

History in the Guise of Narrative: Blurring Fact and Fiction in Amitav Ghosh's *In an Antique Land*

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Abstract

The present study analyzes Amitav Ghosh's work, *In an Antique Land* (1992), as an alternative form of historiography narrative which questions the existing demarcations between historical facts, literary fiction, and ethnographic knowledge. The paper seeks to fill the gap in the literature on the need for a comprehensive analysis of the interplay between archival fragments, narrative construction, subaltern representation, ethnographic reflexivity, temporal hybridity, and cultural mediation in the selected text. Qualitative textual analysis is used in the study, especially in the reconstruction of Bomma's history through archival fragments, construction of medieval and contemporary narratives, Ghosh's ethnographic engagements, and representation of linguistic and cultural differences. Through this analysis, one can understand how Ghosh utilizes fragmentary evidence and narrative construction to make known the mediated nature of historical knowledge. The portrayal of Bomma shows not only what is possible but also what is problematic in trying to retrieve marginalized histories, with ethnographic reflexivity bringing into question any notion of culturally distant observation. In addition, temporal change and translation indicate the instability of history and culture. In conclusion, one can understand how the hybrid form of narration in *In an Antique Land* serves as a historiographical strategy by which Ghosh problematizes historical authority and archival silences.

1. Introduction

The issue of the connection between history and narrative has always been one of the important questions in literary criticism and historiography. The traditionally perceived definition of history was a well-ordered account of past events founded on facts and documents. Nevertheless, the account of the past can never be free from interpretation. The historical knowledge itself depends on the existence of the sources, the choice of the evidence, the point of view of the historian and narrative techniques used for the construction of the events (Ratnam, 2013). This problem acquires special importance when the author tries to violate the usual line dividing the facts of history from imaginative narration. *In an Antique Land* (1992) by Amitav Ghosh is an important interdisciplinary literary work where history, anthropology, travel writing, memoirs, archival studies and literature are combined to create a world lying somewhere between the documented history and narrative interpretation. The central concern of *In an Antique Land* is Ghosh's interaction with the Cairo Geniza documents and his attempt to reconstruct the story of Bomma, who was an Indian slave living in

the twelfth century in relation to the Jewish merchant named Ben Yiju (Gunning, 2009).

The historical sources that Ghosh has access to are incomplete and insufficient to provide a full picture of Bomma's life and the environment that he belonged to. These sources are not historical sources per se since they do not present a full historical story but are rather fragmentary sources that need to be analyzed and reconstructed into a story (Clifford, 1983). Ghosh reconstructs these fragments into a narrative in which a bigger world of migrations, trading, cultural contacts, religious interactions, and human relationships becomes visible. The process of reconstruction clearly shows that it is not enough just to have historical sources, there is also needed interpretation of these sources to create a history. Therefore, one of the questions that emerges from this text is about the possibility of separation between historical knowledge and narrative (Desai, 2004). The historical reconstruction of Bomma is even more complicated due to Ghosh's contemporary experiences in Egypt. Besides the medieval story, the book includes his experiences in the Egyptian villages of Lataifa and Nashawy, where he examines the customs, social relations, culture, and daily life. The juxtaposition of the medieval and contemporary stories generates a special type of narrative in which the processes of historical reconstruction and ethnographic study are constantly intertwined. Ghosh does not appear in the story as an absolutely impartial researcher (Mondal, 2007). His personal experiences, contacts, misunderstandings, and insights are included into the story. This self-reflexive aspect raises doubts about the possibility to create an ethnographic knowledge through absolute objectivity. The process of ethnographic knowledge production involves the observer too, and consequently, the portrayal of one culture through another is affected by language and cultural mediation (Hawley, 2005).

