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The Language of Student Power and Space: Building a Spatialised Social Movement Identity in East Pakistan, 1948–1954

Abstract

This article traces the emergence and development of a student political identity in post-colonial East Pakistan as it coalesced around the Bengali Language Movement (*Bhasha Andolan*). It further argues that the collective student political identity was directly tied to the development of the Dhaka University campus as a contentious movement space. The politicisation of the students and the campus operated in a mutually constitutive dynamic in which students both defined, and were defined by, their physical control of the campus space and in spatialised ritual practices memorialising deceased student activists as political martyrs. This case study provides a salient example of the interconnected relationship of urban space, collective identity, and social movements.

Keywords: *student politics; Bangladesh; Pakistan; campus space; urban space; protest; social movements*

Introduction

Can I ever forget the twenty-first of February
Incarnadined by the love of my brother?[1]

The song *Amar Bhaier Rokte Rangano Ekushey* (My Brother's Blood Spattered on the 21st) is performed annually on 21 February as part of countless celebrations across Bangladesh, and within the Bengali Diaspora, in memory of protesters killed in Dhaka on 21 February 1952 as part of the *Bhasha Andolan* (Language Movement).[2] The

1 Abdul Gafar Chowdhury: Amar Bhaier Rokte Rangano Ekushey [1952], translation by Kabir Chowdhury, in: Henry Glassie/Feroz Mahmud (eds.): Living Traditions: Cultural Survey of Bangladesh Series II, Dhaka 2008, pp. 578–579.

2 As point of clarification regarding terms and translation: *Bhasha Andolan* (translated directly as Language Movement) refers here to the social movement in East Pakistan from

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song, said to have been written at the bedside of a student who had been shot by the police at Dhaka University, laments the death of those killed, and calls for action to continue the movement. It concludes with the lines "The souls of my martyred brothers still cry. But today everywhere the solemn strength of the people has begun to stir and we shall set February ablaze by the flame of our fierce anger. How can I ever forget the twenty-first of February?"[3] Indeed, the events of that day are not forgotten in Bangladesh—the movement, the martyrs, and the monument to them occupy a dominant presence in the historical and emotional memory of Bangladesh as a nation. The annual celebration of *Ekushe* on the grounds of Bangla Academy and Dhaka University is typically the largest secular celebration of the year, even exceeding the attendance of Liberation Day festivities.[4]

The *Bhasha Andolan,* for Bengalis and a broader audience, provides a narrative story that condenses complex political and cultural negotiations taking place in the newly formed postcolonial state into an emotionally charged story of martyrdom and righteousness. Tariq Rahman captures the legacy of the Language Movement well, describing:

> The symbol of *Ekushe*, as the 21st of February was called, resonated throughout the political and cultural life of the intelligentsia of East Bengal. The essays, poems and plays on it in particular and the language movement in general bear witness to its crucial significance. In fact, *Ekushe* and the *Shaheed Minar* were (and remain) the most powerful symbols of resistance in the political life of what is now Bangladesh. They gave emotional force to political and economic demands.[5]

1948–1956 for the addition of Bangla as a national language of Pakistan; the word *Ekushe* (translated directly as twenty-first) when used as proper noun refers both to the events of the date 21 February, 1952 in which several protesters were killed and to the annual memorial celebration of the Language Movement on the 21 February; *Shaheed Minar* (translated directly as Martryr's Memorial) refers sometimes generically to any monument to those killed on 21 February, and sometimes specifically to the large national monument near the grounds of Dhaka University.

3 Abdul Gafar Chowdhury: Amar Bhaier Rokte Rangano Ekushey, p. 579. The memorialisation of Ekushe is not confined to Bangladesh alone, see also José Mapril: A Shahid Minar in Lisbon: Long Distance Nationalism, Politics of Memory and Community among Luso-Bangladeshis, in: South Asia Multidisciplinary Academic Journal [Online], 9 (2014), at: http://journals.openedition.org/samaj/3733 (accessed on 5 June 2019); DOI : 10.4000/samaj.3733; Claire Alexander: Contested Memories: The Shahid Minar and the Struggle for Diasporic Space, in: Ethnic and Racial Studies 36:4 (2013), pp. 590–610.

4 Reece Jones: Dreaming of a Golden Bengal: Discontinuities of Place and Identity in South Asia, in: Asian Studies Review 35 (2011) p. 389.

5 Tariq Rahman: The Bengali Language Movement, in: Pakistan Journal of History and Culture 16:2 (1995), pp. 1–32.

The significance of the Language Movement is also reflected in the bounty of literature available on the subject, academically and popularly.[6] Yet while the key role of students in the movement and the location of the *Bhasha Andolan* occurring largely on the Dhaka University campus is well known and celebrated, there is little consideration of the *Bhasha Andolan* as part of the process of defining the campus of Dhaka University as a distinctly contentious political space. Thus, this article explores two inter-related components with regard to the *Bhasha Andolan.* First, it will provide a narrative history demonstrating that the *Bhasha Andolan*, as the first major student mobilization in post-colonial East Pakistan, was formative in the establishment of the idea that Dhaka University students were a critical political constituency in East Pakistan. The cultural and political conditions of the movement established the framework for future interpretations of the role of students as protectors of democracy and Bengali culture that traces through the entire latter half of the 20th century. Second, this article will suggest that through the physical geography of the campus space as the movement's hub and the continued contest over the erection and destruction of the *Shaheed Minar*, the students' political and cultural identity was directly linked to, and extended upon, the *place* of Dhaka University. Thus, re-examining the *Bhasha Andolan* in terms of *both* identity and space, provides a salient example of the interconnected relationship of urban space, collective identity, and social movements.

Finding the Place: Dhaka University in a Postcolonial Pakistan

Dhaka University was not always a contentious place—at least not in its relationship with state power. In fact, the University was established as a reward for Muslim elites in East Bengal who remained loyal to the British colonial government during the attempted Bengal Partition of 1905–1911. While resistance to the administrative partition of Bengal had been fierce in Kolkata, in East Bengal the Muslim population saw the split as a potentially positive change that could increase economic and political representation for Muslims. When the political mobilisation of West Bengal successfully pressured the British to annul the Partition, many Muslims in East Bengal felt betrayed.[7] The British colonial government appeased the unhappy East Bengalis

6 Bashir Al Hela: Bhasha Andoloner Itihas, Dhaka 1985; Badruddin Umar: Purba Banglar Basha Andolan o Tatkalin Rajaniti Volume 1, Dhaka 1995. For English language treatments, see Badruddin Umar: Language Movement in East Bengal, Dhaka 2000; S. M. Shamsul Alam: Language as Political Articulation: East Bengal in 1952, in: Journal of Contemporary Asia 21:4 (1991), pp. 469–487.

