

SESSION 12 (Papers)

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Exploring Diasporic and Trans-Local Variations in Manipuris: A Study of Inter and Intra Changes of Performing Arts

During seven devastating years of Anglo-Burmese war (1819-1826), a significant number of Manipuris (prominent inhabitants of Manipur and Barak valley of the present India) migrated in search for a new land for survival and found it in Sylhet in present-day Bangladesh. This current minority in Bangladesh brought with it a unique blend of Vaishnavite and indigenous traditions from Manipur, and their cultural practices gradually adapted to the new environment and continued their existence in relation to local customs. This is especially evident in the heterogeneity of their music, involving Sylheti tunes and vibes in certain ritual stanzas embodied by traditional tunes, rhythms, and vocal throwing style of north southern India. On the other hand, due to the global fame of the Manipuri dance, they were able to preserve it in a more or less homogeneous form. As time progressed, trans-local border-crossing of the community brought about changes in their socio-cultural practices, from ritual singing practices to their food platter and traditional gifts, all of which have been hybridized with dominant groups. My study has a focus on trans-local processes and items in Manipuri culture of Bangladesh, referring to inter and intra changes of the performing arts between the Manipuris of Bangladesh and India, and based on the exploration of the situations on the ground.

Bio

Sukanta Singha is a Bangladeshi artist and civil servant, deeply immersed in the field of ethnomusicology. Currently pursuing his M.Phil. research on Manipuri festivals and music at the University of Dhaka, Singha passionately explores ethnic culture, music, and dance of Bangladesh. His dedication extends beyond music, as evidenced by his book on *Ethnic Language Learning of Moulvibazar District of Bangladesh* and his contribution to the 'Centennial Book Project' in the Department of Music, University of Dhaka. His commitment to cultural preservation is exemplified by his membership in the 'Intangible Cultural Heritage Consortium of Bangladesh' and his active participation in the ICTMD.