

# Riverscapes: Looking Through the Eyes of Fishermen in *A River Called Titash*

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লালন বলে জল শুকাইলে  
সেদিন মীন যাবে হাওয়ায়।<sup>1</sup>

As the camera pans, we see the sail of a boat on the vast expanse of the river, rain falling on the boat and silt, floating hyacinths on rippling water, a bald young boy performing rites at the river, people bathing, washing clothes, myriad kinds of boats with fishing nets docking, leaving, and arriving at the shore, trees casting shadows on the bubbling water surface, and waves touching the feet of a woman in abeyance. This continuity of events together with Dheeraj Uddin Fhakhir's folk song gives the audience a glimpse of rural Bengal's riverine landscape in Ritwik Ghatak's cinematic adaptation (1973) of Adwaita Mallabharman's novel *Titash Ekti Nadir Naam* (1956).<sup>2</sup> I argue that riverine landscapes or riverscapes which serve as the infrastructure or the background for collective existence of communities are perceived differently in a fluvial environment as the inhabitants of *nadimatrik* Bengal share a complex intertwined relationship with the rivers making the land-water binary inconceivable.<sup>3</sup> Memory also plays an integral role given the need of traversing rivers without a cartographic map and community formation along the rivers' course. This paper attempts to look at landscape and memory from the point of view of the Malo fishermen community in *A River Called Titash*.<sup>4</sup>

With the advent of the Bengali novel in the nineteenth century, lucid descriptions of Bengal's riverscapes and riparian communities were added to the vernacular repertoire—the Kahars by the Kopai river in *Hansuli Banker Upakatha* (1947), the Rajbangshis by the

Teesta river in Tistaparer Brittanta (1952), the Malos by the Padma in *Padma Nadir Majhi* (1936) among others.<sup>5</sup>

“The bosom of Bengal is draped with rivers and their tributaries, twisted and intertwined like tangled locks, streaked with the white of foamy waves... All these tangled wet gray locks are the rivers.”<sup>6</sup>

Being born into a Malo household in the Comilla district by the river Titas in present-day Bangladesh, Mallabarman paints a fitting picture of the Bengal basin.<sup>7</sup> The Jhalo Malo or Malos, one of the primary fishing castes of Bengal, were designated as Scheduled Caste in the colonial records.<sup>8</sup> His Dalit identity finds some reflection in Ananta’s character who also migrates to the city like him. Set in the pre-partition era, the ethnographic portrayal of the lived experiences of his community makes *A River Called Titash* a tour de force in the novelistic tradition.<sup>9</sup>

Titash’s history is the history of its people making public memory an essential and irreplaceable part of Malo culture.<sup>10</sup> Their ancestors had settled along its banks not knowing who had named the river or what its etymological significance is, yet their public memory has no recollection of a time when the river was not called Titash.<sup>11</sup> According to Edward S. Cassey, individual memory, social memory, and collective memory contribute to the formation of public memory. The river has no major towns or cities on its bank nor do merchant vessels ply on it. Its banks are rather “imprinted with stories of a mother’s affection, a brother’s love, the caring of a wife, a sister, and a daughter” and Titash has existed as an eternal truth being a witness to death, grief, birth, and joy.<sup>12</sup> This ingrains the permanence of the river into their lives accentuating their place dependence with it.<sup>13</sup> The human need to be attached to places and have profound ties with them unravels differently in riparian communities where the

dynamic river partakes in identity formation. Thereby, I attempt a reading of the riverscape through hybrid spaces, heterotopia, and elemental water.

