Abhijit GUPTA

Book history in India

In these days of national and trans-national book histories, the case of India presents a curious anomaly. It is no more possible to talk a history of the book in India as it is to talk a history of the book in Africa or Europe. The linguistic diversity, the uneven history of print and the widely differing protocols of writing and reading make it virtually impossible to compose a book history purely in national terms, or within the parameters of the nation-state. The Indian subcontinent is home to more languages than anywhere else in the world. The Indian constitution recognises twenty-two official languages, but the number of mother tongues in India is over 1,500 of which twenty-four are spoken by a million or more people. The ex-librarian of the National Library in India, B. S. Kesavan did attempt to write a three-volume history of Indian printing and publishing, but it was more in the way of a compendium of work already done in the field. No scholar would be so foolhardy to attempt such a project now, unless he was completely possessed by the shade of Harinath De, the first-ever Indian librarian of the National Library who was fluent in a small matter of 34 languages. Similarly, a book history organised according to language will be partial, since two or more languages invariably overlap anywhere in the region. In Bengal the history of the Bengali book cannot be properly appreciated without some understanding of the protocols of the book in English, Persian, Sanskrit and Urdu. To take one, admittedly spectacular example, the Baptist Mission Press in Serampore, which published the first Bible in any Indian language in 1800, printed in as many as 40 languages supplying books to a market which stretched from Afghanistan in the west to Indonesia in the east.

We are thus left with the region. To a certain extent, it is possible to speak of the history of the printed book in South Asia in terms of specific places: Goa and the Malabar coast to in the 16th and the 17th centuries, and the three presidency cities of Bombay, Calcutta and Madras in the 18th and the 19th, along with the likes of Serampore, Dhaka, Lucknow, Benaras, Colombo, Lahore and so on. Such histories are easier to manage, and within the reach of the individual scholar. But at the end of the day, the regional model is a scaled-down version of the national model, and runs the same risk of being collapsed into an

undifferentiated narrative. The major centres of book production in South Asia were home to a number of distinct "print cultures", published in a wide range of languages and reached readerships in far-flung constituencies. They were also the crossroads of a bustling traffic in ideas, personnel, technologies and materials which is notoriously difficult to measure but key to understanding the diversity of the book in south Asia. Another important component of this traffic was the overseas trade in books, both inward and outward, something to which the recent trans-national turn in book history has drawn attention. We need a meshing of regional and global perspectives to be able to do justice to these histories.

The other curious feature about the book in India is the simultaneous existence of orality, script, print and the digital word, even to this day. Many scholars speak of a "pre-print publishing industry" in India which "primarily revolved around the widespread and large-scale commission, production, and dissemination of manuscripts"[1]. The coming of the printing press to Goa in 1556 and then to the Malabar coast in the early decades of the 18th century did not witness to an indigenous take-up of printing in the hinterland and printing continued to be confined to the coastal areas, until the rise of the Madras and Calcutta presidencies under the East India Company in the latter half of the eighteenth century. In between, print was mobilised chiefly by Christian missionaries for the purpose of proselytising, with local initiatives confined to stray cases such as that of Bhimaji Parekh's in Bombay in 1674.

MISSIONARIES AND THE BOOK

Nevertheless, it is from missionary accounts that we have some of the first descriptions of the printed book vis-à-vis the manuscript book. While the Jesuits in Goa made no attempt to socialize the book and printed on sufferance (their printing press had accidentally turned up while en route to Abyssinia) the Danish Lutheran missionary Bartholemew Ziegenbalg was among the first to engage with the materiality of manuscript book. Writing to his parent body the Society for the Propagation of the Christian Knowledge (SPCK) in c.1707, Ziegenbalg observed: "As for the *Outside* of these Books, they are of a quite different Dress from those in Europe. There is neither Paper nor Leather, neither Ink nor Pen used by the Natives at all, but the Characters are by *Iron Tools* impressed on a Sort of Leaves of a Certain Tree, which is much like a Palm-Tree. At the End of every Leaf a Hole is made, and through

[1] Graham Shaw, "South Asia", in Simon Eliot and Jonathan Rose, eds., *A Companion to the History of the Book* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), 126.

the Hole a String drawn, whereby the whole Sett of Leaves is kept together."[2] This form of the book, known as the *pothi*, had been paramount in India for nearly two millennia, with the palm-leaf as the preferred substrate in the southern peninsula and the bark of birch and aloe in north and north-east India. Elsewhere, Ziegenbalg wrote how he would send his emissaries into distant villages to buy manuscripts from the widows of Brahmin scholars, or failing which, have his own scribes copy them.

