Re-Constructing '71:
The Visual Landscape of
Bangladeshi Nationalism Now[1]

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[…] within the disciplines of architecture, landscape architecture, urban design, and cultural geography, there is an emerging body of theoretical, historical, and design research which recognize the capacity of the built-environment to serve as a repository of our collective and individual cultural history and memory. Yet contemporary methodologies of design often ignore the power of the landscape to evoke the history and memory of place, homogenizing the diverse cultural forces resident in the landscape, and thus reinforcing a peculiar sense of collective amnesia. (Craig Evan Barton 2001: xiv)

The manner in which human sense perception is organised, the medium in which it is accomplished, is determined not only by nature but by historical circumstances as well. (Walter Benjamin 1935: 222)

Introduction

Building architecture, more specifically a landscape of museums, archives and monuments, has long been employed as a powerful apparatus for grounding history and making collective memory. As a nation monument-

alises and memorialises its past and explicitly it's wounded past, it contributes to the making of nations, nationalistic ideologies and resultant nationalism. This process has always had a political urgency to produce a homogenous community with seemingly continuous narratives (Anderson [1983] 2006: 5). These relatively new terms though seemingly comprehensible are problematic to explain.

Ernest Gellner argues that nationalism is a fabrication or invention (Gellner 2008). Benedict Anderson ([1983] 2006: 4) also mentions that the constructed cultural artefacts arouse deep attachments as well. He argues that nationalism is only constructed upon imaginary homogenous nationhood where the community is heterogeneous. Eric Hobsbawm (1990: 141) also contends that nation is a term that signifies 'inevitably local or regional historical conjunctures' (Hobsbawm 1990: 78); it is an entity 'a nation from other entities a priori'; He further states that nation-building 'as conceived by nationalism' (Hobsbawm 1990: 201) is often based on a single measure of 'language or ethnicity or a combination of criteria such as language, common territory, common history, cultural traits or whatever else' as a process of aspiration establishment. This helps people in a defined nation or political boundary to identify themselves under the rubric of commonalities that are deceptive since none may have the same religious, historical, or cultural background.

Therefore, history and collective memory play a colossal role in creating an image or a national identity of the nation; Therefore, following Anderson, Gellner and Hobsbawm's arguments, sociocultural and political hegemony constitutes part of the categorical, ideological force in the construction of nationalism or a sense of strong unity it is. Thus, as different ideologies are implemented on a palpable built-environment, the landscape becomes a cultural artefact of a particular kind (Anderson [1983] 2006: 13). A nation is recognised increasingly by the nationalist forces it imparts; these forces are manifested, stored, restored, and materialised through multiple performative acts that become landscape artefacts. The museums as memory sites become aestheticized artefacts or archives and depositories of feelings. Herein is established a strong camaraderie between intangible nationalist feelings and the embodied tangible landscape. In Pierre Nora's words, these monuments create spatial moments that we can designate as 'lieux de memoire' or 'places of memory', where

> memory crystallises and secretes itself has occurred at a particular historical moment, a turning point where consciousness of a break with the past is bound up with the sense that memory has been torn—

but torn in such a way as to pose the problem of the embodiment of memory in certain sites where a sense of historical continuity persists. (Nora 1989: 7)

This essay probes the power of landscape vis-à-vis the built-environment to manifest as a nationalist force. Here, the nationalist forces and nationalism per se are an expression of political ideologies that are cosmetic, embodied, and performative in their very ontology. The landscape pertains to the simulative and regulatory aesthetics of visual materials, placement strategies and designs. This essay thus problematises nationalism as a living landscape production that is primarily reliant on visuals. Henceforth, it is a visual landscape. This visual landscape includes architectural forms, images and figural imageries that are manifested via societal and spatial engagements and participation. It is instrumentalised to sway the masses towards a new nationalist impulse and to construct a collective memory based on the past. Though this localised exploration focuses on Bangladesh, it also offers a macro lens to see the new wave of nationalism that is a current global phenomenon and essential catalytic force of shifting landscapes.

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On 16 December 1971, Bangladesh was born after an excruciating nine-month-long civil war and a resultant massacre. The murder of estimated 1.5 to 3 million Bengalis started with the idea of extinguishing the pluralist Bengali culture which consisted of: Hindu, Muslim, Buddhist, and a small percentage of Christians. On the whole, the Bengali people has linguistic commonalities and a shared cultural ethos that is centred around *Tagorism.*[2] This heterogeneity, which also bears Hindu influences and lingual influences of Sanskrit, which is also a language of the Hindus was the core of Bengali culture, seemed tainted to Pakistan, which was relatively more Islamic. Hence, Bengali Muslims were considered as an "impure form" that did not fit with Pakistan's Islamic orthodoxy.

Since the war, the country has been trying to memorialise its mutilated history. By exemplifying Bangladesh's post-independence landscape today, this essay speaks of the domination of imageries and built-environment as a part of the visual landscape and collective memory. This new landscape constructs a wave of neo-nationalist sentiments based on an anguished event—the 1971 war. Doing so, it hyper-mobilises an inherited nationalist force that supersedes previously inbred ones. A new nationalist essence of the 1971 war supplants other nationalist forces or historical possibilities and consequently dissolves them to make the '71 spirit the core and essential part of discernible patriotism. This dominant neo-nationalist

ideology as a nationalistic visual practice is spread through the '71 archives in a way that monopolises the landscape which is visible and thus visual.[3] This sentiment has turned into a newly set normative trend of "71-now".

In that vein, this chapter polemically queries the very ontological and epitomical premise of Bangladesh's shifting urban landscape, a landscape that is instrumentalised to contract our nationalist impetus towards the 1971 war. This construction is an important chronotope, a part of a larger historical landscape narrative that has remained unexamined till today and demands to be unveiled. Thus, this research article probes, reframes, and contests a freshly constructed visuality of the nationalist landscape at this historic moment of Bangladesh, essentially relying on political imbrications of the 1971 civil war. As the nationalist historical narrative quintessentially comes with genocide accounts and memories, this landscape can, from a nationalistic perspective, synonymously be referred to as a 'genocide landscape', 'memory landscape' or, certainly more appropriately, a 'landscape of necropolis or death'. Contrariwise, one can also see it as the 'landscape of victory'.

As an intersection of landscape and social theories, this essay examines the role of architecture and landscape in creating nationalist sentiments and collective memory based exclusively on the country's fifty-year-old civil war. It questions: why and how can landscape bring forth vigorous nationalist sentiments? What is '71 memory, and how is it inscribed in urban spaces and encoded in the built-form? Therefore, this paper is a critical reading of new museums and archives with '71 nationalist potencies. This archival landscape is unlike the monuments and markers that were built immediately after the war; these sites are seemingly more commanding, widespread, and complex in ensuring a nationalist agenda. They create a nationalist landscape that dissipates an accelerated feeling of "now and true" over the country's cultural and visual landscape. What allows them to do so?

This essay looks into the critical aestheticization of '71 via built-environment and the materials that embody the neo-nationalist spirit. It explicates architecture and landscape as memory-aids and memory conduits with visual materials inside and outside. It emphasises the synthetic construction of a new wave of nationalism using the potency of the built-environment creating feelings and a mythical permanence. As much as the "1971 visuals" are important, architectural aesthetics are equally important as their vessels.[4] This nationalist and memory landscape is the holistic built-environment itself, that serves as the visible locus of both public and

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personal memory with explicit and implicit connections. Hence, echoing the words of John Ruskin (1849: 164), the paper sets built-environment as a crucial apparatus of feelings: 'We may live without her [architecture], worship without her, but we cannot remember without her.'

Focusing on diverse stakeholders and user-based clientele groups, locations and genesis, this essay examines Bangladesh's three new major iconic museums that not only display "1971-visuals" but also partake in three distinct generative processes. They are: (a) the government-initiated *Swadhinata Sthambha* and Museum of Independence War (SSMIW, opened in 2013), (b) *Muktijudho Jadughar* or the Liberation War Museum (LWM, opened in 2015), and lastly (c) Torture Cell and Burial Ground Barisal (TCBGB, to be built), which came as an urge from the local people in Barisal city, a small town outside Dhaka, close to rural parts. The essay sees the museums and archives distinctively from the '71 monuments. These three archives/ museums set themselves as discrete categories, based on their very genealogical process. Here, category A is government initiated, category B is initiated by major '71 actors and category C, though designed by architects, was instigated by the local populace. Moreover, these sites of memory are not static. They are symbolic, performative and active places that become animated memory-sites through their variety of interactive events and programmes. They contribute to the making of a visual landscape, creating a tangible and intangible connection to the past. They also create a nationalist impetus and a relationship with the generations that came after and never witnessed or experienced the war. Their role depends on: the materials they carry, how they carry them and how they are contained, and how this holistic containment of "71-visuals" is understood in the visual landscape that we call 71-now.

Azoulay mentions that an archive is a confluence of a triad: documents, bygone time, and the walled spaces (Azoulay 2017). She further argues that with a connection to the past and with documents that seemingly create a factual image of history, an archive takes a sacrosanct position. What was 1971 for Bangladesh then, and what is it now? What makes 1971 omnipotent and penetrating? The three categories aid to answer these questions and understand the processes and the vested interest of reinstating the footing of a neo-nationalist ideology in the political and visual landscape of Bangladesh today.

The qualitative research method of this article includes scholarly investigations, historical analysis, informal interviews with designers and stakeholders over a two-month-long stay in Bangladesh in 2019 and 2020 and

also meetings held online. As a part of understanding the spaces, this methodology includes visits to illustrated archival sites for spatial observations, documentations and analyses that were completed during the site visits. This article further relies on photographic inquiries of war images and photographs of the 71-visuals that were collected from archives such as Drik Gallery Dhaka, Bangladesh National Archive and digital archives.

