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Content

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Editorial

Scholarly engagement with the politics of borders in regions of the Global South has been wide-ranging. Questions pertaining to cross-border trade, ethnic conflict, circular migration, transnational grassroots activism, border disputes among nation-states – to name but a few – have been interrogated from disciplinary perspectives ranging from history and anthropology, to economics and international relations. Indeed, the sustained nature of this engagement with borders as frontiers of identity, governance and culture, particularly since the 1990s, makes it reasonable to now think of 'border studies' as a multidisciplinary field of research in its own right. Two articles in this July issue of the *Global South SEPHIS e-Magazine* respond to this domain of research by focusing on pre-colonial Menchum and the international boundary between Cameroon and Nigeria, regions that have received comparatively less attention from researchers concerned with border politics.

Protus Mbeum Tem and Hyasinth Amih Nyoh's co-authored piece revisits skirmishes among inter-ethnic groups in pre-colonial Menchum, with the objective of questioning the dominant idea that colonial rule had imposed peace in a region previously plagued by ethnic conflict. Indeed, the authors turn this thesis on its head by demonstrating that a series of activities between ethnic groups along the erstwhile Menchum Division – for instance, cross-border trade, inter-group marriages, and practices of traditional healers – were carried on with mutual respect for different beliefs and customs; until, that is, the artificial categorisation of African communities into administrative units by the colonial apparatus. In an important shift, the authors show that some indigenous cultures of border communities, far from being the sources of communal violence, can actually play a palliative role in situations of ethnic discord.

Henry Kam Kah's essay continues this historical exploration of border politics by inviting attention on the Cross-River region bordering Cameroon and Nigeria during colonial rule. He asks: Why did the creation of borders by German and British rulers not dissuade communities in Cameroon and Nigeria from continuing cross-border interactions? Kam Kah's analysis reveals that for many

African communities, the notion of 'border' did not hold the unambiguous finality imposed by European governance on the region. Communities in the Cross-River area, therefore, adopted a variety of strategies to undermine colonial restrictions on the free movement of people and goods across Cameroon and Nigeria. Taken together, these two essays illustrate how practices of border-making, especially in similar societies, sunder the lives of those who have developed harmonious ways of living with difference. They also describe the strategies of resistance evolved by border communities to countervail such forms of sovereign violence.

If the two pieces on Africa use archival sources to delineate the impact of colonial rule on local cultures, Anurag Mazumdar's essay brings us to the contemporary moment and urges us to contemplate the effects of global capital on a street book market in present-day Kolkata. Using in-depth interviews and participant observation as his methodological tools, Mazumdar probes the neoliberal assumptions underlying the West Bengal government's proposal to relocate an entire street market – one that has shaped reading and literary cultures in the city – to a glitzy book mall. Displacing book-sellers who have mostly operated on the peripheries of the publishing industry, is, according to the author, an effort to create sanitised urban spaces for consumption that are suited to the flows of a global economy. Needless to say, such strategies further marginalise small entrepreneurs. Mazumdar shows that the installation of a book mall on College Street is part of recent urban policies aimed at altering the spatial order of cities in ways that bring the amorphous character of a busy street, bustling with creative cultural exchanges between disparate social groups, within the folds of governmentality.

Pakistan is a nation that continues to occupy a key position in political affairs concerning not simply the Indian subcontinent, but also international politics at large. Unfortunately, the SEPHIS e-magazine has not been able to procure as many articles on and from this region as it would have liked. Aly Ercelan's piece in the current issue of the e-magazine constitutes a small move in filling this lacuna. Demonstrating the close connection between landlessness and malnutrition in rural Sindh, Ercelan argues that governments' agricultural policies crucially shape experiences of food insecurity in low-income households in poor countries. Highlighting the glaring flaws in existing patterns of landownership in rural Pakistan, the essay makes a case for nutrition and food consumption as significant indices of the efficacy of social welfare schemes in developing economies.

For our 'Across the South' section, Paulo Fontes reports on the Second International 'Worlds of Labor' Conference held in Brazil, a few months ago. The largest meeting on labour history in Brazil, the conference saw the participation of more than three hundred researchers from seventeen countries. The conference took fundamental topics in Brazilian labour history as starting points to engage with problems of labour through a broad transnational perspective. The meeting also attempted to innovate within the field of labour history by looking at neglected issues such as literature, sports and rural workers.

The second conference report is by Anne Blackburn and Michael Feener, who review the proceedings of 'Orders and Itineraries: Buddhist, Islamic, and Christian Networks in Southern Asia, 900-1900'. Organised by the Asia Research Institute of the National University of Singapore, the two-day conference was attended by eighteen speakers from regions as diverse as Sri Lanka, the Philippines, Europe, North America, Australia, and Singapore. The papers presented sought to engage, in a comparative perspective, histories of different religious orders in early-modern Southern Asia. A significant area of inquiry that emerged through these discussions is the complex processes which localise religious 'orders' in regional settings.

This issue includes two book reviews. *People at Play: Sport, Culture and*

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Nationalism, a collection of essays by different scholars, attempts to probe the nexus between sporting cultures and nationalism in southern Asia, but leaves the reviewer unsatisfied. Nikhilesh Bhattacharya finds that the book makes many more promises than it keeps, and several essays inadequately grounded in the vast academic literature on nationalism and sports. Taken together, the essays suggest some potentially interesting ways to trace a history of sport in a time of nationalism; however, few, if any, are able to sustain a thorough examination of the theme.

Swathi Shivanand's review of *Unlearning the City* suggests that the book, while it may seem like an anthology of loosely-connected essays, makes a fresh contribution to urban studies by bringing perspectives from visual cultural research to throw light on the urban field. Its value lies also, Shivanand claims, in the new methodology that it offers to researchers for uncovering subaltern cultures practices in Asian cities of the Global South.

We hope you enjoy reading this issue of the e-magazine!

Land for Food Sovereignty in Pakistan

Economic democracy in Pakistan remains weak despite intervals of electoral democracy. So inequitable is the distribution of assets and income that no less than half of the population suffers from malnourishment. Government approaches to social protection mock citizen rights and lack evidence of substantial progress towards universalism. Public action must seriously consider asset redistribution, in which land reforms has to be accorded a significant role. This article examines the implications for the Sindh province where very large inequality in land ownership has resulted in widespread sharecropping by landless tenants, whose income poverty is exacerbated by resulting child labour and debt bondage.
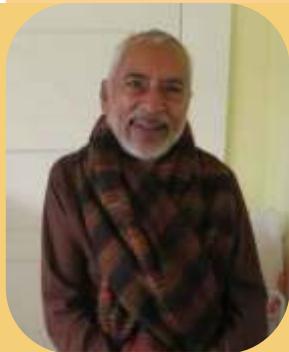
Aly Ercelan

Aly Ercelan is Senior Fellow at the Pakistan Institute of Labour Education & Research (PILER), and remains associated with social movements for peoples rights to land and water through long-standing association with the Pakistan Fisherfolk Forum (PFF) and various networks.

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Introduction

The enormous imbalance in economic and political power leads to intense and widespread oppression of children and their parents not merely in Pakistan but all of South Asia. Deprivation of minimal food and shelter is a form of violence that can be corrected through redistribution of economic power and resources in favour of the needy and unfairly impoverished. Wealth redistribution is essential, which calls for agrarian restructuring as a primary instrument in realising universal rights. Differentiated access to natural resources is nothing but a lethal, even if legal, inequitable future for millions – beginning with land and then spreading to water, and state subsidies.

For millions of landless and near-landless subsisting in rural Pakistan, the ceiling set by Zulfiqar Bhutto at 100 acres per owner is way too high. The current ceiling of sixteen acres is also doubtful, but for a few fortunate landless families. A modest transfer of around one acre per capita can provide the push for food security through cooperative farming, emphasising collective responsibility for ecologically conservationist use of land.

Committed to a decent life for all, members of the ILO have called for serious implementation of a universal social protection floor. This paper should then be seen as invoking urgent public action in South Asia, reaffirming emphasis upon universalising social security through redistribution of farm land and restructured access to fisheries.

The impetus for this paper came from the recent release of a much-delayed Agriculture Census. More dedication in implementing the suggestions is required, than what was done in the past land reforms under (Field Marshall) Ayub Khan and Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto. This article focuses on Sindh.

Food Sovereignty

Several surveys attest to the pervasive impoverishment and subsequent exclusion, in rural Sindh, including the oppression that regularly denies dignity to millions of children, women and men. These findings include province data in the official National Nutrition Survey (e.g. over seventy per cent household suffered from food insecurity with varying degrees of hunger, and over one-fourth of the children under five were found severely stunted). Other dismal indicators are to be found in the Household Integrated Economic Survey (e.g. over forty per cent of workers were in elementary occupations, whose average earnings were well under the already inadequate national minimum wage); Labour Force Survey (e.g. one-third of all wage workers received less than Rs 5,000 a month); Pakistan Social and Living Standards Measurement Survey (e.g. well over one-half the population has never attended any school; net enrollment at matric level was less than twenty per cent even for males).

Reinforcing official reports of mass deprivation are studies done for the Human Development in South Asia report and at the Sustainable Development Policy Institute as well as the Social Policy and Development Centre. Internationally, both UNICEF and IFPRI (in the Global Hunger Index) paint a distressing picture of Pakistan.

With a national annual income of over $ 1,300 per capita, mass impoverishment cannot be defended as resulting only from paucity of resources. Where did the 'aid' go which consumes several billion dollars in annual debt servicing and forces odious indebtedness to the IMF? As a country, Pakistan is estimated to generate a monthly income of around Rs 8,500 per employed person, but rural Sindh is distinctly worse at less than Rs 5,500 earnings from employment in agriculture. The Agriculture
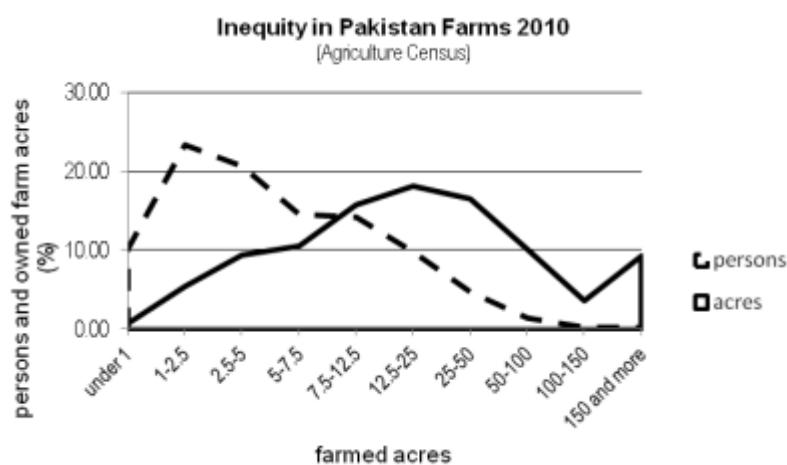
Census observes that every peasant farm in rural Sindh could have nearly ten acres through an equal distribution of the privately owned land nearing 11 million acres.

Wealth Redistribution

State efforts at income redistribution remain quite inadequate, and this is not entirely due to tax-evasion. An obsession with enhancing capacity for mass destruction is among the primary reasons for diversion of huge resources away from needy citizens – an indefensible collusion among all state institutions.

Enquiry by socially committed research (e.g. by UNRISD), shows sharp inequality in returns to assets, which is accompanied by vast differences in assets themselves. Inequitable outcomes are most cruelly illustrated by the presence of widespread hunger and malnutrition, inadequacy and absence of schooling, large number of child labour – all leading to intolerably high risks of morbidity and mortality for children and women.

Inequality is evident in the incapacity of many to meet nutritional standards – much more than one-third of rural Sindh is unlikely to get sufficient nutrition by following average consumption patterns. In a population of nearly 22 million from agricultural households, the Agriculture Census reflects less than a million ownership holdings. Since more than half of the holdings are smaller than five acres, the vast majority of Sindh's population can lay claim to barely more the ten per cent of land. Thus the alarming malnourishment in Sindh comes as little surprise.

Sharp inequality in land ownership in Sindh is blunted through rented land, but barely. Landless tenants plus owner-tenants still cultivate less than seven acres on an average. Sharecroppers are given, at best, half of the produce after sharing and half the cost of purchased implements. No wonder that the average tenant family is hard-pressed to meet its subsistence needs, and cannot help but sink into debt bondage. There is yet to be any progress in reforming tenancy legislation or extending minimum wages to field labour.

Land Reforms

The first step in building a land fund is to tap the 'public surplus', consisting of land acquired in previous land reforms but yet to be transferred to the landless. The commercial use of land in cantonments suggests much additional contribution of public land. Vast areas in flood plains can also be part of the distribution system to the landless rather than being illegally grabbed by those already immensely wealthy. Some estimates suggest publicly held cultivable land of 2.5 million acres across Pakistan.

Redressing historical injustice, landless tenants should have priority entitlement in land redistribution. At an average of 4-5 acres, mostly sharecropped, landless farmers in Sindh now farm over a million acres. Even after requisitioning much (cultivable) public land, it is estimated that sizable land will have to be surrendered by the very large landowners, possessing 100 acres or more. Unfortunately, smaller landowners have to be tapped if large landowners are allowed to retain substantial land in a generous manner.

Owner-tenant farms use nearly half a million acres of rented land. Thousands of very small owner farms (those under five acres) also deserve a decent and secure livelihood, which requires additional owned land. And why should livestock households remain excluded from such entitlements? It is therefore likely that a sweeping land reform will require most of the twenty thousand or so landowners owning fifty acres and more to surrender a large part of their nearly two million acres for redistribution.

