3 Sounds of a Massacre: Chuknagar, East Pakistan, 1971

This chapter aims to develop a new understanding of a large massacre by analyzing what survivors and witnesses heard, according to their later statements. This massacre occurred on May 20, 1971, at Chuknagar, East Pakistan, a large village about 30 km west of Khulna. It was part of the violent attempt by the Pakistani military government to suppress the Bangladeshi autonomy movement and prevent a secession from March 25 to December 16, 1971. A small, unidentified unit of Pakistani troops entered Chuknagar, where a crowd of thousands of predominantly Hindu people had gathered on their flight to India, and shot a large number of people, probably thousands, with most of them being Hindu male refugees.[1] It was an unprovoked mass killing of unarmed fellow citizens.

Why analyze a massacre? This term, it seems to me, has had more of a political than a scholarly career. In the academic literature, there seem to be two distinct concepts of 'massacre', a narrow one and an encompassing one. The latter understands massacre – usually appearing in the singular in such studies – as a chiffre for mass murder in general, which can be supra-local and of a longer duration (and may even turn into a legal category),[2] coming close to what is being called 'genocide'.[3] However, this is not what I am referring to here. Much of the study of massacre in the narrow sense has been concerned with the memory of

1 An early brief mentioning of the killing is in "Over one lakh killed in Khulna alone", *Bangladesh Observer*, February 4, 1972, putting the number of victims at "at least 3,000". The massacre was rarely discussed in scholarship until the year 2000. But see another journalistic account (of 1972?): Gouranga Nandi, "Killing Fields in Khulna", in: *Tormenting Seventy One: An Account of Pakistany army's atrocities during Bangladesh liberation war of 1971*, ed. Shahriar Kabir (Dhaka: Nirmul Committee, 1999), www.mukto-mona.com/Special_Event_126-march/shahriar_kabir/Tormenting71_1.pdf (last accessed March 9, 2007). Both articles mentioned in this note specify that the victims were refugees but not that they were overwhelmingly Hindus, framing them as "Bengalis" instead. More recent treatments are in Sarmila Bose, *Dead Reckoning* (London: Hurst & Company, 2011), 115–125 and Salil Tripathi, *The Colonel Who Would Not Repent: The Bangladesh War and Its Unquiet Legacy* (New Delhi: Aleph, 2014), 118–125.

2 See, for example, the considerations with reference to Jacques Sémelin in David El Kenz, "Présentation: le massacre, objet d'histoire" in *Le massacre, objet d'histoire*, ed. David El Kenz (Paris: Gallimard, 2005), 7–23, here 9. Eric Wenzel, "Introduction: Le massacre dans les méandres de l'histoire du droit", ibid., 25–45 and some chapters in Eric Carlton, *Massacres: An historical perspective* (Aldershot and Brookfield: Scholar Press, 1994) seem to follow this line of argument.

3 See Jacques Semelin, "In consideration of massacres", *Journal of Genocide Research* 3, 3 (2001): 377–389, here 379.

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and public discourse on massacres.[4] Although informed by these aspects, this chapter does not follow this course either.

My brief study is not primarily concerned with violence in general, but rather with a specific form of it. One particular characteristic of a massacre is arguably the "physical proximity" between perpetrators and victims. Characterized by the unity of time and place, massacres represent a special kind of dramatic collective violent interaction.[5] In fact, they have been called "public, performative acts".[6] A massacre implies direct violence and a physicalness and close interaction that lets an inquiry into sounds appear productive. Among the questions with which researchers usually approach single mass slaughters, one pertains to the degree of organization and state control.[7] Historians – this author is one – have been looking for specific characteristics of individual massacres instead of constant features. The question of why *this* massacre should be studied can be answered as follows: because of the special course of action in the case of Chuknagar, there were many survivors and, thus, more people who could tell the story than usual. This analysis provides insights into the persecution in East Pakistan, but may also be useful to raise questions concerning other mass killings, which could be further discussed.

