

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE



Mobility and Multilingualism in South
and Southeast Asia: Impacts of global
ecological change on local society

27 - 29 DECEMBER 2021

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International Conference 2021
on
Mobility and Multilingualism in South and Southeast Asia: Impacts of global
ecological change on local society

27-29 December 2021

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Conference Hall, Room no. 311, MCB Building, Cotton University, Panbazar, Guwahati, PIN: 781001, Assam, INDIA

Concept Note
International Conference
on
Mobility and Multilingualism in South and Southeast Asia: Impacts of global
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Both throughout history and at the present moment, environmental change has driven new patterns of human mobility and settlement, and with it has rearranged social relations. An important, but largely overlooked element of environmental change has been its impact on language, linguistic expression, cultural dialects and cultural heritage.

Threats to linguistic diversity are considered most commonly in terms of the loss of language due to restrictive government policies, market dynamics and demographic changes. The research field of bio-linguistics has demonstrated a spatial correlation between areas of high biological diversity and high linguistic diversity at the global level. For this international conference, we are interested in linguistic diversity as a dynamic mosaic of interlingual interactions that are created and maintained through multilingualism. The threats to linguistic diversity, cultural dialects and cultural heritage encounter the human knowledge structure (the archaeology of knowledge). In this line of questioning, we seek to understand linguistic identity and linguistic expression as a matter of language use in multilingual mosaics, where individuals, households, communities and various networks of social interaction (the creative genres/ agencies) draw upon multiple grammars, lexicons and pragmatic frameworks to navigate daily life.

We take as our site South Asia and Southeast Asia, both regions of intense linguistic diversity that are and have undergone various environmental changes throughout history. We look at how environmental change and mobility have impacted the multilingual mosaics in the various regions. We invite proposals from various fields of inquiry including linguistics, literature, cultural studies, anthropology, archaeology, visual culture, sociology, education, development studies, environmental studies and other related fields.

Topics can include:

- The impact of environmental change on linguistic and cultural expression such as visual culture and literature.
- Studies of particular multilingual areas (such as Northeast India, Upper Mekong, Tribal areas) which have sustained environmental (natural or development-induced) change.
- Discussion of migration on multilingualism and language use in various communities and peripheral areas.
- Inter-related idea of “ecology” as part of language, culture, and identity.
- Historical or archaeological studies of environmental change and migration and its impact on languages and cultures.

The International Conference will be held for three days from 27-29 December, 2021 and the mode of execution of the conference will be Physical and Hybrid. The conference will see invited speakers from India and other countries who are concentrating their individual research on Linguistics, Literature, Cultural Studies, Anthropology, Archaeology, Visual Culture, Sociology, Education, Development Studies, Environmental Studies and other related fields in South Asia and Southeast Asia. On mentioned subjects, we will seek papers from academicians, researchers and professionals and that will be part of the conference through registration.

The collection of the conference papers will be published in the Peer Reviewed journal '*Abhidha Journal of Art, Archaeology and Cultural Heritage*' of Pragjyotish Centre for Cultural Research (PCCR), Guwahati. There will be publication of books by PCCR as well.

**International Conference
on
Mobility and Multilingualism in South and Southeast Asia: Impacts of
global ecological change on local society
27-29 December 2021**

Conference Schedule

Date	Sessions
Day 1 (December 27, 2021)	
10:00 am to 10:30 am	<i>Registrations</i>
10:30am to 10:55am	<i>Welcome Tea and Snacks</i>
11:00 am to 11:05 am	<i>Welcome</i>
11:05 am to 11:10 am	<i>Invite Dignitaries to Dais</i>
11:10 am to 11:15 am	<i>Welcome Note by Dr. Manjil Hazarika</i>
11:15 am to 11:25 am	<i>Felicitation of Dignitaries</i>
11:25 am to 11:30 am	<i>About the Conference by Dr. Nishaant Choksi</i>
11:30 am to 11:40 am	<i>Inaugural Speech by Prof. Bhabesh Chandra Goswami</i> (Honourable Vice-Chancellor, Cotton University)
11:40 am to 12:10 pm	<i>Book Launch & Speech by the Chief Guest Prof. Nani Gopal Mahanta</i> (Honourable Advisor to the Education Department, Govt. of

	Assam Director, Centre for South East Asian Studies, Gauhati University Professor, Department of Political Science, Gauhati University)
12:10 pm to 12:20 pm	Launch of Abhidha Journal & Speech by the Guest of Honour Prof. Vasant Shinde (Director, Rakhigarhi Archaeological Research Project, Former Founding Director General, National Maritime Heritage Complex, Former Vice-Chancellor, Deccan College PG and Research Institute, Deemed University, Pune)
12:20 pm to 12:30 pm	Speech by the Guest of Honour Prof. Chandan Kumar Sharma (Prof. Dept. of Sociology and Head, Dept. of Social Work, Tezpur Central University)
12:30 pm to 12:40 pm	Speech by the Guest of Honour Ms. Madhurkankana Roy Regional Director, Indian Council for Cultural Relations Guwahati
12:40 pm to 12:45 pm	Vote of Thanks
12:45 pm to 1:40 pm	Lunch
	Session 1
1:40 pm to 2:20 pm	Keynote: Dr. Chandan Kumar Sharma
2:20 pm to 2:50 pm	Speaker: Prof. Vasant Shinde
2:50 pm to 3:20 pm	Speaker: Dr. Madhumita Barbora
3:20 pm to 3:50 pm	Speaker : Vysakh R
	end
Day 2 (December 28, 2021)	
	Session 2 (Online)
	Chairperson: Dr. Alok Kanungo

9:00 am IST/10:30 pm USA/10:30 am Lao - 9:30 am IST/11:00 pm USA/11:00 am Lao	Speakers: Dr. Nathan Badenoch, Dr. Khammanh Siphanhxay, & Sommork Phanyavong
9:30 am IST/ 3:00 pm GMT to 10:10 am IST/ 3:40 pm GMT	Keynote: Dr. Gerald Roche
10:10 am to 10:40 am	Speaker: Dr. Samar Sinha
10:40 am to 11:00 am	Tea Break
	Session 3
	Chairperson: Dr. J.A.H. Khatri
11:00 am IST/ 9:30 pm PST to 11:40 am IST/ 10:10 pm PST	Keynote: Dr. Judith Pine
11:40 am to 12:10 pm	Speaker: Dr. Moushumi Kandali
12:10 pm to 12:40 pm	Speaker: Dr. Nishaant Choksi and Kalpesh Rathwa
12:40 pm to 1:30 pm	Lunch
	Session 4
	Chairperson: Prof. Paromita Das
1:35 pm to 2:05 pm	Speaker: Dr. Jonali Devi
2:05 pm to 2:35 pm	Speaker: Snehal Tambulwadikar-Khedkar

2:35 pm to 3:05 pm	Speaker: Dr. Sankuntala Longkumer
3:05 pm to 3:30 pm	Presenter: Rashmita Phukan
3:30 pm to 3:55 pm	Presenter: Ridipta Saikia
	End
Day 3 (December 29, 2021)	
	Session 5
	Chairperson: Prof. Shiela Bora
10:00 am IST/ 11:30 pm USA to 10:40 am IST/ 12:10 am USA	Keynote: Dr. Shobhana Chelliah
10:40 am to 11:10 am	Speaker: Dr. Alok Kanungo
11:10 am to 11:40 am	Speaker: Dr. Narayan Sharma
11:40 am to 12:00 pm	Tea Break
	Session 6
	Chairperson: Dr. Nishaant Choksi
12:00 pm to 12:30 pm	Speaker: Prof. Shiela Bora
12:30 pm to 12:55pm	Presenter: Dr. Sweta Mahanta
12:55 pm to 1:20 pm	Presenter: Parismita Borah

1:20 pm to 2:10 pm	Lunch
	Session 7
	Chairperson: Dr. Jonali Devi
2:10 pm to 2:35 pm	Presenter: Dr. Chommu
2:35 pm to 3:00 pm	Presenter: Dr. Pushpa Renu Bhattacharya & Dr. Madhumita Barbora
3:00 pm to 3:25 pm	Presenter: Devashree Bora & Mrinmoy Doley
3:25 pm to 4:00 pm	Concluding Session/ Valedictory Vote of Thanks

Abstracts

The Nagas: Culture Contacts vis-à-vis Migration

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The Nagas are quintessentially a hill people for whom identity and social status is as important in life as after death and their origin is in obscure. The Nagas are spread throughout the Indian states of Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh and Manipur, and parts of Myanmar. They were never subjugated by any external political power except for occasional encounters with the Ahom kings from the 13th century CE onwards, until the annexation of their territory by the British and the mission works of the American mission in the mid-19th century. Up to just a couple of centuries ago, the Nagas remained untouched by the higher civilizations of even the neighbouring districts/states in India and Myanmar. They lived in isolation practising their distinctive customs, and the only trade route nearest to them on the Indian side had been to Assam. Albeit the nearest ocean is 2500 km from their habitat, a good number of materials used by the Nagas as an integral part of their culture and identity, are either brought from Ocean or traded through it. Besides, several of their cultural traits including, but not limited to practices of annual ancestor veneration, community fishing, rain- making ritual, are Oceanic in origin. Through the study of cultural artifacts this presentation will attempt to understand the possible pre-modern culture contacts of the Nagas vis-à-vis migration.

