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Movement Texts as Anti-Colonial Theory

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Abstract

Despite the decolonial turn among sociologists, we have yet to engage a vast amount of thought produced by anti-colonial movements. The circumvention of much of this thought indexes overly restrictive understandings of what constitutes social theory, and I diagnose three ways in which this plays out. Anti-colonial movement texts provide striking demonstrations of this limitation, and of what is lost as a result. Through a close study of a banned 1970s pamphlet from Pakistan, I show that critically deepening the decolonial project through an engagement with movement texts raises ethical questions about the academy's relationship to political struggle and demands new methodologies of archival retrieval that recognise the scattered, fragmented condition of texts subject to colonial violence. If addressed, southern movement texts reveal counter-infrastructures of knowledge production replete with counter-political vocabularies that challenge homogenising academic definitions of the Global South and enrich our theories of decolonial praxis.

Keywords

anti-colonialism, Balochistan, decolonisation, Jabal, movement thought, Pakistan, South Asia, southern movement texts

Introduction

Between 1973 and 1977, a Marxist-Leninist collective out of Pakistan's southern province of Balochistan circulated an underground pamphlet called *Jabal*. Written at great risk during a counterinsurgency campaign launched by then Prime Minister Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto, possession of the pamphlet was considered treasonous and grounds for arrest. *Jabal* criticised Bhutto for centralising power and undermining democracy inside Pakistan while presenting himself on the global stage as a Third World socialist. The

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pamphlets' authors argued, in contrast, that the pursuit of a more democratic internationalist order was inconceivable without a multinational dispensation inside Pakistan, inclusive of its repressed and minoritised communities.

Jabal is a site of anti-colonial theory relevant to sociologists associated with the recent decolonial turn. The pamphlets were written by thinkers allied with an indigenous counter-hegemonic movement, responding to the immediate circumstances of Cold War-era, anti-communist and neo-colonial violence, and articulating an alternative vision of collective life. *Jabal* was one of several 20th-century movement texts – including newspapers, journals, magazines, newsletters – that emerged in sites of neo-colonial violence. However, a long-delayed decolonial turn in sociology persistently overlooks movement thought expressed in texts like *Jabal*.

I argue that the decolonial turn retains an exclusivist understanding of what constitutes social theory critical of colonialism that precludes movement texts (section one). I identify three sources of this blindness: *the prioritisation of internal disciplinary concerns* at the expense of attending to questions that emerge out of political struggles against colonialism; *a set of inherited assumptions about acceptable forms of social theory* that exclude movement texts as sources of intellection; and a reliance on *overly schematic understandings of what constitutes southern thought* in ways that flatten the plural and contradictory anti-colonial networks and ideas exposed by texts like *Jabal*. These limitations are expressed in what gets counted as decolonial social thought worthy of inclusion in research and teaching, all of which remains tethered to analyses written by identifiable personalities, usually available in or easily translatable into European languages. This ignores that much critical intellection under conditions of violence had to be collective, underground, on-the-run and anonymous, in non-European languages, and in forms that can escape capture and destruction by states and majorities, majorities and empires. It also erases the plurality of marginalised knowledges that did not become hegemonic within anti-colonial struggles, because they never emerged in forms easily retrievable and translatable into the university, including its homogenising understanding of southern politics. Their exclusions indicate that the decolonial turn is over-determined by concerns in the western academy, and unreceptive to the ostensible source of its inspiration: the political struggles of southern peoples.

I show that the erasure of movement texts will not be addressed via their additive integration into existing decolonial agendas (section two). In the first instance, they force us to take seriously *ethical questions about recovering and integrating the intellectual labour of movements* and to raise *methodological questions related to archival retrieval*. Ethically, we risk extracting and depoliticising the knowledge of movements and, with marginalised texts often anonymously authored, their re-circulation in the present could have unknown consequences for those involved. To address both issues, I first argue that these texts force us to reconnect with movements at a time of profound, academic disconnection from political struggles. Second, *Jabal*, like many movement texts, was meant to be distributed and consumed as widely as possible, but also easy to disappear so those producing, circulating and reading it could survive. As a result, such texts are not readily available. The difficulty of archival retrieval challenges a tacit, positivist assumption that anti-colonial theory is readily available to be transferred into research and teaching, and reveals that even decolonial sociologists share with their discipline an

attachment to the belief that data, or archives of anti-colonial thought, are there to be found.

In the second instance, I chart how decolonial debates miss the rich anti-colonial networks and ideas of texts like *Jabal*. A close study of *Jabal* reveals *counter-infrastructures of knowledge production* replete with *counter-political vocabularies* crucial to the formation of anti-colonial praxis. These counter-infrastructures did not look like the hegemonic infrastructures of academic knowledge. In order to survive constant attempts to do away with them – to destroy printing presses, burn copies of pamphlets, punish distributors and readers of incendiary writings and so on – those producing, circulating and reading texts developed malleable and invisible networks that operated collectively, underground, on-the-run and anonymously. The flexibility and opaqueness of these counter-infrastructures meant they could operate as alternative forums where marginalised collectives that did not have space to publish in northern or postcolonial, metropolitan centres could experiment with critiques of colonialism. *Jabal* functioned as one of several underground outlets that provided an alternative multinationalist and internationalist vision of Pakistan and the world. This included a critique of Bhutto and the military state as the inheritor of colonial logics after the formal end of British empire. Circumventing movement texts means remaining blind to such texts as repositories of non-canonical and counter-hegemonic anti-colonial thought.

