University of Tartu
Central University of Jharkhand

Tradition, Creativity and Indigenous Knowledge:

Winter School of International Folkloristics and Indigenous Culture

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Abstracts

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Introduction

Contemporary approaches conceptualise folklore as a vernacular expressive practice embedded in social, communicative and political contexts. Whereas earlier scholarship emphasised the stability of folklore as a static and conservative body of knowledge, current research focuses on variation, change and creativity. However, even though synchronic approaches tend to dominate in international folkloristics, tradition has remained one of the key concepts of the discipline, referring to the historical dimension of folklore and the cultural process of 'creating the future out of the past' (H. Glassie). The creation and preservation of traditions is seen as an integral part of the everyday life of individuals, local communities and informal networks as well as states and various institutions.

The winter school and the Tradition, Creativity and Worldview: Inter-Disciplinary Perspectives on Cultural Dynamics academic symposium at the Central University of Jharkhand, Ranchi, aim at bringing together doctoral students, and junior and senior scholars from different countries to discuss the relationship between tradition and creativity, stability and change in folklore and vernacular cultures past and present. Since the meeting will be held in a region that abounds with the indigenous peoples of India, special attention will be paid to the indigenous peoples of the world and their traditional knowledge expressed in worldviews, belief systems, poetic and narrative genres, arts and practices of everyday life.

The winter school of international folkloristics and indigenous culture is organised by the Centre for Tribal Folklore, Language and Literature (Central University of Jharkhand, India) and the Department of Estonian and Comparative Folklore (University of Tartu, Estonia) in co-operation with the Centre of Excellence in

Cultural Theory (CECT). Holding the winter school at the Central University of Jharkhand has become possible thanks to the support of the Vice-Chancellor Prof Darlando T. Khathing. We express deep gratitude to him, to all our sponsors and to the members of the local organising team.

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Abstracts of the Plenary Lectures:

From People to the Nation – the Setu and the Veps

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In this lecture I plan to give you an overview of the cultural emancipation of two small Finnic groups – the Setu and the Veps, the first living mainly in the Estonian Republic, the second in some parts of north-west Russia. The number of both peoples is not greater than 10 000.

Historically the Setu have belonged to the Russian Orthodox cultural sphere, although linguistically Setu speech is much closer to Estonian than to Russian. After the Estonian Independence War in 1920 their territory was compounded to the Estonian Republic and the Setu people began to adopt western-style culture. As a result, the Setu began to modernise quickly. Today the Setu have a literary language and a written epic (as the symbol of the nation), and in Estonia they are visible and self-sufficient both culturally and partly even politically. Despite the linguistic assimilation (the younger Setu increasingly speak Estonian) the Setu like to stress their dissimilarity from (other) Estonians. For ordinary Estonians traditional Setu culture and folklore and its modern extensions are exotic, attractive and interesting.

The Veps played a noteworthy role in the establishment of a Russian state more than 1000 years ago. After this they remained at the periphery under the domination of Russian culture and were only 'discovered' again in the 19th century. For a short period in the first

half of the 20th century, small ethno-linguistic groups received support from the Soviet regime in order to create schooling systems and literary languages, although this was soon reversed and banned under Stalinist national policy. Since the *glasnost* period in the Soviet Union (the 1980s–90s) Vepsian culture has made a new start. In the nation building process folklore and other elements of traditional culture are often used. Today, the overall trends in this regard do not make the Veps future seem very promising.

As the starting point in the 1920s was similar for both groups we can see how historical circumstances have influenced subsequent processes differently.

'The End of Time' *in* Tribal Traditions or 'The End of Time' *for* Tribal Tradition? Some Considerations on Adivasi Culture in Contemporary India

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This lecture proposes an analysis of the concept of the End of Time/end of a time-cycle in the tribal cultures of India. At the dawning of the third millennium, we often hear about the end of the world, catastrophes, the decline of humanity. In such a distressing period of cultural dispersion and ethnic and social upheaval, many new-age movements, as well as many pseudo-religions, have meddled in this topic, giving rise to the most disparate millennial fears.

Moreover, since time immemorial all great civilizations, those disappeared as well as those still alive, have handed down (through written or oral tradition) prophecies on the conclusion of the age: the 'dark era', the 'iron age'/Kali Yuga, i.e. the current age of humanity.

The concept of time itself involved – and still involves – the need for a conclusion to the human cycle, given that it had a beginning chronicled in mythical and cosmogonic memories. However, this conclusion is conceived as the end of time, as the end of a world, as a deluge of fire and rain, as a final war with the reappearance of the heroes of the past, perhaps in different forms. It is described as a dramatic event, an authentic collective punishment, from which only the righteous will eventually be saved and carried to a new purified earth. The long sequence of disturbing signs of the times anticipating the final catastrophe can only be properly interpreted by chosen souls; in contrast, all these distortions and anomalies will be

evaluated in the opposite way – and therefore positively – by those who cannot overcome the barriers of space and time, thus becoming accomplices of the personified ignorance and violence that will eventually unleash The End.

In my analysis I will try to shed light on these issues, wondering if this subject is present and how it has developed in the traditions of the Adivasis of India. The idea of a cyclical time, a historical becoming, the idea of *post-mortem*, the cult of the ancestors and the ancestral link with territory are possible linkages between tribal India and the major classical traditions of the Subcontinent (Hinduism, Buddhism, etc.). In this game of overlapping layers and cultural osmosis, the knowledge of the Adivasis is as important as any other tradition, and it is possible that it holds valuable lessons for understanding not only other cultures (ancestry, shamanism, empathy with the sacred, etc.) but also the world in which we live (sustainability, the relationship between man and the environment, indigenous knowledge of the forest, etc.).

The end of the existing world order can be regarded as a cultural theme in the context of a mythical configuration that is explicitly referenced by the shaman: for example, the theme of the recurring destruction and regeneration of the world in the context of the myth of the renewal of time.

As an anthropological and permanent risk, the *end* is simply the risk of not being able to be in any possible cultural world, the loss of the opportunity to be operationally present in the world, the reduction to annihilation of any horizon of worldly operability, the catastrophe of any community not able to plan its existence according to its values.