Impact of Environmental Changes on the Tribal Societies of Northeastern India

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The relationship between nature and culture has been a subject of much debate. However, it cannot be undermined that culture assumes its particular forms in specific natural/environmental contexts. This influence of environment on culture comes out in clear form in the tribal societies and the

societies that traditionally have been living in close proximity with nature and are dependent on nature-based economy. Studies have shown that these societies, which are often smaller in scale, have been at the receiving end of the rapid and large-scale environmental change that has happened in the last few decades. UNESCO has taken cognizance of the fact that climate change has uprooted many indigenous communities from their habitats throwing their traditional way of life completely out of gear. Further, the mindless development projects to push the corporate growth engine brushing aside pressing environmental concerns have had a debilitating impact on the way of life of communities in various parts of the globe, especially in the countries of Global South.

The above situation is all too familiar in the northeastern region of India, a region of remarkable cultural and linguistic diversity which is also a global bio-diversity hotspot. Acting as a bridge between Southeast and South Asia, the region manifests cultural traits from the Ganges to the Mekong valley. The region is home to numerous small tribal communities with their distinct culture and nature-based livelihood practices. However, environmental changes on account of the various development activities and pressure of changing demographics on the traditional resources have posed serious challenge to the traditional way of life of these communities. Many of them have been already displaced from their traditional habitats causing serious concerns over the sustenance of their traditional economy, culture and the knowledge system. Coupled with this, the penetration of market forces as well as the demographic changes on account of large-scale migration of outsiders into their habitats has also had an enervating effect on them. The fact that more than seventy tribal languages of the region have slipped into the endangered category while many languages have already been lost is only a manifestation of the alarming scenario.

Environmental changes and its impact on the Monpas of Arunachal Pradesh

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The Monpas are one of the twenty-six major tribes of Arunachal Pradesh mostly residing in the districts of Tawang and West Kameng. The Monaps have close affinity with Tibet in respect of culture and religion. The Monpas are a peace-loving community living in harmony with nature. From the remote past the Monaps have been rearing yaks and sheep while maintaining balance with nature.

Agriculture, craft practices, socio-religious, customs and practices have a deep connection with the natural environment where they reside. Most of their cultural aspects are shaped by the natural environment in which they live. The paper is an attempt to understand the changes in the cultural life of the Monpas due to changes in their environment. It shall also look how the Monpas have sustained these changes and have carried forward their unique culture.

The effect of environmental change on linguistic and cultural expression of Mising Tribe

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Socio-cultural intermixing among members of diverse ethnic groups living together is a common phenomenon in a multicultural society. Behavioural plurality is crossing the boundaries of society today, affecting a considerable portion of the population around the world, with the development of communication systems. Over the centuries, civilizations all over the world have witnessed how their members have evolved linguistically and culturally. Although imitation and adoption are natural human traits, normally socially and culturally marginalized group tend to be attracted towards the cultural practices of the dominant group. This paper investigates the cultural-linguistic assimilation of the Mising Tribe of the Brahmaputra Valley. Mising tribe is one of the most prominent tribes of Assam Northeast. Following an eight-year transition, this traditionally hill-dwelling tribal community is now extremely bicultural and bilingual. Factors such as migration, education and increasing urbanization trend have led to the fear of a possible displacement of the Mising language in the future.

Global Patterns of Urbanization and Language Loss: Beyond Methodological Cityism

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Our present historical moment is characterized by two trends that are rarely examined in relation to each other. One is the increasing urbanization of the planet's population. Since 2007, the world's population has become majority urban, with rural residents making up a dwindling proportion of humanity. A second prominent trend is the precipitous decline in the number of languages that are spoken and signed, with most recent estimates suggesting that approximately half of all languages being used today are to some extent endangered. This presentation will examine the relationship between these two trends. I will argue that, within linguistics and sociolinguistics, there has been an emphasis on looking at the city as a static site: a venue where people and languages meet, forming a self-contained language ecology that endangers some languages and supports others. I describe this approach as a form of 'methodological cityism,' following urban theorists Hillary Angelo and David Wachsmuth, and argue that understanding the links between urbanization and language loss requires us to move beyond this approach, to a focus on urbanization as a process and an emphasis on political ecology rather than simply ecology. I make this argument drawing on my own research into language politics and urbanization in Tibet and reflecting on case studies from other locations.

Traditional knowledge and Natural Resource Conservation: Some Insights from Anthropological Perspective in India's North East

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India's North East is a hub of both natural and cultural diversity. Since long past the hills and valleys of North East have been occupied by different ethnic groups and they have been adopting

with the local situations which consists of a varied echo-niches ranging from steep high hills to alluvial plains in the fertile valleys. In their struggle for survival the local people have been accumulating empirical experiences of their own termed as traditional knowledge. Such knowledge tradition has passed generation after generation orally, became part of their cultural identity and reflects in their day-to-day cultural practices.

The existing literature reveals that during sixties onwards due to various factors like population pressure, mechanized means of resource utilization, development interventions leading to economic growth etc., there happened to be rapid depletion of natural resources on which the indigenous people are very much dependent. In this context in the recent past the traditional knowledge has been gaining ample importance towards achieving Sustainable Development Goals of today's world. However, very little is known about such practices of indigenous people living close to nature. Therefore, the need of the hour is to make an anthropological investigation of the knowledge system imbued with values and ethics, skills and cultural practices of the indigenous people. The aim of this study is to tap the century old traditional conservation practices adopted locally by the various cultural groups of North East towards maintaining their natural resources basically land, water and forest resources and to draw imperatives to contribute an insight in the area of development research, policy planning and implementation.

The study is based on both primary and secondary sources of data. Various Case studies from Assam, Arunachal Pradesh and Nagaland are drawn to understand the prevailing practices in different echo-niches.

Water and other flows: significance, resilience, and threat

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The Lahu people with whom I work, traditionally widen agriculturalists in the uplands of what the UN has labelled the Greater Mekong Subregion, are speakers of several dialects of a language which is classified as Tibeto-Burman. Although the incursion of lowland nation states with standard

languages and compulsory education and the imposition of national borders have had a significant impact on Lahu people in the 20th and 21st century, Lahu being-in-the-world reflects flows of ideas, media, and identity throughout the region over a considerable period of time. In this address I want to approach the central conference topic of threats to linguistic diversity from a position of what Tsing (1993) has referred to as “people from out of the way places” and to expand, just a bit, the notion of language via the concepts of semiotic ideologies and representational economies developed by linguistic anthropologist Webb Keane (2007).

In order to accomplish this shift of stance I have chosen as my focal point: water. Water is, of course, important both practically and symbolically for many peoples, meeting universal human physical need and serving a variety of semiotic roles. Anthony Walker, foremost ethnographer of the Lahu, describes the multifaceted significance of water in Lahu culture as a reflection of both traditional Lahu ritual praxis and the influence of contact with Buddhism, pointing to notions of water he encountered in Lahu contexts in the course of his fieldwork as reflections of long contact and interaction between uplanders such as the Lahu and the lowland groups who dominate the nations into which the region is now divided (2011). This pushing back against an image of a pristine and untrammelled uplands only recently overcome by lowland political entities calls on us to attend to the frameworks, the ideologies if you will, within which interaction takes place rather than viewing any and all interaction as potentially destructive or polluting. My own ongoing project looking at Lahu language media – and in particular Lahu language karaoke music videos – offers further evidence of the complex significance of water in Lahu contexts as it appears within these semantically dense multimodal texts within which modern Lahu identities are performed.

A semiotic analysis of some aspects of the types of uses of water and their connection to a sense of Lahu-ness which retains its distinctiveness while drawing on not only traditional and Buddhist but also Christian systems of meaning will, I argue, enrich our understanding of the ways in which ongoing flows of ideas, media, identities and people may take place without necessitating erasure or endangerment, while at the same time requiring that we attend to the impact of semiotic and linguistic ideologies not only on Lahu as a singular entity but on the internal diversity of Lahu language and praxis which is very much under threat in the 21st century.

