



Periodisation and the Twentieth Century: Grappling with the Pre-Histories of Bangladesh

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This paper¹ discusses the first (1905-1911) and second (1947) partitions of Bengal as well as the history of Pakistan movement within a larger twentieth century history of Bangladesh. As one of the nation-states formed partially – but not completely – out of the colonial structures of power embedded within the British Empire, the state of Bangladesh invites reflection about the nature of early twentieth century political change. The paper will begin with a review of the relevant historiography on both the first (1905-1911) and second (1947) partitions of Bengal. It will also include a brief discussion of the East Pakistan period (1947-1971). The paper will also suggest that the first and second partitions along with the East Pakistan period of history point not only to the result of Bangladesh, but to multiple points in a broader regional history.

This regional history demonstrates the search for political community outside the nation form and therefore requires reconsideration in relation to the emergence of Bangladesh. The history of twentieth century South Asia points to two particular current debates into which a consideration of Bengali Muslim intellectual history presents a valuable contribution. First, the historical relationship between arguments for recognition as well as those for redistribution of resources for marginalised groups is a debate in Anglo-American philosophy that warrants an engagement with Bengali Muslim intellectual history of the twentieth century. Secondly, this history, and particularly its role in the creation of a Pakistan concept, merits a close look at current debates about the 'pre-history' of nations, an issue of concern to historians of Asia and Africa today.



The relationship between recognition and redistribution is a one that has captured the attention of generations of political theorists working in European and American contexts. Debates about recognition and redistribution have been raging in the Anglo-American philosophical community, with a major point being *Redistribution or Recognition: A Political-Philosophical Exchange* (2003) by Axel Honneth and Nancy Fraser, which is a detailed debate about the nature and meaning of social justice, and starts with the premise that in the modern capitalist world, the role of a state's relationship to redistribution of resources and its role in the recognition of particular identities (based on race, gender, or other markers of difference) has yet to be fully theoretically investigated. At the risk of over-simplification, Fraser offers the position that recognition of difference and redistribution of resources are separate entities, whereas Honneth sees redistribution as imbricated within notions of recognition. When trying to understand the twentieth century history in South Asia before and after the 1947 partition of colonial India, we find that approaches to recognition of Muslims, suffering from marginalisation or political injustice, has been implicitly and explicitly linked to movements for redistribution of resources.

Viewing the history of the twentieth century through the poles of recognition and redistribution leads also to a consideration of the 'pre-histories' of nations. This issue has commanded serious attention in modern South Asian historiography, given long-standing historical questions on the extent of colonial institutions and ideas on the making of nations compared to the indigenous nature of South Asian nations (cf. Chakrabarty 2011; Chatterjee 1986). Scholars of South Asian history have recently turned not only to the 'pre-history' of the nation but other macro-level processes of caste, colonialism, and modernity.

In the June 2013 *American Historical Review* forum on Pre-Histories, scholars examine how histories across time and space may productively engage with the 'pre' attached to most periodisations of nations, modernities, and colonialisms. Given recent discussions of Bangladesh's emergence, the new histories of Bangladesh may best follow O'Hanlon, who remarks in the forum that "histories of modernity in India may be best understood in terms of uneven and sometimes paradoxical continuities rather than profound rupture and a great 'pre', whether this is the 'pre' of old-fashioned modernisation theory or the 'pre' of a communitarian past that in some ways seems to stand outside of history" (O'Hanlon 2013: 767).



First Partition, 1905-1911

The first partition of 1905 to 1911 is usually referred to in the historical literature such as Cronin in 1977 or Molla in 1981 as pre-cursors to the creation of Pakistan. As Cronin states, the first partition was a “critical milestone in the ultimate movement for Pakistan” (1977: 228). However, as the research of Cronin and Molla and studies of conceptions of Pakistan in the Bengali language demonstrate (Bose 2014: Ch. 5), it is impossible to identify a direct link between the rhetoric and politics of the first partition and the rhetoric and politics that transformed into a movement for Pakistan. Rather, particular contingencies, such as the rising nationalist movement challenging colonial rule in Bengal, forced the colonial state in the early years of the twentieth century to conceive of Bengal, and its partition, in ‘communal’ terms.