The study of Indology as a discipline can be said to have begun with the setting up of the Asiatic Society in Calcutta in 1784, but its early investigations were not overly concerned with the form or sociology of the manuscript or the printed book. It was left to the Baptist missionaries, who set up the famed Mission Press in Danish-controlled Serampore in 1800, to leave the first substantial accounts of printing in the sub-continent. Admittedly, these consisted of reports—or "Memoirs" as the missionaries called them—of their own work, but given that the Mission Press printed in at least 40 languages and ramified over much of south and south-east Asia, their accounts are invaluable for understanding the early history of print in the region. In addition, the Serampore establishment did not just print: they cast type, made their own paper and ink and did their own binding, and all of these operations are covered in detail in their "Memoirs" as well as "Periodical Accounts". However, what are totally missing from these reports are the names of the local assistants who worked side by side with the missionaries in translating, printing, press-work and binding. Other than the type-making Karmakar family, one is hard put to find any names of the print-house personnel who were the mainstay of the Serampore establishment.

THE IMPORTANCE OF JAMES LONG

The first person to have systematically studied the book trade in colonial India was the Anglican priest Rev. James Long (1814-1887). During his residence of over three decades (1840-1872) in Calcutta, Long compiled at least three bibliographies of Bengali printing which still remain the mainstay of book studies in 19th century Bengal.

Long's first compilation came out in 1855, as two parts in the *Selections from the Records of the Bengal Government* (No. XXIII). The first part was titled "Returns relating to native printing presses and publications in Bengal", while the other was called "Names and writing of 515 persons connected with

[2] A. K. Priolkar, *The Printing Press in India: its beginning and early development* (Bombay: Marathi Samshodhana Mandala, 1958), 40.

Bengali literature, either as authors or translators of printed works". To this was appended "a catalogue of Bengali newspapers and periodicals". In the prefatory notice, he wrote: "I have been for several years employed in the compilation of a Catalogue Raisonnee of Bengali books. I have used this as a check on my Returns; and have also visited nearly all the Native Presses myself and ascertained the particulars from personal inquiry. …I found it practicable to give, in only few cases, the number of works circulated, because there are few regular book shops where those books are to be found. The books are given out on commission to hawkers who traverse the streets of Calcutta and its neighbourhood to sell them, carrying them on their head. There are several hundreds of this class of men employed."[3]

Long's comments are revealing about his modus operandi, and indeed, for the rest of his career in India, all his investigations were marked by the same ethnographic zeal for fieldwork and observation. Long's returns were for the year 1853-54 and were divided into as many as ten columns, giving bibliographic information under the following heads: place, names of presses, names of each work, description of each work, number of copies of each work struck off, number of copies of each work sold, price of each work per copy, number of pages in each work, copy furnished and remarks. Not all of the heads were equally informative but there is no doubt that he had set himself an ambitious programme of bibliographic description. Much later, while on trial for libel for arranging the publication of *The Indigo-Planting Mirror* (an English translation of a Bengali play fiercely critical of indigo factors titled *Nil-darpan* by Dinabandhu Mitra), Long said:

> My time has been spent chiefly among the Natives, engaged in Vernacular teaching, in the charge of a body of Native Christians, and in the promotion of Christian Vernacular literature…I have aimed for the last ten years in my leisure hours to be an exponent of Native opinion in its bearing on the spiritual, social and intellectual welfare of Natives of this land; as for instance, when applied to, on the part of the Court of Directors, seven years ago, to procure for their Library copies of all original works in Bengali, or as when, lately, I sent to Oxford by request copies of all Bengali translations from Sanskrit; or when I have procured for missionaries, Government, Rajas &c., Vernacular books of all kinds… Here is an illustration: these two Vernacular books were sent to me a few days ago from Benares—one Robinson Crusoe in Hindi, the other a Choral Book in Urdu. Almost every week I receive new Vernacular Books, and I make a point of bringing them to the notice of Europeans on various grounds.

