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Stateless in South Asia: The Making of the India- Bangladesh Enclaves

WILLEM VAN SCHENDEL

“*O*NLY IN THE EYES OF THE LAW ARE WE INDIANS.” With these words Anu Chairman sketched the position of tens of thousands of people living beyond the reach of state and nation in dozens of enclaves in South Asia.¹ Much of the recent wave of literature on the nation is concerned with critiquing an earlier generation of scholars who tended to assume a correspondence between nations and states. In the new literature, the connections among nation, state, territory, sovereignty, history, and identity are all problematized. Nations are seen as being socially constructed in many different ways. Thus, there are nations without states, new nations that are invented before our eyes while older ones disintegrate, and older diasporic nations that are being joined by a host of new transnational communities. Nations are now conceived as more fluid, malleable, and unpredictable than ever before.

If there is a common assumption in this new literature, it is the notion of territorial contiguity. Almost all nations are imagined, or constructed, in connection with a specific area of the globe, a homeland in which that nation is naturally rooted by means of a “divine cartography” (Krishna 1999). In the nationalist imagination, and in the scholarly literature about it, this homeland is seen as uninterrupted, homogeneous, and bounded. Unlike the world map of states—with its clearly demarcated, contiguous, and fairly stable units—the world map of nations is imagined as made up of units that spill over state borders, overlap each other, and are continually pushing for their own, exclusive national space.

This article argues that both maps are incomplete. The contiguous, uninterrupted homeland is a fiction, as is obvious from the fact that many nations and states have

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¹“*Shudhu ainer bisbebe amra Indian.*” Interview in Dohala Khagrabari, an Indian enclave in Bangladesh, February 2000. Interviews were carried out jointly with Dr. Md. Mahbubar Rahman; translations are mine.

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learned to live with discontinuous territories (e.g., the United States with its detached state of Alaska). There are, however, even more bewildering territorial arrangements that require us to reconsider assumptions about the contiguity of national space. This article looks at the extreme (and perhaps unique) case of almost two hundred small territories that, for over half a century, have existed outside the world state system. For the inhabitants of territories beyond the orbit of any state, the nation and the state are highly contested and complicated notions. What group identities do they develop? Do these escape the category of nation? And how do neighboring nationalisms deal with such territories punctuating the contiguity of their own imagined homeland?² This article examines these questions.

True Enclaves

The territories that I refer to are unadministered enclaves. An enclave is a portion of one state completely surrounded by the territory of another state.³ Such true enclaves should be distinguished from a range of territories that are commonly referred to as enclaves but for which other technical terms are available.⁴ Although there is a small literature on enclaves, it has no connections to the new literature on nations and nationalism. Most writings on enclaves treat these as geographical curiosities, or as problems of state sovereignty, international law, and efficient administration. The literature on enclaves is highly statist. It contains very little information on how social life in enclaves evolves, what identities are created by enclave people, or their ways of coping with ideologies of the nation and citizenship.⁵

Enclaves have occurred frequently in history. They were often an expression of decentralized forms of rule that tolerated discontinuous holdings. With state centralization came territorial consolidation. In Western Europe, a part of the world that was particularly rich in enclaves, many were eliminated progressively as state sovereignty and national identity were linked increasingly to territorial continuity.

²For an exploration of these questions for the small Spanish stronghold of Melilla on the North African coast, see Driessen (1992).

³From the point of view of the state to which it belongs, such a territory is an *exclave*. From the point of view of the state in which it is located, it is an *enclave*. As *enclave* is the better-known term, I opt for it here.

⁴Notably enclave states, coastal territories, and pene-enclaves. In *enclave states*, an entire state is surrounded by the territory of another state. Contemporary examples are Lesotho (surrounded by South Africa), and San Marino and Vatican City (both surrounded by Italy). *Coastal territories* are portions of one state surrounded by another but with a coastline that makes it possible to access them from their "home state" without crossing the territory of the surrounding state. Contemporary examples are the Spanish territories of Melilla and Ceuta on the Mediterranean coast (surrounded by Morocco), the East Timorese territory of Oucssi Ambeno on the Savu Sea (surrounded by Indonesia), and the Brunei district of Temburong on the South China Sea (surrounded by Malaysia). And *pene-enclaves* (or *prorptions*) are parts of the territory of one state that can be approached conveniently over land only through the territory of another state. Contemporary examples are Point Roberts (Washington State, United States; road through Canada) and Jungholz (Austria, road through Germany). For typologies, see Robinson (1959); Catudal (1974). In this article I am not concerned with various metaphorical uses of the term *enclave*, currently popular in the study of ethnicity and settlement patterns (e.g., "ethnic enclave," "urban enclave").

⁵The burgeoning literature on borders and identities points the way to new ways of studying enclaves, although so far it has not taken enclaves on board. See Donnan and Wilson (1999); Baud and van Schendel (1997).

By the time of the Congress of Vienna (1815), territorial consolidation was virtually complete in all European countries except Germany, which formally abolished its last 196 enclaves in 1928 (Krenz 1961).⁶

Today about 250 enclaves survive in the world, and they are found mainly in three areas: Western Europe, the fringes of the former Soviet empire, and South Asia.⁷ In Western Europe, single enclaves exist in three places: the Spanish territory of Llívia in southern France, the German territory of Büsingen in northern Switzerland, and the Italian territory of Campione d'Italia in southern Switzerland. A fourth area is the Netherlands-Belgium borderland, where thirty tiny enclaves intermingle: eight are Dutch (Baarle-Nassau) and twenty-two are Belgian (Baarle-Hertog) (Catudal 1979; Brekelmans 1965; Ragas 1999). Some of the successor states to the Soviet Union have enclaves in one another's territories.⁸

The great majority of the world's enclaves, however, can be found in a small section of the India-Bangladesh borderland, where 123 Indian enclaves are surrounded by Bangladesh and 74 Bangladeshi enclaves are located in India. In their complexity, number, political significance, and social eccentricity, they have no parallel in the world. Largely ignored by the literature on enclaves and national identities, they form the topic of this article.

The Creation of a Landlocked Archipelago

Strewn along the northern border of Bangladesh, the 197 enclaves look like a group of islands of unequal size (see map 1).⁹ They differ from their West European counterparts in many respects, not least in that they are *modern* enclaves: they came into existence in 1947 when British India disintegrated and the states of Pakistan and India were formed.¹⁰ During the worldwide process of decolonization in the twentieth century, most newly independent states retained the boundaries that were

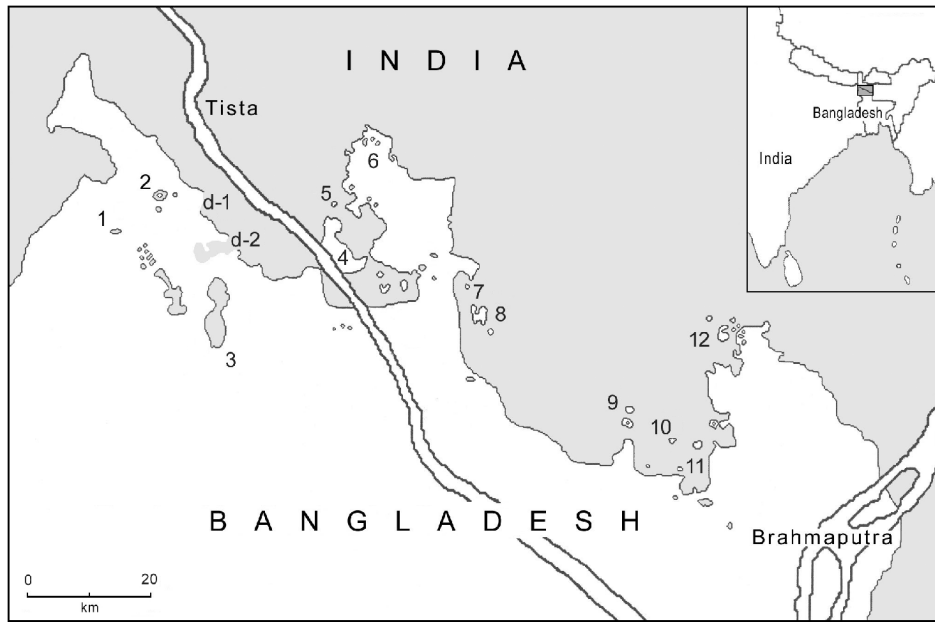
⁶Germany grew out of many German-speaking states that had numerous enclaves in one another's territories. These enclaves were allowed to persist until 1928 when the German government amalgamated them with the federated state surrounding them.

⁷In 1974, Catudal (119) counted 255 true enclaves, but his figures for South Asia are approximate.

⁸There are two Armenian enclaves in Azerbaijan: Artsvashen and Nagorno Karabagh. The status of the latter is undetermined, as it has declared itself an independent republic. There are also three Azerbaijan enclaves in Armenia: Azatamut, Yukari Askipara, and Kyarki/Tigranashen. Similarly, there are a number of enclaves between Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Kyrgyzstan, all of them located in the Ferghana valley: two Tajikistan enclaves in Kyrgyzstan (one named Vorukh) and one in Uzbekistan, and four Uzbekistan enclaves in Kyrgyzstan (two of them named Sokh and Shakhimardan). In addition to these "post-Soviet" enclaves, about which very little information is available, there is one enclave in the Arabian peninsula—Madha, a small territory belonging to Oman and surrounded by the territory of the United Arab Emirates.

⁹This map shows the largest enclaves and some of the smaller ones. Positions and sizes are approximate since no map of the enclaves has ever been published. The maps in this article are based on a variety of sources, especially colonial district maps and district gazetteers.

¹⁰By contrast, the surviving European enclaves all came into being in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries: Campione (1512), Baarle (1579), Llívia (1660), and Büsingen (1698). Of course, many enclaves have come into existence since then but none survive today. In the twentieth century, enclaves occurred frequently during wars (e.g., the many enclaves that appeared when Yugoslavia fragmented in the 1990s), or they emerged from wars (e.g., West Berlin, 1945–1991).



Map 1. The enclaves of the India-Bangladesh borderland.

Enclaves mentioned in the text: (1) (Chand Khan) Putimari; (2) Garati, Shahebbari/Haluapara; (3) Dohala Khagrabari, Balapara Khagrabari and Kotbhajni; (4) Dohogram (-Angorpota); (5) Dhabalshuti Chhit Mirgipur; (6) Bhotmari, Panishala; (7) Falnapur; (8) Nolgram; (9) Batrigachh; (10) Shibproshad Mustafi; (11) Karala; (12) Moshaldanga.

Disputed border areas: (d-1) Khudipara; (d-2) Berubari.

established during colonial rule. India and Pakistan were unusual in splitting apart at the moment of decolonization, creating completely new international borders between them. The enclaves were created at the same time.¹¹

At this time the old region of Bengal, in which the enclaves are located, was divided between India (which received West Bengal) and Pakistan (which received East Bengal, soon renamed East Pakistan—in 1971 East Pakistan would secede from Pakistan to become the independent state of Bangladesh). The new international border between India and East Pakistan was drawn quickly by a Boundary Commission that based itself on district maps rather than field surveys (Chatterji 1999). The enclaves were all in one section of the border where precolonial state formation, two patterns of colonial rule, and uneven decolonization combined to produce them.

Precolonial Roots

In the late seventeenth century, the Mughal state expanded into northern Bengal but was unable to occupy the kingdom of Cooch Behar (Hunter 1876, 8:316–17,

¹¹All enclaves were on the border between the eastern wing of Pakistan (East Pakistan) and India. In 1947, there were 130 Indian enclaves and 95 Pakistani enclaves. By 1965, as a result of boundary agreements, their number was reduced to 123 Indian and 74 Pakistani enclaves (“Two Issues” 1965; Karan 1966; Majumdar 1977, 5). Today, officials in India and Bangladesh sometimes speak of 111 Indian and 51 Bangladeshi enclaves but the basis for these reduced figures is unclear.