## GHATS AND PORTS

A port is a man-made infrastructure that allows vessels to dock for the transportation of cargo and passenger whereas a *ghat* can be a natural sloping into the water or man-made steps going into the water used for everyday chores and tying of boats. This man-made system of spaces superimposed on the land functions to serve the community.<sup>14</sup> The land-water boundary is blurred in the presence of such hybrid places (*ghats* and ports) that negotiate or overlap the space between the two different milieus. These land-water interfaces have shaped civilizations by providing access to water for travel while at the same time locates cultural mores of the Malos and holds a repository of intangible values.<sup>15</sup>

Flecking the course of the river with human activities, the *ghats* come alive with young mothers dipping and lifting their plump babies, daughters, and wives filling up their earthen pitchers and the plying of boats. A newborn's first bathing ceremony takes place at the *ghat* where the mother washes the baby's head and prays to the river amongst the group of singing women. Boatloads of straw and clay also arrive at the *ghat* for the annual Kali Puja. Malo boys take great pride in mixing the finely chopped jute fiber, water, and clay for the goddess's structure. The abstainers for the puja start their day with a predawn bath in Titash and fetch water for the worship, arrange flowers and offerings of food before the idol. On the day of the winter solstice festival, children wait at the *ghats* for the return of fishing boats, and they celebrate it with sweet treats, singing, and a procession. The *ghats*, then, become an expression of the Malos' beliefs reinforcing the identity of the community on the place and the

identity of the place on the community.<sup>16</sup> The attachment stems from familiarity and a deep sense of care for the river and its floodplains.

Maghmandal is also performed at the *ghat* by unmarried young girls for thirty days where they bathe in Titash, worship the sun with a bouquet of flowers, and offer seven cupped handfuls of sacred water whilst chanting. These rites are observed for marriage; where on the thirtieth day, a banana plant float is carried by the girls over their heads to sail it on the river. Women celebrate the ritual's observance by singing along with the drums and the brass plate. As soon as all the floats are launched, the village boys jump into the water and end up ravaging most of them. Such rituals and customs strengthen the attachment to the riverscape by reaffirming the sanctity and unchanging significance of it, thereby, building enduring relationships between 'a people and their place'.<sup>17</sup>

Unlike the *ghats*, Bhairab is a large port where steamships occasionally halt. Merchant boats carry out their business transactions through the day. Nobody lingers around the port after their work is done. When they finish late into the day, the boats set sail at the strike of dawn. Bhairab Malos fare better than Gokanghat Malos given the access to railways and the big river. The port along with Bhairab Bazar serve as a marker and safe harbor for the fishermen who sail north to fish during the lean winter months as we shall see in the following section.<sup>18</sup> As place is any stable object that catches one's attention, the waterscape constructs become those points of rest on the vast expanses of water.<sup>19</sup>

A *ghat* is again used as a marketplace. Fish trader Kalobaran's mother gets her basketful of fish from the village *ghat's* marketplace where the night fishermen's boats have stationed. The traders go up and down the slope carrying out their business. Kadir Mian, who grows sweet potatoes, goes to sell them at a market that falls on the left bank after crossing Titash's arc. Janet Donohoe speaks of places serving not only as settings or sites of events but also as active participants. This holds true for the Malos in their hybrid aqueous

places that provide a transitioning plane between the materialities of land and water allowing the boat (heterotopia) to shift milieus.

## ROUTES AND RIVERSCAPE

The introductory paragraph which describes Ghatak's opening scene roots the standpoint of humans being terrestrial animals. *Titash's* narrative oscillates from the land to the water and back again to the riverscape. Mallabarman's illustrative fisherfolk routes forces the readers to adopt a non-terrain centric viewpoint. A Malo neighborhood is in a state of perpetual preparation to set sail on the water with their boats tied to the *ghats* and the mending nets drying on the ground. Malo homes, an irreplaceable center of significance and the foundation of identity, extend beyond the homesteads into the riverscape and the Titash river. Public memory is situated and enacted in these common arenas where the place facilitates remembering as well as embodies the memory. Yi-Fu Tuan claims places to be stable objects on which we lay our eyes, thence, the riverscapes and siltbeds become the 'points of rest' for the fishermen on water. Adrift on water, the fishermen on boats challenge our terrain-centric conception of landscapes and give rise to alternate ways of seeing.