History, nationalism and landscape

Bangladesh's nationalist construction that was based primarily on the Bengali language, and a culture founded on the deltaic landscape and geography has a contested historical trajectory. Having a common history and a shared past with today's neighbouring Pakistan and India Bangladesh's roots go as far back as the ancient Indus Valley Civilization (3500 BC- 1600 BC), which is positioned within the governmental boundaries of Pakistan today (Ashraf 1997: 9; Huq & Shoaib 2013).[5] Thus its landscape palimpsest owes much to major historical fragments—Indus civilizations, overlapping Hindu, and Buddhist periods (300 BC- 1200 CE), Pre-Mughal (1205–1610) Muslim and Hindu kingdoms, the Islamic period of the Mughals (1610–1757), the East India Company (1757–1858), the British colonial period (1858–1947), the Pakistan period (1947–71) and the Bangladesh period that started in 1971 (Begum 2018). With shared cultural ethos, history, and political limits, Bangladesh's aesthetic embodiment and nationalist phenomenon rely both on the location and natural settings that are local as well as regional.

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Positioned in low-lying, riverine geographical land, the country was set in the Vanga or Bangala region (of the Vanga Kingdom, 500 BCE) in the Indian subcontinent (Huq & Shoaib 2013).[6] Ptolemy and later Cunha argued that Bengal was part of an estuary such as in *bhati* areas, *mohonas*, where an estuary plays a role as the meeting point of a river and the sea (Cunha 2019). With recurrent inundations, landslides, and perpetually shifting shorelines, equivocal and perpetually changing union of land or of water sets Bangladesh amidst an ambiguous terrain both topographically and culturally.[7] Thus, as the ever-changing wetlands are a major part of Bangladesh's nationalist landscape, the culture is perplexing. Emulating echoing Spender, 'this Bengali landscape is very Bengali to us' (quoted in Lekan 2004: 1).

Thus, an idealised nationalism began far from and in a much earlier time than today's civil-war-oriented nationalism. Bangladesh's muggy ambience of clay, clay-built forms and essentially clay-burnt bricks are signature

elements that explicate a nationalist, masonic trajectory. 'Mud [clay] is the bane of Bengali middle-class', Ashraf (2019) writes. For this, American modernist architect Louis Kahn's red-brick complex and water-focused landscape have become a symbol of Bangladesh's nationalism; it is described as 'an image of a visionary Bengali City' (Ashraf & Haq 2002) where water and mud are part of the national identity that evidently came from geological and socio-cultural settings. Also, easy access to water and the bay gave entrée to traders who turned to be settlers and/or settler colonisers; these settlers were of a wide gamut, ranging from Proto-Australoids, to Arabs, Turks, Portuguese, Armenians, British, and more (Ahmed 1994).[8]

Thus, the country's cultural attributes were transferred towards a deep-rooted pluralist platform and influenced by Hinduism, *Tagorism*, *baul* (or local Sufi), and *Brahma* philosophy.[9] Therefore, an ethno-racial tension grew between less conformist, dark-skinned Muslim majority Bengalis and fair-skinned, more Islamic Pakistanis. This was the prime reason for Pakistan's effort for the cultural erasure that sparked the cyst and ended with the independence war in the first place. Secularism as the first amendment of the newly born Bangladesh pertinently reflects in the national anthem that the country adopted right after gaining independence: 'Amar Shonar Bangla' (My Golden Bengal). The song resonates with anti-colonial sentiment and the natural landscape and also implicates the country's genealogical impurity, as it was written by a Hindu Indian Nobel Laureate, Rabindranath Tagore. 'The Bangladeshi national anthem glorifies a make-believe land where the distinctly rural and deltaic landmass becomes an end in itself' (Mukherjee 2011). But the nationalist attitude in recent times has been more reverential to 1971, which is the focus of this essay.

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Dhaka, which was once described as the 'city of Jahangir' (r. 1605-1727), later as 'city of mosques' and eventually as 'city of cellular phones' (Samayeen 2011), is now a 'city of 1971 monuments'.[10] Each paradigm is reflected in the landscape developments; Dhaka's landscape is a palimpsest of its history. Mughal patrons made the heterogeneous racial constituents as one homogenous identity; they built *baghs* (gardens), *chawks* (squares), and forts which still exist as vestiges over the city. Later, British Rajs' used their methodical, colonial tools to establish a well-ordered infrastructure on top of the Mughals' landscape of beautification and recreation. Now, the regime that began in 1971 encodes patriotism in a different language and infrastructure. How did that happen?

With British colonialism, many rifts occurred, such as the 1905 division of Bengal into East and West Bengal. However, the major division occurred at midnight of 14 August 1947. On that night, the Indian subcontinent was partitioned to create two homelands: Hindu-majority India and Muslim-majority Pakistan. Sir Cyril Radcliffe's drew a largely arbitrary line across a map to delimit the new nations which had yet to develop their distinctive nationalisms.

Separated by one thousand miles of Indian land, the two Pakistan wings had many dissimilarities and yet one strong religious commonality. As the idea that one nation needs to be recognised and materialised through nationalist aestheticization such as national anthems, cultural products like poetry, literature, songs, dance, cultural property, language, and holistic images of visual landscapes, became challenging and problematic. Thus, this was the beginning of another schism, which veered towards a new Islamic nationalism. The east wing, which later became Bangladesh, posed a contrast to Pakistan's orthodox Islamic culture. Thus, racial, cultural, and, more importantly, linguistic differences created friction that dissolved any possibility for a cohesive nationalist future.

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Antagonism started with the banning of *Bangla* (Bengali), the core of Bengali culture and identity.[11] Therefore, despite religious parallels, the first public resistance began in 1952 with the language movement. At this political paradigm, there was also another right-wing trend for an establishment of Islamic nationalism that was carried out by incorporating the concept of Islam and symbolism in visual landscape explicated by architectural forms. Thus, the use of domes and minarets and often lunar symbols in modern built forms began to dominate the religion-based nationalism and its visual landscape.

In 1971, a massive disturbance started in East Pakistan as Pakistan's central government, located in West Pakistan, rejected the victory of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, a young Bengali politician and the co-founder of the Awami League (AL), in the democratic election from East Pakistan. In March of 1971, amid two million people, Mujib gave his famous '7 March speech' in the historic Ramna Park. Calling for civil disobedience and the war against oppressive West Pakistan, he announced, '[t]his time the struggle is for our freedom. This time the struggle is for our independence.' On the other side, in West Pakistan, President Yahya Khan proclaimed, 'Kill three million of them […] The rest will eat out of our hand.' The general's words at a February conference sufficed for the aggression and intensity of

violence (cit. Samayeen 2021), thus resulting in a bloody war and a massacre in East Pakistan.

During this liberation war, the Pakistani army carried out a massive killing. With some discreet Bangladeshi-origin allies of Pakistan (called *Razakaars*), troops killed thousands of civilians, including women and children. Eyewitnesses saw 'bodies of lifeless children slung over the laps of their dead mothers, women who clung to the bodies of their beloved husbands before both being shot dead, and hopeless fathers who used their bodies to shield their daughters from inevitable fate' (Nabi & Nabi 2010). Some of the massacre sites have been monumentalised; most remain unnoticeable, spread throughout Bangladesh's rural and urban landscapes and penetrating waterways. Thousands of dead bodies were thrown into *khals* (lakes), *beels* (small lake-like wetlands), *jhils* (estuaries), *dobas* (small natural pools), and rivers (Figures 1 & 2). Nabi writes, 'Pakistani soldiers continued firing like hunters taking potshots at birds in a cage. […] Those who ran and jumped into the river were shot like fish in a barrel' (cit. Samayeen 2021; Nabi & Nabi 2010: 418). Seeing the mass graves, U.S. Senator Adlai Stevenson also stated, 'I was horrified at the brutality of the Pakistani forces. In the annals of history, there is nothing to parallel this genocide. Their inhumanity boggles the mind' (cit. Samayeen 2021; Nabi & Nabi 2010: 419). This was too intense for a country to forget, and hence the fervour created a potent nationalist fury waiting to have a concrete form.

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"1971-visuals"- Killings by Pakistani Army in Bangladesh's Liberation war.

Figure 1, source: photograph by Rashid Talukder, Drik Picture Library Limited.

"1971-visuals"- Killings by Pakistani Army in Bangladesh's Liberation war.

Figure 2, source: photograph by Rashid Talukder,
Drik Picture Library Limited.

A few prototypical *sthambha* (pillars) and monuments have been built sporadically in a few of the killing sites as a mnemonic apparatus. However, they are incommensurate to the scale of the loss. Chuknagar, one of these sites, is deemed to be the largest. This killing site near the borderline with India has not been explored till recently. After twenty years of independence, historian Muntasir Mamoon (Mamoon 2002), along with the late historian Salauddin Ahmed, started his research around 1994 and 1995.[12] Mamoon and Ahmed found that about ten thousand civilians, mostly members of the region's Hindu minority, were killed within three hours. They were only hoping to cross the border and spare their lives. Many women were raped before being shot, and their brutalised dead bodies were thrown in Bhadra River.

