

POLITICAL VIOLENCE AND INJUSTICE ON ARCHITECTURE AND HERITAGES IN DHAKA, BANGLADESH:

CASE STUDY OF JULY UPRISING IN DHAKA, 2024

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Significance?

1. Architecture and politics- traditionally branches of human scholarship used to explain these separately.
2. The study aims to identify the intersection of architecture and politics in relation to violence and injustice, focusing on the causes and influences of 'terrorism on architecture'.
3. Three selected and affected architectural heritages were discussed where agitated mobs attacked for political gain.
4. Parliament Building and its complex, Dhanmondi 32, and the 17th-century heritage Boro Katra, Caravan Sarai.
5. Some UNESCO heritage laws and national laws will be discussed and future suggestions will be made accordingly.



Parliament Building

Research Aim

- To identify the **hidden sources** of politics, political dominance, and decisions behind the notable architecture and heritage buildings of Dhaka city.
- To **identify the real threats and challenges** associated with the political endeavours over the selected heritage sites. After meticulous observation, this will help us to evaluate the political mistakes that caused harm to architectural heritages in the past and raise awareness for the future.
- To **make some recommendations and suggestions**, this study will try to protect and ensure the originality, authenticity, and integrity of the politically affected heritages of Dhaka city in the future accordingly.



March for unity in Shahid Minar, Language martyrs monument, 5th August 2024

Methodology

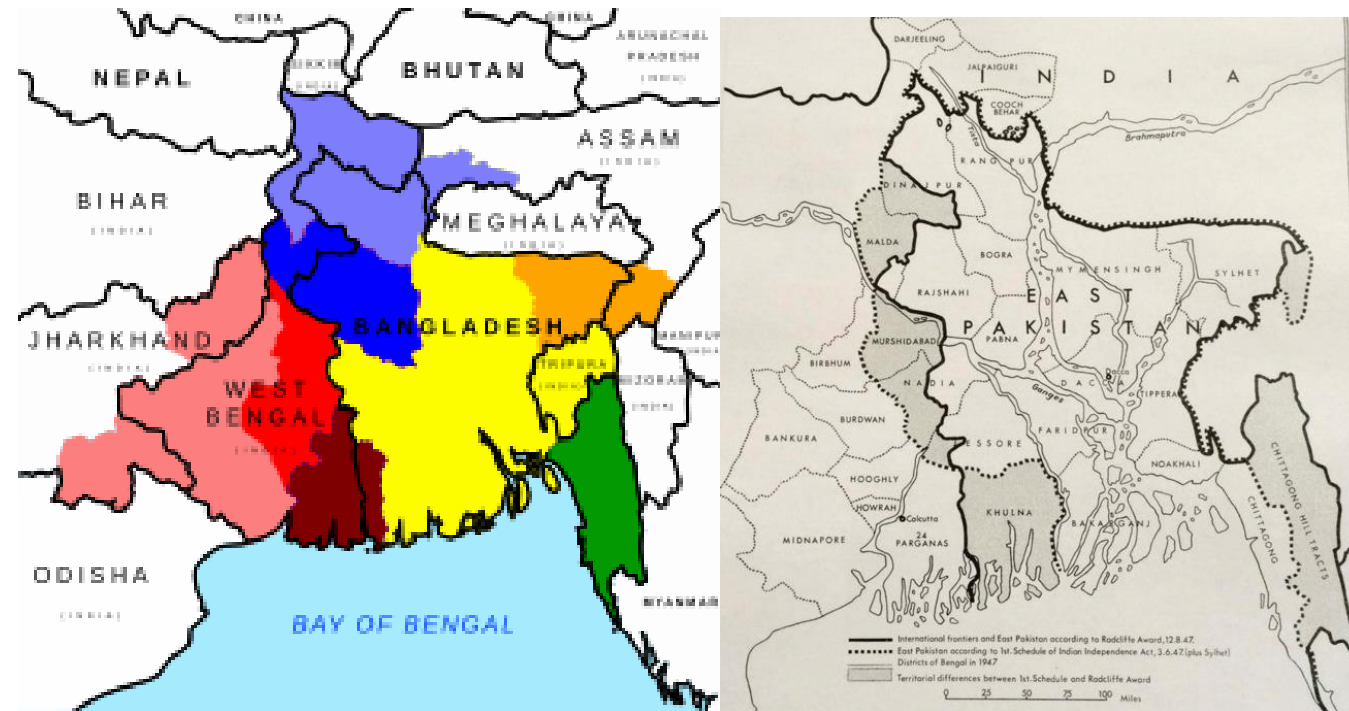
- The study will rely on an **extensive literature review** from previous scholars to satisfy the first objective.
- Then it will try to satisfy the second objective and for that will search **for suitable architectural examples as case studies** for this research from various historical phases of Dhaka city, and abroad; rather than going for illustrative examples.
- Finally, to achieve the last objective, **all the possible political connections with architecture will be meticulously analysed**, and explained from various rational and logical aspects. To develop discussions and integrate reality to eradicate problems, if not possible, at least mitigate the past olitical mistakes to follow local, global and UNESCO parameters.



