

The SEATRIp Speakers Series presents

Dr. Jane M. Ferguson
Australia National University, Canberra

Rocking in Shanland: Burmese Popular Music and Ethnic Insurgent Band Practice

Although Burma has the dubious distinction of possessing some of the longest-running internal conflicts in modern history, one often overlooked aspect is the role of popular culture and its consumption within these struggles. Although it might seem to be an anomaly, even the most adamant of ethnic Shan separatists can, and often do, have great affinity for Burmese popular music. Based on over two years' ethnographic fieldwork amongst a community of Shan insurgents and their affiliates, this paper will examine the ways in which a key genre of Burmese popular music, /copy thachin/ is interpreted, played, and ultimately re-signified by politicized Shan amateur musicians in a rock band at the Thai-Burma border. Limited fieldwork carried out in Yangon amongst Burmese songwriters will flesh out the history and structure of the Burmese popular music industry. Finally, I will demonstrate that borderland zones constitute important generative spaces for certain kinds of popular culture practice, especially when these practices can, and often do, produce contentious political consequences.

Friday, October 9, 2009 - 1:00-2:00pm - INTS 3107



(following the SEATRIp Fall Welcome Reception - same location from 12:00-1:00pm)
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