List of eyewitnesses of Chuknagar massacre who contributed to oral history (left), the list of massacre sites in Bangladesh (right).
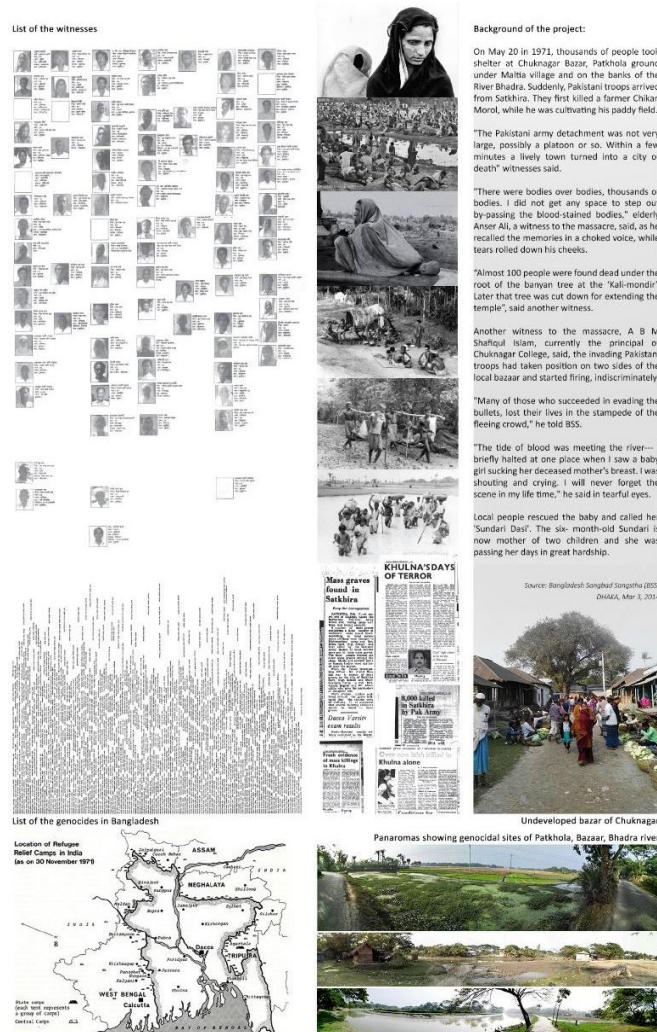
Figure 3, source: Nishat Tasnim Oyshee.

The Chuknagar incident was not an isolated event, there were numerous massacre sites (Figure 3) throughout Bangladesh. The Pakistani army built many bunkers and torture-cells solely to persecute and kill Bengalis. These bunkers were often located next to a river so the Pakistani army could throw grenades and brush fire to the fighter across the river or crossing the river. The dead bodies were thrown over the country's land and water, making the memory and potential nationalist memory sites ubiquitous. In doing so, Bengal's deltaic landscape has become a more embodied memory landscape or a landscape of necromancy and more entwined with the deltaic plateau. Even trees are a part of this memory-scape, as many hid in the trunks of large Banyan trees during army invasions.[13]Thus, water and natural landscape bore witness to the gruesome narrative of '71. These killing sites, mostly unknown, unsurfaced, and often unidentified, are omnipresent throughout Bangladesh. They have been ignored for long, but now they are getting resurfaced with aggressive plans. A report has revealed that the Pakistani occupation force's mass killings involved 4,180 incidents in ten districts of Bangladesh in 1971 (Staff Correspondent 2019).

The cruelty of the Pakistan army did not end with the butchery of the common people. Having lost the war, they tried to annihilate any hope for the emerging nation by killing its brightest heads. On 14 December 1971, just two days before independence, the Pakistani army made a target list and rounded up intellectuals, scholars, and professionals such as teachers, professors, doctors, engineers and other professionals from their homes to Dhaka's Rayer Bazaar area to be summarily killed, mostly blindfolded (Nabi & Nabi 2010: 414). It was planned carnage of Bengalis from all walks of life, in an attempt to eradicate a culture. Today, Bangladeshi nationalism draws heavily on the grimness of the 1971-civil war, which took a heavy toll on the country.

As Mujib spearheaded the war and also declared Bangladesh independent after the victory on 16 December 1971, he thus came to be known as *Jatir Pita* (literally, 'the father of the nation'). As an important historical figure and the first prime minister of independent Bangladesh, Mujib's image was used as the first personified image in independent Bangladesh's currency in 1972 (Figure 4). Now, his figural imageries are replicated and spread everywhere, particularly in the museums. Thus, he becomes the person indelibly connected to the nationalist vision and visuals.[14] With that, it is also undeniable that this national event has become a part of the personal memory of AL.

Mujib's portrait on Bangladeshi currency after 1971.

Figure 4, source: Bank Note Museum (digital).

However, in 1975, he was assassinated, presumably as a part of a deep-rooted conspiracy. It was a pre-existing anti-independence ethos that was triggered by the Razakar collusion and a pro-Pakistani culture. His assassination plot indicates yet another paradox of Bangladesh's lineage. The very anti-independence and pro-Pakistani position is a paradoxical sentiment that goes along with a principle that Benedict Anderson articulates in *Imagined Communities* (Anderson [1983] 2006): an unstable claim of a homogenous whole. Following Mujib's demise, the country was in an apparent hibernation from the liberation war. Though Victory Day and National Independence Day were celebrated, only a few monuments were built and archives, museums, and galleries were absent. Even the urge to build was less and the rush was almost invisible compared to today.

Several monuments such as the National Martyrs' Memorial or *Jatiya Smriti Shoudha* (1976–82) were erected in memory of those who perished in the war. There was also the Martyred Intellectuals Memorial (1996–99) at Rayerbazar, a memorial built with the memory of the martyred intellectuals of 1971. The *Shahid Minar,* a language movement monument, was built in commemoration of the language movement where the martyrs were killed. But none of these contained "71-visuals" that would convincingly consecrate the spaces, powerfully persuade mass feeling or rouse the violent emotions of '71 creating a new collective memory. There was no archive or museum construction that would offer robust effort to record, archive, and showcase 1971, an event of such national importance and scale. On the contrary, there were even a few instances of planned intervention for a historical erasure of '71 and its traces from the landscape.

After recapturing power in 1995, AL aggressively advocated vociferous programmes to keep '71 safe from the programmes of erasure that were

slowly being implemented by other parties (such as the Bangladesh Nationalist Party, BNP, now the opposition). This was not to invent or fabricate a history but to heighten a history that was in danger of being suppressed and erased. The AL government created the Sheikh Mujib Museum archive, also known as the Bangabandhu Memorial Museum (1994), at Dhanmondi 32, Mujib's residence known as Bangabandhu Bhaban. AL also changed the name of the town of Baidyanathtala to Mujib-nagar, which means the 'City of Mujib', in honour of Mujibur Rahman. These were not only to save '71-history from erasure but also to bring it above the surface for the generations that had not witnessed the war; it was to reinforce nationalistic ideals. So, there was an intense sense of urgency for the creation of archives and monuments that would restore the memories of the war and stop historic erasure. It involved permanent and monumental architecture and changes in landscape and culture. The three categories of 1971 war archives that express the 71-culture in distinct ways and have unique nationalistic narratives are described below.

Swadhinata Sthambha and Museum of Independence War (SSMIW)

Swadhinata Sthambha and the Museum of Independence War (SSMIW), designed by architects Marina Tabassum and Kashef Mahboob Chowdhury and completed in 2013, is a case study of where the designing process was politically entwined (Figures 5, 6 & 7). This complex of both a museum/archive and the landscape was the result of a top-down process and an effort that came from the AL government. Thus, the budget was drawn from a national financial plan. The museum was set underground in a 67-acre (some say 63) area at today's Suhrawardy Uddyan in the Ramna Park.

Shadhinto Stambha, Dhaka.

Figure 5, source: photograph by Nubras Samayeen.

The eternal flame placed axially with the *Shadhinto Stambha.*

Figure 6, source: photograph by Syed Momin.

Ramna Park as a site for the museum also has its historic chronicles; it was one of the many *baghs* the Mughal built. It was built as *Bagh-e-Badshahi* or *Shahbag* (Garden of the King), which is now known as Suhrawardy Udyan (Begum 2018: 40). Later, with the British, the *Bagh-e-Badshahi* faced colonial re-appropriation to accommodate their colonial district. They turned the *bagh* into a race-course *maidan*, or open public space (Begum 2018: 43, 48).[15] This is also the place where Mujib gave his historic 7 March speech and where the Pakistani forces surrendered with a written agreement on 16 December of 1971. Later, in the postcolonial era (after the 1947 partition), the park changed its meaning again. Begum (2018) writes, 'The Ramna area which has been re-structured, reproduced, re-appropriated and consecutively manipulated throughout different political periods has played a vital role in the structuring and evolution of the city.' Thus, the site was strategically selected for the museum to be monumentalised and carries its historic values that started before '71.

In the Pakistan era, the military rulers transformed Ramna into a park lined with trees. In the post-independence era (after 1971), the race-course was renamed Suhrawardy Uddyan.[16] During the early 1980s, the BNP government turned the spot of Mujib's independence speech into a children's amusement park (*Sishu Park*), which was a deliberate expurgation move against palpable historical traces. Thus, the site appropriately deserved a monument or '71-marker that would recall its history. Also, it might be a call for a heritage scholar to see the rightness of this shift in design.