The relation between the text and history is also very much intertwined with its postcolonial reading. Traditional readings of history have focused on the importance of political happenings and important personalities and institutions, thereby underrepresenting the stories of ordinary and marginalized people. Through Bomma, Ghosh gives us a glimpse into the story of a historical figure that is only available through very sparse evidence in the archives. The effort by Ghosh to find out the life of Bomma, hence, becomes a story of reclaiming a marginalized history. It must be noted, however, that the text does not indicate that it will be possible to remove the silences of the archive altogether (K. & K. T., 2025). The story of Bomma continues to remain mediated by the documents and Ghosh's understanding of the documents. Yet another significant aspect of *In an Antique Land* is the hybrid nature of its narrative style. The book neither follows the conventional pattern of a history book nor can it be termed merely as fiction. It is rather through the synthesis of archival, ethnographic, autobiographical, travel, and descriptive writing that Ghosh manages to create a hybrid style of narrative, in which different forms of knowledge converge (Anusheya & Sumathi, 2026). Through this hybridity, Ghosh manages to challenge disciplinary boundaries and show that, like literature, history and anthropology are dependent on the process of selecting, interpreting, and narrating information. In this regard, the present paper analyzes *In an Antique Land* as an example of alternative historiography

where the interplay between the historical evidence and literary narration is constant throughout the text. Qualitative textual analysis and close reading are utilized in order to examine how Ghosh uses fragmented archive materials as the basis for narrative writing, represents marginal experience, compares different periods of time, juxtaposes the medieval and the contemporary, and makes use of ethnographic and linguistic encounters in questioning the objectivity of knowledge.

2. Literature Review

In an Antique Land by Amitav Ghosh has attracted a lot of academic criticism for its unique blend of historical, anthropological, travel, autobiographical, and literary narrative features. The existing body of scholarship tends to consider the book as a significant contribution to the area of past representation and the relationship between documentation and narration of historical events. Academic critics view the work from various angles of historiography, ethnography, cultural translation, postcolonialism, subaltern representation, and generic hybridity, respectively (E. Belal, 2025). Even though all these approaches focus on different issues, it becomes clear that in the context of In an Antique Land traditional concepts of objectivity of historical records and the division of literary and scholarly knowledge systems are challenged. This review will try to unite the above critical perspectives in order to define the major areas of scholarship in Ghosh's work. Perhaps one of the major areas of study has been that of the interplay between history and narrative (E. Belal, 2025). The work of Robert Dixon on Ghosh is premised on the way in which the author presents a challenge to conventional historiographical methods and focuses on the narrative techniques of constructing history. From this viewpoint, history cannot be regarded as merely a clear and straightforward story of what happened in the past, since the evidence that is available needs to be selected, interpreted, organized, and presented as part of a narrative story (Ratté, 2012). This is important especially with regards to In an Antique Land, where the historical narrative is constructed through a partial archive. Ghosh's interactions with the Cairo Geniza reveal the challenges of reconstructing a full history through partial documentation, and here the archive does not give an account of history but merely a trace of it, making it necessary for the writer to reconcile evidence with interpretation (Anusheya & Sumathi, 2026).

Likewise, Javed Majeed in In an Antique Land addresses the problems with archival research. It is through his analysis that one understands the fragmented quality of the texts which allow Ghosh to bring the history of the medieval Indian Ocean back to life. The texts provide fragmentary information about Bomma and Ben Yiju, and hence there exists a distance between the historical period and the current portrayal. Ghosh solves this difficulty through a style of narration that is a mix of the documents, interpretation and imagination (Poray-Wybranowska & Ball, 2020). This point of view is significant since it shows that when historical texts themselves are fragmentary, the separation between the fact and the fiction becomes blurry. Another important point for criticism in relation to the text concerns its anthropological and ethnographic aspects. For her study of the book, Claire Chambers uses the notion of cultural translation and focuses on transitions from one cultural and temporal sphere to

another (Yadav, 2021).

The depiction of Egyptian society in Ghosh's work does not appear as an impartial anthropological description. Instead, the experiences and observations of Ghosh himself become involved in the process of production of cultural knowledge. Such a position undermines the notion that ethnographic texts allow one to give a fully objective portrayal of another society (Guragain, 2025).

