

# TGIF

## THE NTU LINGUIST CHATROOM

### The linguistic (pre-)history of South Asia and Southeast Asia: Drivers of dispersion and contact prior to the European colonial expansion

In this talk I will reconstruct a linguistic (pre-)history of South Asia and Southeast Asia in the context of the agricultural revolution, environmental influences on the dispersal of early farmers, the consequences of technological innovations, and historical and cultural developments that shaped the languages of the region prior to the coming of the Europeans. Drawing on geographical, archaeological, historical and linguistic evidence, the paper will consider how South Asia and Southeast Asia first became populated, and by whom. Special consideration will be given to the impact of the Neolithic transition, when peripatetic hunter-gatherers shifted to sedentary cultivation, resulting in food surpluses and subsequent population explosions that drove migration in a search for new lands. It will be shown that this has important consequences for understanding how languages and their speakers dispersed throughout Asia, profoundly reshaping the linguistic composition of the region. The paper will identify what languages were used by various ethnic groups inhabiting South and Southeast Asia prior to the arrival of European traders and then missionaries in the 16th century, it will present historical evidence of language contact in the modern-day languages spoken in the region, and in conclusion it will summarize explanations for the types of borrowing and convergence that emerged in that contact.

#### ABOUT THE SPEAKER



**Alexander (Alec) Coupe** is an Associate Professor in the Division of Linguistics and Multilingual Studies, an Alexander von Humboldt Fellow, and a former editor of *Linguistics of the Tibeto-Burman Area*. For the past two decades his research has focused on the recording, analysis and documentation of the languages of Northeast India; more recently he has begun collaborations with minority language communities to develop orthographies, children's reading books and dictionaries that will help to maintain their languages in an increasingly globalized world. As a field linguist he has interests in

phonetics, phonology, tone systems, morphology, morphosyntax, syntactic structure, pragmatics and semantics, and he has published research in all of these fields. His work collectively feeds a higher interest: to better appreciate the extent of diversity in human languages, and how this can inform linguistic theory.

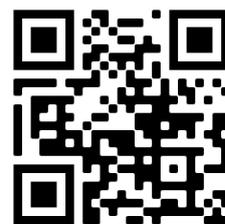
#### WEBINAR ●

Date: 30 October 2020  
Time: 1.30pm-2.30pm

#### ZOOM INFORMATION ●

Register at  
[www.tinyurl.com/tgif-alec](http://www.tinyurl.com/tgif-alec)

or scan QR code



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