

**2<sup>nd</sup> International Conference  
of the  
Asian Research Borderlands Network**

**Asian Borderlands:  
Enclosure, Interaction and Transformation**

**5 – 7 November 2010**

**Chiang Mai, Thailand**

**PROGRAMME & BOOK OF ABSTRACTS**

**VENUE**

Furama Hotel, 54 Huay Keaw Road, Muang Chiang Mai 50300

**ORGANISERS & SPONSORS**



## CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

## PROGRAMME SCHEDULE

### Thursday 4 November

16.00 – 20.00

- *Corridor 1<sup>st</sup> floor*

Pre-registration

17.00 – 18.00

- *Corridor 1<sup>st</sup> floor*

Opening photo exhibitions and welcome reception

### Friday 5 November

7.30 – 8.30

- *Corridor 1<sup>st</sup> floor*

Registration

8.30 – 9.00

- *Leelawadee room, 5<sup>th</sup> floor*

Opening

9.00 – 9.45

- *Leelawadee room, 5<sup>th</sup> floor*

Keynote speech by Prof. James C. Scott

9.45 – 10.15

- *Corridor 1<sup>st</sup> floor*

Tea/coffee

10.15 – 12.15

- *Leelawadee room, 5<sup>th</sup> floor*
- *Bussarakam room, 1<sup>st</sup> floor*

Identity Construction in the Borderlands  
Wonderlands in Borderlands: Religious Institutions and  
Ritual Texts beyond States

12.15 – 13.15

- *Lobby lounge*

Lunch

13.15 – 15.15

- *Leelawadee room, 5<sup>th</sup> floor*
- *Bussarakam room, 1<sup>st</sup> floor*

Ethnicity at the Crossroads ? Borders areas and dynamics  
of belonging  
Unpacking Regulation in Borderlands: Securities,  
Identities, and Corruptions

15.15 – 15.45

- *Corridor 1<sup>st</sup> floor*
- *Morakot room, 1<sup>st</sup> Floor*

Tea/coffee  
Poster Presentation

15.45 – 17.45

- *Leelawadee room, 5<sup>th</sup> floor*

Policy dialogue:  
Rights, States and Cross-Border Resources

## Saturday 6 November

9.00 – 10.30

- *Leelawadee room, 5th floor*
- *Bussarakam room, 1st floor*

"Zomia", The Southeast Asian and Himalayan Massifs:  
Takes on Highland Transnational Spaces I  
Trapping and Un-trapping the Bordered: issues and  
challenges of people in cross-border situation

10.30 – 11.00

- *Corridor 1st floor*
- *Morakot room, 1st Floor*

Tea/coffee  
Poster Presentation

11.00 – 12.30

- *Leelawadee room, 5th floor*
- *Bussarakam room, 1st floor*

"Zomia", The Southeast Asian and Himalayan Massifs:  
Takes on Highland Transnational Spaces II  
Research Ethics – Managing Political and Social  
Complexity and the Role of Elites I

12.30 – 13.30

- *Lobby lounge*

Lunch

13.30 – 15.00

- *Leelawadee room, 5th floor*
- *Bussarakam room, 1st floor*

Plight of the Peripheral communities across the Asian  
borderlands: Discourse on livelihoods, marginality and  
state's interventions  
Research Ethics – Managing Political and Social  
Complexity and the Role of Elites II

15.00 – 15.30

- *Corridor 1st floor*

Tea/coffee

15.30 – 17.00

- *Leelawadee room, 5th floor*
- *Bussarakam room, 1st floor*

Crossing Borders: Missionary Networks, Movement and  
the Geographies of Religious Conversion in the Asian  
Borderlands  
Borders as a site of survival and resistance

17.00 – 17.30

- *Corridor 1st floor*

Tea/coffee

17.30 – 19.00

- *Bussarakam room, 1st floor*

Movie on *The Songs of Eh Doh Shi 2006* presented by  
Friends Without Borders

19.00 – 19.30

- *Bussarakam room, 1st floor*

Q & A with the Producer of the movie

## Sunday 7 November

8.30 – 11.00

- *Leelawadee room, 5<sup>th</sup> floor*
- *Bussarakam room, 1<sup>st</sup> floor*

Borderland Minorities and the Politics of Representation  
Coping with Scale – Moving from Micro to Macro, Global to Local and all stages in between

11.00 – 11.30

- *Corridor 1<sup>st</sup> floor*
- *Morakot room, 1<sup>st</sup> Floor*

Tea/coffee  
Poster Presentation

11.30 – 13.00

- *Leelawadee room, 5<sup>th</sup> floor*
- *Bussarakam room, 1<sup>st</sup> floor*

Pushing the Archival Limits of 'Zomia'  
Border Rituals in South Asia I

13.00 – 14.00

- *Lobby lounge*

Lunch

14.00 – 16.00

- *Leelawadee room, 5<sup>th</sup> floor*
- *Bussarakam room, 1<sup>st</sup> floor*

The Last Great Enclosure?  
Border Rituals in South Asia II

16.00 – 17.00

- *Leelawadee room, 5<sup>th</sup> floor*

Business meeting

17.00 – 18.00

- *Swimming pool, 17<sup>th</sup> floor*

Farewell drinks

**Thursday 4 November****16.00-20.00** Pre-registration: Corridor 1<sup>st</sup> floor**17.00-18.00** Opening photo exhibitions and welcome drinks: Corridor / Tubtim room 1<sup>st</sup> floor**Friday 5 November****7.30-8.30** Registraton: Corridor 1<sup>st</sup> floor**8.30-9.00** Opening: Leelawadee room, 5<sup>th</sup> floor**9.00-9.45** Keynote speech: Leelawadee room, 5<sup>th</sup> floor  
Prof. James C. Scott, Yale University, USA  
The Politics, Geography, and Agro-ecology of State-Evasion: Zomia and its 'Cousins' Elsewhere**9.45-10.15** Tea/coffee: Corridor 1<sup>st</sup> floorLeelawadee room, 5<sup>th</sup> floorBussarakam room, 1<sup>st</sup> floor**10.15-12.15** **Identity Construction in the Borderlands****Wonderlands in Borderlands: Religious Institutions and Ritual Texts beyond States***Convenors: Frédéric Bourdier & Jacques Ivanoff**Convenor: David Holm*  
*Discussant: Ts'ui-p'ing Ho***Frédéric Bourdier***Identity Effervescence in the Borderlands: a Case Study in Northeast Cambodia***David Holm***Priests, Texts, and Power in the Tai Chieftaincies of western Guangxi***Jacques Ivanoff***Bordelands and identity reconstruction between insular and mainland Southeast Asia***Ya-ning Kao***Making Flower-rituals Diverse among the Zhaung People along the Sino-Vietnamese Border***Maxime Boutry***The Myanmar-Thailand border and transnational Burmese migrations An adaptative colonization of a trans-ethnic social space***Jacob Cawthorne***Taoism and Self-Governance: The Yiu Mien of Laos***Olivier Ferrari***Borders and cultural creativity. The case of the Chaolay, Sea Gypsies of southern Thailand***Shu-li Huang***"Keep In the Village": The Emergence of Ahmao (Hmong) Skepticism and Its Dealing with the Chinese State*

<b>12.15-13.15</b>	<b>Lunch: Lobby lounge</b>	
	<b>Leelawadee room, 5<sup>th</sup> floor</b>	<b>Bussarakam room, 1<sup>st</sup> floor</b>
<b>13.15-15.15</b>	<b>Ethnicity at the Crossroads? Borders areas and dynamics of belonging</b>	<b>Unpacking Regulation in Borderlands: Securities, Identities, and Corruptions</b>
	<i>Convenor: Olivier Evrard</i> <i>Discussant: François Robinne</i>	<i>Convenors: Reece Jones &amp; Jason Cons</i> <i>Discussant: Willem van Schendel</i>
	<b>François Robinne</b> <i>Interethnic borderlands vs transethnic crossroads: what coherency behind hybridity?</i>	<b>Reece Jones</b> <i>Spaces of refusal: rethinking resistance at the border</i>
	<b>Kwanchewan Buadaeng</b> <i>Children of Migrants from Myanmar, Schooling and Transnational Identities</i>	<b>Duncan McDuire-Ra</b> <i>Opposing the Logic of Enclosure in the India-Bangladesh Borderlands</i>
	<b>Olivier Evrard</b> <i>Myth, ritual and belonging in a transethnic perspective: the case of Vieng Phu Kha, Laos</i>	<b>Jason Cons</b> <i>Spatial Corruptions: Development, Place, and Rule in the India-Bangladesh Enclaves</i>
	<b>Prasit Leepreecha</b> <i>Wrist Tie as a Transethnic Ritual in Northern Thailand and Laos</i>	<b>Malini Sur</b> <i>Milking Cash Cows at the Border: Cattle Trade between India and Bangladesh</i>
<b>15.15-15.45</b>	<b>Tea/coffee: Corridor 1<sup>st</sup> floor</b>	
<b>15.15-15.45</b>	<b>Poster Presentation: Morakot room, 1<sup>st</sup> Floor</b>	
<b>15.45-17.45</b>	<b>Policy dialogue - Rights, States and Cross-Border Resources: Leelawadee room, 5<sup>th</sup> floor</b>	

**Saturday 6 November**

	Leelawadee room, 5 <sup>th</sup> floor	Bussarakam room, 1 <sup>st</sup> floor
9.00-10.30	<p><b>"Zomia", The Southeast Asian and Himalayan Massifs: Takes on Highland Transnational Spaces I</b></p> <p><i>Convenor: Sara Shneiderman</i></p>	<p><b>Trapping and Un-trapping the Bordered: issues and challenges of people in cross-border situation</b></p> <p><i>Convenor: Ramananda Wangkheirakpam</i> <i>Discussant: Mhon Kikon</i></p>
	<p><b>Jean Michaud</b> <i>Zomia and beyond</i></p>	<p><b>Johan Elverskog</b> <i>An Anarchist History of the Silk Road</i></p>
	<p><b>Sara Shneiderman</b> <i>Are the Himalayas in Zomia? Some Scholarly and Political Considerations across Time and Space</i></p>	<p><b>Sujata Ramachandran</b> <i>BY THE NUMBERS? Policies and Practices Towards Bangladeshi Transmigrants in India</i></p>
	<p><b>Tina Harris</b> <i>"Zomia", Cartographic Anxiety, A Geographical Excuse, and Zomia-Making in the Himalayan Massif</i></p>	<p><b>Ben Campbell</b> <i>Crossing the Borderlands: shifting Tamang positions on the cultural politics of connectivity</i></p>
10.30-11.00	Tea/coffee and poster presentations: Corridor 1 <sup>st</sup> floor	
10.30-11.00	Poster Presentation: Morakot room, 1 <sup>st</sup> Floor	
11.00-12.30	<p><b>"Zomia", The Southeast Asian and Himalayan Massifs: Takes on Highland Transnational Spaces II</b></p> <p><i>Convenor: Sara Shneiderman</i></p>	<p><b>Research Ethics – Managing Political and Social Complexity and the Role of Elites I</b></p> <p><i>Convenor: Erik de Maaker</i></p>
	<p><b>Pat Giersch</b> <i>Across 'Zomia' with Merchants, Monks, and Musk.</i></p>	<p><b>Micah F. Morton</b> <i>Negotiating the Changing Space of 'Zomia': Aqkaq Tseir Kaq Tiq Kaq Ma or Ten Akha are the Same as One</i></p>
	<p><b>Sarah Turner</b> <i>Borderlands and border narratives: how the Sino-Vietnamese border shapes challenges and opportunities for upland traders</i></p>	<p><b>Bianca Son</b> <i>The Creation of an Elite with the Subaltern Discourse of the Zo</i></p>
	<p><b>Steven B. Miles</b> <i>Riverine Diaspora: Cantonese in Zomia, 1700-1850</i></p>	<p><b>Bokhtiar Ahmed</b> <i>The Jigsaw Puzzle of 'Mi-Jaw-Ram': Identity, Disjuncture and Power on a Bangladesh Borderland</i></p>
12.30-13.30	Lunch: Lobby lounge	

	<b>Leelawadee room, 5<sup>th</sup> floor</b>	<b>Bussarakam room, 1<sup>st</sup> floor</b>
<b>13.30-15.00</b>	<b>Plight of the Peripheral communities across the Asian borderlands: Discourse on livelihoods, marginality and state's interventions</b>  <i>Convenor: Sarit K. Chaudhuri</i>	<b>Research Ethics – Managing Political and Social Complexity and the Role of Elites II</b>  <i>Convenor: Erik de Maaker</i>
	<b>Sarit K. Chaudhuri &amp; Gibji Nimachow</b> <i>Plight of the Akas: Livelihood, Resource Management and Politics of Exclusion in Arunachal Pradesh</i>	<b>Christoph Antons</b> <i>Asian borderlands and the legal protection of traditional knowledge</i>
	<b>Deepak K. Singh</b> <i>A Tale of Two Marginal People: Chakma refugees and the indigenous peoples of Arunachal Pradesh</i>	<b>Nel Vandekerckhove &amp; Bert Suykens</b> <i>The Meaning of Border in 'Rebellious' Society</i>
	<b>Gerald Roche</b> <i>Mountains that Join: Inverting the Friction of Distance in the Western China's Hehuang Region</i>	
<b>15.00-15.30</b>	<b>Tea/coffee: Corridor 1<sup>st</sup> floor</b>	
	<b>Leelawadee room, 5<sup>th</sup> floor</b>	<b>Bussarakam room, 1<sup>st</sup> floor</b>
<b>15.30-17.00</b>	<b>Crossing Borders: Missionary Networks, Movement and the Geographies of Religious Conversion in the Asian Borderlands</b>  <i>Convenors: Alexander Horstmann &amp; Vibha Joshi Parkin</i>	<b>Borders as a site of survival and resistance</b>  <i>Convenor: Kyoko Kusakabe</i>
	<b>Alexander Horstmann</b> <i>Christian missionary networks and the Karens at the Thailand-Burma Border</i>	<b>Soe Lin Aung</b> <i>The Friction of Cartography: Spatial Struggle and Mobility as Resistance among Migrant Communities on the Thai-Burma Border</i>
	<b>Vibha Joshi Parkin</b> <i>Cross-border evangelism and nationalism among the Naga of Indo-Burma</i>	<b>Kyoko Kusakabe &amp; Ruth Pearson</b> <i>Childcare at the border: Strategies for survival of migrant workers at the Thai-Burmese border</i>
	<b>Mandy Sadan</b> <i>Localized religious identities: Singpo-Kachin-Jingpo communities of Indo-Burma</i>	<b>Wen-Chin Chang</b> <i>Yunnanese Women Traders in Burma</i>
<b>17.30-19.00</b>	<b>Movie on <i>The Songs of Eh Doh Shi</i> 2006 presented by Friends Without Borders: Bussarakam room, 1st floor</b>	
<b>19.00-19.30</b>	<b>Q &amp; A with the Producer of the movie</b>	