7 The communal dimension of the 1905 Partition bears brief remark here. While the division was not made on religious grounds, the split of Bengal into two areas did produce a sense of

by promising to build an educational institution to rival that of the great universities of Kolkata, and to base it in Dhaka. The university was actually not built until 1920 (the First World War interrupted British plans for building the campus), but even at this point of the height of Nationalist agitation in West Bengal (and throughout much of the subcontinent), Dhaka, and the Muslim intelligentsia in particular, remained largely supportive of the British colonial regime and often agitated for the need to be more explicit in the Muslim League's loyalty to the British.[8] Yet, as the Nationalist movement progressed and grew over the interwar years, and following the Lahore Resolution in 1940 (which called for the establishment of Muslim state(s) in regions with populations of Muslim majority) the faculty and students of the university no longer advocated loyalty to the empire; like much of East Bengal, the campus community was highly supportive of the Pakistan project and were vocal supporters of the Muslim League and the leadership of Mohammad Jinnah as the "father of Pakistan."[9] As part of independence in 1947, the nation-state of Pakistan was created into two wings, and Bengal was split along virtually the same lines as the 1905 Partition (East Pakistan was the former East Bengal and West Pakistan was carved from the Northwestern region of India). Dhaka became the provincial capital of the Eastern wing.

Almost immediately after independence, the relationship between the East and West wings of Pakistan began to change. Despite a larger proportion of the total population residing in the Eastern wing, power was heavily concentrated in the Western wing, and most of the political posts were held by individuals from the Western por-

one side being more Hindu dominated and one side more Muslim. The demographic reality is that both Kolkata and Dhaka had diverse populations, but the political elite in Kolkata tended to be more Hindu dominated and in Dhaka, more Muslim dominated. The Partition exacerbated the communal divisions, though it did not create them. For more on the politics of religion and nationalism, see for example Mushirul Hasan: Nationalism and Communal Politics in India, 1916–1928, Delhi 1979; Ayesha Jalal: The Sole Spokesman: Jinnah, the Muslim League and the Demand for Pakistan, Cambridge 1994; C.A. Bayly: Origins of Nationality in South Asia, Delhi 1994.

8 For more on the establishment of Dhaka University, see M. Siddiq Khan: A Chapter in the Muslim Struggle for Freedom: Establishment of Dacca University, in: Dhaka University Studies 16 (1968), pp. 81–105; Mozammel Haque: The Role of Dacca University in the Evolution of Muslim Politics in Bengal, in: Journal of Research Society 30:2 (1993), pp. 27–54; Mohammed Hanan: Bangladesher Chatro Andoloner Itihash, Vol. 1: 1830–1971, Dhaka 1999.

9 For more on the relationship of East Bengali Muslims to the Muslim League and the Pakistan Movement, see K. Alquama: Bengali Elite's Perception of Pakistan: The Road to Disillusionment, Karachi 1997; Syed Mussawar Hussain Bukhari: Autonomy is Better than Secession, in: Interdisciplinary Journal of Contemporary Research in Business 2:8 (2010), pp. 268–282.

tion.[10] In addition, in 1947, East Pakistan was verging on a severe food crisis, and memories of the 1943 Bengal Famine were still fresh.[11] The population was anxious to avert another calamity on the scale of the disaster just four years before, and panic and hoarding became increasingly widespread. The new post-colonial government's response was inconsistent and vacillated between utter disinterest and ineffective implementation of policies addressing the inflated prices of food in East Pakistan. Further compounding the problem was the government's reliance on colonial models of economic principles; the newly independent government repeated many of the very mistakes the British had made in the 1943 famine, including the disastrous cordoning system and the levy system.[12] Relief aid was poorly allocated and distribution was further disrupted by corruption. The most egregious error however was the prohibition on the production of salt in the coastal areas of East Pakistan. The prohibition meant that salt had to be imported from West Pakistan, at much higher cost than locally produced salt, and the scenario rang far too familiar to the salt tax that had launched Gandhi's Great Salt March of 1930 that had catalysed the independence movement.[13] While most of the West Pakistani press was largely inattentive to the concerns in the Eastern wing, one Karachi columnist wrote: "It is an unintelligible mystery that in the other part of Pakistan famine is looming large in the wake of serious food crisis, when in this part there is enough food […]. Are we going to build up Pakistan's prosperity on the dead bodies of our brothers, sisters and children?"[14]

Despite (or perhaps partly resultant from) the early and overt imbalances in distribution of resources and power, organised resistance and mobilisation in the Eastern wing was slow and scattered.

The first real resistance to the ineffective food policies of the government came from students. In September 1947, the Democratic Youth League was formed from various members of a left-leaning student organisation at Dhaka University. They

10 Willem van Schendel: A History of Bangladesh, Cambridge 2009, pp. 107–109 and 133–143.

11 The Bengal Famine of 1943 resulted in 7–10 million deaths over a period of about one year. This amounted to the death of about one in seven Bengalis from starvation and associated diseases. For more on the Bengal Famine, and the administrative policies leading to it, see Amartya Sen: Poverty and Famines: An Essay on Entitlements and Deprivation, Oxford, 1982.

12 Badruddin Umar: Language Movement in East Bengal, pp. 31–39.

13 Of course, in 1930 the Muslim League did not participate in the Salt March, and were in fact critical of the Congress breaking the law. However, once the independence movement was more established, the Salt March became part of a shared legacy of resistance in popular understanding that was claimed by all Indians, regardless of the early Muslim League's non-participation.

14 Quoted in: Badruddin Umar, Language Movement in East Bengal, pp. 35–36. Originally published in Freedom (weekly newspaper), 10 July 1949.

aligned with several other organisations to put together relief committees. However, due to a scarcity of resources, the concentration of the groups in urban areas, political infighting, and general problems with organisation, the relief efforts were largely failures. The food crisis had subsided by 1951, and public consciousness had shifted to other battles, but the food and salt crisis was a critical first flicker in the fire of discontent blazing beneath the surface between East and West Pakistan. As Badruddin Umar describes:

> Though the food crisis and famine condition of 1947–1951 was not as severe and devastating at the famine in 1943 […] it was very extensive and caused great hardship and misery to millions of people in East Bengal. […] Added to that suffering was the disillusionment of the people in general […] who had dreamt of a happy, trouble free and peaceful life during the Pakistan movement and were now facing even physical liquidation and the threat of it in the new homeland for the Muslims.[15]

The food crisis, and the dissatisfaction it engendered, was a small but important moment in the consolidation of Dhaka University students' development as a political constituency. While the students did work collectively, they were not yet articulating their own demands in terms of entitlement to power. Indeed, students at Dhaka University were largely mobilising on behalf of the peasants who were much more devastated than the urban populations. Yet, critically, the food crisis presented the political opportunity for the Democratic Youth League to form, and to cut its teeth in the process of mobilisation and collective action. The Democratic Youth League, and students of Dhaka University, were now organised. They only needed a cause that resonated with their own experience.

