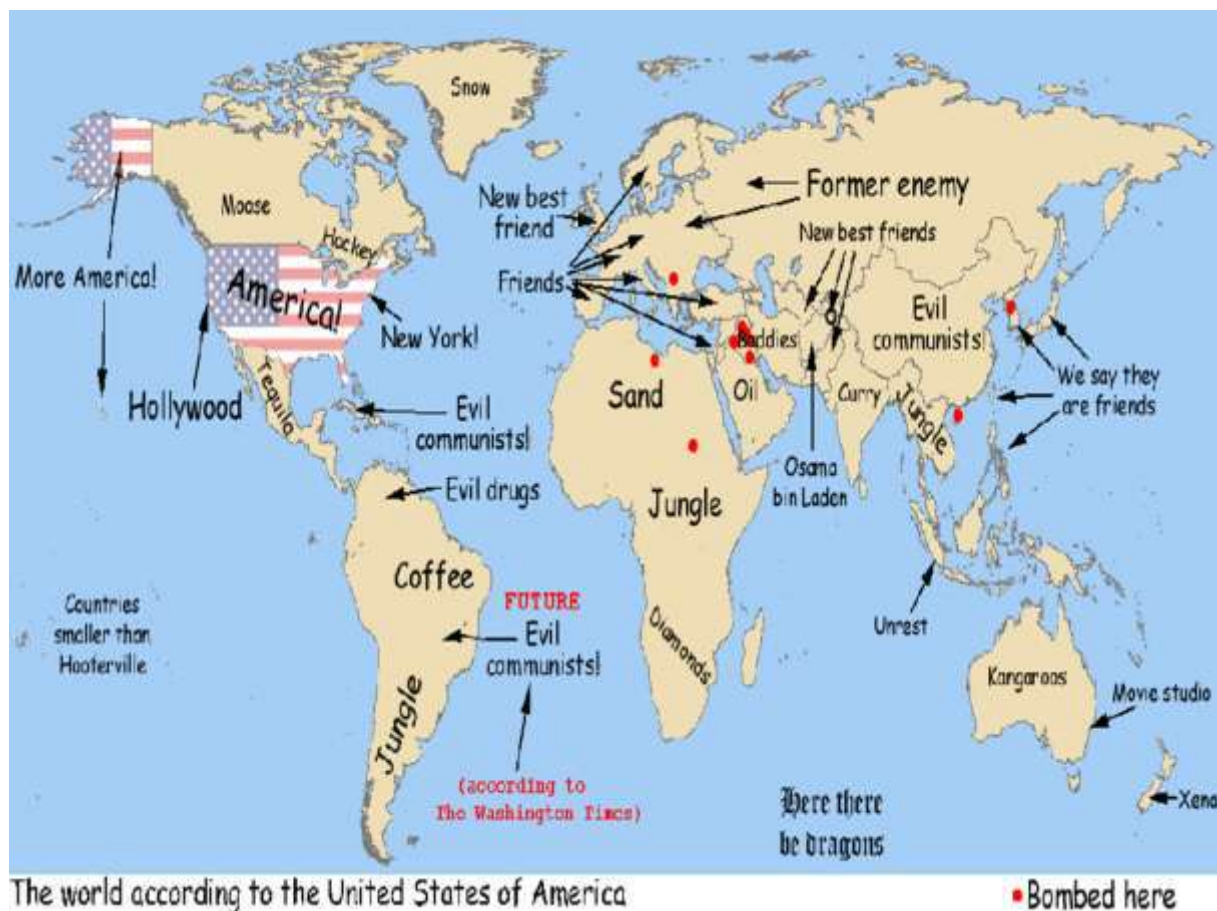


1. Mental Maps: How We See the World, by Matt Rosenberg



A person's perception of the world is known as a mental map. A mental map is an individual's own internal map of their known world.

Geographers like to learn about the mental maps of individuals and how they order the space around them. This can be investigated by asking for directions to a landmark or other location, by asking someone to draw a sketch map of an area or describe that area, or by asking a person to name as many places (i.e. states) as possible in a short period of time.

It's quite interesting what we learn from the mental maps of groups. In many studies, we find that those of lower socioeconomic groups have maps which cover smaller geographic areas than the mental maps of affluent individuals. For instance, residents of lower income areas of Los Angeles know about upscale areas of the metropolitan area such as Beverly Hills and Santa Monica but really don't know how to get there or where they are exactly located. They do perceive that these neighborhoods are in a certain direction and lie between other known areas. By asking individuals

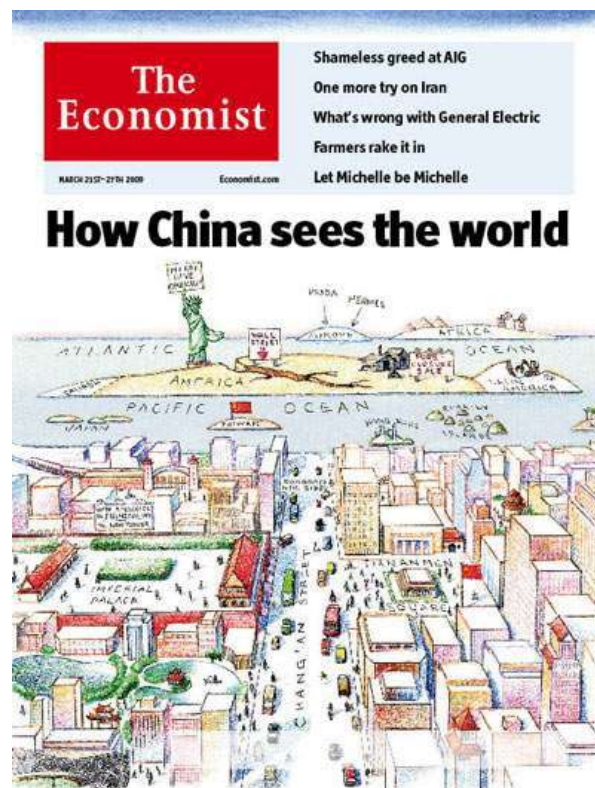
for directions, geographers can determine which landmarks are embedded in the mental maps of a group.

Many studies of college students have been performed around the world to determine their perception of their country or region. In the United States, when students are asked to rank the best places to live or the place they would most like to move to, California and Southern Florida consistently rank very high. Conversely, states such as Mississippi, Alabama, and the Dakotas rank low in the mental maps of students who don't live in those regions.

One's local area is almost always viewed most positively and many students, when asked where they'd like to move, just want to stay in the same area where they grew up. Students in Alabama rank their own state as a great place to live and would avoid the "North." It is quite interesting that there are such divisions in the mental maps between the northeast and southeast portions of the country which are remnants of the Civil War and a division over 140 years ago.

In the United Kingdom, students from around the country are quite fond of the southern coast of England. Far northern Scotland is generally perceived negatively and even though London is near the cherished southern coast, there is an "island" of slightly negative perception around the metropolitan area.

Investigations of mental maps show that the mass media's coverage and stereotypical discussions and coverage of places around the world has a major effect on people's perception of the world. Travel helps to counter the effects of the media and generally increase a person's perception of an area, especially if it is a popular vacation destination.



Questions:

1. Based on the article, how would you define what a mental (or cognitive) map is?
2. Why do you think that people of lower socioeconomic statuses create mental maps that cover smaller geographic areas?
3. Why do you think that college students ranked certain place in the United States as "The best places to live" if they themselves had never been to those places?
4. Think of the following 3 regions of the world: The Middle East, the 'Deep South' (in the United States), and Sub-Saharan Africa. For each of the regions listed above, I want you to write down 3 words or phrases that you associate with those places. Also, write down if you have ever been to those regions.

5. If I were to ask you to draw your own mental map (which I will ☺), what areas of the world would you know the least about? The most? Why?

2. Do Maps Create or Represent Reality? By Laura Hebert

Take the quiz! Compare country size. Which of the images on both sides of this placemat are "area accurate?" How is the Hobo-Dyer projection below different from the one on the reverse side? Answers and details about all the images are at www.odt.org/quiz. To the right: (5) Van der Grinten's map, (6) Goode's Toronto centred projection, (7) the Dymaxion map, and (8) Goode's Homocylindrical map.



ISBN 1 931057-11-7
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“Maps lie to tell the truth. They lie in order to make a point.”

Have you ever stopped and really looked at a map? I'm not talking about consulting the coffee-stained map that makes its home in your glove compartment; I'm talking about really looking at a map, exploring it, questioning it. If you were to do so, you would see that maps differ distinctly from the reality that they depict. We all know that the world is round. It is approximately 27,000 miles in circumference and home to billions of people. But on a map, the world is changed from a sphere into a rectangular plane and shrunk down to fit on an 8 1/2" by 11" piece of paper, major highways are reduced to measly lines on a page, and the greatest cities in the world are diminished to mere dots. This is not the reality of the world, but rather what the mapmaker and his or her map are telling us is real. The question is: "Do maps create or represent reality?"

The fact that maps distort reality cannot be denied. It is absolutely impossible to depict a round earth on a flat surface without sacrificing at least some accuracy. In fact, a map can only be accurate in one of four domains: shape, area, distance, or direction. And in modifying any of these, our perception of the earth is affected.

There is currently a debate raging over which commonly used map projection is the "best" projection. Among a multitude of options, there are a few that stand out as the most recognized projections; these include the Mercator, the Peters, the Robinson, and the Goode's, among others. In all fairness, each of these projections has its strong points. The Mercator is used for navigation purposes because great circles appear as straight lines on maps utilizing this projection. In doing so, however, this projection is forced to distort the area of any given landmass relative to other

landmasses. The Peters projection combats this area distortion by sacrificing accuracy of shape, distance, and direction. While this projection is less useful than the Mercator in some respects, those who support it say that the Mercator is unfair in that it depicts landmasses in the high latitudes as being much larger than they really are in relation to landmasses in the lower latitudes. They claim that this creates a sense of superiority among people who inhabit North America and Europe, areas that are already among the most powerful in the world. The Robinson and the Goode's projections, on the other hand, are a compromise between these two extremes and they are commonly used for general reference maps. Both projections sacrifice absolute accuracy in any particular domain in order to be relatively accurate in all domains.

Is this an example of maps "creating reality"? The answer to that question depends on how we choose to define reality. Reality could either be described as the physical actuality of the world, or it could be the perceived truth that exists in peoples' minds. Despite the concrete, factual basis that can prove the verity or the falsehood of the former, the latter may very well be the more powerful of the two. If it weren't, those - such as human rights activists and certain religious organizations - who argue in favor of the Peters projection over the Mercator would not be putting up such a fight. They realize that how people understand the truth is often just as important as the truth itself, and they believe that the Peters projection's areal accuracy is - as the Friendship Press claims - "fair to all peoples."

Much of the reason that maps so often go unquestioned is that they have become so scientific and "artless." Modern mapmaking techniques and equipment have served to make maps seem like objective, trustworthy resources, when, in fact, they are as biased and conventional as ever. The conventions - or the symbols that are used on maps and the biases that they promote - that maps make use of have been accepted and utilized to the point that they have become all but invisible to the casual map observer. For example, when we look at maps, we don't usually have to think too much about what the symbols represent; we know that little black lines represent roads and dots represent towns and cities. This is why maps are so powerful. Mapmakers are able to display what they want how they want and not be questioned.

The best way to see how mapmakers and their maps are forced to alter the image of the world - and therefore our perceived reality - is to try and imagine a map that shows the world exactly as it is, a map that employs no human conventions. Try to envision a map that doesn't show the world oriented in a particular manner. North is not up or down, east isn't to the right or left. This map has not been scaled to make anything bigger or smaller than it is in reality; it is exactly the size and shape of the land that it depicts. There are no lines that have been drawn on this map to show the location and course of roads or rivers. The landmasses are not all green, and the water is not all blue. Oceans, lakes, countries, towns, and cities are unlabeled. All distances, shapes, areas, and directions are correct. There is no grid showing latitude or longitude.