Srivastava extends this relationship between ethnography and literary practice through the examination of connections between the academic career of Ghosh and his fiction. It is especially valuable in providing insights into how *In an Antique Land* transcends standard disciplinary boundaries. The text uses scholarly research while at the same time employing literary devices in order to create the story of cultural encounter. In this way, ethnographic observation becomes a form of storytelling, and personal experience contributes to the process of creating knowledge. These works point out the need for reflexivity in Ghosh's writings and show that the lines between researcher and researched, scholar and author are intentionally blurred (Poray-Wybranowska & Ball, 2020). The post-colonial value of *In an Antique Land* also constitutes one more line of research that should be noted in the existing body of literature on the issue. According to Gaurav Desai, Ghosh's attempt to reconstruct the medieval Indian Ocean world is linked to dominant historiography. It is important for him to recover the marginal histories that cannot be interpreted within the framework of Eurocentrism. By creating the image of the medieval Indian Ocean world, Ghosh refutes the idea that contemporary borders of nations and cultures may be extended to the past. The world depicted by the author is based on mobility, commerce, migration, religious contacts, and cultural exchanges (Basha & Margret, 2024).

Recovering marginalized histories becomes related to the representation of Bomma, an Indian slave in twelfth century who survived in the history only through fragmented references found in the archives. In attempting to recreate his story, Ghosh brings about the shift of historical focus from dominant political players to an average person whose traces can be found only indirectly (Guragain, 2025). The importance of this approach is in the questioning of standard priorities of history. However, when dealing with Bomma, one faces the issue of whether it is possible to recover a subaltern voice in the first place. Because Bomma himself does not speak, his story becomes mediated through archival materials and Ghosh's interpretations. This means that representation and recovery cannot be separated from each other (E. Belal, 2025).

A further important characteristic noted by scholars relates to the hybrid nature of *In An Antique Land*. The book is a combination of travel literature, autobiography, historical investigation, ethnography and literary fiction. Such genre hybridization is important in the context of the entire book being seen as a challenge to the boundaries of disciplines (Ratté, 2012). The past is put side by side with the present through historical investigation, whereas the process of scholarly inquiry is conducted using literary devices such as description, characterization and narrative structure. The connection between past and present is especially significant in this case. Ghosh is moving between the medieval period created out of archival documents and his personal experience in Egypt during the twentieth century (Yadav, 2021). The

switching of eras does not just mean creating two different stories; they become a conversation between the different periods of time. The modern experience becomes a tool for the interpretation of the past, while the reconstruction of the past helps to understand the present cultural relations. The temporal hybridity becomes the confirmation of the continuous interpretation of history from the perspective of the present (Basha & Margret, 2024).

These points, therefore, define certain key features of *In an Antique Land*, including its questioning of traditional historiography, its reliance on fragments of archive sources, its ethnographic self-reflexivity, the recovery of hidden history, its postcolonialism, and its hybrid narration style. But all these features have been studied separately from one another (Vescovi, 2021). It seems possible to develop a study in which all these features will be analyzed together as interconnected elements that enable *In an Antique Land* to challenge the authority of traditional historical discourse (Smith, 2007). More specifically, it seems possible to pay more attention to the way the interaction of the fragmentation of archives, subaltern representation, ethnographic experience, hybrid temporality, and translation affects the creation of the narrative and challenges the traditional discourse of historical knowledge.

3. Methodology

This study uses a qualitative textual analysis approach to investigate Amitav Ghosh's *In an Antique Land* (1992), especially focusing on the interplay between history, narrative, ethnography, and representation. The main text serves as the major analytical tool for this study, while secondary scholarly sources are used to provide an interpretive framework. Close reading is the key analytical approach used in this study, and the areas of focus include the structure of the narrative, archival snippets, time shifts, characters, ethnographic interactions, cultural translation, and marginal historical representations. Of key interest here is the process of reconstructing Bomma's story from the Cairo Geniza archives and the contrast between medieval Indian Ocean civilization and Ghosh's modern experience in Egypt. This analysis is guided by the postcolonial and historiographical approaches, especially in terms of issues of historical authority, marginality, cultural representation, and knowledge production through media. This work will take into account the interaction between ethnographic observation and narrative self-reflexivity to analyze how Ghosh's observer role impacts the representation of cultural experience. The opposition between fact and fiction is not taken for granted in the methodology since the interaction between documentary evidence and narrative will be analyzed in the text. In this way, the analysis will focus on how Ghosh challenges the existing historiographical approaches using literary devices.

