

## Shadow States

Since the mid-twentieth century, China and India have entertained a difficult relationship, erupting into open war in 1962. *Shadow States* is the first book to unpack Sino-Indian tensions from the angle of competitive state-making – through a study of their simultaneous attempts to win the approval and support of Himalayan people. When China and India tried to expand into the Himalayas in the twentieth century, their lack of strong ties to the region and the absence of an easily enforceable border made their proximity threatening: observing China's and India's state-making efforts, local inhabitants were in a position to compare and potentially choose between them. Using rich and original archival research, Bérénice Guyot-Réchart shows how India and China became each other's 'shadow states'. Understanding these recent, competing processes of state formation in the Himalayas is fundamental to understanding the roots of tensions in Sino-Indian relations.

Bérénice Guyot-Réchart teaches international and South Asian history at King's College London. She was previously Research Fellow at Emmanuel College, Cambridge. Her research explores the effects of social, political, and environmental processes on South Asia's contemporary international relations. She has recently published in *Contemporary South Asia* and *Modern Asian Studies*.

# Shadow States

*India, China and the Himalayas, 1910–1962*

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Bérénice Guyot-Réchart

*King's College London*



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## Acknowledgements

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This book began as a dissertation charting late colonial and early independent India's incorporation of the region once considered South Asia's 'largest *terra incognita*': the eastern Himalayas. I soon realised that I could not separate this story from what was happening across the border. Indian state-making in what we now call Arunachal Pradesh was always conditioned by the shadow of China, especially after the People's Republic of China (PRC) annexed nearby Tibet. And the conditioning went both ways, it appeared. This book is an effort to explore this interaction and its consequences, albeit from a primarily Indian angle.

I first wish to thank the Gates Cambridge Trust and Trinity College, Cambridge, for their financial support during my PhD. I acknowledge the support of the Mary Euphrasia Mosley Travel Fund, the Cambridge History Faculty's Prince Consort Fund and Members' History Fund, the Smuts Memorial Fund, the Cambridge Humanities Research Scheme, the Frederick Williamson Fund, and Emmanuel College, Cambridge.

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I have tremendously benefited from the advice of scholars at Cambridge and beyond. My thanks must first and foremost go to Joya Chatterji, an extraordinary supervisor, mentor, and friend. Vivek Bhandari, Katia Buttefrille, Peter Caterall, Graham Chapman, Leigh Denault, Laurence Gautier, Rebecca Gnüchtel, Anton Harder, Ben Hopkins, Emma Hunter, Beatrice Jauregui, Harshan Kumarasingham, Rachel Leow, Fiona McConnell, Sanghamitra Misra, Rana Mitter, Zilpha Modi, Ishan Mukherjee, Partha Pratim Shil, Kaushik Roy, Tsering Shakya, Jayita Sharma, Benno Weiner, Arne Westad, and Benjamin Zachariah – all helped at various stages of this project. I particularly wish to thank Willem van Schendel, David Washbrook, and David Ludden for their constant support. Equally, I thank Gunnel Cederlöf, Jason Cons, Tanja Hüber, Stella Krepp, Li Wenjie, Andrés Rodriguez, and Willem van Schendel for reading certain book chapters, and Rebecca Gnüchtel and Toni Huber for commenting on the whole manuscript and sharing some of their work with me.

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## Acknowledgements

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Last but not least, this book would not have been possible without my family. This book is a very small reward for their love, support, and patience, but it is to them – and above all to Max – that it is dedicated.

## Transcription and Terminology

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This book refers to the inhabitants of the eastern Himalayas as ‘tribes’ or ‘tribals’. While these terms belong to a contested ‘vocabulary of power’,<sup>1</sup> they are in common use in Arunachal Pradesh, where they can be used with pride.<sup>2</sup> *Adivasi*, today the more consensual term elsewhere in India, refers to indigenous communities originally from the rest of the subcontinent who arrived in colonial Assam to work in tea gardens. Moreover, the Indian constitution recognises the indigenous populations of NEFA/Arunachal as Scheduled Tribes, with attendant rights and privileges.

A related issue is how to designate Arunachal and Assam’s various Scheduled Tribes. The most important ones are listed below: the terms most widely recognised today first, and older or alternative ones second. The newer names tend to be endonyms, whereas the earlier ones had often been given by outsiders and can be considered derogatory – ‘Abor’, for instance, means ‘ungoverned, untamed’ in Assamese. For this reason and because they were replacing older terms by the end of the 1950s, this book uses the most familiar names today.