But Long's much longer work-in-progress, not just for 1853-54, but for the entire history of Bengali printing, also came out in 1855. Titled *A Descriptive*

[3] James Long, "Returns relating to Native Presses and Publications in Bengal", *Selections of the Records of the Bengal Government, No. XXII* (Calcutta: 1855), 88.

Catalogue of Bengali Works, it was an exhaustive list of "fourteen hundred books and pamphlets" which "have issued from the press in the last sixty years". Based primarily on the collection of the philanthropist Jaykrishna Mukhopadhyay (which subsequently became the Uttarpara Jaykrishna Library), it was also remarkable for being the first-ever attempt to classify Bengali works according to genre. Particularly significant was his attempt to propose a genre called "Musalman-Bangla Literature" in which Long classified work written in a Bengali heavily inflected with Perso-Arabic words—in addition, these works closely followed the design of the manuscript page, resulting in a distinctive title-page and typographical layout. On the other hand, as a man of cloth Long was disapproving of genres such as "erotica", which he recorded with obvious distaste: "On erotic subjects there are various books which have passed through many editions in prose and poetry, and have a wide circulation... These works are beastly, equal to the worst of the French school". A few years later, he would be instrumental in playing a leading role in pushing through legislation which made the sale of obscene books and prints in Bengal punishable by law.

Long was also responsible for compiling what may be called the first book-trade index. Prior to Long, information about printing establishments could be found in yearly publications such as the *Bengal Directory and Annual Register* and so on. But these would usually record not more than a dozen of the better-known presses under the head "Native Presses". In his 1853-54 list, Long was able to furnish the names of 515 Bengali "authors, editors, translators, &c."; two years, later, in 1857, he was able to list the names and establishments of as many as 46 presses operating in the famed "*Bat-tala*" (lit. under the banyan trees) area in north-central Calcutta. He wrote: "Few Bengali books are sold in European shops. A person may be twenty years in Calcutta, and yet scarcely know that any Bengali books are printed by Bengalis themselves. He must visit the native parts of the town and the Chitpoor road, their Paternoster Row, to gain any information on this point. The native presses are generally in by-lanes with little outside to attract, yet they ply a busy trade."[4]

Two other missionaries followed immediately in Long's bibliographical footsteps. In 1861, the Rev. John Murdoch published from Madras a bibliography of Christian tracts in all Indian languages, including English. This was followed, in 1865, by the *Classified Catalogue of Tamil Printed Books, with introductory notices*, the first bibliography in an Indian language other than Bengali. In its introduction, Murdoch wrote: "The idea of publishing such a Catalogue was borrowed from the Rev. J. Long; the plan has been copied

[4] Quoted in Abhijit Gupta, "The History of the Book in South Asia", Michael Suarez S. J. and Henry Woudhuysen, eds., *The Oxford Companion to the Book*, Vol. 1 (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2010).

from the report of the International Statistical Congress; the Introductory Notices have been chiefly selected from the works enumerated below."[5] Among the works Murdoch drew on, mention may be made of the Rev. H. Bower's three-volume *Catalogue of Oriental Manuscripts and other works*; Murdoch also expressed indebtedness to the various Indian and European assistants who aided him, such as C. Rajagopal Pillai, T. S. Condaswami Iyer, and the bibliomaniac Rev. C. E. Kennet, who, "in search of a rare book…shows the keenness of scent and tenacity of a bloodhound." Murdoch's categories were not nuanced as Long's—he does not, for example, distinguish between denominations such as Baishnab-ism, Shaiba-ism and Brahmo-ism as Long does, and instead chose to lump them all together as "Hinduism". This is something Murdoch himself acknowledges and comments that "they could each form the subject of a separate volume." Nevertheless, Murdoch was able to cast his net wider, and is able to list many as 1,755 works printed in Tamil, inclusive of newspapers and periodicals. Murdoch is also the first to recognise the problem of adequately transliterating Indian words and comments: "In Romanising Tamil words in this Catalogue, letters have simply been transliterated—they have not been altered to express the pronunciation. From want of accented vowels, the long sounds have not been indicated. Other classes of letters might have been represented according to the system of Max Muller; but the compiler was so pressed for time, that this could not be attended to."