However, there are problems with and limitations to the attempt to 'read' a massacre in a semiotic sense.[8] Although violence is always also a communicative act, it is also true that in a context of organized mass violence, different violent methods may be used against one target group and by one group of persecutors, and the same method may be used against different groups. Therefore, the method may not be characteristic of the relationship between perpetrator and victim.[9] Moreover, one of the questions connected with massacres that are usually asked is about why people kill.[10] But massacres may be decided upon by politicians or func-

4 El Kenz, "Présentation", 14–18.

5 Mark Levene, "Introduction" in *The Massacre in History*, eds. Mark Levene and Penny Roberts (New York and Oxford: Berghahn, 1999), 6; Philip Dwyer and Lyndall Ryan, "The Massacre and History", *Theatres of Violence: Massacre, Mass Killing and Atrocity throughout History*, eds. Philip Dwyer and Lyndall Ryan (New York and Oxford: Berghahn, 2012), xiii–xiv.

6 Dwyer and Randall, "Massacre", xviii.

7 Levene, "Introduction", 13; Dwyer and Ryan, *Massacre*.

8 One example is Christian Ingrao, *Hitlers Elite* (Berlin: Propyläen, 2012), 241–314.

9 See Christian Gerlach, *The Extermination of the European Jews* (Cambridge et al.: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 140.

10 Carlton, *Massacres*, 1–3, 167–177 discusses this and other possible questions. The question of motives is also central to Christopher Browning, *Ordinary Men* (New York: HarperCollins, 1993) and Daniel Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners* (New York: Vintage Books, 1997), both dealing with German mass shootings of Jews in Poland on the basis of problematic material.

tionaries far away from the perpetrator units dispatched to carry them out, so studying the latter may do little to explain why people were killed. Studying the violent acts themselves, as many scholars suggest,[11] tells analysts more about the 'how' and performative aspects than the 'why'. Importantly, it is also telling of the experiences and responses of victims, survivors and witnesses.

This is remarkable because many studies of massacres concentrate on the perpetrator side.[12] However, the fact that Pakistan never acknowledged the slaughter at Chuknagar (which is telling about the state of Pakistani government and society), that there is no documentation by, and about, those who carried it out, and that there are no pictures, creates an opportunity to change perspectives, look at – or rather listen from – the direction of those under attack, inquire into their experiences and use their accounts in a novel manner.

This chapter uses the approach of sound history. It reconstructs sounds from written texts, as is an established historical practice. Who tapes the sounds of a mass killing anyway? Historians have to work in the absence of recordings of this kind. This, however, creates some problems. Narratives do not equal perception at the time, which may have been selective anyway; memory and representation are additional filters that may distort what once was the actual experience.

Given that sound history is used here to generate findings beyond noises, not all considerations in this chapter stay within the realm of aural experience. I ask what the noises of the massacre in Chuknagar are telling about its performative and communicative aspects; what the acoustic experience reveals about social interaction and relations between those involved, between and within groups; which emotions can be traced and how they were expressed or could not be expressed through sounds; what role religious practice played; and how community ties or their absence were audible. In addition, I consider what acoustic omissions there are in the narratives. In this manner, this chapter attempts to show how mass violence is constituted by social interaction and what characterized the social situation in Chuknagar on that day.

11 See Trutz von Trotha, ed., *Soziologie der Gewalt* (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1997); Alexander Laban Hinton, ed., *Annihilating Difference: The Anthropology of Genocide* (Berkeley et al.: University of California Press, 2002).

12 See for example the research questions formulated in Jacques Sémelin, "Analyser le massacre: Reflexions comparatives", *Questions de Recherche* no. 7, 2012, 1–42, esp. 4, 32–33; Dwyer and Randall, *Massacre*.

Sources

The material this chapter is based on is a collection of 90 accounts by survivors and witnesses. This was the result of Bangladeshi researchers gathering such people in September 2000 and letting them provide public statements in Chuknagar and Khulna during a two-day event. Out of the 200 statements that were made, 90 were selected and published in a book in Bengali in 2001 that was translated into English in 2013.[13]

On the one hand, this material is highly valuable because it provides many angles of listening: by locals and refugees; Hindus and Muslims; men, women and children at the time; and people of different classes and trades. Unlike other recollections pertaining to the conflict in East Pakistan in 1971 (this is similar to many other cases of mass violence), the sample is not dominated by well-educated middle-class Muslim urbanites (but it is dominated by male accounts and includes only 25 women).[14] The selection of reports is special because it encompasses many poor, lowly educated people. Even beyond the conflict in East Pakistan, I am not aware of any massacre in history for which so many accounts are available, at least not in such a concentrated form.[15] In any case, this provides a rare opportunity.