Dhaka university 16th July, 2024

What was the politics of Bengal?

1. After Mughal empire's decline, from **1757**, 23rd June, Bengal's political scenario was dominated by elite Hindu landlords who patronized British colonization, centring Calcutta.
2. After **1858**, Sepoy Mutiny or the 1st independence war of India, British consolidated their power and marginalised Muslims of Eastern Bengal.
3. In **1904**, they divided the huge province of Bengal, as it was very difficult to control and educated Bengali population wanted independence but in 1911, it was integrated again, called 1st partition of Bengal.
4. In **1947**, Bengal divided to two halves, distributed equally to India and Pakistan, according to religious majority.

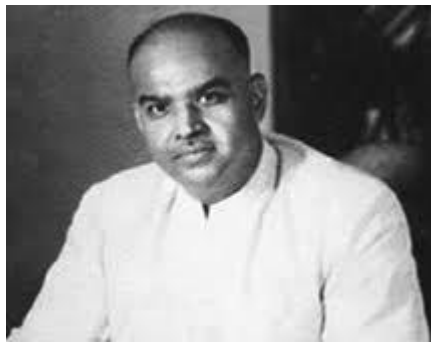


Ethnical and linguistic map for Bengalis, 78 million peoples in 1904 and Partition of Bengal, 1946

What was the politics of **East Bengal**?



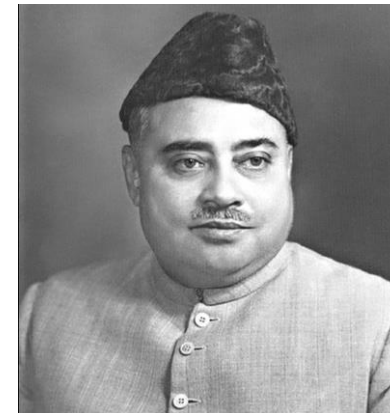
Politics + **Religion** = A bitter curry



Shyamaprosad Mukherjee



Muslim league, 1906

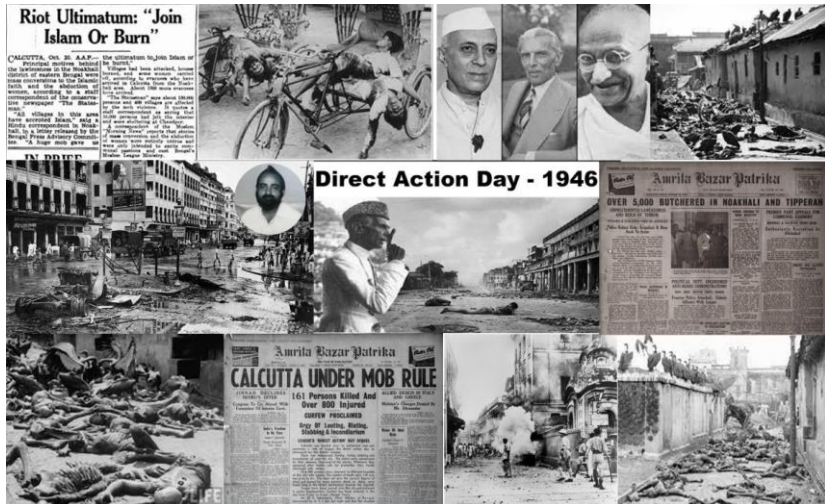


Khawaja Najimuddin



A native gentleman said to me –
‘my countrymen always howl until a
thing is settled; then they accept it’.
Lord Curzon, British Viceroy, 1904