This is an impossible task. The only representation of the earth that fits all of these criteria is the earth itself. No map can do all of these things. And because they must lie, they are forced to create a sense of reality that is different from the tangible, physical actuality of the earth.

It's strange to think that nobody will ever be able to see the entire earth at any given moment in time. Even an astronaut looking at the earth from space will only be able to see half of the earth's surface at any particular instant. Because maps are the only way that most of us will ever be able to see the earth before our eyes - and that any of us will ever see the entire world before our eyes - they play an immensely important part in shaping our views of the world. Although the lies that a map tells may be unavoidable, they are lies nonetheless, each one influencing the way that we think about the world. They do not create or alter the physical reality of the earth, but our perceived reality is shaped - in large part - by maps.

The second, and just as valid, answer to our question is that maps represent reality. According to Dr. Klaus Bayr, a geography professor at Keene State College in Keene, NH, a map is "a symbolized representation of the earth, parts of the earth, or a planet, drawn to scale...on a flat surface." This definition states clearly that a map represents the reality of the earth. But merely stating this viewpoint means nothing if we can't back it up.

It can be said that maps represent reality for several reasons. First, the fact is that no matter how much credit we give maps, they really mean nothing if there isn't a reality to back it up; the reality is more important than the depiction. Second, although maps portray things that we can't necessarily see on the face of the earth (e.g. political boundaries), these things do in fact exist apart from the map. The map is simply illustrating what exists in the world. Third and last is the fact that every map portrays the earth in a different way. Not every map can be a totally faithful representation of the earth, since each of them shows something different.

Maps - as we are examining them - are "symbolized representation[s] of the earth." They depict characteristics of the earth that are real and that are - in most cases - tangible. If we wanted to, we could find the area of the earth that any given map depicts. If I were to choose to do so, I could pick up a USGS topographic map at the bookstore down the street and then I could go out and find the actual hill that the wavy lines in the northeast corner of the map represent. I can find the reality behind the map.

All maps represent some component of the reality of the earth. This is what gives them such authority; this is why we trust them. We trust that they are faithful, objective depictions of some place on the earth. And we trust that there is a reality that will back up that depiction. If we did not believe that there was some verity and legitimacy behind the map - in the form of an actual place on the earth - would we trust them? Would we place value in them? Of course not. The sole reason behind the trust that humans place in maps is the belief that that map is a faithful representation of some part of the earth.

There are, however, certain things that exist on maps but that don't physically exist on the surface of the earth. Take New Hampshire, for example. What is New Hampshire? Why is it where it is? The truth is that New Hampshire isn't some natural phenomenon; humans didn't stumble across it and recognize that this was New Hampshire. It is a human idea. In a way, it may be just as accurate to call New Hampshire a state of mind as it is to call it a political state.

So how can we show New Hampshire as a physically real thing on a map? How are we able to draw a line following the course of the Connecticut River and categorically state that the land to the west of this line is Vermont but the land on the east is New Hampshire? This border isn't a tangible feature of the earth; it's an idea. But even in spite of this, we can find New Hampshire on maps.

This would seem like a hole in the theory that maps represent reality, but in fact it is just the opposite. The thing about maps is that they not only show that land simply exists, they also represent the relationship between any given place and the world around it. In the case of New Hampshire, nobody is going to argue that there is land in the state that we know as New Hampshire; nobody will argue with the fact that the land exists. What the maps are telling us is that this particular piece of land is New Hampshire, in the same way that certain places on the earth are hills, others are oceans, and still others are open fields, rivers, or glaciers. Maps tell us how a certain place on the earth fits into the bigger picture. They show us which part of the puzzle a particular place is. New Hampshire exists. It isn't tangible; we can't touch it. But it exists. There are similarities among all of the places that fit together to form what we know as New Hampshire. There are laws that apply in the state of New Hampshire. Cars have license plates from New Hampshire. Maps don't define that New Hampshire exists, but they do give us a representation of New Hampshire's place in the world.

The way that maps are able to do this is through conventions. These are the human-imposed ideas that are evident on maps but which cannot be found on the land itself. Examples of conventions include orientation, projection, and symbolization and generalization. Each of these must be utilized in order to create a map of the world, but - at the same time - they are each human constructs.

For example, on every map of the world, there will be a compass that tells which direction on the map is north, south, east, or west. On most maps made in the northern hemisphere, these compasses show that north is at the top of the map. In contrast to this, some maps made in the southern hemisphere show south at the top of the map. The truth is that both of these ideas are totally arbitrary. I could make a map that shows north being in the lower left-hand corner of the page and be just as correct as if I said north was at the top or bottom. The earth itself has no real orientation. It simply exists in space. The idea of orientation is one that had been imposed on the world by humans and humans alone.

Similar to being able to orient a map however they choose to, mapmakers can also utilize any one of a vast array of projections to make a map of the world, and none of these projections is any better than the next one; as we have already seen, each projection has its strong points and its weak points. But for each projection, this strong point - this accuracy - is slightly different. For example, the Mercator portrays directions accurately, the Peters portrays area accurately, and azimuthal equidistant maps display distance from any given point accurately. Yet maps made using each of these projections are considered to be accurate representations of the earth. The reason for this is that maps are not expected to represent every characteristic of the world with 100% accuracy. It is understood that every map is going to have to dismiss or ignore some truths in order to tell others. In the case of projections, some are forced to ignore areal accuracy in order to show directional accuracy, and vice versa. Which truths are chosen to be told depends solely on the intended use of the map.

As mapmakers have to utilize orientation and projection in order to represent the surface of the earth on a map, so they must also use symbols. It would be impossible to put the actual characteristics of the earth (e.g. highways, rivers, thriving cities, etc.) on a map, so mapmakers utilize symbols in order to represent those characteristics.

For example, on a map of the world, Washington D.C., Moscow, and Cairo all appear as small, identical stars, as each is the capital of its respective country. Now, we all know that these cities are not, in fact, small red stars. And we know that these cities are not all identical. But on a map, they are depicted as such. As is true with projection, we must be willing to accept that maps cannot be completely accurate depictions of the land that is being represented on the map. As we saw earlier, the only thing that can be a totally accurate representation of the earth is the earth itself.

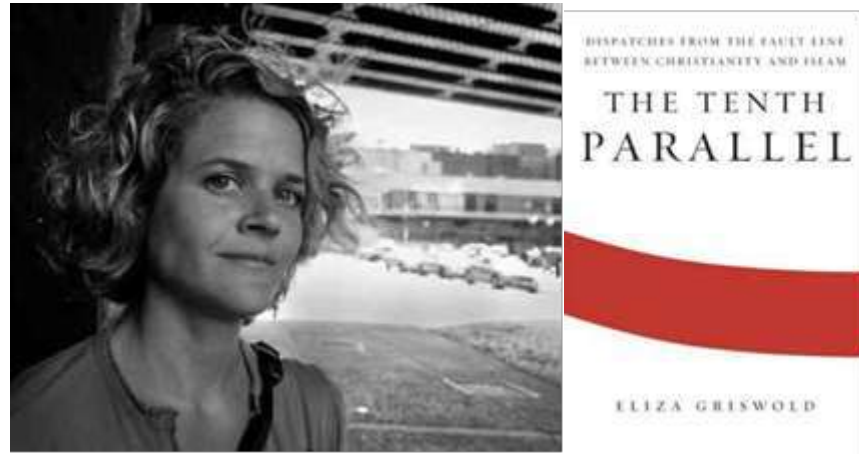
Throughout our examination of maps as both creators and representations of reality, the underlying theme has been this: maps are only able to represent truth and fact by lying. It is impossible to depict the huge, round earth on a flat and relatively small surface without sacrificing at least some accuracy. And though this is often seen as a drawback of maps, I would argue that it is one of the benefits.

The earth, as a physical entity, simply exists. Any purpose that we see in the world through a map is one that has been imposed by humans. This is the sole reason for maps' existence. They exist to show us something about the world, not to simply show us the world. They can illustrate any multitude of things, from migration patterns of Canadian geese to fluctuations in the earth's gravitational field, but every map must show us something about the earth upon which we live. Maps lie to tell the truth. They lie in order to make a point.

Questions:

1. Why does Hebert argue that maps ***have to*** distort reality?
2. List and describe some of the different types of map projections that the article describes, and what each is meant to show the viewer
3. Hebert argues that contemporary (modern) maps are "...as biased and conventional as ever." – How does she justify this point of view?
4. When Hebert describes the borders of New Hampshire as "...an idea." – what does she mean?
5. What specific things about maps did this article teach, explain, or reveal to you that you didn't know before (or didn't bother to think about)

3. The Tenth Parallel: Dispatches from the Fault Line between Christianity and Islam (Eliza Griswold: 2010, Prologue)



“I wanted to see how Christianity and Islam are actually lived every day by huge numbers of vulnerable, marginal believers – individuals who are also part of the global story of poverty, development, climate-change forecasts, and so on...to go where such lives are actually led, where wars in the name of religion are not Internet media campaigns...but actual wars fought from village to village and street corner to street corner.”

Prologue:

The chief was spending Easter Sunday in his hut, which smelled of stale smoke from a cooking fire and of something more glandular: panic. When the visitor from Washington ducked inside, the chief, a man in his mid-fifties named Nyol Paduot, rose stiff-kneed from a white plastic lawn chair. He had spent several days keeping watch against an approaching dust cloud kicked up by horsemen and Jeeps. It would mean his village of Todaj, teetering on the fraught and murky border between northern and southern Sudan, was under attack again. He was grouchy and unkempt: his eyes pouched, his salt-and-pepper beard scruffy, his waxy green-and yellow shirt stained with the tide lines of dried sweat. He glowered at the American visitor, Roger Winter, whose bare legs poked out from khaki shorts. One leg bore the scar of a snakebite he had gotten not far away while helping to broker a peace on behalf of the United States. The 2005 deal was supposed to end nearly forty years of intermittent civil war between northern and southern Sudan, which had left two million people dead. In some places, the peace agreement had stanchied the bloodshed, allowing the south to form a nascent government that described itself as “Christian led.” Under the terms of the deal, the north was supposed to make it attractive for the south to remain part of a unified Sudan by giving it a voice in the national government, and a fair share of oil revenues. But the north ignored most of the

terms. The peace deal proved to mean nothing here on the boundary between the two Sudans, which jigs and jags like an EKG reading along the straight, flat latitude of the tenth parallel.

The tenth parallel is the horizontal band that rings the earth seven hundred miles north of the equator. If Africa is shaped like a rumpled sock, with South Africa at the toe and Somalia at the heel, then the tenth parallel runs across the ankle. Along the tenth parallel, in Sudan, and in most of inland Africa, two worlds collide: the mostly Muslim, Arab-influenced north meets a black African south inhabited by Christians and those who follow indigenous religions—which include those who venerate ancestors and the spirits of animals, land, and sky.¹ Thirty miles south (at a latitude of 9°43'59"), the village of Todaj marked the divide where these two rival worldviews, their dysfunctional governments and well-armed militaries, vied inch by inch for land. The village belonged to the south's largest ethnic group, the Ngok Dinka. But in 2008, when Roger Winter paid Nyol Paduot a visit, the north was threatening to send its soldiers and Arab militias to attack the village and lay claim to the underground river of light, sweet crude oil running beneath the chief's feet.

Oil was discovered in southern Sudan during the 1970s, and the struggle to control it is one of the long-running war's more recent causes. The fight in Sudan threatened to split Africa's largest country in two, and still does. In 2011, the south is scheduled to vote on whether it wants to remain part of the north or become its own country, made up of ten states that lie to the south of the tenth parallel and border Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda, the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Central African Republic, and Chad. This looming split—which, if it happens, would likely occur largely along the tenth parallel—meant that Todaj and the nearby oil boomtown of Abyei, about ten miles south, were vitally important. Whichever side controlled them would control an estimated two billion barrels of oil.