4. Analysis

4.1 History as Narrative Construction

One of the key issues that Amitav Ghosh addresses in his book *"In an Antique Land"* is how the past is accessible to the present. Instead of portraying history as a set sequence of facts that can be objectively reconstructed, Ghosh demonstrates how

history is a process of reconstructing information based on fragments, interpretation, and narration (Chaudhari, 2022). The historical reality portrayed by the text is mostly built on the basis of the author's encounter with documents preserved by the Cairo Geniza, which contain bits and pieces of individual histories and social relations of the medieval era. Those are just pieces of evidence without any full picture of history behind them. Bomma's life story is one example that shows this process very well (K. & K.T., 2025). The sources that are found in the archives do not give an account of the whole biography of the Indian slave. Ghosh finds scattered information that needs to be linked up to form a story. The story goes beyond mere presentation of sources, and tries to recreate the social and cultural context in which these sources existed. The way in which these archival sources are turned into narratives shows that historical knowledge is characterized by selection and interpretation. History, in other words, is determined not only by survival but also by organization of the source materials (Sankaran, 2012). The importance of Ghosh's methodology lies in the fact that he does not hide the fact that there are gaps in the archives. The spaces in Bomma's life history become obvious through this process of reconstruction. He does not try to present his own interpretation as the only one which is historically true and definite. These gaps become important in that they demonstrate the limits of conventional history. This means that the archive may store some traces of life without storing life experience. The story-telling nature of history is further supported by the way Ghosh moves back and forth between archives and the contemporary experience of reality. The past during medieval times is not separated from the present day experience of Ghosh in Egypt. Rather, the historical account unfolds in conjunction with the observations and experience of Ghosh. Thus, the structure of the narrative underscores the fact that the past is understood in terms of the present (Thapa, 2023).

The text further questions the idea that meaning in history is innately embedded in the documents themselves. Documents cannot speak for themselves; they take on meaning through interpretation.

"The only other means was to take copies of those documents that had been published, and to compare them with the actual folio pages — smudged, worn eight-hundred-year-old bits of paper — until such time as one's eyes grew expert in deciphering the script... It was the deciphering of the documents, rather than the language itself, that was the hard part (Ghosh, 1999, p. 103-104)"

Ghosh's use of archives proves the need for the reader and writer to make links between people, places, events, movements, and social practice. The story becomes the way in which these disparate pieces become coherent. In this way, storytelling is not just an added element of the study of history but integral to its understanding (Vallury, 2022). Through his emphasis on fragmentation of archives, interpretation, and narration, In an Antique Land raises doubts about the validity of an entirely factual historiography. While Ghosh does not deny the importance of historical facts, he highlights both their value and their insufficiency. Thus, Ghosh creates a historiographic practice that acknowledges the value of historical documents as well as

their deficiency and incompleteness. As a consequence, history becomes an activity of negotiation between factuality and interpretation, between presence and absence, document and story. Consequently, Ghosh succeeds in making explicit the very process of creating history (Vallury, 2022).

4.2. Fact, Fiction and Historiographic Imagination

The difference between fact and fiction is consciously blurred in the case of *In an Antique Land*. While Ghosh uses documentary evidence for his reconstruction of history, he narrates that documentary evidence in such a way that it consists of description, characterization, reflection, dialogue, and reconstruction. His book thus exists somewhere between historical writing and literary narrative (K. & K.T., 2025). However, this doesn't mean that Ghosh gives up on historical facts in favour of fiction. On the contrary, Ghosh makes use of the interface between documentary and narrative to highlight the complexities of representing a past that only partially exists. The fragmentary character of the Cairo Geniza material represents the primary condition of this interaction. While the documents offer information about Bomma and Ben Yiju and other figures mentioned in the essay, they do not allow for access to all aspects of their lives. The archive keeps traces, but not full stories. Thus, Ghosh should interpret those traces and place them into the broader historical and social context. Narrative imagination becomes inevitable since there are gaps in the historical record that cannot be filled by means of documentation. The reconstructed story is not an invention and not simply the replication of the archival material (Jean-François et al., 2022).