THE RAJ AND PRINT

Returning to Bengal, the task of James Long was briefly taken up by the Rev. John Wenger. In 1865, his "Catalogue of Sanskrit and Bengalee Publications Printed in Bengal" was published as a record of the Bengal government, and extended the scope of his predecessor's work by including Sanskrit books in the reckoning. In its introduction, Wenger reveals how the British government under the Crown was beginning to take a heightened interest in Indian language publications. In a letter written to the Secretary of State for India in 1863, the members of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland urged the government to assist in "oriental studies in England" and stated: "It is unnecessary for us to dwell on the serious hindrance which has arisen…to a proper appreciation of the actual condition of India and its inhabitants, equally from a scientific and political point of view, and in some degree, we may add, to a proper administration of the country itself". This is one of the first instances when the bibliographical impulse may be said

[5] James Murdoch, *Classified Catalogue of Tamil Printed Books, with introductory notices* (Madras: Christian Vernacular Education Society, 1865).

to have been invoked in the interests of administration and political control, a connection which would become more explicit with the passage of the Press and Registration Act of 1867. The Bengal government requested the Rev. John Robinson to carry on Long's work but Robinson could not carry on the task owning to ill health and it fell to Wenger to complete it. According to the introduction, the chief method of collecting information consisted—as in the case of Long's—of visits to printing establishments in both Calcutta and Dhaka. But when these did not prove productive, Wenger consulted trade catalogues as well as advertisements of books in "Native newspapers, and also the published Reports of the Calcutta Auxiliary Society and the Calcutta Christian Tract and Book Society."

The increasing range of sources which were being consulted for bibliographical information signal a growing sophistication in early historiographies of the printed book. This was reflected in the protocols which came into operation with the passage of the Press and Registration Act of 1867, or Act XXV of the Governor-General in Council for 1867. The act made it compulsory for all printers and publishers to register every publication in British India for a sum of Rs 2. Any unregistered publication was deemed to be outside the law and its publisher or printer could be punished with a two-year jail sentence and a five-thousand rupee fine. By printing the returns as a "catalogue", issued four times a year as a supplement to its official gazette, the government of Bengal kept a record of all the books published in the province. Robert Darnton writes: "The catalogue entries from 1868 to 1905 cover about two hundred thousand titles…For Bengal alone, the catalogues from those years run to fifteen enormous volumes, each containing five hundred pages or more, each page covered with small print. Their scale is staggering: more than a million words, printed with precision in sixteen standard columns."[6] The act may thus be considered as a watershed in the history of print in India.

With the government taking on the task of bibliographic control from the likes of Long and Murdoch, there are markedly fewer scholarly interventions in the documenting and cataloguing of print, outside of libraries. In this context, mention must be made of the magisterial catalogues compiled by J. F. Blumhardt of the British Library. An expert in a wide range of Indian languages, Blumhardt compiled catalogues of Assamese, Bengali, Gujuarati, Hindusthani, Marathi and Oriya literature between 1886 and 1915. Then there was the linguist G. E. Grierson's brief history of the Baptist Mission Press in Serampore, probably the first-ever history of a press written in India. Among Indian scholars, the discovery and preservation of the manuscript book had begun to assume greater urgency. The essayist, literary scholar, and novelist,

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[6] Robert Darnton, "Literary Surveillance in the British Raj", *Book History*, 4 (2001), 134.