Other than Paduot, and six elders gathered in his hut, the village appeared deserted. Prompted by gunfire and rumors of war, the five hundred families who lived there had fled south, terrified that Todaj was about to be wiped off the face of the earth. Their fear was well founded: three times in the previous twenty years, soldiers from the north had laid siege to Todaj, raping women and children, killing and carrying off young men, and burning to the ground the villagers' thatched huts and the Episcopal Church made of hay. It was the end of the dry season, and a breeze stirred the air over this colorless plot of parched earth, bare but for these empty dwellings and a few gaunt cows trawling for loose hay. The cows wandering hungrily around the village didn't belong to the people of Todaj, but to northern Arab nomads, the Misseriya, who, because of seasonal drought up north, came south at this time of year to graze their cattle. Paduot was afraid that when the rains began a few weeks later, and the nomads could return home to their own greener pastures, there would be nothing to keep the northern soldiers (cousins and sons of the nomads) from attacking Todaj. "We know when they burn our village, they want the land," said the chief, a Ngok Dinka translator rendering his words into English. These patterns sounded like the ones unfolding less than fifty miles northwest, in the region of Darfur, because they were the same. Three decades ago, while Sudan's current president, Omar Hassan al-Bashir, was a military general stationed on this border, the Khartoum-based northern government perfected the methods of attack, using the paramilitary horsemen called the Janjawid, whom it was now deploying in Darfur. Todaj faced this same threat, but other than Roger Winter, very few knew anything about the impending disaster. On BBC radio,

Paduot heard much talk about Darfur. Although the same thing was happening here along the border, it rarely made international news. The two fronts had much in common, since all of Sudan's wars boil down to a central Khartoum-based cabal battling the people at the peripheries. The only differences between Darfur and Abyei, the chief explained, were religion and oil. In Darfur, there

was no oil and both sides were Muslim, a confrontation he did not understand. "Why would Muslims fight against Muslims?" he asked aloud. Here, the north had mounted its assaults in the name of jihad, or holy war, claiming that Islam and Arab culture should reign supreme in Sudan.

Chief Paduot, who had survived several such conflagrations, had come to see Islam as a tool of oppression, one the northerners were using to erase his culture and undo his people's claim to the land and its oil. "People hate Islam now," he said. Having stepped into the hut behind Winter, I glanced around to see if any of the elders was startled by the chief's remark. If they were, no sign of it crossed their faces, which showed only dread and exhaustion. To defy the north, most of the villagers had been baptized as Episcopalians—they prayed daily, attended church on Sunday, and had cast off loose, long-sleeved Islamic dress in favor of short-sleeved Western-style button-down shirts, or brilliant batiks. For them, *Islam* was now simply a catchall term for the government, people, and policies of the north. Race, like religion, was a rallying cry in this complicated war. The paler-skinned Arab northerners looked down on the darker-skinned people of the south, Paduot explained slowly. He seemed tired of giving tutorials to outsiders. What good were earnest, well-meaning people like us, who came with our water bottles and notebooks to record the details of a situation but could do nothing to stop it? The divisions between north and south along the tenth parallel date back centuries, and colonial rule simply reinforced them. One hundred years earlier, the British colonialists who governed Sudan had virtually handed this swath of land south of the tenth parallel to the Roman Catholic Church. Daniel Comboni, a beloved nineteenth-century Italian missionary who was canonized as a saint in 2003, headed Catholic efforts in Central Africa with the expressed aim to "save Africa through Africans." Under Comboni's direction, the Catholic Church ran all schools and hospitals (and forbade Protestant missionaries from proselytizing), until, in 1964, the northern government, employing Islam as a form of nationalism, expelled all missionaries from the country. African Christians—not Westerners—were left to lead the local church, which was then, as now, under fire from the north as an alien, infidel institution. This attitude has not changed, the local Catholic priest, Father Peter Suleiman, told me. "Every day we experience the misery of the south. You still hear the promise of death." And oil has made things worse. "The north believes that oil is a gift from God for the Muslim people," he said. Although the Catholic Church still held some sway along this border, Father Suleiman told me that an influx of more charismatic Protestant churches was gaining ground. In the village of Todaj, many of the villagers were convinced that they were still alive solely because they had prayed to Jesus Christ for protection.

Born into a family that prayed to ancestral gods, Chief Paduot became a nominal Muslim in order to gain admission to school (a practice begun by Christian missionaries and now emulated by Khartoum). Through a process of forced Islamization, the north had made it compulsory for people to declare themselves Muslims by saying the Shahada—"I bear witness that there is no god but God, and I bear witness that Mohammed is his messenger"—and adopting Muslim names in order to attend school, get a job, or avoid jail or violent death. In his forties, Paduot, chief by birth, decided that he wanted to leave Islam and become a Catholic. But the northern security forces threatened

the local Catholic priest, one Father Marco, saying they would torture him if he baptized the chief. (They told Paduot they'd stone him if he became "a backslider from Islam.") He refrained from converting to Catholicism to safeguard his village from further trouble. "I kept Islam to protect my people," he said, but, to show his independence, he had returned to the indigenous practices of his youth—called the noble spiritual beliefs. Christians and Muslims alike disparaged the local indigenous religion on the ground that it didn't teach adherents to follow the one, true God. That was ignorance on their part, Paduot said. "We worship one Creator God, too, then smaller gods."

He had also married an Episcopalian. Now he led us out of the hut—its thick, round walls like a muddy mushroom stem—and pointed to a line of what looked like tiny corn-husk scarecrows along the roofs of his and other huts. "They are crosses," the chief said. Their frayed edges glowed in the afternoon's pewter light; they were symbols marking the beginning of the south, and visual reminders to anyone entering the village that it was a Christian place, the chief explained. Squinting into the overcast sky to look at them, I thought the threadbare totems were also bids for divine protection. Yet the crosses seemed to be proving as ineffective as the chief's satellite phone, which hung by its power cord from two portable solar panels on the thatched roof of his hut. There was no one left for him to call for help. Though his cousin, Francis Deng, was serving as the United Nations Special Representative for the Prevention of Genocide, and though Paduot met regularly with local UN officials, representatives of the southern government, and visitors such as Roger Winter (a longtime head of the U.S. Committee for Refugees who had lobbied hard for the south in Washington and Khartoum), no one could do anything to stop the impending assault.

On the surface of this conflict, two groups, northern and southern, Muslim and Christian, were competing for land and water. Yet at a deeper level, the people were now pawns of their respective governments, and Paduot knew it. He produced a worn map softened with use and pointed to three annotations in English: PUMP 1, PUMP 2, PUMP 3. These indicated the oil fields of the Greater Nile Petroleum Operating Company—a consortium of Chinese, Malaysian, Indian, and Sudanese interests operating in Sudan with the blessing of President Bashir. At the same time, Bashir was exhorting his holy soldiers, or Mujahideen—whom he called "the legitimate sons of the soil"—to re-up for jihad. Once again, he was making use of race and religion to safeguard oil interests before the country faced the impending split.

Some of his soldiers were stationed two hundred yards away, acting as sentries on the north-south border, the location of which was determined by whoever was strong enough to push it a few inches one way or another. Around their makeshift barracks, camps of nomads were springing up, as if preparing for war. Over the past few weeks, as Paduot looked on, the soldiers had received shipments of automatic rifles and rocket-propelled grenade launchers. If a full-scale rift between north and south occurred, it would begin right here with these weapons, Paduot warned. A village sentry came in and whispered in his ear. Abruptly, he stopped talking; soldiers were slouching against the hut's outside wall, listening to his every word.

In Africa, the space between the tenth parallel and the equator marks the end of the continent's arid north and the beginning of sub-Saharan jungle. Wind, other weather, and centuries of human migrations have brought the two religions to converge here. Christianity and Islam share a fifteen hundred-year history in Africa. It began in 615 when Mohammed, his life at risk at home on the

Arabian Peninsula, sent a dozen of his followers and family members to find refuge at the court of an African Christian king in Abyssinia (modern-day Ethiopia). Within a decade of Mohammed's death (in 632), the first Muslim armies landed in Africa, proceeding south from Egypt to today's Sudan. There they made a peace pact—the first of its kind—with the ancient Nubian Christian kingdoms along the Nile River.

The pact lasted for six centuries. Then religious wars broke out. By 1504, the last of the Christian kingdoms in Sudan had fallen to Muslim armies. From the seventh century to the twentieth, Muslim traders and missionaries carried Islam inland over the northernmost third of Africa, carving trade routes from the holy city of Mecca in Saudi Arabia to the West African kingdom of Timbuktu. Away from the coasts, crossing the landlocked region south of the tenth parallel proved difficult; the pale, grassy savanna thickened to bush, and the bush gave way to a mire of emerald swamp and jungle. Along the tenth parallel, the tsetse fly belt begins: and these blood-sucking insects, each the size of a housefly and carrying African trypanosomiasis (sleeping sickness),³ virtually stopped Islam's southern spread.

To the east, five thousand miles off the African coast and over the Indian Ocean, natural forces also shaped the encounter of Christianity and Islam in the Southeast Asian nations of Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines. The trade winds—high-pressure air currents that move steadily from either pole toward the equator—filled the sails of both Muslim and Christian merchants from the northern hemisphere beginning in the eighth century. These reliable winds propelled Christian and Muslim ships to the same islands, beaches, and ports, then returned them either to Europe or to the Arabian Peninsula, their ships heavy with cargoes of cinnamon and cloves.

The trade winds are part of the intertropical convergence zone, a weather system that moves to the north or south of the equator, depending on the season. In this zone, wind currents from the northern hemisphere run into those from the southern hemisphere. As the two cycles meet head-on, they generate cataclysmic storms. In Asia, these storms begin during monsoon season and generally spin west to Africa, where the most tempestuous of them move west off the African coast at Cape Verde, across the Atlantic Ocean, and become America's hurricanes. Within this band, Asia, Africa, and America are part of a single weather system.⁴ (A dangerous year of monsoons in Asia and storms in Africa's catastrophe belt, for instance, can mean a disastrous year of hurricanes for the U.S. eastern seaboard.)

As the earth grows warmer, preexisting cycles of flooding and drought around the tenth parallel grow increasingly unpredictable, making it impossible for African nomads, most of whom are Muslims, and farmers (Christians, Muslims, and indigenous believers) to rely on centuries-old patterns of migration, planting, and harvesting. They must move into new territory to grow food and graze their livestock. Consequently, between the equator and the tenth parallel two groups with distinctly different cultures and cosmologies unavoidably face off against each other—as they do in the Sudanese village of Todaj.

Growing populations intensify these competitions. Due to the explosive growth of Christianity over the past fifty years, there are now 493 million Christians living south of the tenth parallel—nearly a fourth of the world's. Christian population of 2 billion.⁵ To the north live the majority of the

continent's 367 million Muslims; they represent nearly one quarter of the world's 1.6 billion Muslims. These figures are an effective reminder that four out of five Muslims live outside the Middle East. Indonesia, with 240 million people, is the most populous Muslim country in the world. Malaysia is its tiny, rich neighbor; the Philippines, its larger, poorer one. Together, the three countries have a population of 250 million Muslims and 110 million Christians. Indonesia and Malaysia are predominantly Muslim countries, with vocal Christian minorities. The Philippines—with a powerful Catholic majority (population 92 million) mostly to the north of the tenth parallel and a Muslim minority (population 5 million) to the south—is the opposite. It has been a strongly Christian country ever since Ferdinand Magellan planted a cross on an island hilltop there in 1521.