Given the general failure of social protection by the state, one would want to explicitly link redistribution with a secure, minimal livelihood. Based upon a daily adult intake of 2,550 calories, SPDC recently proposed a monthly expenditure standard of Rs 1,850 per capita for rural Pakistan. This is a conservative calorie intake compared to the 3,000 suggested for urban workers by the Asian Floor Wage Campaign.

A simpler expenditure standard may be derived from average consumption. For rural Sindh the official survey of expenditures give expenditure per capita of around Rs 1,400 and 2,300 for average

monthly food and total consumption respectively. This enables a daily diet of 1,000 calories per capita, no more than one-half of any reasonable calorie standard. Apparently income inequity is stark enough for the risk of hunger to loom even over an average household.

What then is implied by the existing pattern of land ownership and access? Official surveys for rural Sindh suggest average income from agriculture (at Rs 5,300 per employed person) to be around Rs 1,500 per capita across agricultural households. Farm size is just under 0.5 acres per capita for these households, and stands at one acre per capita across the farm population. Hence much more than an acre per capita should be the standard of consumption in a single family farm. If we were to take into consideration other dimensions of deprivation – such as attaining matric education for all males – the required land standard would rise further.

Does the current holding of tenants suffice for a secure consumption standard? Their farm area is around 1.3 million acres, across nearly 0.3 million farms. Even at a conservative average of 7-8 persons per household, the landless tenant population of Sindh would require more than twice their current average of 0.65 acres per capita, i.e. well over 2 million acres.

The alternative is to ensure non-farm employment to meet the deficit expenditure, which would require a serious commitment to an employment scheme such as NREGA in India. Such an effort is unfortunately absent at the moment. Perhaps we should work with a landowner lobby to realise secure and decent employment for the landless, which would minimise the land surrendered to a redistribution fund.

Child labour is a curse that perpetuates impoverishment. Removing it wholly will reduce income and hence raise land requirement as long as adults are paid inadequately. When food sovereignty is the goal, i.e. meeting demands entirely through self-production via ecologically responsible farming, ownership requirements of the landless are likely to increase further. Across the province there will naturally be differential land needs according to variations in farm productivity, fulfilled non-food consumption, and probable non-farm income.

Contested Justice

Objections will be raised, vehemently by large landowners (that include army officers) in Sindh and their allies in Islamabad disguised as defense against 'fragmentation'. These will include a Shariat Court judgment, suffered by the landless due to a distorted interpretation as a ban on land acquisition for redistribution – despite continuing land purchases by government for 'development' projects. If compensation for land acquisition from the wealthy is politically justified, then it could be in the form of annual income at a level not exceeding the minimum in official declarations, e.g. in tax returns.

Inequity in Sindh Agriculture
(Agriculture Census)

Defenders of inequity claim economies of scale in farming to deny land redistribution. This is dubious since there is no reason why cooperatives cannot achieve such economies with complementary public action such as credit for expensive technology. Furthermore, we have seen no credible evidence to establish scale economies, especially when land degradation through irresponsible farming – as excessive cropping intensity, inappropriate crops, excessive use of chemical fertilisers and pesticides – is taken into account. Were one to include considerations of water and drainage, the balance will tilt even more against large farms, hugely subsidised that they are in ecology and infrastructure, quite unnecessarily if not foolishly.
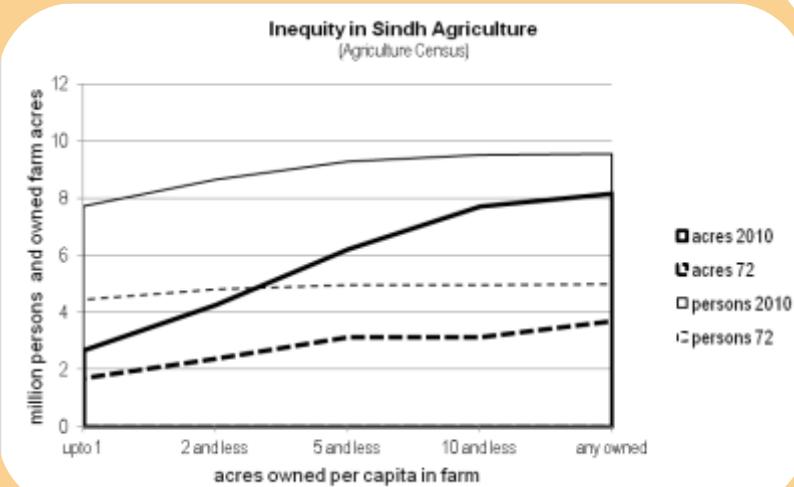
Lobbies for large landlords warn that subsistence farms are unlikely to produce surpluses for feeding non-farm households, specifically urban labour. It certainly is well past the time when 'national interest' is taken to mean that peasants should be subsidising urban capital through cheap labour. A similar threat is supposed to lie in reduction of crops that serve industry and exports, such as sugarcane, rice and cotton. We are unable to understand the logic that crop incentives which work for large farms will somehow fail to work for subsistence farms. In any case it is absurd to defend a combination of mass hunger and exports (not just of cotton but also of rice and wheat).

Not infrequently, we are told to increase non-farm employment rather than redistribute land. More non-farm jobs are necessary for a growing population on top of significant numbers already underemployed, unemployed by neoliberal economic policies, or simply excluded from market labour such as millions of women. With an obsession for export-led growth, economy management lends no confidence to the creation of decent work on the scale required to rapidly eliminate the generation of mass poverty in both rural and urban Sindh. For example, extensive numbers of rural earners remain self-employed or unpaid family workers. Millions of wage workers fail to get jobs – which include employment in the urban periphery – that offer permanent relief from household hunger. This is so even when multiple earners are counted in, for the obvious reason of exploited and underpaid women workers and hazardous child labour.

Conclusion

This article is to be seen as a first exercise in placing land reforms on the agenda for non-violent eradication of inequity. Pakistan need not await another rain and flood disaster to remind its rulers that sustained, and dignified, social protection comes from assets that reduce vulnerability and expand resilience, through maintenance of ecological integrity. Rather than facilitating international land grabs for DFI, Pakistan should heed the stern warning given by Jan Breman to the Asian Development Bank: Corporate agriculture in the guise of agrarian reforms will surely lead to pauperisation in Sindh.

Barnaparichay:
A Mall in Progress, A Street in Transition

In this paper I wish to examine the politics of the changing spatial order in Indian cities, post-liberalisation, with particular reference to College Street in Kolkata. The spatial reconstruction of College Street is largely reliant on the changing logic of culture and changing consumption pattern post-liberalisation. Through narratives and ethnography of the street, I would also try to examine whether changing notion of culture is creating a new spatial order in our cities, which is creating sanitised spaces for elite consumption. I would also argue through the paper that there is a politico-economic structure that legitimises this conception of the new urban spaces in a post-reform global city. Finally, I wish to look into the changing role of pedestrians through their access to these spaces in the city.

Anurag Mazumdar

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I was greeted with a structure in College Street whose existence I was unaware of when I went there in 2007. At first I thought that they were trying to break down the College Street market and sell it to a private developer because the government had done the same to the Park Circus Market.[1] But when I asked a few people here and there what was going on, I was in for a surprise. They told me that the College Street *boipara*[2] was supposed to be relocated in its entirety to the mall. It was as if the street would be transported to a mall.

This was the first reaction of Prateek Karmakar (27), now a research fellow in a university in West Bengal, who used to frequent College Street in his routine hunt for rare books, as well as his regular session of *adda* with friends from Presidency College. He shared his experience of how he felt when he heard, for the first time, that the College Street *boipara* was to be relocated to a book-mall on the other side of College Street, and in the process, the old College Street market was to be demolished. He was certain that his reactions of horror and nostalgia were not his alone.

He rightly points out that College Street, as a space, is cherished not only in Kolkata, but is famous also in the rest of India; however, the myth that the street has remained the same through the passage of time is not quite true. In fact, during the reign of the Indian National Congress (INC) government in 1960s, a first Basic Development Plan (BDP) was created by the Calcutta Metropolitan Planning Organisation (CMPO) to plan the areas differently from what had been done by the British. The myth that the street was isolated from changes surrounding it was probably kept alive in popular discourse by invoking the image of 'this exotic place full of intellectual activity'.

The myth assumed new proportions with the announcement, in 2003, by the Government of West Bengal that it wished to relocate the entire College Street *boipara* to a mall that was going to come up across the street. The mall was to be constructed after demolishing the dilapidated structure of the College Street Market that was one of the 13 Municipal Markets that were built during the colonial period. Since College Street market was a heritage structure, the mall that was to be built, had to maintain the spire of the erstwhile market in accordance with the rules of re-developing a heritage property. The contract for developing the new mall was

Books displayed on the footpath in College Street - Photo-Anurag Mazumdar

given to Bengal Shelter Housing Development Limited, a company that was formed under a joint venture by the Government of West Bengal and Samar Nag, a Bengali entrepreneur in a public-private partnership with the Kolkata Municipal Corporation (KMC). The mall was named *Barnaparichay*[3] – keeping in mind the long history and association of Bengal with the written and spoken word.

The ground floor of the mall was supposed to accommodate all the shops and establishments that were there in the existing College Street Municipal market. They had been temporarily relocated to a different place called the Marquis Square, very close to the present College Street market. The first and the second floors were supposed to be sold as premium retail space to branded bookstores that would set their flagship showrooms there, much in the line of Barnes and Noble in the United States of America. The top floors were to contain all the second-hand bookshops that, till then, were located in the sidewalks of College Street. They would be given shops proportionate to the area that they occupied and none of the pavement book-sellers would be cheated in that regard. There would also be a world-class auditorium where book launches and other cultural programs would be held. The mall would have a dedicated space for an art gallery that would give the Bengali book reader a chance to interact with fine art along with books. Beside the paraphernalia associated with the modern book industry, *Barnaparichay* would also house technologies for the restoration and conservation of books. To complete the entire

experience, the architects and planners also conceived of an archive and a training school dedicated to printing and publishing. To recreate the charm of the Indian Coffee House,[4] it would also have a dedicated food court, the planning document showed.

The 'Mall' in Bengali Culture – Its Symbolisms

In terms of the production of a new socio-cultural space, it might be important to question the place of a mall in the culture of Bengal. Although the advent of malls in the country can be traced to the early 1990s, their presence in the geography of Kolkata is a fairly recent addition — the first mall was built around 2003 in an elite neighbourhood of South Kolkata, i.e., Elgin Road. Therefore, malls as a shopping destination is not a very old phenomenon for the population in Kolkata. In that context, a book mall might stand out even as a proposition, because the very idea of a mall selling books is complex, especially when placed in the framework of global commodity culture. The book as a commodity needs to be conceived within the environs of a culture that is constantly being refashioned and remodeled by global capital. If one cannot locate the book as a commodity within the structure of the mall and define the socio-cultural aesthetics it is associated with, chances are that customers will fail to make meaning of the book-buying experience.

Market-driven capitalism assumes that material and symbolic productions are bearers of the same site – that social subjects and the objects to be consumed are both produced at the same place. The mall, in general, probably performs that function; but it would be interesting to note alterations in this function when books become the primary commodity. In such a context, what is important to note is not just where one buys books from, but also that only certain people will have access to these spaces. Arghya Sen (54), a professor at an undergraduate college, notes:

The front facade of College Street Book Mall - Photo - Anurag Mazumdar

> I do not feel that the mall has any place for a book. The malls that I have been to are often too noisy and therefore even if there are bookshops you do not feel like going inside them. I also feel a little intimidated when I want to go inside them. You could call it my presumption but somewhere I feel that books are meant to be taken very seriously and buying it is a *more* serious affair. And the mall is not at all a place where serious activities can take place. In fact, I was shocked when my son bought a book from Big Bazaar[5] that day. I could not even imagine that books were sold with clothes and vegetables.

One can try and understand Sen's anxiety which is largely born out of the failure to ascertain the commoditised nature of a book. He cannot relate to this culture because consumption is value-driven and loaded with meanings. Buying a cake and buying a book are not the same thing to him. Since this kind of conspicuous consumption might have negative responses owing to *this* lack of proper meaning, the designers of any mall try to create spaces that are different from mere centres of consumption. It is built to create an environment that can be partially dissociated from the act of shopping. Spaces are so designed that they create an illusion that something other than mere shopping is going on. But when it comes to a very involved shopping experience like buying a book, then this argument might not stand; the very nature of buying a book is different from buying apparel or furniture, and this difference needs to be accounted for.

It is probably from this understanding that Arghya Sen's anxiety arises. Every commodity has some symbolic expression ascribed to it by its perceived use and that attachment also gives meanings to the commodity culture around it. The reader appropriates a certain meaning out of the very design of the mall and the location of the book in that space. This meaning-making is crucial since this is one of the

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determinants of change in the nature of the book as a commodity and not merely a cultural artefact.

**The Relic of the Second Hand Book – An Attempt to Fossilise?**

The book mall also seeks to immortalise the idea of the second-hand bookshop by maintaining the culture that has become part of the legend of College Street. All the visible traits that make up the popular imagination of College Street would be maintained. But this could also be interpreted as an attempt to redefine a past in a way that it loses its ability to make transitions over time. The street and its markets would have probably not remained the same through time, but because of the mall, it will remain fossilised. In the environment of the mall, the second-hand bookshops run the risk of looking like relics of a cultural practice that is propagated largely by people in power. This is what a bookseller, Rakhal Mondal (45), had to say,

> Even if we are given our own space in the book mall, we will only stand out amid the otherwise fancy areas in the mall. The street has a grounded feeling to it – and hawking has always been a part and parcel of people on the street. It is highly unlikely that the same conditions of the street will be present in the mall. And anyway, I do not understand what the need for recreating the market is.