Haraprasad Shastri discovered the earliest Bengali manuscripts at the royal court of Nepal. These contained Budddhist religious lyrics which Shastri published in 1916. The legendary Abdul Karim "Sahityabisharad" collected nearly 2,000 manuscripts from East Bengal and wrote the *Bangla prachin puthir bibaran*, a study of old Bengali manuscripts in 1914.

TOWARDS A NATIONAL HISTORIOGRAPHY

After the independence of India in 1947, the first significant work on the history of print was A. K. Priolkar's *The Printing Press in India: its beginnings and early development, being a quatercentenary commemoration study of the advent of printing in India in 1556*. As the title suggests, the book was nothing less than an attempt to write a *national* history of the book in India, a formidable task which has since been attempted only once. Though Priolkar's book was restricted to the histories of print in only four Indian languages—Tamil, Marathi, Gujarati and Konkani—it nevertheless set a benchmark for how histories of print ought to be written. Carefully avoiding the temptation of digressing into literary history, it still remains the only successful attempt at composing a narrative of print in India which is multilingual in scope.

With the setting up of various national academies of letters and societies in the post-Independence period, there was a move towards composing national histories and encyclopaedias of literature, such as the five-volume *Encyclopaedia of Indian Literature*, compiled by Sisir Kumar Das and completed in 1989. Histories of print, such as they were, were subsumed under projects like these, and there are hardly any print histories of note before the Eighties. What did attract some attention was the compilation of bibliographies, which may be seen as attempts to reengage with the unfinished bibliographical projects of the 19th century. Katherine S. Diehl, while working as a librarian at the Serampore College, complied an exhaustive catalogue of imprints held by the William Carey Historical Librar in 1962. In 1966, Krishnacarya published the first-ever bibliography of Hindi literature as *Hindi ke adimudrit granth*.[7] According to B. S. Kesavan, "The scholarly introduction of this work presents a systematic history of printing in Hindi, from its earliest days to 1870."[8] This was followed by Pitambar Narain and S. Bhaskaran Nair's

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7 Krishnacarya, *Hindi ke adimudrit granth* (Benaras: Bharatiya Jnanpith Prakashan, 1966).

8 B. S. Kesavan, *History of Printing and Publishing in India: A Story of Cultural Re-awakening. Vol. III. Origins of Printing and Publishing in the Hindi Heartland* (New Delhi: National Book Trust, 1997), 362.

Hindi bibliography till 1964, published in 1971.[9] In Bengal, the manuscript collector Jatindramohan Bhattacharya turned his attention to the pre-1867 period in Bengali bibliography and prepared an alphabetic index of printed Bengali books in two volumes, the first encompassing 1743-1852, and the second 1853-1867.[10] In Bangladesh, likewise, M. H. Khan compiled a union catalogue of Bengali books held in British libraries and depositories.

Elsewhere, micro-histories of localised print centres were enjoying considerable scholarly attention. In Bengal particularly, the popular "Battala" print market of the 19th century was thoroughly studied by the likes of Sukumar Sen, and Nikhil Sarkar who wrote a series of popular works in Battala under the pseudonym Sripantha. But Battala was not just described as a market of print, but rather as a cultural phenomenon, an index of popular taste. In recent years, Battala has been somewhat over-studied, the year 2011 alone witnessing as many as five studies of the subject. Nevertheless, what Battala studies enabled was a refreshing antidote to the grand narrative of print as a harbinger of colonial modernity. With its staple of almanacs, mythological literature, farces, songs, medicinal texts and the typographically distinct Muslim-Bengali works, Battala was consciously distanced from the moralising and reformist agenda of print, and a new set of methodological tools had to be developed by scholars to study its operations.