When Ananta takes his first trip on water from Bhabanipur, the readers share the amazement and point of viewpoint of the young boy. The ebb tide pulls the boat down the creek as we watch the villages and farmlands pass by. As the banks close to each other, Ananta could peek into their homes, observe the farmer smoking a hookah and the yoked bullocks. The boat ran aground in the shallow water. Gouranga and Nityananda had to tie a rope around his waist and push with his shoulders respectively to reach the waters of Titash. Ananta walks up to the bend of the creek and is mesmerized by the sight of Titash: "Not a mere river—it is a thousand years of untold stories flowing on between the bounds of two banks".<sup>20</sup> Ananta's or Mallabarman's personal act of remembering is idiosyncratic to their

individual memory. Ananta's mother's individual memory tries to recall the village she was married into by Titash where the river takes a westward bend following a long northward course. Their ways of knowing the river and riverscapes are determined by their relation or situatedness to the water, whether upstream, downstream, distant, or immersed in it.<sup>21</sup>

Peter Turchi states that cartographic knowledge has been in use to ward off fear of the unknown and distinguish between life-sustaining and life-threatening whereabouts. In the fluvial environment of Bengal, social memory takes the place of maps; the memory held in common by those that are affiliated by kinships, geographical proximity, and engagement in the same project like in the case of the fishermen Kishore and Subal relying on old, frail Tilakchand to navigate the river route from Gokanghat to Shukdebpur village in the lean fishing months of winter.<sup>22</sup> In the process of Tilak's articulation of his route memories, they become public to the next generation, moving beyond the remembering individual. The 'unique rememberer' remembers the routes in particular ways where the primary locus is situated in an intersubjective nexus that is at once social and collective, cultural, and public.<sup>23</sup> There exists extrapersonal dimensions of remembering where the river and its riverine landscape form a part of their knowing and being known.

Rowing for a half day on Titash they finally join Meghna, leaving young Kishore spellbound by its bottomless depths and immensity. The riverscape shows signs of erosion on one bank resembling a clifflike projection while the other bank has an accretion of silvery beds of sand. They arrive at the landing of Bhairab village at sunset and could immediately make out the presence of Malos from their boats, nets spread over bamboo stakes, tar-stained pits, vats of gaab resin, and cane baskets. As Tilak could not locate a safe place to harbor in the next bend of the river, they decided to anchor at Bhairab for the night.

At the break of dawn, they resume their journey leaving behind all signs of the Bhairab port to the boundless, transparent, quiet waters of the Meghna. They travel close to the bank in the morning surveying the barren bank with no village, trees, or *ghats*. The desolation observed calls to mind Jackson's statement about landscapes being the visible manifestations of a community or, in this case, the lack of one.<sup>24</sup> Tired of the bleakness, Kishore instructs Subal to steer to the other bank which was not visible. He reassures Subal that danger reigns near the banks while Mother Ganga protects boatmen in the midstream. Michel Foucault's heterotopia, the boat, which is a floating piece of space makes the utterance of the belief possible. Without it, humans would not have been able to traverse a different milieu for a prolonged period. The boat enables a vantage point from the aqueous milieu to the terrestrial landscape. It is also a means of security and a pause in the currents.

At nightfall, they hit a sandbar and later learn the name of the village at daybreak. Unlike the Malos of Gokanghat, the Nayakanda fisherfolks do not have to go for night fishing owing to the Meghna's bountiful supply. The sadhu who invited Tilakchand, Kishore, and Subal for a meal as a part of their tradition gets teary-eyed at their departure from Nayakanda.<sup>25</sup> With this, Mallabarman shifts his lens and now both the readers and the *sadhu* watch the boat become a distant dot from the *ghat* before vanishing from view on the endless water. These cultural constructs nourish the Malo existence by providing a woven net of relationships. The river takes a convex arc where the swirling water erodes the hard rocks making it perilous to go anywhere near the bank as the falling chunks of earth can crush their boat. It has turned into a hill-like projection. Oaring against swiveling currents they make it through the stretch. The Meghna's breadth has narrowed substantially as they rowed upstream. The reading of a landscape varies from person to person depending on their past experiences and it has a history of its own. Collective

memory involves the commonality of content even if the individuals do not share the same history, locale, or experience.

