

Ethnofilmography workshop and film screening
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Arunachal Pradesh holds one of the highest concentrations of cultural diversity in all of Asia. It contains almost innumerable languages, cultures and religious traditions, many of which appear to be at least hundreds of years old, often differ greatly from one another, and are found in few if any other places on Earth. All of this uniqueness and diversity seems to have come about due to relative isolation over long periods of time. However, in recent years this isolation has almost completely come to an end. As Arunachali people culturally integrate with larger India and increasingly travel outside Arunachal Pradesh and abroad, many aspects of Arunachali cultural uniqueness and diversity are under threat of disappearing. Added to it, the pressures brought on by a globalised notion of “organised” religions and spirituality seems to be further weakening not just traditional institutions but also mindsets. What should be done about this?

Although there are many possible answers to this question, I will suggest that documentation is one of the most important things we can do at this critical time when many if not most Arunachali cultures, traditions and languages appear to remain strong. In the first half of this workshop, we will look at some of the ways that film and video can contribute to the overall project of cultural research and documentation in Arunachal Pradesh. In addition to an overview of the ongoing efforts of the Center for Cultural Research and Documentation (CCRD) based in Naharlagun, Arunachal Pradesh, I will also discuss the way that video documentation was integrated into the recent “Tribal Transitions” project led by the anthropologist Stuart Blackburn, and suggest ways that video documentation can be similarly used by linguists. The second half of the workshop will consist of a film screening.