**Sunday 7 November**

	Leelawadee room, 5 <sup>th</sup> floor	Bussarakam room, 1 <sup>st</sup> floor
8.30-11.00	<p><b>Borderland Minorities and the Politics of Representation</b></p> <p><i>Convenors: Meghna Guhathakurta &amp; Eva Gerharz</i></p>	<p><b>Coping with Scale – Moving from Micro to Macro, Global to Local and all stages in between</b></p> <p><i>Convenor: Willem van Schendel</i></p>
	<p><b>Sabyasachi Basu Ray Chaudhury</b> <i>The Chakmas in Arunachal Pradesh: Statelessness and the Problem of Representation in Borderlands</i></p>	<p><b>Edyta Roszko</b> <i>The goddess of cinnamon : the relationship between lowland and highland</i></p>
	<p><b>P. Thirumal &amp; C. Lalrozami</b> <i>On the Discursive and Material Context of the First Handwritten Lushai Newspaper 'Mizo Chanchin Laishuih', 1898</i></p>	<p><b>R.K. Debbarma</b> <i>From Place-Everywhere to Placeless: Space, (Im)mobility and Exclusion</i></p>
	<p><b>Meghna Guhathakurta</b> <i>Representing the Khumi of the Chittagong Hill Tracts: The Making of a Film</i></p>	<p><b>Dolly Kikon</b> <i>Unsettling the Hill/Valley Divide: An Ethnography of Haats in the Foothills of Northeast India</i></p>
		<p><b>Ellen Bal &amp; Timour Claquin</b> <i>(Re)interpreting the indigenous peoples' discourse in different spaces: a case study of the Garos of India and Bangladesh</i></p>
		<p><b>Phillipe Ramirez</b> <i>Unfashionable mess on the margins : clans, politics and ethnicities in Northeast India</i></p>
11.00-11.30	Tea/coffee and poster presentations: Corridor 1 <sup>st</sup> floor	
11.00-11.30	Poster Presentation: Morakot room, 1 <sup>st</sup> Floor	

	<b>Leelawadee room, 5<sup>th</sup> floor</b>	<b>Bussarakam room, 1<sup>st</sup> floor</b>
<b>11.30-13.00</b>	<b>Pushing the Archival Limits of 'Zomia'</b> <i>Convenor: Mandy Sadan</i> <b>Michael Eilenberg</b> <i>Evading state authority: Rebels and outlaws in the borderlands of Dutch West Borneo</i>	<b>Border Rituals in South Asia I</b> <i>Convenor: William S. Sax</i> <b>William S. Sax</b> <i>De-ritualizing Borders in the Divine Kingdoms of Rawain</i>
	<b>Alexander Ong</b> <i>Historicizing Transborder Crossers within the Sino-Vietnamese Borderland Stretch of Zomia, 1671-1751</i>	<b>Lokesh Ohri</b> <i>Redrawing Borders and Ritual Adaptation in the Western Himalaya</i>
	<b>Jianxiong MA</b> <i>The State Agency in the Formation of Yunnan-Burma Frontier since the 1720s</i>	<b>Girija Pande</b> <i>Is Mahakali a Border or Culture? Content and Context of Gamara-Meshar in Indo-Nepal Border</i>
<b>12.30-14.00</b>	<b>Lunch: Lobby lounge</b>	
	<b>Leelawadee room, 5<sup>th</sup> floor</b>	<b>Bussarakam room, 1<sup>st</sup> floor</b>
<b>14.00-16.00</b>	<b>The Last Great Enclosure?</b> <i>Convenor: Oscar Salemink</i> <b>Debarati Bagchi</b> <i>Locating the 'Exceptional': Land Question in Colonial Sylhet</i>	<b>Border Rituals in South Asia II</b> <i>Convenor: William S. Sax</i> <b>Christoph Bergmann</b> <i>Homeward Bound: Celebrating Harvest in the Darma Valley of the Kumaon Himalayas</i>
	<b>Debojyoti Das</b> <i>Re-Imagining Margins, State Power, Space and Territoriality in the Naga Hills</i>	<b>Hans Harder</b> <i>Borders and the Bangladeshi Hindu Diaspora: A Study of Sitakunda, Chittagong</i>
	<b>Oscar Salemink</b> <i>The art of upland governmentality and the desire for improvement in Vietzomia</i>	<b>Jürgen Schaflechner</b> <i>Moving through meaning: The pilgrimage of Hinglaj Devi in today's Pakistan</i>
	<b>Stéphane Gros</b> <i>The Benevolent State: A case Study among the Drungs of Northwest Yunnan (China)</i>	<b>Deborah Tooker</b> <i>Border Emotions among the Akha</i>
<b>16.00-17.00</b>	<b>Business meeting: Leelawadee room, 5<sup>th</sup> floor</b>	
<b>17.00-18.00</b>	<b>Farewell drinks: Swimming pool, 5<sup>th</sup> floor</b>	



## **ACTIVITIES**

## **PHOTO EXHIBITIONS**

### **Path of Perseverance: The Chin from Burma**

#### **Introduction**

The Southeast Asian nation of Burma has been plagued by political turmoil, active armed conflict, and severe economic deterioration for almost five decades. In 1962, the military took over the government in a coup. A series of military regimes have since ruthlessly controlled the country through violence and oppression. Burma's ethnic nationalities, which comprise roughly 40 percent of the total population, are particularly targeted by the military regime for abuse. The ethnic Chin represent a small segment of Burma's persecuted ethnic population.

Facing relentless human rights violations, severe economic oppression, and restrictions of basic freedoms, the Chin are frequently forced from their homes. Their search for safety and survival beyond Burma's borders leads them to India and Malaysia. However, their future as refugees in India and Malaysia is less than secure as they face intense discrimination, exploitation, and other abuses.

This exhibit follows the journey of the Chin from their homeland in western Burma to the rural, isolated communities of Mizoram; to the dusty and impoverished refugee neighborhoods of New Delhi; to the urban flats and jungle camps of Malaysia.

Benny Manser

#### **Life in South Asian Borderlands**

South Asia is a region of many different international borders. They come in various forms. Some are old, others not. Some are tense and fortified, others open and relaxed. All of them have created borderlands, zones on both sides of the borderline. Here millions of people live lives that are marked by the border in ways that are largely unknown to non-locals.

The images in this exhibition document life in the India-Bangladesh-Burma borderland. This is a relatively new borderland – two generations ago it was still part of a single unit, British India. It was not till 1947 that an international border descended on the inhabitants. They had to get used to the fact that they had now been assigned the citizenship of one country, and their neighbours that of another.

As national identities developed, however, many cross-border connections persisted, or were newly forged. Borderlanders had to make the best of a difficult situation, especially because tense relations between their countries often translated into dangerous borders. As a result, states have often regarded their borderlanders with suspicion, and borderlanders have felt neglected, criminalised and misunderstood by their states.

This exhibition presents images from the borderland with a view to facilitating reflection on the relationship between states and borderlanders in South Asia.

Willem van Schendel  
Malini Sur

## **POLICY DIALOGUE**

Policy Dialogue: 'RIGHTS, STATES AND CROSS-BORDER RESOURCES'  
(sometimes referred to as 'Round Table Discussion on Cross-border issues')

The Policy Dialogue will bring together policy makers (both government and NGO), activists and researchers from South and Southeast Asia. They will discuss issues of cross-border resources (water, forests, minerals) and the regulation of rights to these resources. The policy dialogue is hosted by the University of Chiang Mai. The audience will include activists from the region, the large NGO community, students and faculty, and participants of the Asian Borderland Research Network Conference, which is being held at the University of Chiang Mai at the same time.

Invited participants:

- 1) Carl Middleton, SE Asia Program Director, International Rivers, Bangkok, Thailand
- 2) Pham Quang Tu, Deputy Director, Consultancy on Development (CODE)  
Dongda District, Hanoi, Vietnam
- 3) Niwat Roykaew, Rak Chiang Khong Group / Natural Resource and Mekong-Lanna Cultural Conservative Network
- 4) Ramananda Wangkheirakpam, North East Peoples Alliance, India
- 5) Mhon Kikon, DICE Foundation, Northeast People's Alliance, India

## **MOVIE: THE SONGS OF EH DOH SHI 2006 PRESENTED BY FRIENDS WITHOUT BORDERS**

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Friends Without Borders (FWB)

5.30 – 7.00 p.m.: Movie – 'The Songs of Eh Doh Shi' – 2006, presented by FWB

7.00 – 7.30 p.m.: A talk with the producer of the film

'The Songs of Eh Doh Shi' - 2006

Thailand/86 min

Director-screenwriter-editor-music composer: Hta Haw Koh

Producer-screenwriter-music composer: Tha Blay Paw

Cinematographer: Nung

Sound: Kieng,Lui

Music Arrangements: Wat, Kai

In this film, true stories from different places and times, as told by Karen refugees and Thai-Karen villagers in Thailand, are threaded together and retold through the eyes of Eh Doh Sho, a 15 year-old Karen boy whose parents have been killed during the civil war in Burma and who has come to live with a relative in a refugee camp in Thailand. The struggles experienced in a forgotten land and from within a fenced-in world have been made into this feature-length movie by a Karen cast and crew, with the help of their Thai friends. The film was first screened at the 2006 Refugee Film Festival in Cambodia, then at the 2007 Human Rights Film Festival in Seoul and the 2007 World Film International in Bangkok. It is also a popular movie among Karen border communities.

Contact:

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Website : <http://www.friends-without-borders.org>  
<http://www.facebook.com/fwbfoundation>  
<http://www.facebook.com/mediamonitoringproject>

## **POSTER PRESENTATIONS**

**Akihiro Hirayama**, Slavic Research Center, Hokkaido University, Japan

*Reshaping Eurasian/Japan's Border Studies*

In the summer of 2009, the Slavic Research Center (SRC) at Hokkaido University in Japan launched an academic program, "Reshaping Eurasian/Japan's Border Studies".

Before the collapse of the Soviet Union, the SRC had a long history of academic researches on the Soviet Union and Eastern European countries.

Seeing new countries created and border conditions changed dramatically in former communist regions in these two decades, the SRC sought the ways to cast new light on the moving dynamics of reconstructed politics, economies, societies and cultures in these regions. "Reshaping Eurasian/Japan's Border Studies" was designed as one of such ways; taking into consideration the geopolitics of newly created borders and peripheries, the SRC are now trying to establish new methodologies and perspectives in area studies.

It is the first and only border studies project in Japan, in which the SRC is conducting border researches not only on Eurasian countries but also on our living region, East Asia, including Japan.

The poster will introduce four missions of the project as follows:

1. Acting as a network center to foster and integrate researches on border issues in Eurasia and East Asia, and Japan.
2. Creating young researchers of border studies with the collaboration with Graduate School of Letters at Hokkaido University.
3. Making exhibitions on border issues at Hokkaido University Museum to let Japanese citizens and foreign tourists have more concern about those issues.
4. Offering the results of researches to the policy-making communities for information, so that they could resolve and stabilize the border issues.

Information other poster presentations will be announced during the conference

## **ABSTRACTS**

## ABSTRACTS IN ALPHABETICAL PANEL ORDER

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### BORDERLAND MINORITIES AND THE POLITICS OF REPRESENTATION

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**Convenors: Meghna Guhathakurta**, Research Initiatives Bangladesh, Bangladesh & **Eva Gerharz**, Department of Social Anthropology, Bielefeld University, Germany

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**Panel abstract:**

People living in borderlands are frequently regarded as highly marginalized minorities. Their recognition by powerful actors located within and beyond the nation-state and therewith, the chance to gain developmental benefits depends on successful strategies of (discursive and political) representation. These representations can be based on different forms of collective action such as activism, but also on ways of ascribing social, cultural, and linguistic characteristics either by members of the group or by others.

This panel seeks to investigate the various forms of representation concerning so-called minorities in South Asia. The panel seeks to examine the interrelations and discrepancies, how "culture" and "tradition" are depicted by whom, and how these strategies are structured by power relations. Focusing on the borderlands between India and Bangladesh in a comparative perspective, the panel asks how such "politics of representation" shape relationships with other groups, with the so-called majority within the nation-state but also beyond: The panel seeks to unravel the various forms of interaction and negotiation across local and national borders in order to show, in which different ways minority groups are increasingly engaging in processes of globalization and development.

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**Sabyasachi Basu Ray Chaudhury**, Department of Political Science, Rabindra Bharati University, Kolkata, India

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*The Chakmas in Arunachal Pradesh: Statelessness and the Problem of Representation in Borderlands*

The construction of the Kaptai dam over the Karnaphuli river in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT), Bangladesh (then East Pakistan) inundated the land primarily inhabited by the indigenous people (Chakma and other groups) of the hill tracts and displaced thousands of them in 1964. About 40,000 of these displaced people crossed the international border and arrived in the Indian state of Tripura. In the context of the strategic scenario prevailing in India's northeast and the eastern part of South Asia at that point, the Government of India decided to settle these refugees in the sparsely populated North Eastern Frontier Agency (NEFA) (now Arunachal Pradesh), a borderland. Since then, these people were completely forgotten until the movement started by the All Arunachal Pradesh Students' Union (AAPSU) in 1996 to evict these 'foreigners' from a state, where even the Indian citizens require Inner Line Permit (ILP) for a visit. The situation for these 'stateless' Chakmas and others turned worse soon and their problem still begs a durable solution. This paper will attempt to examine the problem of these people living in the South Asian borderland with an emphasis on the existing discourses of nation-state, citizenship, rights and justice.

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**P. Thirumal & C. Lalrozami**, Department of Communication, University of Hyderabad, India

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*On the Discursive and Material Context of the First Handwritten Lushai Newspaper 'Mizo Chanchin Laishuih', 1898*

Historically, the study of newspaper has focused on elaborating the object of its enquiry as industrial merchandise, a text, a sign of bourgeois promise and extraction or an entity that excites individualistic and nationalistic sentiments. Methodologically, it has concentrated less on the singularity of the event or the univocal character of a newspaper. This attempt is an effort to correct the imbalance in the division of labor. Mizo Chanchin Laishuih (MCL) may be

regarded as a visual text scaffolded to words and not images. It assumes a complex picture composition having varied surfaces and putative depths. The perceptual economy that is incited by MCL speaks of a process that produces an active Protestant silence. It flags off a mythology around the nascent enterprise of writing and scripting that anticipates a prescient self and the absence of a civil state, summoning and exorcising the good and bad spirits from the woods and the kin-ordered clans, impertinently addressing the fabled Tiger as a cat and the accompaniment of the Puithiam's chant with the inducing of a numbed apothecary of the newly arrived Doktor Sap. MCL institutes – and is a product of – a parallel process that demarcates seemingly negotiable and non-negotiable boundaries between the Plains and the Hills. The plainization of the Hills is not a linear process where practices of the plains are replaced with the practices of the Hills. It is likely that MCL paraded itself and derived its authority as the organ of the Colonial State and it had no pretensions of constituting a liberal subject or serving a liberal order.

