

Living on the Sino-Indian Border: The Story of the Mishmis in Arunachal Pradesh, Northeast India

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Living on the Sino-Indian Border

The Story of the Mishmis in Arunachal Pradesh, Northeast India

In northeast India, there are several indigenous peoples who reside along the Sino-Indian border about whom there is very little academic research. Some communities are present on either side of the border, making research very difficult. The Mishmi is one such indigenous group living in the northeast region of India bordering southern Tibet. Out of four Mishmi clans, three reside on the Indian side and one on the Chinese side of the international border. After the 1962 Sino-Indian War, movement of Mishmi people across the border was restricted, impacting social ties and trade-related activities. We discuss relations between the Mishmi and the British, followed by their interactions with the Indian administration. We document how people used the borders before the war and how development on the border has impacted Mishmi lives. This research is a first attempt to document information about the Mishmis in India and China. In this article, we present our preliminary observations based on anthropological fieldwork in Arunachal Pradesh, India. Secondary information was gathered from websites, archives, and reports.

KEYWORDS: Arunachal Pradesh—China—India—Mishmi—Sino-Indian border—Tibet

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RESEARCH on ethnic minorities is particularly challenging for those living in a disputed region close to international borders. The region between India and China is strategically crucial for the two superpowers, and both are investing heavily in the development and security of their respective frontier regions. Several indigenous peoples live along the international border and are impacted by developmental policies. As India and China vie to gain the status of the next global superpower, the stories of indigenous peoples may get lost. There are several indigenous communities on either side of the Sino-Indian border (TAPP 2002; CHAUDHURI 2013).¹ One among them is the Mishmi, who live in Arunachal Pradesh (India) and Zayu County (China). In this research report, we document how the Mishmi used the borders before the war and how development on the border has impacted their lives in Arunachal Pradesh. This report is our first attempt to document ethnographic and archival data concerning the Mishmi community both in India and China.

Arunachal Pradesh (Arunachal, hereafter) is a frontier state of northeast India, also known as the “land of the rising sun.” It shares a 1,126-kilometer international border with Tibet, which is claimed by China (NOORANI 2011; KURIAN 2014). Arunachal has been largely cut off from mainstream economic and infrastructural development until fairly recently. In its national policy the government of India has imagined the region to be “backward” due to a lack of infrastructure and connectivity (BARUAH 2003). Arunachal, however, is claimed by China. The dispute over the territory led to a war between India and China in 1962. Today, the region continues to remain central to the boundary dispute between the two countries (JACOB 2015).

The movement of Mishmi people across the border has been restricted since the war, thus impacting social ties and trade-related activities. Because the state of Arunachal is a border zone, even Indians require an Inner Line Permit. In China, the Deng Mishmi live in such a sensitive area that it is difficult to get research permission, even by Chinese scholars. The last time any serious investigations were conducted was probably the year 1985, when the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences sent in a team of four anthropologists from the Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology.

We begin by providing a brief account of the current situation on the Sino-Indian border. Then, we visit the archival literature to offer a glimpse of the colonial presence on the border. We provide two stories, one of Yaaku Tacho,² a Mishmi woman who went to China in the 1950s and worked for the Chinese government. The first author met Yaaku’s daughter, who shared pages of her mother’s personal

diary written in Chinese. In her diary, Yaaku writes as a Chinese patriot. She praises Chinese officials for being helpful in providing education and jobs. The second story we provide is of the hunters who visit the border zone to hunt the prized musk deer. These hunters claim that Chinese hunters have started to enter deep into Indian territory, where they hunt indiscriminately, without any concern for the delicate ecological balance of the area. They also claim that the trips they make to the border help in the protection of India's territory, since they keep an eye out for Chinese intrusions. The hunters note that the military agencies are not very well versed with the landscape, leading to a demand for their service. They thus take pride in their skills and knowledge, things that are used predominantly by the military during intelligence gathering. Mishmi hunters on the Indian side of the border are thus contracted government agents of sorts, performing a duty for which enlisted Indian troops are not equipped.

THE MISHMI: A TRANSBORDER COMMUNITY

There are three sub-groups within the Mishmi cultural group residing on the Indian side of the border (Idu, Digaru, and Miju), who reside in the districts of Lohit, Anjaw, Lower Dibang Valley, and Dibang Valley. These districts are collectively termed the Mishmi Hills (see Figure 1). One sub-group, the Deng Mishmi, live on the Chinese side in the county of Zayu, which is located in the Tibet Autonomous Region (LANG and QIANGBA 2000; see Table 1). There has been little or no connection with the Deng Mishmi in Tibet since the war between India and China in 1962. The Deng never became an officially recognized ethnic group in China and were finally classified as an “unidentified ethnicity” or “others,” due to the nature of a category for characterizing only a handful of people in contemporary China (LI 2008; DA 达蔚 2011).

The Mishmi ethnic community is one of the twenty-six major “tribal” groups of Arunachal.³ Since there are four sub-groups recognized within the Mishmi fold, each addresses the members of other Mishmi groups as their brothers and recog-

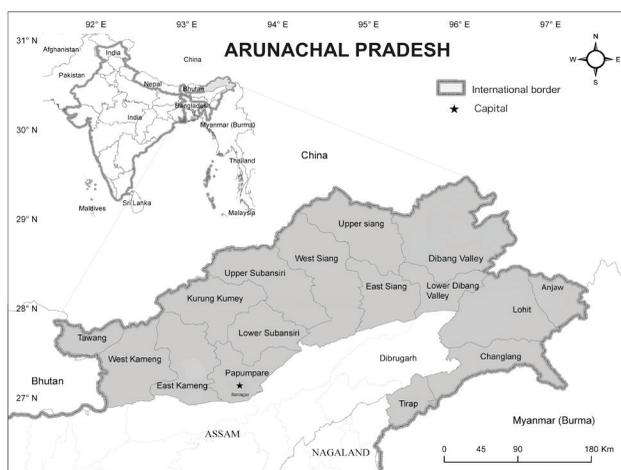


Figure 1. Arunachal Pradesh. AIYADURAI 2012.

Mishmi	Sites	Country	Population*(approx.)
Idu	Dibang valley and Lower Dibang valley	India	12,000
Miju	Lohit and Anjaw	India	----
Digaru	Lohit and Anjaw	India	----
Deng	Zayul valley	South Tibet (China)	1300

TABLE 1: Details of the four sub-groups of the Mishmi. There is no tribe-specific population data available for Miju and Digaru. It is estimated that the Mishmi population in India, including all three districts, is 50,000 (KRI 2008). According to the census of 2001, there were 9,076 Idu Mishmis and in the census 2011, their population rose to 12,000. Source: SARMA 2015.

nizes each other as belonging to one major “tribe” of Mishmi, according to those residing on the Indian side of the border. Each sub-group has several clans that are known to live along the rivers and tributaries streaming through the area. The Mishmi see themselves as a separate ethnic group from their neighbors, the Adi, who belong to the Tani group (SARKAR 1987). The Tani group consists of the Adi, Nyishi, Apatani, Tagin, and Hill Miri tribes of Arunachal, all of whom have a common ancestor, Abotani, the primal ancestor of these “tribes.” Each sub-group of the Mishmi, on the other hand, have their own primal ancestors (Nani Initaya for Idu, Amik Matai for Mijus, and Jamalo for Digarus).