I conclude by reflecting on the need to move beyond logocentric movement thought, with its in-built hierarchies between editor/writer, writer/reader, literate/illiterate and so on (section three). I centre *Jabal* to map the consequences of grounding decolonial debates in a concrete expression of southern movement thought. However, movement texts only scratch the surface. Most movement thought is not written down; unwritten expressions raise other questions, reminding us how ambitious a decolonial intervention truly is.

How Decolonial Debates Circumvent Movement Texts

Recent decolonial sociologists have intervened in the discipline in one of three ways. Each intervention has focused on different limitations baked into sociology, and proposed different routes towards decolonisation. Yet, all retain exclusionary definitions of critiques of colonialism that erase movement texts as sources of anti-colonial intellection.

One form intervenes in the discipline by revealing its Eurocentrism and its long-standing imperial entanglements (Bhambra and Holmwood, 2021; Connell, 2018; Go, 2016; Steinmetz, 2013). Bhambra (2014) has demonstrated how sociological accounts of modernity and the global present them as internal to Europe. She argues for a ‘connected sociologies’ approach that recognises how the present is constituted by ‘colonialism, enslavement, dispossession and appropriation’ (Bhambra and Santos, 2017: 6). Steinmetz (2013: xi) charts how sociology has a ‘disciplinary amnesia about its own engagement with colonialism and empire’. With other writers, he revisits the discipline’s obfuscated imperial entanglements. And, Connell (2018: 400) has argued that sociology ‘is part of the global economy of knowledge production that grew out of the imperial traffic in knowledge’; this reproduces a division of labour where southern sociologists provide raw data that gets theorised in the Global North.

Another intervention focuses on introducing the writings of non-western thinkers and schools into the academy (Alatas and Sinha, 2017; Onwuzuruigbo, 2018; Patel, 2009). This intervention grew out of calls ‘to build autonomous and indigenous sociologies . . . from the premise that sociologists in the South need to reject intellectual imperialism, and build their own systems of sociological thought’ (Meghji, 2020: 107). Akiwowo (1986) argued that southern sociologists should study ‘local problems through local epistemologies’ (Meghji, 2020: 107). Alatas and Sinha (2017) introduce non-western and female thinkers to push back on the discipline’s over-reliance on white men. They say it is necessary to build autonomous sociologies that reconnect with regional intellectual traditions and reject the ‘captive mind’, which orients sociologists outside Europe and North America to mimic theories alien to their contexts (Alatas, 2003). In the *ISA Handbook of Diverse Sociological Traditions*, Patel (2009) broadens our understanding of the rich variety of sociological thought from around the world.

A third, more anti-disciplinary approach – spearheaded in sociology by Santos (2014) – focuses on ‘intervening in the discipline . . . from the outside by confronting social sciences and social scientific knowledge with non-scientific, popular, vernacular knowledge’. He insists on centring the plural forms that ‘epistemologies of the south’ take in order to build new ‘ecologies of knowledges’ open rather than closed to thinking ‘anchored in the experience of resistance of all those social groups that have systematically suffered injustice, oppression and destruction caused by capitalism, colonialism and patriarchy’. He identifies the sites of these experiences as ‘*the anti-imperial south*’, which for him is ‘an epistemological, non-geographical south’ that produces ‘counter-knowledges’ from the heart of struggles against these forces (Bhambra and Santos, 2017: 4–5). These counter-knowledges include forms usually excluded from the academy, like songs, posters, art, poetry or dance.

These interventions are in conversation with one another, and not always in agreement. For example, Alatas (2006) criticises the move to indigenise sociology as insufficiently decolonial; he says it presents local epistemologies as a mere variation of western social science. Bhambra (2014: 94) criticises Alatas’ demand for autonomous sociologies as presenting ‘thinking and thought as endogenous aspects of defined and separate civilisations’; she says this denies their historical entanglements, at best demanding their addition into a global sociology that leaves western social science untouched.

I also adopt a critical stance, but like these scholars my purpose is not to undermine the decolonial initiative but to deepen it. I take inspiration from indigenous scholars of decolonisation from the Americas, who criticise the multiple abstractions of the decolonial turn. In their seminal article, ‘Decolonization is not a metaphor’, Tuck and Yang (2012: 1) criticise the reformist co-optation of decolonisation by ‘educational advocacy and scholarship’ to remind readers that decolonisation is about the material ‘repatriation of Indigenous land and life’. Similarly, the Bolivian sociologist Cusicanqui (2012: 98) criticises the emergence of a ‘jargon, a conceptual apparatus, and forms of reference and counter-reference that have isolated academic treatises from any obligation to or dialogue with insurgent social forces’. Embedded in communities directly targeted in setter-colonial violence, these scholars have pushed back on decolonial ideas that abstract from the highly politicised demands of colonised peoples. Building on these interventions, I argue that each of the three interventions charted above circumvents the political and

intellectual labour of collectives affected by colonial violence. Each approach constructs an exclusionary definition of decolonial thought, which erases southern movement texts as sources of intellection, and re-erects academic disciplines, individual intellectuals and the Global North as central to the enterprise.