10:405–30). Powerful landlords from that kingdom retained possession of their lands in the area dominated by the Mughal state, either by holding out against the invading troops or by entering into alliances with them. Similarly, landlords from the Mughal area were able to hang on to landed estates within Cooch Behar. Like most estates in Bengal, these were fragmented into many scattered plots. Such holdings detached from the parent estate were then known as *chbit mobol* in Bengali; this term came to mean “enclave” after 1947. These small territories paid taxes to one state but were surrounded by the territory of the other state. Sovereignty was expressed not so much in terms of territorial contiguity as in terms of jurisdiction and tax flows.

Indirect Colonial Rule

Over time, the Mughal state disintegrated and the provincial governor of Bengal became the *de facto* ruler of Bengal. When the British East India Company replaced him in the mid-eighteenth century, the border with Cooch Behar marked the northernmost limit of British territory. In 1772, however, a British expedition invaded and conquered Cooch Behar. The kingdom was incorporated into the province of Bengal, but the British decided to rule it indirectly: the Maharaja and his administration were retained under the control of a British political agent. In this way, Cooch Behar survived as a Princely State, surrounded by directly ruled districts, till the end of colonial rule (Hunter 1876, 10:414–16; Majumdar 1977).

Two-Step Partition

In 1947, the political poker game between the leaders of the Indian nationalist movement and the British authorities ended in the decision to partition India. “British India,” the directly ruled territory that covered three-fifths of the subcontinent, was the territory actually partitioned. The rest of the subcontinent, subdivided into 565 Princely States (also called Native or Indian States), was neither partitioned nor given independence in 1947. The only options the rulers of these states had were to join Pakistan or to join India.

Cooch Behar was one of these states. When the British withdrew, Cooch Behar lay wedged in between East Pakistan and India. One hundred and thirty Cooch Behar enclaves were located in East Pakistan and fifty-one in India.¹² Two years later, the Maharaja of Cooch Behar merged his state with India.¹³ The enclaves then became Indian territories. The enclaves in East Pakistan became true international enclaves, whereas those surrounded by India were soon merged with the district in which they were located.¹⁴ Conversely, the Pakistani enclaves in Cooch Behar were now

¹²Cooch Behar enclaves could be found in the districts of Dinajpur and Rangpur (East Pakistan) and Jalpaiguri (West Bengal, India).

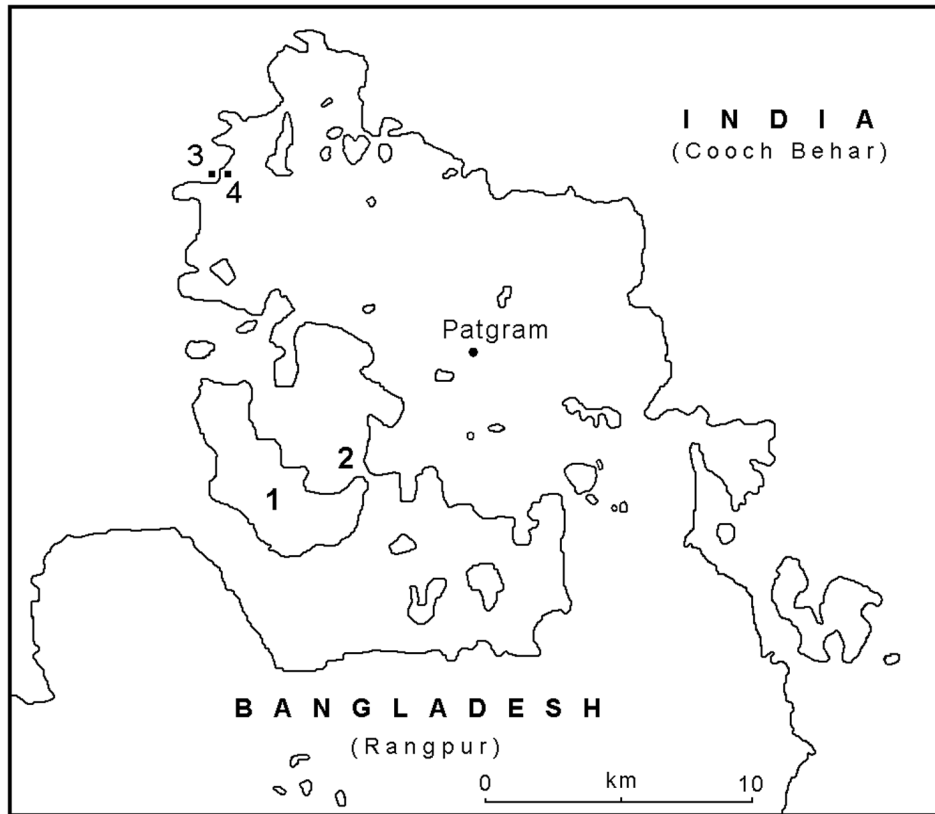
¹³For the text of the Merger Agreement of 28 August 1949, see Majumdar (1977, 40–42). To complicate matters, and quite unrelated to the enclaves, the Maharaja continued to be a substantial landlord (*zamindar*) in East Pakistan. He owned the large and fragmented Chak-lajat Estate, which had its own tax offices at Debigonj (Dinajpur district) and Patgram (Rangpur district), and his estate staff collected land taxes from his Pakistani tenants till the abolition of *zamindari* rights in East Pakistan in 1952 (Government of East Bengal, Home [Political], Confidential Records, B. Proceedings [hereafter abbreviated as CR] 1V–6/50 [141–71, June 1954]). These records are in the National Archives of Bangladesh.

¹⁴All Cooch Behar enclaves in India lay in Jalpaiguri district, and they were transferred to the jurisdiction of that district in 1952 and 1955. For the text of the notifications, see Majumdar (1977, 3–5).

surrounded by India and had therefore also become international enclaves. In short, the Mughal outliers in Cooch Behar had become part of British India and then part of Pakistan, whereas the Cooch Behar outliers in Mughal territory had become part of the Princely State and then part of India.

Unlike much boundary-making in the colonial world, the border between East Pakistan (Bangladesh) and India owed little to “modern” concepts of spatial rationality.¹⁵ The new international border was anything but a straight line; it snaked through the countryside in an irregular zigzag pattern. And nowhere was it more tortuous and unpredictable than in the region where the enclaves were located. Map 2 shows the bizarre shape of the border in the Patgram section of this region, as well as the location of nine Bangladeshi and twenty-four Indian enclaves.

¹⁵Since the eighteenth century, European models of ordering political space have increasingly influenced boundary making in the colonial world. Europeans thought of political space as a kind of checkerboard in which every state shared fixed borders with others without any “political voids”; in which there was a broad correspondence between states and peoples; and in which state sovereignty manifested itself equally at the political margins and the centre (Nugent 1996). Such ideas did not go unchallenged. Edney (1997) provides examples of British attempts to convert Indians to “rational” European conceptions of space, and of Indians’ resistance against mapping as a way of inscribing an imperial space. Nonetheless, European models of space eventually helped shape much of the world. They became so deeply rooted in our geopolitical imagination that alternatives are often overlooked. For example, when Anderson (1996, 12–36) analyses the “international frontier in historical and theoretical perspective,” he constructs an intellectual tradition running straight from the Roman Empire via medieval Europe and the “French example” to the modern state system. He ignores the role of various non-European traditions of cartography and boundary making in the shaping of the modern world (e.g., Gole 1989; Thongchai 1994; Suárez 1999). It is true that colonial borders resulted more from European political and bureaucratic considerations than from local concepts of ordering political space. Many colonial borders followed “rational” meridian parallels and mathematical lines (arcs, curves) or major geographical features. In Africa, three-quarters of the borders are straight lines or curves (Sautter 1982), and other well-known examples are found in North and South America, Australia, and New Guinea. The administrative rationality of such borders is considered to lie in the fact that they reduce the zone of contact between two sovereign territories to the absolute minimum, making it relatively easy and cheap to police them. But it is important to realize that many (post)colonial borders, not least in Asia, are the outcome of long dialogues and struggles between local and European spatial imaginations. And yet this interplay of imaginations has hardly been studied comparatively for Asian borders, unlike, e.g., African borders (Asiwaju and Adenyi 1989; Nugent and Asiwaju 1996). For three reasons, the India-East Pakistan/Bangladesh border, although a late colonial one, owes little to such considerations of bureaucratic rationality and economy. First, it was a completely new international border created *inside* a defunct colonial territory. In British Bengal, there had never been a need rigorously to police and to “rationalize” internal administrative boundaries, which often overlay precolonial ones. Second, the Bengal Boundary Commission’s brief was to partition the territory on the basis of Muslim and non-Muslim majority areas, and population figures were available only for districts and other administrative units (subdivisions, *thanas*, *mouzas*) whose shapes owed much to precolonial demarcations. Not surprisingly, the Commission opted to follow the boundaries of these units wherever it could. Third, political parties were given the opportunity to lobby intensively for inclusion of territory in the prospective states of Pakistan and India, making it impossible for the Commission to make grand parting gestures in the name of spatial rationality (Chatterji 1999). In the few places where it did draw a short straight line across the landscape in order to link two sections of older boundary line (as in the case of Berubari, see below), this led to protracted and still unresolved conflict between the successor states. Partition imposed an amazingly erratic modern border that proved difficult and costly to police. Today, a meandering line of over 4,200 kilometers encircles Bangladesh, a territory only the size of the state of Wisconsin. This is the longest border that India shares with any of its neighboring states.



Map 2. The India-Bangladesh border at Patgram.
 (1) Dohogram (-Angorpota) enclave (Bangladesh); (2) Tin Bigha corridor (India); (3) Chengrabandha (Indian border checkpost); (4) Burimari (Bangladeshi checkpost).

Regulating Territorial Discontinuity

From the moment they came into existence, the states of India and Pakistan were on strained terms with each other. Having suffered the state equivalent of a messy divorce, the power elites of the two states became uncomfortable neighbors who could not avoid frictions over their garden fence, the borderland that simultaneously joined and separated them. The exact location of the new border itself became a point of contention. Despite international mediation and several treaties, important parts of the border remain contested, undemarcated, and volatile even today. The new border became a crucial site of foreign policy, both reflecting the inter-state dynamic—which fluctuated between suspense and open confrontation—and producing conflicts that affected that dynamic.¹⁶

¹⁶Since 1947 (with the exception of a short period in 1971–72 when the border appeared to have virtually disappeared in the wake of the Bangladesh Liberation War), scuffles have been a regular feature of border life, claiming the lives of Indian, Pakistani, and Bangladeshi border guards and many local people. In a recent example (April 2001), Bangladeshi border guards occupied the border village of Padua/Pyrdiwah that they considered to be in “adverse possession” by India. Indian border troops responded by invading another part of the border-



Figure 1. Pillar marking the boundary between India and the Bangladeshi enclave of Nolgram. The villagers are standing on a road in Indian territory, looking towards the photographer who is standing on Bangladeshi soil. Photo from author's collection.

The enclaves were located in this highly sensitive borderland. Their fate was tied up with the uneasy and unproductive relationship between the state elites. Importantly, there was never any question of their annexation. Neither state dared take the step of annexing the enclaves of the other, even during wars fought between India and Pakistan in 1948, 1965, and 1971.¹⁷ On the contrary, the legality of the enclaves' status quo was reaffirmed during numerous high-level official meetings. Neither state disputed the area and boundaries of the enclaves: in 1934, a survey had established and demarcated with concrete pillars the borders between British India and Cooch Behar. These pillars are still in place today. Figure 1 shows one of these pillars, which differs in shape from those marking the India-Pakistan (now Bangladesh) border that was created in 1947.

land, only to be met with fierce resistance from their Bangladeshi colleagues. In this fight, sixteen Indian and two Bangladeshi border guards were killed, and several people were injured. This led to a major deterioration in relations between the two countries (Ahmed 2001). This clash also had repercussions for the inhabitants of some Bangladeshi enclaves. According to Bangladeshi press reports, Indian border guards moved artillery to the enclaves, dug bunkers, harassed inhabitants, and did not allow them "to step outside the demarcated pillars that separate the enclaves from India" (Haq 2001).

