

**Panel: “The Art of Preserving the Local Self: the Making of Ethnic Minority’s Identity, Territory and History in Northeast Cambodia”**

**Convener:** Frédéric Bourdier PhD, Institut de Recherche pour le Développement (IRD)

**Abstract:**

Instead of succumbing to the alienating powers of colonization, some ethnic minority groups in northeast Cambodia have resisted the course of their destiny being charted by the foreign other. The foreign others may have multiple faces, however. He can be the one who lives across the river, the one who is politically dominant or the one living beyond well-known borders with the military power to bring war.

Using the lenses of material culture, geography and historical anthropology, this panel will be articulated around three vignettes: i) The first one discusses The Jorai’s ability to find creative ways to care for the victims of the intense U.S bombing of the 1970s. By mixing the old with the new, traditional rituals and craftsmanship are re-invigorated with a heightened sense that time should be carved out for the unburied dead; ii) The second examines how for the Tampuon both the notions of common land and common past are inherent to the preservation of multiple ethnic identities especially in the context of territorial conflicts and cultural misconstructions. To this end, the notion of ‘commonality’ is key in enabling these communities to forcefully contest the colonization and urbanization of their rural space by Khmer and foreign investors; iii) The last vignette analyses the ways in which the first revolutionary movements at the time of the French Protectorate were successful in recruiting Jorai, Lao and Kachoh’ ethnic minority soldiers. This chapter that pre-dates the rise of the Khmer Rouge is key in these communities’ own historicity since their resistance against the French colonizers is inscribed in the village elders’s discourse as a symbolic fight against all forms of colonial domination.

**Discussant:** Krisna Uk, PhD, Institut de Recherche pour le Développement (IRD)

**Expected number of participants:** 4

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