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**Meghna Guhathakurta**, Research Initiatives Bangladesh, Bangladesh

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*Representing the Khumi of the Chittagong Hill Tracts: The Making of a Film*

In a region called the Chittagong Hill Tracts, in the south-eastern part of Bangladesh which is peopled by 11 different ethnic communities, the Khumis (400, 000) and Khyangs (200, 000) are among the smallest and most marginalised groups. Most members subsist traditionally by jum cultivation (swidden). Both communities suffer from extreme hardships conditions and encroachment of their culture by larger majoritarian communities both within the region and the general national framework. Research Initiatives Bangladesh (RIB) has supported two ethnographic films on them. In this paper I wish to elaborate some of the methodological challenges with regard to collective representation that one comes across in the making of such films which are documentary in the first place but which representations carry far-reaching political connotations.

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## **BORDER RITUALS IN SOUTH ASIA**

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**Convenor: William S. Sax**, South Asia Institute, Heidelberg University, Germany

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**Panel abstract:**

Not only does Border Studies call state-centred analyses into question, it also challenges the idea that a "borderless world of flows" is emerging under the sign of globalization, a world in which identity will no longer be conceived in terms of the nation-state. We contend that the creation, abolition, and militarization of borders has important effects on the identities of border communities, and that a powerful but so far neglected method for understanding these effects is the study of border rituals. There are many kinds of border rituals: rituals that create borders and rituals that abolish them; rituals for crossing borders as well as for defending them. In this panel, we assume that rituals are a fundamental site for the performative and ritual construction of identity, and ask, "How do border rituals affect reflexive processes of identity construction among border dwellers?" Five of our seven papers (Bergmann, Huber, Ohri, Sax, Schrempf) focus on ritualized borders between Himalayan communities and their neighbors; a sixth (Schaflechner) concentrates on the Indo-Pakistan border and its effect on the rituals of desert populations, while a seventh paper (Harder) focuses on the border between Bangladesh and India.

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**William S. Sax**, South Asia Institute, Heidelberg University, Germany

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*De-ritualizing Borders in the Divine Kingdoms of Rawain*

Until the 20th century, the region known as Rawain in the Western Himalayas at the headwaters of the Tons River was ruled from temple-fortresses by local gods and their oracles.

Borders between these divine kingdoms were highly ritualized, patrolled by the gods in their palanquins, and marked by frequent skirmishes when they were crossed without permission. Following the Gurkha war of 1814-1816, the victorious British were even compelled to negotiate post-war borders with Mahasu devta, the greatest of these local divine kings. The entire region was proudly independent of its neighbours, the kingdoms of Guge, Rampur Basahr, and Garhwal, and local inhabitants continue to insist on their cultural and political autonomy. In recent decades however, the old borders have been severely attenuated, and local political forms drastically altered, as part of a process of incorporation into the Indian political and cultural mainstream. Sax's paper focuses on what happened to the relation between border rituals and identity after the old borders were attenuated or abolished, while Ohri's paper looks at how the cult of Mahasu, the greatest of these divine kings, has adapted to the establishment of two new Indian states, Himachal Pradesh (established 1971) and Uttarakhand (established 2000).

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**Lokesh Ohri**, South Asia Institute, Heidelberg University, Germany

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*Redrawing Borders and Ritual Adaptation in the Western Himalaya*

In the upper reaches of the Western Himalayas, in the mountain tracts lying between the rivers Sutlej and Yamuna (Tons), lies the realm of the god-king Mahāsu. This zomia-like region is characterized by rituals of possession and procession, where the complex of four brother kings Mahāsu endure as ruling deities despite incursions by British colonialism and the assimilative projects of modern Indian state-making. This paper contextualizes transformation and steadfastness of Mahāsu's ritualistic kingship and social life in a secularizing environment.

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**Girija Pande**, Kumaun University, India

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*Is Mahakali a Border or Culture? Content and Context of Gamara-Meshar in Indo-Nepal Border*

Originating from the Lipulekh pass at an elevation of about 7820 m in the higher Himalayas and descending down to the Indo-Gangetic plains, the river Mahakali, which up to Sharda Bairaj in foothills marks 250 kms long boundary of two sovereign nations- India and Nepal, is not merely a river; it is a unique example of the common culture of the societies living on either side of the river in two different political settings.

Annual festival such as Gamara-Meshar is a unique expression of life ways of communities living on either side of the border. In folk psyche Gamara, the female deity, travels on either side and narrates the changing socio-cultural scenario of the valley specially the joys and sorrows of the female folk. A week long festivity ends with Hil-jatra (Hil means mud & Jatra means procession), the only mask festival along border. It is said, that Hil-jatra came to Sor (Pithoragarh in Indian territory) valley from the Sorar region of West Nepal.

The proposed paper aims at examining the meaning of borders in a culture area, taking example of Gamara festivity. It will also focus on border dynamics in the context of rituals.

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**Christoph Bergmann**, Research Assistant, Department of Ethnology, South Asia Institute, Heidelberg University, Germany

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*Homeward Bound: Celebrating Harvest in the Darma Valley of the Kumaon Himalayas*

Analyzing people's ability to avoid or resist state appropriation in the border regions of upland Southeast Asia, James C. Scott introduced the notion of 'escape agriculture'. The success of agricultural escape strategies is measured in terms of invisibility through mobility in topographically inaccessible landscapes. This paper takes up Scott's idea and focuses on the interrelation of subsistence routines and ritual practices among the Bhotiyas of the Kumaon Himalayas in Uttarakhand (India). Existing works have foregrounded the role of cross-border trade within their 'traditional' livelihood system. Through a historical review of arguments that have been proposed to explain the apparent supremacy of trade at the cost of seasonal agriculture in permanent high altitude settlements, I show how an emerging Bhotiya elite

fueled and utilized topography-based ideas of land, labor and ethnicity to push the terms of state-recognition towards a non-agrarian, entrepreneurial tribal society. However, field cultivation was and still is practiced. Moreover, the ritual cycle is deeply intertwined with agricultural tasks. An ethnographic analysis of its culminating point, the celebration of harvest, reveals a conception of land as homeland (lungba) that takes shape in acts of dwelling through both movement and cultivation. The ritual displays how pastoral mobility and agrarian place-attachment are integrated in a way that enables these borderlanders to channel emerging power relations and possible conflicts towards the ongoing transition between a past and future home and thus foregrounds a more place-bound version of 'escape agriculture'.

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**Hans Harder**, Heidelberg University, Germany

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*Borders and the Bangladeshi Hindu Diaspora: A Study of Sitakunda, Chittagong*

The partition of the Indian subcontinent in 1947 landed the Hindus in Eastern Bengal (i.e. East Pakistan and later Bangladesh) in a peculiar situation, as they found themselves a religious minority cut off from many of the major holy places and pilgrimage sites mainly to their West and North in what had become the Indian Union. More peculiar, however, is the fact that this isolation is hardly reflected either in publications by Bangladeshi Hindu middle class authors, which are mostly of an entirely secular character, or in the Hindu religious literature available in Bangladesh. This paper tries to explain this lack of reflection. It examines the evidence on trans-border pilgrimage from Bangladesh to India, and argues that the border's impact within Bangladesh is limited, fostering ecumenical tendencies among the Hindu community and blurring the distinctions between formerly distinct forms of Hinduism such as Shaivism and Vaishnavism.

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**Jürgen Schaflechner**, Heidelberg University. SFB 619, Germany

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*Moving through meaning: The pilgrimage of Hinglaj Devi in today's Pakistan*

Sindhi Hinduism confounds the notion of discrete religious boundaries that is still to be found in Religious Studies. Sindhi rituals freely employ symbols and practices that are normally associated with Islam, Sikhism and Hinduism, giving them new and broader meanings. This paper examines the impact of the partition of Sindh on the rituals of Sindhi Hindus, focusing on the pilgrimage system of Hinglaj Devi.

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**Deborah Tooker**, Le Moyne College, USA

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*Border Emotions among the Akha*

In this paper, I consider the construction of a Zomian identity-- that of the Akha-- by looking at non-discursive dimensions of social life, particularly emotional and spatial dimensions. This approach reveals a process of identity construction, some of which is found in ritual, which relies on metaphors and signs of 'centering' and 'levelling', making the Akha an egalitarian 'people in the middle' as opposed to 'others', including muang-type societies which are constructed spatially as peripheral and non-level, and emotionally as dangerous.

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## **BORDERS AS A SITE OF SURVIVAL AND RESISTANCE**

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**Convenor: Kyoko Kusakabe**, Gender and Development Studies, School of Environment, Resources and Development, Asian Institute of Technology, Thailand

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**Panel abstract:**

State utilizes international border for its nationalist projects, economic growth strategies, and control of goods, information and people. Migrant workers at the border area resist and

circumvent such state control. The panel explores the struggles of migrant workers for their dignity and citizenship vis-à-vis the state/ market/ mainstream communities, and discusses the state of "not being governed" of women and men in and from "Zomia" (Scott 2009) moving into the highly 'governed' border industrialization area. The consequences of their mobility/ immobility and its differences by gender, age, and ethnicities will be discussed. The restriction, control as well as the intentional vacuum in governance leads to invisibility and total disregard to the human existence and citizenship for marginalized people, such as small women traders, migrant workers at the border zones and children in-between borders. Such precariousness in status at borders can, on one hand challenge gender ideologies and practices, but on the other hand create further vulnerabilities for women. However, faced with marginalizing forces, families spread across borders defying control by the state and exploitative markets, and demonstrate strategies for survival and resistance. The panel will focus on such resilience among people living in the border areas.

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**Soe Lin Aung**, Research Officer, MAP Foundation, Burma

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*The Friction of Cartography: Spatial Struggle and Mobility as Resistance among Migrant Communities on the Thai-Burma Border*

Recent research (see Arnold 2007, Arnold and Hewisohn 2005, Arnold and Pickles 2009, Pongsawat 2007, Sang Kook 2007, and Tsuneishi 2008) suggests the history of state power and the expansion of sovereignty on the Thai-Burma border to be tied very closely to the Chatichai government's reformulation of Thai economic imperatives in the late 1980s—the much-vaunted policies aimed at "turning battlefields into marketplaces." But this view only offers, as it were, one side of the story; it has always missed a crucial perspective: the complicated consolidation—until the last decade, attempted more than achieved—by the Burmese military of the Burmese side of the border, which was not and has not been tied to the economic liberalization programs of the 1980s. Furthermore, James Scott's important new work opens up the possibility of a *longue durée* reading of the hegemonic power of the *padi* state vis-à-vis resistant border zones, mobile and acephalous. The relationship between the two, he argues, has long been relational, mutually constitutive, a centuries-old working out of civilizational dynamics according to altitude, agro-ecology, and the hill politics of escape, flight, and opportunistic rebellion. Scott obviates the need for analysis exceeding the past two decades. This paper, based on advocacy-oriented fieldwork conducted over roughly a two-year period in Mae Sot, Tak province, seeks to resituate contemporary analyses of the Thai-Burma border area, suggesting that a prevailing economic determinism cannot fully account for the long-term hill-valley power negotiation within which current border dramas should be understood to unfold. With migrant communities in Mae Sot serving as an analytical focal point, this paper aims to make a claim for widening the context of Thai-Burma border analysis, considering not only the Burmese side of the border but also the broader historical trajectories that intersect in this dramatic space within contemporary Zomia.

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**Kyoko Kusakabe**, Gender and Development Studies, School of Environment, Resources and Development Asian Institute of Technology, Thailand & **Ruth Pearson**, University of Leeds, United Kingdom

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*Childcare at the border: Strategies for survival of migrant workers at the Thai-Burmese border*

The current registration of migrant workers does not allow dependents of migrants to come to Thailand to stay with their parents. However, noting that most of the workers are in their reproductive age, and noting that not all of them have reliable relatives back in Burma, many migrant workers have no choice but to bring their children to their place of destination. The paper discusses various strategies that the migrants take in order to juggle their childcare responsibilities, especially by making use of the porous border and the different services and support available across the border. The way the areas across the border is governed/ not governed affect the options that the migrant workers can take.

*Yunnanese Women Traders in Burma*

This paper examines an under-studied topic—Yunnanese women traders in Burma since the period of the Socialist regime. Throughout history, Yunnanese men have played a significant role in transnational trade in upper mainland Southeast Asia, especially between Yunnan and Burma, by means of mule-driven caravans. Traditionally women were confined to domestic work, and hence were absent from this economic undertaking. Many local poems and songs describe their loneliness while their husbands were away for long distance trade.

In 1949, the Chinese Communists took over mainland China and launched a series of political movements from the 1950s to 1970s. This resulted in an unprecedented scale of Yunnanese exodus to Burma, mostly staying in rural Shan and Kachin States. Unfortunately, these migrants were compelled to take up frequent movements because of the socio-political unrests in Burma. Many men either joined local militias or cross-border trade. In the face of the turbulent situation, many Yunnanese women were also obliged to take part in economic activities in order to sustain the everyday living of their families. Their engagement involved different types of trade, including local, long-distance and cross-border trade. This paper examines these varied types of economic movement based on in-depth ethnographic data collected in the last ten years. It highlights an on-going process of shaping and re-shaping “gendered geographies of power” that mingle with the business acumen, frustration and pain of these Yunnanese women traders.