¹⁷A different fate befell the enclaves of Dadra and Nagar (H)aveli, part of the Portuguese domains in Western India. The Indian government demanded a return of these domains in 1950, sealed the enclaves in 1954, fought a legal battle with Portugal regarding rights of passage in the International Court of Justice, and finally annexed the Portuguese territories, including the enclaves, in 1961. See Krenz (1961); Catudal (1979).

State representatives at the local level, however, were sometimes less inclined to respect the defined enclaves. In January 1949, when it had become clear that Cooch Behar would accede to India, Pakistan police and Ansars (paramilitary personnel) entered some Cooch Behar enclaves and reportedly declared “that *chbit* lands [enclaves] in the state have become part of Pakistan and Pakistan laws [are] in force in *chbit* land of the state.” Protests by the Cooch Behar authorities triggered a telegram from the local police chief in Pakistan, stating, “I do not think you have any independence in Pakistan as you have acceded to India.” In response, Cooch Behar demanded that the local authorities be reprimanded by their superiors.¹⁸

In the first years of their independence, Pakistan and India maneuvered cautiously to find a *modus vivendi* regarding the enclaves. Both realized that it was impossible to play power politics. Any action directed against the other’s enclaves was bound to have repercussions on one’s own enclaves in the other country.¹⁹ Instead, they tried to impress upon each other their shared interest in taking control of these detached territories and thus preventing them from falling into the hands of “Communists and ordinary criminals.”²⁰ A two-step line of action was agreed upon, first to regulate the right of passage and then to eliminate the problem by exchanging the enclaves.

Right of Passage

Talks on communication between the enclaves and their “mainlands” were initiated right after Independence, but it would take until August 1950 for a procedure to be agreed upon.²¹ Under the agreement, district officials were allowed to visit enclaves if they had a photograph identity card and if their visit was announced by telegram no less than fifteen days in advance. They would then be escorted back and forth across foreign soil. Police officials also could visit the enclaves, provided they wore uniforms and went unarmed. Certain goods could be transferred into the enclaves once a month, and tax revenues could be collected once every six months.²²

¹⁸“No question of ‘claim’ is involved so far as the State *chbits* are concerned. This fact should be impressed upon the district officers of Dinajpur (East Bengal) forthwith” (CR 3C–6/49 [1273–329, November 1950]). Shortly afterwards, the police chief of Debigonj (Dinajpur) wrote: “I do not command [my armed patrol parties] to enter into the pockets [i.e., three Indian enclaves] and they also do not and I know that the S. P., D. I. B. [Superintendent of Police, District Intelligence Branch] Dinajpur has pass order, not to cross the border of Indian Territory” (CR 1V–6/50 [141–71, June 1954]).

¹⁹Only in one case was an enclave’s integrity not respected. The tiny Indian enclave of Chand Khan Putimari in the far west straddled the road between two towns in Bangladesh, Dinajpur, and Panchagarh. When this road was metalled, the few hundred meters through Indian territory were simply metalled, too.

²⁰CR 3C–6/49 (1273–329, November 1950); CR 3C1–4/50 (September 1961).

²¹In February 1948, the East Bengal Government sent a telegram to Cooch Behar suggesting that “by mutual agreement, armed police of both sides should be allowed to carry arms across the other’s territory in order to enter and leave the enclaves.” Cooch Behar agreed but later that year received a letter from the East Bengal Government stating that “the East Bengal Government was not willing to enter into any mutual agreement in this respect” (CR 3C–6/49 [1273–329, November 1950]). When the Chief Secretaries met in April 1949, they agreed that “nothing could for the present be done to remove the difficulties mentioned by Cooch Behar” (*Decisions taken at the Chief Secretaries’ Conference held at Calcutta on the 7–9 April 1949, Sixth Conference*: 5; in: CR 3C1–4/50 [September 1961]).

²²Only mustard oil, kerosene oil, sugar, matches, cloth, medicine, and medical appliances could be moved between mainland and enclaves: i.e., commodities could be imported to the enclaves but local produce (esp. jute, paddy, and tobacco) could not be exported to the mainland (*Decisions taken at the 17th Chief Secretaries’ Conference held at Dacca on the 29 and 30 August, 1950*: 4; in: CR 3C2–5/50 [2237–55, March 1953]).

Nothing was agreed, however, about the transit of private citizens or about trading enclave produce outside the enclaves. In other words, it was an agreement between two self-absorbed state bureaucracies that completely ignored the economic interests of the people living in the enclaves. Each state allowed certain officials and goods from the neighboring state to enter their own enclaves but barred enclave people from participating in the regional economy. Since enclave people could not legally sell their own produce outside the enclave, it was unclear how they were to generate the income to pay taxes and to buy commodities offered by mainland merchants. Moreover, enclave people who owned land outside the enclave could no longer legally cultivate it.²³ In other words, the agreement criminalized the enclave people's daily routines without offering them any alternatives. If they were to survive, they had to ignore the agreement and to face the peril of being defined as smugglers.

Bureaucrats also found the accord shaky and difficult to implement. Officials were often refused access to their own state's enclaves, and there was no more than a haphazard and intermittent state presence in the enclaves.²⁴ For example, in early 1951, Pakistan held its first population census. When the enumerators tried to carry out the census in Pakistani enclaves in Cooch Behar, they were harassed and arrested by Indian border police.²⁵ As a result, the population of all enclaves was excluded from that census, and from all censuses since then.

At first, citizens of India needed no travel documents to visit East Pakistan, and vice versa. In 1952, however, the two governments agreed to introduce passport and visa controls. This agreement made no mention of the inhabitants of the enclaves and thereby created a Kafka-esque situation for them: it resulted in formally locking them up in their enclaves ("Pakistan" 1952).²⁶ They could not acquire passports without acting against the law. Since there were no passport offices in the enclaves, enclave-dwellers who wanted a passport had to cross foreign territory illegally to reach their parent state through one of very few official check posts. The authorities of the parent state would then have to allow them in without a passport, again illegally. Once admitted to the parent state, they could try to get a passport. If successful, they could approach the consulate of the other state, hundreds of kilometers away, for a visa to return home. Once the visa expired, the illegal procedure had to be repeated. In effect, by omitting the enclave people from the passport agreement, both India and Pakistan abandoned them as citizens. Marooned in their enclaves, they could not leave without infringing the laws of both countries.

²³People living in a Pakistani enclave could own land nearby in India, and vice versa. Although they were Pakistani citizens (and as enclave people did not pay taxes to the Pakistan government), they paid land tax to the Indian authorities over their plots in India. Such cross-border land holding came to an abrupt end in 1965 when both India and Pakistan confiscated "enemy property" in the wake of the Indo-Pakistan war of 1965 ("Kazirhat" 1992).

²⁴Time and again, officials had to be reminded about the agreement between the Chief Secretaries. As a result, transcripts of the rules can be found in, e.g., CR 1V-6/50 [141-71, June 1954]; CR 3I-436/53 [714-17, August 1954]; CR 1B3-16/53 [74, November 1954]. For a "tentative tour programme" of officers of the Central Excise Department of India, submitted for approval to the Pakistan authorities in December 1951, see CR 1V-6/50 (141-71, June 1954). On officers being refused entry to "their" enclaves, see CR 1V-6/50 (141-71, June 1954); CR 1B2-3/53 (2057-84, January 1955); CR 3I-436/53 (714-7, August 1954).

²⁵CR 8C1-1/51 (76-83, May 1953). For the case of an Indian sanitary inspector treating a case of smallpox in the Indian enclave of Kotbajni in Pakistan in April 1950 and being detained on the way back, see CR 10-1/50 (899-903, March 1953).

²⁶For an unsuccessful attempt by the East Bengal government to find a solution to the problem after the agreement had been reached, see CR 3I-436/53 (714-17, August 1954).

The situation was even more complicated for those who lived in enclaves *within* enclaves. There are several such situations, e.g., an Indian enclave known as Garati in Bangladesh (Panchagarh district, previously Dinajpur) contains a Bangladeshi sub-enclave known as Haluapara. The inhabitants of Haluapara are citizens of Bangladesh but cannot licitly avail themselves of the services of their state: their sub-enclave is completely surrounded by an Indian enclave. There is no official border crossing from the sub-enclave to the enclave and none from the enclave to the mainland. For these inhabitants, simply going to market in Bangladesh necessitates *four* border crossings. These crossings are doubly illegal because these Bangladeshis neither hold passports nor cross at a designated check post.²⁷

For state officials wishing to visit “their” enclaves, visas were now required. This created a new barrier to easy access. By the mid-1950s, both states had largely given up trying to establish their authority and to collect taxes in enclaves situated in their neighbor’s territory. Only a single enclave remained within the orbit of its parent state. This enclave, Dohogram, was situated less than a hundred meters from the Pakistan mainland. A Pakistani police post was maintained there. The enclave followed a historical trajectory all its own and would turn into one of the most hotly contested territorial issues between India and Pakistan/Bangladesh (see below).

Exchanging the Enclaves

High functionaries of India and Pakistan began discussing the idea of exchanging enclaves soon after Cooch Behar merged with India.²⁸ Immediately, this idea also became part of the public political discourse in both countries. Three years later, however, an Indian newspaper reported that no action had been taken:

It has more than once been suggested by spokesmen of the [Indian] Union Government, including the Prime Minister, that the only way in which the problem can be solved is by exchange of these enclaves between India and Pakistan. But it does not appear that the Pakistan Government has yet been approached in this regard. As the situation has been steadily worsening, it would be only logical on the part of both the Governments of India and Pakistan to settle the matter without delay.

(“Short Comment” 1953)

It would take another five years for the two Prime Ministers to agree “to an exchange of enclaves of the former Cooch Behar State in Pakistan and Pakistan enclaves

²⁷Interview with Khwaja Moinuddin and others, Garati/Haluapara, February 2000. Similarly, the Bangladeshi enclaves of Batrigachh and Moshaldanga (in Cooch Behar, India) contain Indian sub-enclaves. Some Indian enclaves in Bangladesh (Kotbhajni and Barapara Khagrabari) belong to the district of Cooch Behar but contain sub-enclaves belonging to the district of Jalpaiguri (India).

²⁸The Chief Secretaries of East Bengal and West Bengal “agreed to recommend to their respective Governments that in the interest of administrative convenience the question of exchange of these enclaves should be considered at a very early date. For this purpose the two Governments should exchange their preliminary suggestions with a view to a detailed joint examination and possibly also a joint local inspection at a later date” (*Decisions taken at the Chief Secretaries’ Conference held at Calcutta on the 21 and 22 April 1950, Fourteenth Conference*: 4; in: CR 26A-1/50 [1050-69, December 1952]; cf. CR 3I-68/52 [102-6, January 1954]).

in India.”²⁹ However, the agreement was never implemented. It became a sensitive political issue in India, where oppositional parties branded it an “unconstitutional act” and an appeal case was fought up to the Supreme Court, stalling any exchange for years. By the time the Indian Supreme Court decided to dismiss the appeal, India and Pakistan were on the brink of the 1965 war; icy relations up to the breakup of Pakistan in 1971 obstructed the exchange of the enclaves after that.³⁰ A second chance presented itself after East Pakistan became the independent state of Bangladesh. In 1974, the Prime Ministers of India and Bangladesh met and agreed, under the Indira-Mujib treaty, to exchange the enclaves as soon as possible. This agreement was ratified by the Bangladesh parliament but was not tabled in the Indian parliament. Like its precursor, it remained a dead letter. Since then, the exchange of the enclaves has been a standard item on the agenda between the two countries, but no progress has been made towards implementing it.