As Cronin himself recognizes, the partition idea did not originate as a scheme to divide Bengal along religious lines. Curzon actually “sought to separate Dacca from Calcutta for precisely the same reason that he wished to exclude the Mahratta Brahmin center of Nagpur from the same administration as Poona – to divide a politically troublesome indigenous elite into competing local centers” (Cronin 1977: 226). However, when the administration faced what they felt were unprecedented and unheard of levels of opposition as well as the presence of Muslim nobles who broadcast their opposition to the opposition, the idea of Eastern Bengal as a Muslim place, and as a coherent space, began to enter official discourse.

In 1905, the Provincial Muhammadan Association came into being, which sought to capitalise on new economic opportunities in the new eastern province. The formation of this association led to the creation of the Muslim League in Dacca, focused on representation in the legislative council. This momentous event in 1906 is what has captivated historians like Cronin and Molla, but as both show in their research, the actual work of the government of East Bengal focused on developing communications, trade, industry, handloom weaving, the construction of schools, agricultural experiments, and the port of Chittagong. This was not done under the guise of religion, as such, but subsumed underneath a regional interest. Girish Chandra Sen, the *Brahmo* scholar, famously supported the partition on purely regional lines (Sen 1904: 119-22). During the 1905-1911 period, though the boundaries that roughly would encompass what became Bangladesh in 1971 were drawn, the actual content of the East Bengal government was linked very little to religious or ethnicised identity and much more to the im-



perial politics of redistribution. The cultural and intellectual history, as well as the politics of the state at this time shows a link between the politics of recognition and redistribution, but hardly in ways that point easily to what became Bangladesh.

Older and recent work regarding such politics confirms that the link between recognition and redistribution demands renewed attention in the pre-histories of Bangladesh. Consider for example, Sumit Sarkar's pioneering studies of texts written near the tail end of the first partition. In his essay "Two Muslim Tracts for Peasants: Bengal, 1909-10", Sarkar examines Mohsin Ulla's *Bureer Soota* (1909/10), and *Krishak Bandhu* (1910), both from Calcutta, and both produced at the end of the first partition, in the wake of a rapidly rising Bengali Muslim middle class in the eastern side that became Bangladesh (Sarkar 2002: 96-111). Sarkar presents *Krishak Bandhu*, funded by Reazuddin Ahmad in Calcutta, editor of the *Islam Pracharak*, as an example of an elite, urbane, and urban Muslim writer manipulating religious identity – and the popular stereotype of the agrarian Muslim being exploited by Hindu landlords – from a vantage point far from the actual politics on the ground. In the 112-page poem, peasants are identified as Muslim and a range of protagonists – zamindars, moneylenders, policemen, and shopkeepers – are identified as Hindus. Attacks on Hindus are prominent and any mention of Muslims as landlords or elites is absent.

Whereas this is one, and well-documented version of the pre-history of Bangladesh, Sarkar's point is to show a concurrent and far more radical vision embodied in the texts of the period, seen through *Bureer Soota*. In this text, written by an author who identifies himself unlike the author of *Krishak Bandhu*, there is a compilation of essays, verse, and news clippings. There is no mention specifically of a 'Muslim' demand, but of rent-reduction, extension of *praja* rights to land, end to landlord encroachment on traditional customs, free legal aid for tenants, and restrictions on interest. Free primary education is also mentioned. Is this also a pre-history of Bangladesh? This would show, when seen together in the context of imperial changes in late colonial India, a tension between redistribution and recognition, embodied, in *Bureer Soota*, with its folk tales and critiques of both indigo planters and *sati*.

This sort of understanding of the pre-history of Bangladesh does not revolve around Hindu-Muslim tensions, and as Sartori in his recent work has pointed out, a "prior elaboration of a discourse of the Muslim cultivator [...] was not fundamentally concerned with the relationship



between Muslims and Hindus” (2012: 6). Rather it is concerned with the connection of Islam with property, not so much with religious identity. As he shows, liberal colonial thought merged with the new, nineteenth century Faraizi strand of Islam, in which *prajas* were independent producers with a stake in the soil rather than contracted labourers. In Sarkar and Sartori’s research, what we are able to see is that though understandings of Islam are by no means absent, neither religion nor ethnicised identity is the basis of a pre-history of Bangladesh.