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**CROSSING BORDERS: MISSIONARY NETWORKS, MOVEMENT AND THE GEOGRAPHIES OF RELIGIOUS CONVERSION IN THE ASIAN BORDERLANDS**

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**Convenors:** **Alexander Horstmann**, Max-Planck-Institute for the Study of Religious Diversity, Germany & **Vibha Joshi Parkin**, Max-Planck-Institute for the Study of Religious Diversity, Germany

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**Panel abstract:**

The panel will scrutinize cross-border religious networks (Christian, Islamic, Buddhist, Hindu) especially religious missionary networks in response to migrations, nationalists movements and flight following war and conflict. On the one hand, the border and the borderland represent the constraints and repression imposed by the modern and expanding nation-state and, as in the case of Burma, China and India. On the other hand, its war machinery, and the geography of the Christian, Islamic and other missionary movement, illustrates the mobility and border-crossing nature of the religious movements. Our interest lies in the missionaries themselves, in the geographies of conversion, their support structures, modes of mediation, humanitarian assistance, and in the new cultures of missionary networks along South- and Southeast Asian borders. The borderlands of Northeast India, Bangladesh and mainland Southeast Asia and refugee camps along Burma-Thai borders are important sites of proselytizing . The protracted warfare in the borderlands produces migrants and refugees who are without citizenship rights. The appeal of new missionary networks stems is not only in their promises of salvation from sin and entry into paradise, but in the provision of this-worldly social services and economic security. These people, their families and children are socialized in imagined communities in which they learn to live Christian, Buddhist, Muslim or Hindu lives thus becoming part of transnational imagined communities or the global ecumene. We invite papers that explore these connections.

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**Alexander Horstmann**, Max-Planck-Institute for the Study of Religious Diversity, Germany

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*Christian missionary networks and the Karens at the Thailand-Burma Border*

I argue that Christian missionary networks provide crucial resource and shelter for Karen refugees, fleeing from protracted conflict in Burma. Karen refugees find refuge in the border town, in the countryside and in the refugee camp. I argue that while the state puts severe constraints on the movement of the refugees in the borderland by confining them to the camp, Christian missionary networks open access to social services and to transnational networks. Educated Christians are at the forefront of the secessionist Karen movement and Christianity provides the ideological underpinning of Karen nationalism. Thus, the refugee camp provides a crucial site of proselytization. Karen Christians have established a firm presence in the Thai borderland and cover the spaces with churches, bible schools, schools, orphanages and migrant schools. While the Christian Karens in Burma are discriminated and Karen pastors are suspected to support the Karen secessionist army, the presence of international Christian organizations and the financial support of Christian relief result in the empowerment of the Christian Karen in the Thai borderland. In my paper, I look at how Christian missionaries assists Karen refugees to re-organize themselves after flight from warfare in Burma.

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**Vibha Joshi Parkin**, Max-Planck-Institute for the Study of Religious Diversity, Germany

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*Cross-border evangelism and nationalism among the Naga of Indo-Burma*

I shall explore the cross border evangelistic mission and nationalism among the Naga of northeastern India and in Burma. Christianity was introduced in the (erstwhile) Naga Hills by the American Baptist Missionaries in the late nineteenth century. Presently Christianity is regarded by the Nagas themselves as a feature which distinguishes them from neighbouring Hindu, Muslim and Buddhist populations. The slogan 'Nagaland for Christ' by Naga nationalists in recent years further promotes this identity and seeks global support. The Indian state of Nagaland is projected as a Christian state with English as its state language.

The Naga Baptist have set up Nagaland Missionary Movement (NMM), a denominational Mission organization under the NBCC, with a goal of sending 100,000 Naga evangelists to spread the 'word of Christ' in all parts of the world. NMM have missionaries in many parts of India and outside India in Nepal, Cambodia, Thailand, and Burma. In recent years Naga missionaries are being trained by Korean evangelical missions and are being sponsored as evangelists to neighbouring states in India as well as across the border in Burma. My paper will explore cross border connections and how these are relate to the Christian identity and nationalism among the Naga.

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**Mandy Sadan**, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, United Kingdom

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*Localized religious identities: Singpo-Kachin-Jingpo communities of Indo-Burma*

It has become standard to represent the Kachin cultural sphere in Burma as being today predominantly Christian and to assert that an antagonistic relationship exists between Christian faith, Buddhism and indigenous spirit rituals, with Buddhism in particular being deemed antithetical to an indigenous 'Kachin' identity. However, when one expands the frame of reference to include related communities in North East India, Thailand and China, it becomes apparent that these three forms of religious identity exist in a much more complex, intersecting relationship with each other, which is constantly evolving in internal discourses relating to the praxis of conversion and proselytisation across borders. As the focus shifts across this space, the meaning frameworks for these different belief systems in relation to Singpo-Kachin-Jingpo communities changes, with differing religious geographies also imposing constraints upon the hegemonic claims of Kachin nationalism beyond Burma's borders. This paper will explore these relationships and the ongoing strategies of negotiation that pan-'Kachin' groups broadly defined have to adopt in their relations with each other and their historical representations of missionary activity of varying kinds, as well as how borders themselves have contributed to the production of localized religious identities.

Asian Borderlands: Enclosure, Interaction and Transformation

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**COPING WITH SCALE –  
MOVING FROM MICRO TO MACRO, GLOBAL TO LOCAL AND ALL STAGES IN BETWEEN**

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**Convenor: Willem van Schendel**, School of Anthropology and Sociology, University of Amsterdam, the Netherlands

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**Edyta Roszko**, Max-Planck Institute for Social Anthropology, Germany / Center of Asia and Pacific Area Studies, Academia Sinica, Taiwan

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*The goddess of cinnamon : the relationship between lowland and highland*

In the colonial and the postcolonial literature the Southeast Asia highlands and plains are depicted as distinct regions of which societies are considered to be isolated from each other and even culturally distinct. Particularly, recent studies that take into account contemporary people living by the sea offer a way to think about the coast as an open space, even if it constitutes as a border. Littoral people living in a transitional zone of land and sea come into view forming as an open and flexible society whereas highlanders are those who are thought of as staying on the margins of states in the 'wild isolation' of jungle and mountains. Therefore, the questions arise as to whether we can conceptualize the highlands like the littoral zone which remains elastic and connected with other places through trade, beliefs, ideas, goods that constantly circulate shaping particular style of life? Can we look at the mountain as a contact zone instead of perceiving them as a remote, marginal and detached land? In this paper, drawing on long term field research in Quảng Ngãi province carried out between September 2006 and August 2007 I focus on religion as a link between mountains and coastal areas. By charting religious beliefs and ritual customs existing in that landscape I offer a glimpse into a local religious domain of the highlands which I came to know by dint of my encounter with the sea. More specifically, I focus on the process of appropriation of the Mother Goddess of Thiên Y A Na by Chinese traders who used her cult in a way that it supported their trading ventures. I show that in Trà Xuân, the cult of Thiên Y A Na provides a common frame for the eighteenth century trade of forest goods and commercial relations between highlanders, Việt and ethnic Chinese.

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**R.K. Debbarma**, University of Hyderabad, India

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*From Place-Everywhere to Placeless: Space, (Im)mobility and Exclusion*

The Tipperah state (Tripura, Northeast India) ruled over two categories of people: Bengali Peasants (produce permanent taxable surplus); and upland mobile subjects (soldiers and mercenaries). Some imaginative techniques to sedentarize the upland mobile subjects were, appropriation of abstract indigenous gods through objectification (idol) and putting them in walled place (an address where mobile groups must turn up for sacrifice), invention of holy sites (controlled by the state), and state appointed high priest. Resistance to these state-making projects included change of gods, mode of worship (sacrifice), modification language and even armed rebellion. These (non)resistances became the basis for division of Tipperah people into different categories. This paper explores the history of extrusions of Tipperah Reangs from Tripura (? to 1948), East Pakistan (1950s?) and Mizoram (1996-98). Tracing this particular history, this paper seeks to problematise the modern geographies of exclusion. More specifically, this paper is an attempt to disrupt the new notion of 'Tripura' (basis for categorisation of Reangs as refugees), and argue that modern space does not constitute complete break, rupture and dislocation from indigenous space. This co-existence announces the nature of modernity which every constructed identity/place must inhabit, negotiate and reject.

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**Dolly Kikon**, Stanford University, USA

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*Unsettling the Hill/Valley Divide: An Ethnography of Haats in the Foothills of Northeast India*

The weekly haats (markets) in the contested foothill borders of Northeast India constitute a social space of interaction between key actors from the federal units of Nagaland (a hill state) and Assam (a valley state): traders, plantation workers, magistrates and border police. In postcolonial India, the state has legalized the colonial hill and valley paradigm through the creation of provincial borders in Northeast India. Today, the foothill is recognized as a physical and legal border, thereby separating hill and valley both politically and culturally. Inhabited by diverse ethnic groups, the foothill topography and its inhabitants transgress social structures, taboos and farming practices attributed exclusively to societies either in the hill or the valley.

My paper will highlight how people's daily practices, in and around weekly haats (markets) in the foothill border, disrupt the dominant hill/valley spatial categories that continues to influence and sustain historically contentious borders, laws and citizenship regimes in Northeast India.

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**Ellen Bal**, VU University Amsterdam, the Netherlands & **Timour Claquin**, Centre de Recherches et d'Études Anthropologiques (CREA), Université Lumière Lyon 2, France

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*(Re)interpreting the indigenous peoples' discourse in different spaces: a case study of the Garos of India and Bangladesh*

Although historically perceived as one distinct 'nation', 'tribe' or ethnic entity, Garos from the Garo Hills and adjacent (lowland) areas have never constituted one unified and self-defined ingroup. British colonial rule produced a feeble notion of an imagined Garo community. Yet, the international border of 1947 formalized certain distinctions between hill Garos and lowlanders that had existed much longer, and it gave a further impetus to the articulations of ethnic identities in different spaces.

This paper examines recent processes of (re)unification among the Garos of Bangladesh and India. It analyzes how social actors on each side of the border have firmly embraced similar transnational discourses of indigeneity, but in order to serve their own distinctive local and national agendas. Based on recent field research in India and Bangladesh, we argue that these discourses feed into two distinct state-directed processes on either side of the border; that of claiming full citizenship through rights as indigenous people (in Bangladesh), and of an autonomous Garo homeland as an indigenous tribal community (in India). The emergence of powerful global(izing) Indigenous Peoples' discourses seemingly unites Garos across borders, in fact enforces two separated state-related processes.

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**Phillipe Ramirez**, Centre for Himalyan Studies, National Center for Scientific Research (CNRS), France

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*Unfashionable mess on the margins : clans, politics and ethnicities in Northeast India*

The anthropological data collected on the borders between two Northeast Indian states show noticeable uncouplings between culture and ethnicity which run against the dominant paradigms of ethno-nationalism. They raise a series of questions about the role of ethnicity in the history of the region within a context of high spatial mobility, multiculturalism and flexible community adoption rules. They also let imagine both a past and a future where present ethnicities are minimized in favor of other organizing principles both at higher and lower degrees.

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## ETHNICITY AT THE CROSSROADS ?

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## BORDERS AREAS AND DYNAMICS OF BELONGING

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**Convenors: Olivier Evrard**, Institute of Research for Development (IRD), France & **François Robinne**, National Center for Scientific Research (CNRS) / Institute of Research on South East Asia (IRSEA), France

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**Panel abstract:**

Most of the anthropologists now agree that ethnic identities shall not be envisioned as "catalogues" or series of bounded discrete entities but rather as local relational systems in which the material and symbolic frontiers are constantly redefined and manipulated. However, this approach does not always draw the full implications of its premises and often still refers to ethnicity and its markers as the ultimate explanation for the understanding of the social systems.

Our aim here is not to pretend that ethnicity shall be completely overlooked but rather to focus on crossroads, networks and places of convergence or exchange, rather than on discrete identities: village or households partnerships, regional rituals involving various populations, mythical and reinvented common histories, economic cooperation or alliance links for instance.

We would like to show that these networks can be understood as "spaces of dispersion" (Foucault 1969: 52-53) that is as mediums for trans-ethnic -rather than interethnic systems. In other words, we want to consider crossroads and borders areas as places for the production of identities as much as result of their "mixing" (Robinne, 2007: 299-308). Beyond the "othering process" which has been abundantly studied by the anthropologists in the past decades, we want to shift our focus towards the "betweening": not only how relation creates identities and borders, but how it holds them together and gives coherence to the social landscape (Amselle, 2001; Prasit & al. 2008).

The contributions will be based on in-depth field study in Thailand, Burma and Laos. They will focus on heterogeneous identities and ritual spaces, middle-men or go-between as well as on transnational migrants populations or urban centres.

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**François Robinne**, CNRS / IRSEA, France

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*Interethnic borderlands vs transethnic crossroads: what coherency behind hybridity?*

Despite - or because - the plural dimensions of any social landscape, a necessary social coherency has to be produced.

At the crossroad of peoples of multiple origins producing a complex and unstable social and linguistic diversity, the Nyaung Shwe township in the Shan State of Burma is basically shaped on the concomitant evolution of the religious circumnavigation of five Buddha images around the lake and of the economic cycle based on "five days one market". The articulation of these two religious and economic spheres not only contribute to organise the moving of the peoples and of the goods; They institute also a political supremacy on the social landscape to those who control - at least symbolically - their evolution. This example could be extended to other comparable social landscapes where Buddhism operate as a federative vector (like in Thibaw

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Township as we shall see), where plural christianism is deeply embedded in plural ethnic revendications (as it the case in Kachin and Chin States), and finally anywhere I was able to make fieldworks in Burma, in remote areas or in urban contexts as well.

In all cases the problematic to keeping apart, at least at first, the usual ethnic - or interethnic - over determinant, that is to focus the analysis on crossroads rather than on territorial and cultural limits, such a problematic would contribute to demonstrate the inclusive dynamic of a social landscape and the interest to take hybridity as object of study.

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**Kwanchewan Buadaeng**, Faculty of Social Sciences, Chiang Mai University, Thailand

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*Children of Migrants from Myanmar, Schooling and Transnational Identities*

The estimated number of migrants from Myanmar living in every Province of Thailand now is more than 2 million. They are from many ethnic backgrounds: Shan, Karen, Mon, Burmese etc. Migrants who start to migrate in Thailand since 1980s now have their children being grown up in Thailand, with an estimate of around 200,000 people. Young children of migrants are either studying in schools or working as child labors. This paper focuses on young migrant children in schools to describe how they have constructed their identities in the nation which is different from that of their parents. The paper is based on the research conducted in Mae Sot District, the border town where a lot of migrants can be found working in the small and medium factories, shops, markets and farm lands. Mae Sot is an official border crossing point, where trading between Thailand and Myanmar is conducted in large amount. It is also the place of convergence where many parties, from global, regional and local levels, come to work with their own agendas, being economics, politics, human rights etc.

The paper will first describe the overall situation of migrants from Myanmar and their children in Mae Sot. It then describes types of schools organized by Thai government, International Non-Governmental Organizations (INGOs) and migrant communities for migrant children. As shown in schooling management, different ideas on what kind of knowledge students should learn are negotiated among Thai government agencies, INGOs and local communities. Schools become in-between space where a single party cannot fully assert its sovereignty and idea. As a result, migrant children in schools are neither totally belongs to their original ethnic communities, nor totally become Thai. They however have constructed the transnational identities in this in-between borderland space.