Yet Islam, which arrived hundreds of years earlier, has remained a source of identity and rebellion in the south for the past five hundred years. Africa's and Asia's populations are expanding, on average, faster than those in the rest of the world. While the global population of 6.8 billion people increases by 1.2 percent every year, in Asia the rate is 1.4 percent, and in Africa it doubles to 2.4 percent.⁶ In this fragile zone where the two religions meet, the pressures wrought by growing numbers of people and an increasingly vulnerable environment are sharpening the tensions between Christians and Muslims over land, food, oil, and water, over practices and hardening worldviews.

The particular strain of religion that's growing the fastest also intensifies these problems. Christianity and Islam are in the throes of decades-long revolutions: reawakenings. Believers adopt outward signs of devotion—praying, eating, dressing, and other social customs—that call attention to the ways they differ from the unbelievers around them. Yet these movements are not simply about exhibiting devotion. They begin with a direct encounter with God. For Sufi s, who make up the majority of African Muslims, and for Pentecostals, who account for more than one quarter of African Christians, worship begins with ecstatic experience. Sufi s follow a mystical strain of Islam that begins with inviting God into the human heart. Pentecostals urge their members to encounter the Holy Spirit viscerally, as Jesus's followers did during the feast of Pentecost when they spoke in tongues. Such reawakenings demand an individual's total surrender, and promise, in return, an exclusive path to the one true God. "These movements aren't about converting to a better version of self," Lamin Sanneh, a theologian at Yale and the author of *Whose Religion Is Christianity?*, told me. "They are about converting to God." They say the believer can know God now in this life and forever in the next. In return, they expect the believer to proselytize—to gain new converts—from either among other religions or their own less ardent believers, which creates new frictions.

These movements are already reshaping Africa, Asia, and Latin America—the region we used to call *the third world*, or even *the developing world*. Nowadays, liberal and conservative Western analysts, and many of the region's inhabitants as well, use the term *Global South* instead. This somewhat clunky moniker is intended to cast off the legacy of the West, to challenge the assumption that the entire world is developing within a Western context. It is also meant to highlight a marked shift in demographics and influence among the world's Christians and Muslims. Today's typical Protestant is an African woman, not a white American man. In many of the weak states along the tenth parallel, the power of these religious movements is compounded by the fact that the "state" means very little here; governments are alien structures that offer their people almost nothing in the way of services or political rights. This lack is especially pronounced where present-day national borders began as nothing more than lines sketched onto colonial maps. Other kinds of identity, consequently, come

to the fore: religion above every thing—even race or ethnicity—becomes a means to safeguard individual and collective security in this world and the next one.

In many cases, then, gains for one side imply losses for the other. Revival provides not only a pattern for daily life but also a form of communal defense, bringing people together, giving them a shared goal or purpose, and inviting them to risk their lives in the pursuit of it. Often the end is liberation, and the means to liberation include martyrdom and holy war. With Islam, it is perhaps easier to understand how believers could see a return to religious law as undoing the corruption sown by colonialism. Yet in Christianity, too, religion has become a means of political emancipation, especially between the equator and the tenth parallel, where Christianity and Islam meet. Many Christians living in these states belong to non-Muslim ethnic minorities who share the experience of being enslaved by northern Muslims, and perceive themselves as living on Christianity's front line in the battle against Islamic domination. In Nigeria, Sudan, Indonesia, and the Philippines, and elsewhere, Christians have lost churches, homes, and family members to violent struggle. At the same time, they, like their Muslim adversaries, see the developed West as a godless place that has forsaken its Christian heritage.

I began investigating this faith-based fault line as a journalist in December 2003, when I traveled with Franklin Graham—Billy Graham's son, and head of a prosperous evangelical empire—to Khartoum, to meet his nemesis, President Omar Hassan al-Bashir, whose regime was waging the world's most violent modern jihad against Christians and Muslims alike in southern Sudan. Bashir was also beginning the genocidal campaign in Darfur. (In 2009, the International Criminal Court at The Hague issued an arrest warrant for Bashir for war crimes and crimes against humanity.) In Bashir's palace's sepulchral marble reception room, the two men argued pointedly over who would convert whom. Each adhered to a very different worldview: theirs were opposing fundamentalisms based on the belief that there was one—and only one—way to believe in God. At the same time, their religious politics spilled over into a fight between cultures, and represented the way in which the world's Muslims and the West have come to misunderstand each other. Being a witness to this conversation was like watching emissaries from two different civilizations square off over a plate of pistachios. Soon afterward, I started to travel in the band between the equator and the tenth parallel. I visited places where the two religions often clash: Nigeria, Sudan, Somalia, and the Horn of Africa; Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines. Over the past decade, there has been much theorizing about religion and politics, religion and poverty, conflicts and accommodation between Christianity and Islam. I wanted to see how Christianity and Islam are actually lived every day by huge numbers of vulnerable, marginal believers—individuals who are also part of the global story of poverty, development strategy, climate-change forecasts, and so on.

No theory of religious politics or religious violence in our time can possibly be complete without accounting for the four-fifths of Muslims who live outside the Middle East or for the swelling populations of evangelical Christians whose faith is bound up with their struggle for resources and survival. I wanted to go where such lives are actually led, where wars in the name of religion are not Internet media campaigns to "control a global narrative" but actual wars fought from village to village and street corner to street corner. Most of all, I wanted to record the interwoven stories of those who inhabit this territory, and whose religious beliefs pattern their daily perseverance. Although it's easy to see Christianity and Islam as vast and static forces, they are perpetually in flux.

Over time, each religion has shaped the other. Religion is dynamic and fluid. The most often overlooked fact of religious revivals, of the kind now unfolding between the equator and the tenth parallel, is that they give rise to divisions within the religions themselves. They are about a struggle over who speaks for God—a confrontation that takes place not simply between rival religions, but inside them. This is as true in the West as it is in the Global South. Religions, like the weather, link us to one another, whether we like it or not.

Some Reviews from the New York Times:

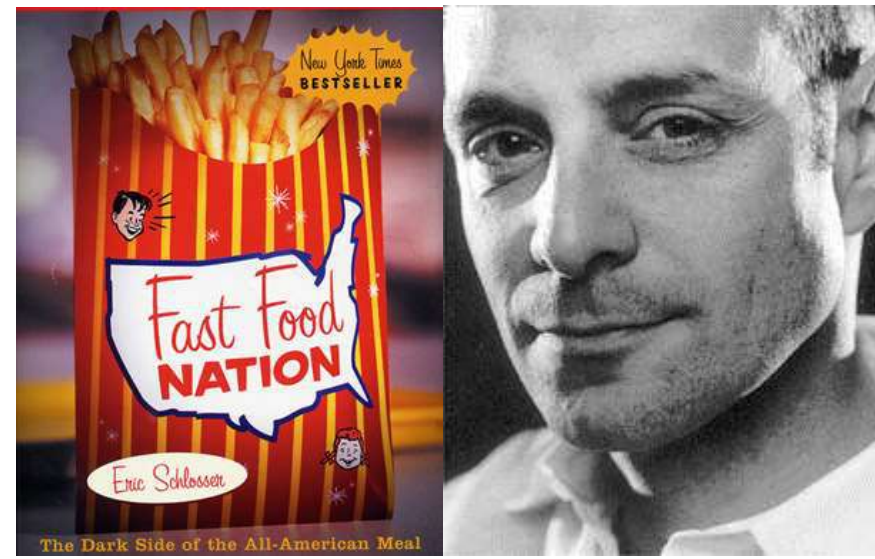
<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/08/18/books/18book.html?ref=review>

<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/08/22/books/review/Robinson-t.html>

Questions:

1. Based on the descriptions, how would you define (your own words) what the 10th Parallel is, both physically and culturally?
2. Based on what she describes, how would you classify the relationship between Muslims and Christians along the 10th parallel? Support this with evidence from the piece.
3. The author states that “Christianity and Islam share a fifteen-hundred-year history in Africa” – briefly describe what this history is (main points here – please don’t recopy whole sections)
4. She also attributes the interaction of, and conflicts between Muslims and Christians to the physical geographic patterns of the region. What are these patterns, and how does she claim they have impacted Muslim/Christian interaction?
5. What role does she claim that population issues have in fueling the conflict between Muslims and Christians?

4. Fast Food Nation: The Dark Side of the All-American Meal (Introduction, Eric Schlosser, 2002):



“A nation’s diet can be more revealing than its art or literature. This is a book about fast food, the values it embodies, and the world it has made...the fast food industry has helped to transform not only the American diet, but also our landscape, economy, workforce, and popular culture.”

What We Eat:

OVER THE LAST THREE DECADES, fast food has infiltrated every nook and cranny of American society. An industry that began with a handful of modest hot dog and hamburger stands in southern California has spread to every corner of the nation, selling a broad range of foods wherever paying customers may be found. Fast food is now served at restaurants and drive-throughs, at stadiums, airports, zoos, high schools, elementary schools, and universities, on cruise ships, trains, and airplanes, at K-Marts, Wal-Marts, gas stations, and even at hospital cafeterias. In 1970, Americans spent about \$6 billion on fast food; in 2000, they spent more than \$110 billion. Americans now spend more money on fast food than on higher education, personal computers,

computer software, or new cars. They spend more on fast food than on movies, books, magazines, newspapers, videos, and recorded music - combined.

Pull open the glass door, feel the rush of cool air, walk in, get on line, study the backlit color photographs above the counter, place your order, hand over a few dollars, watch teenagers in uniforms pushing various buttons, and moments later take hold of a plastic tray full of food wrapped in colored paper and cardboard. The whole experience of buying fast food has become so routine, so thoroughly unexceptional and mundane, that it is now taken for granted, like brushing your teeth or stopping for a red light. It has become a social custom as American as a small, rectangular, hand-held, frozen, and reheated apple pie.

This is a book about fast food, the values it embodies, and the world it has made. Fast food has proven to be a revolutionary force in American life; I am interested in it both as a commodity and as a metaphor. What people eat (or don't eat) has always been determined by a complex interplay of social, economic, and technological forces. The early Roman Republic was fed by its citizen-farmers; the Roman Empire, by its slaves. A nation's diet can be more revealing than its art or literature. On any given day in the United States about one-quarter of the adult population visits a fast food restaurant. During a relatively brief period of time, the fast food industry has helped to transform not only the American diet, but also our landscape, economy, workforce, and popular culture. Fast food and its consequences have become inescapable, regardless of whether you eat it twice a day, try to avoid it, or have never taken a single bite.

The extraordinary growth of the fast food industry has been driven by fundamental changes in American society. Adjusted for inflation, the hourly wage of the average U.S. worker peaked in 1973 and then steadily declined for the next twenty-five years. During that period, women entered the workforce in record numbers, often motivated less by a feminist perspective than by a need to pay the bills. In 1975, about one-third of American mothers with young children worked outside the home; today almost two-thirds of such mothers are employed. As the sociologists Cameron Lynne Macdonald and Carmen Sirianni have noted, the entry of so many women into the workforce has greatly increased demand for the types of services that housewives traditionally perform: cooking, cleaning, and child care. A generation ago, three-quarters of the money used to buy food in the United States was spent to prepare meals at home. Today about half of the money used to buy food is spent at restaurants - mainly at fast food restaurants.

The McDonald's Corporation has become a powerful symbol of America's service economy, which is now responsible for 90 percent of the country's new jobs. In 1968, McDonald's operated about one thousand restaurants. Today it has about twenty-eight thousand restaurants worldwide and opens almost two thousand new ones each year. An estimated one out of every eight workers in the United States has at some point been employed by McDonald's. The company annually hires about one million people, more than any other American organization, public or private. McDonald's is the nation's largest purchaser of beef, pork, and potatoes - and the second largest purchaser of chicken. The McDonald's Corporation is the largest owner of retail property in the world. Indeed, the company earns the majority of its profits not from selling food but from collecting rent. McDonald's spends more money on advertising and marketing than any other brand. As a result it has replaced Coca-Cola as the world's most famous brand. McDonald's operates more playgrounds than any other private entity in the United States. It is one of the nation's largest distributors of toys.