The Pakistan Movement and the Second Partition

To move to another moment in the pre-history of Bangladesh that is over-determined by the nation, the late colonial moment of the Pakistan movement deserves clarification. Rather than a moment of manipulation or deception, a localised understanding of the tensions between recognition and redistribution, embodied in the creative outpouring of poetry and polemic in Bengali, occurred in the guise of Pakistani writing and thought.²

Though Muslims had been writing in Bengali for many generations and from the 1910s to the early 1940s maintaining a growing voice in Bengali letters, in 1942 young rising stars of Bengali Muslim journalism like Abul Kalam Shamsuddin, Mujibur Rahman Khan, and Abul Mansur Ahmed began the East Pakistan Renaissance Society, the first institutional instantiation of the Pakistan concept. All of these individuals were recent migrants into the city of Calcutta and unlike Muslim intellectuals elsewhere in India, such as Delhi or Lahore, these people were from small towns, or mufassil locations, throughout riverine eastern Bengal. Unlike their counterparts in prosperous Hindu communities, who had the benefits of Western education since the 1800s, and unlike Muslim intellectuals from traditionally well-heeled families who educated their sons in Persian, Arabic, and Urdu, these Bengalis were often the first in their generation to migrate to the urban centre of Calcutta, the first to obtain a formal education, and the first from their home villages to enter the public world of politics in Calcutta. Many were also involved in the growing world of literary societies in Calcutta, starting from the 1911 Bengali Muslim Sahitya Samiti.

In August of 1942, along with several others, these upstarts focused on the creation of literature itself as a central platform for their politics. Shamsuddin declared that “[...] we understood the call to Pakistan to be not just a political one, but one inspired by and based on literary



and cultural strength" (Bose 2014: 284). Meeting throughout August, the group issued a formal declaration of principles in September of 1942. Nearly all of the objectives and public speeches were published in *Masik Mohammadi*, the most widely read monthly periodical in Bengali produced for a Muslim readership, from 1942 to 1945, the years when the society was most active. As one of the most vocal leaders of the organisation, Shamsuddin articulated a broad plan for literary-cultural autonomy in line with the concept of Pakistan. Not exactly a challenge to the so-called "Two-Nation Theory" that alleged the existence of a Hindu Hindustan and a Muslim Pakistan, this plan was rather a revision of that concept to include a fully-fledged Bengali Pakistan that had its own unique and internally understood elements of culture.

Shamsuddin interpreted Pakistan as referring to a "[...] struggle for freedom not just for one *desh*, but for many *deshes*, many *jatis*, as India is a large federation of *jatis*" (1994: 364). This signals an intervention into the history of ideas about selfhood in Indian conversations, as it creatively and consciously played with markers of difference. From this foundation, Shamsuddin declared the overall mission of the Renaissance Society to be the promotion of *swatantrata*, or difference, in literature and culture. In this formulation, "difference" would reflect the nature of Bengali Muslim intellectuals, whose worlds were thoroughly different than that of the Congress nationalist elite and elite urban and urbane Urdu-speaking Muslims. Abul Mansur Ahmed was initially sceptical of the idea of Pakistan. Given his commitment to the rights of peasants and workers and his immersion in the politics of a changing rural economy in the eastern countryside he thought the concept was too vague to account for the problems plaguing Bengali society. But, then, with the rise of a book published by the Society in 1942 his views began to change.

Pakistan was published in 1942 by the Society, authored by Mujibur Rahman Khan. This book was the first published attempt in Bengali to intellectually outline the Pakistan idea in Bengal. Two factors squarely planted Mujibur Rahman Khan's conception of Pakistan into a revolutionary and inspirational framework. First, Pakistan's entire existence as a new nation would base itself on language and literature. He cited a galaxy of models, like the writers of France and Russia, whose literature provided the basis for their respective nationalist sources of selfhood. Other precedents like English in the U.S.A. were discussed.

In addition to language, the book argued that minorities in a centralised government, whether colonial or post-colonial, would always be



disempowered in relation to the majority. With the inspiration coming from the distinctive Bengali Muslim experience, the idea of Pakistan aimed to universalise the minority problem. It would provide the means for all groups to fully realise their self-determined existence. Like the Pakistan theorists of other parts of India, the precise details of this entire program were not given but rather made a rhetorical effect on the situation facing Indian Muslim activists of the era. After reading this book, Abul Mansur Ahmed came to one of the East Pakistani Renaissance Society (EPRS) meetings in Calcutta and became an ardent admirer of the goal of protecting minorities in a future post-colonial India. Initially, he felt wary of how a movement that invoked religion so vaguely might be vulnerable to a takeover by mullahs and bigoted religious leaders, but now he began to promote Pakistan as an attack on unjust majoritarian governance and as an anti-colonial critique.