On the other hand, the material is problematic in several respects. It was compiled 29 years after the events when peoples' memories had possibly faded or become distorted and many had probably already told their story many times. These are not sources in a strictly historical sense, but representations in retrospect. Further, most of the text of the printed statements, although grammatically first-person accounts, seems to consist of summaries, judging from occasional stretches of text put in quotation marks that seem to indicate word-by-word reproduction. The texts appear to be based on interviewers' notes and not tape recordings.[16] Many of the statements are laconic, being only a page long. Moreover, the text was – badly – translated from Bengali (a language that I unfortunately am not in command of) into English, a process through which nuances of sound description may have gotten lost. The procedure through which this material came about is also questionable, as there were introductory speeches condemning Pakistan and helpers of the Pakistani government of 1971, whether Bengali or from minorities; the organizers tried to frame the Chuknagar incident as the sin-

13 Muntassir Mamoon, ed., *1971 Chuknagar Genocide*, 2nd ed. (Dhaka: University Press Publishers, 2014). Quoted: MM.

14 16 persons in the sample appear to be Muslim.

15 This excludes Hiroshima and Nagasaki, if the use of the Atomic bomb there could be called a massacre.

16 See Hasina Ahmed et al., "Compilers' Note", in *MM*, 19–20.

gle biggest massacre during the entire conflict, calling it "Chuknagar genocide"; and the statements were made in front of groups of other locals.[17] As a result, many people may have felt inhibited about talking frankly and may have complied to certain narratives.[18] The "Chuknagar genocide" has been being used as part of a larger narrative of a Pakistani "genocide" against Bengalis in general. What survivors and also witnesses presented were narratives of pain, suffering, victimization and accusal.

Context: The Conflict and Mass Killings in East Pakistan in 1971

In March 1971 cultural and economic tensions between Pakistan and the especially poor, marginalized and geographically isolated eastern wing of the country (contemporary Bangladesh) erupted.[19] In late 1970, the Awami League, a political party with social-democratic rhetoric that spearheaded the autonomy movement in East Pakistan, won an absolute majority of seats in parliament elections for all Pakistan through a sweeping victory in the east where more than half of the country's population lived. Afraid of secession, West Pakistani elites, including the ruling military junta, delayed the lawful takeover of the Awami League. When President Yahya Khan announced the indefinite postponement of the opening of parliament in early March 1971, most East Pakistanis suspected betrayal, and the Awami League adopted a policy of non-cooperation in East Pakistan and controlled the administration and public life. Confrontations between Bengali civilians and Pakistani troops, police, West Pakistanis and so-called Biharis (i.e., non-Bengali speakers who were former refugees from India and collectively accused in 1971 of siding with the Pakistani regime) claimed several thousand lives within weeks in riot-like skirmishes. On 25 March 1971, the military started a crackdown to crush the autonomy movement, ruthlessly using tanks and fighter jets in their own country.

Within days, the relatively weak military units (less than 50,000 in a province with a population of 70 million) split between Bengalis and West Pakistanis and

17 See reports about the event in *MM*, 175–191; and the critical appraisal by Bose, *Dead Reckoning*, 116.

18 For some of the pressures involved in public statements about one's own persecution of 1971 in 1990s Bangladesh, with special reference to rape, see Nayanika Mookherjee, *The Spectral Wound: Sexual Violence, Public Memory and the Bangladesh War of 1971* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2015), 68.