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**Olivier Evrard**, IRD, France

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*Myth, ritual and belonging in a transethnic perspective: the case of Vieng Phu Kha, Laos*

The small city of Vieng Phu Kha in Laos is surrounded by ruins: temples, walls and ovens which origins and uses are still under discussion among archaeologists and historians. These vestiges form the concrete basis on which are elaborated numerous tales shared, with some variations, by the local populations, mainly speakers of Mon-Khmer (Khmu, Lamet, Samtao) and Tai (Lue, Yuan, Yang) languages.

This paper focuses on this abundant oral literature and on the ritual associated to it, which was performed until the end of the 60s and gathered all the villages of the area. The aim is not to answer the enigmas raised by the existence of the ruins but rather to understand how the local populations have elaborated a common cosmology which sustains their (sometimes conflicting) interpretations of ethnic differences as well as of historical events and cultural heritage.

The paper draws upon the data collected in Vieng Phu Kha between 2006 and 2009 while surveying the archaeological and natural heritage of the district. It gives first a general description and history of the human settlements in this borderland area located at the intersection of several pre-colonial polities. It shows that ethnic labels cannot be understood solely through the history of migrations but refers also to localized social and political relationships. Then, it compares several versions of the myth concerning the origins of Vieng Phu Kha and shows how this conceptual framework is still used by the various ethnic groups to explain the contemporary social landscape. Finally, it analyses the ritual which used to be

organized once every three years for the tutelary guardian of the city: the process of the ceremony as well as the verbal categories used by those involved allow us to understand how common symbolic references emerge and operate culturally hybrid social system.

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**Prasit Leepreecha**, Center for Ethnic Studies and Development, Faculty of Social Sciences, Chiang Mai University, Thailand

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*Wrist Tie as a Transethnic Ritual in Northern Thailand and Laos*

The wrist tie ritual is popular among several ethnic groups in Northern Thailand and Laos, especially when a special group of guests visits local villagers. The ritual meaning has evolved in the course of recent history. Traditionally, it was performed for both blessing and healing purposes mainly among people of the same locality. In the contemporary context, however, it is extended for blessing special guests, especially close relatives living in a different location but also sometimes officials and/or members of other ethnic groups. Furthermore, in the tourism context, business operators and local villagers take such ritual for impressing tourists and visitors. In this article, I investigate the forms and meanings of common ritual of wrist tie among the Khon Muang (lowland northern Thai), Lao, Lue, Karen, Hmong, and Khamu villagers scattered in northern Thailand and Laos. My argument is that it became a common reference, a transethnic ritual, through which each identity positions itself vis-à-vis others.

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## IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION IN THE BORDERLANDS

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**Convenors: Frédéric Bourdier**, L'institut de Recherche pour le Développement (IRD), France & **Jacques Ivanoff**, Centre national de la recherche scientifique (CNRS) / Institut de Recherche sur l'Asie du Sud-Est Contemporaine (IRASEC), Bangkok, Thailand

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**Panel abstract:**

The purpose of this panel is to go against the prevailing idea which tends to assimilate borderlands with marginalization and deprivation. Borderlands in Asia are no more remote areas and do play a role in the making of the Region. One of the ideas would be to show the potential and the capacity of borderlands to stimulate new identities.

So far spatial political boundaries have been perceived in terms of physical limitations associated with population movement controls. Such a focus on this existing but reductionist dimension arbitrarily creates the illusion of a false divide despite pioneering exchanges that can be recounted in various aspects but not only, as it usually mentioned, on transactional and economic interactions. Ideas are also circulating. And this circulation does not mean just passing by, or establishing an ephemeral transitional bridge.

It has been already demonstrated through socio-anthropological research undertaken in some parts of the world that, beyond appearances, contacts among people living in the borderlands do not weaken local identities. They become stronger but not by becoming inured to: they may get together and create a new platform.

Borderlands redeploy and reinforce people's reference points which are part of an identity in a perpetual negotiation. This new-fangled and fluctuating interference, trespassing on the administrative border demarcation, does not appear in a socio-cultural vacuum and rather that insisting on what is lost and progressively forgotten in a built-up and fluctuating geographical context, it seems more constructive to identify emerging and innovative configuration peculiarities. To put it briefly, how cohabitation shapes the social milieu.

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**Frédéric Bourdier**, IRD, France

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*Identity Effervescence in the Borderlands: a Case Study in Northeast Cambodia*

Social transformations occurring in the Northeastern part of Cambodia inhabited by hill peoples deserve a particular attention with regards to recent dynamics going on in the borderland. It

has been said and re-said, even till the present days by government workers, developers and some social scientists freshly arrived, that local populations residing in these undulating borders areas were, more than others, facing a growing exclusion, not only due to the location nearby the Vietnamese and Laotian borders but because of being socio-culturally marginalised and usually perceived as vulnerable ethnic groups with an increasing weakened identity.

Although such statements deserve careful attention and are not totally false, they cannot be taken for granted either, mostly the aberration of the concept of "identity deprivation" supposed to be the outcome of a geographical and a political marginalization. Rough categorisations and linear associations do entertain a misleading reductionism liable to provide artificial tools for elaborating false referential identities from outside. Such asymmetric attitude has been worsened with the nowadays typical government obsession with the ethnic cataloguing, already entertained in Vietnam and Laos, and nowadays en vogue in Cambodia, a static classification which does not take into consideration people's capacity of innovation and their local strategies and manipulations to modify, for instance, their name and their cultural background within a particular borderland area.

I wish to present some elements of reflection going on further in that direction. I would like to demonstrate (or at least to show the relevance of) the endemic reality of the cultural creativity and specificity of hill peoples in a context of intensified encounters in the borderlands. I argue that the increasing complexity of these exchanges are not influential in the lost of so-called "authentic identities and cultures" but, to the contrary, are contributing to the everlasting re-construction of flexible identities, comprehended as a continuum, in a Cambodian territory sharing more and more physical and social relations with Laos and Vietnam.

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**Jacques Ivanoff**, CNRS/IRASEC, Bangkok, Thailand

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*Bordelands and identity reconstruction between insular and mainland Southeast Asia*

Population « on the move » in Southeast Asia are increasing due to economic factors; this is what politicians, national agencies and « managers » of the displaced people said. But these economic pushfactors are more an extension of traditional networks which, in Southern Thailand, extend towards the South and the North.

The political separation imposed by the colonization between a Maritime Malay Muslim and a Buddhist Rice cultivators populations, enlightened the actual problem of the so-called « violent » Deep South (Southeast Thailand) and explain the mobility of the Sea Folks on the West coast. These Malay Muslim population created networks with their Malay counterparts and thus a incessant mobility between the two countries at the origin of a « double identity and they create a new intermediary social space in Southern Thailand. We will explain how it has been construct and show its cultural landmarks its differences.

On the West coast migration and mobility retied links between the Insular and Mainland Southeast Asia.

First the Sea Gypsies in Thailand are an essential cultural link between Orang Laut in Malaysia and Moken in Myanmar overlapping the colonial division and renewing the pact of traditional multivassalities. There are the keepers of the memory, what some called the « interstices » of history. This traditional mobility is know topped by a Southern migration of the Myanmar people in Thailand, Malaysia.

History show how the two Asias were cut off, anthropology show us how cultural links were kept alive and Economic analysis show us how mainland immigrations meet insular traditional migration. What are the political, sociological and cultural consequences of such movement? How these populations interact? How the traditional mobility of nomads get along with socioeconomic migration? At which point a segment of a population rejoin an ethnic groups? These some of the question we will try to answer.

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**Maxime Boutry**, CASE, Paris, France/Institut de Recherche sur l'Asie du Sud-Est Contemporaine (IRASEC), Bangkok, Thailand

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*The Myanmar-Thailand border and transnational Burmese migrations An adaptative colonization of a trans-ethnic social space*

The frontier may be approached as any social space (Condominas, 1980) with its different components (ritual, social, economical, cultural) at different scales. Unlike the dominant conception of the international frontier as a line defining abstract entities such as nations or constructed identities (actually ideological) or opposing ethnicities, we assert here the creative role of the frontier in negotiating the identities of interacting populations in border regions. The creation and reinforcement of the administrative frontier in the south between Myanmar and Thailand is recent, and acted like a catalyst in revealing multiple frontiers as bonds between the different populations taking advantage of it. Indeed, the transnational population of Burmese migrants may not be approached as one and only one whose aspirations, socio-cultural and economical strategies would be the same. Nevertheless, professional or ethnical differentiations do not appear satisfying to understand the structuring of the migrants' transnational social space that appears much more as an adaptative colonization than a flight for economical or political reasons. The imbricate networks of middlemen (taukè), brokers (pueza), customary migrants (bawlon), trafficked Burmans (kon ku: khè' lu) and transnational populations (Dawei's, Thais, Malays) structure the frontier's social space. These networks merge both economical and ethnical belonging to manage the territory, invent socio-cultural strategies based on intermarriages (Boutry and Ivanoff, 2008), multi-ethnicity (Horstmann, 2002), occupying the interstices (Winichakul, 2005) created by the contradictions between states.

The Burmese migrations across the Myanmar/Thailand border in the south question the center-oriented concepts of nations and ethnicity thus addressing a reflection to both politics and scientific researches. We propose here to analyze the migration as a result of the management of the frontier, being no less than an economical exchange part of the global transnational exchanges generated by state borders. While historical mobility becomes a source of income for the sedentary administrations, the local management of the frontier overwhelms any attempt to control the territories (in terms of space and identity) from the centers while extending its sphere with proper space and time conceptions to encompass spaces in the center as well. Thus the issues of migrations can only be resolved by studying the questions of trans-ethnic relationships at the crossroads.

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**Olivier Ferrari**, Institut de Recherche sur l'Asie du Sud-Est Contemporaine (IRASEC), Bangkok, Thailand / Chulalongkorn University Social Research Institute (CUSRI), Bangkok, Thailand

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*Borders and cultural creativity. The case of the Chaolay, Sea Gypsies of southern Thailand*

After the colonial times, the borders in Southeast Asia delineated new national identities for the dominant populations, giving sometimes birth to new forms of ethnicity as it is the case in Thailand. Though, they also became new territories (geographical as well as imaginary) in which populations once strictly interconnected had to adapt their interrelations. Which way do these populations adapt their identities and take advantage of these entities to express their cultural creativity?

We take here the case of Moken, Moklen and Urak Lawoi', the Sea Gypsies of southern Thailand, in order to analyze some aspects of their ethnicity in relation with the borders they cross. On the one side, to the north the Moken are distributed between Thailand and Burma ; on the other side, the Urak Lawoi', to the south, are transborder with Malaysia. Moklen, in between, strictly remain in Thailand. We have here the case of populations whose ethnic « frontiers » are vague, depending on the circumstances. In Thailand, the three groups are nowadays undifferentially referred to as Chaolay (« people of the sea », an exonym that is becoming ethnonym, accepted and used by the three populations. Nevertheless, the three groups keep their particularities and also adopt different strategies according to the relation they have with the border, still keeping contact with their relatives in neighbouring countries.

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The aim of the paper is to discuss these multiple identities and the role the border plays into their dynamic shaping. Acting as a separator or a unifier, according to the cultural factors taken into account, as well as on the circumstances, the border is perfectly integrated into the identities of the Sea Gypsies. More than that, its existence plays a major role at a regional level, where it was integrated in the social system binding the nomads to the other populations (Malay Muslim, Sino-Thais, Buddhist Thais).

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**Note:** The following two papers will not be presented, but serve as discussion material for this session

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**Thierry Lejard**, social worker, General Director of the association of prevention, Paris, France

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*The life out of peripheral economy by families and communities at the borders of the nations: Aranayaprathet/Poipet*

The border is a symbolic line, which divides national territories whose centres attempt giving it a reality. "Control" barrier and passage point, limit between societies that never stop interacting through local communities, exchanges and the syncretism of the actions.

The study area is a wide space that extends between two multifunctional cities. Entry point for "adventurous" tourists, twin cities, exchange markets, "no man's land" between two borders (an Asian Las Vegas in the frank zone). It is a complex and dynamic territory where traffics, trade and human passages take place. In that regional sphere, identities and adaptability to the socioeconomic context are created.

In these particular spaces, familial groups and children cross, work and participate to a form of peripheral economy implying recuperation, daily wages, transportation of goods, local culinary production (such as the grasshoppers, that are found in the whole Thailand). There, a life is composed around the symbolic divide and the transborder territory. The adaptability and the knowledge of these communities, their link with this complex environment shows an aptitude to organization, and to constant innovation, which evolves within the limits imposed by precarity and sudden events.

We propose to analyse the family groups and their peripheral economy in a regional transborder space, between two cities and two Nations as different as Thailand and Cambodia can be. It is a space characterized by a trade in recycled low quality goods, a potential turistic way between Bangkok and Angkor and a huge "no man's land" with a casino that whitens the money of the gambling, forbidden in Thailand.

As a starting point, we will consider the familial communities as an important strata in the social organization created by the border. We will decrypt their link with a larger network located at the scale of the borderland, which defines cultural, social and political dynamics (trade, traffic, migration, interculturality...).

This analysis will allow us describing one of the "circular" local dynamics belonging to the border, contributing to its life while lying within other larger dynamics, such as human and commercial passage between two centres, which are a ring in the chain of international transborder that extend through several countries (especially in these times of globalization).

This description of family groups and of their social and economic life in a peripheral context is thus imbricate in much larger systems and social organizations as well as in wider borderlands. It will be a starting point allowing the decryption of the other networks and associated systems: traffic, prostitution, immigration, counterfeit trade, recycling... Also, it will lead to the understanding of the human interrelations associated to these phenomena: exchange, exploitation, survival, innovation and adaptability.

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**Christian Culas**, CNRS - IRASEC (Bangkok, Thailand – Hanoi, Vietnam)

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*Uses of frontiers and relationships with others (ethnic people and State) to build local identities: Some cases study of Hmong structural homogeneity in contract with their practical diversity of actions and positions in different time and in local situations*

Hmong ethnic group live in five countries of South-East Asia massif (China, Vietnam, Laos, Thailand and Burma), all sub-groups share the same socio-political system: traditionally no clan chief, no village chief and no connection between traditional religion (shamanism) and political power or authority. The socio-political and cultural-linguistic background of all the Hmong is similar, but in different locations, in different times and in different contexts relationships with others groups (sometimes through the border) are not achieved by these "cultural background". So even in the specific case of the Hmong this is impossible to build a general theory of relationships with others, because the flexibility and adaptability, and capacity to read and follow specific occasions and opportunities.