According to a senior Mishmi informant of ours, all Idu, Miju, Digaru, and Deng are different “tribes,” whereas another Mishmi scholar, who did his PhD among the Idu Mishmi, claims that the groups are “sub-tribes.” In the archives, however, Mishmi are reported to be divided into “clans” without any specific reasons for labeling them as such (MITCHELL 1883). The Mishmi themselves, however, recognize separate apical ancestors, hence the term “clan” does not seem appropriate. The Idus and Digarus have language similarities (SARMA 2015), but socio-culturally the Digarus have more affinity with the Miju and Deng Mishmis. All the Mishmi are believed to have migrated from Burma following the course of the Lohit river (BHATTACHARJEE 1983). But there are different claims about their migration routes, for according to BARUAH (1988), the Idu Mishmi migrated from Tibet. HUBER (2012) discusses the complexity of understanding the origins and migration in the region, especially in the case of the northern Subansiri hill peoples. AISHER (2012) makes similar points about Nyishi migratory routes. BLACKBURN (2005) has written briefly about Mishmi migration history through the lens of the funeral ritual and how the journey of the soul is perceived to be through the migratory route of the Mishmi.

The ambiguous nature of the border decides identity and legality, depending on which side of the border one is present and active. People’s movements across the border were common in the past, with traders bringing stories from China stating

that people there had a better living standard, higher education, and more prosperous material conditions than in India. This compelled Indian Mishmi to visit China. When the Indian administration made its presence in the Dibang Valley, the Mishmi men and women who returned from China were looked upon with suspicion. The border thus became a space that defined “patriots” and “traitors,” having an extreme effect on the lives of those Mishmi who had crossed from one side to the other.

GEOPOLITICAL SIGNIFICANCE

The region of Arunachal under investigation here is strategically important for both China and India (see FIGURE 1). There is a large amount of information on issues to do with security and political debates (VERTZBERGER 1982; BASU and MIROSHNIK 2012), but anthropological and sociological research on the local communities living on the borders is lacking. It was only after the war in 1962, when India began building infrastructure in northeast India, that the region entered a new nationalist discourse aimed at the “nationalization of the frontiers” (BARUAH 2003). This process has made so-called tribal regions, such as northeast India, financially dependent on the central government. Since then, there have been tremendous demographic and socio-cultural changes with “significant social, environmental, and political costs” (ibid., 917). However, the development of Arunachal has been shaped by a concern for national security. This is why BARUAH (2003) has argued that it is only in the cosmetic sense that Arunachal has witnessed development.

The rise of China and its increasing significance in the world is of great interest to scholars and policy makers the world over. But the question of its rise in terms of its immediate neighbors, borderlands, and rapid development shapes how the impacted local communities react in terms of their everyday lives, for living conditions along the frontiers are rapidly changing (SAXER and ZHANG 2016). Across the border, western China has invested huge funds to develop these frontiers. China is increasingly engaging with and controlling border disputes by strengthening its defence and border security (SHARMA 2014). There have been discussions about developing the border regions for mutual benefits, but China has prevented a multilateral development loan in Arunachal.⁴ China even raised a concern over the use of the name “Arunachal,” as it signified belonging to India, and insisted that the toponym be removed from the policy document. This action was taken because China claims the entire state of Arunachal as its own. China opposes the idea of any further infrastructure development on the border, seeing it as a threat to its own autonomy (ANON. 2014). In addition to that, China has been openly expressing disappointment with Japan because it was assisting India with infrastructure development in Arunachal. Japan’s statement that Arunachal belongs to India was a source of friction between India and China as recently as 2015 (REUTERS 2015).

India is investing in military power and development in the northeast region, which was neglected for years. The state-building projects have intensified in the

last decade, and the government continues to expand its infrastructure and military facilities in Arunachal. The government of India plans to build a 2,000 kilometer all-weather road along the border with China (KUMAR 2014). Arunachal's first passenger railway service was started in 2014 (SINGH 2014) and a special Mountain Strike Corps was set up along the border by the Indian Army (PANDIT 2014). To fortify defences along the China border, fifty-four new Indo-Tibetan Border Police posts are being planned in Arunachal (TIMES OF INDIA 2014). The region is also currently witnessing the construction of several hydro-electric projects (DUTTA 2008). One of them is the 3000 MW Dibang Multipurpose Project, which in 2014 got clearance from the Ministry of Environment and Forests, Government of India. To raise the socioeconomic profile of the region, funds for northeast India during the eleventh five year plan (2007–2011) were 122,086 crore, which amounts to roughly 9 billion US dollars (KURIAN 2014). Other than military and infrastructural development in the region, ideas of development are reflected through the creation of national parks and biosphere reserves within the framework of “green development” and “ecological modernization” (MCAFFEE 1999; YEH 2009, 2012). Rural people in the region often see such biodiversity conservation schemes as new forms of “development” with economic consequences. While local people welcome these developmental activities, environmental activists, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and civil groups within and outside Arunachal are concerned about the unplanned development in this geo-politically, ecologically, and culturally sensitive region (BHAUMIK 2009; RAHMAN 2014).

Recent publications have been produced by the Mishmi themselves (KRI 2008; MENE 2011, 2013). In addition, there are several articles on Mishmi culture, language, and customs published within India by both the Mishmi themselves (PULU 1977; PULU 1982; DEURI 1983; LINGI 2011; RONDO 2011) as well as other scholars in India.⁵

FROM THE CHINESE SIDE

The Chinese name for Arunachal is “Afunaqiaerbang,” which is simply the transliteration of “Arunachal” (or *zangnan diqu*) into Chinese, the region of south Tibet (see ARPI 2013; MAPS OF INDIA n.d.). The group of Mishmi in southern Tibet is called Deng, which is one of the fifty-seven minority groups officially recognized by the government of the People's Republic of China (LI 2008).

The Deng are known by other names as well: Dengba, Darang, Geman, Kaman, Mishmi, or Miju.⁶ They live mainly in the southeast part of the Tibetan Autonomous Region in the county of Zayu, especially in the forested areas of the Hengduan Mountains at an elevation of 1,000 meters. According to LANG and QIANGBA (2000), Deng people live on the border of southeast Tibet and Myanmar (for a similar case of minorities living across national borders, see TAPP 2002). The Deng are known to be divided into at least two groups: Darang and Geman. These are related to the Miju sub-group living in the Arunachal province in India. Fei Xiaotong, one of the founders of early Chinese anthropology and sociology in China, states that the official status of the Tibetans of Pingwu County in Sichuan

Province and the Dengs of Zayu is not yet “established” (FEI 1980). The Deng, as the Mishmi, speak a language derived from the Tibeto-Burman language family.⁷ From the limited image resources available on the Internet, the material culture of the Deng looks very similar to that of the Digaru and Miju Mishmi. During the first author’s research in the border villages of Chaglagam and Taflagam in the Anjaw district during a 2006–08 field trip, the Mishmi there often talked about their relatives on the other side of the border.

