of frustration and loss of faith and certitude by reestablishing the believer's sense of well-being, their sense of the essential rightness of the moral world of which they are part.' (Alpert 1939) As Sinha points out, 'basic to this theory is the stress on religious phenomena as communal rather than individual […]. Durkheim was not concerned with the variety of religious experiences of individuals but rather with the communal activity and the communal bonds which emerge through participation in religious activities' (Sinha 2009, 81-101). Thus, 'Religion is an eminently collective thing. It binds men together, as the etymology of the word religion testifies. Religion is eminently social: it occurs in a social context, and, more importantly, when men celebrate sacred things, they unwittingly celebrate the power of their society. This power so transcends their own existence that they have to give it sacred significance in order to visualize it.' (Sinha 2009, 81-101)

METHODOLOGY

I used the ethnographic method as the study of socio-cultural contexts, processes and meanings within cultural systems' (Whitehead 2004), based on fieldwork and participative observation. This method offers as advantages of close contact with the group members, insight into behavior, but has its limitations: lack of scientific approach, partiality due to social situation, lack of importance of various events, narrow field of experience (Sharma and Sharma 1997, 32).

As I knew little about the region, the people, the history and the time spent in Sundarbans was very short, I could only formulate research pre-suppositions. Thus, my research question was centered around the way individuals from different ethnic and religious groups live the participation in the festival of Durga Puja, with religious and social implications in the context of Indian modernity. Durga Puja ritual passed from the domestic sphere to the public sphere, becoming a social representation for nationalist attitudes, lately shifting from a mere religious ritual to one with social aspects, becoming more a family and community ritual than a religious one. The people of the region of Sundarbans found ways of participating in each other's religious celebrations and rituals, based on long time living together and sharing a difficult geographical and economical area.

DURGA PUJA IN WEST BENGAL: HISTORY, MYTH, RITUAL

Each autumn, Durgā's myth, the *Devī Māhātmya*, dating back to the 5th century CE, is recited over the nine-day period 'to invoke balance within people's individual lives as well as within the entire community' (Amazzone 2010, 5): 'It has been said that when life becomes full of suffering, when no relief seems to be withing reach, when forces beyond our control threaten to destroy our very existence, it is then that the Universal Mother Goddess will appear to Her devotees and free them to their anguish. […] As an embodiment of unconditional love, the

Goddess in Her forms as Ambikā, Caṇḍīkā and Pārvātī will come with Her entourage of wildly fierce, amazonlike Goddesses and fight the *asuras* or demons that threaten our very existence' (Amazzone 2010, 5).

I arrived in India on the 9th of October 2013, during Durgā Pūjā festivities, and I was hosted in the house of a Bengali family, who included me in their celebration of the goddess Durga, both in the city of Kolkata (Calcutta) and in Basanti, Sundarbans. I was expecting to experience a domestic celebration and a visit at one temple, maybe the favourite or regular one of the family. On the 2nd day of the Bengali Festival, during the night pilgrimage on the overcrowded streets of Kolkata, I became aware of the fact that we were actually visiting the many shrines temporarily constructed for the occasion of the festival, called *pandals*.

Pandals in Kolkata, during Durgā Pūjā Festival, October 2014.