Clearly, the two-step policy devised by India and Pakistan in the early 1950s turned out to be a complete failure. An early agreement on the right of passage fell into disuse after it was overtaken by new passport and visa rules in 1952. The agreement was never renewed and all traffic between the enclaves and the outside world therefore became illegal. Several high-level agreements were made to exchange the enclaves, but none of them could be implemented.

In short, the enclaves are a symbol of the inability of these states to come to terms with their territorial discontinuity. By allowing the enclaves to persist unadministered for over half a century, the states have created a landlocked archipelago of stateless territories inhabited by tens of thousands of individuals who are, in practice, also stateless. The livelihood of these individuals would be completely impossible if they did not routinely engage in actions that these states define as criminal and illicit. In a world parcelled out between states, stateless territories have become very rare and those that exist tend to be uninhabited. The India-Bangladesh enclaves provide a unique example of miniature societies attempting to survive in the interstices of the modern world state system. It is to these societies that we now turn.

Transteritorial Identities

The creation of the enclaves in 1947 took their inhabitants by complete surprise. In the words of Md. Bokhtaruddin, an inhabitant of the Indian enclave of Bhotmari in Bangladesh:

²⁹Known as the Indo-Pakistan Agreement of 10 September 1958 (together with the Joint Communiqué or the Nehru-Noon Agreement of 12 September 1958), it also stated that India would not receive compensation for extra area going to Pakistan. A Ministerial Conference to flesh out this agreement (which resulted in the Indo-Pakistan Agreement on Border Disputes of 23 October 1959), however, did not mention the enclaves or their exchange (Appadorai 1982, 96–103; Sreedhar 1993, 6–9, 149).

³⁰The reason for the delay was at least partly because the exchange was linked to the “Berubari affair.” In the agreement it was decided to divide Berubari (not an enclave but a small area of disputed border land held by India, see map 1) between India and Pakistan. The southern half of Berubari was to “be exchanged along with the general exchange of enclaves and will go to Pakistan.” Oppositional parties in India protested against the government giving away what they saw as territory that was lawfully Indian (“Protest” 1960; “Appeal” 1965; Jha 1972, 170–74; Chakrabarty 1974, 402–4, 470–73).

In 1947, when Pakistan and so on came about, we thought we were in Pakistan. But then the EPR [East Pakistan Rifles, the border militia] came and started to pester us all the time. Then we began to realize that we were *not* Pakistanis, that we were Indians after all. Because the Pakistan authorities always looked on us with suspicion, we thought: “We are not Pakistanis.” . . . They would not let us go to Pakistan territory, we could not go to the market. If we wanted to go anywhere, they would demand money.

(Interview with Md. Bokhtaruddin, Bhotbari enclave, February 2000)

People in the enclaves had to come to terms with the peculiar nature of state and nation formation in the subcontinent. The demand for a separate state of Pakistan had been based on the assertion that Muslims in colonial India formed a separate nation and that they were entitled to a homeland. Therefore, Partition was based on a division of Muslim and non-Muslim majority areas, the former going to the new state of Pakistan and the latter to the new state of India. In a highly charged atmosphere of hostile nationalisms, Muslims were invited to identify with the “Pakistani nation” and non-Muslims with the “Indian nation.” But in many places in Bengal, there was a poor fit between territory, religious community, and national identity. There were tens of millions of Indian Muslims and East Pakistani non-Muslims (Hindus, Christians, Buddhists, etc.) whose self-identification varied enormously, both between individuals and over time.

A striking characteristic of the nationalisms that developed in India and Pakistan after 1947 was *transterritoriality*. Both states saw themselves as being in charge of the populations living in their own territory, but also of a category of people living in the territory of the other state. These two groups can be described as *citizens* and *proxy citizens*. Thus India’s proxy citizens were the Hindus in Pakistan, and Pakistan’s proxy citizens were the Muslims in India.³¹ This complementary transterritoriality—backed up by various agreements and institutions³²—was seen as a safeguard for the well-being of minority religious communities, but it also weakened their position. For example, Muslims in Pakistan simply were citizens of Pakistan, but Hindus in Pakistan were citizens of Pakistan (their territorial nation) as well as proxy citizens of India (their transterritorial or potential nation). This highlighted their liminality as loyal citizens of their territorial nation. The question of the loyalty of proxy citizens became a moot issue in the antagonistic nationalisms that Pakistan and India proceeded to build. It was in this situation that enclave people had to find their

³¹India’s proxy citizens in Pakistan also included Buddhists, Christians, Sikhs, and other non-Muslims, but in practice it was Hindus with whom the Indian state was concerned.

³²For example, under the Inter-Dominion Agreement of 1948, such transterritorial protection was furthered by the creation of an Inter-Dominion Information Consultative Committee, Provincial and District Minority Boards, Evacuee Property Management Boards, and monthly Inter-Dominion meetings. In the Nehru-Liaquat Agreement of 1950, the two governments decided to set up a joint Commission of Enquiry into the Bengal riots of 1950; to “depute two Ministers, one from each Government, to remain in the affected areas for such a period as may be necessary” in order to restore the confidence of the minorities; to include representatives of the minority community in the governments of East Bengal (Pakistan) and West Bengal and Assam (India); and to set up Minority Commissions in East Bengal, West Bengal, and Assam in whose meetings the two Ministers of the governments of India and Pakistan could participate. Moreover, the Deputy High Commissioners of India (in Dhaka) and Pakistan (in Calcutta) often acted as conduits to bring grievances of their “proxy citizens” to the attention of the governments of Pakistan and India, respectively (Appadorai 1982, 80–93).

footing. In terms of identity, they were pulled in three directions: they were citizens; they were proxy citizens; and they were enclave people.

Citizens

The quotation above from Md. Bokhtaruddin demonstrates how the Pakistani authorities excluded Muslim inhabitants of an Indian enclave from the Islamic nation of Pakistan. The authorities sought to impose an Indian national identity on them on the basis of their territorial location. Enclave people found that their new citizenship was driven home more by representatives of the surrounding state than by their own state. They were often denied access to markets outside the enclave (a disaster, because whatever markets had existed in the enclaves withered away) on the ground that they were foreigners.³³ The passage of residents from enclaves to their mainland had never been regulated, and this resulted in enclave people frequently being harassed, forced to pay bribes, or being arrested when they left their enclave.³⁴ In the same way, the lack of an accord about the passage of local produce to and from the enclaves made all trade illegal. This led to a frequent impounding of jute, tobacco, and paddy “smuggled” out of (or into) enclaves.³⁵

As we have seen, the state to which the enclaves belonged had a weak and intermittent presence.³⁶ There were short periods when policemen, tax collectors, and compilers of voters’ lists appeared in the enclave, underlining the relationship between residents and their citizenship—but the only continuing link between the enclaves

³³In July 1951, the Deputy Secretary of the Government of West Bengal (India) wrote to his counterpart in East Bengal (Pakistan): “this Government have received further reports that the East Bengal authorities have announced by beat of drums at the border *bats* [markets] at Ambari, Mirzapur, etc. that people living in Cooch Behar enclaves surrounded by Pakistan territory will not be allowed to buy and sell articles in the *bats* located in Pakistan and if any of them are found marketing in those *bats*, they will be arrested and suitable action taken against them If the reports be correct, there appears to have been a move for the economic blockade of Cooch Behar enclaves surrounded by Pakistan territory” (CR 1B2–35/51 [2349–59, January 1955]).

³⁴Or even in the enclave itself. In October 1951, Indian policemen arrested Kendru Barman of Nolgram (a large Pakistani enclave in India) and demanded an “illegal gratification” for his release. Kendru went to the main Pakistan border over a kilometer away and reported to the border police that these Indian policemen frequently visited the enclave and took money from the inhabitants under threat of arrest (CR 1V–6/50 [141–71, June 1954]; CR 1B4–16/51 [2342–48, January 1955]; cf. CR 1B2–9/51 [Pt.] [1116–41, March 1954]).

³⁵For example, when Bachhan Mohammad, an inhabitant of Kharkharia (an Indian enclave in Pakistan), “was returning home with about thirty seers [twenty-seven kilograms] of paddy in a gunny bag from the house of his co-villagers Sri Ramprosad and Sri Shyamadas, three Pakistan armed policemen trespassed into the enclave and arrested him on suspicion that he was smuggling paddy from Pakistan” (CR 1B2–9/51 [1116–41, March 1954]; on jute, see CR 5T–4/50 [321–36, June 1952] and CR 1B5–3/50 [625–44, December 1955]; on tobacco, see CR 1V–6/50 [141–71, June 1954]).

³⁶Often it was also confused about the location of its own and the other’s enclaves. When India complained about an incident in Garati (an Indian enclave located in Panchagarh, Dinajpur district, Pakistan) in 1952, the Pakistan authorities sent a memo to the wrong district, Rangpur, which was not sure where the enclave was either. The District Magistrate replied: “The location of Garati enclave of the Indian Dominion could not be fixed, and as such no steps against the alleged trespassers could be taken. If the Indian Government have no objection a copy of their border plan may be sent to fix the location and cause enquiry about the so-called incidents and find the culprits if any” (CR 1B2–58/51 [904–10, December 1952]).

and their state was through land registration.³⁷ Economically and socially, the enclaves remained integrated with the surrounding state, and the currency of that state was used.³⁸ When plots of enclave land changed hands, however, the new owner had to register his ownership in a land registry office in the mainland.³⁹ Land registration in the entire region was decades behind; land papers show ownership as it was many years ago. Yet the registration of land ownership still formed the backbone of most enclave people's continuing connection with their parent state.

There was no uniformity, however, in land registration policy. The 2,500 inhabitants of Garati (an Indian enclave in Bangladesh), for example, ceased to have any contact with the Indian state.⁴⁰ In Garati, land registration became a local affair, complete with local registration forms that were kept in a central enclave ledger. Figure 2 shows one such land registration document, valid in Garati but without any legal standing outside that tiny enclave. This unique document indicates how, in the absence of a state, the people of Garati had created a fairly formal legal system of their own.

But Garati was unusual. In most cases, a number of influences induced enclave people to identify themselves as citizens. And they did act as citizens when they filed petitions with local authorities of their "own" states.⁴¹ However, there were two strong impediments to such self-identification. The first of these was proxy citizenship.

³⁷Up until the 1950s, inhabitants of some enclaves may have voted in elections of their parent state, but since then they have not exercised this citizen's right. After 1971, however, some enclave people managed to get registered as voters in the surrounding state and voted there for some years ("Dhaka" 2000; interview with Sudhir Ray, Nolgram enclave, February 2000).

³⁸The police chief of Debigonj (Pakistan) stated, in his report on a visit to the large Indian enclave of Dohala Khagrabari in 1950: "The Muslims of the place, no doubt, want our administration and the Pakistan currency also is in use there. There is no other alternative but to use Pakistan currency there as the enclaves are surrounded by Pakistan" (CR 1V-6/50 [141-71, June 1954]); interview with Khwaja Moinuddin and others, Garati enclave, February 2000. Marketing had to be done outside because traders were afraid to enter the enclaves, roads were very poor, and markets inside enclaves were prohibited in the early years after 1947. Enclave people maintained family links with the surrounding area (not with their mainlands), and many cross-border marriages took place. In Kotbhajni (an Indian enclave), religious congregations also provided links: Hindus would join *pujas* in Pakistan/Bangladesh as ordinary participants, and Muslims were members of a cross-border mosque congregation (*shomaj*) (interviews with Mahesh Chairman, Kotbhajni [Indian enclave], and Jofiruddin and others, Nolgram [Bangladeshi enclave], February 2000).