The decision to institute a singular national language in both wings of Pakistan was, in some regards, a matter of practicality. Jinnah was convinced that there needed to be unity on the issue of language and that all parts of the nation needed to conduct state business in the same language.[16] The choice of which language was less practical—the language chosen, Urdu, was spoken by only a small percentage of the population, in both East and West Pakistan. By numerical majority, there were more Bengali speaking Pakistanis than any other language (56 per cent of the total population) and several other languages had wider usage than Urdu (spoken as a primary

15 Ibid., pp. 40–41.

16 It should be noted that the issue of official language was also a major point of contention in post-colonial India, and the issue of language was debated through constitutional amendments throughout the 1960s and 1970s. For a good examination of the post-colonial developments in India, see Ramachandra Guha: India After Gandhi: The History of the World's Largest Democracy, Sydney 2008.

language by about three per cent of the population). Urdu was, however, the language of the established political elite.[17] Despite the majority of the population speaking Bangla, many West Pakistani elites argued that Bangla as a language was too closely tied to Sanskrit, and it was shared with the state of West Bengal in India, and thus, not legitimately Pakistani. Drawing on communal difference still raw from the turbulent British departure, Muslims elites in West Pakistan argued that Bangla was "a Hindu language."[18]

When Urdu was established as the official, and singular, national language, there was immediate response from East Pakistani intellectuals and provincial representatives. Dr. Mohammad Shahidullah, a Bengali linguist at Dhaka University, argued that "If Urdu or Hindi instead of Bengali is used in our law, courts, and universities, that would be tantamount to political slavery."[19] Shahidullah's concerns were not unfounded and hit close to home for the middle class of East Pakistan, most of whom did not speak Urdu. In a pamphlet produced by the *Tamuddun Majlis,* a cultural organisation of students and professors at Dhaka University, Abul Mansur Ahmad wrote: "If Urdu is made our state language then the educated people of East Pakistan will become illiterate overnight and they will also become disqualified for government service."[20] In the same pamphlet, the demands of the *Bhasha Andolan*, while still in a nascent stage, were articulated for the first time. There were two basic demands:

1. for Bangla to be the language of educational instruction, court proceedings, and mass communication in the province of East Pakistan and
2. for Bangla and Urdu to be the languages of the central government.[21]

The pamphlet was distributed widely, and while much of the rural population remained largely uninterested in the issue of national language (they were more concerned with economic difficulty), the urban population of Dhaka was increasingly agitated. Students, in particular, seemed to have found their cause.

17 Willem van Schendel: A History of Bangladesh, p. 110.
18 S. M. Shamsul Alam: Language as Political Articulation: East Bengal in 1952, pp. 475–476; Syed Mussawar Hussain: Autonomy is Better than Secession, p. 271; Tariq Rahman: The Bengali Language Movement, pp. 8–9.
19 S. M. Shamshul Alam: Language as Political Articulation: East Bengal in 1952, p. 475.
20 Abul Mansur Ahmad: Pakistaner Rashtra Bhasha, Bangla na Urdu, Dhaka 1948, held in Bangla Academy Archive collection, Dhaka, Bangladesh (reproduction also held in Liberation War Museum archive).
21 Ibid.

Putting Student Political Power into Play

In February of 1948, students from several organisations, including the Democratic Youth League and the *Tamaddun Majlis*, met to discuss the formation of a united student organisation.[22] A new political body was formed called "East Pakistan Democratic Youth League".[23] There was considerable debate over the name, and whether to include the word "Muslim" in the coalition name, but ultimately, it was not supported by the majority of students. The group decided that the emphasis should be on youth, since there was already a Muslim League.[24] In the secret conference, students put plans in place for a *hartal*, or general strike, and they drafted a preliminary manifesto, described by a student present at the meeting as a document, "prepared on the basis of the democratic principle of economic, social, political and cultural improvement and development of the youths."[25] The formation of the East Pakistan Democratic Youth League was an important step in the articulation of a student political identity; indeed, the fact that the political goals of the organisation are somewhat vague adds further evidence that the greatest function of the conference was to consolidate, and make physical, the shared imagined community of "youth." While the students were not yet sure how this identity would be empowered, there is clear indication that it was understood to have political potential.

The first real physical test of the students' political identity came on 26 February 1948 with the *hartal*. Students were successful in shutting the educational institutions down, and had wide participation in street demonstrations by students from Dhaka University, as well and semi-independent Engineering and Medical Colleges. Later in the evening, the students met on the campus of Dhaka University to discuss plans to move forward. There was widespread outrage over the recent remarks of East Pakistan's provincial representative in Congress, Nazimuddin, who had just defended Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan's rejection of a proposal to include Bangla as one of the languages of the Constituent Assembly. Nazimuddin had been quoted in the newspaper as saying "Most of the inhabitants of East Pakistan think that Urdu should be accepted as the only state language."[26] Students decided, after much discus-

22 Tajuddin Ahmed: Personal Diary, 2 March 1948, Bangla Academy Archive Collection.

23 Badruddin Umar: Language Movement in East Bengal, p. 44. This should not be confused with the Democratic Youth League, which was the smaller, previously formed group. The new East Pakistan Democratic Youth League virtually absorbed the old group, but there were other organisations represented as well.

24 Tajuddin Ahmed: Personal Diary, 2 March 1948, Bangla Academy Archive Collection.

25 Shamshul Haq in an interview cited in: Badruddin Umar: Language Movement in East Bengal, p. 45, and provided in full transcript in idem: Purba Bangla Bhasha Andolan, pp. 93–96.