What was the failures of **United Bengal**? 1946



Hindus against Muslims

'Divide and Rule'

250 seats in Bengal assembly

Muslim League 113
Congress 86

Bengal is a Muslim majority province now, premier is Muslim!



June 20, 1946. The joint assembly decided by 126-90.

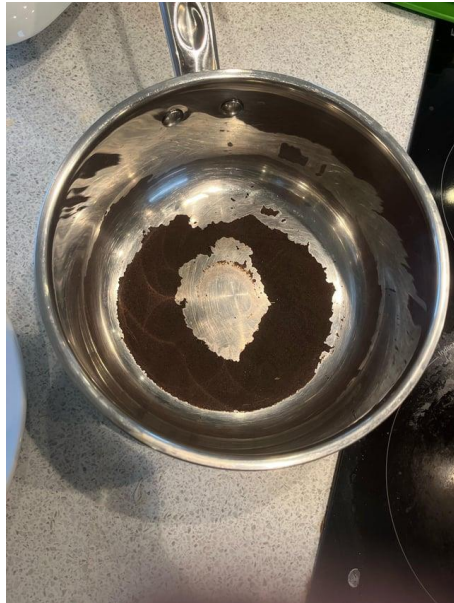


Later, only West Bengal joined **India**, decided by 58-21

East Bengal joined **Pakistan**.

What was the politics of East Pakistan? 1947-1971

The curry fallen directly into the stove!



Pakistan, Empty promise

9 month of Bangladesh Liberation War

6 million fleeing to West Bengal

30 million death

400,000 rape

25,000 war babies born,
rests were abortion

93,000 Pakistani troops
surrendered, as only
public surrender in
human history



Alliance of Pak
Army, Al-Shams
and Al-Badr
forces, killed
1000 intellectuals

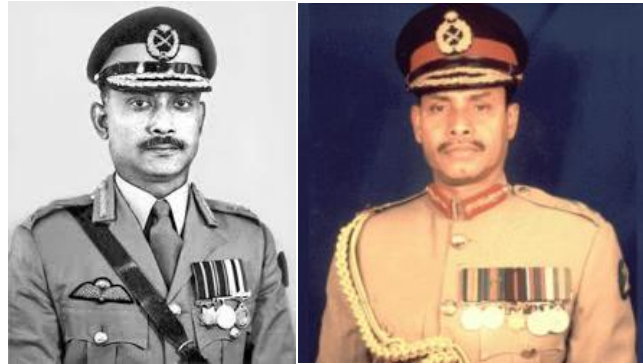
University
teachers 991
Doctors 49
Lawyers 42
Others 16
Journalists 13

What was the politics of Bangladesh? 1971-2024



All the founding fathers were killed brutally

1971-1975



Islamic political parties were reintroduced by dictators, 1977.



1975-1991



Pro-Islamic politics (wife), vs pro-Indian Alliance (daughter)

Democracy restored?

1991-2024

Anti-discrimination in job
Quota reform in govt job 30% (for veterans of 71) to 10%
End of 17 years regime

What was the July Uprising 2024



Long reigning female Prime minister Sheikh Hasina, flee to India
5th August, 2024

After **820** years, any ruler was ousted!



Bakhityar Khilji, invaded Bengal with 18 horsemen, the last Hindu king Lakshman Sen was ousted!
1204



700 students and 300 civilians were killed
22,000 injured



3 case studies: Parliament complex, Dhanmondi 32, and Boro Katra
Attack on Architecture: July Uprising, 2024



Architecture Guide,
Dhaka, Dom publishers,
Germany



Entering the heart of Bangladesh,
Access from Demand!
Could be a UNESCO Heritage



Torching and Bulldozing the Birthplace of Bangladesh, **Wrath or, Ignorance!**



Destruction of
17th-century heritage,
Opportunistic greed!
Could be placed on tentative UNESCO Heritage list.