In the downstream, the banks had looked like faint dark lines. They could make out the thatched roofs of village houses by the side of the river. Subal enquires of Tilakchand which river they are on given the change in the landscape he was witnessing. A village lined with trees arises in front of them. The river again takes a bowl-like turn at the end of the village towards the west and disappears from their vantage point. Beyond the village lies a curved flat stretch of glistening sand that has fewer trees than the village. The stretch has an assemblage of straw-topped structures while the river slithers like a python through the landscape. Tilakchand recognizes Shukdebpur and the fish-drying stretch of Ujaninagar khala.

The fear of the unknown has been tackled by a route map allowing them to reach life-sustaining stretches of the river. Topographic narratives shared by Tilakchand threaded together constituted the route map; it converted the physical spaces into memory-laden places.<sup>26</sup> Memory draws the map while the map archives the memory. The community's mapping practice seeks to articulate the place-based relations of a watery home and hence it differs from the cartographic navigation methods.<sup>27</sup> It also substantiates the role of memory in intergenerational learning of riverine routes. Landscapes and memory bring together different time frames, and different material interfaces which facilitate ways of knowing a place. It helps one realize the past, live in the present and plan for the future.

### **CHANGES IN THE RIVER(SCAPE)**

A river goes through dynamic changes through its course diurnally, seasonally, and over the years, altering its floodplains and subsequently the lives of people on its banks. Some rivers cause profuse flooding during the monsoons making their banks indistinguishable from

the river itself while in summer months they run dry, and expose flatbeds which are then used for growing crops. The shallow water is not suitable for cattle to soak themselves. As there is no looming fear of drowning, mothers let their wards waddle in the water while they finish their chores. The stabbing cold shallow river water of winter makes bathing an ordeal. By the end of *Chaitra*, there is hardly any water to wash off the sweat on one's back.<sup>28</sup> In *Magh* the riverbeds bloom with mustard flowers and sprouting peas and beans.<sup>29</sup> With their triangular fishnets, fishermen catch *chanda*, *punti*, and *tengra* in the dribble that is left behind.<sup>30</sup> Bijoy, situated thirteen miles from Titash, is one such river that almost dries up in *Chaitra* leaving the fish and the fishermen gasping for life and livelihood respectively.

Titash is full even in autumn. The low-lying lands hold enough water for the paddy, vinelike grass, and water lilies. Towards the end of autumn, the water evaporates, and the river reverts to its normal level leaving the flatlands to dry and harden into clay. With the onset of the harvesting season, peasants carry the crops from the farmlands along the river to their hinterland villages. They return to plant mustard and eggplants in the fields and sweet potatoes on the sandbars as they grow well in sandy soil. Spring brings no color to the farmlands but excites the fishermen who tether their boats by the *ghats*, sell, and eat the fish they catch. They decorate their boats and smear colored powder (*abir*) on the bows and sides.<sup>31</sup> Titash is tinged with the red-pink hues of the skies. *Chaitra* ends with the gusting winds of *Baisakh* marking the end of a long hot summer.<sup>32</sup> The approaching rain washes the plowed fields and carries the surface water from the overflowing fields into the river. It turns the water of Titash to an ocher brown. Fishes unable to see swim directly into the fishing nets of Malo men while children enjoy the temporary yet cool muddy waters of the river.