THE BRITISH AND THE MISHMI: IMAGINING AND SHAPING PEOPLE AND TERRITORY

Arunachal was never brought under any formal administrative control by the British government during British rule.⁸ Arunachal, earlier known as the North East Frontier Agency (NEFA), was administered as part of Assam during the British period. A policy of minimal interference was adopted by the British, which Guha has termed “shadowy suzerainty” (GUHA 1999). The British did not interfere too much for the fear of provoking violent rebellion, but later made visits to the Mishmi Hills for mapping and surveying. They also engaged in punitive expeditions. The British saw these border regions as promising territory for trade (i.e., tea, timber, and ivory) and thereby focused mainly on maintaining law and order to maximize the economic gains, while gaining control of this resource-rich land.

There was constant friction between the hill people of Arunachal and the so-called “civilized” valley dwellers of Assam. People in Assam paid tolls to the hill people for collection of wood or any other forest product. Mishmis (Miju) even collected tolls from Hindu pilgrims who visited the Parasuram Kund in Anjaw district. Raiding by the Mishmi prompted the British to set up an armed outpost to keep a check on the movements of the hill people.

In 1873, the British enacted a regulation known as the Inner Line Regulation of 1873, which prohibited anyone who was residing in Assam, or passing through the districts of Assam, from going beyond this line without a pass. The pass constituted a written permission from the designated authorities. The intention of the Inner Line Permit (or Pass) (ILP) was to stop poachers, moneylenders, woodcutters, traders, and missionaries in the valleys from exploiting the hill people. Arunachal continues to be a restricted area and even today an official permit is required to enter the state for all visitors except the native people of Arunachal. The ILP has been an impediment to the economic development of Arunachal state ever since. It still continues to be a contentious issue there. The first ever railway service, as mentioned above, opened in 2014, but was suspended due to huge protests by the Arunachal Pradesh Student’s Union because of a fear of mass entry of non-native Arunachal people flooding in from outside the state (GAO 2015).

British relations with the Mishmi and other hill peoples were guided by a payment system called *posa* (blackmail money).⁹ For efficiency of administration, the British created the special post of “political officer.” These political officers were required to be intelligent in their instinct, quick in their sympathies, and have the ability to learn vernacular languages (BOSE 1979, 175). In a couple of years,

these officers managed to assert some influence on the frontier people and opened friendly communication to start commerce (BOSE 1979; KINGDON-WARD 1927). The British policy with regards to the hill people was, as stated earlier, generally of non-interference—unless of course there were attacks on British subjects, violations of the “inner line,” or danger to the people in the foothills and Assam. But later, the British changed their approach and entered the inner line on several occasions to survey, map, and even punish the hill tribes for various “unlawful” incidents.

For the British, Assam and the adjoining hills, including the Mishmi Hills, were important for expanding trade as well as for promoting their commercial interests (BHATTACHARJEE 2002). The British carried this policy out by exerting control over the frontier people. They needed to conquer and subdue the inhabitants to further their economic interests by, for example, planting tea in Assam (BARAL 2009). Defining the frontier was thus a key step toward identifying and classifying the people who were to become British subjects (ROBB 1997). Maintaining peace in the region was crucial for the promotion of trade, as there were conflicts not only between the hill tribes but also between the Mishmi and the Tibetan ethnic groups over incursions into the territory. Hunting issues also continued to be a constant point of tension and negotiation. Stopping feuds between these groups was therefore a major challenge for the British. One of the ambitious ideas the colonialists came up with was to establish a rail link from Sadiya to Batang in Sichuan, China through the Mishmi Hills, but this never materialized due to the fear that such a rail link would facilitate the entry of Chinese troops into Indian territory (BOSE 1979). During that time, the British controlled territory up to Zayul Chu,¹⁰ a Chinese outpost near Rima. At the local level, however, there was trade between the Mishmi Hills, China, and Burma using the historic trade routes.

Another strategic reason to manage a frontier area was that the British were concerned that if they did not take interest in this region, the Mishmi people would end up becoming “Chinese” subjects. To win over the local native people, governmental representatives carried with them tea and cigarettes as “political presents” (ROUTLEDGE 1945). F. P. Mainprice, the Assistant Political Officer of Lohit Valley in 1945, had a long list of political presents that included iron and steel for making *daos* (machetes), black thread for making coats, salt, tea, rum, cigarettes, and opium (MAINPRICE 1945). Tobacco leaves for Tibetan coolies and wristwatches, safety razors, torches, soap, and towels were gifts for Tibetan officials in Rima. Even guns were presented to local village headmen, if they cooperated with the British. In 1909, Noel Williamson, the Assistant Political Officer of the time presented six Mishmi (Miju) men each with Double Barrel Machine Loading (DBML) guns for assisting him in his journey in 1907–08 (WILLIAMSON 1910). Headmen who cooperated with the British and those who checked existing feuds were presented with red coats (ROUTLEDGE 1945).¹¹

These political officers had multiple duties, for they were not only administrators and surveyors but also naturalists and anthropologists (see TABLE 2). Acquiring knowledge about people and places was an integral part of the colonial enterprise, as MONAHAN (1899) puts it in his letter to the Foreign Department Secretary of the Government of India.¹² In the letter he writes the following:

Year	Visitors/events	Remarks
1825	Lt. Burlton	The Mishmis were first mentioned by Lt. Burlton (British officer). He explored the upper course of the Brahmaputra.
1826	Lt. Richard Wilcox	Visited the Mishmi country and carried out a number of surveys in Assam.
1836	Dr. William Griffith	A British botanist travelled up to the Lohit river to explore the natural history of the area.
1848	Permanund Acharya	Murdered in the Mishmi Hills when he travelled to Tibet from Assam.
1873	T. T. Cooper	British explored routes for tea trade.
1854	Father Krick and Bourry	French Missionaries murdered in the Mishmi Hills.
1885	J. F. Needham	Visited Mishmi Hills and nearly reached Rima.
1911–12	Mishmi Mission	Punitive mission by Major. Dundas (British Officer).
1945	B. H. Routledge	British Political Officer posted in the Mishmi Hills.
1950	Anini outpost	Indian government set up an outpost in Anini. First ever office to be set up by Indian government.
1980	Rajiv Gandhi's visit	First and the only Prime Minister to visit Anini.
1980	Lohit to Dibang district	Dibang district carved out of Lohit district. Anini became the headquarters.
1983	Road construction	First metalled road constructed up to Anini.
1998	Dibang Wildlife Sanctuary	4,914 km ² of district set up for wildlife conservation.
2001	Dibang district	Dibang district was divided into two (Dibang district and lower Dibang district with Roing as its headquarters).
2013–14	Military	Establishment of Indian Army battalion. ITBP has been present in Anini for a long time.
2013–14	Wildlife conservation	Dibang Tiger Reserve (proposal stage)

TABLE 2. Key visitors and events in the Mishmi Hills (1825–2014)

...acquiring as far as possible, an accurate knowledge of the country and of the haunts and habits of the people, and, of impressing definitely on these savage marauders that they cannot raid on our frontier, or murder, rob, and carry off unoffending British subjects with impunity (MONAHAN 1899, 1).