UNESCO World Heritage Site Selection Criteria



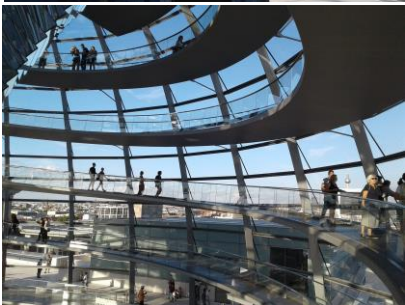
Case study 1: Modern Heritage: **Three good examples!**



Reichstag, Berlin
Denkmalpfledge (local heritage of outstanding cultural public interest, national significance, historical, artistic or scientific identity of Germany; must meet UNESCO Criteria).

Designed for Kaiser palace in 1894, Damaged in the fire of 1933, was Adolf Hitler's plot and again during World War II.

Redesigned by famous architect Norman Foster and reopened in 1999 as the permanent parliament of Germany. Walk-in glass dome with 360° view was designed by artist and architect Gottfried Böhm, Its concept was, free accessibility ensured for all and lawmakers are under the surveillance of public.



Sydney Opera House, Sydney, WHL listed in **2007**

Selection criteria

(i) to represent a masterpiece of human creative genius;

Outstanding universal value: great architectural work of the 20th century, carefully set with waterscape, shows creativity both in architectural form and structural design. urban sculpture and iconic work of modernist and Danish architect Jørn Utzon. Designed in 1957.



Case study 1: Modern Heritage: **Three good examples!**



Chandigarh Capitol Complex, India

The Legislative Assembly, is part of the Capitol Complex in Chandigarh, Punjab-Haryana, India, at the foot of the Shivalik Hills. The complex is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and a prime example of modernist architecture designed by architect Le Corbusier.

The complex prioritizes functionality, simplicity, and the use of new materials and construction techniques. It is spread over an area of around 100 acres.

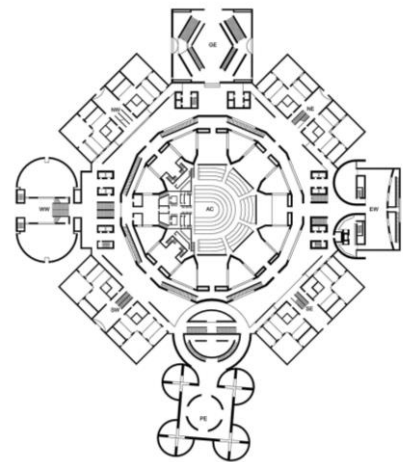
Criteria i) and vi) WHL listed in 2016

An Outstanding Contribution to the Modern Movement is a World Heritage Site consisting of a selection of 17 building projects in several countries by the Franco-Swiss architect Le Corbusier.

These sites demonstrate how Modern Movement architecture was applied to respond to the needs of society and show the global range of a style and an architect.



Case study 1: National Parliament complex: **Authenticity and Integrity** (OUV for Modern heritage)



The building is in more demanding situation to be enlisted in UWHL as Modern heritage under **Selection criteria (i)**:

“To represent a masterpiece of human creative genius”

Outstanding universal value: great architectural work of the 20th century, carefully set with cityscape, iconic form and sound structure. **The largest legislative complex in the world**, comprising of 215 acres of land. One of the 5 master architects of modernism, Louis I. Kahn designed it as his masterpiece, completed in 1982.

Case study 1: National Parliament complex: **Authenticity and Integrity** (Modern heritage).