The first approach does not prioritise the integration of other knowledges, arguing that as long as a deeper critique and contextualisation of sociology remains unaddressed, such interventions are at best additive. However, in insisting that the critical contextualisation of sociology is primary, it orients the decolonial project inwards, towards the discipline, instead of outwards, towards broader political struggles inside and outside the academy. It requires no connection or conversation with political collectives targeted in colonial violence, and no engagement with the knowledges they produce.

This gap between theorising and movements did not always exist, and not all critiques of colonialism are distanced from political organising. In fact, the relationship to struggle can be one way to chart the subtle differences between anti-, post- and decolonial approaches. What Go (2016) calls the first wave of critiques of colonialism (represented by, for example, Frantz Fanon or Amílcar Cabral) emerged from thinkers embedded in *anti-colonial* movements. The purpose of this writing was not to make an intervention in the academy, but to collectively end empire. As Bhambra (2014: 115) shows, thinkers associated with the post- and decolonial turn emerged from within the academy: the *postcolonial* from the humanities, among 'diasporic scholars from the Middle East and South Asia', such as Said (1978) and the Subaltern School, and the *decolonial* from 'diasporic scholars from South America' like Quijano (2007) and Lugones (2007). I would like to argue that what Go (2016) identifies as the second wave of critiques of colonialism – the postcolonial – turned its back on the connections forged by anti-colonial thinkers. One reason was a frustration with teleological ideas of progress embedded in Marxist logics central to several anti-colonial movements (Scott, 2004: 3). Decolonial theorists – from outside disciplinary sociology – have been more insistent on centring the worlds of colonised subjects and the knowledge of their movements, and in many ways this article builds on their work. Perhaps that is why student movements, more than institutional academics, were central to placing decolonisation at the centre of university agendas. However, decolonial theorists start from the entanglements of modernity/coloniality emergent out of Europe; I argue that this can erase more emplaced hierarchies, some of which may have pre-colonial provenance. This approach can prompt them to apply a top–down definition, which misrecognises all critique of the colonial as subversive of power, a move that erases the rich and contradictory terrain of critiques of colonialism in the geographical Global South. I deepen this critique below, in my consideration of Santos, who builds on the work of decolonial theorists.

The second approach prioritises the integration of non-western thinkers and schools. However, it presupposes that social theory is individually authored, existing in forms easily retrievable, translatable and consumable within the academy. This ignores the violent conditions of imperialism and colonisation, which often necessitates collective, underground, fugitive and anonymous political and intellectual work to evade capture and destruction by power. This reproduces a narrow sliver of critical thought about imperialism and colonialism, much of which reflects the insights of elite males from these contexts able to write thoughts down in a form more readily available.

Scholars of slavery, genocide and annihilation have started to look at the challenges of writing about lives (political, economic, social, intellectual, emotional) targeted in mass violence. Faced with the exclusion of slaves in the archive, Black studies scholars have charged empiricist methodologies as complicit in the erasure of Black life (Mbembe, 2002; Smallwood, 2016). The assumption that evidence is easily available ignores slavery's annihilatory conditions, and means that positivist modes of writing social life reproduce the historic violence of slavery (Hartman, 2008). This makes it necessary to experiment with new methodologies, including ones that confront how some aspects of slave and Black life may never be recovered (Hartman, 2019; Sharpe, 2016). Navaro (2020), who studies sites of the Armenian genocide in Turkey, takes inspiration from Black studies scholars, among others, and argues that 'professional imaginaries about "research methodologies" assume the availability, presence, and accessibility of "evidence" and propose routes towards its conceptualisation and interpretation'. She argues that this 'availability, presence, and accessibility' cannot be assumed if your field site exists in the aftermath of mass violence: after destruction, researchers face the methodological challenge of encountering a field often absent of evidence, data, or material (Navaro, 2020: 162). Our debates also assume that thought is easily available for us to then integrate it into new textbooks of social thought. Yet, what is and is not available for us to integrate is a product of power, of who had the abilities and resources to write, publish, distribute and who did not, and of who is and is not allowed or able to form and maintain an archive.

The third approach is acutely aware of how the academy produces what Santos (2014) calls an 'abyssal line' that separates 'north-centric, western-centric thinking' from other knowledges (Bhambra and Santos, 2017: 5); the former is presented as the only valid way of knowing. Santos is in conversation with work by other decolonial scholars (Lugones, 2007; Mignolo, 2000; Moldonado-Torres, 2007; Quijano, 2007), and like them works to legitimate knowledge from southern movements. This article builds on this important intervention. However, I also challenge Santos' argument that the Global South is epistemological, and his definition of it as any site of struggle opposing ''capitalism, colonialism, and patriarchy' (Santos, 2014: 238). Other decolonial sociologists also argue that critiques of colonialism constitute a shared 'Southern standpoint' (Meghji, 2020: 61) defined not by geography but by their critique of empire (Go, 2016: 21). While I agree with the ethical and intellectual compulsion of the argument – a refusal to recognise billionaires in India as southern or to dismiss Black radical organisers in the USA as northern – I insist we must retain, and think more deeply about, the Global South as geography. An insistence on the Global South as epistemological not only misses the material conditions under which movements operate, and therefore the secret, fugitive forms many take to survive destruction (Fadaee, 2016, 2017; Kamal, 2020). It also conceals the multiple and diametrically opposed critiques of colonialism that exist in the geographical Global South, some more counter-hegemonic than others.