At this point, one must be reminded of the lyrics quoted at the beginning of the article where Lalon Fhakhir speaks of the

disappearance of fishes in the absence of water, promptly raising the question as to whether it is the elemental water that sustains a fluvial morphology. Ivan Illich claims that water is not a-historical. It covers whatever existed before space or place came to be perceived. The fishermen's life and livelihood dwells on the river. They inhabit and retrace the lives of their ancestors through their dwellings. It develops when every moment contributes to or shapes a community's own space. Traditional dwellings never terminate, it terminates when the material or stuff upon which they have built their dwellings diminishes: "As long as there is water in the river, only that long do they float on the water. When the water dries, they too evaporate and disappear."<sup>33</sup> With the floating boat realizing the shift to a non-terrain centric viewpoint, we also become aware of the *charlands* embedded in the water. *Charlands* are a unique fluvial environment where the lands float on water in accordance with Kuntala Lahiri-Dutt and Gopa Samanta.

The stories of the new tributary formation and the origin of Titash are all part of the oral history of Malos which is a deeply social practice, connecting the past and the present.<sup>34</sup> Hamilton and Shopes use the term public memory to indicate the essentially social nature of the remembering process. One of the factors in the study of 'the memory of publics' is the oscillation that exists between the horizon of remembrance and forgetting. The latter is attested in Titash's origin story which is seldom recalled by the Malos. While dancing along its course the Meghna slipped and created a breach on its left bank.<sup>35</sup> Gushing waters paved their way through the alluvium and hard rock and made sweeps around various villages touching the base of many forests and flatlands. After creating its own course through the plain, Titash returns to the lap of Meghna. Its circular shape is compared to the bangle kankon worn by the village women which has a gap between its two ends just like Titash.<sup>36</sup>

On their return journey from Shukdebpur, the three fishermen arrive at the new tributary after sailing through Aganagar, Bhairab

Bazar, and the inlet of Khalapura. As places store the memories and prompts them, the remembrance of 'the memory of publics' is confirmed in Tilakchand's narration of the new tributary's formation story.<sup>37</sup> A small rift was formed on the western bank of the river and the mouth of a canal had existed in the west. It filled up in the monsoon and dried up in the winter. Boys of Baikunthapur and Tatarkandi villages caught small fish in the shallow waters. A massive surge from the Meghna whirled against the ground and created a wide mouth into which the waters gushed and crashed against the two banks of the canal resulting in chunks of earth falling into the whooshing water. The whirlwind of violent currents consumed farmlands, open fields, villages, and trees for days. Farmers cultivated their harvests; villagers left their huts driving their cattle with them farther west to safety. The frenzied movement of water knew no bounds and the canal metamorphosed into a body of water wider than the Meghna, full of strong currents and waves.

At times the changes to the landscape are also man-made or human-induced. The large village of Bhairab shrunk from its former size as land was taken away to build railroads pushing the needs of marginalized people to the periphery. But the riverscape change that permanently altered the lives of the Titash Malos was the rising siltbed in the river. Not only does water animate their bodies but also permeates their ways of thinking. Their lives are intricately linked to the river networks and their identities are shaped in relation to the waters they experience.

Kendall R. Phillips uses the phrase 'the memory of publics' to investigate the ways in which memory or memories affect the public(s) and are in turn also effected by the publics. Radhacharan Malo had a bad dream of the river drying up. He describes his experience of the river while night fishing to his fellowmen as most Malos no longer fish at night. The intergenerational knowledge makes Malo fishermen aware about the direction of currents at different points of the river. After lowering his net beyond the bend of Jatrabari, Radhacharan

made a note of the opposite swirl in the water currents. Knowing Titash like the back of his hand, he feels something is amiss in the flow's pattern. The places where he was familiar with slanted currents are straight now and where they used to be straight are slanted. These memories present themselves as the horizon within which the conception of a public's memory is developed, where our sense of the public is constituted, and individuals are deliberated to become public beings. He found no fish near the cremation ground bend, neither near the bend of five homes nor near Garibullah's tree. The currents were slack; the fish leaped at a little distance away from where he laid the net and expected the flow to be. It was near the mouth of Kurulia canal where the currents churned like a top.