Acquiring knowledge about the residents and landscape was not the only aim in reaching out to these frontier people, since the idea was to gain control over locals. For example, the murder of Noel Williamson (a political officer) and Dr Gregorson (a tea planter and doctor) changed the approach of the British from non-interference to direct confrontation. There were several incidents during which British troops extracted fines, arrested “criminals,” and even destroyed Mishmi villages. An expedition was carried out in 1853 when two French Missionaries, Fathers Nicolas Michael Krick and Augustine Etienne Bourry, were killed

by a Mishmi headman named Kaisha in Anjaw district (HERIOT 1979). Kaisha was later arrested and hanged in Dibrugarh. One of the best-known expeditions into the Mishmi Hills in 1911 was “the Mishmi Mission” led by W. C. M. Dundas, the Chief Political Officer, to subdue and settle three groups: the Abors (Adis), Mishmis, and Miris. The Mission was undertaken particularly to punish those who had murdered British officials. The military strength of this mission was 750 troops, made up of 350 Naga Hills military police, 150 Dacca military police, 200 sappers,¹³ as well as 1,200 Naga coolies who acted as porters (HAMILTON 1912).

In addition to trade and maintaining law and order, the earlier European visitors were intrigued by the magnificent landscape and fascinating wildlife. Some of the junior officers, like Ronald Kaulback, a British explorer and geographer, wrote several letters to Francis Kingdon-Ward, the well-known British botanist and explorer, asking his advice and suggesting that he visit this region. Kaulback later took the position of an assistant for Kingdon-Ward’s botanical survey (KAULBACK 1935). Kingdon-Ward visited the region, and came to be known as the last of “the greatest plant hunters” (LYTE 1989). William Griffith, a British doctor and naturalist-cum-botanist, travelled up the Lohit river to explore the natural history of the area.

Writings by these visitors created an image of “untouched” hills waiting to be explored. These explorers saw the frontier Himalayas as a natural laboratory for documenting plants, insects, mammals, and birds. On the one hand their writings exposed the natural heritage of the region, the majestic mountains, rivers, and waterfalls, while on the other hand they also wrote about the hill people, their behavior, cultures, and customs. They wrote of the region’s people as “dangerous” and “barbaric.” Such negative descriptions stand in contrast with the mesmerizing beauty and magic of the landscape. The British perceived the Mishmi as dangerous, dirty, unfriendly, and wild. The views of earlier visitors toward them were equally negative, not at all sympathetic toward understanding the locals. The Mishmi, in 1882, were seen as “untouched by any civilizing influences” (WALLER 1990), and the description of all the so-called natives “as less than human and abominable” was a common characteristic of colonial ethnographies written about northeastern India (BARAL 2009).

The Mishmi controlled the trade routes in the area between Tibet and Assam. They regularly refused the entry of outsiders into their territory and were thus labelled as a “ferocious tribe” (STEWART 2006, 79). The Mishmi country was regularly reported to be dangerous, and because it was not properly explored until the early twentieth century, it was seen as “a place not for an outsider.” Some reports about the Mishmi held that they were a friendly yet uncultured race from the point of view from the British. For example, the British intelligence officer F. M. Bailey’s account, noted that the “Mishmi were whole friendly but a very ill-mannered race, troublesome and unpleasant” (BAILEY 1945; KINGDON-WARD 1927, 287). According to KINGDON-WARD (1913, 1), “...though they would not ordinarily murder an intruder, they would willingly leave him stranded without food and porter.”

HAMILTON¹⁴ (1912) observed that the tribesmen were of uncertain temperament and frequently at war among themselves. After 1826, intense fighting among Mishmi factions prevented the entry of visitors from outside the region for

approximately five years (HAMILTON 1912). T. T. Cooper reported that the Mishmi (Idu) were “war-like and predatory,” and that at one time they were such trouble that they were forbidden to visit Sadiya (COOPER 1873, 180–81). The Mishmi in Lohit Valley were reported to be “uncooperative with each other and with strangers,” and they were disliked and not trusted (MILLS 1952). COOPER (1873, 189) again writes the following about Mishmi houses:¹⁵

The interiors of the Mishmee houses more resemble a cowshed than human habitation, while from the outside they might be mistaken for fowl house. The most striking feature of the interior is the number of skulls of mithuns, bullocks, buffaloes, tigers, bears, deer, monkeys, and takin.

In spite of the skewed representations by visitors, writings by Europeans left behind a rich source of archival information about the material culture and lives of the Mishmi. For example, J. P. Mills, administrator-cum-anthropologist, gave a detailed account of the Mishmi of the Lohit Valley (MILLS 1952). But one has to be careful when reading what the Europeans wrote about the Mishmi, given the prejudice and unequal power relationships between the colonial administration and the local Mishmi. ELWIN (1959), who was known for his relentless defense of India’s indigenous people, was probably one of the few scholars who had positive views about the Mishmi as being friendly, colorful, and beautiful. He was surprised by the negative views of previous visitors, writing in his autobiography that they seem to have something wrong with their eyesight:

...all the previous travellers had stressed how “difficult” the Mishmis were and how unpleasant and unattractive. I can only say I fell in love with them at once. Our first village was inhabited by Digaru Mishmis and the men wore their hair tied in a knot on the top of the head and the women has theirs in a fantastic piled up style which would attract admiring attention anywhere. (ELWIN 1964, 274)

The diaries written by missionaries and anthropologists provided data about the native people’s way of life for effective local administration. In the absence of any text prior to the British period, one is dependent on colonial ethnography, but one should be critical of how these texts were produced and for what purposes. Mishmi people were often seen as “backward,” “uncivilized,” and “primitive” by the British. Similar terms were used to describe several groups in India by the colonial state. The term “tribe” emerged as a distinct category in colonial times, which continues to be used today by bureaucrats, scholars, and even by the Mishmi themselves. Among the Mishmi, like other groups in northeast India, the term is internalized and used in identity discourses as a source of pride (McDUIE-RA 2012).

THE STORY OF YAAKU TACHO AND THE HUNTERS ON THE BORDER

The first author interviewed¹⁶ a Mishmi government official posted in Khonsa (Tirap district) whose parents lived in China for nine years in the 1950s. This is the story of her mother Yaaku, who had free school education in China and was then later employed by Chinese officials. Her daughter told the first author that Yaaku probably worked as a spy for the Chinese government. She and her husband went

to China with a small group of people from Dibang Valley. Most of the Mishmi people who went to China received education for eight to nine years. They saw the Chinese as very kind and believed that communists are nice people. They spoke of the Chinese army as being good. Yaaku's daughter remembered what her parents told her about the time they reached China:

When we reached, we were welcomed. It was very nice. We were taught patriotism for China. We were told that China is the best. Boys and girls were kept in separate hostels. We were kept in a military school. We were always trained by military officers and we received weapons training.