It makes the traditional opposition between fact and fiction more complicated than ever before. Fiction is traditionally linked to creation while history – to accuracy. The book by Ghosh shows that the description of the historical truth may use some narrative devices which are normally used in literary prose. Character, scene, order of events, description, point of view are all necessary in order to make isolated pieces of history become meaningful. The employment of literary devices doesn't automatically lead to the disappearance of the historical base of the story. The inclusion of Ghosh himself into the narrative makes this ambiguity even greater. The experiences of Ghosh that he describes in his text are his experiences in the present day in Egypt, but these experiences also have to be mediated through literature (Gunning, 2009). He chooses what to say about the people he meets, about the conversations he has with them, about the differences in culture he has observed, and how he himself has reacted to all this. In the end, even the apparently real ethnographic sections are mediated through perspective. Historiographic imagination thus turns out to be a crucial idea in grasping the approach of Ghosh. The imagination, in this case, should not be taken as a total freedom of fabrication and creation. On the contrary, it is an act of mind that seeks to link up gaps between evidences in order to make sense of them. Ghosh creates historical connections and settings while being mindful of the constraints posed by the available evidences (Vallury, 2022).

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4.3. Alternative Historiography and Subaltern Voices

In *An Antique Land* presents an alternative way of understanding history by moving the focus from dominant histories which are usually based on politics to people and communities who have not received much attention in conventional historical writings. The character of Bomma plays a crucial role in this exercise. As a twelfth-century Indian slave, Bomma is someone whose existence has only been traced through the pieces of information available in the archives (Thapa, 2023). In other words, Bomma is a historical subject whose story has not survived in a full-fledged narrative form. However, through these fragmented details, Ghosh reconstructs a larger world of social connections, movement, labor, commerce and culture. One of the reasons for the relevance of Bomma is his marginality (Gunning, 2009). He does not have a role as a ruler, as a political leader, or as someone who has historical significance. His relevance is established by virtue of his place within the social and economic interactions of normal life. In connecting Bomma with Ben Yiju, Ghosh gives us insight into the flows of people across India, Egypt, and elsewhere in the Indian Ocean region. The historical narrative shifts from one that revolves around politics to one that revolves around human experience.

Ghosh's depiction of the world of the Indian Ocean reinforces this historiographical approach even further. The historical scene is one of movement beyond borders, whether geographical, cultural, or religious. People belong to networks that transcend the boundaries of modern notions of nation or static identity.

"It was then that I began success the partitioning of the past had achieved: that I was sitting at that desk now because the mowlid of Sidi Abu-Hasira was an anomaly within the categories of knowledge represented by those divisions. I had been caught straddling a border unaware that the writing of History had predicated its own self-fulfilment" (Ghosh, 1999, p. 340).

Trade, migration, religious beliefs, and personal connections create a social environment where cultural identities are in flux. Through such a reconstruction of the world, Ghosh is questioning the habit of reading history through the prism of political borders of the present (Kiranmayee & Kumar Reddy, 2026).

"It struck me, suddenly, that there was nothing I could point to within his world that might give credence to my story — the remains of those small, indistinguishable, intertwined histories, Indian and Egyptian, Muslim and Jewish, Hindu and Muslim, had been partitioned long ago. Nothing remained in Egypt now to effectively challenge his disbelief: not a single one, for instance, of the documents of the Geniza (Ghosh, 1994, p. 340)."

But the recovery of the story of Bomma reveals the constraints of retrieving the subaltern voice as well. Bomma himself never tells his own story. Bomma's life becomes available to the contemporary reader through archival snippets and by Ghosh's understanding. Hence, despite the desire to make the marginalized voice

visible, it still remains an exercise in mediation. While Ghosh is able to recover some elements of Bomma's world, he is unable to resurrect an authentic voice which belongs to someone whose voice has been lost forever. Thus, the text manages to avoid presenting alternative history as a substitute for official history. On the contrary, the text makes clear that any construction of history is influenced by issues of preservation and power. Some lives create a lot of documents, and some live by means of accidental references.