An attempt to recreate the street market within the mall poses the risk of becoming a symbol of cultural preservation. Cultural preservation in itself is not problematic, but when it is applied to a vibrant place like College Street, it risks creating spaces that are caught in a time warp. The street is important in the context of the book as a commodity as it allows divergent agents to be represented through a transaction. The street recognises differences because it brings together people from different social strata. This is not just an exercise in social mobility but the street does extrapolate the multi-layeredness of the city in the space of the book-market itself. Since the mall will not have the socio-cultural realities of the street within its built environment, the 'street bookstores' in the mall will become edicts of a crafts museum; they will be unable to respond to changes that will necessarily transpire in the world of learning and culture, outside.

The imposing structure of 'Barnaparichay' book mall - Photo - Anurag Mazumdar

Moreover, street bookstores are always considered to be on the margins of the well-established publishing industry. In the case of College Street, these bookshops are found along the entire stretch of College Street footpath, starting from the junction of Mahatma Gandhi Road (including the smaller lanes) and, finally, terminating at the junction of Surya Sen Street. They have created their own business model, one that is different from that of large-format bookstores: Their unique trade practices include procuring books from non-traditional sources, sometimes from customers themselves, and their pricing strategy takes into account the purchasing power of the common man or woman. While large-format bookstores do offer sales from time to time, the second-hand stores in question depend on discounted prices and bargaining, all throughout the year. Relocating these stores to the mall carries the inevitability of them being dominated by the economic codes that govern the publishing business elsewhere. This will not only hamper their business but also rupture the codes of consumption and imagination that go against the normative grain of things.

The book mall has tried to re-create the space of the street book culture by hosting an event called the *Sharod Boi Parbon* in September 2009, on the premises of the book mall. This event was a precursor to the Puja celebrations in Kolkata and was pitched as a book fair, much in the manner of the annual

Kolkata Book Fair. Many big publishers were invited to participate in the event, as were the smaller booksellers in the city. Samar Nag, the owner of Bengal Shelter, the company that is building the mall, took personal interest in the affair. He said that this was their attempt at maintaining the cultural heritage and tradition of College Street, albeit in the modern environs of an under-construction mall.

College Street: Flows in the Street

The idea of a mall in the College Street area should also be understood in terms of the flow of people in the consumption processes on the street. It would be interesting to note how people/customers would react to the space that is being created in complete opposition to the way readers have been used to seeing the College Street area. The space of the College Street *boipara* is largely a horizontal space that is spread across several pavements and other alleys that spread around College Street. There are areas earmarked for particular books: Second-hand, literary, chapbooks, school textbooks, as well as medical, engineering and undergraduate textbooks. The mall, by its very design, will have to be vertical, and this will position the large format bookstores above the second-hand bookstores. Pedestrians will have to acclimatise to different dimensional qualities of the changed space. Thus, the creation of the book mall and the relocation of the second-hand bookshops therein, would form a visual and visceral change in how people access urban space in the specific context of the book neighbourhood.

According to Turner, the marketplace is a 'liminoid zone'[6] where potentiality can be questioned by the diverse forms of human interaction, where, within confined public spaces, there is the opportunity to meet without prior notice. The marketplace also has the potential for assertion of collective rights or subversion of existing hegemonic beliefs. College Street market performs these very functions, in that it allows the pedestrian to create urban geographies at variance with the existing discourse; this is made possible largely by the multiple layers of interaction – between the consumers and the shopkeepers, shopkeeper and shopkeeper, and readers – that the street has historically facilitated. In these information flows on College Street, there is no fear of moral censure or surveillance. The mall and its built environs stand antithetical to this very flow of human beings. The mall would impose definition on a street which has derived its peculiar habitus from a firm insistence on open-endedness.

The Voices From the Street: Small and Marginal Book-Sellers

The success and functioning of the book mall would depend largely on how the second-hand booksellers, or even the marginal booksellers dealing in new books, organise their spaces. When I was conducting my research, my interviews with the street booksellers revealed that a large section of them had not booked a stall in the new mall. In fact, there was not a single shopkeeper who told me that he was shifting to the book mall. Some of them had approached the builders but they had not finalised the deal. The two factors that were prohibiting shopkeepers from taking up shop at the new mall were the cost of retail space and the spatial allocation of new shops in the mall.

In order to place the discussion in context, it is important to understand the present situation of the market and the way it operates. The market is divided into three parts: The large bookstores, the footpath bookstalls which sell new books and, finally, the second-hand bookshops and stalls. The large bookstores are mostly family-owned and, therefore, run as family establishments. The shops selling new books on the pavement are mostly owned by the shopkeepers themselves. The second-hand bookstores, on the other hand, in some of the cases, are not owned by the shopkeeper; the person behind the counter is only managing the store. The shops are provided a trade license against a small fee by the Kolkata Municipal Corporation, which can be renewed every year. They have a fixed electricity line with a common electricity consumption meter from the CESC (Calcutta Electric Supply Corporation) and the monthly bill is generally shared equally among all the shops. There are six trade unions in the College Street *boipara* which have carefully demarcated areas of jurisdiction. The unions are managed by the shopkeepers themselves with very little interference from the established political parties.

Given this context, there must not be sufficient incentive for the shopkeeper to shift to the space allocated for them in the book mall. This is what Srikanta Ghosh (47), a bookseller selling second-hand literature books, had to say,

In the College Street area, the booksellers generally operate on a very slim margin of profit. Most of the shopkeepers have a very low working capital. In fact, even though I own this stall for around 14 years (he had bought it from the original owner for around Rupees 2.5 lakhs, he clarified later), I cannot say that I have amassed enough to buy another shop. I have daily sales of around two to three thousand rupees but that is just sufficient to sustain my family. The exorbitant price that they (the mall authorities) are asking for booking a new stall is turning off most of the shopkeepers, even if they want to book a stall.

My research revealed that the booking amount for a space of 120 square foot in the mall is between Rupees ten to twelve lakhs. This is too large an amount for these businessmen. Indeed, if no one is able to buy space for a shop inside the mall, then the entire logic behind the redevelopment fails. Moreover, the bookshops clarified that no one from the side of the mall had actually approached them for booking space in it.

The spatial allocation of the bookstores in the new mall is also worth considering. Most of the second-hand booksellers revealed that the space that was reserved for them was in the fifth and sixth floors of the mall. According to them, this location would be highly detrimental to them. Haren Samanta, (62), a pavement bookseller, said:

If customers have to go to the fifth floor to find a book, then chances are most of them would not even think of doing that. The ease with which we operate our business now on the street is missing in that mall. The planners are failing to understand we are a business depending on passing pedestrians. The second-hand bookshops would be marginalised because they would have no way to attract their readers in this way.

According to several other bookshop-owners, there is a hidden bias towards the large-format bookstores that would also be allocated space inside the mall. This is probably due to the second-hand bookshops' marginal existence in the entire publishing industry. The fact that they could not change the space allocated for them and had to back down also goes to show that the scope of negotiating with authorities is limited.

There is also ignorance, on the part of the planners, of the manner in which the pavement booksellers sell books. They are not dependant on static customers, as a mall would be, but they are more interested in getting the attention of pedestrians in the street. In the absence of such a setting, there would be no movement of people; the flow on the street is such that consumption depends on the spectacle of the moment, in this case, a particular book or document. This spectacle of the moment has the potential to arrest the hurrying pedestrian at a particular pavement bookshop and compel him/her to pick up an interesting book.

View of the Street – Large Bookstores

I now turn to the perspective of the big, family-owned bookstores. There were mixed feelings even among the large bookstores: They too were unsure of the contribution that the mall was going to make to the literary ethos of Bengal. Among the large bookstores, Chakroborty, Chatterjee and Co. was really apprehensive because they felt that the move would do them no good. The store, which completed a hundred years in 2010, is among the oldest bookshops on College Street. Paresh Mazumder (34), one of the owners of the store, said something which is important to contextualise the discussion in terms of the stance of the large, family-owned bookshops on the street.

It does not make sense for us to go into the mall because we realise that we will be placed in a very precarious position with all the other bookstores vying for the same readers and with probably a better ambience. In here, the ambience we offer is that of a hundred-year-old bookstore that has a history of its own. This history attracts so many people that it would be almost suicidal to move into another area.

He made it clear that the only option available was to buy a godown in the same place, so that they could use it as an extra space to stock all the titles. Though the establishment is quite old, they have cleared space to display books. According to him, the buyer is very discerning and the mall might not

change anything in the book economy of College Street; the buyer might well continue visiting the same bookstores that have developed affective ties, goodwill and trust with its clients, over many years. He also felt that the mall's impact on the urban space of College Street would depend largely on the extent to which it catered to the different class profiles of customers.

This discussion can be carried forward by looking at large format bookstores elsewhere in the city, which might also take up space in the mall. Interestingly, two of the biggest chains of bookstores in Kolkata – Oxford Bookstores and Crossword – have not booked any space in the upcoming mall, at least till the time that I was conducting this research. This is interesting because if the big bookstores are not taking up shop in the mall, it is doubtful to what degree the present character of the street and its market would change. It is largely acknowledged that the large format bookstores cater to a more upscale clientele that values and can afford the air-conditioned ambience offered by these bookstores. The presence of upmarket coffee shops in such bookstores[7] is proof that they try and create a complete 'glocal' urban experience for the customer. This was echoed by Rahul Sen, (37), Deputy Manager (Retail Operations) of Crossword's Eastern India Operations.

> I believe that the reader who is coming to Crossword is making an informed choice to buy a complete experience of an environment, not just a book. We are not vying for a store in the book mall in College Street because we somehow do not fit into the character of the street itself. For us, it is important to maintain the positioning that we have at present. This does not mean we are underestimating College Street as an urban space contributing to the overall interest in books in Kolkata. It has a different charm of its own and we are not competing with that space ever.

The large format bookstores, thus, acknowledge the contribution of College Street to the culture of reading in the city but are reluctant to move into the College Street area. This has largely to do with the reader who accesses spaces differently and their relationship with these spaces. Comparing the experience of College Street with a large format bookstore chain, Probal Das, (34), a graduate researcher said,

> I was looking for the book on Kolkata street names by P. Thankkapan Nair. When I went to this particular store in Park Street, the guy manning the counter had not even heard of such a book. He had to check many times in the directory just to get the name right. When I went to College Street, the man there brought out a 1990 copy of the book, with a smile on his face. It was frayed and soiled at places, but you do not mind that because the shopkeeper is probably as knowledgeable as you are and equally enthusiastic about the book.

This personal connect between reader and seller is organic to exchanges in College Street *boipara*. This is probably not operational in a space like the mall which need not encourage social bonding or cohesion. The physical space of the mall need not always be permeated by an intimate knowledge of every customer or bookseller.

> Personally, I would not mind going to the book mall once it is built. But I am not sure whether I would want to buy any books from there. The people of College Street know books like the back of their palm, and more importantly, you are in the company of others like you. That makes every visit to College Street rewarding.

The response of Satwick, (25), a young university student, shows that the hunt for books still remains an activity that is an exercise in personal expression. The conception of the book mall has a recurring theme – that of a nostalgia for the traditional public marketplace, one that is epitomised by the College Street *boipara*. This idealised marketplace is born out of an intimate popular knowledge of the street. A part of the anxiety related to the making of a new mall emanates from the loss of familiar iconography of College Street. As an urban space, College Street still remains largely amorphous, open to our own signification, which might change with *Barnaparichay*. This transition will not be isolated but will have larger socio-political implications on cultural practices in Bengal. Probably that is the greater anxiety that dominates the cultural landscape of Kolkata.

1 The Park Circus Market, located in the South-Central neighbourhood of Park Circus in Kolkata, is one of the 22 Municipal markets owned by the Kolkata Municipal Corporation (KMC).

2 *Boipara* (Bengali) roughly translates to a 'neighbourhood of books' where *boi* stands for books and *para* stands for neighbourhood. The term is often used to refer to the book market in College Street and surrounding by-lanes. It brings a ring of familiarity to the street – the *para* indicating that it could be treated like an extension of the private.

3 *Barnaparichay* (Bengali) is the first book of grammar that is given to Bengali-speaking children to learn the Bengali alphabet. The book mall draws its name from this book because of its immediate and popular association with knowledge in the mother tongue.

4 The Indian Coffee House is a worker's co-operative run coffee shop in College Street opposite Presidency College, Kolkata. It used to be a cherished haunt of college and university students, literati, artists and was considered an intellectual melting-point in Kolkata.

5 Big Bazaar is an Indian chain of hypermarket stores that offer a wide range of merchandise right from clothes to furniture to books. A brand of the Future Group, at present, it operates 214 stores in India.

6 The market has always been defined as a liminal space, since it occupies a fraught territory between the local and the global. Turner (1982) calls this a 'liminoid zone' because the certainty of events can be questioned through the prospects of sudden meetings and interactions, assertion of the rights to public space and freedom of expression. See V. Turner, *From Ritual to Theatre*, Peforming Arts Publication, New York, 1982.

7 Both the flagship stores of Oxford Bookstore in Park Street and Crossword in Elgin Road have up-scale spaces for socialising.