The Global South as geography is a direct product of empire. Yet, it is also produced by pre-colonial forms of hierarchy, for example, caste in India, retained and reformed through the western encounter (Chakravarti, 2019). This creates terrains where counter-hegemonic politics includes more than opposition to empire. Other than opposing capitalism and patriarchy, as Santos (2014) argues, counter-hegemonic movements here also oppose more

emplaced hierarchies, for example between caste or languages. For that reason, not all anti-imperial critique is equally counter-hegemonic. Anti-imperialism is reforged by one's position on other terrains of battle, much like anti-racist politics is shaped by positions on gender and sexuality, or capitalism and class. For example, in 1970s Pakistan, both Bhutto and *Jabal* critiqued US empire. However, Bhutto saw the movements *Jabal* came out of as pawns of imperial intervention aimed at undermining Pakistani sovereignty, while the latter's critique of 'imperialism and its stooges' included 'Bhutto and co.'[1] An epistemological definition abstracts away from this material reality; a geographical one forces us to attend to hegemonic forms of anti-colonial politics and to parse out different lineages of anti-imperial critique rather than collapse them into a shared 'southern standpoint'.

Anchoring Decolonial Debates in Movement Texts Like *Jabal*

Anchoring decolonial interventions in movement texts is one way to address the limitations laid out above. These texts force an orientation towards movements that raise important ethical questions about the relationship between the academy and political struggles currently not relevant to the first intervention; demand that we pay attention to methodological challenges of archival retrieval rather than tacitly assume that social thought is readily available, a key assumption among the second set of scholars; and brings to light marginalised anti-colonial networks and ideas that trouble understandings of a shared southern standpoint central to the third approach. Indeed, a closer look at other southern movement texts will reveal a plurality of innovative ways that they circulated, and novel ideas that they experimented with. For instance, in her study of *The Masses of India*, published in the 1920s, Aziz (2021) traces how sailors, dockworkers and small bookshop owners subverted imperial shipping routes to circulate this anti-colonial newspaper. Meanwhile, in her study of rare issues of *Haq Katha*, circulated by the 'religious disciples, Maoists and Marxists' of Maulana Bhashani 'across small towns, villages and *chars* (sandbank islands) in Bangladesh between 1972–'75', Layli Uddin (2021) traces alternative, vernacular articulations of socialism and Islamic heterodoxy that rethought concepts like 'land, labour, property, rule, sovereignty and God'. More grounded attention to southern movement texts exposes the rich archive of anti-colonial thought that has always made up critiques and alternatives to imperial logics.

To tease out exactly how movement texts can address the blind spots laid out above, and provide an alternative and non-canonical source of anti-colonial thought, it is helpful to engage just one example. This is because movement texts must be read in context, via a grounding of them in their geographical place, historical moment, political collectives and material-political forms within which they emerged. For this contextualisation, I return to the 1970s underground pamphlet out of Pakistan with which I opened this article: *Jabal*.

Jabal operated as the formal bulletin of the armed, Marxist-Leninist Balochistan People's Liberation Front (BPLF), and was produced, distributed and read by its urban left allies. The armed group organised out of the mountains of north-eastern Balochistan, a marginalised province in southern Pakistan, to fight a violent counterinsurgency operation launched by Prime Minister Bhutto between 1973 and 1977 with the help of the US-backed Shah of Iran (Vatanka, 2017: 89–93). The name *Jabal* – literally 'mountain'

in Balochi and other, neighbouring indigenous languages like Sindhi – drew on Baloch cosmologies of its peaks as a site of refuge and resistance from first British colonial, later Pakistani military, state power (Breseeg, 2001).[2] *Jabal*'s urban left authors also drew on *foquismo*, a theory of revolution popularised by Régis Debray who, via Che Guevera's Cuban experience, argued that a small paramilitary group can launch a revolution in the whole country from a concentrated presence in marginalised, rural areas disaffected with a central state. Indeed, in 1973, a long-standing frustration with Pakistan's powerful military and federal government reached new heights, when Bhutto dismissed the province's first democratically elected government led by his main opposition at the time, the National Awami Party (NAP) (Jalal, 2014). While Bhutto's social democratic Pakistan People's Party (PPP) had strong support in the commercial capital of Karachi and the neighbouring provinces of Sindh and Punjab, NAP drew its support from marginalised, minoritised ethnic groups, including the Baloch, as well as allied urban communists suspicious of Bhutto's role as a feudal landowner and past as a defence minister in the first military government (Jaffrelot, 2015). NAP criticised Bhutto for centralising power, marginalising minoritised languages and ethnicities; pursuing imperial and anti-communist alliances; and exploiting the resources of Balochistan (Breseeg, 2004: 265–266). Bhutto charged NAP with armed conspiracy to overthrow a postcolonial state struggling for sovereignty within an imperial world order, two years after another part of the country, East Pakistan, had successfully seceded and formed Bangladesh (Government of Pakistan, 1974). He also charged NAP in Balochistan as a party run by *sardars*, tribal leaders, intent on undermining postcolonial sovereignty via foreign support, merely to line their own pockets (Bhutto, 1976). In response NAP members, allies and sympathisers launched widespread protests, including an armed campaign.[3] Its purpose was to force Bhutto to release NAP leaders from Hyderabad Jail in neighbouring Sindh, and stop the operation alongside arrests, torture and conspiracy trials.[4] The BPLF emerged as an armed response against Bhutto's policies (Harrison, 1981: 54–55).

