

# Negotiating Ethnicity: Politics and Display of Cultural Identities in Northeast India

Painting Courtesy of Jackie Morris



4, 5, 6 July 2013, Vienna

<http://www.oeaw.ac.at/sozant>  
[identity-neindia@oeaw.ac.at](mailto:identity-neindia@oeaw.ac.at)

Institute for Social Anthropology and Phonogrammarchiv, Austrian Academy of Sciences  
Initiativkolleg (Doctoral School) “Cultural Transfers and Cross-Contacts in the Himalayan Borderlands”  
Department of South Asian, Tibetan and Buddhist Studies, University of Vienna  
Indian Embassy in Austria



**Initiativkollegik**  
Cultural Transfers and Cross-Contacts  
in the Himalayan Borderlands



Conference organized by Shahnaz Kimi Leblhuber (Department of Social and Cultural Anthropology, University of Vienna), Dr. Mélanie Vandenhelsken (Institute for Social Anthropology, Austrian Academy of Sciences), Dr. Bianca Son (Dept. of History, SOAS, U. of London), and Dr. Jürgen Schöpf (Phonogrammarchiv, Austrian Academy of Sciences).

## **CONFERENCE VENUE**

University Campus AAKh, Spitalgasse 2-4, 1090 Vienna, Austria:

- Hörsaal A: Hof 2.2;
- Seminar room 2: Hof 1.6.2;
- Seminar room 3: Hof 2.1, Department of South Asian, Tibetan and Buddhist Studies

ISA: Institute for Social Anthropology, Apostelgasse 23, 1030 Vienna, Metro Kardinal-Nagl-Platz, line 3

## **CONFERENCE DINNER AND LUNCHESES**

We have decided to drop registration fees for all presenters at the conference as well as those attending the lectures. However, we kindly ask these attendees to contribute should they wish to participate in the lunches and the conference dinner. The payment has to be made in cash at the registration desk during the conference:

- 5 € for Indian students
- 15 € for Indian scholars
- 10 € for other students
- 25 € for other scholars

For logistical purposes we need attendees to register to the conference and the meals via email to [identity-neindia@oeaw.ac.at](mailto:identity-neindia@oeaw.ac.at) by July 2<sup>nd</sup> (this information is vital for our logistics), and indicate whether you would like to participate in the lunches and the dinner:

- Thursday July 4th lunch (sandwiches)
- Friday July 5th lunch (sandwiches)
- Friday July 5th Conference Dinner
- Saturday July 6th lunch (sandwiches)

We have to charge the same amount even though you would attend only one of these meals. Please note that several restaurants and shops are in the university campus where the conference will take place.

4 <sup>th</sup> July		
9:00-10:05	<p>Welcome address – <i>A</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. Dr. phil. Univ.-Doz. Michael Alram, Vice President of the Austrian Academy of Sciences</li> <li>. H.E. Mr Ambassador Ramachandran Swaminathan</li> <li>. Univ.-Doz. Dr. Helmut Lukas, Vice Director, Institute for Social Anthropology, Austrian Academy of Sciences</li> <li>. Prof. Martin Gaenzsle, Deputy Head of the Department of South Asian, Tibetan and Buddhist Studies, University of Vienna, Speaker Doctoral School/Initiativkolleg, “Cultural Transfers and Cross-Contacts in the Himalayan Borderlands”</li> </ul>	
10:05-10:45	Registration	
10:45-11:00	Coffee break	
11:00-12:30	<p>Plenary session - <i>A</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Keynote address: <b>Prof. Sanjib Baruah</b>, Professor of Political Studies, Bard College, New York <i>Reading Fürer-Haimendorf in Northeast India</i></li> <li>- Introductory papers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. <b>Dr. Bianca Son</b>, Dept. of History, SOAS, U. of London <i>Exclusive Memories: The Making of the Zo through Elite Narratives</i></li> <li>. <b>Dr. Sara Shneiderman</b> Assistant Professor of Anthropology and South Asian Studies, Yale University <i>Reframing Ethnicity: Academic Tropes, Political Desire, and Ritualized Action in Northeast India and Beyond</i></li> </ul> </li> </ul>	
12:30-13:30	Lunch	
13:30-15:00	<p>Panel 10 – <b>Role of migrations trans-border networks and solidarities – Seminar room 3</b></p> <p><i>Chair:</i> Dr Satyabrat Sinha, Political Scientist, Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science, Presidency University, Kolkata</p> <p><b>Duncan McDuie-Ra</b> Associate Professor of Development Studies, University of New South Wales, Sydney, Canberra—School of Social Sciences <i>Traveling Identities in Northeast</i></p> <p><b>Farhana M. Hoque</b>, PhD Candidate Dept. of Anthropology, University College London <i>Identity in The Chittagong Hill Tracts: The Tendency to Oscillate between Difference and Sameness</i></p> <p><b>Uttam Lal</b> Assistant Professor, Geography and Natural Resources Management, Sikkim, India <i>Cross Border Interactions to Trapped Identity: A Case Study of Yak-Herders of</i></p>	<p>Panel 6 – <b>Sacralisation of culture; ethnicity and rituals - <i>A</i></b></p> <p><i>Chair:</i> Prof. Martin Gaenzsle, Professor of Cultural and Intellectual History of Modern South Asia at the Department of South Asian, Tibetan and Buddhist Studies of the University of Vienna</p> <p><b>Meenaxi Barkataki-Rusheweyh</b>, PhD Candidate University of Göttingen <i>‘Our old culture is our new religion: our new religion is our new culture’: The link between institutionalizing old belief systems and reinventing cultural identity—a case study of Rangraism amongst the Tangsa in Notheast India</i></p> <p><b>Jenny Bentley</b>, PhD Candidate University of Zürich <i>Ritual Practice, transformations and changing attachments to locality within the Lepcha community in Sikkim and West Bengal</i></p>
15:00-15:30	Coffee break	