26 Cited in idem: Language Movement in East Bengal, p. 47.

sion, that the issue of language would be the focus of their efforts. They formed the State Language Action Committee, which was comprised of students and faculty from Dhaka University and a few other educational institutions.[27]

The State Language Action Committee acted quickly to escalate the issue of language to primary importance. President Jinnah was scheduled to visit Dhaka in March, and the students knew it was critical to have a consolidated movement upon his arrival. CM Tarik Reza describes the frantic first days of the organisation as it came together:

> On 2 March 1948, student leader Shamshul Alam became the new Convener of the State Language Action Committee. The boycott of classes, meetings, rallies, publication of statements and distribution of leaflets had been going on since 28 February 1948. On 6 March 1948, a meeting on the Dhaka University old Arts Faculty campus called upon the people, the student and youth community to observe a general strike on 11 March 1948.[28]

The strike on 11 March marked a turning point in the movement, and in the students' sense of their own role in it. The strikes were observed by all educational institutions, and the students picketed in front of the High Court and the Secretariat. According to Alam, "About fifty students were injured in the clash and nearly a thousand people were arrested."[29] The government attempted to minimise the conflict, and frame it in communal terms, by issuing a statement to the press:

> Some saboteurs and a group of students went on strike today to observe the strike called for protesting against the decision not to have Bengali as a language of the Centre. All the Muslim areas, and most of the non-Muslim areas refused to observe the strike. Only a few Hindu shops were closed. […] It is now clearly understood from the information obtained after searches that a deep conspiracy is now on for creating division among the Muslims and creating chaos in the administration for undermining Pakistan.[30]

The government's characterisation of the strike was not only inaccurate in terms of describing the strike (countless eye witness accounts confirmed the strike was quite widespread in Muslim and Hindu areas), it also established what would become the standard government response to the language issue: they claimed that the actions

27 Ibid.
28 CM Tarek Reza: Ekush: Bhasha Andolaner Shobitro Itihash, 1947–1956, Dhaka 2008, p. 18.
29 S. M. Shamshul Alam: Language as Political Articulation: East Bengal in 1952, p. 477.
30 Badruddin Umar: Language Movement in East Bengal, pp. 47–48.

were being orchestrated by forces (implicitly Indian, or at the least Hindu) that wanted to see the destruction of Pakistan. In this way, the government generally avoided any real discussion of the content of the demands of the movement, merely characterising all mobilisation as efforts to create chaos. It also, perhaps inadvertently, implied that the students involved in the strike were in conflict with the state overall by being part of "a deep conspiracy […] for creating division among the Muslims and creating chaos in the administration for undermining Pakistan."[31] Thus, in some part, by describing the strike in terms of the stability of the Pakistani state, rather than describing it as a negotiation or internal disagreement over the issue of language, the contentious dynamic between students and the state was framed by the state itself.

In response to the arrest of so many student leaders, the strikes were extended for several days, and on 15 March, students called for a non-stop *hartal*. Sensing the rising tide of agitation, and hoping to damper the tension before Jinnah's arrival scheduled for 19 March, Nazimuddin agreed to meet with the students of the Language Action Committee. The meeting resulted in an eight point agreement, signed by Nazimuddin and the students present at the talks. Among the eight points were agreements to release those who had been arrested protesting the language issue, that Nazimuddin himself would introduce a special proposal to the Executive Council to include Bangla as a national language, and a statement that Nazimuddin affirmed, after discussions with the State Language Committee, that the movement was initiated by East Pakistani students and not enemies of the state.[32] The imprisoned students were released from custody later in the evening. In addition to the victory of their release from prison however, there was another significant gain for the students: the agreement codified, officially, that the language movement was orchestrated and lead by *students.* The meeting with an elected official and the resultant agreement established the legitimacy of the students as a negotiating political constituency.

Jinnah's arrival shortly thereafter was met with less fanfare than previous trips, but there was still significant excitement for his visit. The issue of language was forefront in everyone's mind, including Jinnah's. Philip Oldenburg has considered Jinnah's seemingly harsh stance on Bangla and provides an interpretation that seeks to make sense of why this issue was allowed to become so contentious. Pointing to Jinnah's increasingly difficult task of trying to forge a sense of unity among the cobbled together nation, he argues:

> While the primary explanations of Pakistani decisions [regarding language] are likely to be direct political and economic ones of the self-interest of West Pakistan

31 Ibid.

32 CM Tarek Reza: Ekush: Bhasha Andolaner Shobitro Itihash, 1947–1956, pp. 20–21; S. M. Shamshul Alam: Language as Political Articulation: East Bengal in 1952, p. 477.

> in maintaining an exploited Bengal, the Pakistani leadership was not invariably cynical and self-aggrandising. It is important to take seriously the ideological position of the leadership, to accept the idea that the leaders felt their actions were just and right […]. Jinnah was not really addressing the question of which language would be the state language of Pakistan when he went to Dacca in 1948. Rather he was addressing this question: why has the demand that Bengali be included as a state language arisen so suddenly?[33]

Jinnah's speech at the Race Course Maidan on 21 March reflects his anxiety on the issue of national unity, but it also reflects a certain uneasiness with too much power falling into the hands of the provinces and out of his federal control. In that respect, he saw the issue of language symbolically as well, although differently so than the students did:

> Our enemies, among whom I regret to say, there are still some Muslims, have set about actively encouraging provincialism in the hope of weakening Pakistan. […] A flood of false propaganda is being daily put forth with the object of undermining the solidarity of the Mussalmans of this state and inciting people to commit acts of lawlessness. The recent language controversy […] is one of many subtle ways whereby the poison of provincialism is being sedulously injected into this province.[34]

In a more famous speech, given at a special Dhaka University convocation to honor him, Jinnah expressed similar concerns about the divisive nature of the language issue. Implying that the students were being manipulated, he declared to the student audience:

> Let me make it very clear to you that the state language of Pakistan is going to be Urdu and no other language. Anyone who tries to mislead you is really the enemy of Pakistan. Without one state language, no nation can remain tied up solidly together and function. Look at the history of other countries. Therefore, so far as the state language is concerned, Pakistan's shall be Urdu.[35]

On that same evening of 24 March, Jinnah met with students of the Language Action Committee.[36] In that meeting, the students asserted themselves in a way that seemed

33 Philip Oldenburg: A Place Insufficiently Imagined: Language, Belief, and the Pakistan Crisis of 1971, in: The Journal of Asian Studies 44:4 (1985), p. 719.