In the PRC, the state-sanctioned term is *minzu* (nationality). Like ‘tribe’, the concept of *minzu* – and the classification of the PRC’s inhabitants in this light – has a fraught history. Chinese authorities currently recognise fifty-five minority *minzu* alongside the Hans. Among them, the Tibetans, the Monbas (Monpas and Membas), and the Lhobas inhabit the eastern Himalayas. The last term, derived from Tibetan, subsumes a variety of non-Buddhist people, such as the Adis or the Mishmis (the latter also known as Deng).<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Willem van Schendel, ‘The dangers of belonging: Tribes, indigenous peoples and homelands in South Asia’, in *The politics of belonging in India: Becoming Adivasi*, ed. by Daniel Rycroft and Sangeeta Dasgupta (London: Routledge, 2011), pp. 19–43.

<sup>2</sup> Stuart Blackburn, *Himalayan tribal tales: Oral tradition and culture in the Apatani Valley* (Boston; Leiden: Brill, 2008), p. 9.

<sup>3</sup> Colin Mackerras, ‘Introduction’, in *Ethnic minorities in modern China*, ed. by Colin Mackerras, 4 vols (London; New York: Routledge, 2011), I, pp. 1–25.

## Transcription and Terminology

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Adi – Abor  
 Hrusso – Aka  
 Bugun – Khowa  
 Galo – Gallong  
 Khamti – Khampti  
 Lisu – Yobin  
 Meyor – Zakhing  
 Monpa – Mönba, Lama  
 Membra – Drukpa, Tshangla, Pemaköpa  
 Mishing – Miri  
 Digaru Mishmi – Taraon Mishmi  
 Idu Mishmi – Chulikata Mishmi  
 Miju Mishmi – Kaman Mishmi  
 Nyishi (Bangni in Kameng) – Dafla  
 Puroik – Sulung  
 Singpho – Kachin

The transcriptions I have chosen are meant to be intelligible to a wide audience. For Mandarin, I follow the pinyin system, except for names like Chiang Kai-shek and Sun Yat-sen, more widely recognised than Jiang Jieshi and Sun Yixian. For Hindi, Tibetan, and local languages, I chose what seemed the most pronounceable renderings for non-specialist, English-speaking readers.

## Chronology

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- 1873 British India creates an Inner Line between Assam and the eastern Himalayas.
- 1910 Zhao Erfeng conquers Dzayül and Pomé. Chinese troops invade Lhasa.
- 1911 March: Murder of Noel Williamson. October: The first of a series of uprisings against the Qing Empire erupts in Wuhan. British India launches the Abor Expedition and the Miri and Mishmi missions.
- 1912 January–February: The Republic of China is declared; the last Qing Emperor abdicates. Chinese officials are expelled from Tibet, Kham, and the eastern Himalayas over the course of the year.
- 1913 Start of a period of *de facto* independence for Dalai Lama-ruled Tibet.
- 1914 British Indian and Tibetan representatives sign a secret boundary agreement in the eastern Himalayas.
- 1933 The thirteenth Dalai Lama dies.
- 1942 March: Japan occupies Burma. Lhasa tries to strengthen control over Monyül.
- 1943 April: London, Delhi, and Assam agree to bring the eastern Himalayas under ‘effective control’.
- 1946 Civil war resumes between the Guomindang and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP).
- 1947 August: India attains independence.
- 1949 October: The CCP wins the Chinese Civil War and proclaims the People’s Republic of China (PRC).
- 1950 August: A major earthquake hits the eastern Himalayas. October: The People’s Liberation Army (PLA) marches on Chamdo to force Tibet to negotiate its peaceful negotiation. India commits to incorporating the eastern Himalayas.
- 1951 February: Indian authorities take over Tawang. May: The PRC annexes Tibet under the Seventeen Point Agreement.

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1953	October: Achingmori Massacre. December: Verrier Elwin appointed Adviser for Tribal Areas.
1954	North-East Frontier Agency (NEFA) formally created. April: India and the PRC sign a trade agreement and proclaim their ‘peaceful coexistence’.
1956	The Khampas in Sichuan, Yunnan, and Qinghai revolt against China. April: Inauguration of the Preparatory Committee for the Autonomous Region of Tibet.
1959	January: Zhou Enlai formally informs Nehru that the PRC rejects the McMahon Line. March: Uprising in Lhasa. The fourteenth Dalai Lama flees to India. August: Longju Incident. September: India decides to militarise NEFA.
1962	October 20: China invades NEFA. November 20: China declares a unilateral ceasefire. Parts of NEFA occupied until early 1963.