Yaaku's diary also reflects that Mishmi were well treated and taken care of by the Chinese. They were influenced by the Chinese propaganda of India as their enemy and China as their good friend. Along with education, Mishmi received weapons training. Some of the Mishmi even participated in the 1962 Sino-Indian war and fought against India. Based on Yaaku's writings, it seems that the Chinese Liberation Army aimed to liberate the Mishmi from India.

Uncles—the Liberation Army on the border is defending our motherland, please liberate Luoda region! ...I am one of China's sons and daughters.

The meaning of “motherland” (*zuguo* 祖国) in her diary refers to China and not India. Thus, the Mishmi people were considered to be part of the territory of China. This feeling is reflected in Yaaku's diary (see FIGURE 2 and translation below). This certificate (see FIGURE 3) of “ethnic harmony” was issued by the Government of China in December 1960 to Yaaku Tacho. The certificate has a picture of Mao Zedong on the top with the flag of China on either side with an official seal. The text in the certificate reads:

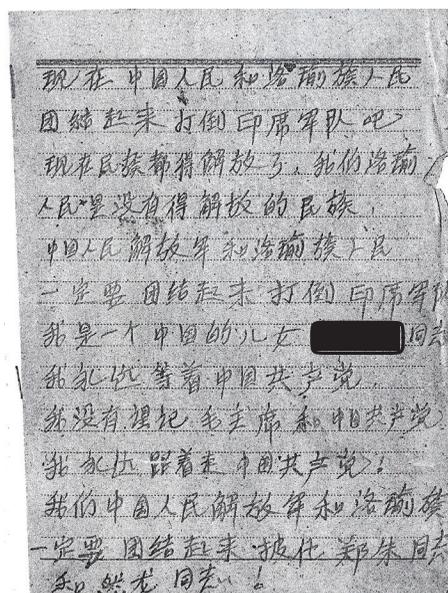
This is to certify that Yaaku Tacho (student from Aidabo village, district..., Luo Yu ethnic group¹⁷ (20 years old) has graduated from the Mandarin class four in Department two.

The war broke out in 1962, and Yaaku's husband and brother-in-law¹⁸ fought with China in Kibithoo against India. After the war, the Indian officials on the border arrested them, imprisoned them, and reportedly tortured them for several days. The story of their escape from Tezpur prison is popular in the Dibang Valley even now. Even after returning to their respective villages, the intelligence officials in India continued to monitor their activities to check if they continued to have links with China. They were suspected of being Chinese citizens and spies.

现在中国人民和洛瑜族人民团结起来打倒印度军队吧。现在民族都得解放了，我们洛瑜人民是没有得解放的民族，中国人民解放军和洛瑜族人民一定要团结起来打到印度军人。我是一个中国儿女_____同志。我永远等着中国共产党，我没有望（忘）记毛主席和中国共产党，我永远跟着走中国共产党！

Text and Translation of Yaaku's diary
(Original in Chinese)
(Chinese Pinyin by the second author)

FIGURE 2: Yaaku's diary. This was provided Mishimbu Miri, whom the first author met during fieldwork on 29 April 2014.



Xianzai Zhongguo renmin he Luoyuzu renmin tuanjie qilai dadao Yindu jundui ba. Xianzai minzu de jiefang le, women Luoyu renmin shi meiyou jiefang de minzu, Zhongguo renmin jiefangjun he Luoyuzu renmin yiding yao tuanjie qilai dadao Yindu junren. Wo shi yi ge Zhongguo ernv _____ tongzhu. Wo yongyuan dengzhe Zhongguo gongchandang, wo meiyou wang (wang)ji Mao zhuxi he Zhongguo gongchandang, wo yongyuan gen zhe zou Zhongguo gongchandang!

Let us Chinese and Mishmi peoples, unite and overthrow Indian army. Now all the other minorities have liberated, but we Mishmi have yet to be liberated. The Chinese Liberation Army and the Mishmi people should unite to overthrow Indian army. I am one of China's sons and daughters. Yakku comrade [referring to herself] will wait for the Chinese Communist Party forever. I will never forget Chairman Mao and the Chinese Communist Party. I will always follow the Chinese Communist Party.

These stories evoke the ambiguities of border spaces that have witnessed years of isolation, followed by independence and the creation of a nation state which made people like Yaaku Tacho and others who went to China at that point of time “for all practical purposes, both Indian and Chinese nationality” (BARUAH 2003). For the security forces, such ambiguities of identities and geographic spaces are seen as dangerous, and therefore nationalizing such spaces becomes urgent and crucial for the government. Although the government shifted its focus to the frontier region only after the war, the ambiguities of the border regions continue to become suspect, as reflected in the tales hunters tell. Mishmi men who visit the borders frequently for hunting musk deer bring back current stories of China or about the people in China. The commonly heard narrative from hunters is,

FIGURE 3: Certificate of “ethnic harmony” issued by the Government of China



“If we don’t go to hunt, the Chinese will end up at our doorsteps. Our going to the borders is a way to check on the Chinese intruders.” Mishmi hunters claim that they are protecting not only the nation’s boundary but also protecting wildlife from Chinese hunters. “Chinese¹⁹ hunt everything, they come with AK-47s and advanced weapons, they don’t spare any animal or bird,” the hunters asserted, citing examples of how Mishmi follow taboos so they do not hunt every animal that comes their way but the Chinese hunt indiscriminately. The reliance of the Indian military and paramilitary on Mishmi knowledge gives the hunters a sense of importance, so they take pride in this. Similarly, Mishmi knowledge of the wildlife and the trails up in the mountains make wildlife researchers completely dependent on the Mishmi.

After the war, the borders were militarized and army bases were set up at Walong and Kibithoo, which were key sites during the war. Dibang Valley has had the Assam Rifles²⁰ and Indo-Tibetan Border Police since the 1950s. The Indian Army is currently taking over the border patrols. The Dibang Valley is witnessing a rise in military activities as the Government of India is investing in military infrastructure there. A new settlement close to Anini has army offices and quarters. Though there is limited interaction between the Army and the local people, during the Long Range Patrols (LRPs)²¹ Mishmi men are hired as guides and also as porters. Two to three trips lasting 14–15 days are carried out every year during the summer close to the international borders. Other than the Long Range Patrols, men of

the Special Information Bureau (SIB) and Special Branch (SB) visit the borders. They often work in close collaboration with the Mishmi men who work as porters and informers. Hunters and the local villagers are also often hired by the Indian military agencies for intelligence gathering. These are all welcome activities for the local Mishmi people, who make substantial amounts of money in a short period of time. Thus they look forward to these activities every summer. In the early nineteenth century, spies known as “pundits” were sent by the British to these borders (STEWART 2006). In the 1880s, for example, one of the famous pundits was A. K., whose real name was Kishen Singh. He visited Tibet and came in contact with Mishmi people. These frontier regions continue to be explored by modern spies (intelligence officers) who work for the Indian government. The first author met a Mishmi man in 2008 in Chaglagam (Anjaw district) who was hired by the Special Branch to plant hidden video cameras on the Sino-Indian border. She asked him, “Don’t you feel scared, it’s a risky job. What if the Chinese catch you?” He proudly answered, “There are Mishmis on the other side so they don’t harm us because we also look like Chinese.” He jokingly pointed out to me that, “If you go you will be shot,” and laughed out loud, and continued, “for that matter any educated-looking person will not be spared.”