"The reference comes to us from a moment in time when the only people for whom we can even begin to imagine properly human, individual existences are the literate and the consequential, the wazirs and the sultans, the chroniclers and the priests — the people who had the power to inscribe themselves physically upon time. But the slave of Khalaf's letter was not of that company: in his instance it was a mere accident that those barely discernible traces that ordinary people leave upon the world happen to have been preserved (Ghosh, 1999, p. 17)."

This means that the archive does not present an unbiased collection of all experiences of the past. These silences determine what can be told about the past, and Ghosh makes these silences visible (Mongia, 2017).

However, there is another historiographical framework in *In an Antique Land*, which is related to the topic of cultural exchange as well. The history of Bomma demonstrates connections that transcend geographical and cultural borders and thus refute ideas of separate and unique civilizations. The past portrayed by Ghosh is the one where interaction and movement are crucial, not exceptional. In the end, Ghosh's handling of the subaltern history is one of recovery along with an explicit restriction on himself (Deore, 2024). It is an attempt to render visible a historically marginalized character without trying to make people believe that the holes in the history can be plugged up entirely. The narrative acknowledges the necessity of this challenge and its complexity. Bomma, through whom *In an Antique Land* reveals the alternative historiography, proves that it has to involve not only the consideration of the ones who were not included in the historical account but also the circumstances that dictate the terms of reconstructing their experience.

4.4 Ethnography, Reflexivity and the Politics of Representation

The ethnographic element in *In an Antique Land* is integral to the way in which Ghosh explores knowledge, culture, and representation. The experiences Ghosh has in the Egyptian villages of Lataifa and Nashawy are what form the contemporary story in *In an Antique Land*, and create a connection between historical reconstruction and cultural experience (Kiranmayee & Kumar Reddy, 2026). Yet in *In an Antique Land*, Ghosh does not take the conventional role of an ethnographer observing a foreign society. Ghosh does not remove himself from the process of ethnography and leaves his personal presence and responses to his experiences evident in the story. The unique situation of Ghosh arises from the fact that he exists in an intermediate cultural situation. Being a researcher from India who conducts research in Egypt, he is both an outside observer as well as someone who can, because of his cultural heritage, challenge the conventional Western notions of the distinction between the East and

the West. His situation does not solve the problem of cultural representation, but it complicates the traditional observer/observed dynamic. He does not stand apart from some distant culture in an unquestionable authoritative position (Mongia, 2017).

"We have to be careful, you understand," he said in a polite, but distant voice. "We want to do everything we can to protect the tomb." He stood up, gave my hand a perfunctory shake and handed going to instruct the man who brought me my passport. "I am you here to take you straight to the station," he said," (Ghosh, 1999, p. 340)

It is, thus, clear that the connections made by Ghosh with the Egyptian villagers play a crucial role in the construction of the narrative. Knowledge about the culture is gained not just through detachment and observation but through discussion, miscommunications, and everyday encounters.

"We have them too!" I shouted back at him. "In my country we have all those things too; we have guns and tanks and bombs. And they're better than anything you've got in Egypt — we're a long way ahead of you." "I tell you, he's lying," cried the Imam... "our guns and bombs are much better than theirs. Ours are second only to the West's (Ghosh, 1999, p. 236)."

In this manner, the process of gaining knowledge ethnographically becomes more apparent. The communities that are portrayed in the text are no longer mere subjects of study but participants in the process of the author learning about cultures different from his own. It becomes even more so in this case because of the issue of language itself. Cross-cultural communication is not often portrayed as being entirely simple. The words, phrases, and cultural implications may not translate to another culture word for word or idea for idea. It means that translation becomes interpretation as well (Kalpakli, 2016). The experiences of Ghosh show that the knowledge of another culture requires certain contexts and interactions. Misunderstandings do not become obstacles but the means of discovering them.

This aspect of representation also holds true on a political level. Representation of another culture involves exercising a certain amount of control over the narration of that particular culture. The writer gets to decide what to observe, what to document, what to emphasize, and how to present the experience to the audience. The significance of Ghosh's self-reflexivity lies in the fact that he does not entirely hide the processes involved in creating the narrative (Dutta, 2015).