Durgā Pūjā is first of all a ritual of worship (*puja*), which for Hindus represents the most important of the devotional rites to the goddess Durga (Peter Rodrigues 1953 and 2003, 2). On this occasion, colorful and diverse temporary shrines are built in the cities and villages, which have as main attraction a stage on which a dramatic ensemble of gods and goddesses are represented in colored clay (*mūrti*). Durga is represented in two different aspects: in her first aspect, Durga is portrayed in the act of slaying the buffalo demon Mahisha (Peter Rodrigues [1953] 2003, 10); in her second aspect, Uma (another name of Durga), as wife of Shiva, returns to her parents'home and brings her four children: two daughters: Sarasvatī and Lakshmī, and two sons: Kārtikeya, riding a peacock, and Ganesha, the bringer of success, accompanied by his rat; on the stage, a cluster of plants is referred as the wife of Ganesha' ((Peter Rodrigues 1953 and 2003, 5). At the end of the puja, these images are delivered to a river (such as Ganesha) and the shrine is dismantled.
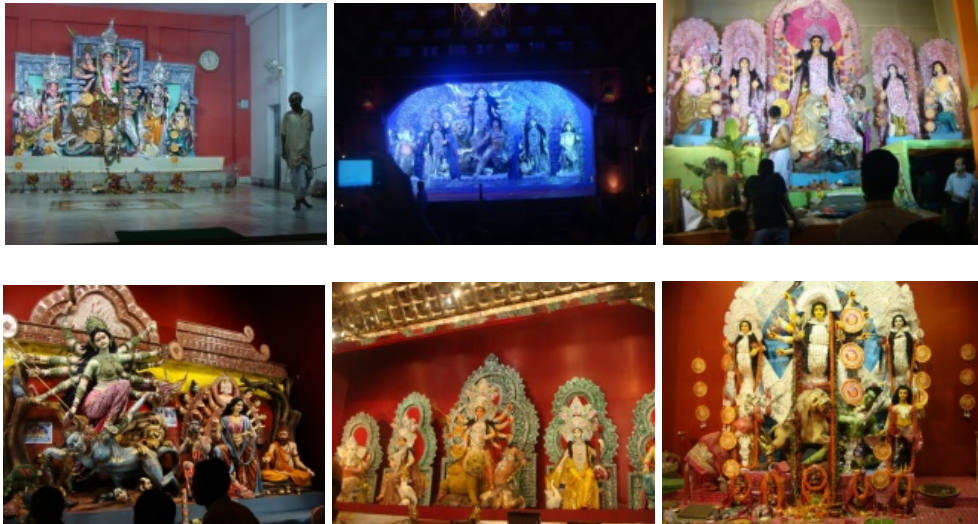
Representations of Durga and accompanying gods and goddesses – the main shrine.
Durgā Pūjā in Kolkata, October 2014.

Krishna Dutta puts Durga Puja in connection to the evolution of the city of Calcutta life and history: 'Durga Puja was apparently observed as far back as 1610, before the founding of Calcutta, by the Sabarno Roy Chaudhuris of Barisha-Behala, the original landowners who negotiated with Job Charnock in 1690. The story goes that after Clive's victory at the battle of Plassey in 1757, he wanted to make a grand gesture of thanksgiving, but the only church in Calcutta, St. Anne's, had been demolished during the siege of the city. Clive consulted his supporter Nabakrishna Deb, who suggested that he make an offering at the feet of Durga at his house in Sovabazar. As a result, the annual Durga Puja at 36 Nabakrishna Street

is still known as Company Puja. When the city became wealthy, the new mercantile Bengali elite, the babus, saw Durga Puja as a splendid opportunity for public relations.' (Dutta 2003, 55-57) As he explains: the first public puja 'was held in 1910 in Balram Basu Ghat Road in north Calcutta. It was a conscious effort to make people identify their motherland Bengal with the goddess so as to give a religious impetus to the growing nationalist movement. The promoters of the ceremony practiced and displayed the arts of stick wielding, fencing, and wrestling and cultivated martial spirit, as they prepared to fight the British rulers' (Dutta 2003, 55-57).

Since independence in 1947, Durgā Pūjā has slowly changed into more of a festival or carnival, rather than a religious festival, the public pujas (*sārvajanīnapuja*) are performed for a community with funds gathered by that community (Peter Rodrigues [1953] 2003, 10), during which 'Calcutta is transformed, almost unrecognizably. Shops and eateries stay open all night; the streets are chanted through loudspeakers adding to the general din from the puja pandals.' (Dutta 2003, 55-57). Furthermore, Suman Nath argues that Durgā Pūjā 'represents a perfect example of transformation of local festivals into high profile festivals for touristic consumption. […] There may be two major positions, first, urban festivals give boom to the city economy as we all see a rise in the consumption habit of Kolkatans. Second, and more importantly there is an element of ethnic pride and we can argue that the puja reinforces the content and meaning of collective identification.' (Nath 2012)