Tribal culture in India is itself a solemn exorcism of this radical risk.

If the cultural theme of the *end* of a certain order is a historical mode of recovery or pre-emption of this risk, even where this issue is less present, the risk is there, however, and the culture of the Adivasis rises to face it.

Contemporary conflicts, as an inevitable side effect of compulsory development and modernization, are quickly wiping out these cultures. Development plans for India and corporate interests in many of the areas where the Adivasis live, clash with the laws on the rights of minorities and on the preservation of their cultures in their natural environment. On one hand, resistance movements in the jungle are preparing for the new conflict while, on the other, abominations occur, such as the Salwa Judum, which have been compared by the Supreme Court in Delhi to the horror of Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*.

Perusing the end of the world, different traditions around the world have dealt with this uncertainty, which more than any other haunts man and finally offers, each according to its own sphere of doctrine, the last and highest perspective on the meaning of life. Unfortunately, today the Adivasis traditional tale of the end of the cycle of time overlaps with a time of profound crisis and social transformation that is likely to be the real 'end of the world' for the Indian tribal universe.

Legends About Indian Saints

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There are examples all over the world in which sometime stories from classical texts, like the Bible or the Hindu Purama, Veda and Vedanta, and the Hebrew texts, are rendered into popular stories. Sometime saints' legends have a relationship with these stories. Saints' legends are told in homiletic contexts to impart teaching to disciples and the general public. Sometime they are glorification of the saints. In India sufficient attention has not been given to such legends.

However, we have in India stories about Kabir, Chaitanya, Nanak and many other Indian saints. It is necessary to gather and classify them. This, along with other analysis, will lead to the understanding of inter-regional similarity. Sometime in the future we can envisage an international genre.

These stories are not only didactic but also show engagement with society. I have other observations: first, all legends are not based on miracles and beliefs about saints. There are certain legends that have social and economic focus, although they are not free from supernatural discourse. The worldview of the tales is religious and ritualistic. Secondly, in some legends identification with nature is reflected. Legend discourse forges an identification with nature and later shows that it has been torn by society. Thirdly, there are tales which engage in an evaluative discourse of morality. Fourthly, many moral and emotional issues come up in the legends and are related to the development of the self. The process of self-development is a journey towards realization of one's vices and becoming aware of

one's smallness. There is acceptance of divine power in all the samples chosen. The discursive elements and rhetorical aspects have been used for interpretation. The compositional structure is varied although certain legends show similarity. For interpretation, compositional structure, discourse and rhetorical features have been taken into account.

This study observes that saints' legends in India, at least since medieval India, have not only been concerned with the supernatural power of the saints but also the question of social equality and injustice. The discourse of these stories are often religious and sometime other prevailing systems, including science in recent years, also intervene.

Sono-Truths: On Making a Sonic Ethnography

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This presentation will reflect on the process of making a sonic-ethnography. I will contextualise this reflection within discussions on the use of sound recording equipment to construct ethnographies. I will propose the notion of 'sono-truth', an analogy taken from ethnographic film-maker Jean Rouch, as a means to articulate the peculiar effect of using sound recordings as the main research methodology. I take sono-truth as the peculiar kind of truth that emerges in-sound.

I will argue that sono-truth acknowledges the reciprocal relationship between the agency of the listener and sonic structures in the process of understanding the sonic dimension of a social experience. To consider this reciprocal relationship necessarily entails a reflection on the different methodological considerations at stake when using non-textual media as means to carry out and present social research. I will show how the use of non-text methodologies addresses the embodied, experience-rich and inter-subjective dimensions of anthropological research over propositional, functional, and generalising conclusions. Linked to this issue are questions associated with:

- tuning into our affective and empathetic qualities;
- what are the contours of the field?;
- is the field an ethnographic laboratory from where anthropologists extract comparative knowledge of social life, or a site constituted through a series of inter-subjective relationships?;
- anthropology's relationship to ethnographic data;
- what are the limits and possibilities of our medium of choice?

Anthropology of Sound and Music:
With Examples from Western Orissa

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This lecture will introduce students to some key questions in the anthropology of sound. It will analyse the characteristics of cultures of orality and will discuss the author's own examples from ethnomusical fieldwork on music, goddess worship and sound in western Orissa.

The Changing Ways of Collecting Folklore in Estonia

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My lecture will introduce the history of collecting folklore in Estonia and the fieldwork methods that have been used.

The history of collecting folklore in Estonia got its start under the influence of the ideas of Romanticism and the Enlightenment at the end of the 18th and the beginning of the 19th century. It became a large-scale activity towards the end of the 19th century when folklore acquired a significant role in the processes of nation building. With the help of a campaign that was announced in the newspapers, Jakob Hurt formed a huge network of correspondents who started to send him folklore from many parts of Estonia.

At the end of the 19th century and in the beginning of the 20th century, folklore collecting fieldtrips were also initiated. Scholars and students went into the field and started to interview village people. This kind of collecting was widely practiced from 1927 when the Estonian Folklore Archives were founded. Initially there was no concept of folklore collector in the minds of the village people, so they were suspicious and rather reluctant to talk. Later – in the middle and the second part of the 20th century – people got used to the folklore collectors so that some of the people who had experienced the folklorists' visits wanted later in their lives to be visited again.

During the course of the 20th century it was a common practice among folklore collectors to keep a fieldwork diary. In my talk about the changes in the ways of collecting folklore I am going to use excerpts from these diaries. I shall also give some examples from my own fieldwork experience.

The Religious Beliefs and Socio-religious Customs of the Oraon Tribe of Jharkhand

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The Oraon are a major tribal group in Jharkhand. They are settled among the Munda Tribe, an Austro-Asiatic speaking group. The Oraon speak the Kurukh language which belongs to the Dravidian family. The Oraon are in constant contact with the neighbouring Hindu and Munda people. There are features in their intellectual beliefs, their traditional beliefs, their tactility assumed and unquestioned beliefs, which – apart from resemblances due to the common elements of universal pattern – are unmistakably borrowed from their Munda or Hindu neighbours. The paper will give a picture of the religious beliefs, customs and traditions of the Oraon people of Jharkhand.