<b>4<sup>th</sup> July</b>		
15:30-16:30	<p>Panel 3 – <b>Colonial and post-colonial knowledge of Northeast India in the building of identities - Seminar room 3</b>  <i>Chair:</i> Dr. Bianca Son, Dept. of History, SOAS, U. of London, UK</p> <p><b>Milinda Banerjee</b>  Assistant Professor at Presidency University, Kolkata  <i>Kinship, Ethnicity, and Colonialism: Interrogating the Shifting Nexus between Political Legitimization, State Ritual, and Community Politics in Princely and Early Postcolonial Tripura, ca. 1850-1950.</i></p> <p><b>Debojyoti Das</b>  Post-Doc, Dept. of History, Classics and Archeology, Birkbeck, U. of London:  <i>The Institutional Construction of Ethnicity in North East India: Anthropology and the Nagas</i></p>	<p>Panel 4 – <b>Display and Performance of cultural identities in Northeast India; Festivals, popular culture, material culture - A</b>  <i>Chair:</i> Dr Erik De Maaker, Lecturer in anthropology, Institute of Cultural and Social Studies, University of Leiden</p> <p><b>Marion Wettstein</b>  Dept. of South Asian, Tibetan and Buddhist Studies  <i>Bodies and Things in Transformation: Manifestations of Shifting identities in the physical and performative world of the Nagas</i></p> <p><b>Mona Chettri</b>, PhD Candidate  Dept. of Anthropology, SOAS, U. of London:  <i>Space, Politics and Ethnicity: Transforming the Religious Landscape of Sikkim</i></p>
17:15	<p>Photopresentation - <b>ISA</b></p> <p><b>Steven Rubin</b> and <b>Shahnaz K. Leblhuber</b>, PhD Candidate  Assistant Professor of Art, Penn State University, Vienna University  <i>Borderline Existence: Burmese Chin in Mizoram State</i> <i>My Land and my People - Mizoram Today</i></p>	
17:45	<p><b>Sanjoy Hazarika</b>, Dr. Saifuddin Kitchlew Chair, Professor and Director at the Centre for Northeast Studies and Policy Research, Jamia Millia Islamia University, New Delhi – <b>ISA</b>  Film: <i>Where there are no Roads ...</i> (42 min). Direction and Cinematography: Maulee Senapati; Production and Script: Sanjoy Hazarika; Narration: Jitendra Ramprakash</p>	