Jabal was launched in the midst of this conflict by allies of the Marxist-Leninist BPLF and in their name. Though its editors and authors were mostly urban leftists living in the cities of Pakistan, rather than many indigenous Baloch who made up the ranks of the BPLF, they were in close contact with the armed group's commanders and aimed to publicise its views and activities to a wider left-wing public within Pakistan and around the world (Anonymous, 2016; Anonymous, 2021).[5] In at least 14 issues published over three years, in English and Urdu, *Jabal* surreptitiously printed, distributed and made available for reading alternative histories, news and information, analyses and critiques of the regime and its policies, and strategic and tactical analyses of the opposition. Published entries included original writings and translated or re-published texts from other national liberation and revolutionary movements around the world. In its first editorial, it stated that its purpose was to help readers 'overcome' the 'lies and distortions spewed out daily by the Bhutto regime' and to 'lay the basis for the UNITY of all oppressed nationalities, democratic and progressive forces in Pakistan' and around the world in order to reimagine the postcolonial state.[6] As a pamphlet printed by hand on cyclostyle machines, secretive production, circulation and reading of *Jabal* was possible through an underground network of sympathisers who could easily print and destroy copies when necessary to evade state capture.

In focusing so squarely on criticising the discipline, the first set of decolonial scholars can reproduce the university as the most important site of knowledge production. Movement texts like *Jabal* produced knowledge beyond disciplines and institutions, even when faced with immense violence. These print forms existed despite the lack of external support because they were cheap, easy, and quick to produce. They are a version of what Bulson (2016: 195–196, 202) calls the little postcolonial magazine: an 'anticolonial device' that freed its writers from passing 'through a Western metropolis for validation' and allowed them to circumvent 'extroverted literary production.' Its curators thought of themselves as committed intellectual workers analysing, critiquing and providing alternatives to a violent, neo-colonial state. Identifying the discipline, rather than (also) movement texts, as primary, means re-centring the academy we wish to critique. At the very moment we interrogate erasures within sociology, we can erect new ones.

However, merely adding texts like *Jabal* to the mix of anti-colonial writings is also not possible. Resurfacing Jabal requires attention to ethical and methodological questions. My ability to find *Jabal* and contextualise it has been directly dependent on existing relations with Balochistan-based movements resisting state violence and Pakistani leftists who have supported them. *Jabal* was only handed to people who could be trusted to systematically read, circulate and destroy it. I was told by those who handed me the pamphlet that they trusted me to work with this material. When I tried to interview former members of the BPLF, many refused to speak with me and when they did, I was asked to shut off my recorder and remember what they said; when I was trusted, it was only because of long-standing relationships developed over many years. Other movement texts are similarly difficult to recover without an existing relationship to those who saved them, or those still affected by their potential recirculation.

This raises ethical questions, around extraction and transparency, crucial in any attempt to engage movement knowledge. As indigenous scholars have argued, integrating the theoretical production of movements risks reproducing the academy's extractive relationship to community knowledge (Cusicanqui, 2012; Smith, 2012 [1993]). In part, this ethical issue is addressed because *Jabal*, written in English and Urdu, was not meant for Balochi- and Brahui-speaking communities, but for allies around Pakistan and the world. However, southern movement texts nevertheless risk becoming fetishised objects that, once removed from their potent political context and inserted into the academy, can become depoliticised. Their presence can give the false impression that 'academics. . . are in dialogue' with targeted communities when in fact they fail to 'follow the pace of. . . discussions' in the very places that these texts emerge from (Cusicanqui, 2012: 102). Avoiding a relationship of extraction will require orienting ourselves towards movements, for the purposes of co-articulating well-informed interventions into current political battles. This requires educating ourselves on a text's position in a wider political discourse both historically and today. In the case of *Jabal*, this can take the form of recirculating the text as a pedagogical tool that provides a buried vision of postcolonial political community in Pakistan (Ahmad and Talpur, 2021).[7] Indeed, the ideas it puts forward, particularly of a multinationalist state, remains a key though silenced demand still alive among some Baloch and many Pakistani leftists (though other Baloch now demand total secession, unconvinced they will ever be given space within the polity). The response to

depoliticised extraction – which literally means the removal of a thing from its context – must be political reconnection.