War, Skirmishes and Socio-Economic Activities in Pre-Colonial Menchum, 1740 to 1902: Factors for Inter-Ethnic Relations

The article studies war, skirmishes and socio-economic activities as factors determining inter-ethnic relations in pre-colonial Menchum. It uses oral interviews as well as sources from the National Archives, Buea. The paper argues that while war and skirmishes led to poor relations between communities, negotiations and peace treaties ended such conflicts and strengthened relations. It also argues that inter-ethnic socio-economic activities such as trade, marriage and hunting along with traditional healers, sorcerers and witch doctors played an important role in enhancing inter-ethnic relations. These arguments challenge the Eurocentric views that the integration of African communities was done only through colonialism.

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Introduction

The coming of Europeans and the annexation of Africa saw the creation of new states and the merging of independent African polities into new administrative units. In doing this the colonial powers disregarded the traditional structure, and argued that without colonialism, it would have been difficult to build peaceful relations among African communities. The latter would have remained disintegrated, engulfed in war and conflict. However, the Europeans failed to realise that, even before their advent, African societies were well-organised and interacted with their neighbours in economic, social and political spheres. Though conflict and disagreement existed within such societies, it was a common phenomenon among polities not only in Africa but the world over where one group dominated the other to further their own interests.

Focussing on the former Menchum Division[1] the paper aims to challenge the European notion of African societies in perpetual conflict. It argues that relations between different ethnic groups in the area were marked by mutual harmony. These relations were enhanced by trade, which brought people together. Relations were cemented through marriages across borders. The activities of traditional healers were also a relation-building medium, as people criss-crossed borders in search for such services. Such peaceful coexistence was disturbed by skirmishes and war which were violent and drew people apart.

It should be noted that around 1740, the people of Menchcum started migrating into the area and formed independent political entities. With colonisation of the area by the Germans in 1902, they were merged together to form the Kentu, Wum and Kom Districts. With the departure of the Germans in 1916 and the coming of the British, these units were made native authorities and in 1948, they were amalgamated to form the Wum Division. Due to pre-colonial trends in establishing relations, it was easy to manage differences in this heterogeneous political unit that brought together people from the Munchi, Widekum and Tikar backgrounds. Studying relations that existed before colonialism, this paper discusses socio-economic activities as factors leading to peaceful coexistence among tribes.

War and Skirmishes as Factors for Building Relations

Inter-ethnic conflicts in Menchum were a common phenomenon. For instance, in Fungom area alone, about twenty-five wars were fought before the coming of the Germans in 1902.[2] In the case of Wum and her neighbours successive wars were fought against the Mukuru, Mbellifang, Nkoremanjang, Batomo and the Age.[3] This was equally true of Kom and Bum as wars became a feature of their relations before colonialism but these wars were instrumental in building and enforcing relations when matters settled down.

Wars were fought between the Kom and Bum for political and economic reasons. The Kom wanted to subdue Bum politically and bring them under their control. This subjugation was supposed to bring great economic benefits to the Kom. Bum was an important centre in the Kola nut trade. People moved in as far as from Ibi, Bisala, Takum, Kom and elsewhere to sell and buy these products.[4] The Kom eyed this strategic economic position enjoyed by the Bum and believed that if they could successfully subdue and bring the Bum under their control, they could benefit from the wealth that was associated with this trade and enjoyed by the Bum. By subjugating the Bum, annual tributes could also be exacted from them.[5] Thus the Bum remained a thorn in the flesh of the Kom and was aware of the fact that unless something was done, hostility from the Kom was eminent. As a result, they were always alert and ready for any possible attack from the Kom.[6]
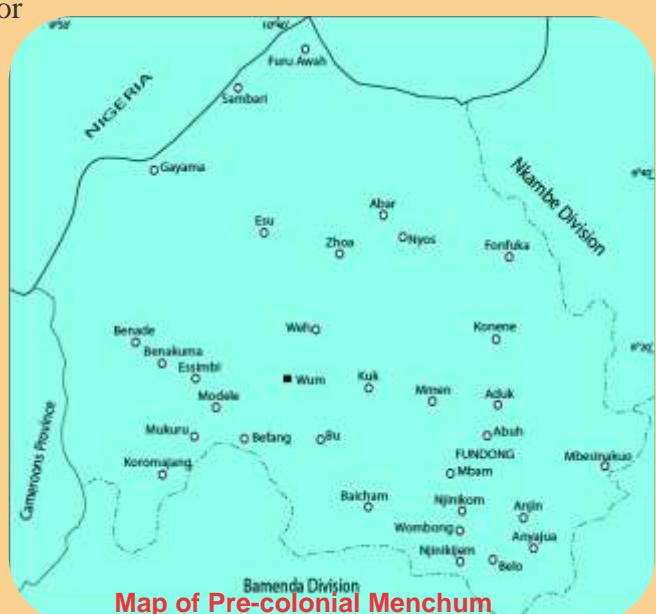
Map of Pre-colonial Menchum

On three occasions, Kom started the war but never succeeded in bringing the Bum under control. On one occasion, the Kom had ordered the Bum to supply food that could feed at least one hundred men. This was unacceptable to the Bum. They saw this as a pretext by the Kom to wage a war against them. Preparing for any onslaught from the Kom they started to mobilise their warriors. Tam, their leader, was confident of his preparations for the war and boasted that the Kom and Laikom[7] were no match and could be destroyed by his warriors within a day. While the Bum were preparing for a possible Kom assault, their camp was infiltrated by Kom spies and in that process, the stool of the Fon of Bum was stolen.[8]

Without the stool,[9] Tam's authority was threatened and immediately, the war was called off and preparations begun to recover the stool from the Kom. Appealing for peace was the only solution and the Kom were appeased with money in exchange for the stool. The stool returned to the Bum tribe and the Kom never succeeded in bringing the Bum under their control.[10] This for once brought peace and enhanced relations between the two groups and for the first time, each of them struggled to preserve and safeguard the new-found peace. Though there were occasional skirmishes, they enjoyed relative peace and were aware of the fact that negotiation and a peaceful solution were necessary.

Such wars and the eventual peaceful relation were not limited to the Bum and Kom only. Rather it was also enjoyed by the Mmen. An old pact that was signed by the ancestors of the Kom and Mmen made the two tribes live as brothers with complete cooperation.[11] No side will attack the other and if such an attack occurred, immeasurable consequences will follow. This agreement was respected by both sides for a long time. In a bid to extend his authority, Fon Yuh of Kom decided to violate it. Mmen was situated between Fungom and Kom and was a buffer to any Kom advancement in the North. Mmen was thus viewed as a stumbling block to the northward expansion of the Kom kingdom which the latter wished to undertake in quest for land, tribute and slaves.

Some Kom warriors saw this as a threat to their well-being and existence. They feared that any attempt to violate the pact with the Mmen, on their part, would provoke the wrath of the gods against them. Some of them tipped the Mmen regarding the possibility of an imminent war. When it became clear that Yuh was determined to move ahead against the advice of some of his people to bring Mmen under his authority, the Mmen tribe was warned by some Kom Warriors that when they see a fire on the Fundong hill, it would be a signal that the Kom were invading.[12]

The Mmen on their part decided to respect the pact and instead of carrying out a pre-emptive attack on the Kom, they did every thing possible not to be the aggressor and were only concerned with defending their *Fondom*. They waited for the Kom to attack them first before they retaliated. It was believed that this would bring the pity of the gods on them. They followed this belief as they repelled Kom advances. Mmen warriors dug trenches while women poured okro-like substances on the path taken by the army. Many of the Kom warriors found themselves trapped in the trenches while the slippery okro-like substance retarded their advances. Those trapped in these trenches were later beheaded.

This war dragged on for long and spies operated on both sides. Things turned difficult when the Kom met some of the Mmen warriors from Imo with doglike heads. They were humans but their heads were transformed.[13] This scenario was so frightful that the Kom had to retreat. Such a show of supernatural forces left the Kom with no option but to sue for peace. They therefore had to make amends as they believed that the gods had turned against them for attacking a brother. Celebrations and feasts reunited the two brothers and cemented relations further.

While peace was being celebrated in Kom and Mmen, war ensued between the Bum and the Bebe Ketti. Constant poaching by the Bebe Ketti on a piece of land claimed by the Bum led to a punitive expedition. The Bum passed through Benchansi and attacked the highland settlement of Bebe Ketti. But on their way back, problems between the Bum and the Benchansi erupted. The latter also wanted a share in the spoils of war and in the ensuing conflict the Fon of Bum was killed. However, the Bum succeeded in reaching home, reorganised and marched to meet their enemy. The Bum defeated them and the Bebe

Ketti was forced to pay tribute. The defeated Bebe Ketti tribe was seen as a part of Bum. Hence, relations improved subsequently. Such a situation remained in force until 1902[14] and was also witnessed in the Aghem area that saw the subjugation of the Bebabefang.

Though they remained autonomous and managed their affairs, the Bebabefang were integrated into the Aghem federation as they were answerable to the Aghem leaders. Most of these wars were fought around 1850.[15] Befang was the first casualty and readily accepted Aghem sovereignty. This was a blessing to the Befang as an understanding developed between them and Befang used the Aghem as a shield against the Bafut who constantly raided them. In this process the Aghem overran the Bafut and made them tributaries.[16] This took the form of palm oil and a drum, that was about five feet high and two feet in diameter.[17] Tribes once subjugated readily accepted the dominance of the victorious group and their position as tribute payers. This helped improve relations between the victor and the vanquished.

These Aghem attacks were not limited to the Menchum Valley settlements. The Aghem were notorious for their attacks on the Fungom settlements. In the reign of Inasong, the first war with the Weh was fought. This was caused when a Aghem woman was secretly married by a Weh man. The Weh were attacked and much destruction was done and many were taken prisoners. The entire village appealed and peace was established with hoes and shovels as reparation.[18] This fostered an understanding between the Weh and the Aghem who had been suspicious of each other earlier since many Weh went for Aghem women. In spite of this understanding and improved relations, a second war was imminent when a Weh man committed adultery with the wife of an Aghem clan head. It was a heinous crime and only war could settle the issue. The Aghem attacked first and six Weh clan heads and five women were taken to Wum. This was just before the coming of the Germans who returned the five women to Weh.

Though constantly raided by the Aghem, the Esimbi and the Beba are also known to have hostilities among themselves. This is commonly referred to as the Bufi war.[19] This was caused by the setting up of a hunting camp in the heart of Esimbi by the Babadji. This was not welcomed by the Esimbi who decided to attack them for moving into their land without permission. While hunting wild pigs, they were attacked by the Esimbi and many were killed. A woman was captured by the Babadji in their war with their neighbour, and handed over to the natural ruler of Benabinge (one of the Esimbi chiefs) who was believed to be the mastermind behind the success.[20] This once more brought peace and cordial relations were re-established.

In spite improving relations in Menchum, disagreements persisted. This was particular to the Case of Fungom groups, Bebabefang and Esimbi. In the Fungom area, Kung had to fight Abar and the entire village was burnt. The Munken killed a man from Esu who visited them and the Esu invaded Munken territory seeking revenge. A man from Mmen had stolen a goat from Weh. He was captured and killed by the Weh. He was a guest of the Kuk and the Kuk retaliated by killing the first Weh man they could lay hands on.[21] The constant raiding on the Esu by the Djumperi villages to the north of the Katsina River met with counter invasions from the Esu. Some of these groups either had to migrate out of the area or accept Esu's suzerainty. War between the Kuk and the Aghem became unavoidable when an Aghem was killed by the Kuk. This man was on a peaceful mission to Kuk. The Aghem took this as an insult, carried raids and killed many.

It should be noted that where war and conflict could not eventually lead to improved relations, it was done through cooperation in various economic and social activities where tribes depended on each other for their livelihoods.

Socio-Economic Activities as Factor for Peaceful Coexistence

Peaceful relations were forged not only through agreements and truces, after war and skirmishes, but also through socio–economic exchanges, as each group was eager to engage in such activities that raised the livelihood of their people. As a result of this trade was carried out in palm oil among the various groups of the area. This trade was very important as palm oil was used for the payment of bride wealth in the area and even for membership into secret societies. This was an excellent substitute for goats, salts and Dane guns that were also used for the same purpose. At times, palm oil was compulsory and was paid

alongside the above mentioned items. Hence, oil producing areas grabbed attention of the non-producing areas. This was true in the case of the Esimbi and the Fungom palm belt where people moved in from all corners of the Division in search of palm oil.[22]

Meanwhile, other areas like Weh and Esu, were noted for the supply of pigs. People came in from other parts of the Division for these animals. Those around the river Kimbi and Gayama as well as Menchum provided other areas with smoked fish. It should be noted that people left their own villages looking for such items, and in the process mixed freely with others exchanging ideas and information. Areas where blacksmiths practiced, became centres of trade as many visited these areas for buying hoes, cutlasses, knives, spears and other products manufactured by the blacksmiths. It is in this direction that many went to Weh, Esu, Fungom, Mme, Bum and Kom and thus interacted and build relations with the local people.

People from different parts of the Division converged on Bum for hunting.[23] Games caught were not only taken back by the hunters, but were also taken to other villages and exchanged with other goods. Trading on food items provided another means for interaction. For instance, plantains and grains were supplied to the palm belts by the Mekaf during times of famine. This was because most of the corn harvested during the harvesting season was used in brewing beer and till the next harvesting season they virtually had to rely on their neighbours. This process strengthened relations between tribes.