However, the ethnographies also set up a productive dialogue with the historical account. The modern Egyptian village setting sets up the context within which the medieval period can be re-evaluated. In some cases, certain cultural or social practices from the present day create links with the past which have been reconstructed by the historians, whereas the differences point out just how much societies evolve over time. This keeps the past from being viewed as merely an artifact of history (Choudhary & Kumar, 2023).

As a result, ethnography in *In an Antique Land* is not just an approach to description. Ethnography becomes a mode by means of which Ghosh analyzes the process of cultural knowledge creation. Ghosh places himself in the very center of the story and highlights the drawbacks of an objective view and the necessity of personal participation in representation. Thus, the text makes ethnography not only a kind of

writing but also a critique of authority, cultural translation, and ethics of representation of other people. Such self-reflexivity proves the claim about the fact that neither history nor anthropology gives access to reality in an objective manner; both are interpretative (Choudhary & Kumar, 2023).

5. Discussion

Based on the results of this study, *In an Antique Land* should not merely be considered a literary text that consists of history and fiction, but rather a persistent questioning of the ways historical and cultural knowledge is constructed. This analysis shows how the narrative strategies of Ghosh function together rather than separately. Indeed, archival fragments, narrative construction, representation of the subaltern, ethnographic reflexivity, time movement, and cultural translation constitute a coherent approach that calls into question any claim to historical comprehensiveness and representation (Anusheya & Sumathi, 2026). This reading builds upon the issues raised in existing academic discourse by integrating them. Past critical discourses have already demonstrated the relevance of Ghosh's dialogue with history, anthropology, postcolonialism, and translation. In this context, the current discourse will further these discourses by pointing out the fact that the very narrative form of the novel is crucial to Ghosh's epistemological project (Deore, 2024). The oscillation between archival fragments and contemporary experience not only gives rise to a new genre but also makes the reader aware of the instability of historical knowledge. Hence, the focus of the novel moves from the historical data to the process of its meaning-making. Further analysis of *Bomma* reveals that historiography from an alternate perspective requires more than just incorporating a subject who has been excluded so far. The fragmented history of *Bomma* shows that different people have been visible in history based on unequal grounds (Guragain, 2025). The reconstruction of the life of *Bomma* by Ghosh not only helps in reconstructing but also poses problems in the form of the marginalized subject since there is no complete record from the first person point of view. Ethnography, in turn, creates a parallel criticism of authority. Ghosh's participation in the communities studied undermines the possibility for his ethnographic chapters to serve as objective cultural analysis since his point of view is also part of the process of knowledge production, proving that cultural representation is mediated through interaction, language, and point of view (Kiranmayee & Kumar Reddy, 2026). The link between this contemporary narrative and the historical reconstruction of *Bomma* in terms of the issue of mediation is obvious. Overall, it is apparent that *In an Antique Land* operates as a critical method in terms of its shifting temporalities, multilingual moments, gaps within archives and self-reflexive storytelling, since these elements go against the assumption that history is linear, definite and conclusive. Thus, the main achievement of the book is to show how literary storytelling can subvert existing knowledge regimes while retaining the historical materiality of the text. Here, Ghosh creates an effective space of interaction between literature and historiography, proving that uncertainty can become a tool for writing a more critical history (Thapa, 2023).

Conclusion

This research has looked at *In an Antique Land* as a narrative intervention which challenges the assumption that knowledge about history is all-inclusive, unbiased and autonomous from representations. The research shows how Ghosh uses archive material to make a type of historical narrative where evidence, interpretation, memory and storytelling are inseparably connected. It is in this way that Ghosh creates his story about Bomma, comparison of past and present, ethnographic reflexivity and focus on translation. What makes the study important is its demonstration that Ghosh's hybrid form not only is a textual experiment but also a method of undermining the power of historical discourse and restoring marginalized voices, with due awareness of the limitations of such restoration. Thus, the study adds to scholarly discussions on the topics of historiography, postcolonial literature, and narrative theory through its focus on the correlation of textual form and knowledge. This study focuses on the close reading of a single primary source and does not pretend to give a complete analysis of Ghosh's literary career or the phenomenon of historiographical fiction in general. Future research can be devoted to the comparative study of other texts by Ghosh and other postcolonial authors in order to discover how archiving, translation, and marginalization are portrayed in them.

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