A survey of American schoolchildren found that 96 percent could identify Ronald McDonald. The only fictional character with a higher degree of recognition was Santa Claus. The impact of McDonald's on the way we live today is hard to overstate. The Golden Arches are now more widely recognized than the Christian cross.

In the early 1970s, the farm activist Jim Hightower warned of the McDonaldization of America. He viewed the emerging fast food industry as a threat to independent businesses, as a step toward a food economy dominated by giant corporations, and as a homogenizing influence on American life. In *Eat Your Heart Out* (1975), he argued that bigger is not better. Much of what Hightower feared has come to pass. The centralized purchasing decisions of the large restaurant chains and their demand for standardized products have given a handful of corporations an unprecedented degree of power over the nation's food supply. Moreover, the tremendous success of the fast food industry has encouraged other industries to adopt similar business methods. The basic thinking behind fast food has become the operating system of today's retail economy, wiping out small businesses, obliterating regional differences, and spreading identical stores throughout the country like a self-replicating code.

America's main streets and malls now boast the same Pizza Huts and Taco Bells, Gaps and Banana Republics, Starbucks and Jiffy-Lubes, Foot Lockers, Snip N' Clips, Sunglass Huts, and Hobbytown USAs. Almost every facet of American life has now been franchised or chained. From the maternity ward at a Columbia/HCA hospital to an embalming room owned by Service Corporation International - the world's largest provider of death care services, based in Houston, Texas, which since 1968 has grown to include 3,823 funeral homes, 523 cemeteries, and 198 crematoriums, and which today handles the final remains of one out of every nine Americans - a person can now go from the cradle to the grave without spending a nickel at an independently owned business.

The key to a successful franchise, according to many texts on the subject, can be expressed in one word: uniformity. Franchises and chain stores strive to offer exactly the same product or service at numerous locations. Customers are drawn to familiar brands by an instinct to avoid the unknown. A brand offers a feeling of reassurance when its products are always and everywhere the same. We have found out . . . that we cannot trust some people who are nonconformists, declared Ray Kroc, one of the founders of McDonald's, angered by some of his franchisees. We will make conformists out of them in a hurry . . . The organization cannot trust the individual; the individual must trust the organization.

One of the ironies of America's fast food industry is that a business so dedicated to conformity was founded by iconoclasts and self-made men, by entrepreneurs willing to defy conventional opinion. Few of the people who built fast food empires ever attended college, let alone business school. They worked hard, took risks, and followed their own paths. In many respects, the fast food industry embodies the best and the worst of American capitalism at the start of the twenty-first century - its constant stream of new products and innovations, its widening gulf between rich and poor. The industrialization of the restaurant kitchen has enabled the fast food chains to rely upon a low-paid and unskilled workforce. While a handful of workers manage to rise up the corporate ladder, the vast majority lack full-time employment, receive no benefits, learn few skills, exercise little control over their workplace, quit after a few months, and float from job to job. The restaurant industry is now America's largest private employer, and it pays some of the lowest wages. During the economic

boom of the 1990s, when many American workers enjoyed their first pay raises in a generation, the real value of wages in the restaurant industry continued to fall. The roughly 3.5 million fast food workers are by far the largest group of minimum wage earners in the United States. The only Americans who consistently earn a lower hourly wage are migrant farm workers.

A hamburger and french fries became the quintessential American meal in the 1950s, thanks to the promotional efforts of the fast food chains. The typical American now consumes approximately three hamburgers and four orders of french fries every week. But the steady barrage of fast food ads, full of thick juicy burgers and long golden fries, rarely mentions where these foods come from nowadays or what ingredients they contain. The birth of the fast food industry coincided with Eisenhower-era glorifications of technology, with optimistic slogans like Better Living through Chemistry and Our Friend the Atom. The sort of technological wizardry that Walt Disney promoted on television and at Disneyland eventually reached its fulfillment in the kitchens of fast food restaurants. Indeed, the corporate culture of McDonald's seems inextricably linked to that of the Disney empire, sharing a reverence for sleek machinery, electronics, and automation. The leading fast food chains still embrace a boundless faith in science - and as a result have changed not just what Americans eat, but also how their food is made.

The current methods for preparing fast food are less likely to be found in cookbooks than in trade journals such as *Food Technologist* and *Food Engineering*. Aside from the salad greens and tomatoes, most fast food is delivered to the restaurant already frozen, canned, dehydrated, or freeze-dried. A fast food kitchen is merely the final stage in a vast and highly complex system of mass production. Foods that may look familiar have in fact been completely reformulated. What we eat has changed more in the last forty years than in the previous forty thousand. Like Cheyenne Mountain, today's fast food conceals remarkable technological advances behind an ordinary-looking façade. Much of the taste and aroma of American fast food, for example, is now manufactured at a series of large chemical plants off the New Jersey Turnpike.

In the fast food restaurants of Colorado Springs, behind the counters, amid the plastic seats, in the changing landscape outside the window, you can see all the virtues and destructiveness of our fast food nation. I chose Colorado Springs as a focal point for this book because the changes that have recently swept through the city are emblematic of those that fast food - and the fast food mentality - have encouraged throughout the United States. Countless other suburban communities, in every part of the country, could have been used to illustrate the same points. The extraordinary growth of Colorado Springs neatly parallels that of the fast food industry: during the last few decades, the city's population has more than doubled. Subdivisions, shopping malls, and chain restaurants are appearing in the foothills of Cheyenne Mountain and the plains rolling to the east. The Rocky Mountain region as a whole has the fastest-growing economy in the United States, mixing high-tech and service industries in a way that may define America's workforce for years to come. And new restaurants are opening there at a faster pace than anywhere else in the nation.

Fast food is now so commonplace that it has acquired an air of inevitability, as though it were somehow unavoidable, a fact of modern life. And yet the dominance of the fast food giants was no more preordained than the march of colonial split-levels, golf courses, and man-made lakes across the deserts of the American West. The political philosophy that now prevails in so much of the West - with its demand for lower taxes, smaller government, an unbridled free market - stands in total

contradiction to the region's true economic underpinnings. No other region of the United States has been so dependent on government subsidies for so long, from the nineteenth-century construction of its railroads to the twentieth-century financing of its military bases and dams. One historian has described the federal government's 1950s highway-building binge as a case study in interstate socialism - a phrase that aptly describes how the West was really won. The fast food industry took root alongside that interstate highway system, as a new form of restaurant sprang up beside the new off-ramps. Moreover, the extraordinary growth of this industry over the past quarter-century did not occur in a political vacuum. It took place during a period when the inflation-adjusted value of the minimum wage declined by about 40 percent, when sophisticated mass marketing techniques were for the first time directed at small children, and when federal agencies created to protect workers and consumers too often behaved like branch offices of the companies that were supposed to be regulated. Ever since the administration of President Richard Nixon, the fast food industry has worked closely with its allies in Congress and the White House to oppose new worker safety, food safety, and minimum wage laws. While publicly espousing support for the free market, the fast food chains have quietly pursued and greatly benefited from a wide variety of government subsidies. Far from being inevitable, America's fast food industry in its present form is the logical outcome of certain political and economic choices.

In the potato fields and processing plants of Idaho, in the ranchlands east of Colorado Springs, in the feedlots and slaughterhouses of the High Plains, you can see the effects of fast food on the nation's rural life, its environment, its workers, and its health. The fast food chains now stand atop a huge food-industrial complex that has gained control of American agriculture. During the 1980s, large multinationals - such as Cargill, ConAgra, and IBP - were allowed to dominate one commodity market after another. Farmers and cattle ranchers are losing their independence, essentially becoming hired hands for the agribusiness giants or being forced off the land. Family farms are now being replaced by gigantic corporate farms with absentee owners. Rural communities are losing their middle class and becoming socially stratified, divided between a small, wealthy elite and large numbers of the working poor. Small towns that seemingly belong in a Norman Rockwell painting are being turned into rural ghettos. The hardy, independent farmers whom Thomas Jefferson considered the bedrock of American democracy are a truly vanishing breed. The United States now has more prison inmates than full-time farmers.

The fast food chains' vast purchasing power and their demand for a uniform product have encouraged fundamental changes in how cattle are raised, slaughtered, and processed into ground beef. These changes have made meatpacking - once a highly skilled, highly paid occupation - into the most dangerous job in the United States, performed by armies of poor, transient immigrants whose injuries often go unrecorded and uncompensated. And the same meat industry practices that endanger these workers have facilitated the introduction of deadly pathogens, such as *E. coli* 0157:H7, into America's hamburger meat, a food aggressively marketed to children. Again and again, efforts to prevent the sale of tainted ground beef have been thwarted by meat industry lobbyists and their allies in Congress. The federal government has the legal authority to recall a defective toaster oven or stuffed animal - but still lacks the power to recall tons of contaminated, potentially lethal meat.

I do not mean to suggest that fast food is solely responsible for every social problem now haunting the United States. In some cases (such as the malling and sprawling of the West) the fast food

industry has been a catalyst and a symptom of larger economic trends. In other cases (such as the rise of franchising and the spread of obesity) fast food has played a more central role. By tracing the diverse influences of fast food I hope to shed light not only on the workings of an important industry, but also on a distinctively American way of viewing the world.

Elitists have always looked down at fast food, criticizing how it tastes and regarding it as another tacky manifestation of American popular culture. The aesthetics of fast food are of much less concern to me than its impact upon the lives of ordinary Americans, both as workers and consumers. Most of all, I am concerned about its impact on the nation's children. Fast food is heavily marketed to children and prepared by people who are barely older than children. This is an industry that both feeds and feeds off the young. During the two years spent researching this book, I ate an enormous amount of fast food. Most of it tasted pretty good. That is one of the main reasons people buy fast food; it has been carefully designed to taste good. It's also inexpensive and convenient. But the value meals, two-for-one deals, and free refills of soda give a distorted sense of how much fast food actually costs. The real price never appears on the menu.

The sociologist George Ritzer has attacked the fast food industry for celebrating a narrow measure of efficiency over every other human value, calling the triumph of McDonald's the irrationality of rationality. Others consider the fast food industry proof of the nation's great economic vitality, a beloved American institution that appeals overseas to millions who admire our way of life. Indeed, the values, the culture, and the industrial arrangements of our fast food nation are now being exported to the rest of the world. Fast food has joined Hollywood movies, blue jeans, and pop music as one of America's most prominent cultural exports. Unlike other commodities, however, fast food isn't viewed, read, played, or worn. It enters the body and becomes part of the consumer. No other industry offers, both literally and figuratively, so much insight into the nature of mass consumption.

Hundreds of millions of people buy fast food every day without giving it much thought, unaware of the subtle and not so subtle ramifications of their purchases. They rarely consider where this food came from, how it was made, what it is doing to the community around them. They just grab their tray off the counter, find a table, take a seat, unwrap the paper, and dig in. The whole experience is transitory and soon forgotten. I've written this book out of a belief that people should know what lies behind the shiny, happy surface of every fast food transaction. They should know what really lurks between those sesame-seed buns.

As the old saying goes: You are what you eat.

*As "Fast Food Nation" is 10 years old this year, Eric Schlosser gave a recent interview in March about how much things have changed (or haven't changed):

<http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2012/03/12/still-a-fast-food-nation-eric-schlosser-reflects-on-10-years-later.html>

Question:

Schlosser's thesis, that ***“A nation’s diet can be more revealing than its art or literature. This is a book about fast food, the values it embodies, and the world it has made...the fast food industry has helped to transform not only the American diet, but also our landscape, economy, workforce, and popular culture.”*** is defended by him throughout the introduction of this book.