People also left the Fungom, Wum, Kom, Beba Befang and Esimbi areas for Bum in order to purchase kola nuts which were found in Bum in greater quantities. Besides, people from these areas acted as middlemen as they purchased it from Ndop, Bali and Ndu.[24] Other settlements in the area that did not have access to these markets had to get it from Bum and in that process interacted with them. Though people of the area across the Katsina River were cut off from the rest of Menchum, their proximity to the Nigerian markets made them middle men. This was because access to the Nigerian market was easier for them than the rest. They brought salt and clothes from Nigeria and exchanged them for castor oil and other products around Menchum.[25] The Aghem also supplied tobacco, hoes, spear heads, salts, machetes, raffia bags, clothes and beads to the Esu and in turn received meat, honey and goats.[26] Such contacts brought these communities closer and social relations were enhanced and hence resulted in inter-community marriages.

Marriage was a means of cementing relationships between communities. Many chiefs and their notables went out of the confines of their Fondoms in search of wives, while others encouraged their subjects to marry from outside their communities and these improved diplomatic ties. For instance, no war has ever been fought between the Weh and the Esu. This is contrary to what occurred between all her neighbours. It is believed that this cordiality was due to a healthy relationship that existed through marriages contracted between the inhabitants of these two villages. They saw themselves as brothers and it was difficult for any one side to raise arms against the other.[27] In Zhoa, marriages contracted between the Fon and Esu women gave room for a healthy relationship between them. Inter-ethnic marriages between the Aghem women and the Weh chiefs also worked in that direction as the hostile atmosphere that reigned between them was minimised through this process. This explains the popular notion that the Fons of Weh had a lusty appetite for Aghem women.

Inter-ethnic marriages also encouraged people from different ethnic backgrounds to take up residence outside their community and called on their loved ones to follow them. In these communities, they served as ambassadors of their tribes. This brought feelings of trust and brotherliness to those villages involved. This is justified by sizeable population of the descendants of groups who migrated to other areas after marriage and took their relations along. With time they became part of the host community. For instance in Weh, the Cha Sei Ngha family is an offshoot of such a union. The elder sister of Cha married a Weh man and brought him to Weh. He married, remained there and his descendants have become one of the most renowned families in terms of numerical strength. This is also true of the Ughe Nsein and Tem Nsen families that are part of the Zaa royal family. The Wa Kah who came in from Mmen married into another community and their offspring have become very influential in the Weh.[28] This is a common characteristic in the region. Thanks to marriages, the exchange of visits by

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their kin and the participation of foreign communities in ceremonies carried out by their neighbours cemented relations.[29] Through this process, diplomatic ties between chiefs and villages were enhanced.

Such exchanges and interaction also resulted due to the activities of herbalists and witch doctors/sorcerers or traditional healers. In search of health services and protection from witches and wizards, people left their areas of origin to where they thought these services would best be available. There was a strong belief that witch doctors found in their localities were not the best to consult for the affected persons. It was also believed that it was easy for one's enemy to use them in committing atrocities. As such, it was advisable for them to go out of their villages where these exercises could be carried out and their fears taken care of. That not withstanding, experts in various fields were present and people had to go in search of them. Chiefs even sent out emissaries and sought for the causes of unwarranted disasters such as epidemics and needed the assistance of their counterparts to direct them in getting such experts that were found in their villages. People moved freely from one village to the other in search of solutions to their health problems.[30] Through this process, acquaintances were created and relations among the people of different areas were sealed.

Conclusion

From the above analysis, it is evident that negotiations, peace pacts and truces in the aftermath of war and conflict cemented relations between conflicting groups. The paper also argued that socio-economic activities such as trade, inter-ethnic marriages and hunting boosted inter-community relations. Furthermore the activities of herbalists, sorcerers/and or witch doctors added to this trend. The paper argues that such activities enhanced interactions and inter-ethnic relations in pre-colonial Menchum and became mediums through which people could easily interact, share ideas and disseminate valuable information.

1 This entails present day Menchum and Boyo Divisions of the North West Region of Cameroon. It was made a Division in 1948 by the British and styled Wum Division. This was renamed by the Government of Independent Cameroon as Menchum in 1968. In 1992, the Division was split into two and one retained the name while the other was named Boyo.
2 Ad(1929)10, No. EP6808, Fungom District Assessment Report, 1929, p.20.
3 Ad(1923)14a, Notes of Late Mr. Gadman on the Administrative Problems of Wum District, Edited by C. J. Gregg, ADO, 1st July 1923, p.5.
4 Ad(1928)24, Bamenda Division, Kom Assessment Report, 1928, p.71.
5 Paul Nchonji Nkwi, *Traditional Government and Social Change: A Study on the Political Institutions among the Kom of the Cameroon Grassfields,* Fribourg, University Press, 1976, p.22.
6 C. Geary, (ed), "Ludwig Brandhl's Historical Notes on the Kingdom of Kom (Cameroon)", in *Paiduma*, 26, 1980, p.60.
7 This is the historical capital and seat of the Fon of Kom.
8 Geary (ed), Ludwig Brandhl's Historical Notes, p.63.
9 The stools used by most Fons in their palaces are not just ordinary objects. They are associated with power and authority and contain some forces beyond the ordinary. In most cases, it has been the same stools used time immemorial by their predecessors. Where these are not present or taken away, it may render them powerless in the eyes of their subjects.
10 Ad(1927)4, An Assessment Report of the Bum Area in the Bamenda Division, Cameroons Province, 1927, p.10.
11 Geary (ed), Ludwig Brandhl's Historical Notes, p.60.
12 Ibid., pp.63-64.
13 Ibid., p.64; It is a belief in the area that human beings can transform into animals.
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Sustained Interaction in a Disintegrated Cross-River Region Border of Cameroon and Nigeria

This paper examines why the German and British demarcation between Cameroon and Nigeria, and the disruptive forces of the two colonial masters, did not stop interaction between the two peoples. The international boundary between Cameroon and Nigeria imposed restrictions on the movement of people and goods across the border. In spite of attempts to regulate cross-border migration, the ethnic groups used different strategies to undermine them. This essay examines how these ethnic groups transgressed the artificial boundary that was made to divide them.

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Introduction: Location, Boundaries and their Significance

The Cross River Region of Cameroon and Nigeria spans the border between South-Eastern Nigeria and South-Western Cameroon. The total land area is about 22,800 square miles or approximately 62,840 square kilometres.[1] The region includes the basin and its outliers and sections of the South-Eastern part of the West African sub-region.[2] The Cross River Region has numerous rivers and swamps. In the coastal marshes, which include the Rio-del-Rey estuary, are screw pines, giant palm and mangrove trees and countless species of oil and raffia palms. Further inland are numerous rivers like the Cross River, Manyu and Mone Rivers. There are also fresh water swamps in the depressions of the region. The several ethnic groups astride the Cameroon-Nigeria border are engaged in different kinds of socio-cultural and economic activities.

The notion of a linear exclusive and sacrosanct boundary did not exist in Africa prior to colonialism; it was introduced by the European countries by the last quarter of the nineteenth century. In pre-colonial Africa, the people believed in loose frontiers.   Consequently, the European concept of boundary turned out to be impracticable and irrelevant to the African people, and created a lot of problems for them. After independence, most African countries did not alter the colonial boundaries, thereby compounding the problems of the partitioned people. The new boundaries imposed by European countries turned what was once free and legitimate inter-ethnic and territorial trade between the same or neighbouring people, into a complicated inter-colonial trade.[3] Unlike Europeans, African people did not regard international frontiers in exaggerated emotional terms; though not rigid, they were more pragmatic in their dealings with border differences between them. Borders were fluid and not the fixed lines that were imposed in many colonial territories. This created problems for most people living along borders in Africa.[4]

The importance of colonially created boundaries in Africa today cannot be over-emphasised. Borders are generally pivotal to the history of African experiences of colonialism and in studies of labour migration, economic change, ethnic identity and resistance to alien rule.[5] As a corporate property, land serves the important economic, social and political purpose of keeping a group together. In Africa, land is home to community gods and spirits and this prevents it from being split between people. If land belongs to the spirits then it has spiritual value. The fact that the ancestors live there and the bones of dead people are buried in those lands, make the people regard their land spiritually.[6] This notwithstanding, the persistence of informal cross-border activities in Africa, with all its setbacks – like, multiple control posts, high transport costs, insecurity, poor accommodation and a difficult transport system – is, however, important in the sense that it provides employment, alleviates poverty among border people, promotes regional trade and integration, as well as economic development.[7]

The existence of multifarious boundary activities, in spite of the hurdles involved in them, makes the present study on boundaries interesting. People move as refugees, educators, like traders and businessmen. Attempts to restrict movement are increasingly difficult because of the strength of social relations across boundaries.[8] Individuals cross boundaries because of self-determination which often conflicts with state interest; but expediency requires that the state weigh what can benefit it in the long run when it promotes inter-boundary movement.

Boundaries are also significant today because of the emergence of micro-regions which intensify cross-border activities. While this phenomenon takes place in other parts of the world, it has developed rapidly as a distinct form of policy-driven process in Eastern and Southern Africa, enabling local populations and refugees to move more freely. In other African countries, boundaries do not exist in the Western sense because they are ignored by actors like local populations and refugees.[9] The fluidity of some boundaries has encouraged transnational spiritual ties, for example, among interpreters of the Pentecostal movement who move from one linguistic area to another to render services for the flock of God.[10] Boundary problems can also be easily resolved using the spatial interaction of people along the border, through language, social life, commerce and culture.[11] In some situations, people of the same ethnic group with the same culture tend to be more antagonistic to each other than those with fewer similarities in language and culture.

Stability in boundary-related matters depends on an all-round surveying capability of the states. Sustained surveying ensures stability in the border areas. It also instils confidence, stability of government and land-use in border regions, and promotes regional and national economic development;[12] divided people are more likely to work together than engage in fruitless bickering. A deliberate policy of porous boundaries unites people of the same ethnic stock across divides created by such boundaries.[13] Institutions in border areas can provide education to co-ethnics on either side of the border.[14] Goemans contends that when boundaries are clear and unambiguous, they promote group cohesion and identity[15] rather than the reverse.

The strict respect for boundaries weakens group consciousness and identity.[16] It also makes members of the same ethnic group develop divergent economic, social, cultural and political structures. The old identities are weakened and this creates tension across the border. Kith and kin sundered in this way denounce their identity and sense of belonging to one another, and this impacts the nation-state identity. Fluid or restricted boundaries also challenge the stability of some governments. If they are arbitrarily drawn, this might subsequently magnify internal and international conflicts[17] and lead to the waste of scarce resources.

As far as the Cross River region of Cameroon and Nigeria is concerned, the government of both countries until very recently were ill at ease in their border relations. This was an attempt to weaken group consciousness and identity across the border. Both governments, however, failed in their efforts. The internecine conflicts that took place in this border area did not deter the people from continuous interaction for socio-economic and political reasons.

Several events in the continent have challenged the necessity of questioning and maintaining borders because huge sums of money are invested in the purchase of arms for war. The African Union (AU), created in 2002, preaches for a union government for all Africans. If Africa were to become united, the boundaries would disappear and border conflicts would vanish too.

Besides, cross-border activities of Islamic militants and *Boko Haram* in Nigeria, Mali and Cameroon do not respect borders. They violate boundary regulations and threaten peace in the countries where they operate. Yet, many African governments recognise boundaries as instruments of state policy. The protection and promotion of national interests inadvertently lead to the re-enforcement of borders.[18] The imposition of borders for national and other interests frustrate sustained interaction among divided people.[19] In many cases, interactions across borders, for various reasons, have socio-political, economic and cultural imperatives.[20] These long-term interactions in the Cross River Region of Cameroon and Nigeria have, however, encountered several hurdles over the years.

Disruptive Border Forces

The establishment of the Cameroon-Nigeria boundary by the Germans and British between 1884 and 1913, led to disruptions in the free flow of goods and services. Both the Germans and British authorities had little regard for the ethnic composition of the area although there was provision in the agreement to

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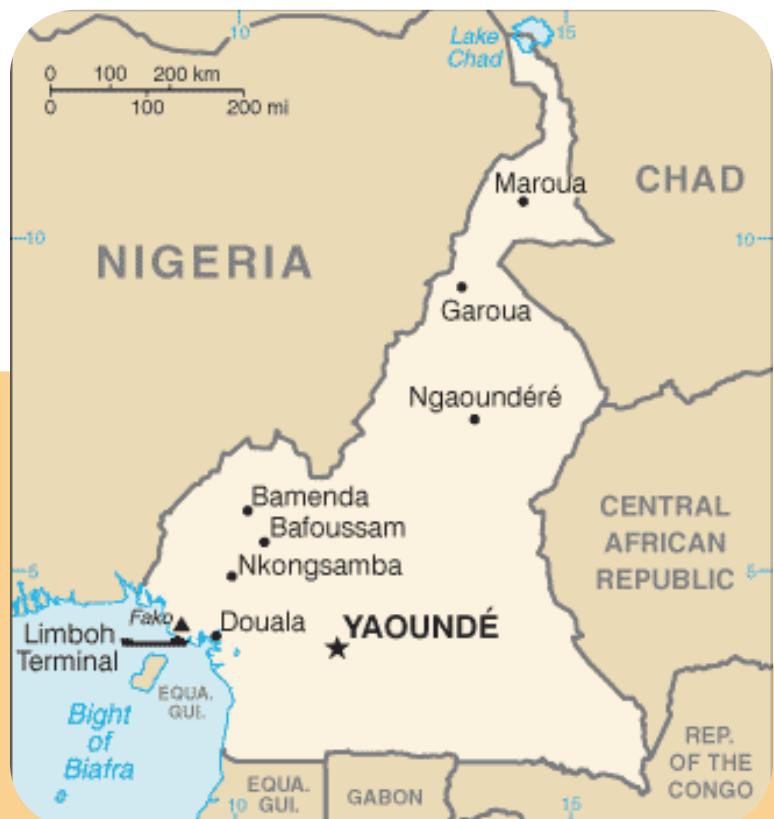
safeguard the interests of the partitioned people.[21] In 1903, boundary commissioners used astronomical methods to determine the trail of the border through Yola on the Cameroon-Nigerian frontier. It revealed the difficulty and artificiality of translating ideas from paper onto the ground.[22]

The dispute over the Bakassi peninsula was not only the product of redefinition of boundaries by the colonial powers but, importantly, a product of resource allocation and clash between tradition and modernity. Several authors have examined the quarrels in the Bakassi peninsula and suggested effective governance strategies. The people of this peninsula are ethnically related.[23] In the past they were governed by the *Obong* of Calabar and his leadership united, rather than divided, the people. The crisis in the region after colonisation was state-imposed against a people who had enjoyed a single leadership in the past.