This raises another ethical question: one risks rendering transparent information potentially dangerous to contemporary movements. To address this, I draw inspiration from indigenous scholars, who say we must refuse to make everything legible to the academy (Simpson, 2007; Tuck and Yang, 2014). They have criticised, quite rightly, the 'major colonial task of social science research' to 'pose as a voice box, ventriloquist, interpreter of subaltern voice' (Tuck and Yang, 2014: 225), and argued that it is necessary to know when to stop asking questions, to know when to shut off a recorder, and to refuse to bring certain things known internally out into the open (Simpson, 2007: 73). There is some information I deliberately exclude, against a social scientific compulsion to render everything transparent (Glissant, 1990). We cannot stir-and-mix movement thought into decolonial debates. Instead, they require being alert not to the needs of the academy – an orientation inward – but that of the collectives targeted in imperial and colonial violence – an orientation outward.

The difficulty of finding copies of *Jabal* is also a reminder that southern thought, especially in movement texts, is not readily available, a key assumption among the second set of scholars. Movement texts, especially those produced under conditions of violence, are often fragmented and scattered. Fragmented, because often entire print runs of anti-colonial texts are unavailable, simply because some issues were destroyed and cannot be found. Scattered, because the most marginalised texts have not been canonised by postcolonial governments in national archives; they are still considered incendiary. Instead, they exist (if at all) in for example the basements of dying political workers. It took me two years to find copies of *Jabal*. Most people said they were long gone, its authors, printers and distributors had burnt them because its contents are still considered treasonous. I still do not have the full print run. And, I only have one copy of other, underground pamphlets also circulated by BPLF allies, such as *jed-o-jehd*.

This fragmented and scattered reality challenges the assumption that anti-colonial theory is readily available to be transferred into research and teaching, and reveals that even decolonial sociologists share with their discipline an attachment to the belief that empirical data is there to be found. It also circumvents the place of power in deciding which anti-colonial writings are available and which ones are not. Often, anti-colonial thinkers integrated into new collections or classes on social theory enjoyed some elite position. That is one reason why so many end up being elite men, often from majoritarian groups within postcolonial states.[8] Yet, in and around such established thinkers were entire communities that debated what decolonisation and anti-colonialism meant in practice. Attention to marginalised movement texts, especially by groups actively excluded from power – such as the BPLF or other, minoritised ethnic communities seen as aberrations from a majoritarian national identity (for example Kurds in Turkey; Kashmiris, Dalits and Muslims in India; Rohingya in Myanmar; Hazara in Afghanistan; Baloch, Pashtuns, Sindhis and others in Pakistan) – can bring to light a more expansive set of social thought. However, given that this other form of thought was not individuated and solely authored, written instead underground, on the run, and anonymously, it is important to pay attention to questions of retrieval, since this thought is not readily available. This is made worse by the fact that they are still marginalised within postcolonial states.

A reorientation towards political struggles, and attention to the fragmented and scattered forms that movement thought takes, opens us up to a vast set of counter-infrastructures, or other underground and fugitive circuits of knowledge and spheres of discussion. These networks made possible the circulation of counter-political concepts developed collectively and anonymously for the explicit purpose of making sense of violent worlds and providing alternatives to them.

Jabal aimed to connect territories and communities in ways that transgressed the Pakistani state's ideas of how they should relate to one another. Identifying the mountains of north-eastern Balochistan as a key site of revolutionary activity, *Jabal* sought to facilitate deeper links into other sites of politics in Pakistani cities and internationally. *Jabal* spoke repeatedly of the mountain and its rural environs as a privileged site of revolutionary politics, drawing on Baloch mythological ideas of the mountain as a site of refuge ('The gorges without paths are our friends'[9]) and global revolutionary ideas of the countryside and mountains as 'the basic arena for armed struggle'[10] 'for democracy and socialism' that can 'spread to the farthest corners of Pakistan.'[11] The mountains were seen as facilitative of a more autonomous, democratic politics because of its distance from the vertical power of the state. It was also seen as a raised, physical terrain that allowed rebels to see the state's violent actions more clearly (*Jabal* includes images of fighters looking at soldiers from the mountains, with binoculars). *Jabal*'s aim was to connect these mountains and its fighters to the urban left in the cities, and anti-colonial struggles in places like 'Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Cuba, Angola, Mozambique, Guinea-Bissau, etc.'[12]

In part, this connection was imagined: Links between the BPLF and those fighting for a democratic and socialist Pakistan and world were more ideological and affective than material. An example of this more idealistic connection exists in reports of BPLF fighters watching movies about the Vietnam War in the mountains[13] or analyses about how Baloch communities were subjected to the same counterinsurgency techniques used in other sites of Cold War-era, anti-communist violence around the formerly colonised world.[14] On the other hand, *Jabal*'s existence as a pamphlet was only possible via logistical links between the BPLF leadership and *Jabal*'s curators, printers, distributors, and readers. The curators regularly wrote letters to BPLF leaders to receive instructions on *Jabal*'s ideological line, and to receive reports of casualties and deaths, military and insurgent operations, and interviews of key members (Anonymous, 2021). These were printed in *Jabal*, via cyclostyle machines, and stapled together. Its copies were surreptitiously circulated hand-to-hand by underground cells maintained by sympathisers in Pakistani cities, far beyond the mountains where the BPLF were living, sometimes several thousands of kilometres away in Lahore (Anonymous, 2018). It is unclear whether copies reached out of Pakistan, though the English content and mode of address in *Jabal* indicates that this was the pamphlet's purpose. These links reflected in and facilitated by *Jabal* indexed a far broader network of hidden, malleable infrastructure, which allowed connections to occur even under conditions of violent, state repression. This broader network includes pirate radio stations that ran out of Beirut, Kabul and Karachi to support the BPLF and other journals like *jed-o-jehd* and *al fatah* that were banned, printed and surreptitiously circulated throughout Pakistan in this period (Sufi, 2015: 116).