Abul Mansur Ahmed then attended every EPRS meeting in Calcutta in 1943 and 1944. In 1943, both the Calcutta and Dacca societies held large-scale meetings promoting their cause. Both of these meetings' proceedings were published in and received wide-spread circulation in prominent newspapers of the time. Ahmed stated in the Calcutta meeting the agenda of the EPRS society to provide for total and absolute freedom:

Pakistan is not just for the ten crores of Muslims and their "community"—it is a claim for the thirty crores of minorities in India and their full religious, agricultural, and geographic and territorial rights. "Pakistan" has provided inspiration for the common people of India to voice their own identities and has given a language of freedom for all *jatis* (cit. in Karim 1968: 71).

After the Calcutta and then a later Dacca festival in 1943, the EPRS set out to fully document local forms of language and folklore and was noticed by major newspapers in Calcutta. Collecting folklore and preserving it scientifically had been in process for decades informally, but now it had a specific purpose with the concept of Pakistan.

In Ahmed's terms, religion was trans-regional even if all the nations that professed the same religion were not politically united. In his worldview, the Muslims of India and Muslims all over the world shared a universalist, trans-regional sensibility. This was a part of religion's strength and beauty, its universalist, and aspirational, ideals. Ahmed cited the most liberal parts of the Qur'an as the basis of Pakistan. Ahmed's example is the surah, *al-Qafirun* 109: 06, which states "to you your religion and to me, mine." And further states "This liberalism



is the foundation of Pakistan” (cit. in Karim 1968: 139). This is not exactly a plea for tolerance, and indeed surah 109 can be read in a variety of ways, but here for Ahmad it is a plea for the recognition of Islam as a visible portion of the larger locality of Bengal that would co-exist with other religious groups. It also signals the usage of Islam as an inspiration for how the modern post-colonial state would look, a state where ideals from Islam would be visible and publicly included in governance.

But culture, or as he began to call it, ‘tamaddun’ did not possess trans-regional powers and only existed within a particular territorial, linguistic, and sub-linguistic (Bengali Muslim as opposed to general Bengali) region. And for full freedom and self-determination to occur, these self-contained, territorially bound cultures must develop to their full potential. The society would create a space for the flowering of Bengali Muslim language and culture. The usage of tamaddun provokes inquiry, given that the word in Urdu carries a particular and significant intellectual history. Initially denoting ‘civilisation,’ the usage of the word tamaddun to denote culture has been traced to the 1890s, when it was used to describe in Urdu the history of Lakhnau as a place with distinctive elements such as architecture.

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In the Bengal context, writers such as Abul Mansur Ahmed were disconnected from these Urdu conversations as they were not participants, but rather distant spectators utilising these intellectual developments for wholly different purposes. Tamaddun is deployed to describe specifically Bengali Muslim elements about the Bengali language and landscape, stated within the context of elaborating a plan for self-determination. Abul Mansur Ahmed produced such a culture concept in opposition to ‘sanskriti’, a term for culture that for him denoted Hindu culture. By doing this, he maintained the flexible and multi-lingual understanding of a proposed Eastern Pakistan at various levels – at a regional Bengali level (inclusive of Hindu and Muslim elements for him) and a larger pan-Pakistani level. Tamaddun, though known as a concept in South Asia, was used as a new term to denote culture that would fit into the new concept of Pakistan. This context, comparable to the context of Punjab in the twentieth century, places the Bengali Muslim culture concept into a predicament aimed to rework existing notions of sameness and difference, as we have seen with earlier engagement with terms like ‘desh’ and ‘jati’.

This set of ideas did not occur under a unified banner of all Muslim voices in Bengal. Abul Mansur Ahmed was certainly aware of critiques,



many of them from Congress members (including many Bengali Muslims), who found Pakistan to be such a narrow-minded idea, 'only for Muslims', and for some, tending toward fascism. When confronted with such critiques, he put forth a defense of the distinctiveness of culture. Empty nationalisms, without any localized content, seen by Ahmed as emanating from the Western world, would flatten out difference and render the distinctiveness of each culture obsolete.

Ahmed's Pakistan referred to the potential for the Pakistan idea to provide for the actual liberation of groups and individuals from centralising, imperialistic tendencies inherent in the Indian National Congress and the British Empire. For him, this signalled the eradication of local hierarchies between Hindus and Muslims in Bengal, not only an abstract critique of British colonialism. Like Habibullah Bahar, another Bengali Pakistan theorist, Ahmed followed the Communist International support of minority self-determination. Communists who were supportive of the Pakistan idea on this basis, like M.N. Roy, supported the EPRS' broader movement of constructing a viable Bengali Muslim 'culture.' Ahmed emphasised the universalising tendencies that other propagators before him voiced, so that "Pakistan is not just for the lives of Muslims, not just for the lives of Hindus and Muslims of India, but for the future well-being of the whole world" (cit. in Karim 1968: 71).