Since the colonial period, there have been problems in cross-border trade between Cameroonians and Nigerians. These problems between female and male traders, include multiple control posts, access to credit to initiate and expand business, high transport costs, insecurity and sexual harassment, poor accommodation and storage, multiple and arbitrary taxation of goods and high costs of communication. Traders have also encountered difficulties because of poor roads and a very difficult transport system,[24] especially along the Mamfe-Ekok road, which is the main road linking Cameroon and Nigeria.

In spite of ongoing construction of the Widikum-Mamfe-Ekok road as part of the trans-African highway linking Cameroon and Nigeria, the roads are still seasonal and affect the volume of trade and the number of traders crossing the boundary for business. Many traders have been forced out of business because of the high cost of transportation and communication, insecurity and arbitrary taxation of goods and services. This explains why such high taxation has resulted in hired labour crossing borders illegally in the region and the Mandara area of the northern part of the border.[25]

Another disruptive force in the Cross River Region is the over-zealousness of the military officers at the borders. Many of them do not look out for car documents to ensure compliance but extort money from drivers and passengers. Some Cameroonian officers, especially the Gendarmerie, are ruthless with Nigerians, which discourages their movement into Cameroon territory. They argue that goods from Nigeria have killed the local industry in Cameroon, and others, like cocaine, are damaging to young people. Bribe-taking is a regular practice among men and women in uniform, on both sides of the border.

Despite the leaders of Cameroon and Nigeria signing the Green-tree Accord to encourage free settlement of Cameroonians and Nigerians in the Bakassi peninsula area, militant groups from Nigeria are a constant menace to peace and free movement in the area. In spite of these and other disruptive forces, throughout the history of the Cross River Region, there has always been interaction across the border, and this has taken different forms.

Unremitting Borderland Collaboration

National borders, including those in the Southwest Region of Cameroon, are mere political creations[26] which have not succeeded in preventing people, goods and services from moving across the border. There is continuous interaction and collaboration between Cameroonians and Nigerians split by the border due to myriad socio-cultural, economic and political reasons. The split groups, since the 1913 Anglo-German boundary, include the Boki, Ejagham and Becheve. Other creek settlements like the Balundo and Ejaw were also affected by the boundary between Cameroon and Nigeria. The Ejagham occupy the region stretching from Eyumojock through Ekok in Cameroon, to Akom and Enanga in Nigeria.[27]

In the socio-cultural domain, the split ethnic groups share similar institutions, language, and dress, among other attributes. These have promoted continuous interaction. Some villages are situated on one side of the border and have their shrines and festivals performed on the other side. This makes them defy boundary restrictions during these festivals and while visiting shrines to perform purification rituals.[28] The festivals are performed by several traditional institutions, including the popular male institutions of *Nyankpe, Nfam* and *Obasinjom,* found in both Nigeria and Cameroon.[29] Cultural dances and performances also take place across the border of Cameroon and Nigeria. In one such instance, a

famous singer, Ogambuk, from Abia village in the Cross River State of Nigeria, livened a festival in Nsanakang village in Manyu Division, in Cameroon. The illegal crossing of the border undermines the international boundary between the two countries. The crisis over the rich Bakassi peninsula has not prevented movements across the border, since the people share a common culture and history.

Other cultural activities which have enhanced interaction between Cameroonians and Nigerians in the Cross River Region include initiation ceremonies and body painting. Some adventurous women have crossed the border several times for initiation into fertility dances. This has given them the assurance of healthy childbirth. The fertility dances are also important because the women believe that their participation contribute to the fertility of the soil.

These dances originated in eastern Ejagham in Cameroon and those of western Ejagham originated from Nigeria. This entails movement and expenditure of time and money. Body painting among Anyang women was copied from Nigeria. They often return to their villages with new body painting designs and contemporary variants of older dance movements which engage buttocks and pudenda.[30] Borrowing and initiation into these cultural institutions have been made possible by continuous interaction between people from both sides of the border separating Cameroon and Nigeria. But for continuous social intercourse, this would not have been possible. Whatever happens at the official level between Cameroon and Nigeria, does not actually concern the people who live the reality of the border. They benefit from one another through similar socio-cultural activities. Niger-Thomas summarises this effectively when she contends that there is the transfer of culture between neighbouring villages astride the Cameroon-Nigeria border in the Cross River Region.[31]

There is also production of wooden masks covered with animal skin in the region surrounding the Cross River. This is carried out by several cultural groups and the mask dance is performed by several associations in the region.[32] Such a practice has provided mask experts from both sides of the international boundary a paying job and has promoted the culture of mask production. The several associations using masks also move from villages across the border to perform. Official communiqués and their enforcement by gun-trotting military officers have little or no impact on this category of people.

Another cultural practice in the Cross River Region which encourages movement across the border is the fattening exercise of young girls. Women were secluded for a period of time during which they were fed and taught virtues of family life. This practice was a way of life among the Ejagham and Boki which have straddled the boundary from the pre-colonial period to independence. This fattening exercise pulled women from far and near and was often the last crucial stage that separated a girl from childhood and adolescence.[33] The cultural practice was highly honoured by Boki and Ejagham women because of its socio-cultural significance. Through the fattening process, the girls were schooled in the importance of proper conduct as they grew into maturity. Elderly women and young girls crossed the border to participate in this cultural practice. It gained young girls the confidence of their peers and respect from prospective suitors and other members of the community.

There is also occasional interaction at the official level between Cameroon and Nigeria; this is in the domain of the management of the border in the Cross River Region. Prior to the demarcation of the Cameroon-Nigeria boundary by Britain and Germany in the 1913 Anglo-German Agreement, the Bakassi peninsula had been under the political leadership of the *Obong* of the ancient Kingdom of Calabar.[34] He controlled the activities of all people, extending up to present-day Cameroon.

After the independence of Cameroon and Nigeria, the two countries were faced with the challenges of solving problems that erupted due to the artificial boundaries. In Maroua in 1975, presidents Ahmadou Ahidjo and General Yakubu Gowon held talks aimed at settling problems arising from this issue. This entailed the movement of officials from across the border into Cameroon. During discussions leading to the court ruling on ownership of the Bakassi peninsula, government officials in Cameroon and Nigeria met several times in Yaounde, Abuja and Calabar. These meetings notwithstanding, border problems between Cameroon and Nigeria continued. Whenever there was a change in government in Nigeria, the new leadership questioned the veracity of previous resolutions.

The interaction of people across the Cameroon-Nigeria Cross River Region has also been made possible by official government activities at the frontier posts of Ekok and Otu.[35] Although the British agreed to cooperate with the Germans to extradite 'criminals' who sought refuge in Nigeria, they did not curtail the people's right of free and voluntary movement into their colony.[36] British officials argued that ordinary fugitives who did not offend or contravene the law would not be compelled to return to the German territory if they crossed over to Nigeria. Similarly, Nigerians could not be debarred from crossing into German Kamerun as long as they were not fleeing from the law.[37] In this way, the British inadvertently encouraged free movement of people across the boundary set up by themselves and the Germans. Today, the Cameroon and Nigerian governments collaborate to protect the montane forests. The two governments provide collective expertise aimed at conserving biodiversity at Gashaka Gumti in Nigeria and Tchabal Mbabo in Cameroon.

Economic activities also take place across the Cameroon-Nigeria border. Trade between different groups took place in this region prior to the establishment of the Cameroon-Nigerian boundary in 1913, and continued thereafter.[38] There was a flourishing trade even before the introduction of the South Atlantic system in the fifteenth century. Items like camwood, fish, livestock and salt were traded among the hinterland communities of present day Cameroon and Nigeria. The people of this region took part in the trans-Atlantic slave trade as competitors in the purchase or capture of slaves in the interior.[39] They also made use of regulatory societies like the *Ekpe* to secure trade routes and slaves. Charms were used in the course of trade to prevent businessmen from being attacked by enemy groups. The establishment of an international boundary by the British and Germans did not stop the people from collaboration.

One major economic activity which has defied free movement across the boundary between Cameroon and Nigeria in the Cross River Region is smuggling of goods and currencies (Franc CFA and the Naira). Cameroonian and Nigerian smugglers have refused to conform to regulations on cross-border activities,[40] not only in the Cross River Region, but also in other areas along the long border between Cameroon and Nigeria, such as the Mandara region in the North.[41] Asiwaju argues that these clandestine activities across the border occasionally pose serious security and economic problems for the governments and people involved.[42]

There was also an enterprising trade in indigenous salt produced in the brine springs of the Cross River area, from the pre-colonial era to independence in 1961. This led to the exportation of large quantities of this locally produced commodity from the producing villages of the Cross River Region of Cameroon to Nigeria, through the Manyu and Cross Rivers. In the pre-colonial period, Nigerians migrated into the salt towns of Ebisi, Boka, Ekokisam II, Oyi, Kesham, Kajifu, Egbekaw, Ossing, Ekok, Abokum, Nsanarati and Nsanakang through special arrangements with the indigenous people. Other Igbo traders brought large stocks of salt through the Manyu and Cross Rivers and sold them in Nigerian markets.[43] Efik traders also purchased salt from the Ejagham people which was commercialised in Nigeria.[44] The trade in salt from brine springs encouraged continuous interaction between traders across the border.

There was, and still is, sustained trade in various kinds of commodities between the people astride the Cameroon-Nigeria border. Walking sticks, harvested from the forest in the Cross River, shipped to Nigeria daily and sold to Hausa traders in large bundles; they later sold these to customers as far as Mali, in the heart of West Africa.[45] These sticks (otherwise, *Massularia acuminate*) are known as *kwako (Pako)* or Yoruba chewing sticks. Their harvest and export is carried out by hired harvesters from the Cross River State of Nigeria and also by local village-based harvesters trained by the Nigerian harvesters. There is a major market in West and Central Africa for these chewing sticks: Ijebu-Ode in Western Nigeria. The quantities of chewing sticks in the Cross River trade between 2003 and 2010 was about 10,677,661.5 metric tons, contributing a total of about 14,728,775 fcfa[46] in revenue for those involved.

There is also a very rich trade of fish with Nigerians travelling to Cameroon; they return home with agricultural and forestry products. Trade in kernels, yams, corn, pumpkin, seeds, pepper and cloth from Calabar has generally promoted regional integration while fulfilling the basic needs of the people concerned.[47] Fishermen from Afikpo in Nigeria, fish in the Cross River and set up small huts and a

market within Cameroonian territory. There are other traders from Lagos in Nigeria, Accra in Ghana and Sierra Leone who exploit opportunities in Cameroonian territories, for instance Ejagham.[48] These unceasing economic activities, in spite of the intermittent skirmishes, have continued to undermine laws that regulate movement across the Cameroon-Nigerian border, especially around the Cross River Region.

In addition, some young men and women from the Cameroonian side of the border cross regularly into Ikom in Nigeria for business and other forms of employment. Some of them are employed as casual wage labourers. Others survive in Ikom and return as hawkers of fake medicines and basic necessities like oil and salt. Some young girls from Cameroon sell their bodies in Nigeria, while others travel to Nigeria to pursue post-secondary education in specialised fields. Others earn a living through divination as a form of business.

In the past, commodity exchange was facilitated by barter or direct exchange. At one time, the Portuguese introduced brass rods as a medium of exchange. Other traders were involved in the exchange of livestock, camwood, wild rubber, *eru* (*Gnetum africanum* and *G. buccholzianum),* bush pepper (*piper guineensis*), bush onion (*Afrostyrax Kamerunensis*), palm kernels for slaves, cloth and dyes imported from Calabar, Tivland and Igboland.

Meanwhile, the Banyang sell and continue to trade in forest products. These are sold to expatriate and local buyers from Ikom.[49] In the early 1950s, women from Cameroon traded in Nigerian markets, notably, Sankwala to the North of the Cross River State. They sold palm oil and bush mango and, in exchange, got other commodities like salt, cloth, sugar, matches and candles.[50] The people of Esagem also organised trade between Okuni in present-day Nigeria, Mamfe, Egbekaw, Kesham and Eshobi. In the process, peace and inter-marriage between the people were contracted. This went a long way to secure and sustain long-distance trade across the border.[51]

Concluding Remarks

The nature of interaction between Cameroonians and Nigerians in the Cross River Region over the centuries provides lessons for partitioned people. Africa has for long grappled with the idea of a united entity as a strategy in an aggressive international political arena. A united Africa is necessary because its people are more likely to reap the benefits of unity, the shortcomings notwithstanding. It is therefore incumbent on African countries to be pragmatic in their handling of the artificially created colonial boundaries to ensure peace, stability and development of all African countries.

