



### **The Bengal Borderland** Beyond State and Nation in South Asia *Willem van Schendel*

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#### **Description**

**Challenges existing assumptions about the nature of relationships between people, place, identity and culture in South Asia.**

'Drawing extensively on the borderlanders' own voices and experiences, and with many photographs, it paints a wonderfully rich and evocative portrait of more than half a century of Bengal borderlife.... The author has added a border study of enormous significance, and one of which border scholars everywhere should sit up and take note.'  
—*Hastings Donnan, School of History and Anthropology, Queen's University Belfast*

*The Bengal Borderland* constitutes the epicentre of the partition of British India. Yet while the forging of international borders between India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Burma (the 'Bengal Borderland') has been a core theme in Partition studies, these crucial borderlands have, remarkably, been largely ignored by historians. While South Asia is poorly represented in borderland studies, the study of South Asian borderlands appears indispensable because here a major and intensely contested experiment in twentieth-century border making took place. Without direct reference to the borderlands as a historical reality it is not possible to understand how post-colonial societies in South Asia developed, the extent to which South Asian economies actually became bounded by borders, or the ways in which national identities became internalized. In examining this crucial region, Willem van Schendel challenges existing assumptions about the nature of relationships between people, place, identity and culture, and raises particularly urgent questions in the context of globalization, with its predictions of the 'end of geography' and a borderless homogenous world.

**Readership:** Of interest to historians, geographers, political scientists and economists, as well as South Asianists and migration experts, and will appeal to academics, students and practitioners.

#### **Contents**

Figures, Plates, Tables; Abbreviations; Acknowledgements; 1. Studying Borderlands, 2. Partition Studies; 3. Radcliffe's Fateful Line; 4. A Patchwork Border; 5. Security the Territory; 6. Defiance and Accommodation; 7. The Flow of Goods; 8. Narratives of Border Crossing; 9. Migrants, Fences and Deportation; 10. Rebels and Bandits; 11. 'Rifle Raj' and the Killer Border; 12. Nation and Borderland; 13. Conclusion: Beyond State and Nation; Appendix, References, Index

#### **About the Author**

Willem van Schendel is Professor of Modern Asian History at the University of Amsterdam and heads the Asia department of the International Institute of Social History at Amsterdam. Formerly, he held the chair of Comparative History at Erasmus University, Rotterdam.

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