For each of the following aspects of American society that he mentions, describe how he argues that fast food has altered it:

1. The American Diet
2. The American economy
3. The workforce
4. General American population culture

*Write about a paragraph for each, no less than 1 page total

5. Shanghai Is Trying to Untangle the Mangled English of Chinglish (By Andrew Jacobs - Published: May 2, 2010, The New York Times):



SHANGHAI — For English speakers with subpar Chinese skills, daily life in [China](#) offers a confounding array of choices. At banks, there are machines for “cash withdrawing” and “cash recycling.” The menus of local restaurants might present such delectables as “fried enema,” “monolithic tree mushroom stem squid” and a mysterious thirst-quencher known as “The Jew’s Ear Juice.”

Those who have had a bit too much monolithic tree mushroom stem squid could find themselves requiring roomier attire: extra-large sizes sometimes come in “fatso” or “lard bucket” categories. These and other fashions can be had at the clothing chain known as Scat. Go ahead and snicker, although by last Saturday’s opening of the [Expo 2010](#) in Shanghai, drawing more than 70 million visitors over its six-month run, these and other uniquely Chinese maladaptations of the English language were supposed to have been largely excised. Well, that at least is what the Shanghai Commission for the Management of Language Use has been trying to accomplish during the past two years.

Fortified by an army of 600 volunteers and a politburo of adroit English speakers, the commission has fixed more than 10,000 public signs (farewell “Teliot” and “urine district”), rewritten English-language historical placards and helped hundreds of restaurants recast offerings. The campaign is partly modeled on Beijing’s herculean effort to clean up English signage for the 2008 Summer Olympics, which led to the replacement of 400,000 street signs, 1,300 restaurant menus and such exemplars of impropriety as the Dongda Anus Hospital — now known as the Dongda Proctology Hospital. Gone, too, is Racist Park, a cultural attraction that has since been rechristened Minorities Park. “The purpose of signage is to be useful, not to be amusing,” said Zhao Huimin, the former Chinese deputy consul general to the United States who, as director general of the capital’s Foreign Affairs Office, has been leading the fight for linguistic standardization and sobriety.

But while the war on mangled English may be considered a signature achievement of government officials, aficionados of what is known as Chinglish are wringing their hands in despair. Oliver Lutz Radtke, a former German radio reporter who may well be the world’s foremost authority on Chinglish, said he believed that China should embrace the fanciful melding of English and Chinese as the hallmark of a dynamic, living language. As he sees it, Chinglish is an endangered species that deserves preservation. “If you standardize all these signs, you not only take away the little giggle you get while strolling in the park but you lose a window into the Chinese mind,” said Mr. Radtke, who is the author of a pair of picture books that feature giggle-worthy Chinglish signs in their natural habitat. Lest anyone think it is all about laughs, Mr. Radtke is currently pursuing a doctoral degree in Chinglish at the University of Heidelberg.

Still, the enemies of Chinglish say the laughter it elicits is humiliating. Wang Xiaoming, an English scholar at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, painfully recalls the guffaws that erupted among her foreign-born colleagues as they flipped through a photographic collection of poorly written signs. “They didn’t mean to insult me but I couldn’t help but feel uncomfortable,” said Ms. Wang, who has since become one of Beijing’s leading Chinglish slayers.

Those who study the roots of Chinglish say many examples can be traced to laziness and a flawed but wildly popular translation software. [Victor H. Mair](#), a professor of Chinese at the University of Pennsylvania, said the computerized dictionary, Jinshan Ciba, had led to sexually oriented vulgarities identifying dried produce in Chinese supermarkets and the regrettable “fried enema” menu selection that should have been rendered as “fried sausage.” Although improved translation software and a growing zeal for grammatically unassailable English has slowed the output of new Chinglishisms, Mr. Mair said he still received about five new examples a day from people who knew he was good at deciphering what went wrong. “If someone would pay me to do it, I’d spend my life studying these things,” he said. Among those getting paid to wrestle with Chinglish is Jeffrey Yao, an English translator and teacher at the [Graduate Institute of Interpretation and Translation](#) at Shanghai International Studies University who is leading the sign exorcism. But even as he eradicates the most egregious examples by government fiat — businesses dare not ignore the commission’s suggested fixes — he has mixed feelings, noting that although some Chinglish phrases sound awkward to Western ears, they can be refreshingly lyrical. “Some of it tends to be expressive, even elegant,” he said, shuffling through an online catalog of signs that were submitted by the volunteers who prowled Shanghai with digital cameras. “They provide a window into how we Chinese think about language.”

He offered the following example: While park signs in the West exhort people to “Keep Off the Grass,” Chinese versions tend to anthropomorphize nature as a way to gently engage the stomping masses. Hence, such admonishments as “The Little Grass Is Sleeping. Please Don’t Disturb It” or “Don’t Hurt Me. I Am Afraid of Pain.” Mr. Yao read off the Chinese equivalents as if savoring a Shakespearean sonnet. “How lovely,” he said with a sigh. He pointed out that this linguistic mentality helped create such expressions as “long time no see,” a word-for-word translation of a Chinese expression that became a mainstay of spoken English. But Mr. Yao, who spent nearly two decades working as a translator in Canada, has his limits. He showed a sign from a park designed to provide visitors with the rules for entry, which include prohibitions on washing, “scavenging,” clothes drying and public defecation, all of it rendered in unintelligible — and in the case of the last item — rather salty English. The sign ended with this humdinger: “Because if the tourist does not obey the staff to manage or contrary holds, Does, all consequences are proud.” Even though he had had the sign corrected recently, Mr. Yao could not help but shake his head in disgust at the memory. And he was irritated to find that a raft of troublesome sign verbiage had slipped past the commission as the expo approached, including a cafeteria sign that read, “The tableware reclaims a place.” (Translation: drop off dirty dishes here.) “Some Chinglish expressions are nice, but we are not translating literature here,” he said. “I want to see people nodding that they understand the message on these signs. I don’t want to see them laughing.”

This article has been revised to reflect the following correction:

Correction: May 7, 2010

An article on Monday about an effort in China to excise Chinese maladaptations of the English language in translated signs, placards, menus and other written materials misidentified a Chinese diplomatic position in the United States formerly held by Zhao Huimin, now the director general of Beijing’s Foreign Affairs Office, who has been helping to lead that effort. He was a deputy consul general, not ambassador. The article also rendered incorrectly the transliterated name of a flawed but popular computerized Chinese dictionary that some linguists consider a source of the Chinglish problem. It is the Jinshan Ciba, not Jingshan Ciba.

Questions:

1. Based on the article, how would you define ‘Chinglish’?
2. Why does Oliver Lutz Radtke argue that Chinglish should not be eliminated, but rather preserved?

3. From the opposite viewpoint, why do critics of Chinglish want to erase it from Chinese society?

6. Indian brides pay a high price - Asia - Pacific - International Herald Tribune (Amelia Gentleman Published: Sunday, October 22, 2006):



NEW DELHI — Once the wedding guests were all assembled, the father of the bride brought out a large metal tray on which he had piled up 51,000 rupees (in notes of 10 and 50 rupees, to make the heap look larger) and handed it to the groom.

A new television and sofa were conspicuously displayed in the same room, so that every member of the party could see what was being offered from the bride's family to the groom as a dowry. A full list of all the other items was copied out by hand and handed to five witnesses - itemizing all the pieces of furniture, kitchen equipment and jewelry that would be delivered in payment.

Unfortunately for Kamlesh, the 18-year-old bride, who uses only one name, the payment from her father, Misrilal, was insufficient. Her new husband had expected a scooter; his parents had wanted more than the 51,000 rupees - about \$1,100 - that they got. During three years of marriage, the requests for an extended dowry settlement began to be accompanied by worsening bouts of violence - until in August, he beat her over the head with a wooden stick, tied her up and locked her in the cow shed as she bled profusely.

Violent dowry harassment is an increasingly visible phenomenon in India. An average of one dowry death is reported every 77 minutes according to the National Crime

Record Bureau and victim support groups say complaints of dowry harassment are rising, fueled by a rising climate of consumerism. "Everyone is becoming more and more westernized - they want expensive clothes, they want the consumer objects which are constantly advertised on television. A dowry is seen as an easy way to get them," said Varsha Jha, an official with the Delhi Commission for Women. Although the giving and taking of dowry is banned here under legislation that threatens a five-year jail term, activists describe the law as "ornamental" and point out that it is almost never imposed. Dowry negotiations remain an integral part of wedding arrangements, although, to avoid legal complications, the payments are often referred to as wedding gifts. Kamlesh has barely spoken since the attack and doctors are investigating whether she suffered permanent brain damage. The Delhi Commission for Women, a government-funded body, is helping her to prosecute her husband, who is currently under arrest for the beating.

Officials at the commission see about 40 abused women every day, and estimate that approximately 85 percent of these cases are related to dowry demands; a figure that they say has grown over the past five years. "There has been a rise in the materialistic way of life across India and dowry demands have risen to become more extravagant in line with these materialistic needs," Kiran Walia, chairwoman of the group, said. "It is one thing to give and take dowry. But what is really obnoxious is the torture women undergo because the dowry is less than expected. Disputes over inadequate dowry split couples from every social strata. This week the former Indian cricket player Manoj Prabhakar was in court trying to settle a case of alleged harassment filed by his estranged wife, Sandhya. She says that the Maruti car, jewelry, television, fridge, sofa-set, double bed and cash handed over by her family as dowry when they married were considered unsatisfactory by her husband, and alleged that he harassed her for more from the start of their marriage. He denies this. "People are getting more greedy and aggressive in their dowry demands," said Jha, of the Delhi Commission for Women. "You might expect that as the country becomes more and more Westernized, this traditional practice would be dying out, like other traditions, but actually the reverse is true.

"The old habits remain." "The men say, 'I'll just ask the girl's parents to get me a Honda.' But they forget that then they have to buy the petrol, so they go back to the bride's family to ask for the petrol money. It's not a one- step system; it's a continuous process." Kamlesh's father had been saving for his daughter's wedding and dowry for 16 years before she married, and was squirreling away as much as he could from his daily earnings as a carpenter of around 125 rupees. The total cost of the wedding and dowry came to around 250,000 rupees, 60,000 of which he borrowed from his boss. When the demands for further dowry payments from the groom's side began coming, it was impossible for him to meet them. Misrilal said his daughter was being bullied for an increased dowry payment from the start. After her husband attacked her in August, he left her, tied up, in the shed for several days, without food or water, until relatives came to her rescue.

"Within a year of marriage he was beating her because of dowry," Misrilal said, sitting with his daughter in a hospital corridor, waiting for her head wound to be examined. The burden both of dowry payments and lavish weddings is one of the main reasons why female feticide - the practice of aborting female fetuses - remains widespread in India. Earlier this year a report in *The Lancet*, a British medical journal, indicated that as many as 10 million female fetuses may have been aborted in India over the past 20 years by families trying to avoid the expense of having a daughter and hoping to secure themselves a male heir.

"After all this torture, I feel that having a daughter is a curse," Misrilal said. At the headquarters of the Delhi Commission for Women, the chairwoman, Walia, was meeting relatives of a young woman, Kusum Hardina, who set fire to herself a few weeks ago because she felt so

desperate at the constant pressure from her in-laws to extract a higher dowry payment from her family. On Sept. 22, she fought with her mother-in-law and brother-in-law over the dowry and then in a fit of anger poured kerosene over herself and set it alight. As she lay dying in hospital, she gave a statement to the police saying she had done it because she was being harassed for a dowry, Walia said.

She had tried to explain to her parents that she was being tormented, but they told her to stick with her husband. When she told the police, they sent around an officer who beat up her husband, which did not calm relations. "We gave 22,000 rupees when they got married. But they wanted a color television, a motorcycle and a fridge as well," Asharam, the brother of the dead woman, said. "Her husband doesn't earn much as a builder, but he was greedy for possessions." "Dowry should be stopped," he added. "Why should you give the husband's family money when you are already giving them a girl?"