In the history-heavy location, the new SSMIW (initiated in 1995) launched a wide-open design competition that asked for a creative proposition of a monument accompanied by a museum. Consequently, the design aesthetics were crucial for the monument. This competition was won by the team of Tabassum and Chowdhury, then recent architecture graduates who met the criteria. The project started its construction by the BNP government (today's opposition party) in 2006. After the AL government was elected and came back to power in 2009, the project was completed in 2013.[17] However, it faced a political urgency as it was rushed to be open to the public as an incomplete project in 2011 before being finally completed in 2013 (Begum 2018).[18]

Tabassum and Chowdhury devised a symbolic 50-meter lighted column, a monumental light obelisk, or *Swadhinata Sthambha* (which means freedom tower) to rise above Ramna's dense trees. The *Sthambha* is placed along a visual axis with the symbolic eternal flame (Figures 5 & 6). The

soaring tower is noticeable from the entry, and a distance. Its strategic layout and design are placed axially from all paths to control spectators' vision towards it. The team deliberately developed an intensely perceptible monumental landscape. They tried to restore the space to its historical value by instigating the observance of 71-memory. A circumambulatory path that surrounds a large pool of water with the tower gets one to the underground museum and archive area. The water as a design element adds spirit and veneration toward the place. Thus, it creates a more omnidirectional infinity landscape, asserting its existence and making a forceful statement of nationalism.

While this emblematic, victorious monument makes a vivid declaration of nationalism outside, the premise has an archive at below-ground level, which is invisible yet adds to the striving nationalist impulse. As one enters the museum, there is an extra human-scale photo of Mujib giving his 7 March speech (Figure 7) The enlarged photo attempts to create a hyper-nationalist feeling. Set in the back-wall plane, as the dominant datum of the museum interior, the photo makes a voluble prominence to the historic moment that guided Bengali's emancipation. The spatial experience is thus centred around this photo. Here, Mujib's figural image becomes a public as well as a private entity that is repurposed. It is thus not only a design-datum for the interior of the museum but also a datum and major element that is reproduced, replicated, and distributed in a manner that itself becomes the symbol in 71-nationalism and a core element of these archives. Thus, Mujib's figure is an embodiment of 71, reproduced in other arts as an omnipresent part of today's urban landscape.

**Interior of the museum with large image
of Mujib (left) and water (right).**

Figure 7, source: photograph by Syed Momin.

As one enters from the light into the darkness on the museum's sub-terranean level, one surely gets a view and experiences the image for more than what a single photograph would afford. There is also a rotunda with falling water which appears as metaphor of teardrops, adding significance to the constructed sacredness. This creates a visible and indelible presence and power of the independence war.

What is critical here is that while Mujib is an important political figure, he is also the father of the current prime minister, Sheikh Hasina; there-fore, while his image contributes to the creation of a neo-national memory of the Bangladeshis today, it is also a personal memory for some. Hence the personal memory is instrumentalised to create the collective memory dwindling in different realms of private and public. But by placing some of these images and personalities at the core of nationalist representation, it also catalyses a homogenous type of singled-out nationalism that banishes or perhaps reduces possibilities of other historicisms discussed earlier in this article. [19]

SSMIW contains images of the massacres, tortures and the war in general (Figures 8 & 9). These "71-visuals" showcase gruesomeness, blood, deaths, leaderships, braveries, and victory to touch the spectator, where photographs as a part of archival paradoxes with recurrent usage become a ritual and a commodity (Samayeen 2021). The war images as an essential component of the archive particularly establish a reliability, trust and holistic sacredness. The gruesomeness of many photos directly arouses anger and other visceral sensations. This is an issue that Marianne Hirsch discusses as post-memory (Hirsch 1996), arguing that it becomes an apparatus of collective memory-making.[20] The powerful images create an impulse. As Geller observes, 'Nationalism as a sentiment, or as a move-ment, can best be defined in terms of this principle. Nationalist sentiment is the feeling of anger aroused by violation of the principle, or the feeling of satisfaction aroused by fulfilments' (Gellner 1983: 1). A newly emplaced 71-sentiment is brought through these emotionally intense photographs, which propagate a '71 simulacra and thus recreate an old yet new memory of the liberation war (Samayeen 2021). With photos that are silent, the sensation is only one-way, with the fierce nationalist feelings transmitted through the nationalist artefacts. Their reticence leaves the images to open-ended interpretations. The monumentalised war images thus retain and epigenetically pass along the atrocious moments, feelings and chronicles within '71-framework.
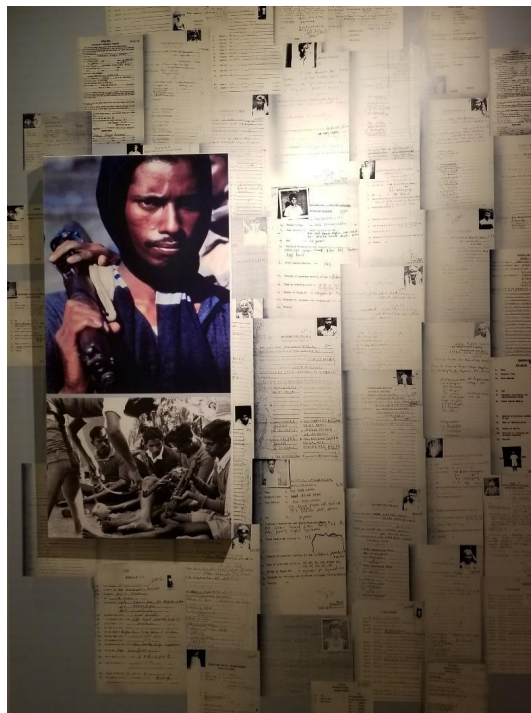
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"1971- Visuals".

Figure 8, source: photograph by
Nubras Samayeen.

"1971- Visuals".

Figure 9, source: photograph by Nubras Samayeen.

These photographs, paper-clips, and paraphernalia as "1971-visuals" become the potent and didactic agency to carry the nationalistic feelings and hence reconstruct collective memory to the new generations (Figures 1, 2, 8 & 9).

Thus, it is not only the quantity of the "1971-visuals" but also the strength of the visuals as well as the design inside that contributes to the construction of the sentiment that the archive and the architecture carry. These visuals easily gain the faith of the viewers. Reproduced at a different time, these testify to 71-now, consistent with Benjamin's ([1935] 1969) theory of mechanical reproduction. Samayeen brings a discussion of Barthes' *studium* and *punctum* that devises feeling. She argues that the war photographs of '71 signify *studium*, where photographer and spectator both are spontaneously and active within the exhibition space. Barthes' second element, *punctum* are associated with a personal sentiment, therefore the visuals disrupt and punctuate the *studium.* Through the course of *studium* and *punctum* process, spectators develop a personal and distinctive impression of '71. Benjamin argues:

Even the most perfect reproduction of a work of art is lacking in one element: its presence in time and space […] The traces of the first can be revealed only by chemical or physical analysis which it is impossible to perform on a reproduction; changes of ownership are subject to a tradition which must be traced from the situation of the original. ([1935] 1969)

Posters for Childrens Art Competetion.

Figure 10, source: photograph by Nubras Samayeen.

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Diverging from Azoulay's argument that archives are walled spaces, here the museum's architectural face, space and envelopment become part of the all-inclusive visual landscape and visuality. The power of archive syphons the wall, embraces bygone '71, and also connects spectators who cannot reject or deny the past; they get captivated to a time-period that they have not experienced. Thus, as much as the architecture and built forms are important, the archival materials are equally powerful to give the forms the empowerment that would impact the people's collective memory. Thus, the nationalist chronotope holistically contributes to the collective memory. But the mere process itself is also a part of the invisible influences. The call for this museum also stirred many in the design fields. The museum holds children's art competitions (Figure 10) on special days, organised by the Ministry of Culture, which also sets a dynamism that makes it intramural and makes the site more accessible to the masses.

Muktijudho Jadughar/Liberation War Museum (LWM)

Almost fifteen years after the founding of SSMIW, in August 2009, a new Liberation War Museum (LWM) opened to the public. This second category of nationalist monuments represented a *longue durée* approach. LWM started its journey in 1996, the same year AL got into power and the Independence War Museum project was initiated. The time frame of its opening reflects the favourable political environment that the government unlocked. AL government was more inclined and voluble to promote Bengali nationalism. Many expatriates who were hiding from the *razakaars* were returning in this time as well, hoping for a better sheltered environment at home (Oyshee 2020). Akku Chowdhury, one of the eight trustees of *Muktijuddha Smriti* Trust (Trust of Liberation War Memory) and a freedom fighter, converted a relative's residence in Dhaka's Shegun Bagicha area into a six-gallery museum.[21] The site, being a residential and light commercial area, did not have any historic significance before the museum claimed the space.

Liberation War Museum, Dhaka.

Figure 11, source: photograph by Nubras Samayeen.

Liberation War Museum, Dhaka.

Figure 12, source: photograph by Nubras Samayeen.

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With the support of many donors and the Institute of Architects Bangladesh (IAB), like the SSMIW, the Muktijuddha Trust also had a design process significant to its chronicle. With a vigorous interest from the trustees, in 2009, there was an open architectural design competition. The new museum was imagined to be iconic, symbolic, and monumental to spark the '71 spirit and uphold the memories of the liberation war to the people. It was to commemorate the struggle and sacrifices that led to the emergence of independent Bangladesh. One of the trustees and the member-secretary at that time, Mofidul Haq, declared, 'The new building of the Liberation War Museum would be an emblem of nation's pride and it would inspire the young generation' (Admin 2009). Hence the museum was intended to be set as a symbol, focusing on the newer generation, supported by local and international donations, with an aim to be built in two years. Another trustee, architect Robiul Hussain, said, 'We like to build up a museum where the young generation will get the true picture of the history of the country' (Admin 2009). Unlike the SSMIW, the LWM stakeholders are explicitly or implicitly participants of the '71 war. Hence, this archive is a passionate undertaking of those who felt the importance of an awakening of 71-spirit and history that needed to be preserved and spread, bringing a halt to any chance of erasure.

The water focused entry of Liberation War Museum.

Figure 13, source: photograph by Nubras Samayeen.