Indian Images: Photography and its Creative Traditions

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The session will start by introducing general theories in relation to photography and its specific mediality (Barthes, Bourdieu, etc.) and attempt to combine anthropological and historical approaches. The session focuses on the past and presence of Indian photographic traditions. For example, I will look at conjunctures of photography and colonialism in the 19th century (photography as an instrument to classify 'others', etc.), and at ways pre-colonial visual traditions continued to flourish with the help of the very same technical innovations used by the colonizers. Moreover, apart from engaging with the history of photography we will concentrate on the 'social life' of contemporary photographs, i.e. their creative production and circulation as well as their use in ritual contexts, their object biographies and links to social hierarchies, and their roles as imaginary spaces for the potential self.

In order to facilitate discussion on the topic it is suggested that students bring 2–3 photographs or even a meaningful/valued album – for example studio photographs, portraits or others (perhaps not just small passport photos), either old or new, colour or black and white which can be introduced and discussed during the seminar. The article by MacDougall will further introduce the topic and act as a basis for discussion.

Genre as a Conceptual Tool in Folkloristics and the Study of Vernacular Religion

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Genre as one of the basic concepts of international folkloristics emerged as a tool of textual classification and a nominalist category for the formulation of research topics. Whereas today titles of articles and monographs often refer to distinct folklore genres, such as epic songs, legend or proverbs, the basic understanding of the concept has changed. Instead of serving scholarship as a useful principle of creating order in the huge mass of texts, genre has become a tool of interpretation. Genres are conceptualised as resources – of themes, of traditional knowledge and of verbal expression; they are also understood as communicative patterns that shape singing, storytelling and other forms of interaction. As orienting frameworks for the production and reception of discourse (R. Bauman 2004) they limit the scope of what can be said and enable mutual understanding. Genres direct attention to certain topics, they form views of life and broaden the world by building up imaginary realms that on the one hand transcend the social and physical realities, and on the other hand encompass and permeate them.

Vernacular religion, as defined by Leonard N. Primano, refers to the human and individual dimension of religion: "as human beings encounter, understand, interpret, and practice it" (Primiano 1995). Later he has emphasized that in contrast to the general understanding of folk religion, vernacular religion is not the dichotomous or dialectical partner of institutional religion but another concept that shifts focus to the power of individual creativity to shape religious lives (Primiano 2012). This perspective raises the importance of

ethnographic research on genres as communicative practice on the individual level. The lecture will discuss some recent fieldwork interviews from Assam as examples of genres that generate and transmit belief in the supernatural. I shall argue that negotiating the boundaries between empirical reality and the domain of imagination in these genres has important social functions both for the individual and the community: it can change human relationships, raise a person's social status or give a new orientation to life.

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Disruptions to Culture: The Refugee Experience, Cultural Sustainability, and Finding Accord with Indigenous Folks

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According to the United Nations, there are over 45 million refugees and forcibly displaced people in the world as a result of armed conflict, political persecution, and environmental catastrophe. Some others are displaced for reasons of economics, including internal displacement as a result of economic development. While many of the displaced are indigenous and other minorities, forced migrants can also be pushed to areas where indigenous communities are already struggling for survival. This illustrated lecture will give examples of refugee subsistence in camps, urban areas, and detention centres in sketching out a larger schematic of cultural sustainability for migrant communities. At the end, there will be a discussion of the relationship between immigrant and indigenous communities and whether their interests are by definition antithetical, or if a co-existent relationship that mutually respects and protect indigenous and migrant culture can be devised in such a way that honours indigenous rights without resulting in nativism.

International Symposium
Tradition, Creativity and Worldview:
Inter-Disciplinary Perspectives on Cultural Dynamics

<u>**Abstracts of the Symposium Presentations:**</u>

The Miao

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China is a unified nation consisting of many different ethnic groups. Fifty-six different ethnic groups make up the great Chinese national family. Because the Han people accounts for more than ninety percent of China's population, the remaining fifty-five groups are generally referred to as "ethnic minorities". Next to the majority Han, the Mongolian, Hui, Tibetan, and Uygur peoples comprise the largest ethnic groups. Although China's ethnic minorities do not account for a large portion of the population, they are distributed over a vast area, residing in every corner of China.

The Miao are one of fifty-five ethnic minorities in China. In addition, the Miao are a worldwide group with a footprint in five continents, mainly distributed in Vietnam, Thailand, France, Britain, Australia, the United States and other countries. The main domestic distribution is in Guizhou, Hunan, Yunnan, Sichuan, Guangxi, Hubei, etc. But the fact is, very few people in the world know this group. At the same time, with the development of Chinese society, the traditional culture of the Miao is disappearing. This is a chance to let other people know that there is a group called the Miao in China.

My presentation – The Miao – will use images, traditional songs and other materials to present a non-famous but great ethnic group.

Selection and Ordination of the *Sangot*

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A *sangot* is a person who helps the *lyngdoh* or priest in administration and religious activities in the traditional political and religious organizations in the Khasi villages. In Nongtalang Elaka, one of the villages of the War Jaintia, a person has to be elected and ordained by a priest to enable him to achieve the position of *sangot*, which was a regular traditional practice among the people. However, with the influence of modernity, most villages now neglect this practice. Similarly, in the case of Nongtalang village too, the ordination of a *sangot* (the main focus of my paper) was a kind of revived practice, which took place after a gap of almost 20 years. What I had found out in my study is that even if this *elaka* (cluster of villages) is situated at the international border of India and Bangladesh, the people still maintain their indigenous identity and religious activities. Even though there are deities like Biskorom, Thakur, Lakshmi similar to those of the Hindus, the identity of one God, the Creator and the other deities is very much attached to the people of Nongtalang village. It is in this context, as I witnessed the ceremony, that I propose to present my paper at the Winter School.

