

Authenticity of The Sign: Travels of A Lahu Song



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Time: 10:00 - 11:00 am

Venue: Room 1504 (Lift 25-26)

Language: English

Abstract

This presentation has as its topic a song which requires rather complex semiotic operations to be Lahu, to belong in some way to this particular Tibeto-Burman language speaking minority nationality. The Wedding Oath song indexes, in different contexts, a desirable modern quality in a premodern society, a connection between an ethnic minority group and the modern state which implies obligations toward that ethnic group, and the positive quality of cosmopolitanism as a characteristic of a modern nation state. The nature of authenticity as a feature of these indexical relationships creates the possibility that one might extend Mendoza-Denton's (2011) concept of "semiotic hitchhiker" to incorporate a non-material feature of a discursive performance. The presentation will introduce central ideas in semiotic anthropology and demonstrate the utility of these concepts for a productive analysis of the meanings which attach to a song which, while not originally or always Lahu has, at its origins and in all of its iterations, a connection to Lahu-ness.