³⁹Land prices in the enclaves fell behind those in the surrounding areas because of the uncertainty of a future exchange, the lawlessness of enclave society, and the extra cost and harassment involved in registering land ownership in the mainland. This had induced some inhabitants from the mainland to buy cheap land in a nearby enclave (and sometimes also to establish a house there) in the hope that the enclave would soon be amalgamated to the mainland (interview with Abdul Khalek and others, Garati enclave, February 2000). See also footnote 74 on "speculative immigration."

⁴⁰Around 1993, the BDR (Bangladesh border guards) induced the people of Garati to hold a census: they counted 2,412 inhabitants (112 Hindus and 2,300 Muslims) (interview with Khwaja Moinuddin and others, Garati/Haluapara enclave, February 2000).

⁴¹For example, the inhabitants of the Indian enclave of Dasiarchhara in Pakistan filed a petition in India "praying that the jute grown in that *chbit* should be allowed to be transported to Indian territory." The local authorities in India tried to come to an agreement with their counterparts across the border but failed (CR 5T-4/50 [321-36, June 1952]). It was also common for residents of enclaves to alert their "own" state whenever police or military from the surrounding area would enter the enclave to intimidate people, to steal crops or cattle, or (as in the Pakistani enclave of Karala in India) merely to make a shortcut (CR 1B2-9/51 [Pt.]

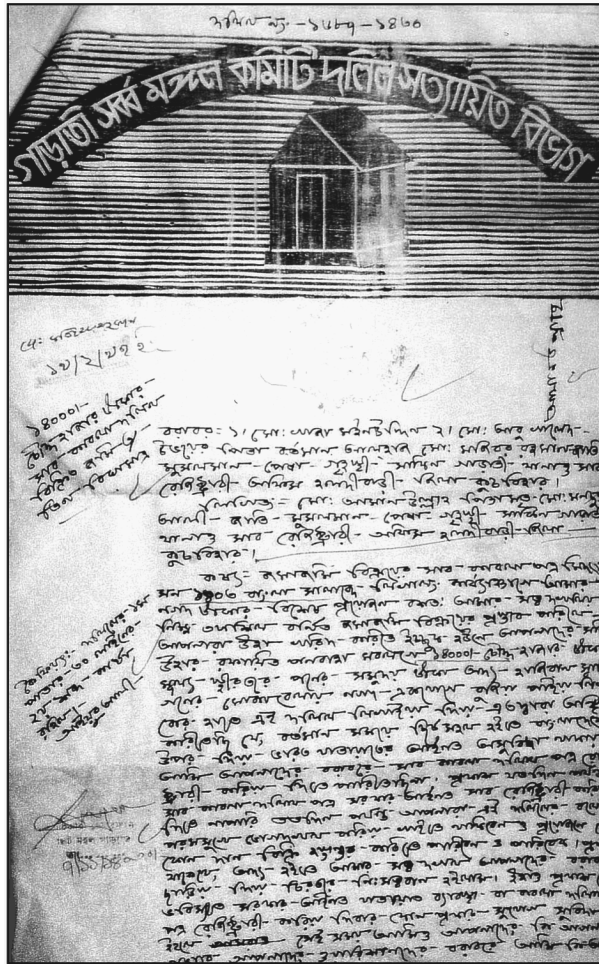


Figure 2. Land registration document issued by the Deed Verification Department, Garati Committee for General Welfare (*Garati Sborbo Mongol Komiti Dolil Shotyayito Bibhag*), 1997. Garati is an Indian enclave with some 2,500 inhabitants.

Proxy Citizens

We have seen that in post-Partition India and Pakistan, citizenship was based on territorial location and proxy citizenship on religious community. The population of the enclaves, as of the surrounding areas, consisted of both Muslims and Hindus. Inevitably, proxy citizenship played an important role in identity formation. Take, for example, a Pakistani enclave in India. It was likely to have a mixed population of Hindus and Muslims. Although all of them were Pakistani citizens, only the Hindus were also proxy citizens of India. They could be singled out for special treatment by personnel of the surrounding state as well as by nationalist enthusiasts.

This is exactly what happened in the early months of 1950, which saw the violent expulsion of Hindus from East Pakistan and Muslims from India. These “communal

[1116–41, March 1954]; CR 1V–6/50 [141–71, June 1954]; CR 3A6/52 [103–9, August 1953]; CR 1B2–58/51 [904–10, December 1952]; “Three taken away” 1951).

riots” turned into a form of international ethnic cleansing: Indian nationalist vigilantes entered Pakistani enclaves, claimed them for India by hoisting flags of the Indian National Congress Party, and proceeded to remove Muslim inhabitants.⁴² In the enclave of Shibproshad Mustafi, they robbed Muslims and drove them away. On 25 March 1950, Indian “volunteers trespassed into Moshaldanga enclave . . . and asked Muslims to declare their allegiance to Bharat [India] and hoist Congress flags on their houses. On their refusal to do so, they assaulted the Muslims with deadly weapons, resulting in a number of casualties.”⁴³

The Pakistani enclave of Dhabalshuti Chhit Mirgipur was not invaded at the time, but its Muslim inhabitants felt thoroughly intimidated. Three times they were threatened by Hindus from Indian territory and told to leave the enclave. One day they found a poster on a tree just outside their enclave that made them realize that it was now almost suicidal to enter Indian territory:⁴⁴ “Muslims! The day has come to sell your blood to the Hindus. Hindus! Get your money ready.”⁴⁵ A month later, a group of armed Hindu volunteers from India entered the enclave, sat down in the house of a Muslim villager, called his neighbors, and told them that the enclave had been taken over by India. The enclave people protested that they had not heard anything about this, upon which the volunteers “grew riotous and ordered the Muslim villagers to leave the enclave immediately, no matter whether it belong[ed] to Pakistan or Bharat.” A fight resulted and “most of the Muslims left the enclave and took shelter at Patgram [Pakistan] as refugees. They [were] not allowed to go back to their own houses by the volunteers.”⁴⁶

In all these cases, proxy citizenship overruled citizenship. Hindu residents of Pakistani enclaves were left untouched. To the invaders, a Hindu living in a Pakistani enclave was “one of us” who, through an unfortunate twist of circumstances, found himself or herself in Pakistani territory. This was not just an exercise in divide-and-rule, but equally an invitation extended to proxy citizens to identify with the Indian nation. This put enclave Hindus in an extremely difficult position. Were they to welcome the invaders as liberators? Did they accept their proxy citizenship as a dominant identity? Such decisions depended on the strength of their self-identification as citizens of Pakistan, their relationship with the enclave Muslims, and the extent to which their lives were anchored materially in the enclave, especially by means of landed property. It also depended on their sense of being part of a third category, that of “enclave people.”

Enclave People

Until August 1947, there had been nothing to distinguish the residents of the future enclaves from their neighbors except that they went to different local offices to

⁴²At the same time, similar invasions occurred in Indian enclaves surrounded by Pakistan, and here the Hindus were driven out (CR 1A3–5/50 [821–30, March 1954]).

⁴³For these and similar reports on the Pakistani enclaves of Bathirgar (Batrigachh), Kismat Bathirgar, Nalgram, Falnapur, and Dhabalsuti Chhit Mirgipur, see CR 5M–4/50 (183–203, May 1955). For reports of similar treatment of inhabitants of Indian enclaves in Pakistan, see CR 1A3–5/50 (821–30, March 1954).

⁴⁴As they had to in order to go to market. Around the same time Muslims from the Pakistani enclaves of Nolgram and Falnapur were driven away from the nearby Indian market of Shangarbari because it was “only meant for Hindus,” nor were they allowed to go to market in Patgram (Pakistan) (CR 5M–4/50 [183–203, May 1955]).

⁴⁵“*Musbolmangon Hinduder nikot tomader rokto bikroy koribar din ashiachbe. Hindugon taka jogar korun*” (CR 5M–4/50 [183–203, May 1955]).

⁴⁶CR 5M–4/50 (183–203, May 1955).

pay land tax or to report a crime. After that date, however, a new citizenship emerged—neither sought nor at first understood, but thrust upon them by administrative caprice.⁴⁷ The old identities based on neighborhood, kinship, language, religion, marketing area, and class that they shared with people outside the enclaves did not suddenly vanish but were now at odds with an ascendant identity based on citizenship. After Partition, self-identification became a strategic dilemma: the more enclave people identified as citizens, the more they distanced themselves from their neighbors and relatives outside the enclave. And the more they identified as proxy citizens (as only some of them could),⁴⁸ the more they distanced themselves from their coresidents in the enclave. If transterritorial nationalism was a problem for minorities living in India and Pakistan, it was an even greater problem for those who actually lived transterritorially in the enclaves.

It was not surprising that they developed a third way of thinking about themselves: as enclave people. They soon shared an experience of exclusion and victimization. In addition to the treatment meted out by state personnel and vigilantes, they were also confronted with other problems that drew them together. The absence of the state certainly had advantages, especially given that enclave people no longer paid taxes. But there were greater disadvantages: roads and bridges were no longer kept in good repair, and there were no health services, schools, markets, banks, mail, or electricity. And worst of all, several enclaves were used as hideouts by groups of armed robbers who took advantage of the absence of police. They committed robberies both inside the enclaves and in the surrounding countryside. A local police chief in Debigonj (Pakistan) was ready to capture “the notorious dacoits [robbers] who have made life miserable for the inhabitants of the Ch[h]its, whenever they cross into Pakistan Territory. Unless and until we can freely enter into the pockets [enclaves] to catch hold of the dacoits nothing can be done.”⁴⁹

Sometimes enclave people themselves took advantage of the absence of state law enforcement to become bandits or small-time military entrepreneurs.⁵⁰ But more often, outsiders occupied an enclave for this purpose. Then the oppression could be severe. Sometimes enclave people who resisted the intruders were murdered by them. In such cases, there was no court to prosecute the culprits.⁵¹ The risk of getting robbed was so great that it affected the settlement pattern in some enclaves. In such cases, people would move their houses to the outer rim of the enclave and leave the center uninhabited in order to make it easier to flee if necessary.

The shared experience of fear and lawlessness drew enclave people together, and they attempted to organize to overcome it. This became easier after 1971 because the tensions between the enclaves and the surrounding states decreased after the demise

⁴⁷As we have seen, enclaves in Jalpaiguri district escaped this fate because both Cooch Behar and Jalpaiguri ended up in India. As a result, these enclaves were transferred to Jalpaiguri and integrated administratively into the district: social identities and citizenship reinforced each other, enclave identities never developed, and the history of separate administration is of little concern today.

⁴⁸That is, Muslims in Indian enclaves surrounded by Pakistan, and Hindus in Pakistani enclaves surrounded by India.

⁴⁹CR 1V–6/50 (141–71, June 1954). In this report of October 1950, he was referring to the three contiguous Indian enclaves of Dohala Khagrabari, Balapara Khagrabari, and Kotbhajni.

⁵⁰CR 1V–6/50 (141–71, June 1954). For the concept of military entrepreneur, see Gallant (1999).

⁵¹This happened when a gang of robbers killed the father of Abul Kashem of the Indian enclave of Panishala around 1961. Interview with Abul Kashem, February 2000.

of East Pakistan. However, patterns of organization differed markedly between enclaves. In some of the larger ones, an enclave council was set up that drew its inspiration from the informal village councils of the region and from evolving structures of state-sponsored local government in the surrounding area. Thus, in the contiguous Indian enclaves of Dohala Khagrabari, Barapara Khagrabari, and Kotbhajni (which together form the largest Indian territory within Bangladesh), three elected Chhitmohol Nagorik Shomiti (Enclave Citizens' Committees) were formed, consisting of a chairman and members representing different village neighborhoods. These councils acted as courts, organized public works through *corvée* labor, and negotiated on behalf of the enclave with the outside world. Once elected, committee appointees tended to stay in office for long periods, stabilizing the position of a tiny enclave elite. In smaller enclaves, this system was not possible. These might have a single elected member who was part of an enclave council covering several nearby small enclaves, or even informally under the chairman of the surrounding (foreign) area. Other enclaves had only informal village leaders.