Protection During Pregnancy and Childbirth in 19th-Century Scotland

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This paper will focus on the beliefs, charms and rituals surrounding childbirth in 19th-century Scotland. During this period, extreme caution involving *materia medica* was taken during both the gestation and birth of babies to seek protection and a safe delivery. In particular, the figures of Mary and Bridget [Bride] were called upon for protection, while measures were carried out to prevent the *sitheachan* [fairies] from interfering with the mother and child. On the isolated Hebridean islands, and in the absence of medical assistance and ecclesiastical guidance, care for the mother and child often fell to local women. As a result, there was often a convergence – in specific rituals – of religious and folk beliefs to ensure the safety of the mother and child during this vulnerable period. In the Western Isles of Scotland, childbirth charms were practiced overtly on the Catholic islands and even embraced by some priests, while in the Presbyterian islands their use was strictly covert.

Drawing on the School of Scottish Studies Archive, Kist o' Riches (tobarandualchais.co.uk), and the Carmichael Watson Archive (carmichaelwatson.lib.ed.ac.uk), I will highlight, explain and discuss the more prominent beliefs relating to childbirth with secondary references to Ireland and Norway. The primary focus will be on the use of sea-beans as childbirth charms, with an effort to elaborate on the Marian association, and the ultimate relegation of the sea-bean to mere 'curio'.

Ritual Dance and Creativity with Special Reference to the *Deodhani* Dance of Assam

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Dances in India are either ritualistic or simply celebrative. People dance to have fun or entertain, to celebrate success, the harvest, achievement, etc., and to recreate past history or myth. Dance is also used in worship, to invoke demons, spirits, deities. The vast body of Indian dance is either classical or community dance. Community dance or folk dance is performed for an audience, although sometimes it does not presuppose any audience.

Assam, a north-eastern state of India, integrates many tribes and caste people. Villages where there is a mixed population, comprising tribal and caste communities, both dance together or participate on occasion to interact socially. Folk dances have also been changed in their content to showcase social change and values because folklore also refers to people's creative knowledge. The structured movement system in dance derives from creative processes that manipulate the human body in time and space. Structured movement systems are a system of knowledge constructed and created culturally and socially by a group of people or by the respective tradition bearer.

This paper will discuss ritual dance and creativity in terms of traditional ritual elements and new elements, the kinesics in *Deodhani* dance and how the changes in this dance performance reflect changes in the society. The contemporary popular *Deodhani* as a ritual dance had its birth in Mangaldoi of Assam. In the Darrang area, *Deodhani* is more a dance performance that can be de-contextualized from the religious background. The *Deodhani*

performance has been transformed into pieces (18 in number) of dance forms from a series of ritual behaviour as observed in the Goalpara region. In the ritual the *Deodhani* performer uses many movements to help her/him to go into a trance. On the other hand the *Deodhani* dance in cultural performances uses specific gestures and movements bounded to and framed within some norms of stage performance and changes have been observed in the *Deodhani* form.

Indigenous Knowledge Focused through Weaving in the Rabha Society of Assam

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The paper will discuss the indigenous knowledge within the weaving culture of the Rabhas of Assam. On the survival of the human being, food, shelter and clothing are indispensable. Each community of the world copes with the geographical and social environment in order to ensure their survival. The Rabha tribes also adjust to their environment through their indigenous, acquired knowledge. The Rabha are the numerically major tribes of Assam which posses a colourful tradition with conspicuous language rites and rituals, festivals, customary law, etc. The weaving tradition is the dominant women's tradition, learnt when the women are girls through socialization. They produce different cloths in their room where different designs are depicted in different colours. The study endeavours to examine aspects of indigenous technological knowledge involved in the handloom and textile tradition which have occupied a distinctive place in the cultural and economic life of the Rabhas. Handloom weaving is likely to survive and prosper because of the force of tradition as well as for the new meaning and substance acquired by it in present times.

Methodologically, data is collected from secondary sources and from library materials.

Barat Festival of Tiwas: Tradition and Creativity

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The Tiwa are a tribe in North East India. They are also known as the Lalung. Nagaon, Morigaon, Karbi Anglong and Kamrup districts in Assam and Ri Bhoi in Meghalaya are the main areas populated by the Tiwa. They are politically organized into Datialia *raja*s (kings)*,* Pacho *raja*s and Sato *raja*s. The Gobha *raja* (king) is supreme in power and is one of the Datialia *raja*s. The Tiwa have two sub-groups, the Hill Tiwas and Plains Tiwas. There are some differences in the traditional practices of these two groups in terms of festivals, worship and belief, and clans and families also vary their cultural practices and beliefs. For example, Barat is a festival which is celebrated by only the Plains Tiwas. This festival is also known as Usha Barat. In the Barat festival people sing two types of song known as Barat *naam*s (songs in the form of hymns) and Barat *git*s (songs). Barat *naam*s are associated with the Barat *puja* (worship) and Barat *git*s – the majority of which are obscene – are sung by the people to tease each other. People perform the Barat dance using animal gestures accompanied by Barat *naam*s and *git*s. Some of the dance performers use different types of *mukha* (mask) in dance performances. These dance parts are called the Barat *mukha nritya* (mask dance). The entire performance of Barat can be traced back through the history and belief associated with the Barat festival.

Tiwa songs and dances are based on tradition. However there are performers who also contribute to the tradition and bring a creative dimension to it. This paper will make an interpretative attempt to understand the relationship between tradition, creativity and society.

Tradition and Creativity in the Method of Sound Recording

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Anthropologists used sound recording technologies throughout the 20th century. However, the approaches to using this method differed. The paper will address the traditions and creative tensions that have characterised sound recording methodologies in anthropology. I will explore this through the work of Alan Lomax, Steven Feld and my own fieldwork among international Krishna devotees in Mayapur, West Bengal. I will argue that the tradition of sound recording technologies have always resulted in the development of new creative practices and epistemologies in anthropology.