The international press has painted a very bleak picture of the skirmishes between Cameroonians and Nigerians. This is without an appreciation of the fact that the people of the Cross River Region have always defied official voice in the region, for various reasons. Like elsewhere in the African continent, the people of the Bakassi peninsula have a common history. Prior to their division by colonial rule, they were governed by the *Obong* of Calabar, Nigeria. This means that all the people of this region who now fall under Cameroon and Nigeria took instructions from the *Obong* at one time. Even in the upper Cross River Region of Cameroon and Nigeria, prior to the advent of colonial rule in the area, many of the groups were nations; but the colonial boundary divided them into Nigeria and Cameroon. The same ethnic group had the misfortune of being governed separately by Germany and Britain. In spite of the imposition of border restrictions and their intermittent relaxation from time to time, these groups kept intact their cultural, socio-economic and political relations.

Considering the fact that Nigeria and Cameroon have a very long border of 1650 kms., from the South to the North, and that the volume of trade and other relations between them is considerable, it is imperative for the two governments to intensify official collaboration on a number of issues; foremost among these is the protection of biodiversity for their collective good. Their joint activities in the protection of scarce ecological resources will secure one of the rarest forest ecosystems in the world and attract scholars and tourists to the area. Besides, the promotion of trade and other related activities across the official border posts at Otu and Ekok should be facilitated so that the people of Cameroon and Nigeria can benefit from one another, and people of the same ethnic stock can work together for peace and stability. The several meetings following the settlement of the issue of Bakassi peninsula saw the

have been occasional skirmishes between the Cameroonian forces of law and order and Nigerian militant groups, in recent times, ordinary people have continued to cross the border for purposes of trade and education.

This study has attempted to show that in spite of the disruptive forces affecting interaction between Cameroonians and Nigerians across the border in the Cross River Region, there has been unremitting interaction between groups for several socio-cultural, political and economic reasons. The dominant image of life in the region has been one of regular strife and war; yet, the Cross River Region of Cameroon and Nigeria, like other areas of Africa which were artificially partitioned, has witnessed sustained and amicable interaction between its people. As the two countries engage in continuous dialogue, there is need to reduce friction, tension and war on account of an artificial boundary; indeed, the imperative should be to encourage free movement of people, goods and services. Such a commitment to peaceful co-existence through cross-border activities must be a joint and sustained effort of both governments and the border people. This will be a micro-form of making the world a peaceful global village.

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Second International "Worlds of Labor" Conference

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Paulo Fontes

The second international 'Worlds of Labor' Conference took place in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil from 27-30 November 2012. The meeting was jointly sponsored by the host institution, the Getulio Vargas Foundation (CPDOC/FGV), and the Working Group "Worlds of Labor" of the Brazilian Historians Association. Several Brazilian universities, international institutions such as the German Re:Work project and the Dutch International Institute of Social History also supported the event.

It was the largest meeting on labour history in Brazil. More than three hundred researchers from all over the nation and from seventeen different countries (Argentina, Chile, Uruguay, Bolivia, Mexico, USA, Canada, Portugal, France, Netherlands, Belgium, Austria, Germany, Senegal, South Africa, Iran and Turkey) were present and enthusiastically participated in the in 35 topical sessions and four roundtables. A lot of sessions had simultaneous translations into Portuguese, Spanish and English, the official languages of the event.

The roundtables highlighted the current challenges of labour history worldwide. Themes such as interdisciplinary trends of the discipline, current state of labour history in Latin America, theoretical debates on the concepts of 'work',

'labor' and 'working-class', and possibilities and challenges of 'global labor history' were among the main topics discussed in the four roundtables. Present in these discussions were international scholars such as Marcel Van der Linden from the International Institute of Social History; Peter Alexander from the University of Johannesburg; Andreas Eckert from the Re:Work and University of Humboldt; John French from Duke University; Rana Behal from the University of Delhi; Carlos Illades from the Universidad Nacional de Mexico; Mirta Lobato from the Universidad de Buenos Aires; and Leon Fink from the University of Illinois, Chicago and the editor of *Labor: Studies in Working-Class History of the Americas.* Some important Brazilian labour specialists such as Angela de Castro Gomes (CPDOC/FGV), José Sérgio Leite Lopes (Museu Nacional/UFRJ), Adalberto Cardoso (IESP- UERJ) and Sidney Chalhoub (Unicamp) were also present.

The topical sessions covered a vast range of themes and discussions. Most of them attempted to engage fundamental topics of Brazilian labour history in a broader and transnational perspective. This was particularly evident in the sessions dedicated to the debates on the history of Brazilian slavery, manumissions and abolition and their connections with working-class formation in the late nineteenth century. It was also marked in the examination of the labour-state relations, the role of labour courts and the "populist" and "corporatist" political systems. Alongside innovative approaches to more traditional subjects of labour history as a discipline, such as trade unions, strikes, gender issues and working-class political participations, the conference also discussed topics less analysed in our field, like worker's education, labour and public history, literature, sports and rural workers.

The working group 'Worlds of Labor' of the Brazilian Historians Association (GT Mundos do Trabalho da ANPUH) has a key role in the dissemination and exchange of increasing production in the field of social history of labour in Brazil. Since its inception in 2001, the GT has been promoting seminars and conferences involving researchers linked to the theme. The GT publishes the electronic journal Worlds of Labor (**http://www.periodicos.ufsc.br/index.php/mundosdotrabalho**).

The program of the conference is available at:
http://cpdoc.fgv.br/en/mundosdotrabalho/program

Orders and Itineraries:
Buddhist, Islamic, and Christian Networks in Southern Asia, 900-1900

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Michael Feener

The workshop titled 'Orders and Itineraries: Buddhist, Islamic, and Christian Networks in Southern Asia, 900-1900' on religious networks in southern (South and Southeast) Asia was held on 21-22 February 2013. It was supported by the Asia Research Institute (National University of Singapore), and co-sponsored by the National University of Singapore Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences Religion Cluster. The workshop was organised by Michael Feener of the Department of History and Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore and Anne M. Blackburn of the Department of Asian Studies, Cornell University and Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore. They brought together eighteen speakers including scholars from Sri Lanka, the Philippines, Europe, North America, Australia, and Singapore for two days of presentation and discussion.

As several scholars involved in the workshop observed, specialists on religious traditions of Buddhism, Islam, Hinduism, and Christianity rarely have the opportunity to develop a sustained comparative conversation. Although the workshop was not originally envisioned to include Hinduism, papers related to Hinduism were included, introducing important points of similarity and contrast for scholars working on the other religious traditions. For many in the room, this was the first chance to investigate comparatively the history of religious orders (corporate structures of ritual and interpretive specialists).

Orders and Itineraries: Buddhist, Islamic, and Christian Networks in Southern Asia, c. 900-1900
organised by the Asia Research Institute, and co-sponsored by the Religion Cluster at the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, NUS
21 - 22 Feb 2013

The workshop organisers stimulated conversations about the viability of 'orders' as a focal category for the study of mobile religious specialists, their institutions, and their networks. Questions were raised as to what extent does the term 'order' fruitfully articulate the combination of discursive, ritual, material, and institutional practices that produce and define collectives of ritual and interpretive specialists? Does the term 'order' allow attention to the activities of religious specialists at a range of social and geographic scales?

The workshop also aimed to develop a comparative perspective on the periodisation of orders, institutional forms and activities. The aim was to discern whether temporal patterns were visible within and/or across religious traditions in terms of how mobile religious specialists were institutionalised, integrated into new local settings, and participated in text production and communicative technologies. During the workshop, this led to discussions of how new economic, political, and cultural processes associated with 'early modern' and colonial eras may have impacted, or been shaped by, the activities of orders and their members.

Another fruitful line of inquiry that developed during the workshop concerned the processes through which 'orders' are localised in regional settings. Which technologies participated in the extension and localisation of 'orders'? What were the contexts of intelligibility that allowed locals to recognise and engage with members of newly arrived 'orders'? How did the attractiveness of 'orders' relate to existing and shifting forms of local and sub-regional social identification? What made a particular 'order' and its network attractive to some local practitioners rather than others?

Scholars from across the globe participated at the workshop, including Andrea Acri (Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore), Ismail Alatas (University of Michigan), Martin van Bruinessen (Utrecht University and National University of Singapore), Nola Cooke (Australian National University), Kenneth Dean (McGill University), Carolina Dionco (De La Salle University), Nancy Florida (University of Michigan), Ramani Hettiarachchi (University of Peradeniya), Lim Peng Han

(Loughborough University), Masao Imamura (National University of Singapore and Harvard-Yenching Institute), Alexey Kirichenko (Moscow State University), Oona Paredes (National University of Singapore), Ian Sinclair (Monash University), Amy Holmes-Tagchungdarpa (University of Alabama), Torsten Tschacher (University of Göttingen), Gerrit de Vylder (Leuven University), Rick Weiss (Victoria University of Wellington) and Ines Županov (Centre Nationale de la Recherche Scientifique).

Sport and the 'Nation': Heterogeneous Perspectives

Amitava Chatterjee, (ed), *People at Play: Sport, Culture and Nationalism,* **Setu Prakashani, Kolkata & Delhi, 2013, pp. 230, Rs 350.**
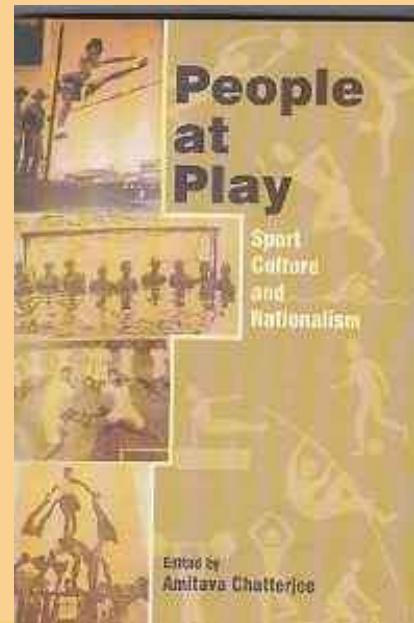
Nikhilesh Bhattacharya

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For a slim volume, *People at Play* uses a lot of words to explain what it seeks to achieve. The blurb on the back cover claims, with a missing conjunction, an unnecessary preposition and at least one extra comma, that 'this book will quench the thirst of students and scholars of history, cultural studies, sociology, as well as to anyone seeking a national perspective on the political and economic salience of contemporary and traditional sport in India'. Boria Majumdar's 'Preface' (i-ii), Kaushik Bandopadhyay's 'Foreword' (iii-vii) and Amitava Chatterjee's 'Introduction' (xi-xxiv) all have something to say about the book's focus. A number of contributors, too, keep up a running commentary of what their essays are about.

The book, however, is curiously silent about how it came into being. In the absence of an explanation, the suspicion grows that it is the final outcome of an academic conference; for what but such a gathering could have brought together topics as diverse as the physical culture movement in nineteenth-century Bengal and the use of sport in F. Scott Fitzgerald's novels? The eleven essays in the collection clearly lack unity of purpose and, in some cases, unity of theme. Loosely grouping them together because they deal with 'sport', 'culture' and 'nationalism' in America and pre- and post-Independence India is an easy but less-than-satisfactory solution.

A couple of essays go off in tangents instead of building into any grand narrative. One such is Binayak Dutta's 'Constructing Colonial Masculinity through Everyday Life: Narrating the Practice of Game as Sports among European Officers of North East India' (pp. 150-160), which examines how ideas of colonial masculinity permeated the hunting memoirs of a few male European administrators in the north-eastern region of British India. So is Shubhankar Roy's 'The Politics of Sports and the Myth of the Nation: Selected Novels of F. Scott Fitzgerald' (pp. 177-198), a study of two novels by Fitzgerald that use references to sport to reveal the rigid stratification of American social life.

Even the essays that deal with the same questions often come up with contradictory answers. Which sport, for example, was preeminent as a nationalist tool in colonial India? Boria Majumdar and Sean Brown root for cricket in 'Why Baseball, Why Cricket? Differing Nationalisms, Differing Challenges' (pp. 1-25), while Debashis Majumder proposes football in 'Footballing Nationalism in Colonial Bengal: A Comparative Analysis' (pp. 161-168). Amitava Chatterjee, on the other hand, seems to lean towards primarily indigenous physical activities such as wrestling, stick-fighting and sword-play in 'Male Body in the Making: Physical Culture Movement in Colonial Bengal' (pp. 128-149). The answer probably lies somewhere in between, but does it serve the purpose of a book to present contesting claims, one after the other, without any attempt at synthesis?

The book contains other disquieting silences. Debashis Majumder's essay and the one co-authored by Amitava Chatterjee and Amitabha Bandopadhyay, 'Alternative Trends in Bengal Football: From Nationalism to Sub-Nationalism' (pp. 169-176), both mention Mohammedan Sporting's amazing streak in the 1930s when it won the Calcutta Football League five times in a row between 1934 and 1938 (it was also the first Indian team to win the League) and the IFA Shield in 1936. In the sporting context, Mohammedan Sporting's achievements appear as significant as Mohun Bagan's historic triumph in 1911 (when it became the first Indian team to win the IFA Shield). And like most sporting successes, Mohammedan Sporting's exploits resonated beyond the field of play. In December 1940, when Mohammedan Sporting became the first Indian team to win the Durand Cup in Delhi, the final was reportedly watched by 100,000 people, including important Muslim leaders who flew in from far-flung cities such as Calcutta, Dacca, Hyderabad and Bhopal.[1] However, the two essays that deal with Bengal football in the present volume do not delve deep into the fascinating story of an all-Muslim team that sometimes sourced players from the farthest corners of the Indian subcontinent and played in boots, bucking the barefoot trend in Indian football. Amitava Chatterjee and Amitabha Bandopadhyay meticulously record how Muslims joined the celebrations after the 1911 triumph of the Mohun Bagan team composed entirely of Hindus. But they do not examine how, less than three decades later, Mohammedan Sporting's achievements were viewed by Hindus, colonial Bengal and the rest of India.