34 Ibid.

35 Quoted in S. M. Shamshul Alam: Language as Political Articulation: East Bengal in 1952, p. 478.

36 Badruddin Umar: Language Movement in East Bengal, pp. 47–51.

to surprise Jinnah. Perhaps emboldened by their newfound sense of political agency (which was only further legitimised by the fact that the nation's president and symbolic "father" of Pakistan had granted them audience), the students in attendance pressed Jinnah forcefully on the issue of language. Adamant that the movement was not anti-patriotic, the students argued until Jinnah became upset.[37] The question that arises from the meeting is whether Jinnah was upset by the students' bold behavior or if meeting with the students forced him to face the reality that the language movement was not the work of foreign agents. Either way, in his final address of the visit, Jinnah re-asserted his position that Urdu, and only Urdu, should be the national language of Pakistan.

Later that same year, Jinnah died suddenly of heart failure and there was considerable political disorder in the wake of his death. Liaquat Ali Khan ultimately assumed power and continued the same language policy position that Jinnah had taken. In fact, Khan was even more unwilling to consider the issue of language and had been among the first opponents to the idea in the assembly motion in 1948. A series of governmental restructuring efforts were put forward and a string of political assassinations took place at higher levels of office.

In the midst of the political changes at the national level, students found space to become one of the most powerful political voices in East Pakistan, particularly in Dhaka. They extended their interest beyond the issue of language, and mobilised around a variety of issues, such as constitutional reform and economic parity between the wings. Student leaders came to new prominence as legitimate political representatives, as evidenced by the fact that student representatives frequently met with heads of state and party leaders, including Fatima Jinnah, Mohammad Jinnah's younger sister. Fatima Jinnah encouraged students to explore their role in forming a dual wing youth league, in order to advance opposition politics to Liaquat Ali Khan's increasingly unpopular regime (her own relationship with him had deteriorated badly).[38] It is also during this nascent period of political action that the young university student Sheikh Mujibar Rahman became politically visible. Rahman, who would later become the face of the Bangladesh Independence Movement and first president of Bangladesh, was a first year law student in 1948 and active in a number of student demonstrations and groups. In 1949, after having been expelled from Dhaka University for political agitation, he became the joint secretary of the newly formed Awami Muslim League.[39]

37 Tajuddin Ahmad: Personal Diary, 24 March 1948, Bangla Academy Archive Collection.

38 Badruddin Umar: Language Movement in East Bengal, p. 74. While the idea to form the youth league cannot be characterised as having origin in Ms. Jinnah's plans, it does reflect a realisation on the part of state officials that the students could potentially be manipulated or used for political gain.

39 This expulsion was officially withdrawn in 2010 by Dhaka University. See: Hindustan Times: Sheikh Mujib Reinstated as Dhaka University Student, 15 August 2010, at: https://

In March 1951, a conference was called to be held, in which about 200 student delegates from students and youth organisations across East Pakistan were to converge on Dhaka University campus for a two day summit. Sensing the danger, the government enacted Section 144 of the Constitution to extend across the campus area. Section 144 forbade public gatherings and demonstrations. The location of conference was changed to an off-campus location, but on the second day of the summit, the police threatened to charge the students. In response, the students held the second day on boats on the main river in Dhaka, the Buriganga. At 2:30 a.m. on 28 March, the formation of the East Pakistan Youth League culminated in the release of a lengthy manifesto addressing virtually every grievance the Eastern province had with Western domination. The manifesto addressed the students' conditions specifically, stating:

> We the middle class youth, dreamt that in Pakistan we would get employment, facilities for developing trade and commerce, get house [sic], get higher culture and standard of living. But being confronted with the cruel bashing of reality, our dreams have been destroyed.[40]

The Manifesto also called upon West Pakistani youth to form a sister organisation, and stated the immediate need to coordinate between East and West Pakistan youth organisations.[41]

Importantly, the grievances with the West Pakistani controlled government did not extend to complaints against the broader population of West Pakistan generally—indeed, the Youth League adamantly defended their position as patriotic Pakistanis—they just had a different conception of what Pakistan was. A. G. Stock, a British Visiting Lecturer at Dhaka University from 1947 to1951, observed a conversation that captures students' multivalent identity at the time. He describes in his memoir: "on the way to college one morning, two students just in front of me were talking earnestly […] one was saying to the other 'I am first of all a Bengali, then I am a Muslim, then Pakistani.'"[42] Stock observed that over the course of his tenure at Dhaka University, he watched the "rising emotions of the intelligentsia over the matter of the Bengali language."[43] He was also witnessing the complexity of the political and cultural identity that postcolonial East Pakistani students were in the process of defining. It was simultaneously defined in regional, religious, and political terms.

www.hindustantimes.com/world/sheikh-mujib-reinstated-as-dhaka-university-student/story-y053Fw1XbbVIyQrZtIDwyI.html (accessed on 1 July 2019).

40 Badruddin Umar: Language Movement in East Bengal, pp. 74–80.

41 Ibid.

42 A. G. Stock: Memoirs of Dhaka University 1947–1951, Dhaka 1973, p. 85.

43 Ibid.

At the same time that the Youth League was forming and taking on new issues, the problem of national language was still being debated at the Constituent Assembly level, as well. Over the course of 1948–1952, several proposals were put forward regarding the language problem. One proposal was to make Arabic the national language since it was the language of the Koran, another argued that Bangla could be adapted to rid it of its "Indian" influence by changing the script to Arabic and replacing Sanskritic origin words with Perso-Arabic ones. The latter proposal gained some currency, and even led to the establishment of several adult education centres in East Pakistan with the purpose of teaching the Arabic script to adults already literate in Bangla.[44] The reaction from the students however was indignant. Students from Dhaka University issued a statement that if the script of Bangla was changed it would alienate Bengalis from their literature, their cultural heritage, and implied that they were culturally subordinate to West Pakistan.[45] For students, the question of language had taken symbolic meaning and to concede to anything but Bangla as one of the national languages was akin to admitting they themselves were inferior Pakistanis, inferior Muslims, and culturally invalid. The Youth League issued a nine-point memorandum in March 1951 that stated that forced implementation of any language other than Bangla in East Pakistan province constituted "cultural genocide."[46]

Following the assassination of Liaquat Ali Khan, Nazimuddin assumed power at the national level. Students, having met with him before Jinnah's visit in 1948, were optimistic that he would hear their demands. Anisuzzaman, a student at Dhaka University and member of the Youth League recalls:

> We the students were hopeful that he would know better than Liaquat [Ali Khan] had known that we were not being puppets of another cause. We were more radical than he was, and many of our Constitutional demands we knew were not going to win us his favor, but on the issue of language we thought we had a chance—but he completely betrayed us.[47]