Lomax's approach is driven by a paradigm that emphasises the preservation and documentation of minority musical practices in the Americas. It also concerns itself with tracing the origins of these musical practices. This approach views sound as embedded in historical and social circumstances. I will contrast this approach with Feld's acoustemology which refers to the effects and affects that are elicited through sound. Feld's methodology is to reproduce authored sonic narratives that illicit in the listener a sense of place and the inter-subjective relationship between field recorder, informants and sonic environment. I will place my own recording experiences in relation to these two different approaches. The chanting and other everyday sounds of the Krishna devotees occur in a dialectic relation that is both social and experiential. I am documenting and putting sound recordings in their social context (as social objects) and through my recordings I want to elicit a sense of place and an affect that are reminiscent of Feld's work.

Adivasi Art and the New Museum Movement in India

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This paper discusses the emergence of a new genre of Contemporary Adivasi Art based on a recent development within museum discourses in India.

The New Museum movement is an emancipatory, participatory museology which tries to include indigenous voices and self representations in a contemporary museum display.

The paper analyses the development of Adivasi Art as a tool of cultural emancipation and respect. It also shows the challenges of a globalised museum discourse in relation to vulnerable art.

Personal Experience Stories about the Netherworld: Tradition and Individuality

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According to Estonian folk belief there are various ways in which communication between the living and the dead can take place: the dead can mediate messages in dreams or through symbolic signs, yet they can also appear as ghostly beings. In most cases the communication is unexpected for those on the living side, however, there is also intentional contact with the dead (e.g. through a spiritist séance). Often conversations with the dead contain descriptions of the netherworld. Here various layers of folk belief can be observed. There are classical Christian concepts of hell and paradise, as well as ancient beliefs about 'living corpses' and descriptions of places where restless souls abide. A number of legends and memorates also describe visits of the living to the realms of the dead. The main focus of my paper is on memorates – personal experience stories about encounters with the dead which mediate descriptions of the netherworld. I will show that only a certain selection of traditional legend motifs about the netherworld appear in personal experience stories and will try to illuminate the origins and backgrounds of such motifs. So my paper is trying to answer the following questions: to what extent are belief elements about the netherworld in memorates and traditional legends similar? Which elements appear only in personal experience stories? To what extent can differences or similarities be found in old archival memorate texts compared to the modern personal experience narratives from recent years? My paper deals with the fear of death, the dead and the netherworld and its expressions in various epochs of folk belief.

Kalari Treatment with Special Reference to the *Kalari* Massage System

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Kalari is a traditional psycho-physiological discipline emanating from Kerala's unique mytho-historical heritage and considered to be the oldest form of physical training in human history. It is a holistic form of physical training that combines the dynamic skills of attack and defence with the secret knowledge of *marma* points. *Marmas* are vital points in the body where the life force energy is concentrated. In addition to the physical training, *kalaripayattu* also involves the training of the mind. Today, it is also practiced by dancers and circus performers as it helps to make the body flexible.

In *kalari* massage the therapist or *kalari* master uses his hands and feet to massage the recipient using medicated oils. Usually the *uzhichil* course lasts for fourteen days. At the time of massage the massaged person should follow strict restrictions to his/her daily routine. The person should not be exposed to the sun for a long time and should eat only prescribed food and should observe strict celibacy. Three types of *kalari* massages are used for different purposes:

1. *Sukha thirummu*

2. *Katcha thirummu*

3. *Raksha thirummu*

Sukha thirummu is a system of massage that relieves the body from aches and muscular pains and also provides physical relaxation and

rejuvenation. *Katcha thirummu* increases a person's body flexibility and physical endurance. *Raksha thirummu* requires specific massage techniques, which the masseur selects keeping the individual's condition in mind. *Kalari* massage can keep one disease free and in a state of positive health.

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http://ayurvedayogavilla.com/kalari.html
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Traditional Food and the Preservation System of the Sarania Kachari Community: A Case Study

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The Sarania Kachari community is a very important ethnic group in Assam. They follow the Hindu religion. Due to sanskritisation this community has lost some of its traditional culture. The social and cultural life of Sarania Kachari community is constantly influenced by Assamese Hindus due to the process of acculturation and assimilation. However, from observation it is seen that this community maintains most of its traditional distinctiveness in respect of their living style. The proposed study is an attempt to understand the traditional food preservation system of the Sarania Kachari community and it's healthy aspects.

The present paper will be an analysis and explanation of traditional Sarania Kachari food recipes reflecting healthy aspects and preservation systems. Fish and meat are essential articles of food for the people of this community. They use three methods to process meat and fish: drying, roasting burning and cooking.

These methods are very interesting and healthy. For preservation the Sarania Kachari heat the fish on a fire or under the sun. Preferably, they use a fire because on a fire mosquitos or other unhygienic insects cannot attack the food items. With the changing times the traditional methods have also changed.

The data related and analysed for clear understanding of the study is based on both primary and secondary sources.

Lepcha Traditional Musical Instruments: A Study

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Music is endemic to every culture. Whether traditional or modern, it has been seen to possess a quintessential feature of the culture to which it belongs. Music is produced in myriad ways with or without the use of objects, which we call instruments. Many a time it is the music of the particular culture that represents it the best. Musical instruments find their own way in the identity of cultures. They become their material legacy and the ways they are crafted, tuned and played become part of their indigenous knowledge. The same can be said of the Lepchas of present day Sikkim and Darjeeling in India, as well as parts of western Bhutan and eastern Nepal.

The Lepchas or *Rongs* as they call themselves are a Mongoloid tribe. From very early on in history they have faced the hegemony of outside forces like the Tibetans, Nepalese and British. Because of this there has been much evidence of cultural transfer and hence transformation taking place in Lepcha society.

The Lepchas have a rich musical heritage. Much has been written about them and their culture in general but not a good deal about their music and traditional musical instruments. The instruments have gained traditionalism by virtue of being handed down from one generation to the next. Along with that, the skills of crafting, tuning and playing have also been transmitted down the line. A hypothetical question emerges: since these instruments are traditional in nature, a transference of skill has to be involved during the teaching and learning process. The same can be said of crafting skills. This leads to a further question as to whether formal institutions and guilds of

teacher-student scholarship like the guru-*shishya parampara* in the Indian classical music scenario exists or existed.