Ziauddin Tariq Ali mentioned that they observed that Bangladeshi people were forgetting their past amid other cultural forces; they did not want 71-history to perish; the Muktijuddha Trust wanted to make a museum that would reach the people and give access to incidents and stories from the historical moment. [22] The museum thus would be the means of preserving the memory as well as perpetuating a new collective memory of the 1971 liberation war. This memory would be directly encrypted from the donors' and trustees' personal memories from the war. Today, some fervent factions and individuals are interested in contributing beyond donations and bringing the '71 memory and history to a more palpable status for the masses.

One such example comes from *Bir Uttom* Captain Shahab Ahmed, a passionate freedom fighter and donor of LWM. Ahmed's actual wartime plane and the helicopter that he flew with Mujib are hung from the ceilings

as memorabilia that visitors can't avoid seeing while entering the museum (Figures 13 & 14). His photos are displayed in the archive.[23] This also creates an imaginary 71-setup in the visitors' minds. This visual paraphernalia is a deliberate effort to put oneself in 1971. The museum also intends to keep Shahab's oral history to intensify the experience with these visualities. With that LWM displays personal belongings, arms, and even human remains.

Young architects Tanzim Hasan Salim and Naheed Farzana won the LWM design competition in 2010. Unlike previous ones which emphasised the historical value of the sites, this one-acre space does not have any historic record and thus inserts new meaning onto what was previously a tabula rasa.[24] This patronage evokes a spatial and ideological expansion and apportionment of 1971, with a site for 1971 memory that is unseen yet ubiquitous. The new premise of the LWM was allotted in Dhaka's Agargaon to be moved from its previous location. Though close to the country's capital, the National Assembly Building Complex (*Shangshad Bhaban*), the new site is discreet and without clear visual access from the main avenue. However, the mere positioning of this new museum works as a catalyst for development of the area with hints of larger access roads in the near future.

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As the LWM (Figures 11, 12, 13 & 17) officially opened on 16 April of 2017, it provided much more space with its 3,500 square meters of gallery space and archive than the previous one. The exterior landscaped areas have several metaphorical architectural pieces set as cultural symbolism, such as bold sticks piercing the façade, which denote the bamboos and arms that Bengalis fought with. They offer palpable feelings and demand a reading of the landscape, thus connecting one to 1971. There is a terracotta fresco of Mujib, which again creates a homogeneous '71 aesthetics. The museum access is also defined by the 'Hall of Remembrance', a round water body with a waterfall in the middle, creating a spiritual moment much like the one at SSMIW. Sara Zaker, the member-secretary and a trustee of the museum, mentioned that a visual intensity of '71 in the architecture was always encouraged, for which they wanted bright new ideas for the museum. [25] Zaker added that having a special architecture was their core reason to call for a competition and that they are immensely happy with the outcome. She further stated that this modernist-looking museum has a lot of metaphors of the horrors of '71 represented within the building, offering an opportunity to decipher and thus feel and be immersed in history.

Helicopter from 1971.

Figure 14, source: photograph by Nubras Samayeen.

**Images from Liberation War Museum,
Captain Shahab Ahmed (middle).**

Figure 15, source: photograph by Nubras Samayeen.

Its architecture and modernist vocabulary gained much applause from the local architectural community and the people in general. Thus, it not only serves as a container of history and memory but also changes the value of the space therein that had no historical significance prior to the construction of the museum. So, in conjunction with the previous example of SSMIW, LWM alludes to the fact that these archives/museums are new nationalistic forms that are not only taking sites of older values but are also appropriating, reclaiming and thus expanding and reshaping the urban landscape with nuovo 71-values.

Ali mentions that it is essential to bring the history of the war to the people.[26] To him, the history does not start from the 1952s language movement or the 1971 war, but goes far back to the Indus Valley, to bring contiguity of cultural uniqueness for which the country sought its independence in the first place.[27]Therefore, the museum does not only have images of 1971 or 1952 but also has sections that chronologically display the country's history from the Indus Valley till today. LWM has a distinctively designed space inside that also covers the atrocities perpetrated against women and children, making the archive more relevant and democratic. It houses a bookstore and an archive, opening research possibilities.

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LWM perpetuates another type of instrumentality over Bangladesh's neo-nationalist landscape formation, propagating intangible nationalist connectivity. Ali remarked that through these programs and activities the new generation is made aware of the history of their country (Ali 2019). These events of anniversaries and dates facilitate annual rituals of historic signifycance such as the Independence Day program (26 March) and Mujib's Birth Anniversary (17 March), which are set up to include children. LWM doesn't celebrate local events only; it also opens up to celebrate International Museum Day (18 May) and Hiroshima Day (6 August), which situates the museum, the country, and the days in a global context. In fact, LWM celebrates and holds educational events for youngsters to commemorate the Holocaust and observe World Genocide Commemoration Day, which makes them a part of global cartography and historicism. The visitors mediate between the meaning of Holocaust remembrance and the memorial, which offers a formative, civic, and individual experience. This intensity depends on the functionality and richness of the LWM archive, which empowers the architecture and landscape too.

Mobile museums, and libraries of Liberation War Museum.

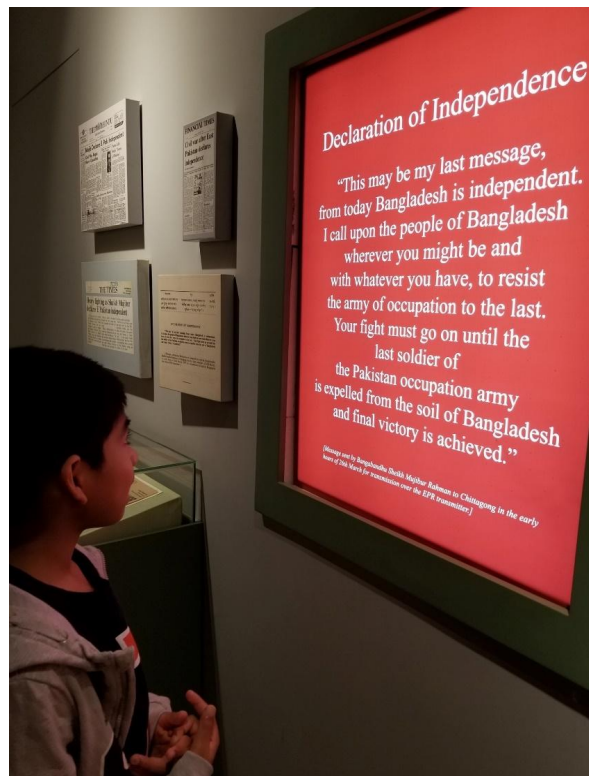

Figure 16, source: photograph by Nubras Samayeen.

Liberation War Museum.

Figure 17, source: photograph by Nubras Samayeen.

What is also unique about LWM is its curriculum, which is designed to reach children and young adults from various institutions (schools, colleges, tutorial centres and art schools). It collaborates within the urban areas and in the rural spreads. They have special programs that accommodate children's museum days and day-long trips. For that, LWM has allotted buses as mobile museums and libraries (Figure 16). As Ricoeur mentions on memory instrumentality, 'To evoke one—to imagine it—is to evoke the other—to remember it. Memory thus operates in the wake of the imagination' (Ricoeur 2004: 5). Thus, through active participation, spatial engagements, and collaborations of younger generations, these memory spots become alive. The live landscapes tend to become more iterative and interactive, rather than being passive walled spaces displaying sterile objects.

Tabinda Hassan Khan, a mother of an eight-year-old, mentioned that these LWM art competitions are not only within the premise of the archive; LWM encourages and arranges the same events sliced up to take place in a micro-scale in schools, alumni clubs, and other institutions.[28] Sahir, a six-year-old, reports that he participated in an art competition arranged by LWM at his father's alumni club (Cadet College Club, a relatively elite clique). The subject matter he was asked to draw was Muktijudho, which plainly means 'Liberation War'. Sahir, who never saw the war's ghastliness, ended up drawing from his limited imagination capacity a group of men carrying a flag; this was independence to him. This is an example of imagined community that relies on one sign—its flag or previously mentioned national anthem. The authorities often ask people to draw an imagined liberation war scenario, which reduces to the aestheticization of the flag, soldiers and even Mujib's figure. How would a child know or visualise independence? At this historical moment in Bangladesh, the awakening of this question is a matter of rhetoric only. The imagination is permeated by visual landscapes of museums and monuments and "71-visuals" aesthetics.

A young professional, Fahinaz Ferdous Meema, revealed that as a child, she also participated in one of the art competitions organised by LWM. She writes, 'I remember participating in one of the art competitions back in my school days on 16 December (Victory Day) and the topic was *tomar chokhe muktijudhu*, which literally means liberation war in your eyes.'[29] Growing up as an architect, Meema pursued her childhood imagination; she designed a hypothetical war museum for her design class in her architecture school (Meema 2020). It is not only "one" Meema or "one" Sahir: '71 museums have become part of an archetypal nationalist element that has

entered the national imagination of younger generations who had no first-hand experience.

With a vehement 71-spirit, young Nishat Tasnim Oyshee (Oyshee 2020) designed an idea project of a memorial for her class, one that she envisions at Chuknagar. She aggressively demands that memorials and archives be built to solidify the memory of such a large-scale massacre of people that Bangladesh witnessed. As her design apparition incorporates mapping and signifying the substantial memory spaces such as points of killing, torture and war-memories (Figures 18, 19, 20 & 21). These spatial moments were everywhere in the landscape: such as in the river where bodies were thrown and the trees where people hid. She calls her work "Through the silts: poem, prayer, and promises for Chuknagar". Oyshee was influenced by Mamoon's text, and also by her interviewees (many of whom were expats fearful of returning to the country), when she tried to translate the text and words into a contextual reality. Therefore, a rising 71-spirit has granted an upsurge of memory design/architectural typology and ideals specific to 1971. This establishes a self-evident example of the rising nationalist landscape which is one of design as well as spirit.