Through these counter-infrastructures, *Jabal* circulated subversive, counter-political ideas that reimagined the relationship between Balochistan and its mountains with the rest of Pakistan and its cities—as well as internationalist connections with the rest of the world. Against Bhutto's idea of north-eastern, mountainous Balochistan as a site where a 'reactionary system' of tribal rule, epitomised especially in the figure of the *sardar*, 'has kept the poor Baluch backward and in chains',[15] *Jabal* imagined them as home to an especially autonomous community who, with fellow Baloch elsewhere, could lead the country towards a more democratic order ('The struggle for democracy and socialism has begun in the mountains of Baluchistan.'[16])

Indeed, central to *Jabal* was the belief that the freedom of the Baloch, especially in the mountains, was mutually dependent on the freedom of other repressed communities inside and outside Pakistan. To achieve this freedom, *Jabal* spoke of how the BPLF and other sympathetic movements should create links among themselves within Pakistan as well as other, ongoing armed struggles against colonial and postcolonial repression around the world. So, *Jabal*'s authors write that the first step 'towards true emancipation of the people of Pakistan is the struggle of the minority nationalities for their national and democratic rights coordinated with the democratic and progressive forces in the Punjab', Pakistan's most politically and militarily powerful province.[17] They drew on the idea of *multinationalism* popularised in part by NAP, which called for state recognition of multiple languages and nations (Breseeg, 2004: 256-266). *Jabal* links the fate of Baloch with those of the Bengalis in former East Pakistan, now Bangladesh.[18] Just two years prior to Bhutto's counterinsurgency operation, Bengalis fought and seceded to create a new country, in part because successive central states had refused to recognise Bengali language and identity as integral to a multinational Pakistan.

They similarly link the Baloch struggle to international movements, writing: 'The national and democratic struggle of every people forms part of the International revolution and needs the cooperation of other fraternal revolutionary movements which may develop into direct cooperation at some stage.'[19] So, at the time *Jabal* was circulating, Baloch from southern Balochistan were being recruited into the Omani army to fight the Dhofar Rebellion, a move heavily criticised by *Jabal*:

> . . . an effort is being made to turn the sentiments of the revolutionaries of Dhofar and the Middle East against the historical struggle of the people of Baluchistan by using these men as hired soldiers against the Dhofar and Arab freedom fighters. In this way they hope to prevent the establishment of links between these movements and the liberation struggle of the people of Balochistan.[20]

As a result, *Jabal* articulated an alternative idea of *internationalism* to diplomatic and military ones pursued by states. Against state-centric internationalisms, *Jabal* called for forging direct links between struggles. They criticised the '. . . officers of the Pakistan army [who] have served reactionary governments in Oman-Dhofar, Jordan, Kuwait, UAE, etc.'[21] Against links that served the 'ruling clique',[22] they declared: 'The day is not far when the revolutionary forces will succeed in making them understand that the Baloch and Arab people are united in their struggle against oppression.'[23] Similarly, in 1970, a small contingent of BPLF fighters went to train with George Habash and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (Harrison, 1981: 74, 120).

In other words, *Jabal* saw an internal battle for a more democratic and pluralist, *multinationalist* dispensation (one that gave all minoritised groups within the postcolonial state an equal stake in power) as inextricably linked to a more democratic and pluralist, *internationalist* dispensation. Of late, scholars like Getachew (2019) have brought attention to how postcolonial leaders worked to bring about a more egalitarian world order by forging direct links between newly independent states for example in the non-alignment movement Bhutto was involved in. *Jabal* reminds us how the movement texts of repressed communities, marginalised by majoritarian states represent an alternative and more critical genealogy of anti-colonial praxis, one acutely aware of the dangers of majoritarianism embedded in the nation-building projects of postcolonial elites yet one committed to building radical alternatives locally and globally. *Jabal*'s vision of anti-colonialism is qualitatively different from a vision propagated by postcolonial elites and states, who often saw internal dissent as a marker of imperial intervention rather than democratic ferment. Indeed, BPLF's critique was read by Bhutto and the entire apparatus of the central state – including its courts, government, and military – as a sign of treason; an attempt to undermine the Pakistani sovereignty through the forging of internal and internationalist links not sanctioned by the state (Government of Pakistan, 1974).

Jabal's alternative networks and ideas trouble a schematic idea that there exists a shared 'southern standpoint.' It shows that even under the formally democratic rule of a self-declared Third World socialist like Bhutto, different groups articulated anti-colonial critique and world-making projects in different, sometimes confrontational, ways. Collapsing all critique of empire as reflective of a shared, counter-hegemonic position is not only inaccurate, it runs the danger of misrecognising those in power as the subaltern. Marginal movement texts like *Jabal* shed light on the vast and contradictory field of discourse that actually constitutes critiques of colonialism.