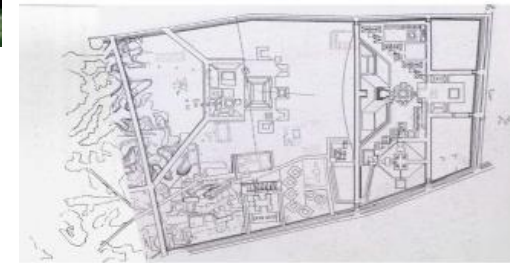
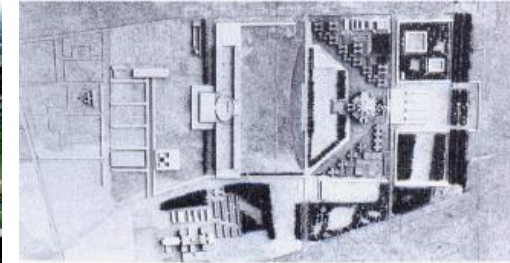
NAM flats (bottom) for the MPs which were supposed to be the secretariat for the second capital complex of Louis Kahn, that changed due to political decision and is clear violation of the original master plan.



The elevated Dhaka mass transit metro line intersects the property of National Assembly Building. Causing disturbance to its authenticity



General Ziaur Rahman Mausoleum, 7th president of Bangladesh; occupying his resting place which is violation to the original master plan



Ar. Louis Kahn's original masterplan preserved in Architectural Archives, University of Pennsylvania, USA



Boundary fence created for security of the complex, a breach to aesthetics and original concept of master architect Louis Kahn.



Ar. Louis Kahn's people's place is always closed with security, not accessible for everybody.

Bangladesh never proposed to include its parliament in UNESCO list, for politics!

Case study 1: National Parliament complex: **July Uprising 2024, demand of Access**).



People demanding their law makers' accountability! Should be open to visitors now, which will also generate revenue for maintenance.

Bring back the original design decisions and masterplan of architect Lois Kahn.

Remove the disturbing elements and tombs of Islamist leaders.

Clear its buffer zones.

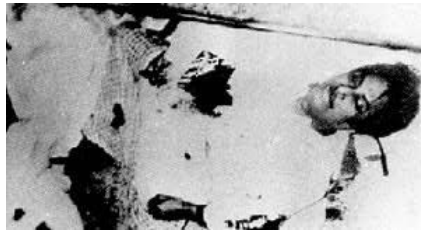
Add unbuilt elements of original masterplan, bring it from Philadelphia.

Submit proposal for world heritage list of UNESCO Immediately!

Case study 2: Dhanmondi 32 Birthplace of Bangladesh vs Birthplace of Pakistan!



Declaration of independence 1971



Assassination of founding father



Reopening as a museum in 1994



Mob torched the museum 2024



All-India Muslim League in Ahsan Manzil on December 30, 1906



Partition of Bengal, birthplace of Pakistan, never attacked!

Case study 2: Dhanmondi 32: **Public wrath and historical ignorance**



Love and hate, for one residence building where Father of the nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman used to live.

People shown love after independence of Bangladesh to their leader, 10th January 1972 (Left).

Agitated mob torched and looted museum at the same building on 5th August, 2024 and DJ party on 15th August and public feast on the occasion of demolishment February 6, 2025 (right)



Case study 2: Dhanmondi 32: **Virtual restoration is possible**



Museum for Father of the nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman opened in 1994, served 30 years.

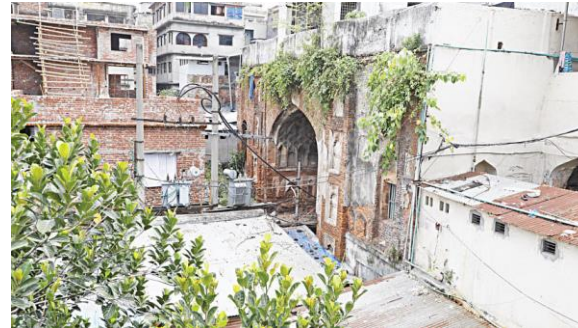


Virtual Museum



Agitated mob torched and looted museum at the same building on 5th August, 2024 and then demolished on February 6th, 2025 (now).

Case study 3: Mughal Heritage of Boro Katra: **Opportunistic Greed**



Built in between 1644-1646 AD, it is another archaeological site, proposed with tentative heritage list of Bengals' unique Mughal river forts.

Architectural **series masterpieces** of the Mughal era, Fits under Criteria (i)

No mutual control of site due to mismatch between government stakeholders: city corporation, district administration and directorate of archaeology.