According to folklore, the Lepchas believe in the inheritance of about eleven musical instruments from their god of music, *Naraok*. Today the Lepchas pride themselves in as many as twenty musical instruments of various types, although so far no proper classification of them has been made under the four main classes, namely aerophones, chordophones, idiophones and membranophones. Furthermore, the processes of their crafting, tuning and playing, which is crucial knowledge, is found to be confined only to a knowledgeable few. So there is a fear that this knowledge will die with them. Similarly, the traditional musicians and craftsmen as important tradition bearers have not been given much due. For so long they have only survived in the background. Hence the need has been felt for such knowledge to be highlighted.

All these hypothetical questions along with the research problem perceived are what the research project aims to probe and find answers to in both a descriptive and analytical manner through both primary (fieldwork) and secondary (review of literature) data. In this way the usage and significance of the musical instruments in Lepcha society will also be looked into.

Tradition and Creativity: Transformative Injunctions among the Khoibu

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The majority of tribal histories and ethnographic accounts, if available, in Manipur were written by travellers, British colonialist and 'other' white missionaries. The case of the Khoibu is no different. Even though there is no ethnographic account or written history so far, a few of the available pieces or mentions were by the British political agents and missionaries and later by some Indian anthropologist. As such there are wide differences between what they wrote and the reality within from the community perspective. With the view that it is time to own up to the responsibility and write about oneself to present a clear picture, oral narratives, which were considered everything before the emergence of a written system, are highlighted in context. This provides a brief detail history of the origin of Khoibu, migration and the present settlements. The role of tradition and belief is put forth. In the latter part, Christianity, which brought education and altogether turns the whole community to a totally different direction and belief, is mentioned to present the drastic transformational changes and situation within the community. This analysis explores the positive changes as well as the problems and issues arising out of such transformative injunctions and the anxiety within the community. These changes ultimately let the Khoibu community build a better relationship with larger neighbouring tribal communities. Such rapport building through Christianity helps the small Khoibu tribe to avoid total annihilation and look for other creative opportunities and a better future. The paper more importantly attempts to present transformative injunctions from the eyes of the observed.

Tradition and Creativity: A Look into Meitei Traditional Costume, *Phanek Mapan/Mayek Naibi*

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Are we losing our traditional charm in the name of creativity? A discussion on this assertion will be the purpose of this paper. The word tradition pictures in our mind a refined creativity that has been followed for generations. In this ever-changing society, tradition is what holds its ground and represents one's identity. Some traditions withstand the test of time and some mould into another form, imbibing new ideas along the way.

Phanek mapan/mayek naibi is worn as women's formal attire in Manipur among the Meitei community, a major ethnic group in Manipur. This is a type of sarong which is wrapped around the chest (by the older married women) and the waist (by unmarried women). It has a distinct designed border and horizontal stripes in the middle part with different colour combinations, signifying various meanings. The most common among them is the *thambal leikhok* (pink set), with *khoi mayek* (shape of a bee) and *ningkham samji mayek* (royal hair style) as the border designs that are worn on most special occasion except for the death ceremony. Every bride has to carry this *thambal leikhok* as an essential bridal gift from her maternal home.

Today the same *phanek* has been modified with many new designs and colours and are welcomed by the new generations in Manipur. There is a wave of creativity flooding through the market, which raises the question of maintaining the originality of the *phanek*. However, even if one encourages new designs, one should also hold on to its uniqueness. Just as a chef experiments with the new

ingredients (flavours and colours) creating new recipes, new designs and colours have the blend of a new trend. But underlying this is a unique intricate design, that is, the horizontal stripes and the border of the *phanek*.

The Thlen Tradition of the Khasis: When Intense Belief Kills

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The single most malevolent supernatural being among the Khasi ethnic community in North Eastern India is the Thlen. This is a creature so steeped in contemporary and traditional belief that local communities are shaped and influenced by it. Sometimes, such beliefs are embedded in the social rubric in such a way as to become dangerous.

With the primary conversion of the Khasis to Christianity, industrialization and rapid urbanization, it might be supposed that such folklore about a demon which sustains itself using human blood in exchange for wealth and good fortune would prove itself obsolete and redundant. Conversely, in the contemporary context, numerous incidents including murder, torture and ostracisms are attributed to the practice and rearing of this supernatural being.

In the village of Smit, near Shillong, on the 16th of August 2013, three people were hacked to death by a mob on the suspicion that they were keepers of the Thlen. Although this was not an isolated case, it attracted a lot of public attention because of the brutality of its details and the proximity of this village with the capital city of Shillong.

This paper will attempt to understand the folklore of supernatural violence that is contextualised in the Khasi social set-up. Why is it that the folklore genre of malevolent magic is so prevalent within the mindset of a community which is primarily Christian? Even though the Thlen now assumes only a moral significance in the worldview

of the urban populace, why is it that manifestations of this belief are so palpable in social expressions?

These are some of the questions that will be addressed in this presentation.

The Celebration of Ashokastami: A Medley of Tradition, Creativity and Indigenous Knowledge

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Almost all the societies of the world preserve specific periods for celebrations. Such celebrations have special meaning for the community. Though to trace the origin of such celebration happens to be the thrust area of many folklore studies it is an agreed fact that celebrations of all types are a juxtaposition of tradition, creativity and indigenous knowledge.

The regular yearly occurrence of celebration is often termed festivals. The moments, get-together, performing rituals, food preparation, dances and songs during festive times all go to create a sense of belonging to the members of the community. This sense of belonging is rooted in a cumulative concurrence of tradition, creativity and indigenous knowledge.

The present paper tries to focus on the celebration of Ashokastami, an annual religious ritual performed on the bank of the Brahmaputra river in Assam. Ashokastami is associated with a sacred dip in the holy river. The Sanskrit term *'ashoka'* means removal from *'shoka'* i.e. sorrow or hurdles. It is believed that all the gods and goddesses pass through the holy water stream on that specific day, which falls in the month of April. The celebration of Asokastami marks a medley of tradition, creativity and indigenous knowledge of the community that performs the ritual.