These arrangements strengthened self-identification as enclave people, although it is important to realize that an overarching identity comprising *all* enclaves did not develop. There were various reasons for this. There was little communication among enclaves, even the ones belonging to the same state. They had not had any contacts with one another before 1947 and were spread out over a distance of some one hundred kilometers with very poor road and water connections. Given the absence of passports, visas, and check posts, travel between enclaves was illegal and risky. Equally important, the inhabitants of enclaves saw little reason for supporting each other. Their enclaves were located in different districts and lower administrative units. To express their grievances, inhabitants of different enclaves had to turn to different authorities. When asked why they had not protested more, a common answer was, "Who should we have protested *to*? There is strength in numbers only if you know where to go. We are of no account to any *raja* [ruler]. Nobody seeks our votes."

Thus, the people of the India-Bangladesh enclaves did not imagine themselves to inhabit some (discontinuous) homeland of Chhitmoholia (Enclavia).⁵² On the contrary, over time the enclaves grew apart as they developed individual characteristics, created their own social institutions, and established individual links with their surroundings. The inhabitants of each enclave were of course well aware of the existence of many other enclaves (although nobody knew how many there were) but the identity that counted most was that which linked them to the other inhabitants of their own enclave.

This enclave identity was based on both negative and positive characteristics. On the one hand, it was an injured identity. It had grown out of fifty years of social, legal, and political exclusion as well as a pervading and shared sense of vulnerability. Enclave people felt abandoned by their erstwhile patrons. They were forced to cope without any outside help and with no say in their political future. They also felt they had come down in the world, not only in absolute terms—because of crumbling roads, collapsed bridges, and the loss of schools, markets, and postal services—but also in relative terms. Their land fetched much lower prices than plots in neighboring

⁵²By contrast, ex-enclave people (and people from the disputed area of Berubari) living in Cooch Behar in mainland India did organize themselves into an Enclave Struggle Committee (Chhitmohol Shonggram Shomiti) and took part in movements which were opposed to the transfer of Berubari (1960) and the Tin Bigha corridor (1992, see below) and were in favor of transferring enclaves to India (1974, 1981, and 1992).

mainland villages, and they had to pay more for goods and services. Even more vexing, they had been excluded from new opportunities that had opened up all around them over the years, particularly health facilities, institutional credit, education, a safe water supply, and electricity. In the words of one indignant elderly woman: “Even if we approach those development types, they turn us away and call us ‘foreigners.’ They have made us miss out on modern life.”

Enclave people identified with their own enclave for positive reasons as well as negative. Some proudly pointed to a shared history of creativity in staving off crises and in developing local institutions such as enclave citizens’ committees, a land registration system, or some semblance of public works through *corvée* labor. Others argued that they had developed a more intense sense of community than that which existed outside the enclave. Some said they could hold their heads high because there were no powerful bureaucrats or policemen to lord over them. Most of all, they were proud of their resilience: “We people of the enclave can cope with anything.”

With the birth of Bangladesh in 1971, life became easier for the enclave-dwellers as they reestablished some connections with the surrounding society. Some even took on two identities, one in the enclave and one outside. Residents of an Indian enclave would use a Bangladeshi address, and thus it became possible for them to send their children to school in Bangladesh, to receive mail, to get treatment in a hospital, and to register marriages. A few enclave people with land both inside and outside the enclave built their houses across the boundary line in order to get access to state services, e.g., electricity. An example of this practice can be seen in figure 3. In this way, some residents of the enclave were able to overcome the sharpest edges of their statelessness, and this actually gave support to their identity as enclave people. In 2000, when we asked enclave people in a number of enclaves in both India and Bangladesh about their citizenship, none replied that they were citizens of either country. The usual answer was, “*Amra chhitmoboler nagorik*” (We are citizens of the enclave), to which they added that it was others outside the enclave who considered them to be Indian or Bangladeshi. To them, their statelessness had become a unifying identity.

Crisis and Transterritorial Identity

By the early twenty-first century, inhabitants of the enclaves expressed their shared experience of exclusion mainly in terms of a distinct enclave identity. This identity, however, provided them little support in times of sudden crisis. When attacked from outside, they had neither the organization nor the arms to keep intruders at bay.

In May 2000, a Hindu girl from India eloped with a Muslim youth from South Moshaldanga, a Bangladeshi enclave in India.⁵³ On 11 May 2000, a crowd of Indians entered the enclave and looted five houses. They also abducted two men who were later released against a ransom of twenty thousand rupees. A week later, the enclave was once more invaded by hundreds of Indians who set fire to fifty-five houses, wounded ten people and abducted four, and looted cattle and valuables. Newspaper reports in Bangladesh identified the leaders of the invasion by name—they were relatives of the girl, local politicians (one a former West Bengal Minister), and armed gangsters. They were said to have been backed by Indian state personnel of the Central

⁵³According to several reports, both were Indians who took shelter in the enclave (“Mashaldanga” 2000).



Figure 3. The chairman of an Indian enclave in Bangladesh poses in front of his house. His left foot is in India, his right foot in Bangladesh. He has extended his house into Bangladesh in order to acquire electricity and a postal address in that country. Photo from author's collection.

Reserve Police Force (CRPF) and Border Security Force. Over the next few days, more than four hundred inhabitants of Moshaldanga and surrounding enclaves fled to the Bangladesh mainland, speaking of Indian siege and occupation, gang rape, more kidnappings, arson, and forcible harvesting of standing crops. They were given shelter in an impromptu refugee camp in a schoolyard. Some of them filed cases in Bangladesh against several Indian nationals who had intruded into the enclave.

Tensions between India and Bangladesh escalated rapidly; both states reinforced their troops along the border. When the Indian authorities refused to hold a flag meeting immediately, the Dhaka authorities lodged a strong protest with the Indian

government. Finally, flag meetings were held. Although India neither allowed Bangladeshi officials to visit the enclave nor to distribute relief goods there, an agreement was reached to restore peace and to allow the refugees to return home (“Chhitmohole” 2000; Islam 2000a, 2000b; “450 People” 2000).

This case demonstrates the extreme vulnerability of people living in the India-Bangladesh enclaves. Within these non-state territories, there were no mechanisms to regulate violence, let alone to monopolize it. The small size of the enclaves and their populations and the loose structure of their internal organization made them easy targets.⁵⁴ In their hour of need, the people of Moshaldanga had recourse to their Bangladeshi citizenship. Hundreds resorted to the safety of the Bangladesh mainland and attempted to mobilize the military, diplomatic, judicial, relief, and information capabilities of that state. They were fairly successful, for the parent state proved to be of some use to them during the immediate crisis—but not beyond it. State pressure helped, however vicariously, to stop the invasion of Moshaldanga, but once again the state failed to install itself as a presence in the enclave. It appears that, for enclave people, citizenship had become an episodic identity that might be in abeyance for years or even decades, to be mobilized only in extreme circumstances and only if combined with flight to the mainland.⁵⁵

The Odd One Out: Dohogram and the Tin Bigha Affair

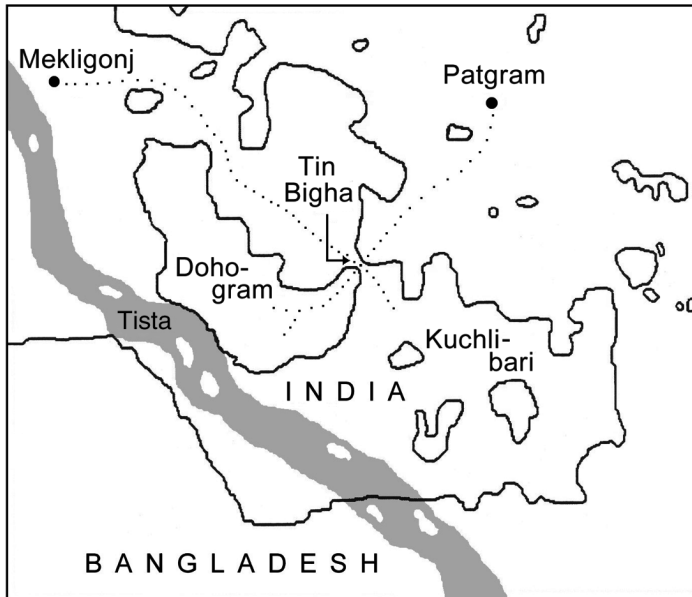
Only one enclave followed another route. In the enclave of Dohogram, citizenship triumphed over enclave identity. Dohogram came into being just like the other 196 enclaves, but its geographical peculiarities turned it into a political cause célèbre.⁵⁶ It was the largest Pakistani enclave in India, almost touching its mainland. It lay in the embrace of the mighty and treacherous Tista River, and it almost cut off a portion of Indian territory (Kuchlibari) from the rest of India. Map 3 illustrates Dohogram’s geographical complexity. Moreover, Pakistan initially and publicly claimed that Dohogram was connected to Pakistan, but in 1953 found out that it had based its claim on a faulty map.⁵⁷ In fact, Dohogram was separated from the Pakistan mainland by about eighty-five meters of Indian territory that became known as the Tin Bigha

⁵⁴Attacks on enclaves are not very well documented but they have occurred fairly regularly. For example, in December 1970, the East Pakistan government claimed that three hundred inhabitants of Batrigachh enclave were killed and seven hundred wounded in an attack by Indian intruders. India denied the charge and said that thirty “miscreants” had entered the enclave (“Far Eastern Round-Up” 1970).

⁵⁵The vulnerability of enclave people was not necessarily greater than that of people living in villages in the mainland surrounding enclaves, but was structured differently. The absence of police or armed forces made for a power vacuum in enclaves that did not exist outside enclaves. On the other hand, it also precluded the collusion between police and local military entrepreneurs (known as *mostan*, *gunda* [in colonial-era English, *goonda*], or *dakat* [*dacoit*]) to which other borderland villages so often were subjected. For the emergence of “mostanocracy” (or gangster rule) in the borderland of India and Bangladesh, see van Schendel (1993).

⁵⁶The enclave has also been known as Tista Nodir Payosthi, and is commonly referred to as Dahagram-Angorpota because it is made up of two contiguous enclaves. In 2000, inhabitants estimated its size at 18 square kilometers and its population at 12,500 (group interview, Dohogram, February 2000).

⁵⁷CR 1B2–28/52 (85–89, July 1955); cf. CR 1B2–3/53 (2057–84, January 1955).



Map 3. Dohogram enclave and the Tin Bigha Corridor. The enclave of Dohogram, which belongs to Bangladesh, is separated from its “mainland” by a narrow strip of Indian territory known as the Tin Bigha corridor. Since 1992 India allows traffic from Bangladesh intermittent access to Dohogram.

(One Acre)⁵⁸ Corridor. By the early 1950s, Dohogram and Tin Bigha had passed into nationalist discourse on both sides of the border. Unlike the other enclaves, Dohogram was worth a fight to both India and Pakistan. That fight was to stretch over decades and involved symbolic, infrastructural, and physical confrontations.