The Eighties were dominated by two influential figures, but with very different styles of approach. Graham Shaw, Head of Asia, Pacific and Africa collections at the British Library began a series of investigations into printing in South Asia in general. In 1981, he produced a meticulously-researched account of early printing in the Bengal presidency, titled *Printing in Calcutta to 1800*. Six years later came the *The South Asia and Burma retrospective bibliography (SABREB): Stage 1, 1556-1800*, a monumental publication listing printed books in *all* south Asian languages from 1556—the year printing began in Goa—till 1800. With the entries providing full bibliographic descriptions as well as locations in major depositories, this work filled a long-felt gap in the early history of print in colonial India. Shaw also published, among others, on the coming of lithography to India, books proscribed by the Raj, printing in south India and so on. His recent work-in-progress on the Raj and censorship in India, based substantially on India Office records, is pioneering in its scope.

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[9] Pitambar Narain and S. Bhaskaran Nair, eds. and comps., *Hindi sahitya-sarani or Hindi Bibliography. Being a universal, classified and scientifically arranged record of Hindi books published up to the end of 1964* (Hoshiarpur: Vishveshvaranand Institute, 1971).

[10] *Jatindramohan Bhattacharya, Mudrita bāngla granther panji*, 2 vols. (Calcutta: Bangla Academy, 1990, 1993).

The other work whose genesis was in the Eighties was B. S. Kesavan's *A History of Printing and Publishing in India*, which came out in three volumes between 1985 and 1997. The first two volumes focussed on south India and Bengal respectively, while the third took up the story in the Hindi heartland. Without doubt, this is the most ambitious attempt to compile a national history of printing and publishing in India. Kesavan, in his capacity as the director of the National Library of India (situated in Calcutta), was ideally placed to carry out this project. In the introduction, he stated: "It will be noticed... that some thought has been given to the literary background which is what gives printing its meaning. This is not a matter of what was printed when, but how the Gutenberg invention proved a handmaid to the cultural uplift of a nation. ...The first printings of significant material in all the disciplines have been tabulated, and details given in full measure. How printing has served tradition and also challenged tradition, is a very exciting story, which has been touched upon briefly."

As is evident from this extract, Kesavan set himself a very ambitious curriculum. In his attempt to venture into the territories of literary and social history, some of the integrity of Kesavan's work was compromised, and the reader is often frustrated by his long excursions into straightforward history of literature. At the same time, his work has the merit of showcasing almost all the research hitherto done on Indian book history, brought together in one place. Perhaps such a work might have been more feasibly attempted by a committee rather than an individual, something future historians might take into account.

The Seventies and the Eighties also saw some acknowledgement of the fact that India has had a robust tradition of publishing in the English language which has flowered after Independence. K. S. Duggal wrote *Book Publishing in India* (1980) from a publisher's viewpoint, while Philip Altbach produced the more scholarly *Publishing in India: an Analysis* (1975). V. Koilpillai's *The SPCK in India* (1985) provided useful information about the beginnings of Tamil printing in the 18th century.

THE COMING OF THE DISCIPLINE

In the Nineties, the discipline of book history formally entered Indian academia. In 1996, Swapan Chakravorty (now the director-general of the National Library of India), a renaissance scholar at Jadavpur University in Kolkata, introduced book history as an optional MA paper in the university's English department. Chakravorty was a Middleton scholar who was equally interested in the evolution of Bengali prose and the publishing protocols

associated therewith. Under his tutelage, book history soon became an attractive option for graduate students in the department.

In the new century, the Jadavpur department held the first-ever conference on book history in India. Titled "Towards Book History in India" and organised by Abhijit Gupta in early 2001, the two-day conference brought together practitioners in the field and became the basis for a series titled "Book History in India". Jointly edited by Swapan Chakravorty and Abhijit Gupta, the first volume of the series titled *Print Areas* was published by Permanent Black in 2004. In the introduction, the editors noted the challenges and possibilities facing book history in India:

> In order to do book history there must be a culture of preservation which values documents for their own sake…[u]nfortunately, such initiatives are as yet unthinkable in India. …Most publishers in our country have not taken the trouble to preserve their records, preferring the convenience of selling them off to the friendly neighbourhood kabariwala…If scholarly interest in these records can be generated now, it may be possible to save the last of them. This will mean motivating researchers to go into the field.[11]

Elsewhere, the editors called for book history to provide a "dialogic gloss" to the traditional disciplines:

> It is hard to convince ourselves that the traditional disciplines of history and literary criticism have measured the full reach of such verbal subterfuge, of such strategic appropriation of the ruler's technology and the subject's awe, of the implications of such episodes in the war of the books for the cultural predicament of the reformer-modernist in colonial India. The uneven fortunes of modernity in colonial India, we suggest, should find a focal point in the history of the book. This is not to claim that the study of self-definitions of Indian modernity is all that Indian book history promises or that indeed is how book history ought to be done. But we do believe that such narratives await the dialogic gloss of the book historian.[12]

In 2006, the Society for the History of Authorship, Reading and Publishing (SHARP), the apex body for book historians, awarded its annual Asia-Pacific conference to Jadavpur University. The conference, titled "New Word Order" was held back to back with another linked conference titled "Print and Palimpsest", organised by the then newly set-up School of Cultural Texts and Records (SCTR) at the same university. The SCTR's mandate of generating digital archives and creating primary resources for research added further momentum to book history studies in eastern India. The conferences resulted in

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[11] "Under the Sign of the Book: Introducing Book History in India", in Abhijit Gupta and Swapan Chakravorty, eds., *Print Areas: Book History in India* (Delhi: Permanent Black, 2004), 6.

[12] *Ibid.*, 13.

two volumes: *Moveable Type* (2008), the second volume in the "Book History in India" series, and *New Word Order* (2011), a standalone volume on the theme of transnational book histories. A third volume titled *Founts of Knowledge* is in preparation at the time of writing.

In the meantime, a number of remarkable monographs had begun to appear in a steady stream. The first of these, Priya Joshi's *In Another Country: Colonialism, Culture, and the English Novel in India* (2002), signalled the beginning of a new phase in Indian book history. In the book, Joshi moved seamlessly between print and literary history, and in the process, recuperated the history of the empire reading before it started writing back. The first four chapters, in particular, looked at how "India consumed the imported novel and found unexpected points of contact between it and traditional Indian narrative forms such as the epic." (Joshi, xviii) The following year, Stuart Blackburn's *Print, Folklore, and Nationalism in Colonial South India* (2003) broke new ground in examining the relationship between the coming of print and the rise of nationalism in the southern peninsula. The book was more ambitious in scope and surveyed the history of the book in south India chronologically. Beginning with the pre-print period, it moved on to missionary figures such as Henriques, de Noblili and Beshci, then considered the period of collaboration between pundits and the College of St George, and finally reported on the rise of print nationalism in the late 19th century.

In many ways, the chronological model adopted by Blackburn is typical of most print histories in colonial India and has been used profitably since. What the model does not accommodate is the coming of multi-national overseas publishers into the lucrative Indian educational market, a trend which becomes visible towards the end of the 19th century. In 2006, Rimi B. Chatterjee's monumental study of the operations of the Oxford University Press drew attention to this previously neglected sector of book publishing in India, and won the George and Jean S. DeLong Book History prize presented by SHARP. In a work of remarkable archival recovery, Chatterjee displayed the complex links between the imperial project, university politics and the consumption of books all over India. Calling her work a "history from the side", she wrote "that the life of books and their makers occupies a territory between the realm of ideas…and the realm of commerce and material culture, which provides both the impetus and the battleground for competing ideas". The same year also saw the publication of Anindita Ghosh's study on the coming of print in Bengal, which adopted a different strategy from that of Blackburn's and focussed on the link between print and identity politics. While acknowledging the importance of the coloniser-colonised framework, she also drew attention to "how in a competitive colonial environment, print-languages and literature afford opportunities to indigenous groups for consolidating power, along multiple axes of class, gender and community". But the most influential work

of 2006 was not one on print at all, but on the pre-print manuscript cultures of the "Sanskrit cosmopolis". In *The Language of Gods in the World of Men*, Sheldon Pollock surveyed the extraordinarily rich terrain of Sanskrit literature and culture, from the moment "Sanskrit. . . was reinvented as a code for literary and political expression" till the period when vernacular or "local speech forms were newly dignified as literary languages and began to challenge Sanskrit for the work of both poetry and polity, and in the end replaced it" (p. 1). The work alerted print historians to the *longue durée* of scribal practice in pre-colonial India and to how script and print continued to inform each other's practices well into the colonial era.

