

Darja's BIO:

Darja Hoenigman (PhD 2015, The Australian National University) is a linguistic anthropologist and a filmmaker, currently a postdoctoral researcher on the ETKnoS project in Laboratoire SPHERE at Université Paris Diderot. Her research over the last 14 years has focussed on the various ways in which the use of language shapes, and is shaped by, social life in two small-scale societies, namely the Awiakay and the Meakambut in East Sepik Province, Papua New Guinea. Her writings about village fights, Catholic charismatic spirit possession, secret languages, lamenting and all-night song cycles are intertwined with observational film. In her current project, Darja is starting to study string figure making and its connection to local cosmology.

TITLE and ABSTRACT:

The significance of the incomprehensible in Awiakay and Meakambut songs

The Awiakay people of East Sepik Province in Papua New Guinea closely identify themselves with a cycle of 42 songs, called *Kaunjambi*. While much of this cycle is composed in a non-translatable spirit language, the abundance of parallelisms uncovers what the words keep hidden. Parallelism is an ordered interplay between repetition and variation, in which the non-repeated elements or variables are associated on the basis of similarity. The logic of these associations is opaque if we look only at the physical or most literal senses of the words/phrases compared. They carry symbolic implications which are 'infused by cultural assumptions' (in the sense used by Roger Keesing 1979), and can only be understood in reference to other aspects of Awiakay lifeworld. In this talk, accompanied by subtitled video segments, we will explore various forms of parallelism used in *Kaunjambi*, and compare them with the ones in Meakambut songs.

REFERENCE:

Keesing, Roger M. 1979. Linguistic Knowledge and Cultural Knowledge: Some Doubts and Speculations. In: *American Anthropologist*. Vol. 81:1, pp. 14–36.