

Call for Papers of Two-Day ICSSR sponsored National Seminar

on

“Oral Tradition of Tribes in India’s North East: Mao Naga Perspectives on Tangible Heritage, *the Makhel*”

Organized by

**Centre for Culture, Media & Governance, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi
in Collaboration with Mao Naga Scholars’ Association
& will be hosted by Hill College, Tadubi, Manipur**

Concept Note

In globalised world with human dependence on technology and borderless flow of knowledge and capital, it is pertinent to ask what roles the oral tradition continues to play. Many cultures, including first nation, aborigine and tribal societies, oral tradition has been the primary form of knowledge transmission and has been the way to communicate complex information about socio-cultural, political, environmental and economics (Chief Kerry's Moose). Of late, the study of oral tradition has gained momentum across scholars particularly in the disciplines of linguistics, history, literature, anthropology, cultural studies and communication. The increased interest on oral tradition is primarily on account of its inherent cultural roots and historical materials, at the same time, it is critical in asserting identity.

Broadly, oral tradition constitutes the body of knowledge and information about people, history and culture of a particular tribe or community. Every community across the world is intimately identified with and inherited oral tradition as a legacy progeny. This body of knowledge and information is an integral part of the community, from the most civilised down to the simplest one. Different communities across the world identified and known based on the nature of appropriation and derivation from their respective oral tradition. One community is differentiated from another depending on its tradition. The historicity of the community had its origin from nowhere other than its oral tradition. Identification with certain myths, legends and lores is a universal feature across the community and human civilization is built and constructed from the knowledge of oral tradition. The discourse of identity formation, consciousness of oneness has its foundation related to folklore and oral tradition. One may believe it or not, but without the tenet of oral tradition; the historicity of a community is incomplete.

The emergence of print culture and growth of modernity does not simply denigrate the significance of orality but appropriated the same to meet the needs of the time. Orality continues to be highly relevant even in the age of post-modern and profusely mediated world. Along with the stages of modernity, orality continues to flourish as recasting and retelling orally of what people have learned in different mediums signify. In most cases, values, beliefs and behaviours are transmitted orally with due consideration and the tribal societies are no exception. Tribes like any other communities formed their distinct identities based on their customs and traditions, pass down orally from one generation to another. Tribals are different from other communities essentially because their customs and traditions, found in oral tradition are relatively distinguishable from their non-tribal counterparts.

India’s North East has always fascinated the minds and imaginations since the region is a home to numerous tribes, sub-tribes and clans residing mostly in the hills and forested area. Nearly 96 percent of its territory shares international border with neighboring countries like China, Myanmar, Bangladesh, Nepal and Bhutan connecting to the mainland India only via - “Siliguri corridor” or popularly described as “Chicken’s Neck.”

The tribes basically have no scripts and relate their lived experiences through oral descriptions. As folklores and folktales are arguably the most enduring stratum of the collective life of any communities, the tribes in India’s North East do have their own way of

“telling and retelling” them to their children. It is important to investigate how such forms of knowledge are cherished for centuries and shaped their views in relations to the world. In an era of globalization, digitization and technologization the oral knowledge existing in tribal communities are getting erased from the modern state. Their narrative on migration, metaphysics, aesthetics, religious views, etc, are either submerged by the established religions or struggles to sustains in the midst of new problems –which constantly challenges the indigenous life-world.

Out of many tribal traditions, Makhel tradition is common to various tribes belonging to Naga group who inhabit in both within and across the Indian Union, do share a common culture and tradition. Largely, these various tribes build and construct their common culture and tradition in around tangible heritage- the *Makhel*. *Makhel* becomes the prime source and reference in tracing and asserting their origin, migration identity.

The proposed seminar aims to trace and interrogate the Makhel heritage of the Nagas from the perspective of oral tradition as exists among different Naga tribes. It intends to draw attention on oral tradition of different Naga groups of how they are related to Makhel tradition and its antiquities. The seminar is expected to raise several questions, such as, What does their timeless folklore and oral tradition have to say about Makhel tradition?, Which is their identity, a common or individual and referring to a group?, In other words, it will be an attempt to find out the strength of how to reaffirm the popular Makhel tradition, to which different groups of Nagas have claimed as their common heritage.

We invite abstract on the following sub-themes:

1. Origin and migration
2. Myths, Legends and Oral Tradition
3. Megaliths, Artefacts and Oral Tradition
4. Story Telling and Oral Knowledge
5. Folksong, Dance and Oral Knowledge
6. Oral Social Systems and Practices
7. Social Taboo and Genna
8. Cosmology and Belief Systems
9. Jurisprudence, Justice and Moral code

Last date for submission of abstract: 7th December, 2018.

Intimation for acceptance of abstract: 10th December, 2018.

Last date for full paper submission: 25th January, 2018.

Venue: Hill College, Tadubi, Manipur

Date: 18th -19th February, 2019

To and fro train fare (AC 3 tier) upto Dimapur (Nagaland) will be provided in addition with shared-taxi fare upto Tadubi to paper presenters.

Modest accommodation will be provided to outstation presenters.

You may kindly submit the abstract and for any further query to the following:

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Convener

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