

Department of Asian Studies  
The University of Haifa

## Centre and Periphery in Asian History

Course number: 125.2603

Dr Arik Moran (Spring 2023-24)

### Course Description:

This course examines the shift in Area Studies research from a focus on “civilizational centres” of India and China to the peripheral borderlands of Southeast Asia and the Himalaya. This transition, which can be traced back to the rise of a multipolar world order following the fall of the Eastern Bloc, highlights the consequences of political change for the production of academic knowledge. The course explores the intellectual origins and development of this shift and its impact on the conceptualization of “stateless” societies in Asian borderlands, also known as “Zomian” spaces. Through case studies and key debates, students will gain a deep understanding of Himalayan societies, the politics of ethnic identities, and their reflections in historical writing.

**Credit:** 4 credits.

**Time and Location:** Online Moodle course.

**Academic Requirements:** Completion of all online assignments and quizzes, participation in discussions. active engagement with assigned readings. Progress from one section to the next is contingent on completion of all previous assignments (you will not be able to access the next assignment without completing current section assignments).

\* Please note that the working language of this course is English and that all assignments, exercises, etc. are to be completed in English.

**Grading:** 50% Quizzes, 30% Unit Summary exercises, 10% Course assignments (e.g., post-it boards), 10% Participation.

### Office Hours and Contact Information:

Mondays 11:00-12:00, Room 1012, Eshkol Tower or by appointment

E-mail: [amoran@humanities.haifa.ac.il](mailto:amoran@humanities.haifa.ac.il)

## Outline & Bibliography

### Introduction: Terminology, Theory, and Historical Background (17 April 2024)

Crash Course World History, John Greene (2014, July 11). *Rethinking Civilization - Crash Course World History 201* [Video]. YouTube.

Yale University, Interview with James Scott (2010, November 4). *James Scott: The Art of Not Being Governed* [Video]. YouTube.

### Unit 1. Paradigm Shifts in a Multipolar World Order (17 April 2024)

#### 1.1 Rethinking Area Studies in the 21st Century

Van Schendel, Willem (2002). Geographies of Knowing, Geographies of Ignorance: Jumping Scale in Southeast Asia. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 20: pages 647-668. DOI 10.1068/d16s

#### 1.2 Zomians and the State

Grégoire Schlemmer, in collaboration with Université Côte d'Azur. (2020, 18 May). *SANSARI. The Goddess and the Corona in the Himalayas*, in *Documentaires, films de recherche*. [Video]. Canal-U. <https://doi.org/10.60527/rw4c-m746>.

### Unit 2. The Debate about Literacy (1 May 2024)

#### 2.1 Illiteracy as a cultural strategy

Scott, James C. (2009). "61/2. Orality, Writing, and Texts". *The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia*, New Haven: Yale University Press, pp. 220-237. <https://doi.org/10.12987/9780300156522-008>

Michaud, Jean (2017), What's (written) history for?: On James C. Scott's *Zomia*, especially Chapter 6½. *Anthropology Today*, 33: 6-10. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8322.12322>

#### 2.2 Literacy as a tool for navigating the state

Schlemmer, Grégoire (2004). "New Past for the Sake of a Better Future: Re-Inventing the History of the Kirant in East Nepal." *European Bulletin of Himalayan Research* 25-26: 119–44. <https://ird.hal.science/ird-00557472>

#### 2.3 The anthropological study of oral traditions

Turin, Mark (1999). By Way of Incest and the Golden Deer: How the Thangmi Came to be and the Pitfalls of Oral History. *Journal of Nepalese Studies* 3(1): 13-19. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.3940728>

## **Unit 3. The Colonial Construction of Tribes and Tribalism in Northeast India (8 May 2024)**

### **3.1 Introduction to North east India**

Wouters, J.J.P., & Subba, T.B. (Eds.) (2022). "Introduction" (pp. 1-13) in Idem, eds. *The Routledge Companion to Northeast India* (1st ed.). Routledge India. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003285540>

### **3.2 Does Scott's model work in Northeast India?**

Wouters, J.J.P. (2011). Keeping the hill tribes at bay: a critique from India's Northeast of James C. Scott's paradigm of state evasion. *European Bulletin of Himalayan Research*, 39, 41-65.

### **3.3 Colonial era anthropology**

Alan Macfarlane, University of Cambridge (2011, March 21) *Interview with Christoph von Fürer-Haimendorf* [Video]. SMS University of Cambridge.

<https://www.sms.cam.ac.uk/media/1116916>

### **3.4 The emergence of modern identities among Zomian "tribes"**

Pandey, S. K. (2011). Politics of belonging: identity and state-formation in nagaland. In *The Politics of Belonging in the Himalayas: Local Attachments and Boundary Dynamics* (Vol. 4, pp. 98-122). SAGE Publications India Pvt Ltd, <https://doi.org/10.4135/9788132107729>

### **3.5 The Apatani people: Past & present**

National Geographic (2015, November 14) *The Changing Face of Beauty in Northeast India | Short Film Showcase* [Video]. YouTube.