Beyond *Jabal*, beyond Text, towards the Undisciplining of Sociology

Jabal is just one of several, 20th-century movement texts.[24] Other marginalised prints also require a reorientation of the decolonial debate towards movements, if we are to circumvent the dangers of extraction and ensure surviving members remain safe were we to recirculate these texts. In turn, locating them requires recognising fragmented and scattered texts as material traces of vibrant anti-colonial intellection. And, attention to other radical texts can reveal how collectives marginalised by extraordinary violence continued to forge counter-hegemonic networks and ideas despite attempts to do away with them. In a jointly launched project entitled Revolutionary Papers – started with literary scholar Chana Morgenstern and historian Koni Benson – I join forces with academics, organisers and archivists to study movement texts from around the world (see www.revolutionarypapers.org).

Yet, movement thought includes more than text, especially since text produces its own erasures. *Jabal* was written in English and Urdu, by allies of the BPLF. Though approved BPLF leadership, and in conversation with its members, they were not part of indigenous Baloch communities. High levels of functional illiteracy means *Jabal* could not be read by the people whose voice it claimed to represent. This exclusivist

logocentrism was also a problem in other movement texts. Sometimes, editors and authors tried to address these hierarchies. For instance, Noor Nieftagodien (2021) says *Congress Militant* in South Africa, circulated by the Marxist Workers' Tendency of the ANC, tried to bridge the divide between functionally literate and illiterate by sending authors to record and transcribe community stories. They would return to read them out. Similarly, in her study of the party organ of the Mazdoor Kissan Party (Workers Peasants Party) in Pakistani Punjab, Sara Kazmi (2021) says members built an 'oral infrastructure' to perform written, literary content otherwise inaccessible to peasants and workers who could not read. Nevertheless, written texts produce hierarchies between editor/writer, writer/reader, or literate/illiterate. Attending to art, poetry, rumours, debates, dance, etc. allows us to explore less exclusive knowledge formations.[25] In an article under preparation, I write about study circles, yet another alternative knowledge practice, documenting military violence held by Baloch students today. However, these other kinds of movement thought raise different ethical and methodological questions, and shed light on other networks and ideas, requiring a different set of reflections.

Whether one attends to texts, or other kinds of thought, it will require a reorientation towards movements, a widening of what counts as social theory, and a pluralisation of what constitutes southern thought. It is only then that we can cultivate a more nuanced understanding of the rich networks and ideas that make up critiques of colonialism around the world.

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Notes

1. *Jabal*, March–April 1977, 1(4): 3.
2. See writings by Talpur (2009) for insight into the role of the mountain in aiding BPLF organising.
3. *Jabal*, December 1976, 1(1).
4. *Jabal*, December 1976, 1(1).
5. *Jabal*, December 1976, 1(1).
6. *Jabal*, December 1976, 1(1): 2.
7. As part of *Revolutionary Papers*, a collaborative project with Chana Morgenstern and Koni Benson, Mir Mohammad Ali Talpur and I have prepared a digital teaching tool for *Jabal*. It is our attempt to re-insert it into political conversations in present-day Pakistan and elsewhere.
8. For example, Faiz Ahmed Faiz, a communist anti-colonial poet and editor of Lotus and Muhammad Iqbal, a pan-Islamic philosopher-poet.
9. *Jabal*, December 1976, 1(1): 9.
10. *Jabal*, March–April 1977, 1(4): 3.
11. *Jabal*, December 1976, 1(1): 5.
12. *Jabal*, March–April 1977, 1(4): 4.
13. *Jabal*, January 1977, 1(2): 11.
14. *Jabal*, May 1977, 1(5): 5.
15. Bhutto, Zulfiqar Ali (1976) Abolishing Sardari System, Prime Minister's Speech, Quetta, 8 April 1976. Available at: https://www.bhutto.org/1976_speech8.php (accessed 8 September 2018).
16. *Jabal*, December 1976, 1(1): 5.
17. *Jabal*, September 1977, 1(9): 1.
18. *Jabal*, May 1977, 1(5): 3–4.
19. *Jabal*, March 1978, 2(3): 4.
20. *Jabal*, March 1978, 2(3): 4.
21. *Jabal*, June 1977, 1(6): 7.
22. *Jabal*, March 1978, 2(3): 4.S
23. *Jabal*, March 1978, 2(3): 4.
24. For examples of other movement texts, visit the website for *Revolutionary Papers*, a collaborative, transnational project that I have co-launched with Chana Morgenstern and Koni Benson. At *Revolutionary Papers* we are investigating how southern periodicals have operated as sites of left, anti-colonial and anti-imperial critical production. As part of this project, we are also collaboratively developing digital teaching tools that allow these texts to recirculate and reanimate our public conversations on decolonisation. The project, can be accessed at www.revolutionarypapers.org.
25. See Ali (2012) and Caron and Khan (2022) for insight into poetry as critical knowledge in northern Pakistan.

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