



Companions and Partners in a More-than-Human-World

Ecological entanglements and kinship in North-East-India

Online Workshop on March 30th, 2026 (Monday)

Organized by **NEHU (Shillong), Sikkim University (Gangtok), FAU (Erlangen-Nuremberg, Germany)**

Co-hosted by



COUNTERPOINT
NAVIGATING KNOWLEDGE

In our initial workshop “Forest, Trees, and People” (23 May 2025), concepts of historiography beyond the human were discussed and applied to the context of Northeast India. In an interdisciplinary design, anthropological, sociological, and religious studies were intertwined within the relational turn to rethink forests, landscapes, and histories which are not merely as human domains but as co-produced worlds. In a further step, the focus will now be on relationships, companions and siblings/kinships across species and elements. It aspires to foregrounds indigenous and local cosmologies in Northeast India that conceptualize animals, plants, rivers, forests, and other landscapes entities as companions, siblings or kin (e.g., Mishmi people relating Tigers as brother in Arunachal Pradesh) rather than as passive resources or abstract ecological units. Such relational ontologies invite critical reflection on dominant conservation regimes, environmental governance frameworks, and scientific epistemologies that often separate nature from culture and humans from non-humans. Keeping these thematic areas, the workshop with several research panels will provide insights into the vibrant tapestry of plant and animal interrelationships in Northeast India. Particular attention with exhaustive discussion will be paid to how animals, plants, and elements of the landscape can become companions and how their role as siblings or kin should be interpreted. Thus, engaging with these plural modes of relating, the workshop aims at giving voice to the pluriverse of more-than-human relationships, supernatural spirits and deities and the multiple ways they are shaping landscapes, cosmologies and histories.

Program

Introduction

Trees, animals and water. Situating relations

Chair: Prof. Rekha Shangpliang (NEHU)

9.00 am (Europe)/1.30 pm (India)

Simon Wiesgickl (FAU Erlangen-Nuremberg, Germany):

Beyond a “Lonely Tree” (Caspar David Friedrich): Religion, Nature and Culture in a More-than-Human World

Thomas Malsom (NEHU, India):

Companions of the Forest: Hornbills in the Relational Cosmologies and Ecological Entanglements in Tripura, Northeast India

Prarthana Arandhara (Independent Researcher, India):

Relational and Multispecies Understandings of Water in Climate Politics of the Northeast India

Panel 1

Human/Plant Partnership

Chair: Prof. Kocku von Stuckrad (Counterpoint Navigating Knowledge)

11.00 am (Europe)/ 3.30 pm (India)

Anshuman Hazarika (Sikkim University, India):

Human-plant relationality in the marriage rituals among the Deoris of North Lakhimpur, Assam

Vulli Dhanaraju (NEHU, India):

Becoming-With Ontologies: Karbi Entangled Histories from Northeast India

Panel 2

Companions in a more-than-human world

Chair: Prof. Charisma Lepcha (Sikkim University)

1.00 pm (Europe)/ 5.30 pm (India)

Sangay Tamang (IIT Dhanbad, India):

“Well-being” in Indigenous Communities: Spirits, Healing and Companionship in the Eastern Himalayas

Jenny Bentley/Monging Lepcha/Pema Yangden Lepcha (Independent Researcher, India):

Shared Journeys: Cane and Bamboo as Travel Companions, Guides, and Intermediaries among the Himalayan Mútunci Róng in Sikkim

Closing Discussion

10 takeaways about ecological entanglements

Chair: Prof. B. Panda (NEHU, India)

3.00 pm (Europe)/ 7.30 pm (India)

Whitney Bauman (Florida International University, USA):

Short remarks on Ecological Entanglements on a local and global scale