'Alternative Trends in Indian Football' claims Indian football, post-Independence, can be reduced to the rivalry between Mohun Bagan and East Bengal that has its roots in the east-west ethnic divide

between two sets of Bengalis. However, the authors neglect to mention that the Indian national football team played in four straight Olympic Games between 1948 and 1960 and twice won gold medals at the Asian Games, in 1951 New Delhi and 1962 Jakarta. Every national team of the period had quite a few Bengal-based footballers, including players from both Mohun Bagan and East Bengal. Both the gold medals were won under Bengali captains, Sailen Manna in 1951 and Chuni Goswami in 1962. Was the fate of the national team of no consequence to football fans in Bengal? How did Mohun Bagan and East Bengal supporters react to their respective heroes working together to bring glory to a newly independent country? We are not told. Most importantly, even if the fans of the two clubs were myopic enough to give more importance to the Calcutta derby (as indeed they might have, going by the frequent incidents of violence that marred matches between the rivals right from 1947), should serious scholars of sport follow suit and take a similarly reductionist view of Indian football? Or is such a view adopted simply because it fits more snugly into the authors' hypothesis?

Boria Majumdar and Sean Brown's essay is one of the few in *People at Play* that has a cogent argument, but it is still guilty of ahistorical simplifications and significant omissions. The essay claims that Americans in the second half of the nineteenth century ditched the English sport of cricket and adopted baseball instead because they had already fought, and won, two wars against the mother country and had no further need to fight her at her own game. The Indian subcontinent on the other hand was under colonial rule till the middle of the twentieth century and saw cricket as a means to engage the rulers in a contest, hoping for symbolic victories in sport, which is but 'war minus the shooting'. To substantiate the point, writes Majumdar and Brown, 'even when India won gold medals in field hockey in the Olympic Games in the years 1928-56, hockey could never rival cricket in colonial India. This is because Britain refused to participate in Olympic hockey contests in the years 1928-36 knowing that the Indians were favourites to win the gold.... Absence of competitions against the coloniser, it can be argued, relegated hockey in the Indian sporting hierarchy' (p. 19).

Even if the discussion is confined to international sport, two omissions, connected to each other, tarnish the argument. One, the authors neglect to mention that though India started playing Test cricket in 1932, it took the national team a few months shy of twenty years to win a Test match against England, or any country for that matter. The innings win against the 'coloniser' in Madras in February 1952, four-and-a-half years after Independence, was India's twenty-fifth Test match. The record against England till that match was played: Fourteen; lost seven and drawn seven. How did cricket remain the top sport in India over two winless decades, even allowing for the break in sporting activities during the Second World War? This is especially strange because, in the meantime, the Indian hockey team had already beaten Great Britain on the biggest stage of all, the Olympic final in 1948 London no less, to win its fourth consecutive gold medal.

The most persuasive argument, and one that Majumdar and Brown carefully avoid making, is that sports in colonial India depended heavily on the patronage of the colonial rulers (and the maharajas and nawabs). While Indian hockey was routinely snubbed by authorities in England, cricket's fate was far different. When the officials of the newly formed Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) went to England in June 1929 to seek affiliation to the Imperial Cricket Conference (the earlier avatar of the International Cricket Council, or ICC), they were received with open arms and promised matches in England on the first opportunity, which happened to be in 1932.[2] It is not difficult to understand why cricket trumped hockey in the hierarchy of Indian sports when it becomes apparent that the hierarchy was constructed by the rulers, not the ruled.[3]

In the final analysis, the most interesting bit about *People at Play* is probably what it does not say: What it hints at but does not probe. That is scant reward for the reader who has struggled through a text littered with grammatical errors, not to mention missing em-dashes, unnumbered footnotes (viii) and repetition of a whole paragraph in a different font (p. 180).

1 Novy Kapadia, "Triumphs and Disasters: The Story of Indian Football, 1889-2000," in Paul Dimeo and James H. Mills (eds.), *Soccer and South Asia: Empire, Nation, Diaspora*, Frank Cass, London, 2001,

pp. 21-22.

2 Anthony De Mello, *Portrait of Indian Sport*, D.B. Taraporevala Sons & Company Private Limited, Bombay, 1959, pp. 6-7. De Mello, as the first honorary general secretary of the BCCI, went to the Imperial Cricket Conference in June 1929 along with the first BCCI president, R.E. Grant Govan. De Mello, too, is guilty of omitting the fact that a proposed MCC tour to India in November-December, 1931 was scrapped because of Mahatma Gandhi's civil disobedience movement.

3 Boria Majumdar and Sean Brown's article is slightly dated: It appeared in The International Journal of the History of Sport, Volume 24, Issue 2, 2007. Majumdar has since reviewed his own position on hockey's importance vis-a-vis cricket in India. See Boria Majumdar and Nalin Mehta, *Olympics: The India Story*, Harper Sport, Noida, 2012 revised edition.

A Book That Re-Forges Our Thinking On Cities
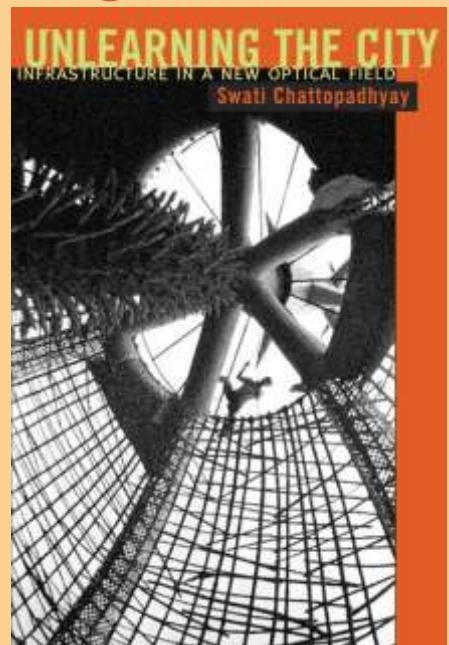
Swati Chattopadhyay, Unlearning the City – Infrastructure in a New Optical Field, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 2012.

Swathi Shivanand

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In her famous essay 'Can the Subaltern Speak?' Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak states: 'In seeking to speak to (rather than listen to or speak for) the historically muted subject of the subaltern woman, the postcolonial intellectual *systematically* "unlearns" female privilege. This systematic unlearning involves learning to critique postcolonial discourse with the best tools it can provide and not simply substituting the lost figure of the colonized'.[1] This brief extract from Spivak raises three key concerns that are central to the book under review here: Unlearning privilege, using tools of dominant discourse to critique it, and finally, the complex question of representation of the subaltern.

In her new book *Unlearning the City: Infrastructure in a New Optical Field,* Swati Chattopadhyay takes from Spivak this methodology of unlearning, and attempts to render the 'hard' field of urban infrastructure 'soft' and 'malleable'; she does so by focusing on *how* it has been made amenable to unintended uses. The task she sets out for herself is to delink infrastructure from its position as an essential constituent of modernist imagination – 'as *the* sign of the modern' – by bringing to bear on it an optical lens afforded by popular visual culture. This unlearning of privilege – a privilege that has played out in scholarship on cities through arguments either advocating for or opposing modernist visions of shaping cities and communities – lies in her attempt to bring the concerns of Subaltern Studies around notions of representation, dominance and marginality, onto the unlikely domain of urban infrastructure; she invests also in unraveling the trajectory of the subaltern and the popular in this terrain. What is particularly interesting about the book is that it avoids the overly familiar trope of the 'subaltern' slum-dweller subject to look for traces of the subaltern and subaltern activity elsewhere: In the remaking of spaces and politics of the city through street cricket (Chapter 4); wall writing and its anti-colonial and anti-nationalist histories (Chapter 5); plebian art on public buses in Kolkata (Chapter 6); and finally, Durga Puja festivities, their 'temporary' infrastructure, their interruptions of capitalist time and space and their simultaneous co-option by and resistance of capitalism (Chapter 7). The stage is set from the first chapter itself when she considers the world of 'uninterrupted flows' in modernist visions (of capital, time and global infrastructure, as seen in real-estate advertisements) that has to always confront the real world of the bumpy and local (of unpaved roads, electricity cuts and traffic jams). Chattopadhyay argues that investigating the spaces where capital fixes itself, grounds itself, is the key to understanding the flow and circulation of capital; spatial infrastructure is that point of fixity which allows one to collapse the binaries between global and local, high culture and low culture, as well as to discuss anew the tropes of marginality and minority that are crucial questions for researchers working on questions of urbanity.

Addressed to theoreticians and practitioners of the urban, the book sets out to 'question the paradigms of urbanism within which we have formed habits of imagining, researching, and teaching about the city' (p. ix), and thus, to defamiliarise existing vocabulary 'from its existing certitudes and generate new contexts of meaning' (p. ix). In this way, Chattopadhyay sets up for herself the formidable task of thinking through and arriving at new paradigms for theory and practice, as well as the contested nature of their relationship. Her focus on practice leads her to Michel de Certeau and his understanding of the subversive potential of practices and she argues that '…practice, in denying representation, remains beyond the reach of the state or capital to shape according to its own dictates. The representational indeterminacy of practice affords prospects and sites of resistance' (p. 46). Because her task is also to revise urban theory while defamiliarising it, Chattopadhyay employs the notion of the 'everyday' as a bridge between theory and practice to argue that the role of the theorist is 'to be the translator of the everyday and common sense' (Antonia Gramsci) and 'to investigate the extensive terrain of resistance performed everyday by subordinated groups, which strategically strides the gap between the public and hidden transcripts' and whose devices are 'anonymity, ubiquity, and disguise' (James Scott). In doing so, the author seeks to challenge a 'dominant order of representation' by adopting a vantage point that allows one to excavate viewpoints on the urban, used by a majority of people to make sense of city life.

The subaltern and their 'infrapolitics' (understood as 'low-key forms of resistance' and as 'the foundation for more legible and legitimate forms of politics') then becomes an obvious category with which to study the urban. Infrastructure is provided another framework following Spivak, who considers it not only 'the effort to establish, implement and monitor structures that allow subaltern resistance to be

located and heard' (p. 58) but also renders any representation of subaltern social action 'fragmentary', 'episodic' and 'contingent'. Such a formulation argues for understanding urban theory itself as infrastructure which provides 'access' to the urban but also demands that this infrastructure ceaselessly rework its vocabulary to fulfill its purpose of locating the dispersed spaces of the subaltern.

This need to rework vocabularies is an idea Chattopadhyay draws from philosopher Richard Rorty, who, in his book *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity,* argues against an essential nature of things and proposes that we continually abandon old metaphors for describing configurations and take on new ones arrived at by working with other human beings.[2] Apart from rendering reality purely discursive, Rorty, in this book, frees language from any permanent connection with reality and renders it purely contingent. This does not mean, however, that there is no reality or our descriptions of reality are false. Chattopadhyay takes forward this opening provided by Rorty to explore ideas such as provincial cosmopolitanism exhibited in artworks about the urban (Chapter 3) and the history of cricket, cricket venues and CLR James (Chapter 4).

The question of representation that underlies the book allows also for a productive exploration of the term 'popular', which Chattopadhyay argues 'is by definition heterogeneous and exceeds the bounds of both bourgeois civil society and the domain of subalternity'. Using popular culture to discuss the materiality of cities is to explore that moment of transformation of the subaltern and its emergence into view in public space. While acknowledging Partha Chatterjee's argument that the 'nature of entanglements' in the urban does not lend itself to an easy distinction between elite and subaltern politics, Chattopadhyay argues that this new notion of the 'political' must address the 'nebulous zone between subalternity and popular culture' and help us understand the 'kind of communication and space the urban subalterns establish among themselves and between themselves and the elite on an everyday basis in the city.' The hope then is that '…the language of the space between subalternity and popular culture in Indian cities might contaminate the language of urban theory sufficiently, deeply enough for us to unlearn the city' (p. 252).

Unlearning the City is a book that seeks to systematically undercut the terms and conditions of legibility in the urban and to bring to the fore that which has been rendered illegible. Doing so requires opening up unfamiliar spaces hitherto considered not fully urban – because of its 'backwardness', its non-conformity with the standards of urbanity – to visual-theoretical scrutiny. This is the unlearning of privilege by using the tools of modernist discourse – namely, infrastructure – not to replace or undermine it, but to use it to excavate subalternity in the city.

Although it might seem to be an eclectic collection of essays, the book's value lies in its bringing a new language of visuality into urban studies. This language takes into cognisance a grounded, historical and experiential understanding of the city, and rejects a simplistic narrative that is based on a modernist, teleological, unfolding of capital.

1 G.C. Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?", in C. Nelson and L. Grossberg (eds.) *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, University of Illinois Press, Urbana and Chicago, 1988, pp. 271-313.
2 R. Rorty, "The Contingency of Language", in *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, University of Cambridge Press, Cambridge, 1993, pp. 3-22.

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