Speaking Paza in the Multilingual Landscape of Northern Laos

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In the mountains of Phongsaly Province in Laos, multilingualism is the norm of daily life for many people. Of the more than 23 languages heard in this area, Paza is spoken by approximately 2,100 people in eight villages. The language is spoken in geographic proximity with other languages from three distinct linguistic families. The Paza people have used the surrounding languages in their daily lives, and stories of multilingualism feature prominently in their narratives of their migrations and livelihoods. The Paza language occupies an ambiguous position within the multilingual networks that crisscross ethnically diverse villages. Paza people have typically be fluent in Ho (Yunnanese Chinese and language of upland political power), Phunoy (which is actually a group of related languages), Lue (the language of the lowland centers of power), as well as Muji (a closely related language spoken in several villages close-by) and varieties of Akha (another group of related languages). While the Paza are known for their ability to “speak all languages”, it is extremely rare that other ethnic groups learn to speak Paza. This is related to Paza strategies for cultural reproduction that rely on complex ritual relationships among patrilineal lineages, preference for loose economic affiliation with more powerful groups and distinct phonological characteristics that mark it as “difficult” among speakers of other languages. Widespread landscape transformation involving conversion of forest to commercial farming, increased mobility from infrastructure development and intensifying competition for subsistence livelihood resources is producing new patterns of language use. In this

paper we explore the linguistic ideologies surrounding the use of Paza in the dynamic local linguistic ecology.

Ecolinguistic Scenario of Northeast India

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Northeast India is a land of ecological and linguistic diversity. Assam is a classic example of the rich linguistic diversity as it is the home of five language families namely; Indo-Aryan, Tibeto-Burman, Austro-Asiatic, Tai-Kadai and Dravidian. The hill states of Northeast primarily have languages of the Tibeto-Burman and Austro-Asiatic language families. Along with this rich linguistic diversity, the eco-diversity of the region is equally unique. In the field of ecolinguistics the trend is to see how this diversity comes to contact and converge creating a multilingual setup. In case of the flora and fauna diversity genetics play a crucial role whereas in case of languages and linguistic communities the socio-cultural, socio-political, economy and migration are some of the vital factors. Herein lays the difference between ecology and linguistics.

Government policies and Census India have created scheduled languages and non-scheduled languages, mother-tongues and other mother-tongues for administrative purposes. This pragmatic approach has impacted the lesser known, lesser researched languages adversely making them moribund, potentially endangered, critically endangered and some on the verge of extinction. Shifting to a more dominant language by the communities of these lesser known, lesser researched languages is another cause for the depletion of the linguistic diversity.

With regards the number of languages spoken in the region, we are not sure of the exact numbers. Documentation and research on some of these lesser known languages have brought to light that there are large varieties of languages and dialects which for political reasons are not accounted for. This is true of Northeast, where a larger linguistic community shows these smaller groups to be a part of their community. This kind of merger has led to the disappearance of quite a number of languages and has impacted on the linguistic diversity of the region. The Constitution of India has

provision for the safe guard of these lesser known languages. But to revitalize and maintain them, will of the community as well as the government is imperative. This paper looks into some of these factors primarily for people at large understand the predicament of the linguistic diversity in Northeast, India.

Another Tale of ‘Metamorphosis’: Reading visual cultural texts on Ecological Changes and Indigenous societies of North East India

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Culture is an abstraction of the holistic human experiential and existential engagement with the ecology. Ecology encapsulates multiple realms of culture, language and other core essence of human identity as these are deeply ingrained within the environmental contexts. Visual Culture, one of the important components of Culture (Contemporary Culture in this context) through its various forms of creative expressions have been devising a unique semiotics for abstract human communication which can be seen as an extended ‘Linguistic’ dimension. Such visual cultural linguistics many a times trans-historically have dwelt upon this interconnection of ecology, culture and society at large whether it is the Chinese Classical Landscape painting with a profound philosophical world view or the Warli painting of India with a deep cosmological orientation. In the context of modernist and post-modernist artistic expressions within the contemporary visual culture such a Metaphysical question about the Interconnectivity of Ecology and Human Existence (with all its multi-layered manifestations through Society - Identity - Culture as observed in the Chinese Classical Painting or Warli Art mentioned herein) has further transformed into a complex inter/intra disciplinary understanding within the socio-political and economic contexts. Like their trans-cultural Global counterparts, Contemporary visual artists of Assam and North East had also begun to address this question with a specific thrust on the impact of environmental Changes over the society and culture in particular. What are the transmutations seen in the Identity dynamics due to environmental changes and ecological destabilizations in a post global neo liberal economy and Capitalistic world? What happens to an ethnic society /group when translocation mobility occurs? What happens to the traditional cultural dynamics of an ethnic society or a community when aggressive ecological

changes are imposed upon by hegemonic forces? Finally, what are the impacts of overall Global ecological changes on the local society/ societies? My paper will make an attempt to address these basic research questions that this seminar proposes to engage in by delving upon the visual texts of some of the Contemporary visual cultural practitioners of Assam / North East India.

Invasive and alien species and their impact on biodiversity, society and culture

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The spread of invasive and alien species is one of the major causes of biodiversity loss throughout the world. However, its impact transcends ecological boundaries and brings changes in society, economy and culture. In this talk, I will discuss the impact of alien species, particularly the alien monoculture plantations and other invasive species on the biodiversity of northeast India. I will also discuss how these changes in biodiversity, in turn, impact the society and culture of the region.

Mobility and Multilingualism: Linguistic and ecological change among the displaced of the Narmada valley

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The completion of the Sardar Sarovar Dam on the Narmada River displaced over 41,000 families from the states of Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, and Maharashtra. These were mostly Adivasi communities who spoke distinct languages and lived ecologically distinct environments, in the midst of hills and forests, and who were also economically and culturally dependent on the Narmada River. These groups came from a variety of communities including Bhilala, Bhil, Tadvi, Rathwa, Pawra, and Vasava. Each group spoke a distinct language, and languages often differed from village to village, although certain communities had varieties which were mutually intelligible while others did not. Following the construction of the dam, over 231 Project-Affected Families were resettled in the plains of Gujarat, of which the maximum number (153) were settled in the areas close to the city of Vadodara.

While there has been some ethnographic research conducted on the lives of those displaced from the dam (Hakim 2000, Thakur 2019) most of this research has been either charting the changing politics or ethnography from the perspective of cultural change. There has been little documentation of the way in which the move to the plains has affected the multilingual practices of these communities. Following initial surveys and preliminary ethnographic investigation conducted among tribal groups who have been relocated from the Narmada valley to the plains, this paper asks about how the persistence and transformation of multilingualism among these communities in changing ecological circumstances.

Denuding the forest: Revisiting British Forest Policy in Colonial Assam from 1826 to 1947

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Assam since ancient times is popularly known for its richness in ecological and environmental resources. The area covered by forests in this region contributed immensely towards the economic sector of the society and in upholding the rich heritage of the region. With the advent of the British after the Treaty of Yandaboo in 1826, the entire scenario became quite different when compared with the earlier times. The changes in the ecological face of Assam have a deep-rooted history attached to

it. The Britishers introduced various forest policies and regulations affecting the entire environmental assets of Assam. Deforestation was one of the direct results of the different rules, laws and regulations passed by the British Colonial rulers. The discovery of the indigenous tea plant in Assam was of profound commercial and political significance to the British government. It is generally regarded that tea was the primary factor which influenced the British to annex the province. These led to allotment and establishment of large numbers of tea gardens in the region leading to clearing of large areas earlier covered by forests. Apart from these, the timber of the sal tree was of immense importance and played a significant role in enhancing the revenue of the British economy. This paper primarily aims to examine deforestation and to locate the historicity of the massive ecological destruction and degradation witnessed under the colonial period in Assam between the period 1826 to 1947 by re-examining some of the significant forest and land settlement policies.

The Impact of Ecological Change on the Cultural Heritage of the Khelma Community: A Case Study

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Due to the impact of ecological change, the Khelma community of the Dima Hasao district of Assam, in India has experienced a dynamic and rapid transformation in their socio-cultural lives. This paper aims to explore a basic overview of the challenges the Khelmas have faced to contest those changes and the impact of those changes in their daily lives. The existing pattern of societal mobility of the Khelma community is also the result of the effort made by the Khelmas to reinforce those changes. It is reflected in the study that only a handful of Khelmas are engaged in the process of competing for socio-cultural changes and curbing for the recognition of a unique ethnic identity, while other members of the community have limited interest in moving. Despite facing restrictions

due to complex requirements for keeping up their own ethnic identity, threats and perceived barriers in practicing their traditional oral culture, the Khelmas are able to preserve and practice it with modifications and changes.