The moment that betrayal was made clear came during Nazimuddin's visit to East Pakistan in January 1952, his first visit as the leader of all of Pakistan to the province from which he hailed and which he had represented in the Assembly.[48] In a speech

44 Ibid.
45 Ibid.
46 CM Terek Reza: Ekush: Bhasha Andolaner Shobitro Itihash, 1947–1956, p. 21.
47 Anisuzzaman: Public lecture session at Independent University Bangladesh, 21 June 2008. The issue was also covered in a subsequent personal interview, 2010.
48 While Nazimuddin was from Dhaka, his family was not considered, nor did they consider themselves, Bengali due to roots in West Pakistan. Nazimuddin could speak Bangla, but was not able to read or write it, and was part of the elite population that spoke Urdu.

before the All Pakistan Muslim League in Dhaka, Nazimuddin declared, "Urdu will be the state language of Pakistan."[49] Nazimuddin repeated the characterisation of the movement as "provincialist" and even read excerpts from Jinnah's 1948 declaration accusing the language activists of being "enemies of the state."[50]

Demonstrating the Strength of Student Power in the *Bhasha Andolan*

Immediately following Nazimuddin's speech, a meeting of the Youth League was convened and the language movement was reignited with fervor. Posters appeared all over the Dhaka University campus. The Youth League dedicated all of its resources to coordinating the *Rhashtra Bhasha Parishad* (State Language Committee) that brought student organisations and political parties under one umbrella organisation. It was headed by a Dhaka University student leader, Kazi Gholam Mahbub.[51] The Language Committee called for daily processions, and for a province wide *hartal* on 4 February 1952, declaring it "Protest Day."

The students professed that Nazimuddin was breaking the eight-point agreement (calling it a treaty) that had been agreed to in 1948 and declared that he was unfit to rule. An editorial in *The Pakistan Observer*, written by Maulana Adbul Hameed Bashani, a highly revered cultural and populist figure, called on students specifically to demand Nazimuddin uphold his obligation. Acknowledging the powerful position the Youth League held in mobilising mass numbers, the editorial, titled "Call to Action for Youth of Bengal," implored that "students must prevent the imposition of an alien language upon 50 million helpless people."[52] In the course of the next few days, "the Youth League emerged as the most influential organisation during the whole movement."[53] Indeed, it now went without need for explanation that students represented a legitimate political constituency and they were even being invoked as such by external observers.

49 Shamshul Alam: Language as Political Articulation: East Bengal in 1952, p. 479; S. Humayan/Tanweer Khalid: Student Politics and the Bengali Nationalist Movement, in: Journal of Pakistan Historical Society 44:3 (1996), p. 276.

50 Morning News: Nazimuddin to Uphold Urdu, 28 January 1952, Bangla Academy Archive Collection.

51 Badruddin Umar: Language Movement in East Bengal, p. 93; CM Tarek Reza: Ekush: Bhasha Andolaner Shobitro Itihash, 1947–1956, p. 37; Willem van Schendel: History of Bangladesh, p. 113; Shamshul Alam: Language as Political Articulation: East Bengal in 1952, p. 479.

52 Pakistan Observer: Call To Action for Youth of Bengal, in: 1 February 1952, Bangla Academy Archive Collection.

53 Badruddin Umar: Language Movement in East Bengal, p. 82.

4 February as a day of action was profoundly successful. The city of Dhaka came to a virtual standstill as it was engulfed by "the biggest demonstration in living memory in East Bengal."[54] Students carried placards that read "Nazim: Obey the Treaty or Give Up your Seat" and a procession of militant students calling themselves "Protectors of Bangla" marched in mock military procession with signs saying "Defend the Honour of Language."[55]

The government responded by declaring that the Youth League, and the State Language Committee, had been influenced by communists with ties to India. As evidence they pointed to a flyer produced on 2 February 1952 by the Communist Party of East Pakistan (EPCP) in which it called for the government to "Establish the right of Bengali language and equal status of all languages." It also called for the languages of West Pakistan, such as Punjabi, Sindhi, and Pashtu, to be given equal status alongside Urdu. The pamphlet concluded by calling on all party workers to join *with students* and mobilise the masses to make Bangla a state language.[56] The charges of a communist conspiracy were largely unconvincing, however, and one editorial in the relatively state-sympathetic daily newspaper *Iffitak* noted: "If the Communists are leading the Youth League, then they are doing a good job of hiding it. For all appearances, they seem to be following the lead of the students."[57]

Following the 4 February protests, there were sporadic and continued demonstrations throughout the province. Classes at Dhaka University remained closed and the campus became the main meeting place for information and planning. The *Amtolla*, a large tree on the campus lawn where students had met following Nazimuddin's speech in January, was established as a *de facto* base and place of communication.[58] There was another massive demonstration on 11 February. During this demonstration, flyers were handed out for a general strike on 21 February demanding Bangla as a national language. The strike was endorsed by virtually every political and vocational organisation in East Pakistan, with the exception of the ruling party, the Muslim League.[59] Following the demonstration of 11 February, *The Pakistan Observer*, the only major paper that was sympathetic to the movement, printed an editorial entitled "Crypto Fascism." In the editorial, Abdus Salam criticised Nazimuddin as nepotistic and out

54 Pakistan Observer: Dacca Quits, 5 February 1952, Bangla Academy Archive Collection.
55 CM Tarek Reza: Ekush: Bhasha Andolaner Shobitro Itihash, 1947–1956, pp. 36–48.
56 Badruddin Umar: Language Movement in East Bengal, p. 93. The pamphlet is also reprinted in full in idem: Purba Banglar Basha Andolan o Tatkalin Rajaniti, pp. 189–196.
57 Iffitak: Staff Editorial, 5 February 1952, Bangla Academy Archive Collection. It should be noted that *Iffitak*, like the *Morning News*, was by and large supportive of the government and tended to downplay the success of the movement. This makes it only that much more remarkable that even they found the claim to be preposterous.
58 Tajuddin Ahmed: Personal Diary, 5 February 1952, Bangla Academy Archive Collection.
59 Badruddin Umar: Language Movement in East Bengal, p. 96; CM Tarek Reza: Ekush: Bhasha Andolaner Shobitro Itihash, 1947–1956, pp. 48–49.

of touch on the language issue. In response, the government shut down the offices of *The Pakistan Observer* and arrested the editors, claiming that the editorial was un-Islamic.[60] The ban on the newspaper only made the government look worse. The Youth League issued a statement on 17 February denouncing the government ban and calling for renewed agitation. On 20 February, the government instituted Section 144, a ban on political processions and public gatherings, under the excuse that they had gathered information to indicate the protests planned to attack the Assembly House.[61]