5 <sup>th</sup> July		
9:00-11:00	<p>Panel 13 – <b>Narratives, myths, and oral traditions - Seminar room 3</b>  <i>Chair:</i> Univ.-Doz, Dr. Guntram Hazod, Institute for Social Anthropology, Austrian Academy of Sciences</p> <p><b>Ilito Achumi</b>, PhD Candidate  Dept. of Sociology, Center for the Study of Social Systems, School of Social sciences, JNU, Delhi  <i>Revisiting the Nagas: Mapping the Memory and Remembering the past in times of Contentions</i></p> <p><b>Alban von Stockhausen</b>  Department of South Asian, Tibetan and Buddhist Studies of the University of Vienna  <i>Walong - the story of the Naga Queen and its variations</i></p> <p><b>Faguna Barmahalia</b>  Senior Research Fellow, Department of Folklore Research, Guwahati University, Assam  <i>Folklore and Ethnic Identity Movement: A study among the Bodos and Rabhas of Assam</i></p> <p><b>Rekha Konsam</b>, PhD Candidate  Department of Sociology, Delhi School of Economics, Delhi University  <i>Ritual, Performance, Narrative: Celebrating the Meitei Cultural Identity</i></p>	<p>Panel 1 – <b>Cultural identity changes in Northeast India - A</b>  <i>Chair:</i> Dr. Philippe Ramirez, Centre d'Études Himalayennes, CNRS, France</p> <p><b>Lavinia Mawlong</b>, PhD Candidate  Centre for Development Studies (ZELF), Freie Universität, Berlin  <i>The practice of "Tang-Jait" within the Matrilineal Society of the Khasis of Meghalaya: A study on Ethnic and Social Boundaries</i></p> <p><b>Erik de Maaker</b>  Anthropology, Institute of Cultural and Social Studies, University of Leiden  <i>Giving Value to the Hills: Land Rights, Farming and Indigeneity</i></p> <p><b>Timour Claquin</b>, PhD Candidate  Centre de Recherches et d'Études Anthropologiques, Université Lumière Lyon 2: <i>A-chik a-song: cultural politics and territorial claims in the Garo Hills region of Meghalaya</i></p> <p><b>Dolly Kikon</b>  Department of Anthropology, Stanford University  <i>Land, Labor and the Construction of Family Ties in the Foothills of Northeast India</i></p>
11:00-11:30	Coffee break	
11:30-12:30	<p>Panel 9 – <b>Tourism, development and cultural identities changes – A</b>  <i>Chair:</i> Dr Duncan McDuaie-Ra, Associate Professor in Development Studies - Coordinator Development Studies, University of New South Wale, Sydney Canberra – School of Social Sciences</p> <p><b>Mirza Zulfiquar Rahman</b>, PhD Candidate  Dept. of Humanities and Social Sciences, Indian Institute of Technology, Guwahati  <i>A 'Clean' view through the clouds? Challenges to community participation and impact of tourism and development in Cherrapunjee and Mawlynnong</i></p> <p><b>Rune Bennike</b>, PhD Candidate  University of Copenhagen, Dept. of Political Science and Centre for Global Studies:  <i>'Ruly Hills' Darjeeling on the Edge of the Northeast</i></p>	<p><b>Visit of Phonogrammarchiv tour:</b></p> <p>Guided tour to the Phonogrammarchiv (the world's first sound archive and modern research institute for audiovisual archiving and restoration), with a focus on historic and current recordings from India by Jürgen Schöpf and colleagues. PLEASE REGISTER for this tour!</p>
12:30-13:30	Lunch	

<b>5<sup>th</sup> July</b>		
13:30-15:00	<p><b>Panel 11 – Gender and Identity Formation in NE India - <i>Seminar room 3</i></b>  <i>Chair:</i> Shahnaz Leblhuber, PhD Candidate, Dept. of Social Anthropology, University of Vienna</p> <p><b>Soibam Haripriya</b>, PhD Candidate  Department of Sociology, Delhi University  <i>Agitating Women, Disrobed Mothers</i></p> <p><b>Rusievan Shangpliang</b>  Dept. of History, NEHU, Shillong  <i>Khasi Matrilineal System: The Backbone of Khasi Culture</i></p>	<p><b>Panel 7 – Religious shift and identity formation - A</b>  <i>Chair:</i> Dr Melanie Vandenhelsken, anthropologist, Institute for Social Anthropology, Austrian Academy of Sciences</p> <p><b>Glen Chua</b>, PhD Candidate  Dept. of Socio-Cultural Anthropology, University of Toronto  <i>Evangelizing in the Borderland: Christian Tribals and Migrant Others in Meghalaya</i></p> <p><b>Ketholenuo Mepfhü-o</b>, PhD Candidate  Centre for Historical Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi  <i>Conversion and Questions of Identity in the Naga Hills</i> (in absentia)</p> <p><b>Philippe Ramirez</b>  Centre d'Études Himalayennes, CNRS, France  <i>Conversions, Population Movements and Ethno-Cultural Landscapes in the Assam-Meghalaya Borderlands</i></p>
15:00–15:30	Coffee break	
15:30-17:00	<p><b>Panel 5 – Display and Performance of cultural identities in Northeast India; Art and medias - <i>Seminar room 3</i></b>  <i>Chair:</i> Alban von Stockhausen, Dr. anthropology, Department of South Asian, Tibetan and Buddhist Studies of the University of Vienna</p> <p><b>Teiborlang T. Kharsyntiew</b>  Assistant Professor, Dept. of International Relations/Politics, School of Global Studies, Sikkim University  <i>Fashion Subculture and Identity Formation in North East India: A Case Study Gangtok and Shillong</i></p> <p><b>Akshaya Tankha</b>, PhD Candidate  Dept. of Art, University of Toronto  <i>Visual Culture and Governmentality in Contemporary Nagaland</i></p> <p><b>Iris Odyuo</b>  Associate Professor, Dept. of History, Sao Chang College, Tuensang (Nagaland) India  <i>The impact of Globalization on Naga Art</i></p>	<p><b>Panel 2 – Separatism from Central India/ State governments, and insurgencies - A</b>  <i>Chair:</i> Prof. Sanjib Baruah, Professor of Political Studies, Bard College, New York</p> <p><b>Townsend Middleton</b>  Assistant Professor, University of North Carolina:  <i>States of Difference: Refiguring Ethnicity and its Crisis at India's Borders</i></p> <p><b>Rakhee Kalita</b>  Associate Professor, Cotton College, Guwahati  <i>The Rage of Caliban": Ethnic Identity, Otherness and the Rhetoric of Anger in India's Northeast</i></p> <p><b>Sanjoy Hazarika</b>, Dr. Saifuddin Kitchlew Chair, Professor and Director at the Centre for Northeast Studies and Policy Research, Jamia Millia Islamia University, New Delhi  <i>Inequality and Impunity: many faces of AFSPA and the State</i></p>
17:00-17:30	<p><b>Jürgen Schöpft – <i>Seminar room 3</i></b>  Ethnomusicologist, Phonogrammarchiv, Austrian Academy of Sciences  Film: Stilwell-Road (1943), 45min</p>	
19:00	<p><b>Conference dinner</b>  Department of South Asian, Tibetan and Buddhist Studies, University campus, Hof 2.1</p>	