Chuknagar Memorial designed by Nishat Tasnim Oyshee.

Figure 18, source: Nishat Tasnim Oyshee.

Chuknagar Memorial designed by Nishat Tasnim Oyshee.

Figure 19, source: Nishat Tasnim Oyshee.

Chuknagar Memorial designed by Nishat Tasnim Oyshee.

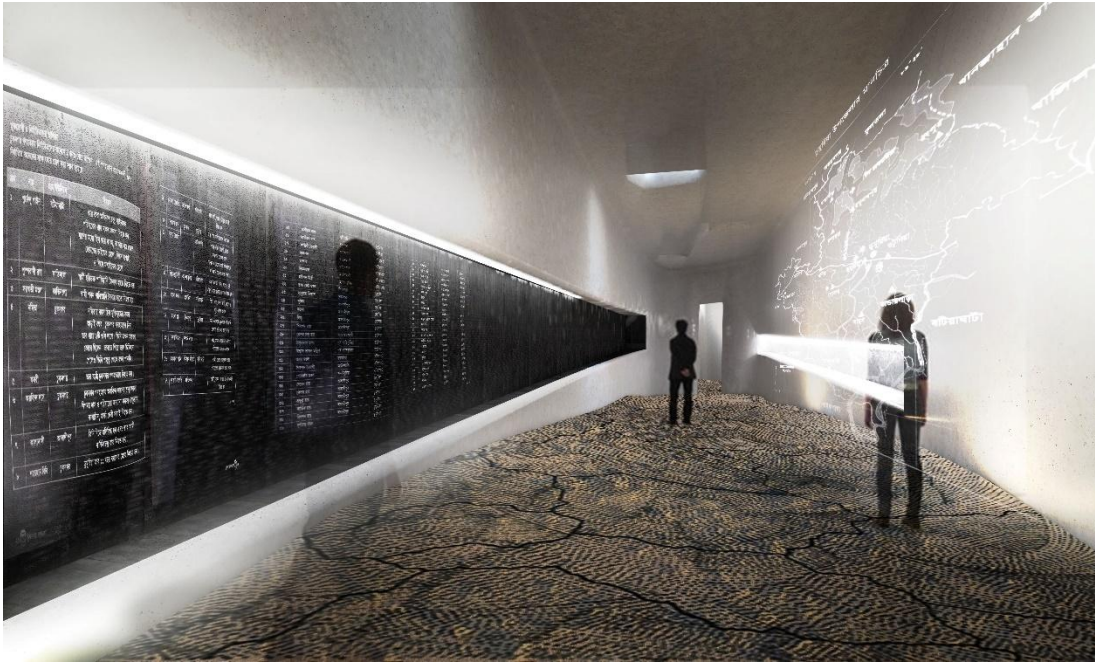Figure 20, source: Nishat Tasnim Oyshee.

Chuknagar Memorial designed by Nishat Tasnim Oyshee.

Figure 21, source: Nishat Tasnim Oyshee.

In 2019, among the 28 best hypothetical thesis design projects from the Bangladesh's 10 architectural schools projected were '71-war museums or memorials for killed women (Saud 2020). This was almost 60 percent of all cultural projects. These projects were imaginary projects on numerous massacre sites or sites of '71 history that has potency to revive '71 memory. This indicates an even more strident memory and nationalist landscape. Hence, '71 museum and archive models have become almost a normative part of spatial explorations in design schools, which was not so fifteen or twenty years back. Thus, the new force of '71 museum establishments propagated a '71-ideology to a more intercellular level in infective ways that Foucault alluded in his "Bio-power".

This has been the case with many Sahirs, Meemas, and Oyshees —the Bangladeshi progenies who have not experienced the war first-hand. As the experience of Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's children*, 1971 is a major event to them and an indelible part of growing up to be a patriotic "Bangladeshi" (Figure 15). This ideology is constructed in parallel to knowing and immersing Bangladesh's other nationalist cultural entities such as the deltaic landscape with water and boats, the *Hilsha* fish, the *Shapla* (waterlily), and the roaring Royal Bengal Tiger. Ananya Kabir wrote of 'the self-conscious telling of those stories, to the processes of re-memorialization'. Both post-memory and post-amnesia are critical to the new nationalist landscape, as these spaces are created with different narratives and articulated historical

experiences. Hence, along with the archival visuals, the built environment's forms, façades, and aesthetics embody, the total visual landscape conveys a meaning that contributes to the making of nationalistic sentiment.

With the help of students in the rural areas, the LWM programme for oral history is trying find freedom fighters and persons who had direct experiences of the war in their respective villages. Perhaps one had lost kin or participated in the war. These histories are collected by the rural students and archived by LWM. Hence it is a history written by children and the direct participants. This is a vernacular history and a history of the ordinary. Posters and drawings are spread to the schools to educate the school students in rural areas to engage them in such projects. This program, therefore, is an effort to historicise and heroize a subaltern 71-history that otherwise would be forgotten. This process itself is double-sided and goes both ways: it spreads, promotes and, at the same time, expands. Therefore, this is an intra-spatial programme that brings the marginalised '71 heroes to the front stage. Though these programmes sound like micro-level intervention, they have a comprehensive impact on newer generations. Breaking the threshold of walled spaces and also urban-rural distinctions, this unique bottom-up process opens up voices.

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Torture Cell and Burial Ground Barisal (TCBGB)

Torture Cell and Burial Ground Barisal (TCBGB) is an archive and museum that has not yet been built and is currently going through its design phase (Figures 22 & 23). As LWM opens up a wider scope from Dhaka, going from the urban core to the rural, the TCBGB represents a third category of archive which sprouted from massacre sites such as Chuknagar. Largely set in semi-urban or small-town settings, these museums, which are relatively smaller in scale, come from the locality, from a vision and demand of the common people. Therefore, the generative process comes from local public demand. This process has a tangible historic association with the sites where they are located. This is also an instance of making a statement and memory-building through archive-making in the outskirts of Dhaka, where monumental LWM and SSMIW set a major example of '71 space-making. Paradoxically, though these sites exert their historic power, by replicating the trend and visuals, the museums run the risk of making '71 quotidian; TCBGB is so too.

Design Proposal for Torture Cell and Burial Ground Barisal (To be built).

Figure 22, source: architects Abu Sayeed M. Ahmed and Masroor Mamum.

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Design Proposal for Torture Cell and Burial Ground Barisal (To be built).
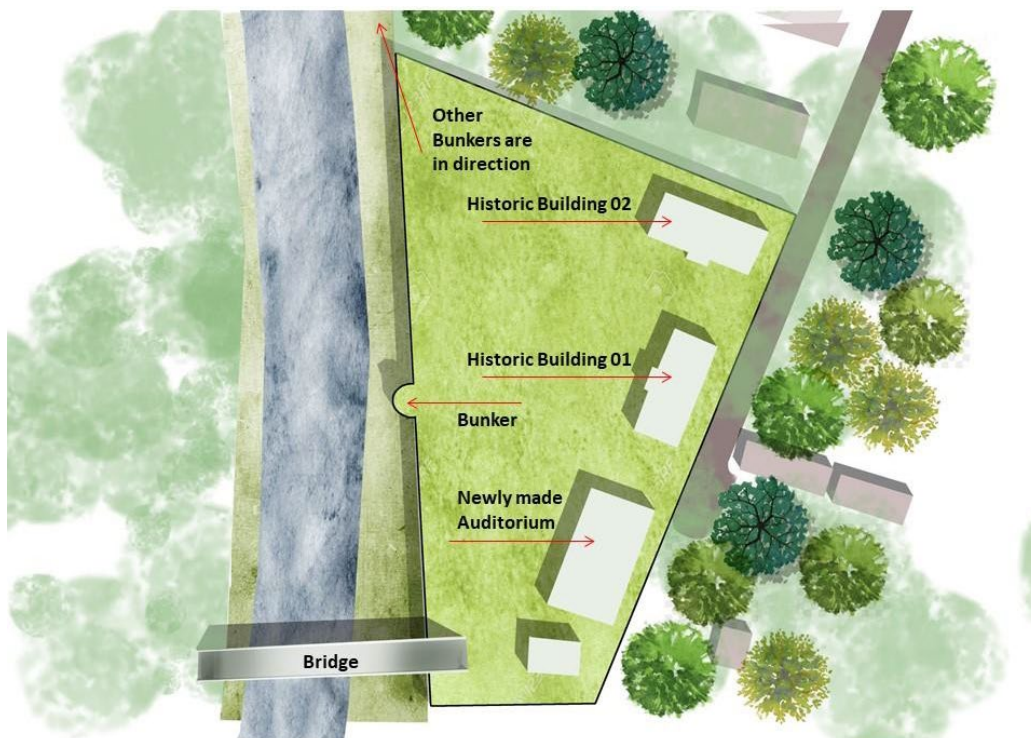

Figure 23, source: architects Abu Sayeed M. Ahmed and Masroor Mamum.

In 2016, in Barisal, the local people developed an urge to revive the history of this area. This particular spot, though it had a dark history attached to it, had rarely been denoted as a historic site. As per locals, some of whom were eyewitnesses, this site was a torture-area, where both freedom fighters and civilians irrespectively were tortured and killed. It is highly probable that there were rape cases, which were common in '71's massacre spots. Typical of ubiquitous slaughterhouses and massacre sites, the tortured and dead bodies were mostly thrown from the bridge into the adjacent water channels. This plot had long been the space of negative memories, becoming with time, a haunted space of ghostly war spirits.