A hurried meeting was called with representatives of the State Language Committee to try and determine how to respond. There was a major program scheduled for the next day, and the question at hand was whether it would be called off as a result of Section 144, or whether the program would continue in knowing violation of the law.[62] Up until 20 February, while the actions had been antagonistic, they had not technically ever broken the law. When the founding conference of the Youth League faced the imposition of Section 144 years prior, they had moved the conferences to boats, which were not covered in the jurisdiction of Section 144, thus, they had not ever violated the order. In the debates over the action of 21 February, the students asserted their own power forcefully and took full ownership of the movement. As Umar describes:

> The great majority of the State Language Committee were against violation of 144, but the general secretary of the Youth League […], convener of the Dhaka University State Language Committee of Action, […] and the Islamic Brotherhood [a student Muslim organisation] spoke in favor of violation. Those who were against the violation argued that the language movement had reached a stage when it could not be limited only to the student community. It had become a concern and movement of all sections of the people. There was no organization in East Bengal at that time which could handle the situation which would develop after the violation of 144 and there was no organization preparation.[63]

Thus, the meeting represented a point of contest for power between the students and the other parties. While student leaders argued that if Section 144 was not violated the movement would cease to exist and would dissolve, established political parties refused to condone breaking the order. One student leader argued that the Youth League had been the "parent body" of the State Language Committee and that if the university students decided to violate 144, the umbrella committee had "no authority to decide otherwise."[64] The students were characterised as extremists, and the majority

60 Pakistan Observer: Crypto Fascism, 12 February 1952, Bangla Academy Archive Collection.
61 Badruddin Umar: Language Movement in East Bengal, pp. 99–100.
62 Ibid.
63 Ibid.
64 Ibid., p. 101.

of the organisation voted against violation. Oli Ahad, general secretary of the Youth League, loudly declared that whatever the decision of the Committee, the students would strike on 21 February. In response, a committee member moved that if the votes had no binding authority, then the State Language Committee should be disbanded. The move was approved, and the organisation was dissolved on the spot.[65]

The events of the 20 February meeting were critical in establishing the students as a discrete political constituency that extended beyond a singular issue, organised instead by their identity category of "student." The students of Dhaka University left the meeting with the sense that the movement was now in their hands exclusively. They spent the night making preparations for the next day's actions.

The police also spent the night fortifying the area around Dhaka University. The next morning, the students gathered under the *Amtolla* and after several hours of debate and consultation with university administrators and party leaders who attempted to dissuade the students from marching, a procession of students headed out the gates of Dhaka University. Waiting outside were rows of police. Once a few students passed through the gate, the crowd of over a thousand students began to pour out, chanting and shouting. The police responded by throwing tear gas shells and arresting male students *en masse*. The female students were not arrested however, and the procession continued toward the assembly house as planned in the programme. As students reached the assembly house, the situation had escalated to a battle. Police and students alike were throwing bricks and getting more and more agitated. As the assembly was about to meet, tensions suddenly escalated and police opened fire on the student demonstrators. One university student, Rafiquddin, was shot in the head and died instantly. Others were injured and died later.[66]

As news of the killings spread, the city of Dhaka was in turmoil. Riots and spontaneous demonstrations broke out across the city, and people swarmed toward the campus of Dhaka University. Shamshul Alam argues that the shootings irrevocably changed the entire nature of public attitude toward Section 144, and the government in general. He explains, "The students that were killed attained *shaheed* (martyr) status, and entered the Bengali psyche forever."[67] The shootings also brought international attention to the issue, increasing the pressure on the government to justify not only its actions, but the language policy in general.[68]

On the evening of the attacks, several students constructed a monument on the campus entrance to those killed in the protest. The police destroyed the monument

65 Ibid., pp. 101–103.

66 Ibid.; see also CM Tarek Reza: Ekush: Bhasha Andolaner Shobitro Itihash, 1947–1956, pp. 49–53; Shamshul Alam: Language as Political Articulation: East Bengal in 1952, p. 479.

67 Ibid.

68 See for example: New York Times: 6 Slain in 2-Day Rioting in East Pakistan, 23 February 1952, p. 2.

almost immediately.[69] Within hours, *Shaheed Minars* (martyr memorials) sprung up all over the campus. Riots continued for several days, and sporadic violence erupted all across the campus and government office quarters. The office of the *Morning News*, a newspaper owned by Nazimuddin's family, was burned down on 24 February.[70] The ruling party and provincial government also destabilised. Several leading figures resigned in protest and the newspapers that had previously been supportive of the West Pakistani perspective abruptly began to print scathing criticisms of the government, not only on the issue of language, but on the issue of provincial parity as well. The tide of discontent in East Pakistan was clear in the depiction of the West and East relationship.

The resentment between the two wings grew deeper and the Muslim League lost all credibility in the East wing. This was made clear in the elections of 1954. In the wake of the violence, the major political opposition parties in East Pakistan had formed a coalition platform in 1953, called the United Front, based on 21 principles of unity. Among the demands were that Bengali be made one of the state languages of Pakistan, that an official *Shaheed Minar* be erected in memory of those killed on 21 February, that 21 February be known as Martyr's Day throughout Pakistan, and that East Pakistan be given full provincial autonomy.[71] When the National Assembly passed a motion to consider Bangla as one of the national languages in 1953, it was too late. By then, the issue of language had been absorbed into a full movement for autonomy. The martyrs had transitioned in the imaginations of East Pakistan from students killed for the right to Bengali language, to students killed for East Pakistan's right to a Bengali identity. In the 1954 elections, the United Front won an overwhelming number of seats, but the government dissolved their authority within months. The issue of language, while still highly symbolic, was one of many political grievances openly expressed in the complaints from East Pakistan.

Memorial Space and Political Definition of the Campus Space

At the national level, the effect of the *Bhasha Andolan* would take years to fully flesh out and would feed larger movements to follow.[72] At the local level, however, the effect was much more immediate. As the physical hub of the Youth League, and the origin of the strikes that were met with violence, Dhaka University became directly linked

69 CM Tarek Reza: Ekush: Bhasha Andolaner Shobitro Itihash, 1947–1956, p. 56.

70 Badruddin Umar: Language Movement in East Bengal, p. 100.

71 Tariq Rahman: Language and Politics in Pakistan, Oxford 1996, p. 16.

72 Bangla was ultimately instituted as a national language in the Pakistani Constitution of 1956. The effect was largely too little too late, although it did cool the tensions between the two wings a bit.

to these issues as the *place* of the *Bhasha Andolan*. Thus, the spatial memories of the events, sacrifices, and victories were associated with the campus. This was reinforced by the continued battle over the erection of the *Shaheed Minar* and in the annual gathering on *Ekush* that took place on the campus grounds.