19 For the following two paragraphs, see Gerlach, *Extremely Violent Societies*, 123–176. See also chapter 4 in this volume.

turned to infighting. The pro-Pakistani troops, at first confined to a few large cities, defeated their opponents, taking control of the province within four weeks. They also killed civilians from the first night, including many intellectuals; Awami League functionaries; Hindus (a 15-percent minority in the province) who were collectively suspected of supporting India and, thus, autonomy or secession; and, increasingly, rural dwellers once guerrilla activity started. Among the troops, anti-Bengali and anti-Hindu sentiments were strong. In the complex conflict that ensued, mutual massacres between Bengalis and Biharis occurred, along with instances of violence by local pro-Pakistani militias, guerrilla attacks, Muslim neighbors turning against Hindus, looting and struggles for land, and widespread rape of women and girls by troops but also civilians. Ten million people (most of whom were Hindus) took refuge in India and up to 15 million (who were largely Muslims) fled within the province. Hundreds of thousands were killed, and many also died in a famine that primarily claimed the lives of small children and old people of rural poor in 1971 and 1972. In December 1971, an Indian invasion with the help of pro-Bangladesh fighters put an end of Pakistani rule within weeks, and the state of Bangladesh was founded.

The designer of the Pakistani re-conquest of the province was Lieutenant-General Amir Abdullah Khan Niazi. According to his scheme, the troops, after defeating the insurgents in cities and towns, should fan out in small units and rapidly advance radially toward the border to terrify the 'enemy' and cause them to flee.[20] The last phase of Niazi's plan involved "combing out the whole province" including the countryside.[21] In May, the time for it had come. It was a central point in Niazi's strategy to sow panic, to the point that he proposed to a superior in June 1971 to bomb a metropole like Calcutta, India.[22]

In April, informants to the West German consulate general in the area of Khulna and Jessore agreed that the army had searched cities systematically after the conquest and killed all Hindus that they found (to reiterate, Chuknagar is in the Khulna area).[23] A critical Pakistani journalist reported similar procedures for villages in the province of East Pakistan that he had visited in the spring of 1971.[24] During May, the U.S. consulate in Dacca called the fact that army troops entered

20 Gerlach, *Extremely Violent Societies*, 141–142.

21 A.A.K Niazi, *The Betrayal of East Pakistan* (Karachi et al.: Oxford University Press, 1998), 60.

22 Niazi, *Betrayal*, 65–66.

23 Deutsches Generalkonsulat Dacca, "Lage in Ostpakistan", April 17, 1971, Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes, Berlin, B37/630.

24 Anthony Mascarenhas, *The Rape of Bangla Desh* (Delhi et al.: Vikas, n.y. [1971]), 117.

villages in East Pakistan to search for and kill Hindu men a "common pattern".[25] In the week between May 14 and 21, 1971 (which was right around the time when events in Chuknagar were occurring), army units destroyed Hindu villages near Nagari to the north of Dacca, killing and wounding many people, burning houses and producing thousands of refugees.[26] In June 1971, 'World Bank' officials also reported the large-scale destruction of housing by fire in villages in the areas of Khulna, Jessore and Kushtia.[27] The practice of army squads storming villages, killing Hindu men, looting and burning their homes appears to have continued in June.[28] Again, there must have been many survivors and witnesses.

During the counterinsurgency operations in the countryside, the most frequent pattern that was observed was that military units gathered villagers, separated men from women and children and killed all or part of the former and especially Hindu men.[29] But there were also reports of more chaotic scenes where soldiers shot down villagers running away in panic.[30] Such incidents took place during the Jinjira massacre where large crowds of displaced persons were shot with machine guns and shelled on April 1, 1971, with many women and children among the victims.[31] A recent survey study of 100 massacres in Bangladesh in 1971 found that 42 percent of the persons identified among those killed were Hindus, 3.55 percent were women, and 3 percent were minors under 16. Over 90 percent of those killed were men aged 16–60.[32] The events at Chuknagar were probably the army's largest attack on refugees, but other, smaller ones often happened closer to the Indian border.[33]

On May 20, 1971, thousands of refugees had gathered in the village of Chuknagar west of Khulna.[34] Many of them had come by boat through the river Bhadra

25 Archer Blood, *The Cruel Birth of Bangladesh* (Dhaka: University Press, 2002), 217–220, quote 217 from a telegram of May 14.

26 James and Marti Hefley, *Christ in Bangladesh* (New York et al.: Harper Row, 1973), 45–46.

27 *Thousand My Lais: World Bank Study on Bangladesh* (n.p., n.y. [1971]), 15.

