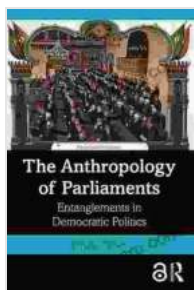


The Anthropology of Parliaments: Entanglements in Democratic Politics

Parliaments are central institutions in democratic politics. They are the spaces where elected representatives debate and pass laws, scrutinize the government, and hold it to account. As such, parliaments play a vital role in the functioning of democratic societies. However, parliaments are not simply neutral spaces for political debate. They are also complex and contested sites where power relations are negotiated and social identities are performed.



The Anthropology of Parliaments: Entanglements in Democratic Politics by Emma Crewe

★★★★☆ 4.4 out of 5

Language : English
File size : 8958 KB
Text-to-Speech : Enabled
Screen Reader : Supported
Enhanced typesetting : Enabled
Word Wise : Enabled
Print length : 240 pages



The anthropology of parliaments is a growing field of research that seeks to understand the social and cultural dimensions of parliamentary institutions. Anthropologists have conducted ethnographic research in parliaments around the world, studying how they operate on a day-to-day basis, how they are shaped by the broader political landscape, and how they impact the lives of citizens.

This article draws on ethnographic research in the parliaments of the United Kingdom, India, and South Africa to explore the anthropology of parliaments. It examines how parliaments shape and are shaped by the broader political landscape, how power relations are negotiated within parliaments, and how social identities are performed in parliamentary spaces.

Parliaments and the Broader Political Landscape

Parliaments do not exist in a vacuum. They are part of a broader political landscape that includes political parties, interest groups, the media, and the public. The relationship between parliaments and the broader political landscape is complex and dynamic. Parliaments are both shaped by and shape the broader political landscape.

On the one hand, parliaments are shaped by the political parties that dominate them. The party system in a country will determine the composition of parliament, the rules and procedures that govern parliament, and the issues that are debated in parliament.

On the other hand, parliaments also shape the broader political landscape. Parliaments pass laws that affect the lives of citizens, they scrutinize the government, and they hold it to account. In this way, parliaments play a vital role in shaping the political landscape of a country.

Power Relations within Parliaments

Parliaments are not simply neutral spaces for political debate. They are also complex and contested sites where power relations are negotiated. Power relations within parliaments are shaped by a variety of factors,

including the party system, the rules and procedures that govern parliament, and the personal relationships between MPs.

The party system in a country will often determine the distribution of power within parliament. In countries with a two-party system, power is typically concentrated in the hands of the two major parties. In countries with a multi-party system, power is more dispersed, and smaller parties may play a more significant role in parliament.

The rules and procedures that govern parliament also play a role in shaping power relations. These rules and procedures determine who can speak in parliament, how long they can speak, and what topics can be debated. They also determine how laws are passed and how the government is held to account.

Finally, power relations within parliaments are also shaped by the personal relationships between MPs. These relationships can be based on party affiliation, ideology, or personal friendship. They can also be based on patronage or clientelism.

Social Identities in Parliamentary Spaces

Parliaments are not only sites of power relations, but they are also sites where social identities are performed. MPs come from a variety of backgrounds, and they bring their own social identities into the parliamentary space. These identities can include gender, race, ethnicity, religion, and sexuality.

The performance of social identities in parliamentary spaces can have a significant impact on the way that parliament operates. For example, the

presence of women in parliament can challenge traditional gender roles and stereotypes. The presence of MPs from minority backgrounds can challenge racism and discrimination.

However, the performance of social identities in parliamentary spaces can also be problematic. For example, the use of racial slurs or homophobic language in parliament can create a hostile environment for MPs from minority backgrounds. The performance of social identities in parliamentary spaces is therefore a complex and contested issue.

The anthropology of parliaments is a growing field of research that seeks to understand the social and cultural dimensions of parliamentary institutions. This article has drawn on ethnographic research in the parliaments of the United Kingdom, India, and South Africa to explore the anthropology of parliaments. It has examined how parliaments shape and are shaped by the broader political landscape, how power relations are negotiated within parliaments, and how social identities are performed in parliamentary spaces.

This article has argued that parliaments are not simply neutral spaces for political debate but are instead complex and contested sites where power relations are negotiated and social identities are performed. Understanding the anthropology of parliaments is therefore essential for understanding the functioning of democratic societies.

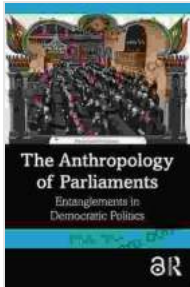
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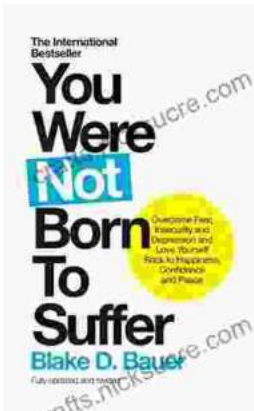
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