The designation of Dhaka University as the marked location of the movement is important in understanding the idea that students were a specific political constituency. The suggestion here that the campus space serves as a point of consideration in students' political identity is rooted in the foundational work of Henri Lefebvre.[73] Building off of Lefebvre's ideas of the social production of space, social geographers such as John Agnew argued for a distinction of 'place' as an analytic tool. Agnew describes 'place' as consisting of "three major elements: locale, the settings in which social relations are constituted (these can be informal or institutional); location, the geographical area encompassing the settings for social interaction as defined by social and economic processes operating at a wider scale; and a sense of place, the local "structure of feeling."[74] Place, then, refers to the ways that social activity is thought of geographically, and how that process of thinking shapes the activity within that space.[75]

The battle for the establishment of a permanent memorial to the students killed in the movement reflected the students' refusal to concede ownership over the legacy of the movement to the government. The government's continued destruction of many *Shaheed Minars* across the campus added fuel to the fire of resistance every time it happened. On 24 February at the gates of the Medical College, students constructed a large memorial to the martyrs. The father of one of the killed students came to the dedication ceremony and prayers were held for those who had died. The ceremony prayers called the ground of the monument "hallowed" by the blood of the martyrs.[76] The police razed the monument to the ground on 26 February.[77]

Students responded by building replica *Shaheed Minars* in virtually every public space on the campus. Each of the residence halls had a monument, all the major lawns, and there were several artistic depictions created that depicted the martyrs and political slogans. The students, in crafting and placing the monuments, were not

73 Henri Lefebvre: La production de l'espace, Paris 2000 (1st ed. 1974).

74 John Agnew: Place and Politics, Boston 1987, p. 28.

75 There is a wide body of literature on the relationship between space and social movements. The discussion here is necessarily, but unfortunately, brief. For more see, Charles Tilly: Spaces of Contention, in: Mobilization 5:2 (2000) pp. 135–159; Deborah Martin/Byron Miller: Space and Contentious Politics, in: Mobilization 8:2 (2003), pp. 143–156; Cynthia Cranford/Robert Wilton: Toward an Understanding of the Spatiality of Social Movements: Labor Organizing at a Private University in Los Angeles, in: Social Problems 49:3 (2002), pp. 374–394.

76 CM Tarek Reza: Ekush: Bhasha Andolaner Shobitro Itihash, 1947–1956, p. 56.

77 Ibid.; see also Habibul Haque Khondker: Dhaka and the Contestation Over the Public Space, in: City 13: 1 (2009), pp. 129–136.

only laying claim to the legacy of the movement, but claiming the campus space as well. In a similar process to what Sam Halvorsen refers to as "taking space," the act of physically erecting a monument, in defiance of the authorities, became deeply symbolic as a means to continue the martyrs' struggle.[78] One student remembered building a monument as "It was as if everything stopped. It was just mud and clay and memory and it was deathly silent. We felt a connection to the martyrs as we constructed it, and every time we saw it."[79] Following the successful election of the United Front in 1954, the police stopped destroying the *Shaheed Minars.* The monuments remained as important reminders of not only the movement, but of the students' victory in claiming the spaces they inhabited as places of student power. In addition to the monuments themselves, the annual ceremony held to commemorate *Ekush* became an important ritual on the Dhaka University campus that tied it to the spatial memory of *Bhasha Andolan*. Regarding *Ekush*, Qazi Azizul Mowla explains:

> It is because ritual occurs in places that spaces become special. An event 'takes place.' Often the ritual will have connection with the site where it occurs because of a previous event, but after time, it is the ritual that is remembered and associated with the site […]. International Mother Language Day/21 February [*Ekush*] […] may be a case in point.[80]

The ongoing process of imbuing symbolic meaning to the spaces inhabited by *Shaheed Minars* is considered by Reece Jones as well, who argues, "these monuments […] institutionalize the perception of a unique connection between Bangladesh, the Bengali language, and the land."[81] On the campus, the monuments provided a physical means to mark the territory in the name of the newly developed political identity of the Dhaka University students. In addition to providing physical markers of the relationship between the campus and the *Bhasha Andolan*, the fact that the state, by way of the police, had continually attempted to tear the monuments down, only to ultimately concede, served as a symbolic indication of students' victory over both the state in terms of the movement and the space.

78 Sam Halvorsen: Taking Space: Moments of Rupture and Everyday Life in Occupy London, in: Antipode 47:2 (2015), pp. 401–417, DOI: https://doi.org/10.1111/anti.12116 (accessed on 1 July 2019).

79 Quoted in: CM Tarek Reza: Ekush: Bhasha Andolaner Shobitro Itihash, 1947–1956, p. 26.

80 Qazi Azizul Mowla: Memory Association in Place Making: Understanding an Urban Space, in: Protibesh 9:52 (2004), pp. 1–10.

81 Reece Jones: Dreaming of a Golden Bengal: Discontinuities of Place and Identity in South Asia, p. 389.

Conclusion

Willem van Schendel summarises that "The language movement, or *Bhasha Andolan,* gave rise to a new type of politician in East Pakistan: the Bengali speaking student agitator."[82] Indeed, the language issue, and the utterly disastrous policy response on the part of the Pakistani government, created the political opportunity structure for students to develop their collective political identity. It also gave rise to a new political geography in which students could anchor themselves. The campus space of Dhaka University, in the course of the movement and in particular in the aftermath of the *Ekushe* violence, transformed into a movement space. The development of the student political identity and the creation of the movement place of Dhaka University were interdependent processes. The case of the *Bhasha Andolan* and the development of the place of Dhaka University provides an important case study in understanding the larger relationship of political identity and place as a mutually constitutive relationship. In the years following the *Bhasha Andolan*, Dhaka University would serve as the hub for generations of student activists throughout political crises including civil war (and the creation of independent Bangladesh in 1971) and authoritarian dictatorship (in the Ershad regime). The *Bhasha Andolan* planted fertile seeds of political action on the campus grounds, and established a spatially rooted political class that students carried on physically and ideologically across generations.

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82 Willem van Schendel: A History of Bangladesh, p. 113.