## Acronyms and Abbreviations

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AG	Adviser to the Governor of Assam (Nari Rustomji 1948–1954, K.L. Mehta 1954–1959, Nari Rustomji 1959–1963)
AICC	All India Congress Committee
APCC	Assam Pradesh Congress Committee
APO	Assistant Political Officer
APSA	Arunachal Pradesh State Archives
ASA	Assam State Archives
ATA	Adviser for Tribal Areas (i.e. Verrier Elwin)
BL	British Library
BRO	Border Roads Organisation
CSAS	Centre of South Asian Studies, Cambridge
DIPR	Directorate of Information and Public Relations, Government of Arunachal Pradesh
IFAS	Indian Frontier Administrative Service
IOR	India Office Records
MP	Member of Parliament
NAI	National Archives of India
NEFA	North-East Frontier Agency
NHTA	Naga Hills Tribal Area
NMML	Nehru Memorial Museum & Library
PB	Parliamentary Board
PLA	People's Liberation Army
PO	Political Officer
PRC	People's Republic of China
SECGA	Secretary to the Assam Governor
SOAS	School of Oriental and African Studies
SRC	States Reorganisation Commission
UKNA	United Kingdom National Archives, Kew



## Glossary

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*T: Tibetan, H: Hindi, A: Assamese, Ad: Adi*

Amban (Manchu)	commissioner representing the Qing Empire in Tibet
Beyül (T)	a Buddhist ‘hidden land’, where believers can attain enlightenment
Bharat darshan (H)	a tour to discover India, with a view to nation-building (literally, ‘pilgrimage to India’)
Chaprasi (H)	junior office worker
Depön (T)	general in the Tibetan army
Dim Dam (Ad)	a particularly aggressive species of flies, endemic in the eastern Himalayas
Dobashi (H)	interpreter
Duar (A, H)	foothill passes connecting the eastern Himalayas and the floodplains of Assam
Dzong (T)	Tibetan or Bhutanese fort, often hosting a local government official
Dzongpön (T)	governor of a <i>dzong</i> (district) in the traditional Tibetan government
Gam (Ad), gaonbura (A)	village headman
Gelugpa	the dominant school of Tibetan Buddhism. The Dalai Lama is its foremost member
Gompa (T)	Tibetan Buddhist monastery or hermitage
Jamadar (H)	low-ranking official
Jawan (H)	Indian soldier
Kaiya (H)	Marwari merchant/shopkeeper
Kebang (Ad)	village council in the Adi areas
Khenpo (T)	abbot of a Tibetan Buddhist monastery
Lama (T)	spiritual leader in Tibetan Buddhism

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Lhopa (T)	Tibetan name for the inhabitants of NEFA (literally, ‘southern barbarian’)
Mahout	an elephant driver
Mekhela Chador (A)	the traditional dress of Assamese women, historically worn by some NEFA communities
Mibong (Ad)	‘colonial official’ in some Adi languages
Momo (T)	Tibetan dumplings
Monlam (T)	the greatest Tibetan Buddhist festival
Nyertsang (T)	Tibetan Buddhist monastic official, in charge of maintaining the accounts and perceiving tribute
Posa (A)	tribute or rent
Sarkar (H)	government
Stupa (T)	mound-like Buddhist monument hosting sacred relics
Tsampa (T)	roasted barley flour, a staple diet of Tibet
Tangka (T)	Tibetan coins
Tusker	(Indian) Border Roads Organisation staff
Ulag (T)	corvée labour, a form of taxation in the Tibetan political system

## Characters

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*(In order of appearance)*

*Fourteenth Dalai Lama, Tenzin Gyatso (1935–present)* – The reincarnation of the thirteenth Dalai Lama, discovered in Amdo in the late 1930s. Enthroned in 1950 after the PLA crossed into Tibet. Fled to India in 1959.

*Tungno* – Headman of the Miju Mishmi village of Pangum, in the upper Lohit Valley, around 1910. Informed British Indian authorities of the conquest of Dzayül by Zhao Erfeng.

*Lu Chuanlin (1836–1910)* – Han official during the late Qing Empire. Governor-General of Sichuan at the start of the twentieth century. Advocated direct rule over Kham.

*Feng Quan (?–1905)* – Han official serving the Qing Empire as assistant *amban*. Tasked with increasing Qing control over eastern Tibet. His actions around Batang led to his murder, insurrections across Kham, and Zhao Erfeng's conquests.