DURGĀ PŪJĀ IN THE SUNDARBANS: SOCIAL SOLIDARITY FUNCTION

While in Kolkata Durgā Pūjā celebration meant a pilgrimage with the crowd, in the village of Basanti the celebration of Durgā Pūjā was a family one. All the members of the family dressed in festive clothes, women took time to put on elaborate silk sarees, helping each other with the dressing. I myself was dressed up in a yellow silk saree, lent by Somen Debnath's mother. *Tilaka* was put on every woman forehead, including mine, red lipstick and perfumes were the final touch. All the Debnath family went to the village center, where the Durgā Pūjā pandals were built. We entered the pandals, performed the ritual (red *tilaka* sign on forehead, *prasad* receiving, praying to the shrine), but the most important seemed to be meeting other people. We stopped for long discussions with other villagers in front of each pandal – which I could not understand, as they were speaking Bengali. In the courtyard of one pandal, a group of young men stopped me and they explained they are Somen's friends. Some of them were Muslim, easily distinguishable from habits. I was already a little puzzled, what would Muslims do there for Durga celebration, when one of them took me by hand inside and showed me the first group of puppets saying 'This means Hindu-Muslim friendship'.

   Near the main altar, representing Durga, six spaces with folk theatre scenes were built; they seemed in no manner connected to any mythological representation (see below).

Image 1: Representation of a Muslim and a Hindu, together.

Image 2: HIV/AIDS awareness.

Image 3: Poliomyelitis awareness (child vaccination).

Image 4: Women literacy drive programme.

Image 5: Do not drink alcohol; do not smoke.

Image 6: Do not cut the trees.

   I found out that these representations are specific to the folk puppet theater, popular in the rural areas in West Bengal, called *Putul Nach*. Generally, these kind of representations are narratives of social themes, called *keecha-kahini*, depicting 'popular events and scandals from ongoing life since they draw quick attention' (Gupta 2012). As Sen Gupta mentions, '*Potuas* are engaged by the State Government to depict specific themes on development programmes to propagate awareness among rural communities; these are generally on HIV/AIDS, anti-dowry, health consciousness, literacy, environment, pollution.' (2012)

S1: Sourav Debnath, College student, 17 years old	'These six statues were put in the puja pandal to make people aware. This is not a part of Durga Puja. In the first group it is said about Hindu and Islam: they are brothers, so, don't quarrel to each other! The second group means awareness of HIV/AIDS; The third group means awareness to mothers to vaccinate children from polio disease. Take vaccine under 5 years old children; The fourth group: literacy drive program in the region, especially among women; the fifth group: don't

	drink beer and whiskey etc. And don't smoke! The last one: don't cut tree. Because trees are our friends.'
S2: Sumantra Giri, drawing teacher in Basanti, 35 years old	'In Basanti there is no community hall. In Bengal, Durga Puja is the celebration of not only for Hindus (…) many community like Hindu, Muslims, Christian, Buddhist, gather in the puja pandal (…) and it is the right platform for canvassing (…) that people can understand about AIDS, at the time of enjoying Durga Pratima. Furthermore, Basanti is a village area, that's why common people enjoy the folk idols rather than the sophisticated ones'.

After visiting the Durgā Pūjā pandals, all the family stopped for street food, then we visited the family store, where a large family gathering took place and everybody received sweets. The village was in festive mood, on the illuminated small streets, families gathered for talking, hugging, eating together sweets. It was an atmosphere of respect and joy, in which everybody seemed to find its place and be well-invited.

RELIGIOUS SYNCRETISM AND KINSHIP IN SUNDARBANS

In the Sundarbans, as I understood during the discussions with the members of the Debnath family, Muslims do not participate in the *religious* rituals of Durga Puja, but in the *community* rituals, as a sign of solidarity and sharing. This participation finds explanation in the history of the region, as, due to its long-term history of successive movements of population, Sundarbans being now a cultural mosaic, multi-lingual, multi-ethnic (Bera and Sahay 2010, 1).