Walia has launched an awareness-raising campaign, sending counselors to universities across the capital to alert students to the problem of dowry violence. But she was not optimistic about its chances of success. "It is very unfortunate, but even educated boys are doing this. The rich set standards for the rest of society. I have no hope that this is coming to an end," she said.

Questions:

1. Describe what a dowry is
2. How frequent are dowry deaths (and general violence) based on the article?
3. What are the causes of this violence?
4. What is the role of Globalization (the interconnectedness of different parts of the world) on the nature of dowries? In other words, in what ways have Western media and society influenced the types of dowries that grooms in India (and their families) demand from a bride?
5. Describe the difference (from your point of view) between being a bride in the United States and being a bride in India – how is the experience of being female different in each culture, how is it the same?

7. How Twitter Proves That Place Matters (www.theatlanticcities.com):



Twitter is a fascinating place to explore not just the connectedness of people but of places. In a previous post, I mapped the locations of the 500 leading "Twitterati." When it comes to celebrities, the Twitterverse is still overwhelmingly American: almost three quarters of them are located in the United States. Los Angeles, with its large celebrity contingent, took the top spot among metros, followed by New York, San Francisco, Washington, D.C., and Atlanta.

A new study, "The Geography of Twitter Networks," by my University of Toronto colleagues Yuri Takhteyev, Barry Wellman and Anatoliy Gruzd from Dalhousie University takes a far more detailed look at the geography of Twitter and what it can tell us about the nature of interaction and proximity in the Internet age. Many predicted the rise of the Internet and of social

media would annihilate distance and overcome the constraints of place by allowing people to communicate and build virtual communities. But the fact of the matter is Twitter actually works with and reinforces the power of place.

To better understand the connections between Twitter and location, the authors worked with a sample of 500,000 tweets. From these, they painstakingly identified roughly 2,000 "dyadic pairs" of tweeters, or Twitter users who often interact. Checking by hand, they were able to pinpoint more than 1,200 of these pairs to precise locations the size of a large metropolitan, spanning 386 distinct locations or "regional clusters."

What they found is that four out of every ten pairs of connected Twitter users fall in the same regional cluster—indeed, at distances of less than 10 kilometers, they are within easy driving distance, according to the analysis. Ties of less than 1,000 kilometers are more common than expected (if such ties were random) and ties of greater than 5,000 kilometers are much less so. While Twitter ties are also closer among those in the same country who share the same language, those two factors alone cannot explain away the effects of proximity. The frequency of airline connections between places is the best single predictor of long distance or "non-local" Twitter ties. This, the authors suggest, is a likely reflection of longer standing physical ties between places. Their findings indicate that place and proximity continue to matter even in social media. Twitter doesn't *replace* the networks that exist in the real world—it reinforces them and makes them stronger. Rather than freeing us from place, this study suggests, the Internet appears to enhance and even expand its role.

Question:

The thesis of this article is that "...Twitter actually works with and reinforces the power of place." Place, as a concept in human geography, refers to the unique physical and cultural characteristics of a particular location. With this definition in mind, describe in a few paragraphs the way in which the article goes on to prove that Twitter helps reinforce the concept of 'place'

8. Quinoa's Global Success Creates Quandary at Home (New York Times - March 19th, 2011):



LA PAZ, Bolivia — When NASA scientists were searching decades ago for an ideal food for long-term human space missions, they came across an Andean plant called quinoa. With an exceptional balance of amino acids, quinoa, [they declared](#), is virtually unrivaled in the plant or animal kingdom for its life-sustaining nutrients. But while Bolivians have lived off it for centuries, quinoa remained little more than a curiosity outside the Andes for years, found in health food shops and studied by researchers — until recently.

Now demand for quinoa (pronounced KEE-no-ah) is soaring in rich countries, as American and European consumers discover the “lost crop” of the Incas. The surge has helped raise farmers’ incomes here in one of the hemisphere’s poorest countries. But there has been a notable trade-off:

Fewer Bolivians can now afford it, hastening their embrace of cheaper, processed foods and raising fears of malnutrition in a country that has long struggled with it. The shift offers a glimpse into the consequences of [rising global food](#) prices and changing eating habits in both prosperous and developing nations. While quinoa prices have almost tripled over the past five years, [Bolivia's](#) consumption of the staple fell 34 percent over the same period, according to the country's agricultural ministry. The resulting quandary — local farmers earn more, but fewer Bolivians reap quinoa's nutritional rewards — has nutritionists and public officials grasping for solutions. "As it's exported, quinoa is now very expensive," said María Julia Cabrerizo, a nutritionist at the Hospital de Clínicas, a public hospital here. "It's not a food of mass consumption, like noodles or rice." Quinoa, domesticated thousands of years ago on Bolivia's arid high mountain plains and now often misrepresented as a grain, is actually a chenopod, related to species like beets and spinach. Its seeds have a light, nutty taste, and when cooked become almost translucent. While the Incas relied on quinoa to feed their soldiers, it was only recently that Bolivian farmers, with the help of European and [American foreign aid](#) organizations, started growing quinoa for export. The focus on foreign markets has altered life in isolated places like Salinas de Garcí Mendoza, a community on the [edge of the salt flats](#) in southern Bolivia where much of the country's quinoa is produced. Agricultural leaders claim that rising exports of the plant have lifted living standards there and in other quinoa-growing areas. "Before quinoa was at the price it is now, people went to Argentina and Chile to work," said Miguel Choque Llanos, commercial director of the National Association of Quinoa Producers. Now, he said, rising quinoa prices have also encouraged city dwellers to return to their plots in the countryside during planting and harvest seasons. Yet there are causes for concern. While malnutrition on a national level has fallen over the past few years thanks to aggressive social welfare programs, Ms. Cabrerizo, the nutritionist, said studies showed that chronic malnutrition in children had climbed in quinoa-growing areas, including Salinas de Garcí Mendoza, in recent years.

In Salinas de Garcí Mendoza and elsewhere, part of this change is due to climbing quinoa prices and more quinoa being destined for export. "I adore quinoa, but I can't afford it anymore," said Micaela Huanca, 50, a street vendor in El Alto, a city of slums above the capital, La Paz. "I look at it in the markets and walk away."

Officials in President Evo Morales's government say that changing food preferences and increased ability to buy processed foods also play a role. "It has to do with food culture, because if you give the kids toasted quinoa flour, they don't want it; they want white bread," said Víctor Hugo Vásquez, vice minister of rural development and agriculture. "If you give them boiled water, sugar and quinoa flour mixed into a drink, they prefer Coca-Cola."

The shift away from consuming quinoa in the cradle of its cultivation has alarmed some of the plant's top marketers in the United States, where quinoa is increasingly coveted by health-conscious consumers. "It's kind of discouraging to see stuff like this happen, but that's part of life and economics," said David Schnorr, the president of the Quinoa Corporation of Los Angeles, one of the largest importers of quinoa in the United States, which has worked with Bolivian producers since the 1980s.

Mr. Schnorr said quinoa's climbing prices in the United States were raising other concerns as well. "At \$5 a box, only so many people can afford that," he said, adding that he would prefer a price about half that amount. "I've always been an advocate of expanding the market, keeping the

prices to a point where more people can try it.” Here in Bolivia, government officials are trying to increase domestic quinoa consumption, even as the product faces steep competition from other foods. At supermarkets here, a 1,000-gram bag of quinoa, just over two pounds, costs the equivalent of \$4.85, compared with \$1.20 for a bag of noodles the same weight and \$1 for a bag of white rice. President Morales said this month that he planned to make more than \$10 million in loans available to organic quinoa producers, and health officials are incorporating the plant into a packet of foods supplied to thousands of pregnant and nursing women each month. Mr. Vásquez, the rural development official, said quinoa would also be available in meals for the armed forces and in more school breakfasts. “That’s already under way in some municipalities,” he said, “but we want to expand.”

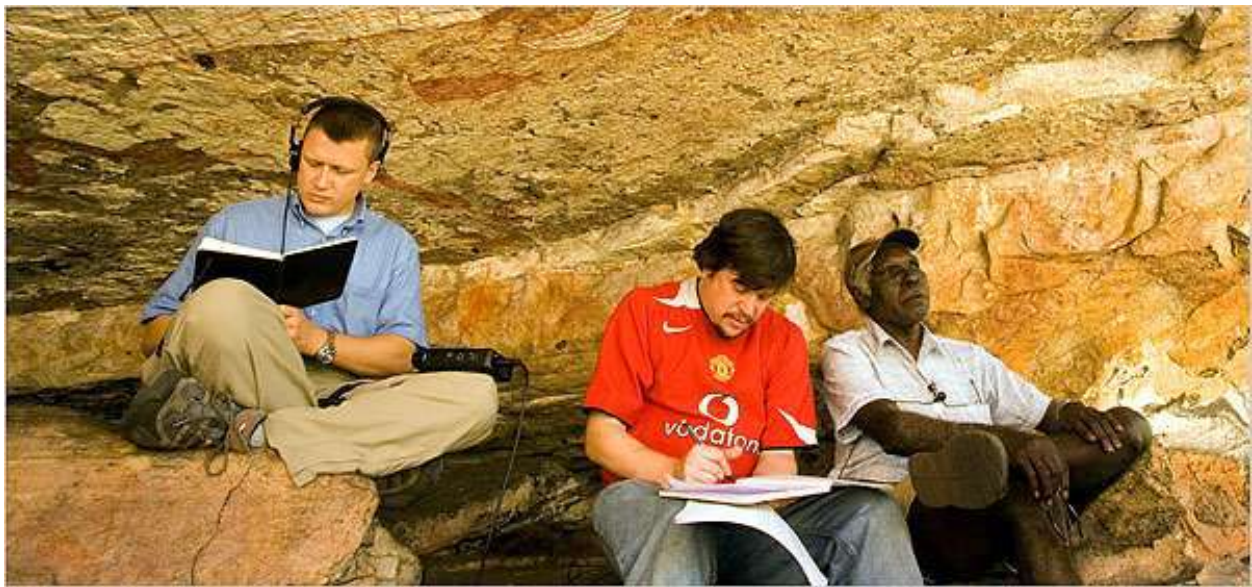
Some here cling to eating quinoa despite its rising price. Paulina Vásquez, 52, a housekeeper and mother of three children in their 20s who live with her in a poor district on a steep mountainside of La Paz, sows the crop each year on her family’s land outside the city. The packaged quinoa found in supermarkets is beyond what her family can afford.

Instead, they harvest their own, store it and then prepare it by hand, a painstaking process that includes washing away the resinlike saponin coating that protects the seeds. Ms. Vásquez regularly prepares a sweet drink of quinoa, apple, cinnamon and sugar for her family for breakfast. But she says many in the younger generation have moved away from it. “People my age and older are eating quinoa,” Ms. Vásquez said. “The young people don’t want it. If there is a pot of noodles everyone is there, as if noodles were nutritious. Even my children are that way.”

Question:

This article discusses a major theme of human geography – globalization versus local culture. In no less than 2 paragraphs, describe both the positive and the negative impacts of Western demand for Quinoa – use social, agricultural, and economic examples in your answer (the article talks about all 3)

9. Languages Die, but Not Their Last Words (By [John Noble Wilford](#) – New York Times)



Of the estimated 7,000 languages spoken in the world today, linguists say, nearly half are in danger of extinction and likely to disappear in this century. In fact, one falls out of use about every two weeks.

Some languages vanish in an instant, at the death of the sole surviving speaker. Others are lost gradually in bilingual cultures, as indigenous tongues are overwhelmed by the dominant language at school, in the marketplace and on television. New research, reported yesterday, has found the five regions where languages are disappearing most rapidly: northern Australia, central South America, North America's upper Pacific coastal zone, eastern Siberia, and Oklahoma and the southwestern United States. All have indigenous people speaking diverse languages, in falling numbers.