28 See Sydney Schanberg, "East Pakistan: An 'Alien Army' Imposes Its Will", *New York Times*, July 4, 1971.

29 Gerlach, *Extremely Violent Societies*, 141–144.

30 Prabodh Chandra, *Bloodbath in Bangla Desh* (Delhi: Adarsh, n.y. [1971]), 159.

31 See Kalyan Chaudhuri, *Genocide in Bangladesh* (Bombay et al.: Orient Longman, 1972), 32–33; A. M. A. Muhith, *Bangladesh: Emergence of a Nation* (Dacca: Bangladesh Books International, 1978), 223.

32 See Shahid Kader Chowdhury, "Age, Gender and Religion of the Victims of the Bangladesh Genocide", *Jagannath University Journal of Arts* 11, 1 (2021).

33 Chaudhuri, *Genocide*, 93; Gerlach, *Extremely Violent Societies*, 138; for the treatment of Hindus ibid., 144–148.

34 This paragraph is based on *MM*.

to continue their flight to India on foot or on buses. They crowded a lowland area at the riverbank, as well as areas near the bazaar, a bus stop and some buildings in town. In the late morning, at around 10 or 11 a.m., a squad of Pakistani soldiers arrived near the bazaar on two to four trucks, dismounted and swiftly started shooting. They split up in several groups, one or two of which advanced to the river, whereas at least one other hunted for victims in the village, searching buildings. The troops were focused on killing Hindu males between the ages of 15 and 60 years. Hindu men, rather than being interrogated, were killed on the spot, which means what they had done or had not done hardly mattered. In cases of doubt concerning a man's identity, the soldiers checked whether he was circumcised (and, thus, presumably Muslim). Many were shot at short range. At the riverbank, the troops lined up male refugees in an improvised manner and tried to shoot them all.

However, then, as at other locations in Chuknagar, a panic set in, people began to run away screaming and tried to hide. The soldiers attempted to find Hindus in their hiding places and kill them at close range. Some, including people who were wounded, were bayonetted to death. Especially near the riverside, however, the perpetrators also shot at people from some distance in situations where they were running away, swimming in the river or trying to hide under water in ponds. As a result, aside from those who were killed, many were left wounded and women and children were hit in the process, too, some of them fatally. Many people, particularly children, also drowned. Several Muslims also ended up getting shot. Most victims were refugees, whereas most local residents, including Hindus, managed to evade the troops and hide. The massacre ended in the early afternoon, at around 3 or 4 p.m. The survivors describe horrible scenes, with corpses and dying people lying everywhere in great numbers, many of which had portions of their skulls blown away or their entrails falling out.

From a genocide studies perspective, this would appear as a clear case: a state-organized mass killing, selectively directed against a religious minority. It resembled, though not entirely, several smaller killings that took place in the same area on May 19 to 21, 1971.[35] However, an analysis of the sounds involved makes the event at Chuknagar appear more complex and less straightforward.

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35 Possibly the same unit committed a smaller massacre against male Hindu refugees in Jhaudanga further west, closer to the border, in the early morning of the same day. Bose, *Dead Reckoning*, 117. A large mass shooting of a crowd of thousands of civilian refugees on the way to the border quite similar to that in Chuknagar seems to have happened at Dakra (about 50 km east of Chuknagar) on the following day. There, 20–25 razakars (pro-Pakistani militias) arrived on two boats and opened fire. See "Dakra massacre", https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dakra_massacre (last accessed March 9, 2017). In Badantola, 40 km west of Chuknagar, persons described as "followers

Evidence: Behavior of Soldiers

Unsurprisingly, the sounds most frequently mentioned in the accounts came from the shooting. Many persons stated that they tried to locate the shots in space, recalling from which direction they heard them and how far away the shooting was. Some also said that it seemed to come closer.[36] Usually, the people identified the sounds as shooting, which is not a given[37] and testifies to the hearing competence and alertness of those present (except for one little boy who said that his family first mistook shots for another noise).[38] One local Muslim said that he had been afraid before that a shooting might happen.[39]

