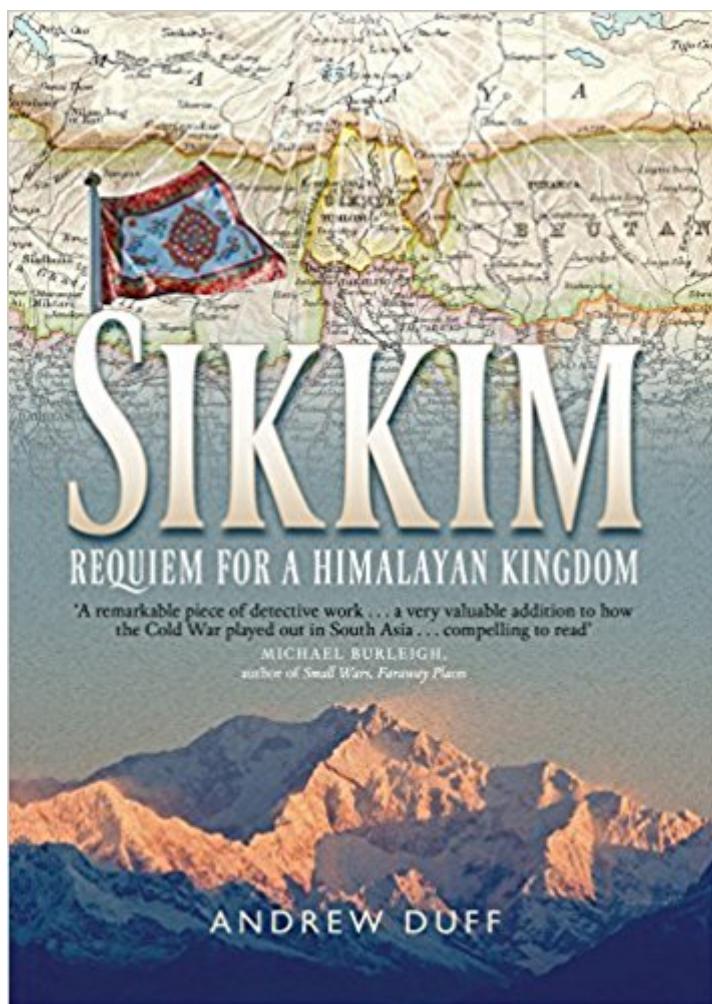


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Sikkim: Requiem For A Himalayan Kingdom



Synopsis

This is the true story of Sikkim, a tiny Buddhist kingdom in the Himalayas that survived the end of the British Empire in India only to be annexed by India in 1975. It tells the remarkable story of Thondup, the last King of Sikkim, and his American wife Hope Cooke, thrust unwittingly into the spotlight as they sought support for Sikkim's independence after their "fairy-tale" wedding in 1963. But as tensions between India and China spilled over into war in the Himalayas, Sikkim became a pawn in the Cold War ideological battle that played out in Asia during the 1960s and 1970s. Rumours circulated that Hope was a CIA spy. Meanwhile a shadowy Scottish adventuress, the Kazini of Chakung, married to Sikkim's leading political figure, coordinated opposition to the Palace. As the geopolitical tectonic plates of the Himalayas ground together, forming the political landscape that exists today, Sikkim never stood a chance. On the eve of declaring Emergency in India, Indira Gandhi brazenly annexed the country. Thondup died a broken man in 1982; Hope returned to New York; Sikkim began a new phase as India's 2nd state. Based on interviews and archive research, as well as a retracing of a journey the author's grandfather made in 1922, this is a thrilling, romantic and informative glimpse of life in Shangri La.

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Customer Reviews

'A masterly and accessible account ... superbly researched, with sources ranging from Scottish missionary teachers' letters to classified US intelligence records and packed full of extraordinary characters straight out of a James Bond novel. The book has great relevance to today's Asia;

anyone with an interest in India and China's complex relationship should read this enthralling book' -- Prajwal Parajuly, author of *The Gurkha's Daughter* 'Those who fantasise about Shangri-La will find this book a fascinating requiem for their dreams' * *Country Life* * 'Andrew Duff masterfully weaves together the many strands of the unfolding drama to produce a gripping page-turner' * *The Hindu* * 'Andrew Duff draws out the remarkable story of Sikkim's annexation and its last king through not just extensive historical research but fascinating human stories' * *DNA India* * 'Clearly the most comprehensive account so far of Sikkim's fall... a masterly skill in story-telling' * *Calcutta Telegraph* * 'An enthralling retelling of the Sikkim tragedy' -- *Pass Blue* * Barbara Crossette * 'Andrew Duff's book is a remarkable piece of detective work. In addition to the fascinating human stories Duff relates, the book is a very valuable addition to how the Cold War played out in South Asia, and to the history of the foreign policies of China, India and the US ... that it is exceptionally well-written makes it all the more compelling to read' - Michael Burleigh, author of *Small Wars, Faraway Places*

Andrew Duff is a freelance journalist based in London and Scotland who writes on India and related subjects. In the UK his work has appeared in *The Times*, *The Financial Times* and the *Sunday Telegraph*, and in India in the *Times of India* and the *India Quarterly*. He travels frequently in India and East Asia.

A terrific read. I have always been fascinated with Sikkim after reading about in the newspaper when I was in grade school. Amazing story and well written.

Sikkim; ever heard of it? You wouldn't be the only one. Yet Sikkim is a hidden treasure, only accessible by winding roads climbing ever higher to the foot of Khangchendzonga, the third highest mountain on earth. Sikkim is remote, certainly, but unlike other remote places -- Antarctica for example -- also a cultural shangri-la of immense natural beauty, where once a Buddhist king married his own American Grace Kelly and delivered the country into ruin. Well, if not ruin, at least into the hands of India; which for the King amounted to the same thing. The story is told by Andrew Duff who was drawn to the country by the simple desire to retrace the steps his grandfather took almost 100 years before. The book started as a search for a trail but quickly became a search for answers: How was it that this independent kingdom came to be Indian? When a small country gets sucked into the games of the Great Powers -- China, Britain, Russia, and India itself -- what cards does it have to play? Was the demonic Khazini of Chakung really a Scot? Was the

King's sister, Princess Coocoola, really the most beautiful woman in the world? The book is full of larger than life characters and their intrigues echo from small court to great world and back again ... and the King sighs and the Queen returns to America and the grip of the world tightens. For all its detail and the research into it is extensive the book reads like a thriller. The writing is effortless and at the end when you put it down you think, yes, that's how it must have been. I am looking forward to Andrew Duff's next forensic examination with great expectation.

An Incredible read. I have recently visited Sikkim and found this book fascinating. A must read!

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