Contextualizing Ecological Changes and Its Impact in Colonial Assam

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Colonial period marks a watershed moment in the history of India as it ushered profound changes in its political, socio- economic and ecological domains. While there has been a plethora of scholarly works on colonialism's socio- economic impact in India, since the 1980's a surfeit of research has emerged on its ecological transformations. To name a few works, Madhav Gadgil and Ramachandra Guha's '*This Fissured Land: An Ecological History of India* (OUP)'; '*The Unquiet Woods* (OUP) by Ramachandra Guha'; '*Nature, Culture and Imperialism*' by David Arnold and Ramchandra Guha. However, none of these seminal works have focussed on the ecological impact of colonialism in North- East India which bore the brunt of massive ecological degradation in the said period. Of late, Rajib Handique's book '*British Forest Policy in Assam*' and Arupjyoti Saikia's '*Forests and Ecological History of Assam, 1826-2000*' have made significant contributions in our understanding of colonialism's impact on the ecology of Assam. While these works have started an important initiative and have opened the door for further research in tracing the destructive impact the region's ecology sustained for the last two hundred years and in fact contains rich empirical information, it is also imperative to locate these deep disruptive ecological transitions in the proper colonial context of total economic domination and exploitation of the colony. The present paper will make an attempt to examine the colonial underpinnings of these severe ecological transitions and its long-term debilitating consequences on the socio- economic arena of colonial Assam.

Colonial Deforestation Policy in Tezpur: Its Role in Urban Development

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Colonial rulers tried to implement their authority all over the world. In India they along with their political supremacy put relentless efforts in commercial sector for their own benefits. Forest became a core of curiosity for colonisation in India. It got a special attention after the introduction of railway, chiefly for its timbers. In Tezpur, a city of Darrang district during colonial regime, colonial deforestation policy transformed the landscape into a major urban centre. Previously most of the areas were filled of dense forest. The paper will try to unravel the ideologies of colonial deforestation policy. It will show how colonial rulers used this policy for their own purposes and what type of results affected on the indigenous people and land. Hence, the city underwent a process of urbanisation for clearing forest and erected British administrative buildings, markets, parks, schools and churches.

Multilingual practices in urban Nagaland

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Nagaland, a mountainous agricultural state in northeast India is home to more than 22 vulnerable languages, spoken by over 16 distinct ethnic tribes. The urban centers of Nagaland have grown rapidly in the last few decades. This is mainly due to rural-to-urban migration, which is a result of both the inadequacies of rural livelihoods and the attraction of urban life.

The focus will be on Dimapur city, the “commercial capital” of Nagaland, which is home to a diverse set of non-tribal peoples. Dimapur is thus a melting-pot of different languages, culture, tribes, religion, ethnicity, race etc. which requires the use of multiple languages along with at least one or two widely used lingua franca (Nagamese and English). Increasingly, fewer children in urban Nagaland speak their indigenous languages. And those who do, often tend to speak slightly

“restricted” versions. There is arguably less and less reason, both socially and economically, to learn and converse actively in these languages outside certain specific social contexts. In the light of climate-change induced uncertainty in rural life and migration, this paper will present preliminary evidence about language practices in multilingual urban spaces, the processes that are changing the way indigenous Naga languages are spoken today especially among the urban youth and how it is shaping the present-day culture and Identity.

Language Documentation as a public service

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Human language is affected by the socio-economic and politico-cultural conditions which in turn make the respective linguistic environments friendly, or hostile or indifferent with respect to a language. In the UNESCO's *Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger*, ‘ethnic indigenous languages’ of Sikkim are endangered in various degrees. A preliminary studies like Linguistic Survey of India-Sikkim (1995-2000, 2008); Vatsagopal (2004); Turin (2012); Peoples’ Linguistic Survey of India (2012); Rai (2014); Rai (2013, 2015, 2021); Bhujel (2014, 2016, 2021); Das (1995); CEL reports (2017a, 2017b, 2017c), Sinha (2017, 2021), etc. reveal that these languages are indeed moribund or at the verge of being ceased as mother tongue or extinct. Paradoxically, despite Sikkim’s rich biocultural diversity, linguistic diversity is depleting; and a cover status - “endangered languages” is in the forefront in the discourse on the languages of Sikkim.

In addition to response to Haugen's ecological questions, a radical way to look at the distribution of global linguistic diversity, to assess the threat of extinction, and to prioritise research, Anderson and Harrison (2006), based on the biodiversity hotspots model, has conceived “language hotspot” to represent areas where we find a concentration of: a high levels of endangerment, a high genetic diversity in terms of language family, and a low levels of documentation - writing systems, grammars, dictionaries, texts, and audio and video materials. It is basically designed to visualize, track the trend, and to prioritise resources.

Sikkim with its depleting diversities requires major policy-to-practice strategies to strengthen the biocultural diversity. This paper provides an overview of the language situation in Sikkim with paradoxes, aspirations and efforts of the local communities and state agencies, and focusses on the 'ethnic indigenous languages' of Sikkim advocating that "language documentation" as a public service.

The story of Kanaklata Barua - A little narrative within the wider narrative of the freedom struggle in India

(As part of the celebration of Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav)

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Kanaklata Barua, born in a rural, patriarchal society at a time when Indian women enjoyed few rights, was a true Gandhian and her approach to the role of women in the freedom struggle narrates the contribution of Assamese women to India's freedom. Like the flag she died for, Kanaklata's story could be the flag of courage, of patriotism, hope and inspiration for common women all over the world. She was an example of the way in which Assamese women responded to Gandhiji's call for non-violence as the way to fight for freedom.

Nurtured in an atmosphere of a simmering political ferment, Kanaklata Barua had grown up listening to stories of Gandhi, Independence and the Congress. She was influenced by the interactions with her uncles, Jaduram Bora and Debendra Nath Bora, both active Congress workers, who made frequent visits to her house. Kanaklata's elder brother, Rajani Barua, was an active volunteer with full time training as a member of the *Mukti Bahini*. Kanaklata's interest in the freedom struggle was a cause of concern for the elders in the family as her grandfather did not approve of the female members of the

family wandering at their own free will. It was not normal for young girls in villages to roam the streets shouting slogans or engaging in volunteer work and she was frequently rebuked by her grandparents for doing so.

Stirred by Gandhiji's call for freedom, Kanaklata believed that women can never be free from the clutches of patriarchy unless India achieved Independence. Gandhi had also built up a campaign of self-reliance for women by postulating their economic independence. He had managed to "temporarily" deconstruct the unseen yet unquestionably observed cultural code of conduct that caused separation between gender and social spaces.

Nearer home, Kanaklata's role model was the Congress stalwart of Tezpur, Jyoti Prasad Agarwala. Young Kanaklata had a deep adoration for Jyoti Prasad Agarwala and her heroic deeds cannot be analysed without mentioning the impact of his teachings on her mind. The patriotic songs composed by Jyoti Prasad Agarwala often figured as the subject of discussion in Kanaklata's family. These songs touched the heart and soul of Kanaklata. Inspired by these songs she decided from the core of her heart about fighting for the freedom of the nation and had accordingly prepared herself mentally.

Kanaklata was motivated to social causes by iconic women leaders of Assam. Chandraprabha Saikiani, the architect of the women's movement in Assam and a pioneer of feminist ideas in the region, had urged upon the womenfolk to participate actively in the ongoing struggle against both, colonialism and patriarchy. She spoke of a role for women in society that was much ahead of their times. Kanaklata came to believe that "Freedom is our birthright." She was of the firm opinion that there was nothing that women could not or should not do. She questioned all inequality in a patriarchal society. The prevalence of orthodox social customs could not deter her intense desire to participate in politics.

Kanaklata's martyrdom also cannot be discussed in isolation without discussing the revolutionary impact of listening to stories about Pushpalata Das. Pushpalata Das, an ardent follower of Saikiani, had signed a pledge with her own blood to fight for the country. Kanaklata was aware about the fact that Puspalata Das had been entrusted with the task of forming the *Mrityu Bahini* in the Tezpur district (volunteer squads whose members pledged to lay down their lives for the cause of freedom of the country) by calling upon young volunteers to lay down their lives for the country.