6 <sup>th</sup> July		
9:30-11:30	<p>Panel 12 – <b>Language and identity formation - <i>Seminar room 3</i></b>  <i>Chair:</i> Dr Jürgen Schöpf, ethnomusicologist, Phonogrammarchiv, Austrian Academy of Sciences</p> <p><b>Mark Turin</b>  Program Director, Yale Himalaya Initiative, Yale University  <i>Situating Language, Recognizing Multilingualism: Linguistic Identities and Mother Tongue Attachment in Northeast India and the Region</i></p> <p><b>Tim Bodt</b>, PhD Candidate  Institut für Sprachwissenschaft, Universität Bern, Switzerland  <i>The Momba Scheduled Tribe of Arunachal Pradesh</i></p> <p><b>Serdihun Beypi</b>  Lecturer, Assam University, Diphu Campus  <i>Language Change in Karbi: An Issue of Threatening Identity</i></p> <p><b>Pascale Dollfus and François Jacquesson</b>  Centre d'Etudes Himalayennes, CNRS, and Langues et Civilisations de Tradition Orale, CNRS, France  <i>Sherdukpens for ever!</i></p>	<p>Panel 8 – <b>Ethnic and indigenous politics and cultural identities changes - <i>Seminar room 2</i></b>  <i>Chair:</i> Prof. B.G. Karlsson, Senior Lecturer of Social Anthropology, Stockholm University – PART I</p> <p><b>Sanjay Barbora</b>  Associate Professor, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Guwahti  <i>Moments of Madness: Violence, Agrarian Change and the Politics of Autonomy in Assam</i></p> <p><b>Kaustubh Deka</b>, PhD Candidate  Centre for Political Studies, School of Social Sciences, JNU, Delhi  <i>This time Bodoland: Yet another 'ethnic massacre' in Assam? From ethnic consciousness to ethnic recognition: the State and the 'ethnic others' in Assam</i></p> <p><b>Cornelia Günauer</b>, MA  Research Assistant and Lecturer at the Dep. Of Anthropology and African Studies at the Johannes Gutenberg University, Mainz  <i>Diversity and Difference-The art of Electioneering in Meghalaya</i></p>
11:30-12:00	Coffee break	
12:00-13:00	<p><b>Tara Douglas</b>, PhD Candidate  Center for Animation Studies, Bath University, U.K  <i>Tales of the Tribes: Animation as a tool for representing cultural identities in Northeast India.</i></p> <p><b>Seminar room 3</b></p>	<p>Panel 8 – PART II - <b><i>Seminar room 2</i></b></p> <p><b>Mitul Baruah</b>, PhD Candidate  Dept. of Geography, Syracuse University, USA  <i>Floods, Riverbank Erosion, and the (Re-)Production of Hazardous Geographies in Assam</i></p> <p><b>N. William Singh</b>, PhD Candidate  Pachhunga University College, Aizawl, Mizoram  <i>Mizo Identity and Role of Young Mizo Association (YMA) in Mizoram</i></p>
13:00–14:00	Lunch	
14:00-16:00	<p>Concluding session - <b><i>Seminar room 2</i></b>  <i>Chair:</i> Prof. B.G. Karlsson, Senior Lecturer of Social Anthropology, Stockholm University</p>	