Jokes and Their Relations to Socio-Cultural Practices in the Khasi Context

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Jokes are one of the popular genres of folklore because they touch on every aspect of human life in any given society. Generally, a joke is told as a true story based either on a true incident or a mythical issue. However, since the purpose of telling a joke is to create laughter, the story usually ends abruptly and humorously by tricking the audience with a punch line. As part of human life, jokes play a vital role in the society and culture in which they are created or told in order to entertain listeners. In addition, jokes can also reflect the traditions, customs and practices of the people who circulate them. These traditions, customs and practices could be both of traditional and modern contexts.

Among the Khasi people of Meghalaya, jokes are also part of their socio-cultural life. As a group, the Khasi are fun-loving people and creative by nature. Their creativity is depicted in various issues relating to their daily lives. One of these subjects is to create to make fun among themselves by way of creating jokes and humorous statements on any occasion and situation. Youths of today are acutely aware that their traditional customary practices are dying and are therefore trying to preserve these age-old traditions either by archiving them or re-creating them in newer forms (jokes, in this context) to fit into present-day use. The paper will try to illustrate and discuss how certain societal and cultural practices are reflected through joke-telling in the Khasi context.

Folksongs and Their Thematic Relevance in Society

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Folksongs are orally transmitted from one generation to the next. They are the key habits and events of everyday life in a sung form. They tell stories of people. Every ethnic community in the world tells different stories about their traditions and cultures through songs. The themes that are present in folksongs speak of the socio-cultural life of the people. Likewise, the Tangkhuls of North East India have their own songs to sing, with different themes. This paper will discuss the themes present in Tangkhul folk songs and their relevance in the society's past, present and future.

Applied Folklore: An Example from Ancient Tamil Society

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In this paper, the inter-relationship between oral and written litera-ture is established, on the one hand, with the help of examples from ancient Tamil classics like *Pazhamozhi Naanuuru* (lit. Pazhamozhi = Proverb + naanuuru = Four Hundred), a text compiled by the post-Sangam poet Muntrurai Araiyanar well before the 4th century AD. And on the other hand, the concept of applied folklore or the process of application of folklore is discussed with suitable examples from the same text. What necessitated the author to make use of the four hundred popular proverbs is an agenda for achieving a moral and ethical society. It is clear that the ancient people understood that the stability and continuous existence of a so-ciety is achieved through the transmission of the empirical knowledge acquired through their participation in society as its members. By giving a few examples from the same text, it is argued in this paper that well before the term folklore was defined in West-ern society, there was a thorough understanding in ancient Tamil society about the formation/creation of folklore and its applications to various purposes. The paper also refers to *Tolkappiyam*, an ancient Tamil grammatical work written by Tolkappiyar around 450 B.C., for the definition about the formation, creation and characteristic features of certain folk forms and rules relating to the transmission of these forms from one generation to the next. Finally, I will focus in this paper on metafolklore and the inter-dependence of folk forms by delineating the nature of proverbs and their relationship with other folk forms such as folk tales.

A Reflection on Change: A Case Study of Ho Folk Tales

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Folktales can be described as oral narratives that do not have a singular, identifiable author. Expanded and shaped by the tongues of tellers over time, and passed down from one generation to the next, folktales often reflect the values and customs of the culture from which they come. Because folktale plots are generally concerned with life's universal themes, they also transcend their culture of origin to reveal the commonality of human experience. Although folktales are imaginative narratives, they are shelved in the nonfiction area of social sciences. Ironically, these tales are 'true' not because they actually happened but because there is often an element of 'truth' or wisdom embedded in them. They are old, as the psyche is old, as the imagination is old and enduring. The patterns of cause and effect, good and evil, which run through these old tales underlie all cultures, underlie even the current dream of unbounded technological accomplishment and success. Folktales, the unauthored, cumulative recasting of many generations' experience, explore the fundamental areas of ourselves, areas so common that they remain at the bedrock of our humanity. Over the centuries, folk and fairy tales have retained important fragments of their original storyline as well as developing culturally specific details and elements. Marina Warner examines these perceptions in her book *From the Beast to the Blonde*, and says that to fully understand folk tales you must be aware of the environment in which they were told or written.

The researcher in this paper explores a collection of written Ho folk tales and tries to reflect on the belief system of the Ho tribe of

Jharkhand and their changing beliefs and culture as the tribes pass through the colonial and post-colonial eras and step into the era of industrial modernization.

The 'Taming' of the Yeti: The Influence of Tibetan Buddhism on Contemporary Lepcha Folk Narratives

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The Renjongmu Lepcha of Sikkim, India, are an ethnic community whose indigenous cosmology, eschatology, and vernacular religion are intricately interwoven with Mount Khangchendzonga, the world's third highest mountain. The Lepcha have long told narratives about the yeti, believed to inhabit the Himalayan jungles and generally depicted as powerful hunting deities, often feared and occasionally aggressive. Over time, the influence of Tibetan Buddhism has 'tamed' the representation of the yeti in certain Lepcha stories; today, they are sometimes portrayed as 'helpers' to Buddhist meditators in the jungle, echoing narratives told within the neighbouring Tibetan Buddhist Lhopo community. Through contextualizing these yeti tales in historical Lepcha culture, analysing similar themes in classical Buddhist and Bön texts, and examining present-day Lepcha and Lhopo stories about the yeti, this paper attempts to highlight the growing influence of Tibetan Buddhist understandings of the yeti as a 'Buddhist guardian' on contemporary Lepcha folk narratives, a shift that stems both from Lepcha interactions with the Lhopo and from the syncretic Lepcha practice of indigenous religion and Tibetan Buddhism.

