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***Asia in Motion: Geographies and Genealogies***  
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**Flows and Frontiers I: Geography of Networks and Economy of Mobility in Asia**

**Panel 98 Inter area/border Crossing**

**8:30 AM -10:00 AM**

**Convenor: Pinkaew Laungaramsri (Chiang Mai University)**

**Discussant: Claire Thi Lien Tran (Irasec)**

Frontier of Asia has long been a marginal topic within Asian Studies. While Asia has been defined in terms of the distinctive characteristics and circumstances of the particular geographic area, such Asian sphere has often been located at the center. The historical construction of Asia is thus a spatial politics which involves the molding of region and identity through the construction of the centralized space along with the exclusion of the margin. However, the rise of new power, especially China and recent flows of capital into various peripheries have rendered the frontier and its people a strategic engine of change.

The proposed double panel brings together interdisciplinary research, weaving trans-border economic relations, frontier mobility, and transnationalism, through the geography of networks and economy of mobility. Against the backdrop of China's rise, regionalization, and neo-liberalization, the panels seek to explore the patterns of change and apparatus of uneven mobility at various types of boundaries interlinking diverse cases from central and marginal Asia, and Asian borderlands in order to understand the diverse ways in which different groups of marginal people respond to transborder and transnational forces. Departing from the predominant state-centered perspective to understand Asian, the panel seeks to rethink the margin in the relationship with regionalism, migration, and transboundary negotiation.

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**1 From Localized Exchange to International Trade Across Himalaya: The Historical Transformation of Commercial Exchange in Yunnan-Burma-India Borderland**

**Zhou Zhiseng, Zhang Libo, Wang Haoyu**

**Zhou Zhiseng, Professor; Editorial office of The Journal of Yunnan Normal University**

This article explored the historical origin, illustrated transformative process, and analyzed the character of commercial exchange between Yunnan, Burma and India across Himalayan through exploration of various categories of historical literature and oral resources. The authors assert that the ancient commercial exchange was based on the localized multi-ethnic networks which has been broadened and re-hinged as the international business circle that crossed the whole Himalayan area. Here, the localized and intra-ethnic economic exchanges became the foundation of the international trade construction and diffusion in that area, which promoted the traditional intra-ethnic communication and dynamics in eastern Himalayan region. Therefore, from the historical perspective, we argue that the relationship between Yunnan and Tibet of China located in eastern foot of Himalayas, India and Burma is interweaved and overlapped by localized intra-ethnic commercial exchanges and supplements and long-distance international trade which shows different intersection spectacle within different age.

Key words: localized intra-ethnic exchange; international trade network; eastern foot of Himalaya; collaboration and mutual promotion

## **2. An analysis on the Spatial Evolution and the Dynamic Mechanism of Non-governmental Commercial and Trading Exchange in China-Burma-India Adjoining Area** **Li Cansong, Hong Liang.** Faculty of Tourism and Science of Geography

The adjoining area of China, Burma and India (CBI) includes Yunnan and Tibet in Southwest of China, Kachin, Shan and other states in Burma, and 7 provincial states of Northeastern India. This area is the corridor of migration among CBI ancient ethnic groups. It is a nexus for promoting culture, economics and communication in CBI of which non-governmental commercial exchange is an important form. This paper trawls through the spatial evolution and spatial characteristics of multinational trading in this area, and refines the dynamics of the merchants. Specifically, the non-governmental trading in CBI adjoining area fortified those significant commercial centers by building the network between traditional trading routes like *Southern Silk Road*, which the national merchants were the core carrier of dynamizing the network as such. Although pursuing the best interest is the main dynamics, the non-governmental trading is a result of resource and product exchange and interaction and networking under the specific geographic circumstances during the struggle for living space. Ethnic groups' need for survival and living in different geographic units is a prime motivation for the non-governmental trading. Along the un-fixed border, the ethnic groups established mutual trust as the safeguard through bartering during migration for the prosperity. The long-standing communication and mutual understanding is the key factor for sustainable development of non-governmental trading.

