



WORKSHOP

KIRANTI – LANGUAGE AND CULTURE IN COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE

PROGRAMM

- 14.00** Welcome and Introduction
Martin Gaenzle
- 14.30** **Grégoire Schlemmer** How to present the »Rai religion« in 6000 words ?
- 15.00** **Marion Wettstein** The weaver and the hunter: An attempt in comparative Himalayan mythology and cultural practice
- 15.30** *Kaffeepause*
- 16.00** **Joanna Bialek** Tracing the origins of *rabs*. Linguistic and social history of the term
- 16.30** **Linda Gustavsson** Religious change among the Sikkimese Limbus
- 17.00** **Mélanie Vandenhelsken** Comparing Limbu in Nepal and in Sikkim. An exploratory framework
- 17.30** **Alban von Stockhausen** Eternalising one's name: Comparing rituals of status between Eastern Nepal and Northeast India

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- 17.30** **Alban von Stockhausen (Bernisches Historisches Museum)**
Eternalising one's name: Comparing rituals of status between Eastern Nepal and Northeast India

ABSTRACTS

GRÉGOIRE SCHLEMMER *How to present the "Rai religion" in 6000 words ?*

I have been recently asked to write for the "Brill's Encyclopedia of the Religions among the Indigenous People of South Asia", a short presentation of "Rai religion", in 6000 words. This project is an occasion to update data and to initiate a comparative work about this topic. The task is not easy and it raises several questions:

which aspects of religious practices should be selected and which aspects ignored? Should we focus on more traditional groups or on the actual realities of practices? Should Rai and borrowed religious practice be taken as a whole with internal variation or as autonomous systems in themselves? I would like to submit a draft text to the constructive criticism of the specialists of different Rai groups. This should also lead to a discussion on the possible ways to undertake a comparative approach to Rai religion.

MARION WETTSTEIN *The Weaver and the Hunter: An attempt in comparative Himalayan mythology and cultural practice*

This contribution suggests that "the weaver and the hunter" can be regarded a prototypical gender model across the Himalayas. Taking the Rai of Eastern Nepal and the Naga of Northeast India as venture points, the paper comparatively explores the roots of this gender model in mythological accounts, hypothesizes about possible regional boundaries, reflects on its mirror in cultural practices, and takes a look at the implications for gender roles and identities with regard to the transformations of these practices in recent history.

JOANNA BIALEK *Tracing the origins of rabs. Linguistic and social history of the term*

Studying Old Tibetan (OT) documents can help us to unravel and thus better comprehend particular stages in the development of a lexeme that at first view gives the impression of having been coined in its ultimate form and meaning in only one step. Using the oldest extant sources on written Tibetan I will attempt to puzzle out the history of the term *rabs* and to demonstrate its semantic proximity to the Kiranti concept of *muddum*. The analysis of the lexical history of *rabs* shall be supported by additional linguistic material including Old Tibetan as well as Tibeto-Burman cognates of *rabs*. It is assumed that a thorough linguistic analysis can provide us information on a broader socio-cultural context in which the reconstructed semantic development might have taken place.

LINDA GUSTAVSSON *Religious Change among the Sikkimese Limbus*

The religious traditions of the Limbu community are undergoing a substantial transition in Sikkim. The paper will discuss the emergence of Yumaism as a 'Limbu religion'. A central aspect of the religious changes, is that the Limbu associations are contesting the authority of ritual specialists by limiting their relevance and significance in the new teachings of Yumaism.

MÈLANIE VANDENHELSEN *Comparing Limbu in Nepal and in Sikkim. An exploratory framework*

Limbus in Nepal and in Sikkim make one single ethnic group and share a common memory. However, firstly the border has divided them politically for two centuries, secondly, differences regarding the self-perception of the ethnic community exist between Limbus on each side of the border, and, thirdly, Limbus in Sikkim do differentiate Sikkimese and Nepalese Limbus on several grounds (mainly religious). Is the cultural diversity within the Limbu community more important between Sikkimese and Nepalese Limbus? What still makes the transnational Limbu community a single cultural unit and what does not? This presentation will explore these questions by discussing field data recently collected and recent publications using a trans-border approach for studying groups living in Nepal and Sikkim. It will highlight preliminary guiding lines for the comparative approach on which is based Vandenhelsken's project, *Trans-border religion. Re-composing Limbu rituals in the Nepal–Sikkim borderlands* (FWF, CIRDIS, University of Vienna).

ALBAN VON STOCKHAUSEN *Eternalising one's Name: Comparing Rituals of Status between Eastern Nepal and Northeast India*

Highlighting the social embedding of, and specific ritual practices within the 'Chamdām' ritual of the Dumī Rai of Eastern Nepal and the so-called 'Feast of Merit' of the Ao Naga, the paper experiments with a comparative approach on two geographically distant ritual practices across the extended Eastern Himalayas.

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Freitag, 12.05.2017 AAKH, Spitalgasse 2, Hof 2.7 1090 Wien Seminarraum 1