Kanaklata's life is in many ways a symbol of pure patriotism unclouded by any philosophical questions. She had fearlessly told the armed police just before her death that the bullets could kill her

body but could not touch her soul. She proved to the world that the path of faith and determination can transform the ordinary to the extraordinary. As Kanaklata collapsed with the tri-coloured flag in her hand with blood gushing out of her bosom, she held on to the tricolour without letting it touch the ground till a few young men from Barangabari promptly organised a ‘changgi’ (a platform made of bamboo to carry dead bodies) and carried Kanaklata’s dead body to her village in Barangabari where she was cremated in their own plot of land. With a smile on her face, the brave seventeen year old had attained martyrdom even before she could complete her slogan. For Kanaklata, the flag was the spirit; it was the faith; it was the symbol. This depiction has symbolic value of enormous significance for the present generation. Can her example rouse the nation to ensure that all that the tri-colour stands for are not allowed to be mired in dust and mud?

Even in the land of her birth her story has remained largely untold, her life not celebrated, her example remaining only as a distant memory to future generations rather than being the guiding star and constant source of inspiration. It is believed that in the Freedom struggle as many as two hundred or more youth below thirty years of age have been executed/ hanged by British Government. It is unfortunate that Kanaklata’s name does not feature in the list of the martyrs of the Freedom Movement of India, let alone amongst the women freedom fighters. Though Kanaklata’s contribution is at par with revolutionaries from any other part of the country, the story of her courage, sacrifice and struggle are missing from our history books.

Only time can unravel this mystery of how the future will preserve the memory of Kanaklata Barua?

- Will she remain merely a statue erected at some street corner for thousands of people to watch as they pass by, or will she remain as a mere reference adorning the rhetoric of feminists?
- Will she be preserved as the eternal spirit in the hearts of thousands of women born in Assam?
- Will she be recalled as the youngest woman in the firmament of Indian society to have sacrificed her life in the Quit India movement?

Endangerment through Political Conflict

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Field linguists regularly come face-to-face with the effects of local and regional conflicts on minority languages. The data that field linguists collect provide evidence of the harm caused to linguistic minorities and their languages through constant low-level violence due to the deterioration of law and order and other conflicts. The result of conflict is often migration out of traditional villages to urban areas and language shift leading to language endangerment. Reviewing the stories of four experiencers from Northeast India, we see how case studies can increase knowledge of language endangerment. In this presentation we see that personal narratives collected and contextualized by a community member, could lead to community and personal healing, create a record for history, and add to collections for scientific discovery.

Kanaga Art Residency: When Artists Return To Their Home Ecologies

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I propose this idea with reference to the topic ‘inter-related idea of ecology as part of language culture and identity.’ In my paper I am proposing an alternate, parallel approach towards cultural mapping with historical, anthropological and cultural studies that may lead to a more aesthetic, equitable documentation of cultures. I put forth this approach as instrumental in introduction to cultures that have been subdued in modernisation in the semi-urban areas; and also in capturing aspects of exotic and non-exotic cultures that are mundane to pedagogy but important in civilizational history of mankind. As I shall put forth in this paper, most cultures are deeply rooted in ecosystems of their regions, and practices and age-old traditional lifestyles sustain the flora and fauna around. With the alteration of cultures from their geographical domains due to various reasons like migration, urbanisation, climate change, occupational changes, ‘ecology’ that is equated with the practices of these cultures goes through changes, in some cases is lost. With ‘Kanaga’ Artists Group we can see the change that may come when artists return to their home ecologies and work. Artists working in different culture and ecosystem in the fashion that this group works includes them as part of the cultures without them realising their identity as the outsider. This has led to an interesting documentation and continuation in practice of cultures and languages. With changes times, we need

to see the possibilities of continuing cultures are living entities and not merely document them as museum artefacts or make them part of scholarly research. Only this approach can sustain the cultural identities and ecologies associated with them. Although art residencies are not new, this approach to looking at artists' collectives and art works is certainly an original one and might lead to exciting findings. One of the most significant implications of this approach is the public domain in to which the cultural mapping is exposed to without specific intentions which are seen resulting into natural amalgamation and hence continuation of native cultures into hybrid ones. With the specimens of three residency programs held in various native ecologies, I would be presenting here how art practices like these could be a significant interlink between cultural practices and their sustenance.

The Mishing Tribe of Assam: Coping with the Changing Environment

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Assam is a melting pot of numerous cultures. Various tribes and communities have migrated to this region in different times and have unanimously contributed to the growth of Assamese culture. The Mishings are one such tribe which belong to the Tibeto-Burman speaking group of people of the greater Sino-Tibetan group. They had migrated probably from the north western part of China in several phases and entered the hills of Arunachal Pradesh before coming down and inhabiting the plains of Assam. Their closeness with the *tani* tribes of Arunachal Pradesh, mostly with the Adis, is reflected through their common ancestry to *Abotani*. Migration to Assam and settling mostly near the river banks of Upper Assam; the Mishings have retained and developed a colourful culture. Like other tribal communities, the Mishing culture is also shaped by their closeness with nature. Changes in the environment directly lead to a threat to the survival of their culture. Moreover the fear of acculturation and loss of identity looms large over this tribal community. This paper is an attempt to understand the co-relation between environment and culture from the perspective of the Mishing tribe of Assam and their struggle for cultural survival in a changing landscape.

Water Conservation and Sustenance Policy of the Harappans: Lessons to Learn from our Ancestors

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One view is that the Harappan Civilization flourished when the climatic conditions were not favourable. How could they have achieved this? Harappans developed a great sense and policy for the conservation of water and developed relevant technologies to overcome this situation. Some sites like Dholavira were established in the desert by the Harappans and they were fully aware about the water crisis in that region. They developed a unique water harvesting and management system at such sites and made sure that they not only survived but kept on thriving. The water conservation system developed by the Harppans is so relevant that even today this can be replicated at many places. The modern town planners need to understand and learn a lot from the Harappan town planning system to make our cities livable. The available archaeological data in this respect will be showcased in this presentation.

Multilingualism and Mobility in Teressa Island: An Ecological perspective

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The primary concern of this paper is the discourse of language loss about Lurö, an Austroasiatic language spoken in Teressa Island, Andaman & Nicobar archipelago, India. Speakers report that Lurö is being replaced by Sanenyö, the language of the neighbouring island. In this paper, I will propose ways to investigate the connections between this discourse of language loss, mobility and the ecological changes that have taken place on the island. Like other islands around the world, Teressa has also been affected by climate change in the Anthropocene. One such event, for instance,

was the tsunami of 2004, which lead to large-scale changes in the ecological makeup of Teressa. It is possible that such ecological changes are related to changes in the use and perception of languages in the island in multiple ways. This possibility is strengthened by the fact that previous linguistic research on Nicobar suggests that Teressa may have had a more complex situation of multilingualism, as opposed to the current discourse of language loss. The larger aim of my research is to understand the ways in which multilingual situations transform in situations of rapid ecological change.

About the Speakers

Alok Kumar Kanungo

Alok Kumar Kanungo, faculty at IIT Gandhinagar and adjunct faculty in Flinders University, was born in Odisha and grew up in close contact with many indigenous communities of eastern and north-eastern India. His early childhood experiences led him to eventually focus on archaeological and ethnographic studies.

For the past two and half decades, Dr. Kanungo has conducted research on the archaeology of glass and contemporary practice of the simple living communities of east and northeast, resulting in 14 books and 75 research articles and book chapters. He has been a Fulbright, Humboldt, British Academy, Rakow, ICG, Homi Bhabha, SPARC, ICHR, and Bead Society fellow, and collaborated on an NSF-funded project on Sourcing of Raw Materials for Ancient Indian Glass. Dr. Kanungo has travelled, and documented the rich heritage of the Nagas of northeast India, and the Bondos and Juangs of Odisha, both in the field and in museums across Europe and the United Kingdom. Placing the Intellectual rights of indigenous people and/or craftsmakers at the forefront of his research, he has worked in many domains of repatriation, traditional technologies, and the overlapping spheres where anthropology, history, and archaeology overlap. He has lectured in many universities and research institutes in Taiwan, England, USA, New Zealand, Bangladesh, Italy, France, Turkey, Malaysia, Germany, and Thailand, besides India.

Chandan Kumar Sharma

Chandan Kumar Sharma received his PhD from Delhi School of Economics (Delhi University) and is currently Professor in the Dept. of Sociology and Head of Dept. of Social Work at Tezpur University, Assam, India. His research interests include Development; Environment; Identity Politics; Migration; Urban Studies; Tribal Studies; Northeastern India.