The shots were reportedly fired from semi-automatic weapons and LMGs. Many stated that they heard shots coming without interruption for a long duration. The witnesses (or interviewers) often described the Pakistani troops as firing "ceaselessly"[40] or "incessantly".[41] One stated: "We heard the firing like an incessant rain", a man who was 15 years old at the time referred to it as a "brushfire", while a man who was aged 31 in 1971 recalled: "In the torrents of bullets I started crying."[42] Sometimes, the shooting appeared inescapable, surrounding the person; one woman (then a girl of 16) spoke about "the noise of gunshots coming from every direction", one who was six years old at the time said: "Bullets were coming from all sides [. . .] Such a rain of bullets was it."[43] Even from a large distance, it was loud: "The Pakistani army came loaded in two trucks. 'They opened fired [sic!] the air was filled with tremendous noises. Every minute the noise was changing. I was about half a mile from the spot of [the] massacre and standing behind a tree watched the situation [sic!].'"[44]

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of the pro-Pakistan Muslim League" massacred over 100 people, predominantly non-locals (presumably refugees), on May 19, one day before the slaughter at Chuknagar. Salil Tripathi, "Blood in the water: The contested history of one of Bangladesh's worst wartime massacres", November 1, 2014, http://www.caravanmagazine.in/essay/blood-water, last accessed November 2, 2017.

36 For example, account by Purno Chandra Roy, *MM*, 24.

37 For example, see James Lastra, "Reading, Writing and Representing Sounds", *Sound Theory, Sound Practice*, ed. Rick Altman (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), 68–69.

38 Account by Someer Biswas, *MM*, 162.

39 Account by Mohammad Sher Ali Sardar, *MM*, 42.

40 Accounts by Purno Chandra Roy and Kalidashi Mondol, *MM*, 24, 52.

41 Accounts by Horipodo Mondol and Ruhidas Chandra Roy, *MM*, 26, 51, see also account by Shorola Mondol, *MM*, 160.

42 Accounts by Atiar Rahman, Monoj Kanti Roy and Bolaj Goldar, *MM*, 87, 117, 149. Harendra Nash Gain in MM, 69, called it "incessant brush fire".

43 Accounts by Bukul Roy and Shorola Mondolin, *MM*, 113, 160; see also Shuvash Chandra Tarakder, *MM*, 158.

44 Account by Bolaj Krishna Kundu, *MM*, 33. Spelling as in the original.

By contrast, the sound of military trucks was mentioned very rarely[45] although several speakers were located close enough to hear them and described the scene of their arrival. This sound may have not been so remarkable because there was, for instance, a bus service in the village, so the sounds of big motor vehicles were normal. In fact, one survivor said that many had left Chuknagar on the morning of May 20 for India by bus.[46]

Genocide studies assign a great deal of importance to inciteful propaganda, usually spread through mass media, which is viewed as a crucial transmission belt between genocidal ideas and action. Some families in Chuknagar probably did have radio sets, and at least one refugee mentioned having listened to disquieting radio news about the Bangladesh conflict, "seeking the latest information".[47] However, none of the accounts from Chuknagar mentions the troops contributing to the propaganda, and none speaks about having heard Pakistani radio propaganda against Hindus or other groups.[48] This is all the more worth mentioning as I have made a similar observation concerning survivors' accounts of German violence against Jews and villagers in the course of anti-guerrilla warfare during World War II, as well as regarding survivors of the mass violence in Indonesia in 1965.[49]

The absence of another sound is notable. It seems that, for the most part, the Pakistani soldiers were not shouting in Chuknagar (which was, for instance, in stark contrast to many Germans persecuting Jews in the early 1940s[50]). Just one out of 90 accounts mentions that "one or two military men" ran to a house with

45 Account by Meena Gain, *MM*, 127.

46 Account by Shuvash Chandra Roy, *MM*, 78. See also Ashutosh Nandi, *MM*, 91.

47 The available information about the ownership of radio sets in East Pakistan/Bangladesh is contradictory. One source speaks of only 300,000 sets in 1974, but another mentions that 17.2 percent of all households owned a set in 1961, a percentage that had risen markedly by 1974, including in the district of Khulna where Chuknagar was located; see Ian Smillie, *Freedom from Want: The Remarkable Story of BRAC, the Global Grassroots Organization That's Winning the Fight Against Poverty* (Sterling: Kumarian, 2009), 35; M. A. Taiyeb Chowdhury, *Dimensions of Development and Change in Bangladesh, 1960–198*0, Ph.D dissertation, University of Western Ontario, 1988, 213, 216–218. Quote: account by Purno Chandra Roy, *MM*, 23.