The stories of Yaaku and the current hunters are from different periods and relate to the border differently. Yaaku’s trips across the borders were facilitated by Tibetans to help her group meet the Chinese officials, who provided them access to education, trade, and jobs. Fifty years later, however, movement through the border regions is restricted to just hunting and surveillance. It was only after the establishment of the Anini in Dibang Valley outpost in 1950 that the restriction on people’s movement was implemented. Similar to Yaaku’s story, these men who visit the borders bring back stories of better infrastructure and talk about how advanced Chinese villages are. The roads are good, they have concrete houses, and vehicles are able to reach the border on the Chinese side.

The China-related topics are never-ending during discussions in the Dibang Valley, since the Chinese army is known to show aggression every now and then on the Arunachal border. Recently, Chinese troops reportedly crossed over the border and occupied territory twenty kilometers inside Anjaw district for nearly four days (TNN 2013). National media in India highlighted this incident that evoked public nationalist sentiments, but for the local people it is not new, as incursions have been known to happen frequently. Border problems in Arunachal continue to cause issues between the two countries. During the recent trip of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to China, the state-owned Chinese Central Television (CCTV) showed India’s map without Jammu and Kashmir and Arunachal (SHARMA 2015). This made the social media and general public agitated in India and started debates over India-China relations. Such “cartographic aggression”²² can be equated with military aggression when troops from China entered Jammu and Kashmir during Chinese President Xi Jinping’s visit to India in 2014. A year earlier, in 2013, during the earlier part of the first author’s field work, two young archers were not allowed to go to the Youth World Archery Championship in Wuxi (China) because they were issued stapled visas, which is not an official visa form (DIKSHIT 2013). The

reason for this action was that China does not recognize Arunachal as part of India, so it did not issue standard visas; instead, they provided stapled visas that were unacceptable. One of the archers was Maselo Mihu, a girl from Kongo village where the first author was based during her fieldwork (AIYADURAI 2016). This incident was often brought up by the villagers to make a point that the Indian government is not treating people from Arunachal fairly and that the people of Arunachal are caught up in the politics between India and China.

BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION ON THE BORDER

In addition to road building and the militarization of the borders, there is a tremendous increase in scientific activities that shapes the border for wildlife conservation on the Indian side. There are large protected areas along the Sino-Indian border that were created in the last couple of decades. In Tawang, the Tsangyang Gyatso World Peace Park was announced in 2004, with the intention to set aside 2,000 km² for setting up a biosphere reserve, on the recommendation of a conservation NGO (MISHRA, MADHUSUDAN, and DATTA 2006). The creation of protected areas has often been in response to international concern and because of influential NGOs in the region. The Government of India responds to such concerns and has turned over its borderlands for biodiversity conservation. Conservation is, arguably, one of the ways to keep the territory free of human occupation, while at the same time taking such actions will win India favor on the international stage. Through such initiatives, we would argue that India is trying to represent itself as environmentally concerned in contrast to China, which often gets bad press for being environmentally reckless and destructive.

The Dihang-Dibang Biosphere Reserve was created in 1998 and spreads across an area of 5,112 km². In 2012, following the rescue of tiger cubs there, the Dibang Tiger Reserve was proposed, whose northern boundary overlaps with the international border. Half of Dibang Valley district (4,194 km²) is already under state protection in the form of the Dibang Wildlife Sanctuary. The sanctuary was officially established in 1988 (notification no: CWL/D/42/92/744-844; dated 12th March 1988). According to the Mishmis, the sanctuary was created without the people's consent and this has been a point of contestation between the state forest department and the local Mishmi. There is a Forest Range Office with just seven staff and two officers to manage the sanctuary.²³ From 2012 onward, there has been a surge of activities in the name of tiger conservation in the Dibang Valley. Although the Mishmi are unhappy about the wildlife sanctuary, they have concerns about the environment. The anti-dam protests against the Dibang Multipurpose Project from 2007 until 2011 resulted in political mobilization and environmental consciousness among the local Mishmi. In 2008, they blocked a road to prevent entry of National Hydro Power Corporation officials to resist dam-related activities. National and global environmental NGOs and reporters covered this story (ANON. 2008).

Similar to the early nineteenth-century explorers, the current scientific explorers visit these borderlands in search of "new species" of wild animals. These explorations have found meaning in the surge in ecological studies carried out by both

national and international scholars with the support of NGOs, research, and conservation organizations. This has been driven in part by inclusion of the region within the Eastern Himalaya “biodiversity hotspot” (MYERS et al. 2000). A large number of public and civil society organizations are currently engaged in supporting ecological and conservation activities in Arunachal. The Mishmi Hills is emerging as a new site for conservation with the efforts of conservation NGOs to control traditional hunting practices and resource use.

Geographical Information System (GIS), remote sensing technologies, and camera trap technology are being used by scientific experts and state planners to showcase rich biodiversity that often excludes consideration of the human inhabitants in favor of a focus on dense vegetation cover and biological complexity. These new actors from the scientific community seek help from the local Mishmi as porters and guides, because they have deep knowledge of local wildlife and the landscape. Without the local knowledge of the Mishmi, the NGOs and research groups would never be able to carry out their research successfully. Hunters are often sought to record animal presence, bird sightings, and high altitude lakes. Locally known hunters become the key informants for researchers who look for potential sites to fix camera traps and to identify the footprints of animals, while also providing guidance on the most convenient ways hike up the mountainous terrain.

HUNTERS AS “BORDER PROTECTORS”?

The government of India has requested the Arunachal forest department to submit a proposal for a Tiger Reserve (DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT AND FOREST, GOVERNMENT OF ARUNACHAL PRADESH 2014). This initiative is suspected by the local Mishmi to be a mechanism to prevent their access to hunting grounds, but hunters justify their hunting trips as also having a nationalistic purpose. Hunting trips, according to Mishmi hunters, are also a way to keep a check on Chinese intrusions into the Indian territory, as was suggested earlier in this article. The proposal of a tiger reserve challenges both the Mishmi’s claims to preserving wildlife and to protecting the borders. It has added another burden to the local people’s concerns, because there is a possibility of curbing hunting practices and also the possibility that more military presence will be added, making even their movements to the borders difficult. Increased surveillance and increased control over the local population is what the local Mishmi fear most.