His publications include *Fixed Borders, Fluid Boundaries: Identity, Resources and Mobility in North East India* (co-edited with Reshmi Banerjee, Routledge 2020), *Axomiya Kon?: Ek Rajanaitik Samajtattvik Avolokan (in Assamese) - Who is an Assamese?: A Political Sociological Analysis* (Span Publications & Strategic Research and Analysis Organization 2006) and two monographs

Political Economy of the Conflicts along the Assam-Arunachal Pradesh Foothill Border (ActionAid Association 2017), *Mapping the Trajectory of an Ethnic Identity Movement: The Case of the Misings of Assam* (Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies, Gauhati University 2012).

His publications have also appeared in *Sociological Bulletin*, *International Journal of Rural Management*, *The Asian Ethnicity*, *Indian Anthropologist*, *Economic and Political Weekly* amongst others. He regularly contributes to national and regional newspapers and journals on issues of contemporary relevance pertaining to politics, environment, education, culture, etc. These include *The Telegraph*, *Firstpost*, *The Mail Today*, *The Pioneer*, *The Deccan Chronicle*, *The Asian Age*, *The Sentinel*, *Amar Ujala*, *Hindustan*, etc. Besides, his comments on important regional and national issues have been often carried out by leading regional and national dailies and magazines.

Chhomu

Dr. Chhomu is presently working as an Assistant Professor in the Department of History at Government College Doimukh, Arunachal Pradesh. She has completed her MA in History from Gauhati University and PhD on “*Socio-Economic and Cultural Life of the Monpas of Arunachal Pradesh*” from Gauhati University. She has participated and presented papers on regional, national and international seminars and conferences on Monpas from historical perspective. She has also published articles in edited books. Her research interests include the Monpas and other tribes of Arunachal Pradesh from historical and cultural perspectives.

Devashree Bora

Devashree Bora has completed MA in Assamese from Gauhati University in 2018 and M Phil from Department of Folklore Research, Gauhati University in 2021. Currently she is pursuing PhD from the Department of Folklore Research, Gauhati University.

Gerald Roche

Gerald Roche is an anthropologist and Senior Research Fellow in the Department of Politics and Philosophy at La Trobe University. His research focuses on the politics of language endangerment and revitalization, with a regional focus on Tibet. He was previously a DECRA fellow at the Asia

Institute at the University of Melbourne, and a Post-Doctoral Research Fellow at Uppsala University's Hugo Valentin Centre. His research focuses on the politics of language endangerment and revitalization, with a regional focus on Tibet.

He previously lived on the northeast Tibetan Plateau for eight years (2005-2013), working as an applied anthropologist. As an applied anthropologist, he has collaborated with people in Tibet on various educational and cultural initiatives, including the creation of the world's largest online archive of oral traditions from the Tibetan Plateau, and the publication of the first nationally-distributed English language textbooks designed specifically for Tibetans.

His publications have appeared in the *Asia Pacific Journal of Anthropology*, *Modern Asian Studies*, *China Quarterly*, and *International Journal for the Sociology of Language*, *Anthropos*, and *Asian Ethnicity* amongst others. He recently co-edited the *Routledge Handbook of Language Revitalization*.

Jonali Devi

A gold medallist in Anthropology, from Gauhati University, Jonali Devi started her teaching career as lecturer first in Arya Vidyapeeth College in 1986, then in Cotton College in 1988. She was head of the Department of Anthropology, Cotton College during 2007 to 2017 and at present holding the post of Associate Professor in Cotton University (erstwhile Cotton College).

She did her PhD research under Gauhati University among two Naga tribes of Nagaland. To her credit she has published a number of research papers in books and journals. In 2020, her book titled '*Shifting Cultivation: Local Government, Indigenous Knowledge and Natural resource Management*' is published which incorporated her in-depth, empirical anthropological research.

Besides long 33 years of teaching experience she has been working in tribal areas of Northeast India with special reference to Nagaland on various pertinent issues like shifting cultivation, village organisation, indigenous knowledge system, common property resource management, heritage conservation, megalithic tradition etc.

As paper presenter, resource person, chairperson she has participated in more than 40 seminars, conferences and workshops at national as well as international level and is academically connected with various institutions like Indian Archaeological Society, New Delhi; National Institute of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj (NIRD PR NERC); Assam Institute for Tribal and Schedule Caste

(AITSC), Guwahati; Centre for Cultural Research and Training (CCRT); Human Resource Development Centre (HRDC) GU; and University Women's Association of Assam (UWAA). She is a founder member of Indian National Confederation and Academy of Anthropologists (INCAA) and was President of Guwahati Regional Chapter, INCAA during 2016 to 2019.

As Co-Convener, she has been associated with Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH), Kamrup Chapter and is involved in various research projects, awareness camp for conservation of cultural heritage.

Judith Pine

Judith Pine received her PhD from University of Washington in 2002 in Anthropology. She is currently a Professor in the Department of Anthropology at Western Washington University. Her research interests include the fields of linguistic anthropology, semiotics, literacy theory, Lahu people, Lahu language media, upland peoples of SE Asia/SW China, indigenesness, globalization/borders, and language maintenance/ endangerment/ revitalization.

Her publications include *Writing Right: Language Standardization and Entextualization* (Pragmatics 2015), *Authenticity of the Sign: Questions about a Lahu Song* (Semiotic Inquiry 2012)

Khammanh Siphanhxay

Khammanh Siphanhxay holds a Master's degree from Muenster University and a PhD from the Vietnam Academic of Social Sciences. He is currently the Vice-Director of the Institute for Social Research within the Lao Academy of Social Sciences. As an anthropologist, he has conducted in-depth research among the Tai Daeng people on both sides of the Laos-Vietnam border, investigating traditional cultural practices, local history and social change. Khammanh's research interests include ethnography, oral traditions, ethnic diversity and the relationship between livelihoods and cultural change. His research focus has been the Tai peoples of northern Laos, but recently has begun work with Tibeto-Burman and Austroasiatic groups to understand the construction of local historical narratives. He is currently engaged with an Asia Foundation funded project on multilingualism and value chains among vulnerable upland populations.

Madhumita Barbora

Madhumita Barbora received her PhD from Tezpur University and is currently working as a Coordinator at the Centre for Endangered Languages, Tezpur University, Assam. Her research interests include Syntax, Field Linguistics, Documentation of Tibeto-Burman languages of North East India and Applied Linguistics.

Her publications have appeared in *International Journal of Synthetic Emotions*, *Linguistics of Tibeto-Burman Languages* and *Prace-Bhasha-Vignan: Indian Journal of Linguistics* and has edited or co-edited volumes of *North East Indian Linguistics* (NEILS). In addition, she has also published books *Aspects of Modern Assamese* (Bhabani Print Publications 2016) and *Bugun Nyo Thau: Bugun Reader* (Eastern Book House Publishers (India) 2015).

Moushumi Kandali

Moushumi Kandali is an Assistant Professor at the School of Culture & Creative Expressions in Ambedkar University of Social Science & Humanities in Delhi, and is currently teaching on lien in the Department of Cultural Studies in Tezpur Central University. Moushumi specialises in cultural studies with specific reference to visual practices and literary cultures.

Her major area of academic engagement has been the art and culture of North Eastern India with a pioneering thesis about the modern art discourse of Assam. She has been assigned by the National Lalit Kala Academy to write a book about the modern art discourse of North East. She has been regularly publishing art related research essays and articles in various international and national journals.

A bilingual writer (Assamese and English), art critic-historian and translator, she is also regarded as one of the most innovative, original and experimental fiction writers of Assamese literature by the critics and readers and has received several prestigious national/ regional awards for her creative writing and has represented India and North-East at several international and national forum.

Mrinmoy Doley

Mrinmoy Doley completed MA in English and Comparative Literature from Pondicherry University in 2017 and M Phil on "*Folklore Elements in Easterine Kire's Novel When the river sleep*", from the Department of Folklore Research, Gauhati University in 2021. Currently he is pursuing his PhD from the Department of Folklore Research, Gauhati University.

Narayan Sharma

Narayan Sharma received his PhD from National Institute of Advanced Studies, Bangalore / Manipal University, Manipal, India in 2013 and is currently working as an Assistant Professor in the Department of Environmental Biology and Wildlife Sciences at Cotton University, Assam, India. His major area of academic engagement has been the study of community and behavioural ecology and the conservation biology of the primates in the fragmented landscape of Upper Brahmaputra Valley of northeastern India. His publications have appeared in *Journal of Biosciences*, *Current Science*, *Journal of Mammalogy*, *Biological Conservation*, *Resonance: Journal of Science Education* and *Economic and Political Weekly* amongst others.