As Somen Debnath explained: 'we also go for the Muslim Eid. When people have not so many things for making a living, they try to be flexible and try to find peace with each other. As for religion, they will try to fit within, meaning they will be part of their neighbour's way and also will make part for their neighbours. That means respect and care, I believe. When people are very poor, they do try to respect each other, try to find peace. That's how they can live a very simple life with each other and making strong bonds'.

The people living in the Sundarbans subscribe to a characteristic folk-religion (Mandal 2003, 26), a syncretic cult, that has gradually been developed by the local people keeping a track with the mainstream of religion practiced in India: 'The tribals in the past used to claim a separate religious entity for them. But now-a-days they claim themselves as Hindus and worship their gods and goddess along with

Hindu gods and goddess.'[4] J.J. Roy Burman explains that for Muslim and Hindu peasants of Sundarbans the cult of Bonbibi is much more important than other major gods and goddesses (Burman 1996, 1211-1215). The deities worshipped in Sundarbans are considered as 'standing' below the Bengali pantheon: they were the gods and goddesses of woodcutters, honey gatherers, beeswax gatherers, boat builders, land cultivators (Sarkar 2010, 30). As Khan explains, 'It can be said that the myth of *Dakshinrai*, the episode of *Rayamangal Kavya* and *Ban BibirJohurnama* have come into existence due to the advent of Islam in this part of Bengal as a social process which compromises between the faiths of both Hindus and Muslims through the super powers like *Dakshinrai and Barkhan Gazi* of that period'. (Gautam and Sahay 2010, 10)

It is considered that the popular culture of Sundarbans has not yet been very well analysed (Sarkar 2010, 1). Accounts of the region situate from popular or mythological histories to archival narratives, or from *punthi*[5] to contemporary literature (for example, the anthropological novel The *Hungry Tide* of Amitav Ghosh (Sarkar 2010, IX). The stories of the region center around the co-existence of man and nature, co-existence between the tiger and the forest-dweller (Sarkar 2010, 1): 'The very mention of the vast mangrove forests of the Sundarbans, the largest in the world, creates an imagery of a dark and dangerous arena, the abode of the Royal Bengal Tiger, snakes, crocodiles and other animals. In these environments lives a community of brave humans whose courage is manifest in their daily battle against nature as they seek to eke out a living, some by cultivating land and others by venturing deep into the forest to collect honey. Even the rivers fail to provide comfort. Apart from storms, which occur all through the year, the fishermen are always wary of crocodiles even though, back at home, the women perform the *kumirbrata*, a folk ritual aimed at appeasing the giant reptiles' (Sarkar 2010, 9).

---

[4] 'The process of detribalization or Hinduisation of Indian tribes is not only operated in the Sundarbans but also in other parts of the country. Some of the Hindu castes being identified as socio-economically backward have been given the status of Scheduled Castes to enjoy certain rights and privileges which are supposed to improve their socio-economic condition. The Scheduled Castes in the Sundarbans include *Bagdi, Bauri, Chamar, Muchi, Dhoba, Dome, Methor, Kaibartta, Kaora, Keot, Mal, Namasudra, Patni, Poundra* and *Sunri*. Among them the Poundras are numerically dominant', in Asim Kumar Mandal, 2003, *The Sundarbans of India. A Development Analysis*, New Delhi: Indus Publishing Company. 36.

[5] The *punthi* literature of the region came into existence before the British became hegemonic in Bengal, free from colonial influence. It is a literature of transition during late pre-colonial and early colonial Bengal, giving a 'view of the mental world and life conditions of the people. Examples are: *Raimangal*, by Krishna Ram Das, 1686, later edited and published by Satyanarayan Bhattacharya, Calcutta University; *Ghazi-Kalu-Champavati-Kanyarpunthi*, by Abdyr Rahim, probably late 19th century; *BanaibibiJahuranama*, composed by Banayuddin, 1877. See Sutapa Chatterjee Sarkar, 2010, *The Sundarbans. Folk Deities, Monsters and Mortals*, New Delhi, Orient Blackswan, p. 30.