Dohogram was the only enclave in which the state was present. Pakistani policemen were stationed there with the permission of the Indian authorities, and without permission when no “route permit” was given. In that case, policemen would simply run from the Pakistani mainland to the enclave and, if they were unlucky, Indian policemen would open fire on them.⁵⁹ Residents of Dohogram also crossed over to mainland Pakistan for shopping, land registration, and so on, which was very risky when armed Indian policemen were posted in the corridor. The presence of armed police was an indication of the fluctuating tension between India and Pakistan. For example, when the two countries came to blows over territorial claims on the other side of the subcontinent in early 1965 (the Rann of Kutch dispute [Jha 1972]), the effects of this clash were felt immediately in Dohogram. Pakistan alleged that Indian troops were being amassed around Dohogram, and that they had entered the enclave and occupied it. India denied these charges, complained about the heavy concentration of Pakistani troops along the border facing Dohogram, and accused Pakistan of expelling Hindus from the enclave (“Unprovoked” 1965; Jha 1972). Soon, intensive firing broke out in the Dohogram area, which led to casualties on both sides and the

⁵⁸Literally, “three *bighas*.” A bigha is one-third of an acre.

⁵⁹See, e.g., the shooting incident of May 1953 reported in CR 1B2-3/53 (2057-84, January 1955). Cf. CR 1V-6/50 (141-71, June 1954).

evacuation of border villages. The language of war came into play: Pakistan spoke of Indian aggression, and the Indian government assured parliament that “not an inch of our territory” would be allowed to fall into Pakistani hands (“Uproar” 1965; “Situation” 1965). After two weeks, a ceasefire was negotiated. Pakistani units at the border opposite Tin Bigha hoisted a white flag; India issued permits to Pakistani officials to visit Dohogram; and some four thousand enclave people returned to their heavily damaged homes (“Cease-Fire” 1965; “Shooting” 1965; “East Pakistan” 1965).

After Bangladesh broke away from Pakistan, a new opportunity for regulating access to Dohogram presented itself. At first it seemed that the exchange agreement of 1974 would eliminate Dohogram and all the other enclaves within a few years. But when this agreement was not enforced, separate negotiations were held between India and Bangladesh. These negotiations eventually resulted in a curious compromise in 1982 that was not implemented till 1992: India granted Bangladesh intermittent passage from its mainland to the Dohogram enclave.

Today, a narrow road runs from the Bangladeshi town of Patgram to the border. It snakes through lush green paddy fields and comes to a sudden halt at a thirty-meter iron fence. On either side of the fence, the paddy fields continue uninterrupted, but along its span, the state is heavily inscribed in the landscape. The gated fence, stretched between two concrete boundary pillars, is Indian. On the Bangladeshi side, two small offices of the Bangladesh Rifles (BDR, the border guards of Bangladesh) can be seen, as well as a red-and-green Bangladeshi flag and a signpost indicating the distance to Dohogram. Across the fence, Indian flags are fluttering in the breeze; personnel of the Indian Border Security Forces stand guard in front of their small outpost; and even the surrounding trees have been marked with the saffron, white, and green of the Indian flag. Beyond the outpost a carefully marked road of some eighty-five meters runs across the fields of Tin Bigha to a second gate. This gate marks the entrance to Dohogram. Beyond it, an outpost of the BDR and Bangladeshi flags can be seen. At night, the gates are closed and floodlights illuminate the corridor. During the day, the gates are opened for an hour at a time and the road becomes a corridor. Pedestrians, rickshaws, motorcycles, and trucks can cross to and from Bangladesh and the enclave, unchecked by Indian authorities—the road is *de facto* Bangladeshi territory then. After an hour, the gates are closed and no traffic is allowed for the next hour, after which the gates swing open for another hour of uninterrupted communication between Bangladesh and its enclave. During the hours in which the gates are closed, a small bus runs on the Indian road from Mekligonj to Kuchlibari, which crosses the Dohogram road (see map 3).⁶⁰

The arrangement does not constitute a transfer of sovereignty. Rather, India allows Bangladesh the use of its territory, the Tin Bigha corridor, to access Dohogram. The corridor itself remains firmly Indian. The gates are operated by the Indian side on its terms, and suggestions to give Bangladesh unrestricted access through the Tin Bigha corridor have been rejected.

The lifeline to Bangladesh has transformed Dohogram. After 1992, Bangladesh governments spent considerable funds on rehabilitating the enclave’s infrastructure,

⁶⁰The construction of this road, and an embankment or wall protecting traffic on it from Pakistani view and fire, was a major point of contention between India and Pakistan in 1965. In 2000 there was no trace of an embankment, and the Mekligonj-Kuchlibari road could be easily observed from Bangladesh, some twenty meters away (“Pak Threats” 1965; “Tin Bigha” 1965; Jha 1972, 176). In May 2001, the Indian authorities were reported to have relaxed the access restrictions to Dohogram somewhat, opening the Tin Bigha corridor from 6 A.M. to 7:30 P.M., with a one-hour break at midday (“India” 2000; “India Relaxes” 2001).

constructing a circular road to connect its three villages, and building bridges, schools, a hospital, and a market. Electricity could not reach the enclave, however, because India does not allow Bangladeshi electricity lines to run across its territory. Rifles were distributed among the Muslim population to defend themselves against possible invasion from India, and most Hindu inhabitants were pushed out of the enclave.⁶¹ After forty-five years, the state of Bangladesh claimed the territory, imposing taxes, organizing elections, and “normalizing” the administration. Non-governmental development organizations also entered the enclave for the first time.

The part-time umbilical cord across Tin Bigha allowed Dohogram to join the nation. After 1992, a strong sense of Bangladeshi citizenship emerged in the enclave, as state patronage and access to the mainland appeared to be permanently guaranteed. Enclave identity did not disappear but was now nested in a national identity. Dohogram became an administrative unit of Bangladesh and its leaders started competing for state largesse with others in the mainland. Proxy citizenship ceased to play a role as the number of Hindu inhabitants dwindled and the Indian state appeared to have nothing to offer the enclave inhabitants. But still, Dohogram residents were unlike other inhabitants of Bangladesh. They knew that India and Bangladesh could decide to implement their earlier agreement to exchange enclaves, in which case there was no predicting whether Dohogram would be exempted.⁶²

Stateless in South Asia

Enclaves are usually treated as footnotes to the history of state formation. This may be correct in the case of the West European enclaves today: their territorial peculiarities have been largely “normalized” through various customs treaties between states as well as through the integrative influence of the European Union. It would be a mistake, however, to consider the India-Bangladesh enclaves as a mere footnote to state formation. In this conclusion, I briefly outline how these enclaves point to the importance of non-state spaces; how they have become embedded in the nation’s imagination in both India and Bangladesh; how they unsettle a well-established historiography; and how they make us reconsider the relationships among territory, nation, and identity.

Non-State Spaces

The India-Bangladesh enclaves qualify dominant models of politics in which the entire world is neatly parcelled out between and controlled by post-Westphalian nation-states.⁶³ Such models have been criticized mostly in terms of competing power

⁶¹Interview, February 2000. According to Dohogram residents, only a few Hindu families remained in 2000. The events after 1992 resembled those after 1947. At that time, too, guns had been distributed to Muslims, and Hindus had been forced to leave the enclave. Before 1947, about 350 Hindu families were thought to have lived in Dohogram, compared to only 125 Muslim families. Cf. CR 3I-20/53 (1-27, November 1954).

⁶²Under the 1992 agreement, Dohogram would stay with Bangladesh, even if at some future date the other enclaves were exchanged. In return, Bangladesh would give up its claim over the disputed territory of south Berubari union (marked “d2” in map 1).

⁶³That is, the type of state that developed after the Treaty of Westphalia (1648), first in Europe and then in the rest of the world.

entities⁶⁴ and in terms of the problems that states face in actually making their own societies legible. The issue of unadministered enclaves points, however, to the spatial limits of states and to the importance of identifying non-state spaces in the modern world. It is unlikely that there are many other places on earth that closely resemble the India-Bangladesh enclaves. Yet, enduring, unadministered, inhabited spaces do occur more frequently than dominant models allow us to see. They range from no-man's lands, frontier societies, and war zones to disputed islands and the high seas. They also include non-state spaces well within state territories, e.g., the high mountains, marshes, dense forests, deserts, and mangrove swamps that allow maroon societies to flourish (Scott 2000). Challenging the image of contiguous state space, they shape the policies of states and contribute to the constitution of both states and nations.

The Nation's Imagination

The spatially insignificant India-Bangladesh enclaves, where no national flags fly, have become unwilling icons of sovereignty, territory, and citizenship in both India and Bangladesh, precisely because the enclaves pose a challenge to the image of the state and the nation as spatially contiguous entities. For this reason we can consider enclaves as privileged locations from which to study nations. National political parties and national governments with no roots in the enclaves themselves have appropriated the enclaves as symbols of the nation. In India, the issue has been taken up especially by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), which opposed the grant of the Tin Bigha corridor to Bangladesh in 1992, organized agitations against it in West Bengal, and has been observing an annual "Tin Bigha Protest Day" on 26 June. In many BJP writings, the enclaves as well as the disputed area of Berubari figure next to the Kashmir issue as powerful symbols of Indian territorial inviolability.⁶⁵ When the BJP came to power in India in 1998, however, it was caught between its political conviction and statesmanship. In an open letter, the president of the West Bengal state unit of the BJP reminded the Prime Minister of India, Atul Behari Vajpayee, of his party's stand and demanded his intervention to end the plight of the inhabitants of the Indian enclaves. The president reported that the enclave inhabitants were living in "virtual bondage . . . they fall outside the purview of the Indian law enforcement machinery since there is no access route for Indian officials to the enclaves Tales of their miseries remained outside the earshot of even Calcutta, let alone New Delhi" ("Where Smuggling" 1998).

In April 2000, the Indian Home Minister L. K. Advani (BJP) visited the Tin Bigha corridor. He himself had opposed the opening of the corridor in 1992. But now he pronounced that "any party may come and go but a government should honor its predecessor's decision, so we have to ensure the corridor's functioning smoothly" ("India" 2000).⁶⁶

⁶⁴For example, transnational corporations and organizations, civil societies, underground economies.

⁶⁵For pandemonium over Tin Bigha in the Indian Parliament, see *Lok Sabha Debates* (1992).

⁶⁶In another expression of national concern, the Indian press, quoting "intelligence sources," has recently suggested that several Indian enclaves in Bangladesh have become "a haven for terrorists." According to these reports, a separatist group (the Kamtapur Liberation Organization, demanding independent statehood for the Cooch Behar area) has established training camps in three Indian enclaves in Bangladesh, forcing most of their inhabitants to flee (Sarkar 2001).

In Bangladesh, the enclaves are equally emotive symbols of the inviolability of the nation's territory. In a highly publicized court case, the Indira-Mujib treaty of 1974 was challenged on the grounds that the agreed exchange of enclaves involved cession of Bangladesh territory and was entered into without lawful authority by the executive head of government.⁶⁷ On the other hand, successive governments in Bangladesh have demanded that India implement the treaty fully. In the treaty, Bangladesh ceded part of the territory of Berubari against a lease in perpetuity of the Indian-owned Tin Bigha corridor. Twenty-seven years later, India still had not kept its part of the deal, although it possessed the Berubari territory. Urged by his Parliament, the Foreign Minister of Bangladesh admitted that the strictly controlled access of Bangladeshis to Dohogram enclave through the Tin Bigha corridor was "not consistent with the 1974 treaty." He informed the House that he had requested India to ensure round-the-clock free access, if need be by constructing a fly-over or an underpass ("Implement" 2001).

The capacity of the enclaves to arouse intense emotions in their mainlands is directly related to the fact that they puncture putatively contiguous national spaces. They are an affront to the nation's imagination.⁶⁸ However, although they appear as "foreign" bodies within the nation's territory, each nation is able by means of its own enclaves to penetrate the other's territory. This interpenetration has led the two nations to dance to the same tune, locked in a slow tango from which they have been unable to extricate themselves. The tune is that of Partition, the orchestration that of foreign policies which constantly recreate national selves by distinguishing the other in terms of territory, boundaries, and security.⁶⁹ The enclaves also demonstrate that what the nation stands for is less important than the national space it claims: the change from "Pakistan" to "Bangladesh" made the tango less strangulating for a while but did not change its score. What remained was a deadlock over the conundrum of national space.