## **Unit 4. Zomian "Others" and the Construction of Cultural Difference (22 May 2024)**

### **4.1 Fredrik Barth: From fieldwork to theory**

Eriksen, T.H., & Jakoubek, M. (Eds.). (2018). *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries Today: A Legacy of Fifty Years* (1st ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429461552>

### **4.2 The difference between "society" and "culture"**

Rodseth, Lars (2005). The Fragmentary Frontier: Expansion and Ethnogenesis in the Himalayas. In L. Rodseth & B. J. Parker (Eds.), *Untaming the Frontier in Anthropology, Archaeology, and History* (pp. 83-110). University of Arizona Press. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv36cj8b9.7>

### 4.3 Himalayan Cultural changes on a micro-scale

Nitzberg, Frances (1978). Changing Patterns of Multiethnic Interaction in the Western Himalayas. In J. Fisher (Ed.), *Himalayan Anthropology: The Indo-Tibetan Interface* (pp. 103-110). Berlin, New York: De Gruyter Mouton. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110806496.103>

### 4.4 Negotiating ethno-religious boundaries on the Roof of the World

Campbell, Cosmo, & Campbell, Ben. (2010). *The way of the road (2010)*. Campbell & Campbell.

## Unit 5. Rituals (5 June 2024)

### 5.1 Territorial Deities and Theistic Jurisdictions in the Hindu Himalaya

Berti, Daniela (2009). Divine Jurisdictions and Forms of Government in Himachal Pradesh (Northern India). In *Territory, Soil and Society in South Asia* (pp. 311–339). Manohar.

Schlemmer, Grégoire (2012). “Rituals, Territories and Powers in the Sino-Indian Margins.” *Moussons* (Marseille) 19 (19): 19–31. <https://doi.org/10.4000/moussons.1174>.

### 5.2 God-Kings and the State

Sanjay Barela, in collaboration with PSBT India (2014, November 14) *Devta Activists (2005)* [Video]. YouTube.

### 5.3 State-led Rituals and the Creation of Regional Identity

Sax, William (2011). Religion, rituals, and symbols of belonging: the case of Uttarakhand. In *The Politics of Belonging in the Himalayas: Local Attachments and Boundary Dynamics* (Vol. 4, pp. 167-181). SAGE Publications India Pvt Ltd, <https://doi.org/10.4135/9788132107729>

## Unit 6. Zomia and its Global Connections (19 June 2024)

### 6.1 Preamble: Tibetan traders as global capitalists

Giersch, C. P. (2010). Across Zomia with merchants, monks, and musk: process geographies, trade networks, and the Inner-East–Southeast Asian borderlands. *Journal of Global History*, 5(2), 215–239. doi:10.1017/S1740022810000069

### 6.2 Movement and Circulation in Tibetan Societies: The Trade in Salt

Lecoq, Patrice (2022) ‘Salt routes and barter caravans in the Himalayan regions of Nepal and Tibet from an ethnographical perspective’, in *Caravans in*

Socio-Cultural Perspective. 1st edn. United Kingdom: Routledge, pp. 39–53.  
Available at: <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003179276-4>

Valli, Éric (2002) *Himalaya (1999)*. New York: Kino International.

### 6.3 Tangible Sovereignties between British India and Tibet

Martin, Emma (2019) “Tibetan Materiality versus British ‘Ornamentalism’, in *Objects and Frontiers in Modern Asia: Between the Mekong and the Indus*. Baruah, M. & Dzuvichu, L. (eds.). Delhi: Routledge, p. 68-89  
<https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429261909>

### 6.4 Tea Trade and Ethnic Group Interactions on the Yunnan Frontier

Xiao, Kunbing (2019) From highlands to lowlands: the Pu’er tea trading network and ethnic-group interactions in the frontier of Yunnan, 1662–1796, in *Objects and Frontiers in Modern Asia: Between the Mekong and the Indus*. Baruah, M. & Dzuvichu, L. (eds.). Delhi: Routledge, p. 93-108. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429261909>

## Unit 7. Whither Zomia? Current Challenges, Geopolitical Shifts and the case for Globalization (3 July 2024)

### 7.1 Borderland Traders after 1950: the case of Kumaoni Bhotiyas

Gerwin, M., & Bergmann, C. (2012). GEOPOLITICAL RELATIONS AND REGIONAL RESTRUCTURING: THE CASE OF THE KUMAON HIMALAYA, INDIA. *Erdkunde*, 66(2), 91–107.  
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/41759062>

### 7.2 Where did everybody go? Zomian villages in the Neo-Liberal Age

Ross Harrison (2014, July 16) *Lifelines - a short documentary from the Indian Himalayas* [Video]. YouTube.

PSBT India (2019, November 18) *Moti Bagh* [Video]. vimeo.

### 7.3 Reviving Zomain Spaces: the Golden Triangle in 21st century Asia

Rippa, Alessandro (2019). Zomia 2.0: Branding remoteness and neoliberal connectivity in the Golden Triangle Special Economic Zone, Laos. *Social Anthropology/ Anthropologie sociale*, 27(2), 253-269.  
<https://doi.org/10.1111/1469-8676.12649>

**\*\*\* Syllabus may be subject to changes \*\*\***