CONCLUSIONS

The way people in the Sundarbans understand to celebrate Durgā Pūjā and other religious ceremonies together, could be an example of what Philippa Williams names an interfaith 'processes of amity' that habitually constitute everyday life in India, and that are, as the researcher points out, generally overlooked by scholars concerned with the 'spaces of enmity' (in Decès 2011, 1963). Since people in the Sundarbans speak only Bengali, English not being a mandatory language at school, I could only talk to a few persons. For a less reductive image of the way people of different religions celebrate together Durga Puja in Sundarbans, as well as other religious festivities, further investigation needs to be done, spending more time in the region, talking to people and observing other festivities. More academic literature needs to be consulted, access to more recent sources is needed in order to understand the symbolism of Durgā Pūjā, the form of religious syncretism specific to this region.

REFERENCES

ALPERT Harry, 1939, *Emile Durkheim and His Sociology*, New York, Columbia University Press.

AMAZZONE Laura. (2010). *Goddess Durga and Sacred Female Power*. Lanham: Hamilton Books.

BANERJEE, A. (1998).*Environment, Population and Human Settlement of Sundarbans Delta*. New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company.

BERA, Gautam K., SAHAY Vijoy S. (ed.) (2010). *In the Lagoons of the Gangetic Delta*. New Delhi: Mittal Publications.

BERGER, P., HEIDEMANN, F. (2013). *The Modern Anthropology of India: Ethnography, Themes and Theory*. New York: Routledge.

BURMAN, R.J.J. (1996). Hindu-Muslim Syncretism in India. *Economic and Political Weekly,* Vol. 31. No. 20 (May 18, 1996). 1211-1215.

CLARK-DECÈS, I. (editor) (2011). *A Companion to the Anthropology of India*, Wiley-Blackwell.

DAS A.K., MUKHERJEE S., CHOWDHURI M.K. (1981). *A focus on Sundarban*. Calcutta.

DUMONT L. and POCOCK D. (1970) [1957]. For a Sociology of India in: *Religion, Politics and History*. Paris and The Hague: Mouton.

DUTTA, K. (2003). *Calcutta, A Cultural and Literary History*. Kolkata: Signal Books Limited.

GEERTZ, C. (1973). *The Interpretation of Cultures*. Basic Books.

GURVITSCH, G. (1963). *La vocation actuelle de la sociologie*, t. I et II. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.

HUNTER, W.W. (1973). *A Statistical Account of Bengal. Vol. I, District of 24 Parganas and Sundarbans*. First Edition London, 1874. Reprint edition Delhi, 1973.

MANDAL, K. (2003). *The Sundarbans of India. A Development Analysis*. New Delhi: Indus Publishing Company.

NATH, S. (2012). '*The Spectacles Called Durga Puja*', sumanparole.blogspot.com.

PETER RODRIGUES H. (1953, 2003). *Ritual Worship of the Great Goddess. The Liturgy of the DurgāPūja with Interpretations*. New York: State University of New York Press .

SARKAR Sutapa C. (2010). *The Sundarbans. Folk Deities, Monsters and Mortals*. New Delhi: Orient Blackswan.

SEN GUPTA A. (2012). *Scroll Paintings of Bengal. Art in the Village*. Bloomington: Author House.

SINHA Atashee C. (2009). Identity, Religion and Morality. *International Journal of Humanistic Ideology. Studies into the nature and origin of humanistic ideas*. Vol. II, no. 2, Autum-Winter 2009. Cluj University Press. 81-101.

SHARMA Ram N., SHARMA Rajendra K. (1997). *Anthropology*. New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers and Distributors.

UBEROI P., SUNDAR N., DESPANDE S. (2007). *Anthropology in the East: Founders of Indian Sociology and Anthropology*. Calcutta: Seagull Books. 33-46.

WHITEHEAD Tony L. (2004). 'What is ethnography? Methodological, Ontological and Epistemological Attributes'. *Cultural Ecology of Health and Change*.