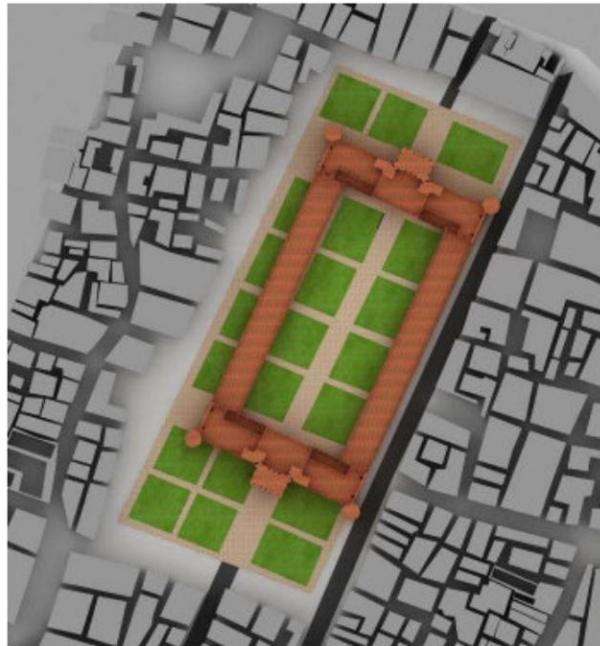
Encroachers take the advantage of it and patronised by the political leaders

No public awareness of heritage protection, personal greed overrides national interests!

No buffer zone possible, not in any range heritage law, 100 meter, 50 meter, 25 meter!

Cheap and ugly, how can department of Archaeology lease heritages for 99 years?

Case study 3: Mughal Heritage: **Any solution?**



Proposal by prof. Mowla and Selim for urban heritage area restoration

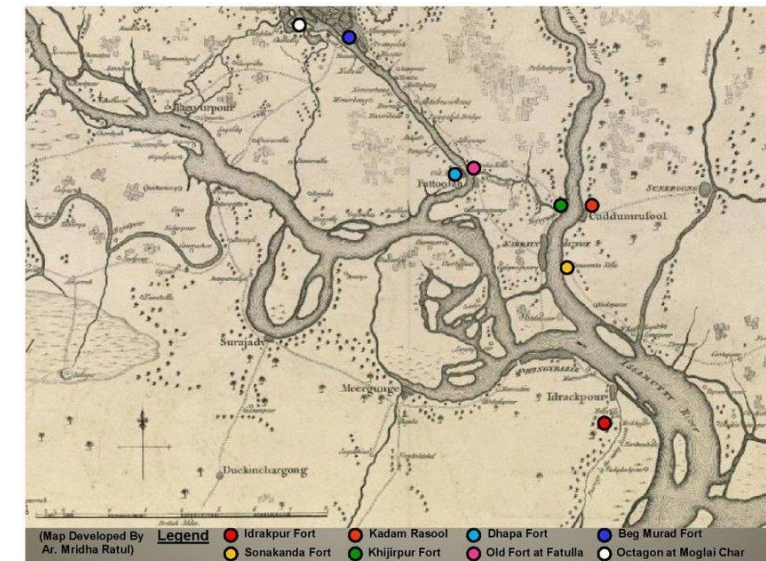


Panorama of the city of Dacca, 1850. Lithograph by W. Corill.

As an tentative UNESCO heritage site, all the river forts and caravan Sarai should be enlisted as 'series heritage' to form an integrity for protection.

Must be preserved under government custody and protected heritage laws with three authorities of the government.

Neighbours should be punished if they do any harm to any heritage! Prison and fine, both!



City of Dacca, 1776. Cartography by James Rennell.

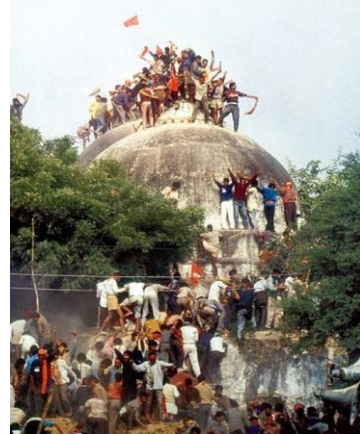
Mughal Heritage in India: **crying for neighbor's Mughal heritage, destructing its own!**

Amnesty International has accused Indian authorities of using demolition drives as an excuse to target Muslims!