In consequence, the main question is "how to fill the gap with rigor between empiric anthropology based on the data production in first hand and deep knowledge of local context to global theory of State/no-State relations and production about thousand different ethnic groups in South-East Asia massif?"

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**PLIGHT OF THE PERIPHERAL COMMUNITIES ACROSS THE ASIAN BORDERLANDS:  
DISCOURSE ON LIVELIHOODS, MARGINALITY AND STATE'S INTERVENTIONS**

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**Convenor:** Sarit K. Chaudhuri, Arunachal Institute of Tribal Studies, Rajib Gandhi University, India

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**Panel abstract:**

Commonalities amidst huge cultural diversities carved out a niche with Asian borderlands divided by geo-political boundaries. This vast physical space, both hills and plains, is occupied by innumerable communities who transformed it into a cultural space. Historically, it is found that the communities, indigenous/tribes or others, who are numerically strong and have successfully built up close linkages with state or power structures or even tried to dominate the same. Whereas there are some numerically weak communities remained at the periphery of these borderlands that failed to articulate their voices and in the process have been marginalized by their dominant neighboring communities. This situation does not fit in to the popular notion of 'center -periphery' or 'mainstream-periphery' discourse rather it tells us a different story altogether where the so called peripheral communities- tribal or indigenous communities, failed to initiate developmental dialogues for their weaker brethrens or in other words these marginal communities were dishonored by the states making them invisible masses or pushing them at the margin of the periphery. This panel seeks to locate the plight of such small and perhaps 'lesser known' communities across the Asian borderlands and try to understand their livelihood patterns and more importantly, the actual nature of marginalization processes vis-à-vis state's response in terms of developmental or other policy initiatives in a globalize world. Such contextual studies across the Asian borderlands may add a new dimension to existing issues of borderlands research seeking viability of 'Zomia' concept.

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**Sarit K. Chaudhuri**, Arunachal Institute of Tribal Studies, Rajib Gandhi University, India & **Gibji Nimachow**, Rajib Gandhi University, India

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*Plight of the Akas: Livelihood, Resource Management and Politics of Exclusion in Arunachal Pradesh*

The Akas are one of the smallest tribes of Arunachal Pradesh located in West as well as East Kameng district of Arunachal Pradesh bordering with China. In 1960, Raghubir Sinha, an anthropologist, first published a small ethnographic work on this tribe which was largely based on the Akas of Jamiri and Bura Gaon areas. Based on the contemporary field works done by both the authors (first one is an Aka by birth) this paper is an attempt to look at the livelihood pattern as well as resource management. Finally it also attempts to underscore the plight of such a small tribe with in an essentially tribal state practically run by their dominant tribal brethrens where voices of the Akas are hardly listen or addressed. Like many other tribes of this borderland area the Akas are also passing through the phase of transition but unlike the

dominant tribes they are suffering all most every front, such as, economy, education, health etc. However, recent electoral politics enabled one Aka youth to join as a Member of the State's Legislative Assembly after fifteen long years though the people in general are not very sure whether this will be effective to change the existing plight of this small tribe.

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**Deepak K. Singh**, Panjab University, India

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*A Tale of Two Marginal People: Chakma refugees and the indigenous peoples of Arunachal Pradesh*

'Naga' is a generic term by which a large conglomeration of communities having This paper deals with two specific categories of marginalised hill peoples living in the disputed peripheral borderland of Northeast India – Chakma refugees and the indigenous peoples of Arunachal Pradesh – who do not fit into the conventional framework of hierarchised structures of dominant-subordinate relationships. Privileging the vantage points of the two communities, it shows how the Chakma issue has become a classic case of political apathy on the part of the modern postcolonial states in South Asia whereby both the refugees and the indigenous peoples, marginalized in their own peculiar ways, find themselves intricately intertwined in a conflict over control of resources for absolutely no doings of theirs. By locating the current issue in its historical context, it seeks to highlight the nature and extent of social and political exclusion of Chakma refugees as well as some of the important aspects of the periphery complex that the indigenous peoples find themselves trapped in.

The much neglected Chakma issue thus allows us to ask important questions about the rights of minority ethnic communities against the backdrop of the contest-ridden history of nationhood and state-formation in modern South Asia. It also allows us to interrogate the nature of state responses to stateless peoples and refugees, while examining the 'culture of care', if any, for such people in the region.

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**Gerald Roche**, Griffith University, Australia / Qinghai Normal University, P.R. China

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*Mountains that Join: Inverting the Friction of Distance in the Western China's Hehuang Region*

In the *Art of Not Being Governed*, James Scot suggests that mountains impose a limit on state travel by increasing the friction of distance and imposing an algebra of diminishing returns upon the state's ability to harvest resources, primarily grain taxes. The state as homogenizing agent is seen to be vectored by the smooth terrain of lowlands and waterways, and blocked by the friction of mountains. To quote Scot (2009: 45): "'easy'water 'joins', whereas 'hard' hills, swamps, and mountains 'divide'". I argue that this is true only from the perspective of the state, and that from the perspective of the local peasantry mountains 'join' populations and in this way resemble 'easy' water in the way they structure dispersed populations into a coherent community. I support my case using examples from the Hehuang region in western China's Qinghai Province.

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### **PUSHING THE ARCHIVAL LIMITS OF 'ZOMIA'**

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**Convenor: Mandy Sadan**, School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London, United Kingdom

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**Michael Eilenberg**, Department of Anthropology, Aarhus University, Denmark

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*Evading state authority: Rebels and outlaws in the borderlands of Dutch West Borneo*

Borderlands in Southeast Asia are often portrayed as being outside state influence, as zones of anarchy where identities are flexible, loyalties ephemeral and state authority largely avoided.

Depicted by state administrators as outlaws and rebels roaming the border hills the populations inhabiting these edges of states further seem especially resistant towards officialdom through their engagement in law bending practices and a heightened sense of autonomy. This paper examines these dynamics as they unravel on Borneo during the Dutch colonial administration in the mid nineteenth century and thus aim to contribute to the growing historiography of Southeast Asian borderlands. The paper shows how state borders on Borneo not solely has been the static or permanent structures, separating territories and excluding people as original intended by colonial state planners. For many borderlanders these borders were and still are as much a basis of opportunity as it is a barrier. By contrasting local narratives with colonial records in the border regency of Boven-Kapoeas in Dutch West Borneo I show how renowned rebel leaders, did their best to take advantage of the differing terms and conditions that colonial rule offered on either side of the border and thus openly challenged colonial authority.

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**Alexander Ong**, Department of History, University of British Columbia, Canada

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*Historicizing Transborder Crossers within the Sino-Vietnamese Borderland Stretch of Zomia, 1671-1751*

This paper spotlights a transborder rebel group, the 'Vietnamese' Mꞑc imperial clan, who fled to the northeastern section of "Zomia" (encompassing parts of Southwest China and Northeast Vietnam) after its defeat by political adversaries the Lê and Trꞑnh in 1592 and was subsequently granted political asylum by rulers in 'China' (the Ming and Qing). Using a wide array of Chinese and Vietnamese sources, I explore not only its subsequent tensions with their 'Vietnamese' enemies who were based in Thang Long (present-day Hanoi), but also its personal ties (through marriage) with the Cen family, a local indigenous chieftaincy who had for centuries been one of the region's numerous de facto ruling families in spite of sovereign claims over it by different imperial dynasties in 'China'. My paper argues that the Mꞑc family's connections with local power ultimately led to its forced resettlement by the Qing state in the 1740s, when the latter discovered that the Cen and Mꞑc were allegedly been in contact with members of a frontier millenarian movement whose ultimate goal was to overthrow Manchu rule, and also that certain Mꞑc clansmen had been sneaked across the political border back into 'Vietnam' in a bid to restore Mꞑc rule.

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**Jianxiong MA**, Division of Humanities, the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, Hong Kong

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*The State Agency in the Formation of Yunnan-Burma Frontier since the 1720s*

During the early to mid Qing Dynasty, in the 1720s, as increasing numbers of Han Chinese moved away from the inner provinces and migrated to middle and southern Yunnan, the Qing government began to carry out reforms to the native chieftain system. The Luohei (Lahu) rose up against suppression but were driven away to the western part of the Mekong River (The Lancang River). Some Han monks became the religious leaders of the Lahu and created the Five Buddha Districts system outside the state administrative county system. However, "Three Strong Men of Frontier Defense" in the region of the southern Yunnan-Burma frontier arose with the coming of British colonialism to North Burma in the 1880s, and took over the previous Five Buddha Districts system in the western part of the Mekong River. These three powerful families performed crucial roles as agents of the state in the formation of the Chinese-Burma frontier from the Luohei Mountain in the north, to Sipsongpanna (Xishuangbanna) in the south. They established their alliance and controlled the trade of salt, tea, and opium and the transportation routes. These families were involved with the Qing government in its suppression of the rebellious Luohei; they also gained private economic benefit from their political activities. They were virtual controllers of this frontier, having established their political economic alliance, making them agents of the state in the transformative era of changing state mechanisms at the Yunnan-Burma frontier. This system of state agency refashioned the multiple relations between mountain tribes and lowland chieftains, and controlled the flow of economic resources in the dramatically altered era from the 1720s to the 1940s. Different kinds of people performed roles of state agency and established different

styles of political governance, beyond the official administration, in the historical formation of the Yunnan-Burma Frontier.

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**RESEARCH ETHICS –  
MANAGING POLITICAL AND SOCIAL COMPLEXITY AND THE ROLE OF ELITES**

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**Convenor: Erik de Maaker**, Leiden University, the Netherlands

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**Micah F. Morton**, Department of Anthropology, University of Wisconsin-Madison, USA

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*Negotiating the Changing Space of 'Zomia': Aqkaq Tseir Kaq Tiq Kaq Ma or Ten Akha are the Same as One*

In my paper I will present findings from ongoing fieldwork on the post-1980s efforts of members of the Akha minority group in Thailand to construct a more formal sense of belonging among Akha residing in the borderlands of Burma, China, Laos, Thailand and Vietnam – a region referred to as “Zomia” by Willem van Schendel, James Scott and others. Formerly Akha maintained a transborder sense of belonging rooted in a mythology of a common genealogy traced back roughly fifty-six generations to the first Akha. Certain factions of Akha in Zomia are now transforming this mythical sense of transborder kinship into an actual transborder movement and sense of cultural citizenship. In my paper I will provide a preliminary description of the transborder movement of Akha in Zomia and identify the various local, national and transnational factors that have contributed to the movement’s rise. I will discuss the ways in which Akha transborder efforts reflect as well as transcend the shifting geopolitical, sociolinguistic and religious borders that have come to define Akha identitarian politics during the latter half of the twentieth century.

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**Bianca Son**, School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London, United Kingdom

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*The Creation of an Elite with the Subaltern Discourse of the Zo*

The highlanders who occupy the mountainous region separating the now nation-states of Burma, India and Bangladesh, which lies in Zomia, are often referred to as the Zo. Whether they share a common ancestry or origin and/or perceive themselves as such is problematic.

In any event, after pacification of Burma proper, Zoland was allotted to three newly formed nation-states. Each Zo group was now in the periphery of these nations and their political strategies moved in different directions. However, all tried to resist being incorporated throughout the colonial period, at Independence and thereafter.

One group, however, the Chin of Burma began creating an elite using Christianity to gain political legitimacy. One specific clan, the Haka, began representing the whole of the Chin in Burma on the world stage. Further, these elite denied a relationship with other Chin clans in Burma, as well as with those in India and Bangladesh. In this way, they accepted Burma as their nation-state. While the majority of the Zo continue to actively campaign their indigenous rights and thus their rights not to be incorporated, the Haka Chin actively campaign for inclusion into Burma.

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**Bokhtiar Ahmed**, Centre for Asia Pacific Social Transformation (CAPSTRANS), University of Wollongong, Australia / University of Rajshahi, Bangladesh

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*The Jigsaw Puzzle of 'Mi-Jaw-Ram': Identity, Disjuncture and Power on a Bangladesh Borderland*

My paper is an ethnographic depiction of how the Pangkhuas in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) of Bangladesh live a disjoint existence across the Bangladesh-Mizoram border, historically disarticulated from their autonym as the 'Jaw' people. The Pangkhuas form one of the smaller indigenous groups among the 'Jumma' people living in the CHT who inherently nurture the 'Jaw' identity while struggling to survive as 'Bangladeshi', 'Jumma' or 'Pangkhuas' in this geopolitical margin of the Bangladeshi state. In Pangkhua language, as it is in other Central Chin languages spoken here, 'mi' stands for human beings, 'jaw' refers to a diasporic identity and 'ram' means land, which when put together as a word, correspond to the Indian state on the other side of the border. Based on my ethno-linguistic fieldworks among the Pangkhuas in between the years 2004 to 2006, and another ethnographic fieldwork scheduled in February to August 2010, here I shall draw upon how the Pangkhuas negotiate their 'Jaw' identity on a daily basis when encountering the extraordinary articulation of political, regulatory and disciplinary practices by the state or the 'Jumma' resistance against it. It reflects upon how identity become the fragments of a 'jigsaw puzzle' for the people like Pangkhuas when frantically shaken apart across the state borders emerged from colonial legacies. In the same vein, I also describe how the stately use of violence resembles a 'jigsaw tool' of power that constantly shears the arbitrary curves of identity along their borders to consolidate the nationalist claim on territory.

This paper will address how the Haka became the dominant Chin, casting themselves in their internationally acceptable light as subaltern highlanders, and in turn subverting and manipulating history to their own elitist benefit. It will demonstrate that although most of these highlanders resisted incorporation, the Haka have adopted the nation-state polity, at the expense of other Zo using revisionism, exclusionism and elitism in the process.

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**Christoph Antons**, University of Wollongong, Australia

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*Asian borderlands and the legal protection of traditional knowledge*

Traditional knowledge related to biodiversity, agriculture, medicine and artistic expressions has recently attracted much interest among policy makers, legal academics and social scientists. Several UN organisations such as the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO) and the Convention on Biological Diversity under the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) have been working on international models for the protection of such knowledge held by local and indigenous communities. Relevant national, regional or provincial level legislation comes in the form of intellectual property laws and laws related to health, heritage or environmental protection. In practice, however, it has proven difficult to agree on definitions of the subject matter, to delineate local communities and territories holding the knowledge and to clearly identify the subjects and beneficiaries of the protection. In fact, claims to "cultural property" have led to conflicts and tensions between communities, regions and nations. The paper will use Southeast Asian examples and case studies to show the importance of concepts such as Zomia and "borderlands" studies to avoid essentialised notions of communities and cultures and to develop a nuanced understanding of the difficulties for national and international lawmaking in this field.