Nathan Badenoch

Nathan Badenoch received his PhD from Kyoto University in 2006 in Southeast Asian Area Studies. He is currently an Associate Professor of Japanese and Asian Studies in Villanova University's Department of Global Interdisciplinary Studies. His research career has spanned the fields of environmental governance, community-based resource management and field linguistics, working in academia, international think-tanks and bilateral development aid.

His current research interests include the poetics of daily language use, multilingualism, traditional ecological knowledge and inter-ethnic relations in the mountains of Southeast Asia. He has conducted in-depth field-based research with ethnic minority communities in Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, Myanmar and India, focusing his linguistic research on Austroasiatic and Tibeto-Burman languages. He is the Executive-Editor of the journal *Southeast Asian Studies* and is an Executive Editor of *Asian Ethnicity*.

Nathan has recently published in peer-reviewed journals such as *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, *Journal of the Southeast Asian Linguistics Society*, and the *Southeast Asian Studies*. He has co-edited works such as *Expressives in the South Asian Linguistic Area* (2020 Brill), *A Dictionary of Mundari Expressives* (2019 Tokyo University of Foreign Studies) and *Water Rights and Social Justice in the Mekong Region* (2011 Earthscan/Routledge). He has received multiple Grants-in-Aid from the Japanese Society for the Promotion of Science, and was the recipient of Kyoto University's Hakubi Fellowship.

Nishaant Choksi

Nishaant Choksi received his PhD from University of Michigan in 2014 and is currently an Assistant Professor in the Social Sciences at the Indian Institute of Technology, Gandhinagar in Gujarat, India. His research interests include the study of script, writing, language ideology, education, semiotics, and indigenous communities in Gujarat, West Bengal, Jharkhand, and Northeast India.

He has published in peer-reviewed journals such as *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology*, *Language and Society*, and *Modern Asian Studies*, and also has edited or co-edited three volumes, including *Tribal Literature of Gujarat* (2010, CIIL Mysore), *A Course in Mundari* (2015, JSPS Tokyo), and *Expressives in the South Asian Linguistic Area* (2020, Brill). In addition, his monograph, *Graphic Politics in eastern India: Script and the Quest for Autonomy* has been published by Bloomsbury this year (2021).

Choksi's research has been supported by various fellowships including the Social Science Research Council, the Japanese Society for the Promotion of Science (JSPS), America-Scandinavia Foundation, Fulbright fellowship, and SPARC (Scheme for the Promotion of Academic Research Collaboration), Government of India.

Parismita Borah

Parismita Borah has completed UG and PG (2021) in History from Department of History, Cotton University, Guwahati. She is engaged as an academic researcher with an organisation named as The Trinitas.

Pushpa Renu Bhattacharyya

Pushpa Renu Bhattacharyya is servicing as a Research Associate in the Centre for Endangered Languages (CFEL) Tezpur University, Assam, India from the year 2016. Her research interests include language documentation and description. She was awarded PhD from Gauhati University, Assam in 2014. The topic of the PhD dissertation is “*The Pronominal System in Asamiya: A Descriptive Study*”. She also served as a Linguist under the L.I.S. India project of CIIL, Mysore in 2006 and in a DIT sponsored project entitled ‘*Indian Languages Corpora Initiative*’ in the Department of English and Foreign Languages, under the supervision of Prof. Dr. Madhumita Barbora (2014-2016).

Rashmita Phukan

Rashmita Phukan is presently working as an Assistant Professor in the Department of History, Nowgong College (Autonomous). She is pursuing her PhD in the Department of History, Gauhati University. She was awarded M Phil Degree in the year 2018 in the topic ‘*Ambari Sculptures: A Study on their Style and Socio- Economic Dimensions*’. Her specialisation is Ancient Indian History and her areas of research interests include Ancient Indian Art and Architecture, Art History, Social History etc. She has presented papers in national and international conferences pertaining to areas related to art, ancient Indian society and culture.

Ridipta Saikia

Ridipta Saikia is currently pursuing his PhD from the Department of History, Cotton University. The title of the thesis is “*An Imperial Vision: Architecture and Urban Planning in Tezpur*”. He has completed an MA in History from Cotton University with specialisation in Modern Indian History. His research interest includes colonial urbanisation in India.

Sakuntala Longkumer

Sakuntala Longkumer has a MA, M Phil and a PhD degree (September 2019) in Applied Linguistics from University of Hyderabad, and was awarded the UGC-Junior Research Fellowship. She has been

teaching Linguistics at the University of Hyderabad as a guest faculty to graduate and postgraduate students for over two years. She has worked on Tibeto-Burman languages of North East India of which she is a native speaker.

Her areas of interest are in the study of syntax mainly case and ergativity (as part of her PhD research), language endangerment, and sociolinguistics. Her field experience has been in linguistics, collecting language data from Tibeto-Burman speakers as part of her PhD research. Currently she is interested in the study of indigenous language endangerment and multilingualism. She has an upcoming post-doctoral project at IIT Gandhinagar focusing on the effects of migration to urban Nagaland and new linguistic practices that have emerged as a result.

Samar Sinha

Samar Sinha teaches linguistics in the Department of Nepali, Sikkim University. As a linguist with specialisation in signed linguistics, he obtained his PhD from the Center for Linguistics, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi on descriptive-cum-theoretical study of “*A Grammar of Indian Sign Language*.” He is interested in features (the atomic elements of linguistic structures) and their relation to architecture and modality in syntactic theory, primarily driven by the data from signed languages, Nepali language varieties and endangered languages. He collaborates with speakers of endangered languages of the Himalayas to document and describe their languages and institutions, and with writers on translation. His other interests are food ways and urban legends.

Currently, he heads the Center for Endangered Languages and Sikkim’s Endangered Language Documentation Project at Sikkim University. He is a founding member and currently, assistant treasurer of the Formal Studies in the Syntax and Semantics of Indian Languages Society (FOSSSIL), India.

Shiela Bora

Shiela Bora, eminent historian of modern India taught at the universities of Dibrugarh and Gauhati. A two-time recipient of the Fulbright scholarship, Prof. Bora has also taught Women’s History at Harvard University. Currently she is a member from India, on the Board of International Advisors for “*The Journal of Women’s History*”, published from Ohio State University, USA. A life member

of the Indian History Congress and the North East India History Association, Prof. Bora has published widely in many national and international journals. Her major works include *Students Revolution in Assam (1917-1947)*, *Youth at the Crossroads: A Study of North East India*, *Growth of Feminist Nationalism in Assam: Role of the Asom Mahila Samiti*, *The Story of Tourism: An Enchanting Journey through India's North-East*.

Currently she is Adjunct Professor at the Department of Archaeology, Cotton University in Guwahati. She is also acting as Convener of Assam State Chapter of the Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH).

Shobhana Chelliah

Shobhana Chelliah is a Professor of Linguistics and Associate Dean for Research and Advancement at the College of Information, at the University of North Texas (UNT). She is a documentary linguist interested in creating descriptions that expand typological discovery, primarily of the Tibeto-Burman languages spoken in Northeast India. Her publications include *The Grammar of Meithei* (Mouton 1997) and the *Handbook of Descriptive Linguistic Fieldwork* (co-authored with Willem de Reuse, Springer 2010). She is currently working on creating a lexical database and grammatical sketch to contribute to revitalization efforts of the Lamkang language of Manipur.

Snehal Tambulwadikar-Khedkar

Snehal Tambulwadikar-Khedkar is an artist, art historian, art critique, curator and above all an educator based in Nashik, Maharashtra. She has done her MVA in Art History, Aesthetics and Criticism from MSU, Baroda in 2011. Snehal has curated many shows and projects both in India and abroad. She has delivered a number of public lectures on various subjects based on History of Art and Aesthetics which also include a TedX talk. As a researcher, her works in forms of articles and papers are published through multiple platforms and has worked on publications with Prof. Rajesh Singh on Ajanta Caves. Currently she is engaged with PDAF, Mumbai as a programme coordinator and is a visiting faculty in some of the renowned Art and Design institutes of India including Sir J.J. School of Art, Mumbai and NID, Kurukshetra. Her desire to create awareness and respect for the heritage of arts and culture in different parts of our country led, to the creation of

Kalpravasi Heritage Tours. Through this initiative and her blogs, Snehal continues to bring in front of people the India's rich historical thought, art and culture.

Sommork Phanyavong

Sommork Phanyavong is a researcher and instructor at the National University of Laos, with a strong background in the pedagogy and practice of Lao language education. Her research interests include education, language policy, cultural change in ethnic minority communities and traditions of oral literature. A native speaker of both Lao and Nyuan, she has conducted research on language and culture during the current period of rapid socio-economic change in Laos. In addition to her interest in formal education, she is currently involved in an Asia Foundation funded project to explore how the diverse networks of multilingualism of northern Laos influences the recent history of local economic relations and value-chain development. Phanyavong is slated to start a doctoral program in Lao Language and Literature at the National University of Laos.