48 For examples of Pakistani propaganda at the time, see Government of Pakistan, *White Paper on the Crisis in East Pakistan* (n.p., August 5, 1971); *Pakistan News Digest* of December 1 and 15, 1971, National Archive of Australia 189/10/7, part 1. See also Siddiq Salik, *Witness to Surrender* (Karachi: Lancer, 1998; first 1977), an account by a PR officer of the Pakistani army.

49 In the sample used for Gerlach, "Echoes", very few mention Nazi radio propaganda. See also Christian Gerlach, "Indonesian narratives of survival in and after 1965 and their relation to societal persecution", *The Palgrave Handbook of Anti-Communist Persecutions*, eds. Christian Gerlach and Clemens Six (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), 453.

50 See Gerlach, "Echoes".

100 to 125 refugees inside "and shouted, 'Here you come, Malaun' (*Malaun* is the slang for Hindus usually used by Muslims)."[51] Another account states: "We saw the vehicles carrying the Pak[istani] army to halt [sic!]. They had arrived just [with]in 10–15 minutes after our arrival [at the riverbank]. There was a roar from everywhere, 'Raise your hands, raise your hands!'"[52] These shouts could have been uttered either by the Pakistani military or by persons among the refugees, part of whom, as many said, surrendered, presented themselves to the military and stood in rows, hoping to be left unharmed. All of them were mowed down sometime later. Given the low number of Pakistani troops present, their shouts could also hardly have come from "everywhere". Two other accounts – although only one is from a witness of the scene described – mention in addition that Pakistani soldiers laughed after killing men and also a few protesting women while leaving other women alive.[53]

No other account mentions any audible emotional involvement of the Pakistani troops. Moreover, it seems that beatings were rarely meted out. No whips, sticks and truncheons were mentioned. More typical are statements that the soldiers pulled people, usually women or children, away from men and shot the latter from short range, and that they spoke little, if at all, to civilians. Khuku Rani Joardar recalled that "[t]hey did not say anything to the women and and children" while killing her husband, his brothers and her sister's husband.[54] Another description reads: "At that moment the army came [and] without any word opened fire on them [refugees at the bazaar]."[55] It should be added that there seems to have been little vandalism by the troops. However, the statements disagree upon how many houses (of Hindu families) were burned down, with some stating three and others an entire neighborhood.[56]

Taken together, this information regarding sounds implies that the Pakistani troops conducted the mass killing at Chuknagar in cold blood, behaving partially in accordance with the self-image of the Pakistani army conveyed in memoirs of

51 Account by Mukundo Bihari Roy, *MM*, 114–115. Another example of soldiers shouting, but outside of the village, in order to call his father to them who was then shot is mentioned by Ershad Ali, as described in Tripathi, *Colonel*, 119.

52 Account by Bukul Roy, *MM*, 113.

53 Account by Shomoresh Mondol (a boy who was 12 years old in 1971), *MM*, 124; cf. account by A. B. M. Safiqul Islam, *MM*, 156.

54 *MM*, 83.

55 Account by Anil Krisno Roy, *MM*, 37.

56 Account by Ashutosh Nandi (three houses), Arobindo Das ("many"), Shontosh Das ("some") and Shohorjan Bibi (the weaver's neighborhood), *MM*, 90, 154, 171, 174.

military officers: professional, well-disciplined and efficient.[57] This is part of their self-representation as an inherently superior Muslim elite that coolly and soberly fights even when being outnumbered or outmatched, a myth that seems to have been somehow paradoxically reinforced by Pakistan's failure to decisively win any of its wars.[58] Such a claim to professionalism has also been observed in other units committing mass murder, such as Nazi German mobile killing units,[59] although these engaged in a lot of shouting and cursing. From the sounds, it appears that the Pakistani troops at Chuknagar found themselves cool and behaved with the habitus of an elite, which was also meant to set them apart from the villagers, to whom they felt superior.