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**Nel Vandekerckhove**, University of Amsterdam, the Netherlands & **Bert Suykens**, Conflict Research Group, University of Ghent, Belgium

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*The Meaning of Border in 'Rebellious' Society*

In this paper we want to look deeper into the meaning of borders within 'rebellious' societies. Although borders are often not taken into account in the study of rebel activities – seeing

rebels either as wanting to inherit the state or disregarding borders as they are active as cross-border actors in fluid borderlands – we propose that the idea of borders often returns with a vengeance. Starting from own ethnographic research in fieldwork sites in Assam and Nagaland, in this panel we want to investigate how rebel movement, or populations living in areas with a strong rebel presence in Zomia, envision the idea of the border. Rebel groups propose a homeland within certain borders, often reworking national and international borders, or creatively use borderlands to evade states or to search for a regime which is more conducive to their activities. As such, borders provide opportunities for rebellious society and these opportunities are central to this paper.

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## THE LAST GREAT ENCLOSURE?

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**Convenor: Oscar Salemink**, VU University Amsterdam, the Netherlands

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**Debarati Bagchi**, Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, India

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*Locating the 'Exceptional': Land Question in Colonial Sylhet*

My paper wishes to critically engage with Scott and the historiography inspired by him, arguing that the idea of "not being governed", does not necessarily imply being 'outside' to the scope of governmentality. I would substantiate the argument by looking at the ways in which colonial intervention in Sylhet produced certain governmental categories in terms of which the 'agrarian' was mapped. Sylhet was depicted in early colonial narratives as the 'frontier' or 'margin' of Bengal. As agrarian expansion in and around Sylhet gave the district a checkered land map where permanent and temporary settlements and swidden agriculture coexisted and intersected, the district was increasingly ascribed the tag of 'exception' in relation to the officially described 'proper' parts of Bengal.

Specifically focusing on the question of property rights, I would explicate how the colonial tropes of 'legality' and 'rights' became entangled and reconfigured in the process of negotiating with Sylhet's putative exceptionalism. I would show that the production of certain regions as 'periphery', 'margin' or 'exception' actually empowers the state and lends certain degree of flexibility to governance. So, my concern would be to move beyond studying the processes of construction of such categories and examine their functions.

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**Debojyoti Das**, School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London, United Kingdom

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*Re-Imagining Margins, State Power, Space and Territoriality in the Naga Hills*

Territoriality, far from being undermined by global processes, is increasing in importance and sophistication as a state resource control strategy in North East India and Nagaland in particular, as elsewhere. The paper argues for re-imagining state power through the colonial politics of territoriality and boundary making. Colonial intervention in the frontiers of North East India was carried out through territorial control. It was achieved through boundary making and cartographic exercise carried out by military officials, survey parties, forest officers and district administrators. Territorialization is a powerful governmentality practice of controlling and classifying subjects. These days it is articulated in state schemes of governance through the use of GIS and Remote Sensing technologies. By drawing maps and boundaries the colonial and the contemporary post-colonial state have succeeded in rearticulating the fluid boundaries with notions of 'fixity' and 'functional spaces'. Spaces have emerged as the new grids of appropriation by state and neo-liberal agents, the market. In this paper I argue that there was a nuanced evolution of multiple spaces in Naga Hills since the late 19th century, and demonstrate how these spaces have been appropriated at different points of time and history through legislations and jurisprudence. The Naga Hills evolved as a space of accumulation,

deficit and no-man's land of slave takers and head hunters, rather than being 'unifyingly' identified as the margins of the British Indian Empire. Three distinct administrative spaces evolve that shape territorialization and conscript the lives of the natives. First, the areas of the foothills where colonial capitalist interest were embedded. Second, the areas of political administered tracts as spaces of deficit and military control. Third, the land that lies beyond the politically administered territories formed the 'blank spaces' of colonial administration.

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**Oscar Salemink**, VU University Amsterdam, the Netherlands

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*The art of upland governmentality and the desire for improvement in Zomia*

In *The art of not being governed: An anarchist history of upland southeast Asia*, James Scott (2009) essentially makes the argument that 'non-state' highlanders in 'Zomia' should be viewed as those who have intentionally evaded 'state capture and state formations'(9). According to Scott, Zomia 'has been peopled for two millennia at least by wave after wave of people in retreat and flight from state cores – from invasion, slave raids, epidemics, and corvée' (242). In my research experience, however, I have hardly ever encountered any highlander who did not wish to partake in the promise of modernity, especially consumer goods. In this paper I would expand on my forthcoming paper "A View From the Mountains: A critical history of Lowlander - Highlander relations in Vietnam" in which I argue that, historically, lowland states and "zomia" regions have been mutually constitutive through trade, tribute and feasts. Economic, political and ritual exchanges and connections were far more important for both uplands and lowlands than is usually acknowledged, not only in scholarship but in such phrases as "remote and backward areas". In this paper I shall explore how the desire for goods and prestige link highlanders firmly to state- and market driven development programs.

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**Stéphane Gros**, Centre for Himalayan Studies, National Center for Scientific Research (CNRS), France

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*The Benevolent State: A case Study among the Drungs of Northwest Yunnan (China)*

Living in a remote valley of Northwestern Yunnan province (China), the Drung people fulfill the Western imaginings of the 'lost tribe' untouched by modern life, and who, like their Tarong cousins of Myanmar, can be '(re)discovered' and stigmatized as some previously unknown 'Asian pygmies'. That such imaginings may still hold today tells us more about the limits of our knowledge and our own biased understanding of marginality than about these people themselves. Indeed, the Drung people fit in well with how upland people in Asia were depicted up until the mid-twentieth century: subjected to taxes and corvées, raided by some of their neighbours and taken as slaves, the Drungs settled in a secluded valley as if they were doing their best to escape the grasp of both the Chinese Empire and Tibetan landlords. They look like an ideal case of runaways; though they have not really succeeded. One reason, I would like to suggest, is that despite the reality of oppression and domination, they have long wished to be better integrated. The Drung people's history is not so much that of runaways from state projects than that of marginalized people who did not fully succeed in reaching their desired level of integration that would have ideally brought them the wealth they sought. In this paper, I will retrace the history of the Drung people's relationship with their neighbours and their incorporation into the People's Republic of China (1949) in order to highlight the Drungs' intricate relationship with external powers and what this has produced.

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**TRAPPING AND UN-TRAPPING THE BORDERED:  
ISSUES AND CHALLENGES OF PEOPLE IN CROSS-BORDER SITUATION**

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**Convenor: Ramananda Wangkheirakpam**, North East Peoples Alliance, India

**Discussant: Mhon Kikon**, DICE Foundation, Northeast People's Alliance, India

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**Panel abstract:**

The colonial border making exercise trapped and divided many indigenous communities in two or more current state borders. Meteis, Nagas, khasis, Garos, Kukis, Chakmas etc are found in Burma, Bangladesh while their 'main' populations are in the present North East India. Implications of division as a result of the hardened borders have economic, social, cultural and political implications for these Indigenous communities.

In the post colonial and globalization processes those hardened borders are loosening up but only primarily to serve existing state structures and the market. National boundaries are sought to soften due to neo-liberal exigencies while at the same time border fencing is expedited. These seemingly opposite actions are but a process of the spirit of our time and does not contradict each other. Border trade and 'free-trade', railways, highways, waterways across 'borders' are meant to serve existing states and the market. However, Asian borderland people are not only left out from both these processes and actions. Existing movements of the borderland peoples for 'self-determination' will need to be accommodated in the 'new' neo-liberal arrangements of softened borders using new technologies (of the state) so that borderland people's democratic rights are addressed.

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**Johan Elverskog**, Southern Methodist University, USA

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*An Anarchist History of the Silk Road*

This paper aims to employ Scott's state-prevention model in order to elucidate the history of the Silk Road, especially in relation to the desert oases of the Tarim Basin during the first millennium. This was, of course, the highpoint of trade between east and west and these cities are now famous, and so too are the endless attempts by the surrounding states to try to control them. Thus while our mental image of this time period is usually captured in the visual image of completing blobs of color representing various empires pouring over Inner Asia, the fact of the matter is that none of the surrounding states ever succeeded in conquering the Tarim Basin. In fact, the oases remained independent and thereby maintained the dizzying linguistic and religious diversity that is now lauded as the defining characteristic of the Silk Road. Yet, although this pluralistic vision drives Silk Road scholarship there has been little reflection on how these fiercely independent desert oases were actually so successful in both avoiding conquest and maintaining rich economic ties with the surrounding powers. Scott's Zomia model can therefore provide a useful paradigm through which to reevaluate the history of the Silk Road.

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**Sujata Ramachandran**, Queen's University, Canada

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*BY THE NUMBERS? Policies and Practices Towards Bangladeshi Transmigrants in India*

This paper inserts a cautionary note into the celebration of agency, dissent, and resistance in the emerging study of 'Zomia' or Asian borderlands. Notwithstanding the fact that the Indo-Bangladesh borderland remains fluid, prone to leakage, and permitting regular flows of people and goods back and forth across state borders, the escalating unease in India over such flows cannot be easily dismissed or discounted. The growing presence of Bangladeshi transmigrants especially, who appear to defy conventional notions of citizenship, belonging, and nationhood have partly provoked such anxieties. The Indian state has been increasingly responsive to these fears by adopting coercive practices and mechanisms to discourage and deter such flows, including fencing border areas as well as the detection and deportation of migrants. This

paper provides an account of these mechanisms and the manner in which it harshly intrudes on the lives of these marginal residents.

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**Ben Campbell**, Durham University, United Kingdom

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*Crossing the Borderlands: shifting Tamang positions on the cultural politics of connectivity*

Peripheral location for the Tamang speaking communities of northern Nepal has been characterised by semi-detached relations to state institutions, and subsistence practices conducive to resilience in the vertical mountain ecology, with seasonal or opportunistic exchange relations with urban settlements. The Connectivity Sector Project of the ADB is joining up road networks between Nepal and Tibet, which for the Tamang communities of Rasuwa District will restore the Trisuli-Kyirong valley to its historical role as one of the primary trans-Himalayan trade routes, for which Tamang villagers provided portering labour. Colonial road-building in the early twentieth century redirected trading patterns, leaving the Trisuli Valley a trading backwater, but the new phase of expanding transport networks presents challenges to the interstitial livelihoods of transhumant agro-pastoralism.

This paper will argue that approaches to the region of Zomia developed by van Schendel,, and recently James Scott, can be usefully applied to the Tamang case. There has been a mutually reinforcing, arms-length 'involution' (Holmberg) through the Tamangs' resistance to Hinduisation, to lowland-centric economic development, and the state's codings of mountain livelihoods as backward and poor. The sensibility of borderland locatedness will be demonstrated through filmed interview material concerning the impact of the road on subsistence strategies. Additionally, scenes of village festive drama will be shown, in which the clashes of Tibetan and Nepalese armies are played out on either side of a borderline of rope stretched across the dust, and other personages from afar are variously received as wayfarers on this cross-road of High Asia. The paper will explore the cultural politics of location in which Tamang communities have eked a living by to a large extent resisting forms of labour and produce taxation, and practising mobile subsistence regimes, that has been open to incorporating outsiders, but which is now vulnerable to being by-passed.

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**UNPACKING REGULATION IN BORDERLANDS:  
SECURITIES, IDENTITIES, AND CORRUPTIONS**

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**Convenors:** **Reece Jones**, Department of Geography, University of Hawaii, USA & **Jason Cons**, Department of Development Sociology, Cornell University, USA

**Discussant:** **Willem van Schendel**, *School of Anthropology and Sociology, University of Amsterdam, the Netherlands*

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**Panel abstract:**

Official rhetoric in many borderlands often casually draws connections between projects seeking to "define" borders, increase national security, and reduce crime and corruption. However, it is rare for scholars, politicians, or the press to explore the overlaps between these processes and their interactions with local government, border security forces, and individuals living in these fraught areas. Such concerns are particular pressing in South Asia, which remains caught in various forms of territorial anxiety. Discourse around security and border control in South Asia tends to see the "securing" of border areas and crime/corruption as antithetical. Yet there exists a more intimate and poorly understood relationship between securing, "defining," and regulating the border and the perceptions and experiences of such processes by those who live near it. In this two part panel, authors open questions about how to rewrite borderlands from the perspective of residents, denature top down projects of control, and complicate both the arts of not being and of being governed (Scott 2009). Examining the India-Bangladesh border, we rethink constructions of "criminal populations,"

notions of "statelessness" and governance, and the complicated process of making identities and belongings in borderlands.

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**Reece Jones**, Department of Geography, University of Hawaii, USA

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*Spaces of refusal: rethinking resistance at the border*

This paper investigates local actions that transgress, subvert, and ignore the imposition of sovereign authority at the borders of sovereign states. It begins by describing the creation and gradual securitization of the 4096 km border between India and Bangladesh, which has culminated with the construction of roads, floodlights, and fences on the majority of the previously open and lightly guarded border. Then, by drawing on interviews with borderland residents, it analyzes the ways that people interact with, talk about, and cross the border in their daily life. The paper argues that the motives and consequences of these cross-border connections are not precisely captured by the literature on dominance-resistance in power relations, which understands most actions as political resistance in a broad milieu of power. Spaces of refusal are proposed to conceptualize a range of activities that are not overt political resistance but nevertheless represent a refusal to abide by the binary enframing of state territorial and identity categories.

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**Duncan McDuie-Ra**, School of Social Sciences and International Studies, University of New South Wales, Australia

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*Opposing the Logic of Enclosure in the India-Bangladesh Borderlands*

The fencing of the India-Bangladesh border is an act of enclosure that suggests finality to the territorial partitioning of South Asia. Rather than viewing the fence as simply a state tactic of extending territorial control, this paper examines the converging and competing narratives surrounding the fence at the national level in India and in the borderland itself, focussing on the federal state of Meghalaya. From this comparison two main arguments are made. First, at the national level narratives around migration, national security, counterinsurgency, and trade underpin a powerful logic of enclosure that is difficult to contest. By contrast in Meghalaya the narratives are far less cohesive and the logic of the fence is far more contingent on local politics. Second, not only is there a difference between the ways the fence is constructed at the national level and in the borderland, but there is differentiation within the borderland itself consisting of narratives that tacitly support the fence, oppose the fence, and locate the fence in the precarious everyday position of communities living on the very edge of state enclosure. These narratives provide insights into the different ways borders, citizenship, and security are viewed and politicised in contemporary Asia.