Over the past few years, scholarly attention has also turned to the relatively less-studied area of north Indian book history. In 2007, Ulrike Stark produced a marvellously detailed account of the Nawal Kishore Press of Lucknow, one of the most successful publishers in 19th century north India. In 2009, Francesca Orsini's long engagement with the literary cultures of Benaras and Lucknow resulted in *Print and Pleasure: Popular Literature and Entertaining Fictions in Colonial North India*. This book maybe described as a prequel to her 2002 work in which she surveyed the boom period of the Hindi literary sphere between 1920 and 1940. In this work, she turned her attention to the world of popular songs and tales which dominated the literary landscape of the 19th century; in addition, she sought to "move beyond the Hindi archive and consider Hindi and Urdu together." In 2010, Farina Mir reported extensively on Punjabi print culture in *The Social Space of Language*. Goa, which has been the cradle-land of Indian printing in the 16th century, also received belated attention in the form of Rochelle Pinto's 2007 study *Between Empires: Politics and Print in Goa*. At the time of writing this essay, a major new study on the world of Tamil books has just come out: A. R. Venkatachalapathy's long-awaited *The Province of the Book: Scholars, Scribes and Scribblers in Colonial Tamilnadu*.

DIGITAL INITIATIVES

Digital initiatives are a relatively recent phenomenon in Indian book history, but mention must be made of the pioneering work of the School of Cultural Texts and Records at Jadavpur University which has carried out extensive digitisations of endangered archives such as "Bengali street literature", "Early Bengali drama", and the "Texts in the Sylheti-Nagri script". The first-ever short-title catalogue in any Indian language was carried out under the auspices of the school by Abhijit Gupta, who compiled an electronic database of Bengali works in print between 1801-1867 in an attempt to regain bibliographical control of the pre-catalogue period. In Bangladesh, Moontasir Mamoon's

encyclopaedic account of printing in Dhaka (2004) set a new bench-mark for researchers working in the area, and also highlighted how the basic building blocks for book history in India—bibliographies, databases, and book trade indices—are yet to be fully available.

RÉSUMÉ FRANÇAIS

Écrire une histoire nationale du livre en Inde est très difficile à cause de la diversité linguistique du pays, mais en parler d'un point de vue régional n'est pas satisfaisant. Car la production de manuscrits a continué dans la seconde partie du XVIII[e] siècle alors que l'imprimerie se développait dans les régions côtières avec la création en 1800 d'une *Mission Press* due à des missionnaires baptistes. La première étude sur le commerce du livre dans l'Inde coloniale vient d'un pasteur anglican, le révérend James Long, auteur de plusieurs bibliographies des imprimés en bengali dans les années 1850. En 1861, le révérend John Murdoch publia une bibliographie de brochures chrétiennes, et en 1865 un catalogue des imprimés en tamoul. La même année, le révérend John Wenger proposa un catalogue des ouvrages en sanskrit et en bengali publiés au Bengale.

1867 marque un tournant important, avec le vote d'une loi imposant l'enregistrement de toutes les publications. Après l'indépendance, A. K. Priolkar tenta d'écrire une histoire nationale du livre, mais limitée aux ouvrages en tamoul, en marathi, en gujarati et en konkani. Ce n'est que dans les années 1980 qu'une liste des publications dans toutes les langues d'Asie du Sud-Est à partir de 1556 fut établie par Graham Shaw, responsable des collections d'Asie, du Pacifique et d'Afrique à la British Library. *A History of Printing and Publishing in India*, par B. S. Kesavan, alors directeur de la Bibliothèque nationale de Calcutta, fut publiée entre 1985 et 1997. Le premier colloque sur l'histoire du livre indien a eu lieu à Calcutta en 2001, suivi de nombreuses publications. Un *short-title catalogue* des imprimés dans toutes les langues indiennes est en cours d'élaboration.