Sweta Mahanta

Sweta Mahanta is presently working as Assistant Professor in the Department of History, Darrang College, Tezpur, Assam. She has completed her PhD in 2013 from Gauhati University on the topic “*Archaeological remains of Tezpur in a Historical Perspective (From the 5th Century C.E. up to the end of the 12th Century C.E.)*”. Her area of interest includes ancient history of Assam, art and cultural history of Northeast India. She has attended and presented a number of papers in regional, national and international seminars and conferences on topics related to history and culture. Her research papers appeared in *Online International Journal of Arts and Humanities*, *Journal of History and Culture* and *The Research Journal of Social Sciences*.

Vasant Shinde

Vasant Shinde is a world-renowned archaeologist and one of the foremost scholars in South Asia. He completed his PhD in Protohistoric Archaeology on Early Settlements in Central Tapi Basin from Deccan College, Deemed University. Prof. Shinde has been a pioneer in archaeological research since the last 36 years, specialising in the Protohistory of South Asia as well as Field Archaeology.

He has completed 16 major research projects, in the process of which he has collaborated with scholars and institutes from around the world, from Institutes such as the Universities of Pennsylvania and Wisconsin in the United States of America to Cambridge and Oxford Universities in the United Kingdom, to the International Research Center for Japanese Studies and Research Institute for Humanities and Nature (both in Kyoto, Japan), Seoul National University College of Medicine, South Korea, and so on. His contributions to Archaeology in India and abroad take the form of a large number of research papers, edited volumes and other publications, comprising 12 books, two monographs, 19 edited books/journals, 133 papers in national journals/books and 72 research papers in international journals/books alone, in addition to 24 popular articles in magazines and other periodicals. Several crucial elements of South Asian archaeology, from hitherto unknown Protohistoric cultural phases to models of urbanisation in Mewar, Rajasthan, owe their discovery to him. His most significant breakthrough research contribution includes first aDNA analysis and Craniofacial Reconstruction of Harappan people.

Vysakh, R.

Vysakh, R. is a research scholar working in the field of Linguistic Anthropology at the Indian Institute of Technology, Gandhinagar. He has done an MA in Linguistics from JNU, Delhi. Prior to joining his PhD, he worked at the Central Institute of Indian Languages, Mysore as a resource person for language documentation in Nicobar Islands in 2018-19 under the supervision of Prof. Anvita Abbi. As part of this project, he spent a total of three months in the field, Teressa Island, Nicobar to collect data for a tri-lingual dictionary and grammar sketch.

He is currently looking at the question of language endangerment, its possible connections with ecological change and discourses associated with the same. His areas of research interest include Language endangerment and revitalisation, Multilingualism, Language ideologies, Semiotics and Language structure. Vysakh's dissertation fieldwork is supported by the Wenner-Gren foundation.

About the Conveners

J.A.H. Khatri

Javed Khatri received his PhD in Linguistics from Gujarat University and is currently an Assistant Professor at School of Liberal Studies & Education in Navrachana University, Vadodara in Gujarat, India. His research interests include Communication theory, Semiotics, Linguistic Anthropology, Sociolinguistics, and Applied Linguistics.

A trilingual writer he regularly publishes in English, Gujarati and Hindi. His publications include *Culture and Representation: The Emerging Field of Media Semiotics* (Ruby Publication & Co., New Delhi 2013). He has also published in various national and international journals such as *International Journal of Research Culture Society*, *International Journal of Research in Humanities*, *Arts and Literature*, *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science* (IOSR-JHSS) amongst others.

Manjil Hazarika

Manjil Hazarika is Assistant Professor and Head (i/c) at the Department of Archaeology of Cotton University in Guwahati. He is an archaeologist by training and has been working on the archaeology of the Northeast India and eastern Himalayan region for the last 10 years. After completing an MA in Ancient Indian History, Culture and Archaeology from Deccan College Postgraduate and Research Institute in Pune in 2005 with first class first position, Hazarika joined the International Master in Quaternary and Prehistory at Universitat Rovira i Virgili in Spain under the Erasmus Mundus Master Program financed by the European Union and worked on the museum collections of stone artifacts from Jinja in Uganda, kept at the Institut de Paléontologie Humaine of Museum National d'Histoire Naturelle in Paris.

He has also completed PG Diploma in Heritage Management and Tourism from Tilak Maharashtra University, Pune in 2009. In 2014, Dr. Hazarika completed PhD from the Bern University in Switzerland and was awarded the highest accolade of *Summa cum laude* (with highest honour). He is the recipient of Prof. H.D. Sankalia Memorial Gold Medal Award, Prof. S.N. Rajaguru Geoarchaeology Cash Prize Award, Late Shri Katragadda Subbaiah Cash Prize Award and Pandit Hemchandra Goswami Memorial Award. His published book *Prehistory and Archaeology of*

Northeast India: Multidisciplinary Investigation in an Archaeological Terra Incognita (2017, Oxford University Press) and papers published in journals have dealt with the prehistoric cultural developments in the north-eastern part of the country. He has also co-authored a book *Glimpses of Aksumite Heritage - Through the Artworks of Solomon Weldegebreal* (2015, Mekelle University Press) and co-edited *50 Years After Daojali-Hading: Emerging Perspectives in the Archaeology of Northeast India – Essays in Honour of Tarun Chandra Sharma* (2014, Research India Press, New Delhi) and *Archaeology in Northeast India – Recent Trends and Future Prospects – Essays Celebrating 150 Years of Research* (2021, Research India Press, New Delhi).

Previously he has served at the Indian Archaeological Society, New Delhi as a Research Associate from 2010 to 2013 and at the Department of Heritage Conservation of the Institute of Paleo-environment and Heritage Conservation, Mekelle University in Ethiopia as Assistant Professor from 2013 to 2015. He was associated with the Mekelle-Heidelberg project on “Survey, Excavation and Training in Archaeology and Heritage Management at Mifsas Bahri archaeological site” near Hashenge lake in Ethiopia. Hazarika was also a member of the Indo-French research team which discovered anthropic activities at Siwaliks of Northwest India dating back to 2.6 Ma, which is the earliest evidence of presence of man in South Asia.

Currently, he is also acting as Convener of Kamrup Chapter of the Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH) and engaged in various activities for promotion and preservation of cultural heritage in Assam.

Nishaant Choksi

Nishaant Choksi received his PhD from University of Michigan in 2014 and is currently an Assistant Professor in the Social Sciences at the Indian Institute of Technology, Gandhinagar in Gujarat, India. His research interests include the study of script, writing, language ideology, education, semiotics, and indigenous communities in Gujarat, West Bengal, Jharkhand, and Northeast India.

He has published in peer-reviewed journals such as *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology*, *Language and Society*, and *Modern Asian Studies*, and also has edited or co-edited three volumes, including *Tribal Literature of Gujarat* (2010, CIIL Mysore), *A Course in Mundari* (2015, JSPS Tokyo), and *Expressives in the South Asian Linguistic Area* (2020, Brill). In addition, his monograph, *Graphic*

Politics in eastern India: Script and the Quest for Autonomy has been published by Bloomsbury this year (2021).

Choksi's research has been supported by various fellowships including the Social Science Research Council, the Japanese Society for the Promotion of Science (JSPS), America-Scandinavia Foundation, Fulbright fellowship, and SPARC (Scheme for the Promotion of Academic Research Collaboration), Government of India.

Phanindra Talukdar

Phanindra Talukdar is an Art Historian, Art Curator and an Assistant Professor at Dr. Anita Baruah Sarmah College of Education, NERIM, Assam. He has published, delivered lectures and curated multiple projects on contemporary art practices of Northeast India including 'Contemporary Cultural Dialects of Manipur' and 'Contemporary Printmaking of North East India'. An avid writer he has written extensively on art and poetry in both English and Assamese languages. He is also a founder member of Pragjyotish Centre for Cultural Research, Assam. He is currently working on a project titled 'Visual Culture, Art History of North East India'.

About the Coordinator

Shruti Nair

Shruti Nair holds an MA degree in Society and Culture from IIT Gandhinagar. She is currently working as a Project Coordinator for an SSRC project entitled 'Mobility and Multilingualism in South and Southeast Asia: Impacts of Global Ecological Change on Local Society' with Prof. Nishaant Choksi at IIT Gandhinagar.

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