**Key words:** China-Burma-India Adjoining Area; Non-governmental Commerce; Spatial Evolution; Dynamic Mechanism

## **3. Governing City Dreams: Hope and Uncertainty in Translocal Tamangs Migration** **Isha Gharti,** Ph.D. student, Faculty of Social Sciences, **Chiang Mai University**

Tamangs, the largest ethnic and one of the most 'marginalized' community in Nepal, in the recent times have made themselves increasingly visible in the lower economic strata of the capital. Lured by the promises of the 'city life' and its 'development', Tamangs predominately residing in the seven districts surrounding Kathmandu have been increasingly relying the low wage works offered in the capital to uplift their lives. The research focuses on the labor migration of Tamangs of Sindhupalchok which sees a major out flow of labor towards Kathmandu mostly to work as construction workers, drivers and handy boys, domestic help and commercial sex workers and the effect of these labor migration has on the restructuring of the local Tamang community. Here, the income generated from the city becomes not only the means for the improvement in everyday living of the community but this mobility in itself has a significant impact on the subtle transformation in perceptions, choices aspirations and behavior. Thus, making these migrant an active agents of social and economic transformation of the local village. Using governmentality and habitus, the research tries to show how the labor migration of locals to Kathmandu paint a picture of city life and how the local individual and community conceptualize it; how each individual rejects, deliberates as well as selectively incorporates it in his/her life and responds accordingly.

**Key words:** Tamang, Sindhupalchok, development, marginalized

## **4. China's Rise and the Transformation of Southeast Asian Borderland** **Pinkaew Laungaramsri,** Professor, **Chiang Mai University**

Where China Meets Southeast Asia: Social and Cultural Change in the Border Regions edited by Grant Evans, Christopher Hutton, and Kuah Khung Eng has been one among few literatures that take borderlands between China and mainland Southeast Asia seriously. One of the major contributions of this collection of field studies in the border region is the attempt to understand how border experiences as well as the process of bordering have changed since the early 1990s. This was the era when traditional political borders were reshaped by the policy of economic corridors regionalization. Various Chinese-locals interactions have been explored in this book with an emphasis on the variety of responses to border transformations through mobility and network building. My paper is based on recent research and examines the role of China and the new wave of Chinese investments and involvements that has been transforming the borderlands of the Mekong Region since the 2010s. In its path to establish a transnational market society that spill over across the region, China, in collaboration with the Southeast Asian states, has not only put the old frontier into an end, but also turned various borderlands into a neo-liberalized space where Chinese market force both sustains a civilizing mission and regulates

local lives at the border. New state apparatuses such as zoning technologies and the state supported “going out policy” have facilitated the influx of Chinese capital and of a new generation of Chinese migrants into the borderlands. Enclaves of new Chinese entrepreneurial communities have been established both in and outside the border areas and are not necessarily integrated into the existing local societies. At the same time, new class relations have emerged along the ethnic lines that brought local experiences closer to the Chinese capitalism. It is this new regime of Chinese-led development and its uncertain trajectory that have come to characterize the contemporary Mekong border, a decade after of what Grant Evans has recorded in “Where China Meets Southeast Asia”

**Keywords:** Chinese capitalism, Mekong region, Neo-liberalized border

**5) “Nation work”— Construction of Chinese National Identity by International Chinese Teachers**  
**Li Jianguo**, Ph.D. student, Faculty of Social Sciences, Chiang Mai University

Confucius Institute (CI), as a Chinese government sponsored organization for the promotion of Chinese language and culture abroad, has been an instrument of “Chinese soft power”. As a contribution to the “small-although rapidly growing” CI-related academic body from a perspective of micro-level day-to-day data, this study investigates “nation work” that the CI dispatched International Chinese teachers (ICTs) practice in Thailand. Following Timothy Brook, nation work is “construction of representation, the appropriation of national forms and ideas from abroad, struggles against rivals—and always the effort to disseminate and instill the results of elites work in as wide an audience as possible”. The ICTs who have been pinned many hopes from the motherland being named as “the modern Zhangqian” or “Chinese name cards” or “Chinese story tellers”, have actually been regarded as one group of “nation workers” to construct Chinese national identity abroad, which is the standardization process of Chineseness for “international neighbors”. The current research investigates the role of ICTs in northern Thai universities in three aspects: first, teaching Chinese—representing contemporary Chinese ideology; second, testing Chinese—building standardized Chinese language network; and third, enacting cultural activities—performing Chinese identity. The research is anticipated to contribute to the theory of Chinese national identity by investigating contemporary Chinese cultural nationalism which is claiming “a real China” and official nationalism which maybe representing “a politically right China” by government sponsored CI.