The memories constitute the sense of collectivity and are constituted by togetherness.<sup>38</sup> Although the Malos had dismissed Radhacharan's dream, they always made it a point to lower the net's poles deeper with apprehension and look for changes in current patterns. They notice the discrepancies and surmise the growing of a large siltbed.<sup>39</sup> Unlike large rivers whose banks are subjected to erosion and accretion, Titash does not erode its bank and hence the siltbed had started to form at the center of the riverbed expanding and rising upwards. Half a mile from Gokanghat, starting from the bend of Jatrabari the siltbed stretched further upstream. A *char* is a piece of land that rises in the shallow riverbeds of deltaic Bengal due to the deposition of silt. It is a hybrid environment where the demarcation of land and water is neither defined nor permanent.<sup>40</sup> Its ambivalent identity makes it a place of contestation betwixt fishermen and farmers—"As long as this land was under water, Malos moved on it, it was theirs. The moment it floats above water, it becomes the farmers'."<sup>41</sup>

"During the rainy season Titash is again full to the brim. At the end of it the water level goes down and the siltbed reappears above water like a chest that rises after a deep breath. Where has so

much water gone? Where have so many fish gone? Only two narrow channels remain near the two sides of Titash, the only evidence that a brimming river once flowed here.”<sup>42</sup>

Over the years the floating char or siltbed had extended beyond the village of Nabinagar upstream.<sup>43</sup> It exhausted their means of livelihood and brought about changes in their cultural identity. The social ties of the community had slackened, squabbles broke out over tying boats by the ghat, and they hit each other over laying nets in the river. While the loan-givers visit the Malos with a gun-carrying attendant to terrorize them and take their possessions away, old fishermen are thrashed and dragged into the cold water of Titash in winter. The rains bring momentary relief but cannot subsist the Malos. They buy from the Pal shopkeepers on credit. Their leader Ramprasad claimed the siltbed underwater belonged to the fishermen as the water over it and ends up losing his life in the brawl with the farmers. Resorting to alternate means of sustenance, few like Banamali carry fry in clay pots slung on shoulder poles, some take up jobs of bringing sacks of goods for the Pal shopkeepers on their back, others harvest paddy for farmers while the remaining folks labor for large scale fishing on the big river.

On either side of the river, the villages of peasants remained green, varying broadly from the landscape of Malo neighborhoods where the sight of loss and ruin is palpable. The homesteads have been reduced to bases with broken hearths and crumbled steps, rows of fishing boats have almost vanished at the *ghats*, and cows graze on the land where fishing nets used to dry. Their yards have piles of fallen leaves on them and no one brings a lamp to the sacred altar of the basil plant anymore. People left on their boats with parts of their huts and belongings when Titash's water was still navigable. Those that left later could not carry their chattels. The villages of Radhanagar, Kishtonagar, Manatala, and Gosainpur all identify with the sameness of the derelict condition. With the onset of the rainy

season, the paddy growing char submerges and small waves reach the shores of Gokanghat. The Malo neighborhood has ceased to exist leaving behind empty hut bases to the wilderness.

The present landscape can no longer be typified by its profound meanings and symbols but by its absurdity and separation from the Malos. Vernacular dwelling space or “commons” is regulated by custom. Once the water evaporates, the river-centered customs also disappear along with the “commons”. A Malo is an inhabitant man, not a political animal.<sup>44</sup> He does not think of the landscape as his creation; he thinks of it as a habitat that existed long before him. Titash is never relegated to a resource or commodity. The yards from the Malo homes took them directly to the waters of Titash. Their proximity is a precondition to their riparian identity, attachment, and reliance on the river. Place making involves giving meanings to landscapes over time, keeping in mind that the character of places also changes with time. The meanings bestowed on Titash’s riverscapes reflect the shared experiences of the Malo community. Time is a part of their experiences of places. Reminiscing about the past introduces their narrative and history into memory in addition to the fact that places and memories co-constitute one another. The spirit of the Malos lay in the waterscape; their identity as floaters was influenced by Titash’s experience: hence with the drying up of the river water, their dreams, cultural vivacity, livelihood, and identity too disappeared.