Hindu nationalists have also targeted Mughal heritage of Taj Mahal, claiming a sacred site for pilgrimage.

Conflicts over the ownership of mosque for erecting new temple is a Hindu supremacist agenda: "reclamation" and "replacement".

Illegally constructed? After Ayodhya's Babri mosque, Gyanvapi mosque in Varanasi, Shahi Eidgah mosque in Mathura, 12th-century tomb of Baba Haji Rozbih in Delhi, list will increase.



Destruction Babri mosque 1992



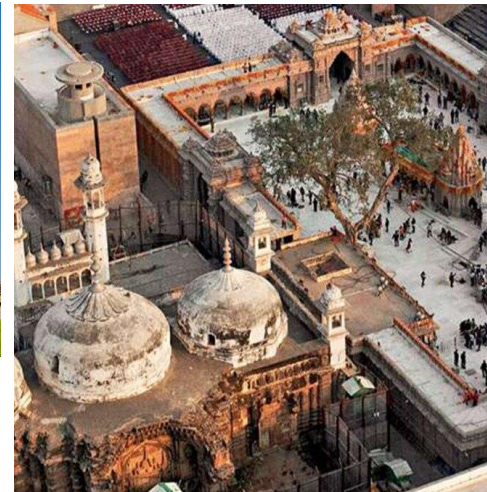
Political massage secular or Hindu India



On the same site, Ram temple inaugurated 2024



Taj Mahal, UNESCO heritage



Gyanvapi mosque in Varanasi,

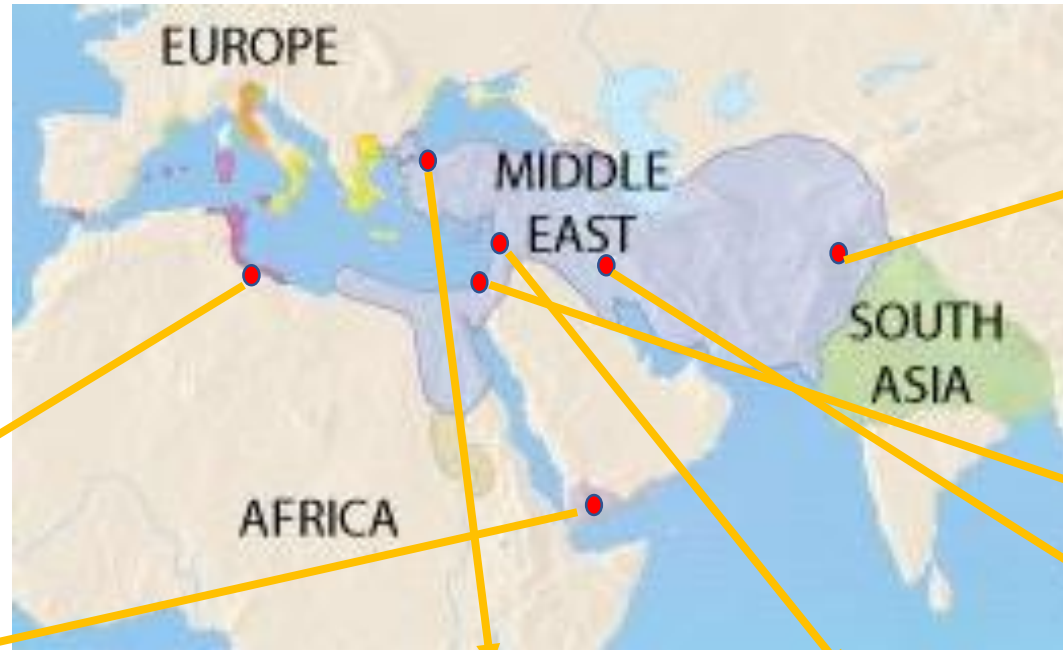


Shahi Eidgah mosque in Mathura

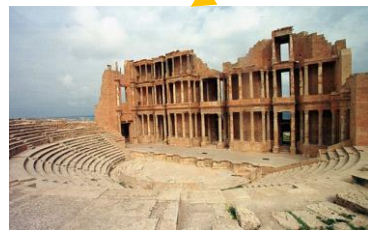
Global Heritage: **Alarming!** And Its stretching.....



