

BIWEEKLY COLLOQUIUM
Monday, May 8th, 4:15 p.m.

**CONFLICTS BETWEEN HILL 'PEOPLE' AND VALLEY 'CIVILIZATIONS'
IN EASTERN HIMALAYAN LANDSCAPES:
NORTHEAST INDIA, MYANMAR, YUNNAN**

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Part of the state building process since around 5000 years is the myth of 'barbarians' who constantly tried to violently appropriate the economic surplus of 'civilizations' with state structures. Actually, the relation between 'civilizations', often based on new technologies of irrigation in river valleys, and 'barbarian outsiders', normally living in less productive landscapes like hills or semi-deserts, were much more complex. In general, not the 'outsiders', but more often the 'civilizations' conquered land and resources by force and other means. In the case of Eastern Himalayan (Northeast India, eastern part of Bangladesh, Myanmar, Southwest China) colonization of hilly areas intensified in the 18th century and accelerated further after the independence of India/Pakistan in 1947 and the foundation of the PR China in 1949.

The lecture will present tentative results of an ongoing research project, whose three subprojects are dealing with the following questions:

a) How far ongoing political, cultural and violent conflicts between militant groups in Northeast India and Myanmar and state security forces are connected to the old contradiction and narrative between hill 'people' and valley 'civilizations'? What is the relation between these conflicts and new forms of 'identity politics' or 'ethnonationalism'?

b) In both regions, different layers of modern and traditional property and land use rights exist. What are the effects of these layers and to which extent village economies in hilly areas are still based on 'collective use' of 'common property resources' (Elinor Ostrom)?

c) Current infrastructure projects, transboundary resource exploitation (e.g. forest, fossil fuels, minerals) and trade in the landscapes of Northeast India-Myanmar-Yunnan are conceptualized as 'new Asian regionalism'. How far these developments are increasing or decreasing the tensions between social groups living on hills and in valleys? Does a 'new region' actually emerge in these landscapes?

Results of several field study tours in 2015 and 2016 in border areas of Northeast India/North Myanmar and Yunnan/West Myanmar will be presented.

Venue: Leibnizstraße 1, Seminar Room 204