## NOTES

- 1 The quoted lines are from Dheeraj Uddin Fhaker’s folk song that opens Ritwik Ghatak’s adaptation. It translates to the following: Lalon Fakir states, the day the water dries up, the fishes are going disappear into thin air.
- 2 The novel was first published by Puthighar in the year 1956.

- 3 The Bengal basin is a large tectonic unit debouched by rivers from the Himalaya in the north, the Chotanagpur plateau in the west, and the Manipur-Tripura hills in the east. The region endowed with numerous river systems is thereafter called a 'nadimatrik desh' (a land nurtured or mothered by rivers), see Kalyan Rudra, *Rivers of the Ganga-Brahmaputra-Meghna Delta: A Fluvial Account of Bengal* (Springer Nature, 2018), 1, <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-76544-0>.
- 4 For the scope of this paper, I shall be using Kalpana Bardhan's 1993 translation of the original text *A River Called Titash*.
- 5 Supriya Chaudhuri, "The Bengali novel," in *The Cambridge Companion to Modern Indian Culture*, ed. Vasudha Dalmia and Rashmi Sadana (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 101-123.
- 6 Adwaita Mallabharman, *A River Called Titash*, trans. Kalpana Bardhan (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993), 16.
- 7 Titas originates from the river Meghna in Sarail upazilla of Brahmanbaria district and rejoins it downstream near Nabinagar upazilla, see Sagir M.D. Ahmed and Hafeza Akther, "Brush and Vegetation Park Fishery in the River Titas, Brahmanbaria, Bangladesh" *South Pacific Studies* 29, no. 1 (2008): 64; Muhammad A. Saadat, Mir Abdus Subhan, and Imran Khan, "Application of Mathematical Model for Assessment of River Morphology: A Case Study of Titas River," *Esteem Academic Journal* 11, no. 1 (March 2015): 166. To locate the Titas river in Bangladesh, see Ahmed and Akther, "Brush and Vegetation Park Fishery in the River Titas, Brahmanbaria, Bangladesh," 64.
- 8 Rup Kumar Barman, "Caste and Class Awareness Among the Fishermen of Bengal." *Contemporary Voice of Dalit* 1, no. 1 (January 2008): 68.
- 9 The Radcliffe's Award was announced on 17th August 1947 dividing Bengal into West Bengal and East Bengal, see Joya Chatterji, *The Spoils of Partition: Bengal and India, 1947-1967* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 57-58.
- 10 Hereafter, I shall be using this spelling of Titash following Bardhan's translation.
- 11 Public memory is the circulation of recollections among the members of a community. Matthew Houdek, Matthew, and Kendall R. Phillips, "Public Memory," *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Communication*, 2017, accessed January 9, 2023, 1, <https://oxfordre.com/communication/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228613.001.0001/acrefore-9780190228613-e-181>.
- 12 Mallabharman, *A River Called Titash*, 21.
- 13 Place dependence refers to the satisfaction a place provides with respect to the needs met in comparison to other alternatives, see Barbara B. Brown, Irwin Altman, and Carol M. Werner, "Place Attachment," in *International Encyclopedia of Housing and Home*, ed., Susan J. Smith, Burlington: Elsevier Science, 2012, 1.

