

Doctoral Workshop: *Living in Asian Borderlands - An Appreciation of Resources*

Ways of Remembering in Early Colonial Lushai Society

Interpreting Puma zai (1907-1911)



Date: 6 February 2014, 6-7 p.m.

Venue: Lecture room, SFB building, Gartenstraße 29, 72074 Tuebingen

Speaker: Dr Poojari Thirumal, Department of Communication, Hyderabad University, India

The early colonial Lushai society (1890-1910) is marked by a creative tension between the communal, rhythmic mnemonics and the written, historical memory as found in colonial ethnographic and Church records. In colonial Lushai society (present day Mizoram, northeast India), over a short period from 1907-1911, a series of festive performances occurred across villages to commemorate a new lyrical composition, *Puma zai*. Set to dance and music its content was popularly perceived as extraordinarily „common place and humorous“. These *Puma zai* performances can be interpreted as the Lushai way of remembering who they were at a time when their symbolic and social world was being dramatically reordered through Christian missionaries and the colonial state. This communal experience of memory has rarely been conceived as source material for writing the cultural history of colonial Lushai Hills district. Framed within this cultural geography, this talk is an interpretive exercise to read the significance of *Puma Zai* performances and the potential „memory or remembering“ that engulfs the local social worlds disclosing 'old ways of life' in colonial Lushai society.

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