## **Flows and Frontiers (II): Trans-border Ethno-Religious Movements**

### **Panel 113 Inter Area / Border Crossing**

**10:20 AM 11:50 AM**

**Chair: Kwanchewan Buadaeng**  
**Discussant: Claire Thi Lien Tran**

Frontier of Asia has long been a marginal topic within Asian Studies. While Asia has been defined in terms of distinctive characteristics and circumstances, it has often been located at the center. The historical construction of Asia is thus a spatial politics which involves the molding of region and identity through the construction of the centralized space along with the exclusion of the margin. However, the opening of border for trade and investment has made the frontier and its people a strategic engine of change. This panel brings together interdisciplinary research tapping the trans-border and inter-ethnic relations, frontier mobility, and the crafting of space and identities from diverse cases. In the frontier of Southwest China, India/Nepal, Burma, and Thailand where the researches have taken places, diverse ethno-religious groups have interacted with each other since the pre-modern time to make use of border economic potentiality. Many ethnic armed movements can be also found fighting the state for their autonomous power. However, against the recent regionalization, and neo-liberalization, new dynamics of transborder ethno-religious movements and networks have occurred. The panel also aims to develop insights into the complex processes of encounter at local level and the diverse ways in which various groups of people respond to cross-regional forces. Using the movement, network and mobility as the interlinking conceptual lenses, the panel compares and contrasts diverse ethno-religious movements within and across the borders. It has also shown that mobility and networks are significant means for people to redefine their relationship to the center.

**Rohingya Networks in Thailand: Negotiation of Representation through Social media** Mr. Kunnawut Boonreak, Ph.D. student, Faculty of Social Sciences, Chiang Mai University

In recent years, Rohingya arrivals in Thailand has drawn tremendous public attention. While media and academia have been the main sources in representing Rohingya image to the international community, Rohingya themselves are also trying to present their own image through their networks. As there are many waves of Rohingya migration into Thailand, therefore Rohingya in Thailand are very diverse in terms of social and economic status. Established Rohingya who have been living in Thailand with Thai citizenship and Rohingya that arrived recently as refugees have been creating their own networks. With several networks for different purposes such as trade, religion or humanitarian aid, these networks always overlap with one another. In the midst of scattered and overwhelming information, Rohingya issues has become, a controversy serving religious or political ideals. This paper tries to configure Rohingya's network which is active in several fields including Muslim organization, INGOs, faith-based humanitarian organizations and social media. This study employs multi-cited ethnography approach to investigate how these networks represent the Rohingya and also emphasizes on the debatable issues from Rohingya's perspective to negotiate with social phenomenon during the latest Rohingya migration in 2017. Applying actor-network theory, the paper shows the work process of Rohingya network using technology and religious beliefs to engage in their own issues with Muslim and non-Muslim actors. The findings show that Rohingya aim to present new image by engaging in networks to create representation responding and countering reputation of being 'terrorists' which are invented by Burmese government and the mainstream media.

**Keywords:** Rohingya, Refugee, Social media, Network, Representation

**2. Ancient Migration of Ethnic Groups in the Adjoining Area of Burma-India-Tibet-Yunnan**  
**LIN Yan-ming**

The adjoining area of today's Burma, India, as well as Tibet and Yunnan of China (BITY), used to be an important migration corridor for many ancient ethnic groups throughout history. Generally speaking, in one of the main migration routes in the adjoining area of BITY that ranges from the southwest China to Burma and India, a variety of ethnic groups settled in and have a long history of migration and moving along this route. Consequently, ancient ethnic groups' migrations has made some significant impact on the development course of the adjoining area of BITY. Most important of all, there had been long-term and close interaction for various civilization and diverse cultures. Based on the historical inspection, this paper emphasizes that the following issues should be brought to the forefront and is worth a deeper understanding. Firstly, in order to strengthen the people-to-people bond, it is necessary to deepen the mutual understanding and positive interaction in the adjoining area. Next, it is pertinent to promote the connectivity of the adjoining area by re-establishing main historical traffic arteries in reference to the ancient migration routes. Last but not least, problem of transnational ethnic groups and other matters related to it, which is rooted deeply in the history, is the common challenge facing Burma, India as well as Tibet and Yunnan of China. So, it is urgent to reinforce co-operation and collaborative governance by the relevant stakeholders.

