

Stateless in South Asia: The Chakmas between Bangladesh and India (SAGE Studies on India's North East)

Deepak K Singh

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What does it mean to be 'stateless' in the modern postcolonial context? This fascinating study addresses this complex question through the case of the Chakma refugees in Arunachal Pradesh. The largely neglected social history of the ethnic Buddhist Chakmas, whose homeland is the Chittagong Hill Tracts (in the present day Bangladesh), carries the multiple imprints of partition, dominant development paradigm and religious persecution. As refugees in the strategically sensitive and disputed territory of Arunachal Pradesh in India's Northeast, they are locked in an intractable conflict over land and resources with the indigenous Arunachalis, themselves marginalized and alienated from the rest of the country.

Setting a new dimension in refugee studies, the arguments in this book are developed on the framework of oral narratives, incorporating the self perceptions of both the Chakmas as well as the Arunachalis who host them. The book critically analyses national and international official documents and policy statements and demonstrates the absence of legal-institutional and legislative structures to address the concerns of refugees. It throws into relief the sharp contestations over nationalism, citizenship and ethnicity in South Asia, both at the level of political movements and academic discourse. It sheds new light on the outcomes of partition, boundary making and state formation, as well as dominant development models by examining the everyday experiences of these communities.

This book will be a useful resource for scholars and students of politics, international relations, sociology, anthropology and history. It will also help policy makers and lawyers.



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