The study was based on field research and data analysis supported by the [National Geographic Society](#) and the Living Tongues Institute for Endangered Languages. The findings are

described in the October issue of National Geographic and at languagehotspots.org.

In a teleconference with reporters yesterday, K. David Harrison, an associate professor of linguistics at Swarthmore, said that more than half the languages had no written form and were “vulnerable to loss and being forgotten.” Their loss leaves no dictionary, no text, no record of the accumulated knowledge and history of a vanished culture.

Beginning what is expected to be a long-term project to identify and record endangered languages, Dr. Harrison has traveled to many parts of the world with Gregory D. S. Anderson, director of the Living Tongues Institute, in Salem, Ore., and Chris Rainier, a filmmaker with the National Geographic Society. The researchers, focusing on distinct oral languages, not dialects, interviewed and made recordings of the few remaining speakers of a language and collected basic word lists. The individual projects, some lasting three to four years, involve hundreds of hours of recording speech, developing grammars and preparing children’s readers in the obscure language. The research has concentrated on preserving entire language families.

In Australia, where nearly all the 231 spoken tongues are endangered, the researchers came upon three known speakers of Magati Ke in the Northern Territory, and three Yawuru speakers in Western Australia. In July, Dr. Anderson said, they met the sole speaker of Amurdag, a language in the Northern Territory that had been declared extinct. “This is probably one language that cannot be brought back, but at least we made a record of it,” Dr. Anderson said, noting that the Aborigine who spoke it strained to recall words he had heard from his father, now dead.

Many of the 113 languages in the region from the Andes Mountains into the Amazon basin are poorly known and are giving way to Spanish or Portuguese, or in a few cases, a more dominant indigenous language. In this area, for example, a group known as the Kallawaya use Spanish or Quechua in daily life, but also have a secret tongue mainly for preserving knowledge of medicinal plants, some previously unknown to science “How and why this language has survived for more than 400 years, while being spoken by very few, is a mystery,” Dr. Harrison said in a news release. The dominance of English threatens the survival of the 54 indigenous languages in the Northwest Pacific plateau, a region including British Columbia, Washington and Oregon. Only one person remains who knows Siletz Dee-ni, the last of many languages once spoken on a reservation in Oregon.

In eastern Siberia, the researchers said, government policies have forced speakers of minority languages to use the national and regional languages, like Russian or Sakha.

Forty languages are still spoken in Oklahoma, Texas and New Mexico, many of them originally used by Indian tribes and others introduced by Eastern tribes that were forced to resettle on reservations, mainly in Oklahoma. Several of the languages are moribund.

Another measure of the threat to many relatively unknown languages, Dr. Harrison said, is that 83 languages with “global” influence are spoken and written by 80 percent of the world population. Most of the others face extinction at a rate, the researchers said, that exceeds that of birds, mammals, fish and plants.

Questions:

1. Describe the many ways in which the article argues that languages ‘die’ off, or become endangered
2. Describe the ways in which endangered languages can be saved or preserved

10. - The Urban Clan of Genghis Khan



An influx of nomads has turned the Mongolian capital upside down.

By Don Belt

Photograph by Mark Leong

Not long ago a young Mongolian livestock herder named Ochkhoo Genen loaded what was left of his life into a borrowed Chinese pickup truck and moved it to Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia's sprawling capital. Slender and dignified, Ochkhoo gave no outward sign of turmoil as he buried himself in the mechanics of packing, lifting, unpacking, and assembling. He may have been disappointed in himself, even shaken, but outwardly he was as smooth and focused as a socket wrench.

Within hours of arriving, Ochkhoo had pitched his ger—the nomad's traditional round dwelling—on a small, fenced plot of bare ground he'd rented on the outskirts of the city. Around it were thousands of other plots, each with a ger in the middle, jammed together on the slopes overlooking

Ulaanbaatar. Once his stovepipe was raised and the stakes driven in, he opened the low wooden door for his wife, Norvoo; their baby boy, Ulaka; and their six-year-old daughter, Anuka.

Norvoo also took comfort in the task at hand. She put aside her worries long enough to make sure their ger was as cozy as it had been in the countryside: linoleum floor, cast-iron stove, and cots around the edges, with family pictures neatly pinned to the wall and a small television on a wooden table.

Outside their door, however, the view was starkly different from what it had been on the steppe an hour southwest of the capital, where they'd raised their livestock next to the ger of Norvoo's parents. Here, in place of rolling grasslands, there was a seven-foot-high wooden fence a few feet away. And in place of Ochkhoo's cherished livestock—the horses and cattle and sheep—there was only the landlord's dog, a black and brown mongrel staked in the yard, who barked himself hoarse at the least provocation.

There was plenty of provocation just beyond the fence, in the ramshackle slums, or ger districts, where about 60 percent of Ulaanbaatar's 1.2 million people live without paved roads, sanitation, or running water. As in other urban slums, the ger districts are high in crime, alcoholism, poverty, and despair, which is why many people here do the unthinkable, for a herder: They lock their gates at night.

"We step outside the ger and all we can see is that fence," Ochkhoo said. "It's like living in a box."

Nomads were never meant to live in a box, but Ochkhoo and Norvoo weren't there by choice. During the winter of 2009-2010, most of the couple's livestock either froze or starved to death during a white dzud, a devastating period of snow, ice, and bitter cold that follows a summer drought; it lasted more than four months. By the time the weather broke, the couple's herd of 350 animals had been cut to 90. Across Mongolia some eight million animals—cows, yaks, camels, horses, goats, and sheep—died that winter.

"After that, I just couldn't see our future in the countryside anymore," Ochkhoo said quietly. "So we decided to sell what was left of our herd and make a new life."

It was also a clear-eyed calculation to improve the lives of their children. Ochkhuu and Norvoo feel no great affinity for city life, but they see its advantages. In the countryside they were far removed from nurses and schools, but here they can get free medical care for their infant son, and Anuka can attend a public school.

There are more than half a million Ochkhuus and Norvoos living these days in UB, as Mongolians call Ulaanbaatar. Many have been driven from the steppe by bad winters, bad luck, and bad prospects. And now that Mongolia's coal, gold, and copper mines are attracting billions in foreign investment, they also have flooded into UB in search of job prospects created by the economic upsurge from mining money.

Beyond the downtown high-rises, UB often feels like a frontier town run amok, strewn lengthwise along a river valley like gravel left behind by a flash flood. Founded in 1639 as a movable Buddhist monastic center and trading post, the settlement took root in its present location in 1778. The town was laid out along one major thoroughfare, which runs along the base of a low mountain. Today that road goes by the name Peace Avenue, and it's still the only direct way to get from one side of town to the other. From daybreak to nightfall, it's jammed with traffic. Driving it is like getting on a conveyor belt that inches past crumbling Soviet-era apartment blocks, side streets that run promisingly for 50 yards and then end at a barricade, unexplained piles of rusted iron and concrete, and office buildings so clumsily situated and hidden from view that no taxi driver can find them.

Add to this a flood of nomads, many of them recent arrivals whose skill set doesn't include city driving, crossing a busy road, or the subtleties of social interaction in an urban environment, and you've got a heady mix. It's not unusual to be waiting in line at a kiosk and have some gnarled tree trunk of a man in herder clothes—steppe boots, felt hat, and the traditional wraparound del—stomp to the front of the line, shouldering customers out of the way like a hockey player, just to see what the place is selling. If there are other herders in line, he gets pushed back just as hard. There are no fights, no hard feelings. That's just the way it goes.

"These people are completely free," says Baabar, a prominent publisher and historian who writes often about Mongolia's national character. "Even if they've been in UB for years, their mentality is still nomadic. They do exactly what they want to do, when they want to do it. Watch people crossing the road. They just lurch out into traffic without batting an eye. It doesn't occur to them to

compromise, even with a speeding automobile. We're a nation of rugged individuals, with no regard for rules."

Early one Saturday morning Ochkhoo, Norvoo, and their kids returned to the country for a weekend at Norvoo's parents' home to prepare their farm for winter. Ochkhoo helped Norvoo's father, Jaya, cut hay for eight hours, and by Sunday night they had moved enough hay to the barn to keep his animals alive through the winter, even a dzud. Jaya too had lost huge numbers of animals during the last dzud—his herd had dropped from more than a thousand to 300 animals—but he was determined to make a comeback, banking on decades of experience as a herder both during and after communism, which he rather misses.

"There were bad things, of course. I hated being told what to do by bureaucrats. But communism protected us from disasters like last winter," he said. "Even if you lost all your animals, you wouldn't starve to death."

Although they supported Ochkhoo and Norvoo's decision to move, Jaya and his wife, Chantsal, often said how lonely they were without them next door. But moving to UB was out of the question. "I wouldn't last a week in that city," Jaya scowled. "Too much noise, too much jangling and banging. I'd get sick and die."

Men like Jaya and Ochkhoo are authentic livestock herders, unlike others who failed during the dzud, said historian Baabar. After the collapse of communism, when many Soviet-era factories closed down, thousands of people left UB to reclaim their pastoral roots. But "they'd forgotten everything they knew about being nomads, how to raise livestock, how to survive these tough winters," he said. The pity, says Baabar, is that they are also not fit to compete in the city.

All this comes at a time when Mongolia, communist until 1990, is seeking to reassert itself between the two powers next door, Russia and China, that have pushed it around for centuries. Nationalism—even xenophobia—is on the rise, and foreigners are increasingly blamed for Mongolia's problems in the same breath as local and national politicians, who are widely considered, with justification, as deeply corrupt.

Visiting Chinese businessmen, accused of enriching themselves at Mongolia's expense, no longer venture out after dark on the streets of the capital for fear of being attacked by young guys in black

leather channeling Genghis Khan, who is back in vogue as a symbol of Mongolian pride. Banned during Soviet times, images of Genghis are everywhere you look today, from vodka labels and playing cards to the colossal, 131-foot steel statue of the conqueror on horseback that rises from the steppe an hour east of UB to cast the mother of all dirty looks toward China.

He's not the only one looking in that direction. By many estimates, Mongolia is sitting on a trillion dollars' worth of recoverable coal, copper, and gold, much of it concentrated near the Chinese border around Oyu Tolgoi, or Turquoise Hill. There Ivanhoe Mines, the Canadian mining giant, is tapping the world's largest undeveloped copper and gold deposit in partnership with Rio Tinto, an Anglo-Australian company, and the Mongolian government, which holds a 34 percent share of the project, potentially adding billions of dollars to the national economy.

How much of that will migrate 340 miles north and into the pockets of ordinary people such as Ochkhoo is an open question. Experts at the World Bank and the United Nations are urging Mongolia to invest that money in infrastructure, training, and growing the economy, although the current government, led by Prime Minister Sukhbaatar Batbold, took a more direct approach, pledging to grant every man, woman, and child a payment of about \$1,200 from the mining windfall.

Ochkhoo doesn't believe he'll ever see that money. But in the meantime, he needs to work. At first he tried his hand as an entrepreneur; having identified what he thought was a need in the community. He and a partner rented a room at a local hotel and then marketed it to ger dwellers, who lack running water, as a place to take a shower or a bath. He went door-to-door looking for customers. There were very few takers. Ochkhoo lost more than \$200 on the deal, a sizable chunk of his savings.

Now he's thinking of buying a used car and turning it into a taxi. He'd need to borrow the money, but he'd make a pretty good living, and the freedom of driving and being his own boss appeals to him. More important, he'd be able to drive his daughter to and from school.

"We may not be able to raise our animals in UB," he went on. "But it's a good place to raise our children."

Passing through the fence into his yard, Ochkhoo drags the wooden gate behind him until the latch clicks. "God, I miss my horses," he says.

Question:

This article also addresses themes of the modern world in conflict with traditional cultural practices. It also discusses the role of modern cities in this process. Describe in detail the conflicts that have arisen between the nomadic and non-nomadic people of the Mongolian capital.