

Swargajyoti Gohain

Imagined Geographies in the Indo-Tibetan Borderlands

Culture, Politics, Place

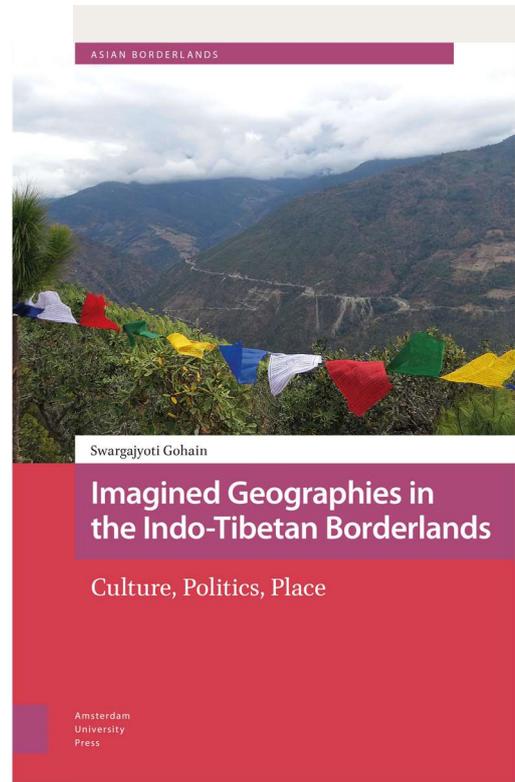
Imagined Geographies in the Indo-Tibetan Borderlands: Culture, Politics, Place is an ethnography of culture and politics in Monyul, a Tibetan Buddhist cultural region in west Arunachal Pradesh, Northeast India. For nearly three centuries, Monyul was part of the Tibetan state, and the Monpas – as the communities inhabiting this region are collectively known – participated in trans-Himalayan trade and pilgrimage. Following the colonial demarcation of the Indo-Tibetan boundary in 1914, the fall of the Tibetan state in 1951, and the India-China boundary war in 1962, Monyul was gradually integrated into India and the Monpas became a Scheduled Tribe. In 2003, the Monpas began a demand for autonomy under the leadership of Tsona Gontse Rinpoche. This book examines the narratives and politics of the autonomy movement regarding language, place-names, and trans-border kinship against the backdrop of the India-China border dispute. It explores how the Monpas negotiate multiple identities to imagine new forms of community that transcend regional and national borders.

"During the last years we have seen a number of new publications on Northeast India that is based on solid empirical - historical and ethnographic - research. This is a highly welcome development. With Imagined Geographies in the Indo-Tibetan Borderlands we get another great addition. The book concerns a geopolitically highly sensitive place and addresses questions of large scholarly and public interest. It will certainly attract a larger readership."

Professor Bengt G. Karlsson, Department of Social Anthropology,
Stockholm University

"This remarkable ethnography takes us deep into Monyul - as a place, a political construct, and a way of life. Gohain's rigorous, sensitive research results in a timely interpretation of how 'Himalayan' identities are produced in and beyond Arunachal Pradesh. Essential reading for students of borderland lives everywhere."

Professor Sara Shneiderman, University of British Columbia



Swargajyoti Gohain teaches Sociology and Anthropology at Ashoka University, India. She has published widely on borders, state, culture, politics, and Tibetan Buddhist communities in Northeast India and the Himalayan region.

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