⁶⁷The case of Kazi Mukhlesur Rahman versus Bangladesh (legal case 26 DLR[SC] 44, 3 September 1974).

⁶⁸This uneasiness may also account for the fact that the enclaves—unusual for icons of sovereignty and territory—are rarely depicted, and therefore popular imagination of them is geographically vague. Neither India nor Bangladesh has ever published maps accurately showing the location of these enclaves, although most of them can be located on the basis of pre-1947 local maps. In mapping the "geo-body" of the nation, the successor states of British India have shown a remarkable reluctance to allow citizens and outsiders detailed knowledge of their contours. Accurate government maps of border regions are highly restricted, evidence of what Krishna has called "cartographic anxiety" (1996; cf. Gregory 1994; Thongchai 1994). In similar vein, in the absence of scholars venturing into the study of the India-Bangladesh enclaves (with the sole exception of Karan's three-page article of 1966), politicians and journalists have fired the nation's imagination without providing accurate information.

⁶⁹Although the two governments essentially gave up on ruling in their enclaves in the mid-1950s, there was continual pressure on them to imagine the inhabitants of the enclaves as members of the nation. In 1996, the Member of Parliament for Cooch Behar phrased it thus: "The main issue [between India and Bangladesh] is about the Indian enclaves and the Indian citizens thereon. For the last fifty years, about one lakh and fifty thousand [150,000] Indian citizens are living in Indian enclaves surrounded by the territory of Bangladesh They are living under the rule of jungle. There is no education; there is no school; there is no drinking water facility; there is no food; there is no law and order; there is no *panchayat*; there is no election; there is no legislature; there is no Parliament for them and there is no representative from them in this august House But our Government is still silent on this issue" (*Lok Sabha Debates* 1996). The complexities of any process of exchanging and regulating enclaves is demonstrated by the repeated failure, since 1843, of attempts by the Belgian and Dutch governments and parliaments to agree on an exchange of their enclaves (Ragas 1999).

Postcolonial Historiography

A third reason to take the enclaves seriously is their capacity to unsettle dominant accounts of post-1947 state and nation formation in South Asia. The states of India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh provide us with a very special case of postcolonial state formation. Unlike the vast majority of colonies gaining political independence during the twentieth century, British India fragmented as it decolonized. Thus the three states of India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh share a single colonial past and have their roots in a single colonial state.⁷⁰ Most theorising on postcolonial states and nations assumes territorial continuity across the temporal divide of decolonization, in terms of both institutions and identities. In the case of South Asia this assumption is completely untenable. The rearrangements, reorientations, and divisions of the spoils were uniquely complex, and they continue to hold sway over contemporary national and interstate politics in the region.⁷¹ The South Asian case allows us to qualify “single-colony-to-nation-state” theories, particularly concerning the impact of colonial rule on postcolonial trajectories: three states and nations were fashioned from a single colony and followed distinct trajectories.

It can be argued that the India-Bangladesh enclaves survived into the twenty-first century precisely because India and Bangladesh are states constructed on a single legal legacy, that of British India. Since the enclaves were surveyed and demarcated during the colonial period, there is no legal way for either state to disown their rightful existence. Thus, annexation has never been an option. Nor has an exchange of enclaves been an option, due to bitter memories of state fragmentation that have fuelled movements fiercely opposing any further loss of territory.

Decolonization led not only to the breakup of the colonial state but also to the fragmentation of South Asian historiography. It created a partitioned academic community engaged with new discourses regarding nation, citizenship, and state that differed considerably between India and Pakistan (and later Bangladesh). Unsurprisingly, the historiography of state and nation came to rest on conflicting interpretations of Partition. Among the few things that historians of modern India and Pakistan could agree upon, however, was the cataclysmic impact of Partition: the critical event of the twentieth century that demanded that henceforth the narration of state and nation formation be a story of binary opposites. Therefore, no blurred boundaries could be countenanced: the new states were conceptualized as sharply defined, territorially unambiguous, and antithetical. National identities were equally well defined: it was unthinkable to be anything but either an Indian or a Pakistani.

The story of the enclaves upsets such neat binary constructions and allows the complexities that went into the making of states and identities in post-colonial South Asia to reemerge. The states themselves created and institutionalized the ambiguous category that I have called proxy citizenship—today, largely without the institutional support of earlier decades but still a core element in nationalist discourse and interstate relations among India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. Furthermore, the inability of the states to come to terms with transterritoriality created unadministered populations: citizens only in the most tenuous sense whose liminal existence belied the simple dichotomies between Indians and Pakistanis/Bangladeshis. To people

⁷⁰A fourth state, Burma (currently known as Myanmar), could be added because it was a province of British India as well. But in the late 1930s, it gained the status of a separate colony, British Burma, and it followed a separate path of decolonization.

⁷¹For some of these complexities in the case of national identities in Bangladesh, see van Schendel (2000 and 2001).

living in enclaves, the polarized nationalisms of India and Pakistan/Bangladesh posed a threat, not a temptation—Partition had dealt them a very different hand. Inscribing their experiences onto the postcolonial historical record requires us to tease apart issues of territory and identity that are usually interwoven.

Fluid Identities

Finally, the case of the India-Bangladesh enclaves makes us consider the connections between territory, nation, and identity. Among inhabitants of these enclaves, identity formation differed fundamentally from that of mainland populations. The literature on the nation in South Asia recognizes the interplay between national identities and sub-national identities—based on religion, language, region, and ethnic group—but it pays scant attention to the interplay between national and transnational (or transterritorial) identities. Identity formation among enclave people provides an example of the second type of interplay. In the course of their daily routines, enclave people move through a variety of transterritorial contexts that create a heightened need to negotiate and to express multiple forms of identity. The way in which they construct these identities offers a particularly compelling field for exploring and conceptualising the contextual dimensions of meaning in social life.⁷²

We have seen that enclave people were pulled among three identities, two of which were transterritorial: citizens, proxy citizens, and members of an enclave community. A fourth identity, also transterritorial, was that of members of a community embracing all enclaves, but this identity never became important.⁷³ The first identity, that of citizens, imposed itself strongly during the early postcolonial years but soon lost its impact. By the mid-1950s, most enclave people realized that their state had effectively abandoned them, and their identity as citizens of that state waned. The second identity, that of proxy citizens of the state surrounding their enclave, was open only to Hindus in Pakistani/Bangladeshi enclaves and to Muslims in Indian ones. This identity peaked with the violent events of 1950 and then faded with its counterpart, that of identity as citizens.

We have seen that both identities could reassert themselves episodically. After the mid-1950s, citizenship and proxy citizenship were usually in abeyance except in rare circumstances when violence and flight triggered their resurgence. In the face of life-threatening violence, enclave people had no option but to flee, and they had nowhere safe to go except to their mainland. Those who could opt only for the identity of citizens fled violence coming from outside the enclave. They could take refuge only in their mainland (as in the invasion of Moshaldanga in 2000). Those who could also opt for the identity of proxy citizens fled violence from within the enclave (as when Hindu families were driven out of the Bangladeshi enclave of Dohogram). For them, there was a choice between two uncertain destinations: their mainland, where they had formal rights but minority status, or the surrounding territory (their “proxy

⁷²This argument, made for border zones by Berdahl (1999, 7), is even more pertinent to small enclaves where daily routines are of necessity almost always transnational.

⁷³There were actually a number of options between the last two categories. We found that in small enclaves located close to each other, people who had set up a joint enclave council could identify with this small group of enclaves. People living in a sub-enclave and its surrounding enclave (as in the case of Haluapara and Garati) could develop a joint identity. Another option was for people living in enclaves belonging to one state to develop a joint identity, but there is no evidence in our material to suggest that this was an important identity at any time.

mainland”), where they were illegal immigrants but enjoyed majority status. But citizenship and proxy citizenship never became hegemonic in the enclaves: whenever a crisis was overcome and people returned to their enclave, their identity as (proxy) citizens soon faded.

The third identity, that of members of their own enclave community, was the only identity that was not transterritorial, at least not from an enclave point of view. This identity developed after 1947 and was boosted by shared experiences of exclusion, victimization, and coping. It became dominant among most enclave people by the late 1950s. It became especially prevalent after 1971 when citizenship lost even more ground with the news of a possible exchange of enclaves between India and newly emerged Bangladesh, and when proxy citizenship weakened further as a result of a new, less communal nationalism in Bangladesh.⁷⁴

Over half a century, the inhabitants of the enclaves invested their territorial predicament with new cultural practices and juggled a combination of new group identities, all of which were problematic and unstable. Although each enclave followed its own trajectory, enclave people as a group drifted away from transterritorial identities and toward one based on their own mini-territory. The world outside became the Other. In enclaves where invasion or ethnic cleansing occurred, two episodic identities—citizenship and proxy citizenship—could briefly emerge among those who felt compelled to leave their enclave, only to be dropped again as soon as they returned. Only one enclave did not follow this route: Dohogram, “the odd one out” in which citizenship made a spectacular comeback after the enclave was given regular access to its mainland.

Confronted with multiple post-Partition identity projects, enclave people have had to find their own solutions. The rich literature on community identities based on religion, language, region, and ethnic group in South Asia usually analyses these as *sub*-national, as nested within a larger national framework. But here we have encountered forms of identity that straddle, obfuscate, and deny national identities and cut across the bipolar historiographical constructions. Such crosscutting identities—which highlight the arbitrariness and violence of discourses of nationhood, citizenship and sovereignty (Krishna 1996)—may not be restricted to unadministered enclaves. For example, they are likely to be widespread in the border zones connecting India, Bangladesh, and Pakistan, among linguistic communities divided by a border, and in areas of disputed sovereignty such as Kashmir.⁷⁵

In the enclaves, then, the absence of the state is mirrored by an absence of nationalism. It is true that local forms of organization took on some state-like functions.⁷⁶ But nowhere did they develop into anything like (mini-)states, if only

⁷⁴The news of a possible exchange of enclaves also affected the movement of people. Before 1971, there had been a trend for people with proxy citizen status to migrate out of the enclaves and settle in their proxy mainland, usually under pressure. In this way, Hindus migrated from Pakistani enclaves to settle in India, and Muslims left Indian enclaves to settle in East Pakistan. Their lands were taken over by those who stayed behind. After 1974, however, a new phenomenon arose: “speculative immigration.” This involved small numbers of Hindu settlers from India buying the relatively cheap land in Bangladeshi enclaves (and, conversely, Muslim settlers from Bangladesh buying land in Indian enclaves) in the hope of these enclaves becoming integrated in India and Bangladesh, respectively, in the near future. Some of these speculative immigrants gave up in disgust when the exchange did not materialize, but others stayed on and now identify predominantly as enclave people.

⁷⁵On the ambivalent identities of people in borderlands, see Donnan and Wilson (1999, 60).

⁷⁶E.g., land registration in Garati, public works by means of *corvée* labor in Dohala Khagrabari, and the administration of justice in many, but not all, enclaves.

because they had neither redistributive functions nor a monopoly of violence. Local forms of identity express a sense of place and local community but lack the broader scope, cogency, and symbols of a nationalist ideology. In today's world, and in current academic discourses, it has become very difficult to imagine populations as being both stateless and nationless. That is exactly why it is important to take cases such as the India-Bangladesh enclaves seriously. They demand that we reconsider received assumptions about the fit between state, territory, sovereignty and identity: "Only in the eyes of the law are we Indians."

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