Though the site has direct historic relation to the war, with time, people started to forget its '71 connection. People started using the long-neglected area for recreational purposes. Some of the local people cleaned up and repurposed the space to be more like a leisure park. However, resistance grew from the adjacent communities of Barisal; many rightfully demanded the retention of the site's original meaning and value associated with '71. Mamun mentioned that it was perhaps also the Barisal City Corporation (BCC) mayor's willingness, which might have arisen from the Dhaka '71 landscape, that made it a possible project to undertake.[30] Perhaps it is the urge of both the public and the mayor to make museumised institutions of spectacle to employ patriotic visual practices that makes museumification a quotidian yet an everyday regalia.

Therefore, with vested citizens' interests, BCC took a different track from the LWM and SSMIW. The planners asked LMW to initiate and organise its restoration. Architect Robiul Hussain and later Professor Abu Sayeed and his team, which included architect Masroor Mamun, were approached by the museum authority. Mamun also worked as the designer of the exhibittion of the Bangabandhu Memorial Extension at the Bangabandhu residence and was briefly involved in the SSMIW exhibition design phase.[31] As the TCBGB design process continues, their proposal preserves the two historic buildings—the torture cells, and the bunker—intact; the architecture stands as an authentic memorandum.

This design is less monumental in scale than the previous two. Ahmed says the intention was to preserve the memory. It uses an adaptive reuse method and landscape as a technique to revive the historic denotation of the site. The site design is inclusive of the bridge over the canal that was once used as the point from which to throw the dead bodies of the tortured, the raped and the martyrs into the water. Thus, the canal becomes a part of the history and memory landscape as well. Upon completion, the new

museum intends to carry 71-visuals like the other two and become an archive that is expected to be explored by many.

What makes this case study different is its predisposition to be an "authentic" site of '71 memories and an underrepresented population. This site is neither reclaimed nor a tabula rasa but carries memories that were generated within. As a former torture cell, it relates to the legitimacy of the use and conservation without concealing its history or altering the signifycance of the edifices that the locals hold. Thus, this third category is the extreme opposite of the categorical spectrum of the three. It contributes to the spatial productions in a very different way. The spaces themselves embody more recent material memories that contribute to the mnemonic evocations of '71.

Conclusion

Memory and nationalistic feelings are communicated through visuals. Through extenuated scale, statuary and consequently enormous effects, SSMIW, LWM, TCBGB and other '71 archives and museums are spectacles. Elements such as Tabassum and Kashef's *sthambha*, Salim and Farzana's allegorical elements and the actual bunker of Mamun and Ahmed are all architectural displays. This case-study triad presents built-environment as participatory and performative spaces where a nationalistic force of '71 and its ideology are produced and fabricated through a tautological landscape of nationalism. The visual landscape is doubly empowered by both '71 visuals and the built environment. This propagates diverse engagements with the spectators. Like Hirsch's argument that photographs are a key medium of post-memory, the built environment—that is, the architecture and iconic images displayed within, which contribute to the making of a nationalistic visual landscape—is also a crucial apparatus in the production of post-memory and collective memory that is instrumentalised to create the neo-nationalist ideals.

Such is the case for '71. The war experiences are transmitted affectively to create collective memories. In the post-independence era, this new-fangled landscape is a new visual taxonomy that forces people to immerse, react and connect. Thus, as much as the producers of such spaces are accountable, with a bodily and visceral engagement, the public is accountable too. They become a part of the production of nationalism. Ironically, this archival landscape seemingly offers a *historique-glacé* or frozen history; it is a history that the country cannot deny. The '71 archives, with their historicism and the impulse to consecrate public space with new meanings,

inflect a new wave of patriotism by being points of mnemosyne and "mnenoscape"—a landscape of "remembrance, memory". These national-istic landscapes transform into theatrical spaces where both personal and collective memory are enacted. Therefore, as much as they change the landscape, they also impact and alter the minds of citizens. These are spaces where the citizens go and themselves contribute to the construction of memory. As the landscapes change, they become the produced, or memory, like Nora's (1989) 'places of memory'. The nationalism of '71 creates an imaginary periphery that is limitless yet contained in the invisible political border of Bangladesh, this is only for Bangladesh and of Bangladeshis.

As the spirit dissipates spaces and the physical architectural border diminishes, the sites bring out a nationalist landscape and symbolic power and imagery that connects directly to '71 in spectators' minds. Therefore, as in Benjamin's analysis (Benjamin [1935] 1969: 18), these archives are appropriate in twofold manners —'by use' and 'by perception', where one is visceral or physical and the other is mental. Put another way, two elements are involved: (a) the corporeal or tangible and (b) the intangible or impalpable form, creating a combined effect on mass. At the same time, the archives themselves appropriate and change the larger landscape in the same twofold manner, generating a holistic '71 essence. Benjamin (ibid.) mentioned that 'on the tactile side there is no counterpart to contem-plation on the optical side'. Thus, the mass audience responds to the per-suasive landscape with personal interactions that happen on an individual level.

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Consequently, the archive becomes a self-stating institution, crystallising the memories from '71 to a new production of collective memory and thus becoming an apparatus on nationalism. In *Imagined communities*, Ander-son argues that 'the museum and the museumising imagination are both profoundly political'; they are 'institutions of power' as three: the census, the map and the museum.' (Anderson [1983] 2006: 163-206) Like colonial institutions, these archives are set for reasons of conquest: it's a conquest of '71 memories. So, the landscape as a memory spot brings back a historical past that is '71 to an immediate present and alters it to social and collective memory. This creates a post-memory and a representative collective memory that is prone towards a provocative urge of neo-nationalism, evaporating other forces such as water-based landscape, muddy cultural ethos and pluralism that the country bore from antiquity.

This nationalism is also secular in its very nature and thus expands on the cultural pluralism. But is this rising nationalist contracture pure?

These architectural and archival spaces develop into a symbolic element of the commemorative heritage of any community; in this case, it is the Bangladeshi community. By repetitive use of images, reiterated texts, and objects, the visual materials contribute the augmented neo-nationalistic culture. Just like Nora's (1989) reference to these places, objects or concepts, creating a visual impulse vested with historical significance contributing to collective memory. This memory and '71 feeling turn out to be almost inheritable. But also, reproduced art has caused '71 to be recreated through new archives. This bridges the distance from the original event and context with text. Therefore, this archival reproduction through museums and the repetitive use of images is an event-branding process that connects to Benjamin's theory. The aura of 1971 depreciates with the number of reproductions with spatial and temporal distance.

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Also, the depreciation happens primarily with the cult value where the image rarely addresses the artist but becomes a potent representative of the war. In Benjamin's words, 'mechanical reproduction of the art changes the reaction of the masses towards the art' (Benjamin [1935] 1969: 14). Here, the "71 museums" war photographs. copies and images of images along with the reconstructed site create post-memory. This institution-alisation and systemisation confirm Michel Foucault's definition of archives and also his idea of biopolitics where nationalism is an element that is processed through landscape. An invisible disciplinary force, it is embedded in the constructed landscape, creating the rubric of a homogenous category of collective memory.

But is this rise of fierce '71 *chetona or* consciousness critical or is it a biased, emotionally charged event? Professor Abu Sayeed M. Ahmed argues that 1971 was slowly but systematically being set on a course to erasure. That effort was occurring spatially and culturally, so there is a strong and imminent need to bring a halt to the historical destruction. Hence, given today's historical paradigm, the country needs to bring a permanence to '71 and establish it before the country can afford to be critical. Hence, any critical exploration of '71 appears to be a negative force on the country's historicism. Perhaps 50 years is not enough. With direct participants of the war and its eyewitnesses still alive, the '71 history is susceptible to subjectivity and leaves the country to spend more time to be critical.

Architect Peter Eisenman (1982) explains that memory is comprised of a series of past events, and history can be known through a collective

memory of these events. He further suggests that memory thus can become a guide to the structures of the urban landscape of a city—a guide in revealing the history of the architecture. He quotes architect Aldo Rossi: '[...] in a city, as memory begins, where history ends' (in Eisenman 1982: 11). Therefore, the designed spaces propagate certain types of nationalistic ideology that people instantaneously learn, nurture and transmit with nationalistic dogma. Hence these customers and designers become the producers, builders and the makers of nationalist idols. Unlike previous monuments that are passive and more allochronic, these museums and archives seem to be promoting and partaking of active engagements and thus are synchronous apparatuses. Engagements of exemplified art competitions and programs are not just the production of art pieces but also the creation of knowledge and imaginary war spaces that produce a new generation that can focus on the concept of '71 nationalism.

National New Delhi, completed 2020.

Figure 24, source: photograph by Aparajita Sangha.

National New Delhi, completed 2020.

162   Figure 25, source: photograph by Aparajita Sangha.

Bangladesh is not unique in this nationalist discourse. This new drift in landscape evidently puts these sites of memory in the global historicism that is being vehemently enacted in countries such as India, England and the United States. This discourse is comparable to India's new Vallabhbhai Patel statue in Gujarat, Mayawati Park and the National War Memorial (Figures 24 & 25) built by the current Hindu nationalist party Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) near India Gate in New Delhi. This is also in line with America's divided nationalist landscape and the recent dispute on whether to keep or not to keep the Confederate statues (Samayeen, McCarthy & Wong 2020). Whose memory do you want to exhibit, and at the cost of whose? Therefore, the establishment of the African American Museum in Washington DC (2016, Figure 26), African American Baton Rouge (2001), the newly inaugurated Partition Museum at Amritsar (2017) and the Jewish Museum in Berlin (2001) are also containers of memory. They project architectural landscape as a memory landscape with both archival content and built aesthetics. These materials and specific aestheticization communicate at a connection to 1971.