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Thus, for Ahmed Pakistan was a solution to modern political life, given the complexities of a given culture and trans-regional elements of identity. As Devji (2013) argues, the power of Pakistan as a concept was precisely because of its status as a new nationalism based not in the blood or the soil, but in the abstract idea of a nation not grounded in geography, history, or local culture. The importance of the Bengali Muslim iteration of the Pakistan concept shows the elasticity of the idea itself given how grounded in locality it was during the late colonial period.

East Pakistan, 1947-1971

The third moment – that of East Pakistan, in existence from 1947 to 1971 – presents a framework with many issues to discuss. In this context, I examine the concept of Pakistan through the writings of the intelligentsia in the 1950s and 60s, particularly in the journal *Concept of Pakistan*³, most active throughout the 1960s, and alive until the middle of 1971. Written in English, the journal featured regular advertisements for the learning of Bengali for non-Bengali speakers, the "Bangla Shikhun" advertisements, alongside a smattering of writing



that aimed to merge the two wings into a new plane of pan-Pakistani life.

One such writing, a serialised play, "Twin Souls", by Ikram Azam who worked for the Pakistan Council on National Integration translated into Bengali by Mesbahuddin Ahmad, appeared throughout 1967, and detailed a Major Moinul Islam, Bengali, posted in Rawalpindi during the 1965 War, his Punjabi wife, Maryam, and their friend, a Pathan Dr Khan, who met and fell in love with his Bengali wife while studying at Dacca Medical College. The play begins with descriptions of "East Pakistani folk music" playing in the background, and chairs, and art from East Pakistan, adorning the homes of West Pakistanis, in the opening scene. As a statement about what many in Pakistan dreamt could happen, both couples who married across the Eastern and Western wings and had to fight against their parents who were against such marriages. Their married lives as well as postings in the West showed the Major that the poverty and problems of corruption affected both West and East, and that Pakistan as an ideal aimed to unite and transcend particularity, but yet celebrate locality of language, culture, and ethnicity. In a telling passage when the Major's son is born, he ends the play by wishing that he would be brought up in martial traditions of his motherland, and it is not clear where this motherland would be, but in a vague un-grounded Pakistan.

The idea of a pan-Pakistani identity and its sense of being is a result of the state being created, though the ideals behind Bengali Muslim concepts of East Pakistani culture and language, articulated first in the Renaissance Society meetings from 1942 onward. Twenty five years later in 1967, it began to reappear with Abul Mansur Ahmad reiterating, and building upon his arguments for a specifically Bengali Muslim Bengali language and literature. This occurred in the wake of the ban on Tagore by Radio Pakistan given the recent 1965 Indo-Pakistan War. He launched into an elaborate defense of the ban in the August 1967 edition of the *Concept of Pakistan*, sustaining a complex position that demonstrates the long-range power of the link between recognition and redistribution. In this long passage, he states that even though the greatness of Rabindranath's talents are indisputable, the traditions known to Muslims taught and sustained by caste Hindus like Rabindranath were not a part of a shared, pan-Bengali culture he thus excavates the exact position from the Renaissance Society about Bengali language and literature in 1944. Rather Rabindranath was part of a Hindu Bengali literary culture that implicitly did not include Muslims



given the social dislocations of caste restrictions, bigotry, and the economic dominance of Hindus in the public sphere.

This argument was marshalled against those who protested the Pakistani government on the grounds that Rabindranath's literature belonged to a shared, Hindu and Muslim, Bengali culture. The modern creation of literature in Bengal from Rabindranath's time onward was already communalised by Hindus, so "there was no Bengali culture for Rabindranath to be either symbol or integral part of and for the Government of Pakistan to hatch a conspiracy against" (*Concept of Pakistan* February 1967: 14). This position, stemming from an earlier argument about renaissance and revolution, first mentioned in 1944, now reiterated that cultural renaissance was required for the revolution that would be Pakistan to take place, "to solve certain socio-economic contradictions which become insoluble through the normal channels of evolutionary process" (ibid.: 11). It maintained that cultural renaissance could only be possible through the language of the people, and such a language had to be creatively instituted, not out of hegemonically Hindu terms, but out of terms as yet unnamed, but that belonged to the Muslim strata of society.

