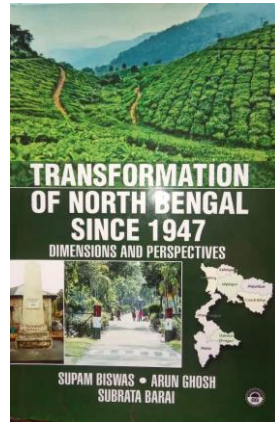


Book Review



Supam Biswas, Arun Ghosh and Subrata Barai(Ed.):*Transformation of North Bengal since 1947 Dimensions and Perspectives*, (New Delhi, Abhijeet Publications, 2021, pp.1-240, Price: 960/p INR)

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The present work expects to explain many untold aspects of post-independent North Bengal in a new dimension at the micro-level study which has so far been neglected by the main stream historians or social scientists. The present study focuses on partition and the changing demographic profile of North Bengal since independence. Special emphasise has been given on the administrative reorganisation and jurisdiction changes since 1947, rise of regionalism and demand for separate statehood.

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Book Review: Transformation of North Bengal since 1947 Dimensions and Perspectives

The demographic profile of North Bengal has been changed dramatically since independence in two occasions-one after the partition of India (1947) and later, after the formation of Bangladesh in 1971. The region witnessed a massive internal migration of our countrymen from state to State, district to district or from one province. People mainly came from outside and started settling themselves permanently by generations.

The book discussed in detail the rise of Siliguri. With the influx of the migrants from across the neighbouring countries, Siliguri turned into the second largest city in West Bengal after Kolkata. The highest percentage of migrations came from Bangladesh. The neighbouring states like Bihar, Jharkhand and Orissa have also contributed largely in this field. Thousands of uprooted people from North East settled in Siliguri due to political instability and ethnic violence. Masses of repatriated Burmese (now Myanmarese) also settled there after their influx in 1967. Siliguri, as a consequence, has become a city of migrants and a cosmopolitan town.

The administrative reorganisation and changes in the Jurisdiction of post-independent North Bengal highly affected the politics, society, economy, culture, demography of that region. The migration problem gave a great blow to the political, social and economic setup of the districts of North Bengal. After the liberation of Bangladesh took place in 1971, people mainly from Bangladesh and outside like Assam came and started settling themselves. Thus, a great demographic upheaval started taking place since 1971 and reclaimed land from many of the indigenous communities. In 1990s, these lands were converted into tea plantations. The outsiders established their strong hold over the govt. services. As a result, a number of indigenous communities were displaced and migrated to other areas. By the influx of a large number of people, confrontations started between them and the existing original inhabitants of North Bengal which ultimately gave rise to political movements demanding separate homelands for the 'son of the soil' (which they called themselves) of North Bengal. At present, we have witnessed several ethnic movements demanding for separate statehood like Kamtapur/Greater Cooch Behar, Gorkhaland, Surjyapurias or a separate Adivasi Pradesh in the Dooars region. These movements may be classified as territorial-based and ethnic-based movements.

The Bengal-Bihar merger resistance movement (1956), origin and growth of enclave problems, inward crisis of backward communities during East Pakistan to post- independent

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Bangladesh, caste-based politics in post-independent 'Himalaya Banga'-all these chapters have produced a special attraction for the readers to study the history of North Bengal after 1947. The bibliography will be immense helpful for those who are doing research on this theme.

Finally, writing the history of post-independent North Bengal is, indeed, a difficult task due to the scarcity of sources. In spite of such interceptions, they have endeavoured much to explore many untold things through various archival sources, government records, and private papers and so on.

I hope that this volume will generate some new innovations in the study of history and definitely help the researchers to enquire into every corners of history of post-independent North Bengal. Only then will the author's success be revealed.