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**Jason Cons**, Department of Development Sociology, Cornell University, USA

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*Spatial Corruptions: Development, Place, and Rule in the India-Bangladesh Enclaves*

This paper explores links between space, development, and corruption in enclaves--sovereign pieces of India inside of Bangladesh and vice versa--along the India-Bangladesh border. I ask how competing conceptions of sovereignty and rule, practices of policing space and "transgressing" it, and configurations of criminality and governance structure daily life. The enclaves are often conceived as "corrupt," "criminal," and "sensitive" spaces by those who patrol their boundaries. This conception leads to frequent transformations in strategies for regulating movement through the enclaves and controlling and rigidly defining its borders. Yet these regulations are complicit in producing new configurations of sovereignty and clientelism within the enclaves themselves. I examine the linkages between these processes through an exploration of the links between development projects, local government, and border-surveying. I explore the ways that discourses around such projects and rumors about them structure experiences of space and expropriation within the enclaves. By exploring these linkages ethnographically and spatially, I problematize notions such as 'territorial integrity' and

'petty corruption,' arguing that patterns of defining and exploiting space are best understood together as processes of spatial corruption.

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**Malini Sur**, Amsterdam Institute of Social Science Research, University of Amsterdam, the Netherlands

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*Milking Cash Cows at the Border: Cattle Trade between India and Bangladesh*

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**WONDERLANDS IN BORDERLANDS: RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS AND RITUAL TEXTS  
BEYOND STATES**

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**Convenor: David Holm**, National Tsing Hua University, Taiwan

**Discussant: Ts'ui-p'ing Ho**, Institute of Ethnology, Academia Sinica, Taiwan

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**Panel abstract:**

This panel shifts the idea of Chinese religion as a metaphor of Chinese Empire to Religions in "Zomia" as a metaphor of in between state and non-state. Imperial China identified indigenous peoples dwelling in Southwest China as "barbarians" and the PRC classified them into ethnic minorities. Peoples in this region use religious practices as a strategy to interact with the Chinese state and other former nearby kingdoms and chieftainships in mainland Southeast Asia. This panel includes one overview on linguistic and cultural diversity among Tai-speaking peoples, and others on specific ethnic groups and their religions. The five papers are on mountain shrines constructed in the Dali kingdom (937-1253), a forest image in ritual texts chanted by the Dai Lue people, heavenly flower gardens as understood by the contemporary Zhuang people, the Kingdom of Heaven as shared by the present Ahmao's communities, and Taoism as practiced among the Yiu Mien in Laos. These studies suggest that such groups have been developing their religious practices or creating ritual texts in part as a response to the power and operations of the states to the north and south of them. Religions help maintain their lands as wonderlands, keep their cultures diverse, and protect crucial values from state dominance or intervention.

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**David Holm**, National Tsing Hua University, Taiwan

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*Priests, Texts, and Power in the Tai Chieftaincies of western Guangxi*

A modified version of the Chinese writing system has been in use for many centuries among Tai speakers and other minorities in south and southwest China. Similar systems are found in Vietnam as far south as the Red River. Early development of the scripts of western Guangxi took place at the courts of the native chieftains (tuguan or tusi). A very important motivation was the need to conduct ancestral rites for the chiefly lineage, to provide an originary narrative for the origins of the lineage, and to conduct Tai-style sacrificial rituals on behalf of the chiefly family and their domain. These functions were in the hands of vernacular priests called mogong (bouxmo). This paper will explore dimensions of this relationship, based in part on traditional manuscripts in the hands of the mogong, and will argue that, far from being localised, both scripts and ritual structures show signs of broad regional convergence. This in turn points to the existence of a third term in between James Scott's binary division of lowland kingdoms and localised highland societies, namely the feudal domains of the Tai in their "valley kingdoms".

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**Ya-ning Kao**, Institute of Anthropology, Tsing Hua University, Taiwan

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*Making Flower-rituals Diverse among the Zhaung People along the Sino-Vietnamese Border*

Along the Sino-Vietnamese border, the Zhuang (a Tai-speaking people) maintain diversity in their flower-rituals in response to both the external Chinese state and the internal Tai spirit world. In De-Jing area, Guangxi, China, people share the concept of children as flowers in flower gardens. The gardens display the value of the wife-giver in maintaining the reproduction and independence of Zhuang society. Three kinds of ritual specialist in this area can carry out flower-rituals to ensure children's well-being. In female shaman's (*mehmoed*) spirit journey, she visits the heavenly flower gardens in a ritual that emphasizes the role of the wife-givers family in maintaining a child's well-being. Vernacular ritual practitioner's (*bousmo*) Zhuang text demonstrates the high amount of Zhuang-Han hybridity. The text chanted in Zhuang language describes less of the wife-giver's role but narrates a detailed journey to visit the flower goddess and description of how to build a flower bridge. A Daoist Chinese text of building a flower bridge is recited in Southwest Mandarin has a long list of Chinese gods and goddesses but never references flower gardens and maternal relatives. Although the text demonstrates a high level of Chinese literacy, Daoist priest's flower-rituals are imbedded in the Zhuang rites of passage. In a long history of Zhuang-Chinese interaction, Zhuang people's heavenly flower gardens are an imagined place keeping the Chinese state away. They do not escape the state by entirely refusing literacy but they do demonstrate more options for dealing with the spirit and real worlds.

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**Jacob Cawthorne**, University of Melbourne, Australia

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*Taoism and Self-Governance: The Yiu Mien of Laos*

The Yiu Mien are an ethnic sub-group that belongs to a larger ethnolinguistic group, called Hmong-Mien or Miao-Yao, with diverse dialects, traditions and histories. In SE-Asia, Yiu Mien communities can be found scattered throughout the contiguous area of southern China and the northern regions of Laos, Thailand and Vietnam, however they originated from present day southern China. In Laos, Yiu Mien communities are primarily located in the northern provinces of Luang Prabang, Luang Namtha, Bokeo and Phongsali. The Yiu Mien practice a mixture of ancestral religion and a form of Taoism most akin to the Meishan teachings which they brought with them during their migrations from China (Strickmann, 1980).

The practice of Taoism, as a religion, models itself on the bureaucratic practices of the Chinese imperial state (Schipper, 1993). However, Yiu Mien society operates largely outside the bureaucracy of modern statehood and the Yiu Mien are historically tax evaders and refugees from abuses of state power. The questions this paper will address are, how do Yiu Mien communities in Laos view this contradiction, and to what extent does Taoism in practice provide cultural resources for self-governance of Yiu Mien communities?

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**Shu-li Huang**, Department of Anthropology, University of Michigan, USA

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*"Keep In the Village": The Emergence of Ahmao (Hmong) Skepticism and Its Dealing with the Chinese State*

Although a village in the mountains of Monsoon Asia; populated by the ethnic minority Ahmao people; is geographically and linguistically isolated as well as politically and economically marginalized, it is the center of a Christian community in Southwest China. Interestingly, the tension between the state and the Christian community results in the emergence of Ahmao skepticism, which in turn dissociates the Ahmao community from the imagined unity of Great China. By Ahmao skepticism, I particularly indicate a sense of "distrust" for local authorities; who, by definition, are representatives of the state in the local context; which prevails over the whole Ahmao Christian community. Unlike other Chinese nationalities, whose "Chinese identity" is capitalized, Ahmao Christians identify themselves as "people selected by the God" whose citizenship is promised in the Kingdom of Heaven. By presenting results from ethnographical study conducted in 2009 in a village located in Yunnan province, this paper argues: despite the fact that China grants only restricted freedom to practice religion; which is also understood as freedom of religious activity confined within a particular place; Ahmao Christians have effectively exploited this restricted freedom. They keep everything that

happens within the village; purposively building up a boundary between insider and outsider, to escape the gaze from the outside, from the state.

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**"ZOMIA", CARTOGRAPHIC ANXIETY, A GEOGRAPHICAL EXCUSE, AND ZOMIA-MAKING  
IN THE HIMALAYAN MASSIF**

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**Convenor: Sara Shneiderman**, St Catharine's College, University of Cambridge, United Kingdom

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**Panel abstract:**

Although the Himalayan region is often represented as marginal and remote, a number of major state-led infrastructural projects – such as the widening of highways in North Bengal and Sikkim and extensions to the Beijing-Lhasa railroad – will soon be near completion. This paper examines the Himalayan Massif as an area that is obfuscated while other, more profitable places are highlighted for a variety of hegemonic political and economic goals. Drawing heavily on ethnographic narratives as well as van Schendel's concept of "Zomia," the paper demonstrates how traders are struggling to make the Himalayan region more coherent in the face of powerful development-driven economic shifts like border re-openings and the re-routing of trade routes. Looking at everyday, lived experiences along cross-border trade routes might help to avoid simple "top-down" vs. "bottom-up" models of hegemony and resistance in order to obtain a more nuanced picture of the tensions and overlaps between large-scale economic shifts and smaller-scale practices.

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**Jean Michaud**, Laval University, Canada

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*Zomia and beyond*

This editorial develops two themes. First, it discusses how historical and anthropological approaches can relate to each other, in the field of the highland margins of Asia and beyond. Second, it explores how we might further our understandings of the uplands of Asia by applying different terms such as 'Haute-Asie', the 'Southeast Asian Massif', the 'Hindu Kush-Himalayan region', the 'Himalayan Massif', and in particular 'Zomia', a neologism gaining popularity with the publication of James C. Scott's latest book, *The art of not being governed: an anarchist history of upland Southeast Asia*. Through a discussion of the notion of Zomia, I will reconsider certain 'truths' regarding highland Asian studies. In the process, I seek to contribute to disembedding minority studies from the national straitjackets that have been imposed by academic research bounded by the historical, ideological, and political limits of the nation-state.

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**Sara Shneiderman**, St Catharine's College, University of Cambridge, United Kingdom

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*Are the Himalayas in Zomia? Some Scholarly and Political Considerations across Time and Space*

This presentation examines the applicability of the Zomia concept for social scientific studies of the Himalayan region. While for both empirical and political reasons the term Zomia itself may not be entirely appropriate to the Himalayan Massif, the analytical imperatives that underlie James Scott's usage of it—particularly the emphasis on the ethnic, national and religious fluidity of highland communities, and their intentionality and agency vis-à-vis the states with which they engage—can be of great utility to those working in the Himalayan region. Through a historical review of the area tradition of 'Himalayan Studies', as well as an ethnographic sketch of the cross-border Thangmi community of Nepal, India and China's Tibetan Autonomous Region, I argue that the potential power of the Zomia concept hinges on its ability to provide an additional framework for analysis (and perhaps political struggle), that adds value to, rather than replaces, 'traditional' nation-state rubrics.

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**Tina Harris**, Texas Tech University, USA

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*"Zomia", The Southeast Asian and Himalayan Massifs: Takes on highland transnational spaces*

Although the Himalayan region is often represented as marginal and remote, a number of major state-led infrastructural projects – such as the widening of highways in North Bengal and Sikkim and extensions to the Beijing-Lhasa railroad – will soon be near completion. This paper examines the Himalayan massif as an example of a geographical “blindspot,” an area that is obfuscated while other, more profitable places are highlighted for a variety of hegemonic political and economic goals. Drawing on ethnographic narratives as well as van Schendel’s concept of “Zomia,” the paper demonstrates how traders are struggling to make the Himalayan region more coherent in the face of powerful development-driven economic shifts like border re-openings and the re-routing of trade routes. Looking at everyday, lived experiences along cross-border trade routes might help to avoid simple “top-down” vs. “bottom-up” models of hegemony and resistance in order to obtain a more nuanced picture of the tensions and overlaps between large-scale economic shifts and smaller-scale practices.

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**Pat Giersch**, History Department, Wellesley College, USA

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*Across 'Zomia' with Merchants, Monks, and Musk.*

For several decades, theorists have challenged notions of geographical space as fixed, instead arguing that spatial scales and regional configurations respond to transformations in politics and economies. This has raised questions about permanent regional studies configurations (such as Southeast Asia), sparking the proposal of ‘Zomia’, an alternative region focusing on Asia’s highland borderlands. Building on these developments, this article employs ‘process geography’ methodologies to reconstruct trading networks through the mountains and river valleys of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Inner Asia’s Kham, East Asia’s Sichuan and Yunnan Provinces, and Southeast Asia. In doing so, it reveals who traded commodities, on what scales they operated, and how their increasingly complex networks were imbricated with state and local power. These networks linked Zomian communities to Chinese and global transformations and influenced local cultural and political changes, suggesting that studies of mobility can uncover hidden geographies of social, political, and cultural change.

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**Sarah Turner**, McGill University, Canada

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*Borderlands and border narratives: how the Sino-Vietnamese border shapes challenges and opportunities for upland traders*

The international border between the provinces of Yunnan, southwest China, and Lao Cai, northern Vietnam presents both challenges and opportunities for local populations on either side, be they ethnic minorities, Kinh (lowland Vietnamese), or Han Chinese. In this paper I investigate the creation and solidification of this borderline and related borderlands, while undertaking an historical and contemporary analysis of cross-border trade networks. Two time periods in which global-local linkages have been especially important in shaping border negotiations are highlighted, namely the French colonial period, and the contemporary economic reform era. I explore how local residents navigate this artificial boundary with regards to kin ties, historical linkages, transnational societies and the international trade networks that they have shaped that reach deep inside each country. Contemporary border narratives of local traders managing important highland commodities such as upland textiles and live buffalo are analyzed. These narratives, collected during ethnographic field work in both countries, shed light on the means by which the borderline and borderland spaces are shaping both attractive prospects as well as constraints. In doing so, the complexities of border livelihoods in this region are illuminated. The investigation highlights the relevance of utilising a ‘Zomia-like’, or Southeast Asian massif, regional approach to interpreting upland livelihoods in the China-Vietnam borderlands, rather than the more commonly employed nation-state lens.

*Riverine Diaspora: Cantonese in Zomia, 1700-1850*

This paper examines the relationship between lowlands and highlands on the eastern edge of Zomia or the Southeast Asian massif by focusing on one regional cohort that penetrated the massif. During the eighteenth century and into the nineteenth, Cantonese from the Pearl River delta in southern China's Guangdong province extended networks of trade and migration upstream along the West River basin into the southwestern Chinese province of Guangxi. Along the upper reaches of the West River system, in southern Guizhou province, eastern Yunnan province, and northern Vietnam, Cantonese penetrated highland regions across provincial and "national" borders.

In addition to examining technological transfer and the movement of commodities, I explore the interaction among Cantonese and highlanders, and the creative juxtaposition of Cantonese and indigenous religious practices. A comparison of this riverine Cantonese diaspora stretching into the eastern portion of Zomia and the more thoroughly studied overseas Cantonese diaspora in maritime Southeast Asia reveals that the two diasporic trajectories were in fact linked. Hopefully this study of one diasporic cohort will draw attention not only to networks of trade and migration that transcended political borders but also to the ways in which highland, lowland, and maritime systems were linked in premodern times.