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Here, he makes another distinction that opposed those who saw a unified Bengali culture in language: the differences within the social registers that made any common language or literature impossible, in a society in which caste differences and Hindu-Muslim conflicts already impaled the possibility of any common culture. Culture had to be remade in the East Pakistani way, as navigation outside of Hindu hegemony. In other terms, recognition and redistribution were linked, as the new Pakistani state would provide for the economic conditions for East Pakistanis to develop in ways that the Hindu-controlled economies of colonial India could not.

Now this all had been present in the 1940s, and indeed, was part of a programme that was not merely local, but linked to a programme for the betterment of the world. Writers in the *Concept of Pakistan* also echoed these understandings of the concept of Pakistan, as Mohammed Kabir states, the Pakistan movement in Bengal was "started only to safeguard the interest of the Indian Muslims but also to protect the interests of all the minorities of the world from onslaughts of brute majorities [...] eternal movement of the downtrodden and oppressed for securing their rights in the face of overwhelming odds of inconsiderate majority domination" (*Concept of Pakistan* March 1967: 23). Further, in the case of language, as A. Sofiullah argues:



Bengali is one of two state languages of Pakistan and by virtue of its official status the world at large has been acquainted with the form and type of the Bengali language. Pakistani aircrafts, stamps, and coins and currency now bear inscriptions in Bengali. As a result Bengali script is known throughout the world. This has been made possible by Pakistan alone. (*Concept of Pakistan* February 1967)

Indeed, Pakistan was essential, in the eyes of many, going back all the way to the mid-1940s, for the maintenance of Bengali. Now that last statement may seem strange from our vantage point today, but my broader point is that Bangladesh's 'pre-history', when viewed through this history, must include a past that actively embraced empire in the first partition and actively embraced the idea (if not what became the reality) of Pakistan. For Bengali Muslim intellectuals writing in Bengali in the late colonial period, language politics were not merely a statement of difference, but one of distinctive inclusion – into pre-existing worlds of Islamicate South Asia, into Bengali literary culture of the time (colonial period), and into Pakistan after the state was created. This sort of pre-history fits oddly existing histories of Bangladesh aiming to read back into history singular attachments to language, religion, or territoriality all of which are entangled in the twentieth century poles of redistribution and recognition that traversed empire and nation.

Conclusive Remarks

What this chapter shows about the pre-history of Bangladesh is the historical search for political community outside the national form. The relationship between recognition and redistribution is often obscured by the focus on the partitions and their endpoints. Partition-centrism further displaces the role of non-Hindu and non-Muslim groups, such as tribals, Buddhists, and other groups, as well as dislocates the struggle for both recognition and redistribution inherent in the politics of the 1910s and the 1940s, the immediate contexts of twentieth-century partitions germane to Bangladesh. One particular angle into rethinking the pre-history of Bangladesh may be to let go of the overwhelming power of colonial Indian historiography and its near obsessive focus with nationalism and communalism.

Though the objects of analysis in South Asian historiography have moved away from these usual targets, into areas such as regional history, literary history, and legal history, the history of Bangladesh has yet to be liberated from mono-lingual and mono-cultural pers-



pectives. Rather, the moments in which recognition and redistribution build upon each other, as Sarkar (2002) has identified in the late first partition period. In order to fully account for the diversities contained with the nation-space of Bangladesh, inclusive not only of non-Muslims and non-Hindus, but of non-Bengali speaking people, perhaps the history of redistribution and recognition's entanglement, as opposed to the history of nationalism or communalism, would provide a starting point.

This approach offers a look at the many "uneven and sometimes paradoxical continuities" that appear in the history of Bangladesh, as an effort to revise periodisation in Bengal in a manner that resists the naturalisation of a self-evident nationalist past. Rather than work toward only expanding the history of post-1971 Bangladesh, a concerted look at its pre-histories, may then yield a more expansive capacity to include the diversity of Bangladesh's population in the conception of its future.

Endnotes

¹ Paper delivered at the workshop "Situating Bangladesh in South Asian Studies", Institute of Asian and African Studies, Humboldt University, Berlin, 18 May 2013.

² See Neilesh Bose. 2014. Purba Pakistan Zindabad: Bengali Visions of Pakistan, 1940-1947. *Modern Asian Studies*, 48 (1), pp 1-36.

³ The Journal *Concept of Pakistan* was published from 1958 – 1971 in Dacca.

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