Probing into the Question of Language Culture and Education

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This paper concerns itself with the question of multilingualism in the context of multilingualism and education. India is a unique example where languages became the basis of determining state boundaries. Not only regions but also religions are involved with language in India and together they form the identity of the people. Here language, religion and region all become the makers of a person's identity and give rise to different loyalties. For example all Muslims in northern India are generally supposed to know Urdu and have it as their mother tongue. In this scenario language widens the gap which already exists in a diverse country like India. People cling on to their mother tongues (actual or perceived) for the sake of maintaining their separate identities and communal solidarity in their respective communities. This gives rise to insecurities especially in the linguistic and religious minorities, who want their languages to be given par status with the mainstream majority languages and government protection. For example the demands of different linguistic communities in India to add their language to the 8th schedule of the constitution.

Every community and region has its own means of expression in a variety of forms and these continue to play a role, though diminishing rapidly in the last few decades, within the social groups. The child's own experiences are denied expression. In the later part of my paper, I will present the way in which the lack of a language policy is causing the current scenario to deteriorate.

Studying Families in a Transnational Context: Defining and Delimiting the Research Site(s)

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The presentation will concentrate on fieldwork experiences with members of transnational families in the area of Estonia, Finland and Russia. For my PhD dissertation I have interviewed former Soviet immigrants living in Finland and relatives who remained in the country of origin, concentrating on narratives of belonging and of family making in a transnational and multiethnic context. Family members narrate migration differently, depending on their position (place of residence, age, gender, etc.). Within the framework of the Families on the Move Across Borders project I have conducted fieldwork among Estonian families within the Estonian-Finnish transnational space, concentrating on migration from the children's viewpoint. Although children are very much affected by migration and are often indicated as one of the main motivations for migration, their experiences of relocation have rarely been studied.

The starting point for both of these projects is that migration does not only concern the individuals who move: it affects the whole family, also influencing relatives who remain in the country of origin. Their lives can be seen as structured by the tension between mobility and different local cultural practices. Studying a phenomena in a transnational context also has methodological implications. The concept of multi-sited fieldwork indicates that research should also be able to follow the movement of people, things and cultural complexities outside the conceptual and geographical realms of defined culture areas (Marcus 1995, 218). It should be stressed, however, that this does not necessarily indicate that the researcher

should move around in a literal sense. However, re-evaluations of the concepts of place and culture raise the need to question often very spatialised understandings of fieldwork practices. My aim is to discuss different possibilities of doing fieldwork among transnational families and the special characteristics of defining and delimiting the research site in this context.

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Cockfighting and Champa Fighting: Animal Fighting as a Pastime and Metasocial Commentary in North-Western Odisha

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The paper looks at two kinds of animal fighting in a former princely state in Western Odisha – namely the cockfight and champa fighting. While both are popular local pastimes and show certain parallels in the concept of the fight (*ladhei*), their actors and audiences differ, as does the role and attitude of the state. It will be argued that these fights express different values and may be understood as 'metasocial commentaries' in Geertz' terms. Yet, this distinction has never been an absolute one and, for example, petty Rajas as rulers used to bridge the gap by supporting both events.

'These People Are the Those People':
Scroll Art Continues its Edition in Jharkhand

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Paitkar art, a form of scroll painting from Jharkhand, eastern India, has significance in its folk narrative tradition and performance. The artists of the *Paitkar* community are roamers and move around from place to place. They are known as *Chitrakars* and the village Amadubi is their home. The tradition of *Paitkar* continues in Jharkhand and its various neighbourhoods with the help of singing and telling tales or myths. *Paitkar* artists reach the house where a person has recently died or a baby has been born and start telling tales and singing songs using the scroll. The songs are called *Baul Geet*, of a philosophical overtone or with self composed lyrics. This paper is a part of research project supported by the NFSC, an India-based organization of folklore research. This paper will focus on the creativity based on indigenous knowledge of the *Paitkar* tradition discussing some of its few specimens. This paper will also throw light on the form, themes and the contents of *Paitkar* from the perspective of narrative traditions of India. The paper shows the hereditary tradition of a community and their efforts to give this community a mark in the present day world. The art form has been analysed with the help of empirical evidence from the village of Amadubi. The methods of art and aesthetics have been implemented to look at the form. While describing the present day status of the art form, the study called for the necessary changes to cope with the pace of change over time.

'Angry Gods' and the Ecological Culture of Karbi Ancestors

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Every space is sacred for an animist Karbi. For a Karbi ancestor, the hills, mountains, rivers, and lakes, etc., are entities which are alive and are owned by unseen spirits. A Karbi invokes a harmonious co-existence of humans with animals and plants, unseen spirits, animate and inanimate beings. A Karbi enters into a spiritual communion with the unseen spirits and worships them as protective deities in various annual rituals. Certain spaces are under the spell of '*Arnam Keso*' or 'angry gods' who must not be disturbed or punished. These 'angry gods' are almost a common occurrence. Household deities, village deities and territorial deities are equally important in the belief system of the community. There are women mourners who perform a 'rain-cloud removal song' when imminent rain threatens the smooth performance of death rituals. The mourners also invoke rain with their songs when drought devastates the earth. There are numerous totem tales, exclusive to clans and sub-clans. Karbi folklore is dominated by almost endless myths and legends performed in sacred verses and chants that reflect a worldview of interconnected and interdependent existence. There are interesting tales including the myth of a 'hidden village' called Rongbin, which continues to raise endless curiosities about the ecological wisdom of Karbi ancestors.

Folklife and Calamity, with Examples from Indigenous Epistemology and Practice

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Folklorists are trained to be primarily interested in the creative processes of everyday life. We are uncomfortable talking about destruction, even though the loss of traditional culture is a contextual backdrop to all we do, and even if that potential loss is only a threat. Those folklorists working in the field of cultural sustainability research and document the received wisdom that traditional cultures are dying out, languages are becoming extinct, traditional arts and customs are being forgotten. Missing from this has been an analysis of the social, political, and economic forces that actively cause such loss. This paper calls for an examination of the destructive forces in everyday life, with special attention to those social forces that result in cultural genocide. This involves naming actors and identifying causality. Furthermore, this paper argues that if we don't analyse the mechanisms of cultural destruction, then cultural workers and communities cannot organize sustainable and effective responses.

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