Map of ancient civilisations



In 2001, the Taliban destroyed the Buddhas of Bamiyan, two 6th-century statues.



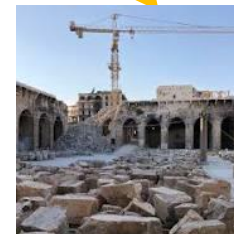
Roman amphitheatre; ancient city of Sabratha, Libya seized by IS; 2015



US lead airstrikes on the ancient city of Marib, Yemen, 2015



Hagia Sophia, Istanbul, Turkey; reopened as Mosque, 2020, was only a museum since 1945



Palmyra and Aleppo, Islamic citadel damaged by civil war gunfire, 2011



IS militants destroyed ancient city Hatra between 2015 and 2017

Acropolis of port Anthedon, Gaza, Israel force destroyed 2023

Recommendations

Need patriotic political vision



The national parliament should remove all its parasitic elements and bring back the original master planning and architectural decisions of master architect Kahn. Then it could be proposed to get enlisted in the UNESCO list immediately.

Irreparable losses !



This is a great loss for this nation that it lost its natal element that holds its birth history so intimately. Although it is an enlisted and protected heritage, this could be seen as rise of Islamic fundamentalism in Bangladesh and their political manifesto



This is the most important Mughal heritage of Dhaka and bears the testimony why Mughals established their capital city in Dhaka. Its site has archaeological evidence of more than 2500 years. Could be easily included in the UNESCO world heritage list, including the series of river forts.

Architecture of Dhaka: **What is your own identity!**



Charyapad



Parliament complex, Tiger city, designed after the most ancient site of Pundra region

Bhusukupada: ভাসুকপা বাঙালি ভ'লি, নিঅ ঘরনী চণ্ডালে লেলি !
Oh Vasukpa, you are now a Bengali, as your wife is taken by the ow caste shoemaker!

Own identity? Religion over Patriotism!

Buddhist university 1500 years of inspiration
UNESCO heritage site.

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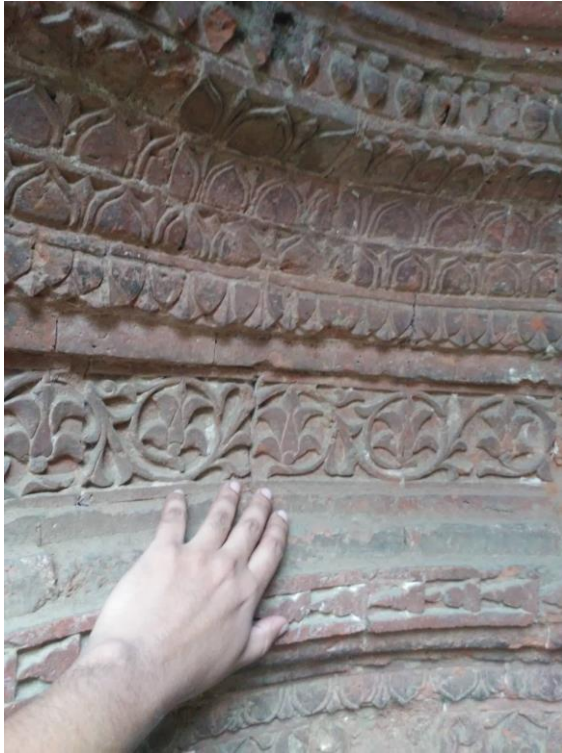
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Architecture: **A Political tool !**



Buddhist ornamentation in 12th century mosque, Gaur, ancient capital of Bengal, Bangladesh



Brick is Buddhist, stone is Hindu, function is Islamic. Choto Sona Mosque, 12th century, Gaur, Medieval capital of Bengal, Bangladesh



Never try to answer a question from the past!

Thank you!