*Zhao Erfeng (1845–1911)* – Han official who led military campaigns across Kham in the last decade of the Qing. Launched radical attempts to firmly incorporate it under Qing sovereignty, but was killed at the start of the revolution that ended the empire.

*Francis Younghusband (1863–1942)* – British army officer and explorer. Led a 1903–1904 armed expedition to Lhasa, which resulted in the British invasion of Tibet and the signature of a treaty with the Dalai Lama.

*Thirteenth Dalai Lama, Thupten Gyatso (1876–1933)* – Spiritual and temporal leader of Tibet. Presided over a period of *de facto* independence for Tibet after the fall of the Qing Empire.

*Noel Williamson (?–1911)* – British colonial official. Assistant Political Officer at Sadiya between 1906 and 1911. Advocated British Indian expansion into the Himalayas. Murdered during an armed expedition into the Adi country in March 1911.

*Frederick Bailey (1882–1967)* – British intelligence officer and explorer. Veteran of the Younghusband Expedition. Travelled extensively in

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- Tibet and the Himalayas. Led an unauthorised expedition to south-eastern Tibet, Monyül, and the Lohit Valley in 1911–1912.
- Mazanon* – Digaru Mishmi headman. Witnessed the attempts of Qing and British officials to expand into the Lohit Basin in the early twentieth century.
- W.C.M. Dundas* – British colonial official. Succeeded Noel Williamson as Assistant Political Officer, Sadiya. Appointed Political Officer, Central and Eastern Sectors (Sadiya Frontier Tract), at the head of an expanded frontier administration in 1912. Worked to assert British Indian claims in the Lohit Valley against the Qing and expand administration in the Adi foothills.
- Liu Wenhui* (1895–1976) – One of the main warlords in Sichuan and eastern Kham during Republican and Nationalist China.
- Sun Yat-sen* (1866–1925) – Chinese revolutionary and statesman. Played a crucial role in the fall of the Qing Empire and the establishment of the Republic of China.
- Henry McMahon* (1862–1949) – British diplomat and colonial official. As Indian Foreign Secretary, led territorial negotiations with China and Tibet in 1913–1914. Gave his name to the Indo-Tibetan boundary in the eastern Himalayas.
- Chiang Kai-shek* (1887–1975) – Chinese political and military leader. Head of the Guomindang Party from 1925 and, from 1928, of the Nationalist Chinese government. Fled to Taiwan upon his defeat by the CCP.
- Olaf Caroe* (1892–1981) – British Indian administrator, specialist of frontier issues. Indian Foreign Secretary between 1939 and 1946. Played a leading role in shaping Indian expansion in the eastern Himalayas and policies towards China. Wrote extensively about Central Asia and the Pakistan–Afghanistan borderlands after 1947. Continued to entertain an active interest in South Asian and Tibetan affairs, for example as President of the Tibet Society.
- Frank Kingdon-Ward* (1885–1958) – British explorer and botanist. Undertook dozens of expeditions through Tibet, Assam, western China, and Burma between the 1910s and the 1960s. His unauthorised attempts to enter Tibet via the North-East Frontier Tracts caused Indian authorities to rediscover the existence of the McMahon Line.
- James Philip Mills* (1890–1960) – Colonial administrator and anthropologist, specialist of the Naga Hills. Appointed to the new position of Adviser to the Assam Governor in 1943 to spearhead expansion into the eastern Himalayas. Had to resign shortly before independence. Taught Cultural Anthropology at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) in London until 1954.

*Paul Mainprice* – Colonial frontier official. Joined the Indian Civil Service in 1937 and served in various parts of India before being appointed British Trade Agent at Gyantse, Tibet in 1942. Appointed Political Official for the Lohit Valley in 1943.

*Peter James* – Colonial frontier official. Appointed to the North-East Frontier Tracts in 1944. Specialist of the Adi areas. Stayed on as an Assam tea planter after 1947.

*Christoph von Fürer-Haimendorf (1909–1995)* – Austrian anthropologist. Born in an aristocratic family. Received his PhD for a study of the Nagas. Befriended Philip Mills in the Naga Hills in 1936. Interned by British Indian authorities as an enemy citizen when the Second World War broke out. On special appointment by the Assam Governor, explored the Apatani and Nyishi country in 1944–1945. Appointed at SOAS, where he became one of the major anthropologists of South Asia. Made further visits to NEFA/Arunachal and Nagaland between 1962 and 1980.