African American Museum, Washington DC.

Figure 26, source: photograph by Nubras Samayeen.

Jan Assman and John Czaplicka (1995) write that 'every individual memory constitutes itself in communication with others. These "others" are, however, not just another set of people, rather they are groups that conceive their unity and peculiarity through a common image of their past.' Hence, though the three categories discussed here started and operate distinctively with their expression and generative processes, their purpose is the same, that is, to conserve and restore national ideals related to the war. These sites of memory are repurposed as nationalist markers that showcase components from the '71 war paradigm to generate nationalistic emotions and reproduce nationalistic propaganda. The three sites possess a shared commonality of spatial reclamation, which reasserts the historical significance of 1971 by creating a nationalist cultural 'locus' following *genius loci* or 'spirit of the place' (Norberg-Schulz 1979). Contrary to the sites' phenomenological spirit, it is the political and cultural spirit that the museum or monument site extends as a form of knowledge and memory production.

Today, the frantic reproduction of '71 visuals vigorously defines a shifting landscape towards a new nationalist landscape of Dhaka. The city, with its 118 square miles, has more than twelve '71 museums. Built in the last ten years, some of these museums, including the Bangladesh Police Liberation

War Museum (2013), the Shaheed Janani Jahanara Imam Memorial Museum (2007), the Bijoyketon Cantonment Liberation War Museum (2019), Sheikh Mujib—Agartala Case Memorial Museum (2017), and also many in the outskirts, such as the Jamalpur Gandhi Ashram (1971), and the Mukti Sangram Museum (2007). There is also the Jalladkhana Killing Field Memorial, which was found in 1999 after an excavation and turned into a museum in 2009. These exhumed massacre spots create a necro-landscape or mnemonic landscape throughout.

This contestation and monopolisation of space is not a conundrum, but a bridge created between Bangladesh's past and present. Thus, this school-arly intervention is a critical analysis: it neither opposes nor subverts the current nationalistic disposition. While a state or nation's boundary is a static component, nationalism, the core of nation-building, is volatile; it's primacy changes with time and political reigns. While synthetically enforced nationalist ideologies become culturally normative for us and for generations to come, this paper also waits when archive reading will be 'critical' and seeks what is not present or presented, and thus can challenge today's idealised nationalism and nationalist landscape. Or perhaps the question is, can this be ever be challenged?

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Endnotes

[1] I owe a debt of gratitude to my Uncle Shahab, a 1971 war hero, who instilled an inquisitive, nationalistic spirit in me and introduced me to the '71-museum patrons. I am grateful to Lorin, my patient accomplice and photographer. I am thankful to Mithun for spirited conversations and to Oyshee, Tihi, Tuli, Sahir and Meema for sharing their stories. I am indebted to Professors Ahmed, O'Brien and McCarthy for their scholarly input and assurance. Thanks to all editors and particularly Farhan for his hard work on this special and much needed compilation. Most importantly, I am appreciative of my advisor, Professor D. F. Ruggles, for letting me contribute to this long-awaited venue I am passionate about.

[2] Tagorism is the philosophy of Noble prize winner Rabindranath Tagore from Bengal. Tagore's ideologies are shared primarily in the Bengal: East (Bangladesh) and West Bengal (a part of India). Tagorism inspired songs and dance forms which were banned from practicing during the Pakistan era.

[3] Bengal: The people in Bengal speak a common language, Bangla/Bengali, that formed from Sanskrit roots. The Bengali-speaking eastern region of India and Bangladesh together are called Bengal. Bengali therefore also means the people who speak Bangla. Bengali is thus used both as noun and adjective. Prior to Bengal's division in 1905, it was one region of the Indian subcontinent sharing a common language and culture. After this division, East Bengal became Bangladesh and part of the region was called West Bengal, which today falls in India.

Bengali and Brahma philosophy: a part of the eastern region of India and Bangladesh together is called Bengal. The people in Bengal speak a common language, Bangla/Bengali, formed from Sanskrit roots. Bengali also means the people who speak Bangla. Prior to Bengal's division in 1905, it was one region

of the Indian subcontinent sharing a common language and culture. After this division, East Bengal became Bangladesh and part of the region was called West Bengal, which today falls in India.

Bengali was often considered a non-Muslim language just because it has roots in *Sanskrit,* a language originated with Hinduism and by the Hindus. Today India's primarily language is Hindi, which is also rooted in Sanskrit.

[4] Here, the article brackets the broad scope of visual landscape to architectural landscape that includes archival materials such as photos, images, visual, texts and liquid installations of the 1971 war that it calls "71-visuals" to focus on Bangladesh's neonationalist scenery.

[5] 'Here land in the country, here the land Bangladesh.' The country of Bangla is the 'land', the term *desh* also used to denote a rural counterpart. It's more applicable to this research since it was mostly rural. Urbanisation really started taking place in the seventeenth century.

[6] The word Bengal came from *Vanga* (or *Banga*).

[7] *Jheel*, *beel*, *pukur*, and *kunda* exist in Bengali literature and music and are core components that exist in Bengali literature, music and folklore.

[8] Note: The Vedic Aryans considered Bengal an impure land and created a hesitance among visitors and settlers such as Turks, Afghans and Persians and, even later, the Portuguese and the British.

South Asia formally consists of India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bhutan, and Maldives. They also have a common association SAARC (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation)

[9] Brahma Dharma is a book on Bengali philosophy written and instigated by Rabindranath Tagore's father, Debendranath Tagore, in 1848.

[10] 'Dhaka underwent major changes as a provincial capital during the Mughal era. The Mughal forms built small yet significant number of gardens and *chawks*, which were public spaces depending on the geology, weather and landscape of the region' (Nilufar 2011).

[11] It has its roots in Sanskrit, making it different from Pakistan's national language, Urdu, which has Arabic and Persian roots. Pakistan's culture is also distinct from Bengal's pluralist culture. Bengal's cultural rituals clearly show Hindu-Buddhist influences.

[12] In his book, Mamoon (2002) mentions that he started collecting oral history from eyewitnesses. One for them is the principal of a college. Chuknagar had not been surfaced before Mamoon wrote the text. Interestingly, many of the people who collaborated with the killers are still alive and residing with those who survived. Hence there was fear of disclosing history. There could be further killing and violence if the truth was revealed Some of the oral informers were without family, and many had left Bangladesh, their home country, in fear.

Interviewee Nishat Tasnim Oyshee, architect who proposed a Chuknagar Complex, mentioned that many of the interviewees who were working on Bangladesh's independence research were out of the country, in fear they would be killed. They returned to the home country of Bangladesh after AL came to power and a '71 spirit rose.

[13] Interview with Nishat Tasnim Oyshee. 2020, 25 July.

[14] It was split from a political party that was previously called the Muslim League.

[15] In 1840, the race-course was reclaimed by Magistrate Skinner and a ticket house was built (Begum 2018).

[16] Sarwardy Uddyan is re-named after Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy. He was an eminent politician, a Bengali nationlist and a lawyer who was Prime Minister of Pakistan.

[17] Bangladesh Nationalist Party, popularly known as BNP, was formed in 1978 by former Bangladesh President Ziaur Rahman after Mujib's death and the presidential election.

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[18] Interview with Marina Tabassum. 2020, 2 January, Dhaka, Bangladesh.

[19] The Independence Museum is not the sole example of such processes; there are others. Mithamoyeen in Kishorganj (outside Dhaka) in another example. It is on a historic site where the Pakistani army engaged in torture and killing. It was undertaken to be preserved and developed as a museum and library as adaptive reuse by LGED of the Bangladesh government. It is currently being designed by architect and Professor Abu Sayeed.

[20] Hirsch (1996) neologises 'post-memory', which she describes as the relationship of new generations who stand with the individual, collective, and cultural damage of earlier ones. It's a memory that creates the relationship for the 'generation after' through transference of personal, collective, and cultural trauma of an event that happened before by means of the stories and images.

[21] Interview with Ziauddin Tariq Ali. 2019, 18 December, Dhaka, Bangladesh.

[22] Ibid.

[23] *Bir Uttom:* After *Bir Sreshtho*, *Bir Uttom* is the highest award for bravery for a living individual who fought in the independence war of 1971.

[24] Tabula rasa: blank slate; in this instance, empty site.

[25] Interview with Sara Zaker. 2020, 6 January, Dhaka, Bangladesh.

[26] Interview with Ziauddin Tariq Ali. 2019, 18 December, Dhaka, Bangladesh.

[27] Ibid.

[28] Interview with Tabinda Hassan Khan. 2020, 20 July, phone interview.

[29] Victory Day, also known as *Bijoy Dibosh*, is a national event of Bangladesh that is celebrated on 16 December for the victory over Pakistan.
Independence Day, or *Shadhinota Dibos*, is celebrated on 26 March. This national holiday commemorates the country's declaration of independence from Pakistan by Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.
Meema, Fahinaaz Ferdous. 2020, 9 July, social media communication with the author.

[30] Mamun, Masrur. 2020, 29 July, email correspondence with author.

[31] Interview with Abu Sayeed M. Ahmed. 2020, 29 July,
Interview with Masrur Mamun. 2020, 2 January, Dhaka, Bangladesh,
Mamun, Masrur. 2020, 29 July, email correspondence with author.

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Interview with Abu Sayeed M. Ahmed. 2020, 29 July.

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