- 14 John Brinckerhoff Jackson, *Discovering the Vernacular Landscape* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), 8.
- 15 Mechthild Rössler Chief, "World Heritage cultural landscapes: A UNESCO flagship programme 1992-2006." *Landscape Research* 31, No. 4 (2006): 334. <http://doi.org/10.1080/01426390601004210>.
- 16 Edward C. Relph, *Place and Placelessness*, (London: Pion, 1976), 34.
- 17 Relph, *Place and Placelessness*, 32-33.
- 18 To locate Bhairab Bazar on the Meghna river, see the map in Mallabarman, *A River Called Titash*.
- 19 Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience*, (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1977), 161.
- 20 Mallabarman, *A River Called Titash*, 72.
- 21 Cecilia Chen, Janine MacLeod, and Astrida Neimanis, ed., *Thinking With Water*, (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2013), 4.
- 22 To locate Gokanghat on Titash, see the map in Mallabarman, *A River Called Titash*. Shukdebpur is located upstream bordering the districts of Mymensingh and Sylhet.
- 23 Casey, Edward S. "Public Memory in Place and Time," in *Framing Public Memory*, ed. Kendall R. Phillips, (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2004), 20-21.
- 24 Jackson, *Discovering the Vernacular Landscape*, 12.
- 25 A sadhu is a pious person who has renounced the worldly life.
- 26 Ben Bridges and Sarah Osterhoudt, "Landscapes and Memory," *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Anthropology*, 2021, 4, <https://oxfordre.com/anthropology/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780190854584.001.0001/acrefore-9780190854584-e-304>.
- 27 Cecilia Chen, "Mapping Waters: Thinking with Watery Places," in *Thinking With Water*, ed. Cecilia Chen, Janine MacLeod, and Astrida Neimanis, (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2013), 285.
- 28 The Bengali calendar starts with the month of *Baisakh* (mid-April) and ends with *Chaitra*. It roughly corresponds with the Gregorian calendar in the following manner—*Baisakh* (April-May), *Jaishtha* (May-June), *Asarh* (June-July), *Sravan* (July-August), *Bhadra* (August-September), *Ashwin* (September-October), *Kartik* (October-November), *Aghran* (November-December), *Paush* (December-January), *Magh* (January-February), *Falgun* (February-March), and *Chaitra* (March-April).
- 29 See note 28 above.
- 30 Names of fish in Bengali.
- 31 All translations from Bengali are my own unless otherwise noted.
- 32 See note 28 above.
- 33 Mallabarman, *A River Called Titash*, 245.

- 34 Paula Hamilton, and Linda Shopes, ed., *Oral History and Public Memories*, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2008), viii.
- 35 Meghna along with its tributaries drains the eastern part of the basin, see Rudra (2018, 74). The rivers in the alluvial plain of Bengal tend have cyclical oscillations within the meander belts, see Kalyan Rudra, *Rivers of the Ganga-Brahmaputra-Meghna Delta: A Fluvial Account of Bengal*, 4.
- 36 Adwaita Mallabharman, *Titash Ekti Nadir Naam*, (Calcutta: Karuna Publishers, 2017), 8.
- 37 Bridges and Osterhoudt, "Landscapes and Memory," 4.
- 38 Phillips, Kendall R, ed., *Framing Public Memory*, (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2004), 3.
- 39 The first appearance of siltbed in the lower bends of Titash near Gokanghat was noticed in the late 1930s, see Mallabharman, *A River Called Titash*, 267. Sediments from the Tripura hills in India and those that are carried by Meghna render the siltation condition severe in the upstream reach and the downstream of Akhaura, see Saadat, Subhan, and Khan, "Application of Mathematical Model for Assessment of River Morphology: A Case Study of Titas River," 166.
- 40 Kuntala Lahiri-Dutt, and Gopa Samanta, *Dancing with the River: People and Life on the Chars of South Asia*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), 1.
- 41 Mallabharman, *A River Called Titash*, 245.
- 42 Mallabharman, *A River Called Titash*, 245.
- 43 To locate Nabinagar on Titash, see Ahmed and Akther, "Brush and Vegetation Park Fishery in the River Titas, Brahmagbaria, Bangladesh," 64.
- 44 Jackson, *Discovering the Vernacular Landscape*, 40.

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