What the state considers illegitimate (illicit) could be what people residing in the region see as legitimate (licit). In the case of hunting, what Mishmi hunters are doing is illegal, because they defy the norms and rules of the forest department. But hunting is a socially acceptable, morally right, and culturally justified practice among the Mishmi. They see their actions as licit, especially those that live in the remote villages near the border, who regularly go for musk deer hunting or to protect crops and cattle from predators. One wing of the state (forest department) sees this as illegal while the other (Army, Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP, below), intelligence branches, and research teams) appropriates the very act of hunting to obtain intelligence about the Chinese and gather information about wildlife,

respectively. Frontier areas like the Dibang Valley are like what Tsing calls “interstitial spaces,” made by collaborations among legitimate and illegitimate partners (TSING 2005, 27).

India’s Wildlife Protection Act was passed in 1972 to prohibit hunting of all wildlife without any consideration for people who live and depend on forest resources for their subsistence, especially those in rural areas. The noticeable lack of any cultural sensitivity toward the so-called “tribals” of northeast India made all those local people who hunted wildlife for subsistence, trade, or for cultural reasons, “criminals” and “poachers” overnight. The very people who appear as criminals in the official discourse of the state clearly hold a different point of view of themselves and their current predicament. What the state officials view as illegal may be considered well within the bounds of acceptable behavior by local communities (ABRAHAM and VAN SCHENDEL 2005, 25). The distinction between the legal and illegal revolves around opposed cultural meanings attributed to the activities in question (*ibid.*, 19). The overlapping of political, geographical, ecological, and historical understandings makes the borderlands of the Dibang Valley with China a space where the distinction between illegal and legal becomes blurred.

Depending on what side of the border one is on, “patriots” and “traitors” are defined. State agencies (i.e., forest department and Indian Army) and non-state agencies (e.g., corporations and NGOs) compete for this border space and are appropriating large portions of it. The Mishmi are caught in the middle of disputes between them, so they become partners, collaborators, victims, beneficiaries, or criminals, depending on which agencies need or do not need them at any given point in time. The role of the local Mishmi as informers disguised as hunters is a good example of illicit and licit categories as a contradiction within the state. The state both condones and approves hunting as a way to collect information on Chinese activities on the border. The Mishmi’s knowledge of the area, their facial features, and their language makes it more feasible for them to do this job for the government than the staff of the Army or Intelligence Bureau, whose employees are often from outside the region. They bear very little physical resemblance to the local Mishmi and have limited knowledge of the terrain, which is absolutely essential for survival in the region. The risk is much higher for the state actors themselves undertaking borderland tasks than it is for Mishmi actors, whose “mongoloid” facial features help them get away with “spying.” According to the Union Minister of Home Affairs, Kiren Rijiju (Minister of State), who is from Arunachal, the villagers near the Indo-Tibetan border can be trained to become informers. Rijiju states that “...the government would like to train villagers along the 3,500 km Indo-Tibetan border to provide information about the suspicious activity” (KAUL 2014).

The relationship of the state with the local people can be ambiguous at times. Mishmi’s ethnic identity and their earlier trading links with their kin across the border, sometimes create anxiety among military agencies. The state not only looks at the indigenous population with some doubt but also scrutinizes even the researchers who visit these regions, mostly the lone researcher from outside Arunachal, such as the first author of this article. Another scholar, an ornithologist who is now

a faculty member of the Wildlife Institute of India has surveyed extensively along the borders of Arunachal. He was tracked back to Mysore, where he worked for a NGO at the time, to verify his identity by government officials. An Indian doctoral student registered at University College London also had difficulties when the Indo-Tibetan Border Police²⁴ authorities questioned him about his work on camera traps, which he used to study tigers. He was viewed with deep suspicion, but the officials showed keen interest to know how the cameras work, their cost, how to procure them, and, more importantly, the strategic locations where the devices were placed.

CONCLUSION

After the 1962 war, the Government of India was very concerned about the loyalty of the people residing on the border, for they were seen as an “uncertain factor” in state-citizen relations (SINGH 2010, 68). It was felt then that since the hill people shared ethnic and racial ties with the people across the border, there was every possibility that they might side with their ethnic “neighbors” (SINGH 2010), a concern that the British also had during their period of colonial rule.

Mishmi people take pride in their dual purpose for visiting the borders: for hunting and for patrolling. The former is an illegal activity according to the state, while the latter is seen as very much legal and preferred by the locals as a livelihood option. Since the war, the region has entered into a new nationalist discourse of development as a priority of the state agenda, aimed at the “nationalization of the frontiers,” as the political scientist Sanjib BARUAH puts it (2003). For the local people within and across the border, the agents of the state are both welcome and unwelcome, depending on who they are and what the purpose of their presence is. Although the borders are politically constructed and are drawn arbitrarily on maps created by human agents with various agendas, the situation on the ground for the local people on both sides of the border is different from the perception of borders as lines of separation and territorial control. Local people see the presence of state actors as an opportunity to acquire economic benefits during patrolling and as a controlling mechanism when the forest department bars tourists from entering their sanctuary without written permission.

During tense encounters, the Mishmi stress that they are “residents of India” too, but their very presence on the border also reminds state authorities about their ethnolinguistic linkages with their Chinese brethren across the border. Such encounters will only become more frequent when border regions such as the Dibang Valley become “cosmetically nationalized,” to use BARUAH’s (2003) term, through roads, dam constructions, and the establishment of protected areas. The border residents in question often find different and innovative ways to engage with state actors. Similarly, authorities in each administrative office involved use legal and political apparatuses to find ways to engage and control locals for effective administration on both sides of the Sino-Indian border.

In this article, we investigated how changes in the environment along the borders have affected the Mishmi community as a whole. We engaged changing

Mishmi perceptions of the borderlands within and against the historical perspective of India and China's entangled border history. While the borderlands are constantly under construction by India's development projects that are fueled by changes in China-India relations, the Mishmi living on the border also act as agents engaging in exchange through informal and fluid lived experience. Historians treat borders as a post-colonial phenomenon shaped by cumulative past events, whereas anthropologists define borders "as boundaries that separate social forms, peoples, and regions" (ALVAREZ 1995, 448). The Mishmi are thus, in this dual sense, both historical and anthropological agents.

Since the war between India and China, the borders have been shaped by nation-building exercises and development agendas that are often transnational. With globalization, international boundaries have taken on new geopolitical connotations (NEWMAN 2003). The building of roads indicates a change in Indian military thinking that has so far opposed developing roads near the border, in case the Chinese use them during a conflict for speedy movement inside Indian territory.

What is happening now in the Mishmi hills is quite similar to what happened a century ago: mapping, census taking, and military interests converge to impact upon the local populations. Several political officers from the Assam administration were posted in Sadiya, from where they conducted surveys of the Mishmi hills near the Indo-China border to assess the practicality of road construction, to build frontier posts, and to resolve inter-village disputes and rivalries (GODFREY 1940; WILLIAMS 1944; MAINPRICE 1945; ROUTLEDGE 1945). One of the fears of the British was that Mishmi people might end up becoming Chinese subjects. The British continued mapping the region until the time of India's independence, counting villages and assessing crop production through what they termed "hoe-tax." They even encouraged Mishmi hunters to grow vegetables and fruits (peaches and apples) and become peasants, by offering them seeds and teaching them how to maintain orchards. Agricultural officers were deputed, and new crops like potatoes were also introduced.