*Jawaharlal Nehru (1889–1964)* – Indian politician and statesman. One of the main leaders of the Indian National Congress' fight for independence in the last decades of colonial rule. First Prime Minister of independent India.

*Nari Rustomji* – Adviser to the Governor of Assam (1947–1953, 1959–1962). Parsi from Bombay. Colonial administrator in Assam prior to 1947. Became the first Indian appointed to the post of Adviser, tasked with leading the incorporation of NEFA into India.

*Mao Zedong (1893–1976)* – Chinese Communist revolutionary and statesman, founder and leader of the PRC from 1949 to 1976.

*Vallabhbhai Patel (1875–1950)* – Indian National Congress Leader and major figure in India's freedom struggle. Deputy Prime Minister from 1947 till his death.

*Kathing, Ralengnao (Bob) (1912–1990)* – Frontier official who took over Tawang for India in 1951. Born in Manipur to a Tangkhul Naga family. Served in the V Force during the Second World War before a brief spell in the Manipur government and the Assam Rifles. Appointed Assistant Political Officer to the Sela Sub-Agency in 1950. Had a distinguished career in the NEFA, Nagaland, and Sikkim administrations before being appointed ambassador to Burma.

*K.L. Mehta (1913–1991)* – Adviser to the Governor of Assam (1954–1959). Born in Rajasthan in an aristocratic family, studied at the London School of Economics before joining the Indian Civil Service in the late 1930s. Succeeded Rustomji as Adviser after the Achingmori Massacre. Left for the External Affairs Ministry in June 1959, where his

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expertise on border issues and the PRC was in high demand. Replaced by his predecessor, Rustomji.

*S.M. Krishnatry* – Former major in the Indian army recruited by the NEFA administration for the first batch of the Indian Frontier Administrative Service (IFAS) in 1954. Chosen because of his long experience of various Indian frontiers: had served on the North-West Frontier during the Second World War, commanded Indian army escorts in Tibet and Sikkim in the late 1940s, and served as Trade Agent at Gyantse (1950–1954).

*Verrier Elwin* (1902–1964) – Autodidact anthropologist, tribal activist, and government official. Born in Britain and naturalised by India after 1947. Went to India in 1927 as a missionary; converted to Hinduism in 1937. Having become an authority on the tribes of central and eastern India, was appointed adviser to Nehru on tribal areas and put at the head of NEFA's research administration.

*Ram Manohar Lohia* (1910–1967) – Indian political leader. Fought for India's independence as a member of the Congress Socialist Party. Broke with Nehru and the Congress in 1948. Founder and chairman of the Socialist Party in 1955, often in opposition to the Nehru government. Early critic of the policies followed in NEFA, particularly Inner Line restrictions. Attempted to publicise the issue by entering NEFA without permission several times in 1958 and 1959, courting arrest. Finally permitted to enter NEFA after the 1962 war, under escort.

*Oshong Ering* (1932/1933–) – Padam Adi who was among NEFA's very first batches of students. Finished high school in 1955 and graduated three years later from St Edmund's College in Shillong. One of the first indigenous inhabitants to join the NEFA administration, in 1960. In post at Pasighat during the 1962 war, where he helped with evacuation and intelligence gathering. Went on to a distinguished career in the NEFA/Arunachal government.

*Zhou Enlai* (1898–1976) – Prime Minister of the PRC from 1949 to 1976. Led the unsuccessful boundary discussions with India prior to the 1962 war.

*Kunga Samten Dewatshang* (1914–1985) – Khampa trader and key founder and leader of the Chushi Gangdruk resistance movement against the PRC. Escaped to NEFA with his family in 1959 and resettled there.

*Sawthang La* (1917–?) – Native Bhutanese who was Assistant Tibetan Agent for the NEFA authorities. Joined service in 1941. Assigned to the Lohit Valley in the mid-1950s. Tasked with monitoring Chinese movements and persuading the Mishmis, Dzayülis, and Meyors of the greater benefits of Indian sovereignty.

*Kamasha* (?–?) – Tibetan carpenter from Rima, active in Dzayül and the Lohit. Favourably impressed by the Indian administration due to its more generous policies towards the inhabitants (compared to China's).

*Tarun Bhattacharjee* (1931–?) – Young NEFA frontier official, born in Shillong. Base Superintendent at the Shimong Adi village of Yingkiong during the 1962 war. Published extensively about NEFA and his life there.

*Katon Borang* (c. 1937–) – An Adi student who experienced the 1962 war. Later an administrator and politician in NEFA and Arunachal Pradesh.