**Key Words:** Adjoining area of BITY; people-to-people bond; migration

3.

**Dynamic Mechanism of Tibeto- Burman Ethnic Groups' Cultural Space Diffusion in China-Burma-India Region**  
**Li Peishen, Zhou Zhisheng**

China's Tibetan-Burman ethnic groups are mainly distributed in Tibet, Sichuan, and Yunnan provinces. In the course of historical migration, some of them entered India and gradually constituted the people of the eastern Himalayan and northeastern parts of India among which the Di-Massa, Charlie, Miguel, Zamia Naga, Gallo are the most representative branches. The other branches reached to Southeastern Asia and Northeastern Asia, mainly in the northwest of Burma, including Burma, Rakhine, Kachin, Naga, Lisu, Hani, Lahu, Karen and other more than 10 ethnic groups, accounting for 90% of Burma population. The Tibetan-Burman ethnic groups in China-Burma-India (hereafter CBI) crossing angle region in migration, with the various ethnicities in the ethnic culture have also spread, and gradually formed a common historical and cultural resource in this region. This article focuses on the common cultural characteristics of the Tibetan- Burman ethnic groups of China, the East Himalaya ethnicities of India,

and Burma's Tibetan- Burman ethnic groups. Through the analysis of the diffusion path of propagation and the Tibeto-Burman ethnic culture in CBI crossing angle region, this paper displays Tibetso-Burman ethnic cultural communication and spatial characteristics of local ethnicity and reveals the dynamic mechanism of the spread of ethnic culture in Tibetan-Burman ethnic groups. The research employs both historical longitudinal analysis and horizontal spatial comb, which could prove a useful reference and compliment future research in the area.

**Key words:** Tibeto- Burman Ethnic Groups; Cultural Space Diffusion; Dynamic Mechanism

#### **4 Thailand-Myanmar Frontier Economic Development and Ethnic Security, Pr Kwanchewan Buadaeng (Chiang Mai University)**

Thailand-Myanmar frontier has been a war zone between ethnic armed groups and Burmese army for almost 70 years. This protractedness has caused countless injuries, deaths, handicaps, displacements and refugees. However, after the cold war and under the context of economic regionalization in the last two decades, the frontier rich in natural resources and cheap labors, has gradually opened for various economic exploitations. The area has become industrialized and commercialized with the support of Thailand and Myanmar state and under the regional scheme of East-West Corridor supported by China and other powerful states. Under this changing context, the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement initiated by the Myanmar government and signed by major armed groups has led to more opportunities for economic development. But what will the peace process and economic development leads to? This paper would argue that ethnic security in the frontier is still questionable. First, bigger armed groups which controls more territory may benefit from economic investments. But those smaller ones which cannot get a fair share of benefit from economic investments, may be resentful and get back to the armed struggle. Second, although Thailand and Myanmar states have talked about the resettlement of the refugees, there has not yet been an action plan. Third, land grabbing for economic investment and the exploitation of nature can impact daily life of people who rely on natural resources. The paper argues that economic development at the borderland may lead to more conflict and violence arising from the exploitation of human and natural resources.

**Keywords:** Thai-Myanmar frontier, economic development, human security

#### **5. Displaced “Karen-ness”: Rebuilding Karen Nationalist Consciousness in Exile Dr. Chao Chung-chi, Assistant Professor, Department of Southeast Asian Studies, National Chi Nan University, Taiwan**

Homelands of refugees are the places where their cultures take root. Refugees are perceived as people severing their ties with their cultures because they are forced to take shelter in neighboring countries. However, in the Karen refugee camps at the Thai-Burma border, thanks to Thai authorities' border and refugee management policies, international refugee assistance NGOs' involvements in the humanitarian assistance works, the collective memories of religious conflict between Christian and Buddhist groups, as well as the upcoming resettlement by Thai government, the Karen refugees not only rebuild their culture in refugee camps but the K-organizations also use the rebuilt-culture to reshape ordinary people's nationalist consciousness. In this paper, I examine how Karen refugees rebuild their culture in such a space and at the same use the rebuilt culture to mobilize people's nationalist consciousness.

**Key Words:** Karen-ness; refugees; Thai-Burma border