The end of British rule brought about a temporary conclusion to expeditions and missionary evangelism, since the northeastern tribal regions were closed off to all foreigners after the independence of India in 1947, at least temporarily. During the early years of the post-independence period, the area was opened only to official research carried out at the Tribal Research Institute, which was commissioned by the first prime minister, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, with the well-known anthropologist Verrier Elwin as its head. The Government of India's tribal studies network in the hills was mainly focused on bringing "development" to the frontier people without disturbing their culture (ELWIN 1959). However, these ideas of protection have changed over time in the post-Nehruvian era of liberalization, for the region is currently witnessing the construction of several hydro-electric and interstate road building projects (GOVERNMENT OF ARUNACHAL PRADESH 2005).

Ideas of development are reflected through the spread of road networks, the construction of dams, and also by the setting up of national parks and biosphere reserves that are presented to the public as "green modernity" progress through the colonization of nature. The surge of ideas relating to conservation and

development in the region is rooted in the detailed but often biased descriptions by colonial missionaries, explorers, pundits, military officials, and botanists, whose resulting images of wildness were constructed through their textual descriptions found in the memoirs and travelogues they wrote and fortuitously left behind for contemporary researchers.

Because of the fieldwork performed by the first author in the valley of Dibang, this article contains more information from the Indian than Chinese side of the border. Ethnic minorities living along and across national borders are essentially challenging to study, due to their sensitive positioning. Doing research on such populations in Arunachal Pradesh, a disputed and restricted area on both sides, is even more difficult. Indeed, China and India impose the highest level of national security on this region. Both nations realize the huge significance of the area and its inhabitants. Researchers therefore face problems having research proposals approved and obtaining permits to carry out the work on site. They also encounter logistical issues, language problems, and find it frustratingly difficult to secure entry permits at the entry points of such sensitive sites along the disputed international borders straddling the Mishmi homelands in China and India. Moreover, there is also a shortage of surviving and accessible secondary resources for consultation.

Both China and India are competing to gain global prominence, but they continue to impose the highest level of security along their national borders. While the focus for both nations is on defense mechanisms, development, and trade links, the lives of the minority societies that live along these borders get marginalized and become somewhat irrelevant. We discussed one such community, the little-known transnational Mishmi. We hope that this research note, based on personal narratives and oral histories and supplemented with archival documents, conveys a sense of Mishmi social history through their stories that are otherwise likely to get lost as this small ethnolinguistic group gets sandwiched tighter and tighter between the two countries both competing for global superpower status, a new “great game” that continues to unfold in the shadow of low media exposure.

NOTES

1. There are several indigenous communities or ethnic minorities who share national borders with China. TAPP (2002) discusses minorities of China who live in Southeast Asia and CHAUDHURI (2013) provides insights into minorities living in India close to the international border with China.

2. We use pseudonyms for informants in order to protect their identities.

3. We are aware of the problematic nature of the term “tribe,” which is why we have put it within quotation marks in this instance of first use. While the term is still used in India, thanks to British anthropological classification, the term is rarely, if ever, used in China, which built its classificatory system on the basis of Soviet anthropology. Instead, the term *minzu* 民族 (ethnic minority) is used for ethnic minority groups. See, for example MULLANEY and ANDERSON (2011) and HARRELL (2002). For the persistence of the concept of tribe in India, however, see BHATTACHARYA and BHATTACHARYA (2003), and for a reflection on the term’s future, see GREGORY (2003).

4. It was 60 million US dollars supplied by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) for watershed development projects (i.e., flood management, water supply, and sanitation) for Arunachal.

5. See also T. K. BARUAH (1988), T. K. BHATTACHARJEE (1983), D. S. NEGI (1996).

6. Their Chinese name is *Dengren* 登人 (Deng people) or *Dengbaren* 登巴人 (Dengba people). They may also be known as “Idu Mishmi (Idu Lhoba),” “Digaru tribe (Taraon, Darang Deng),” or “Miju Mishmi (Kaman Deng).”

7. Because of a lack of information, we cannot definitively confirm whether the Deng speak the same language or dialect as the Mishmi.

8. The British came to Assam during the Anglo-Burmese war of 1824–26, after which Assam came under its rule (BOSE 1979).

9. *Posa* is money or products offered to the hill tribes by the Ahom kings of Assam to prevent them from raiding the villages in the foothills and plains. *Posa* was greatly valued by the hill people. It came in the form of clothes, salt, and iron (SINGH 2009). For every ten houses in the foothills, the hill people were entitled to receive a set of clothes, one *dao* (machete), ten heads of horned cattle, and four *seers* of salt. *Seer* (Farsi *sihr*) is a traditional unit of mass and volume used throughout South Asia in the past. In India, the Standards of Weights and Measures Act (No. 89 of 1956, amended in 1960 and 1964) set it at 1.25 kg. However, it varies from state to state in India, existing in “old” and “new” forms.

10. Zayu often appears as Zayul Chu.

11. Village headmen were given woolen red coats by the British to signify the authority of the person and to represent the administration in the area concerned.

12. F. J. Monahan was the Secretary to the Chief Commissioner of Assam.

13. Sappers were soldiers who performed a variety of military engineering duties, such as bridge building, laying or clearing minefields, demolition, field defense, and general construction as well as road and airfield construction and repair.

14. A Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society, Angus Hamilton gave an account of the British military expeditions in the Mishmi Hills in 1911–1912.

15. Mishmi was also written as Mishmee in the colonial documents found in Indian and British archives.

16. All interviews were conducted in Hindi and English by the first author. Yaaku wrote her diary in Chinese, and the few pages left from her diary were translated into English by the second author.

17. Indian ethnic groups are known to have different names in China. Luo Yu is most likely one of the names the Chinese use for Mishmi.

18. Sanjib BARUAH (2003) refers to *the Assam Tribune* article which mentions Yaaku’s brother-in-law and the first author met him in Anini in 2013–2014. Sanjib BARUAH (2003) also refers to this Mishmi man.

19. When the Mishmi speak of the Chinese, they could be referring either to the local Chinese, Tibetan hunters, or the Chinese Army.

20. This is one of India’s paramilitary troops.

21. The Indian Army and the Indo-Tibetan Border Police jointly undertake border patrol duty, including Long Range Patrols, to get a sense of the international border’s dynamics as well as to check on China’s activities.

22. This expression is widely used by geographers. Cartographic aggression is a term by which a country describes any act by a neighboring country that shows part of its geographic area as its own territory. It is often used in the case of maps.

23. The Mehao Wildlife Sanctuary staff is responsible for manning this site. As such, there are no regular staff members residing within the Dibang Wildlife Sanctuary, according to the Management Plan of Dibang Wildlife Sanctuary (2010–2011 to 2014–2015).

24. The Indo-Tibetan Border Police force was created in 1962 in the wake of Sino-Indian war earlier that year. The force is deployed along the India’s border with the Tibet Autonomous Region.

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