However, not everything supports this impression. To consider this, one must move partially beyond the history of sounds. To begin with, none of the witnesses reported hearing any orders among the military personnel. Hierarchical organization would probably be one of the characteristics that define the Pakistani army's self-image. A different piece of evidence that contradicts the self-representation of the army's cool, professional discipline concerns the rapes of women and girls in 1971 for which the Pakistani troops were notorious and which are also said to have taken place in Chuknagar, although only according to a few statements. One witness claimed to have actually seen rape taking place, another the abduction of several women when the troops left.[60]

Many witnesses said that the Pakistani soldiers largely shot Hindu men who were approximately between 15 and 60 years old. But since the killers did not herd the victims together and thousands ran away to try hiding in buildings, behind or on trees, and under water, the troops often shot from greater distances and at times with no clear vision of the target. This may explain why some said that the soldiers were shooting "haphazardly" or "indiscriminately".[61] As a result, they killed a considerable number of women and children, while many were left

57 See Salik, *Witness*; Niazi, *Betrayal*; Hakeem Arshad Qureshi, *The 1971 Indo-Pak War: A Soldier's Narrative* (Oxford et al.: Oxford University Press, 2002).

58 See. C. Christine Fair, *Fighting to the End: The Pakistan Army's Way of War* (Oxford et al.: Oxford University Press, 2014), esp. 8, 88, 99, 165. Stephen Cohen attributes this attitude in particular to what he calls the "American generation" of military personnel that dominated the Pakistani army around 1971: Stephen Cohen, *The Pakistan Army* (Oxford et al.: Oxford University Press, 4th ed. 2002), esp. 64, 69, 86, 90.

59 See Andrej Angrick, *Besatzungspolitik und Massenmord: Die Einsatzgruppe D in der Sowjetunion 1941–1943* (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 2003), 236.

60 Accounts by Mukundu Bihari Roy and Monoj Kanti Roy, *MM*, 116, 118. A recent study on rapes in this conflict in general is Mookherjee, *Spectral Wound*.

61 See acounts by Monoranjon Roy, Ruhidas Chandra Roy and Shuvash Chandra Tarafder, *MM*, 35, 51, 158.

wounded. The people included in the sample mentioned that 20 female relatives or acquaintances were killed, nearly 10 percent of the identified victims.[62] Sometimes the soldiers also shot while marching,[63] which must have compromised selective aiming.

The editor of the interviews estimated that 6,000 to 10,000 people were murdered in the Chuknagar massacre.[64] These figures have been challenged by a critic, given that most witnesses agreed that the number of perpetrators was only between 20 and 40, who had arrived on only up to four vehicles. This would mean, as she objected, that each soldier and officer would have killed 150 to 500 people within about five hours.[65] Was this possible, and could they have even carried so much ammunition? (Nobody mentions that troops were supplied from their trucks, or were supplying themselves, with additional ammunition.) Witness testimonies concerning the overall figure of people killed vary greatly and appear largely speculative. But several facts do indicate that people were killed in four-digit numbers. There is no doubt that Chuknagar was packed with thousands of refugees at the time. One Muslim man who worked with others to dump corpses into the river on May 21 stated that they disposed of 4,200 bodies, according to an incomplete count.[66] The 90 interviewees alone mentioned that 195 relatives and acquaintances known by name were killed (the 74 Hindus interviewed mentioned 193 of these victims; a few of these are double counts).[67] In addition, according to other accounts, soldiers said that they did not shoot women for lack of ammunition and that they spared people in the end, perhaps including men, because they ran out of bullets.[68]

In any case, while operationally the mass shooting in Chuknagar may appear efficient from the perspective of the Pakistani army, strategically it was in part counterproductive. From April to June 1971, the dominant strategy of the Pakis-

62 My count based on *MM*. According to similar figures in Chowdhury, "Age", 8 percent of the identified victims at Chuknagar were women (5 of 62).

63 For example, see account by Jitendro Mistree, *MM*, 164.

64 Muntassir Mamoon, "Introduction", *MM*, 8.

65 Bose, *Dead Reckoning*, 124–125 suggests a number of victims in the hundreds.

66 Account by Ali Badsha, *MM*, 152. But this estimate can be questioned. According to Abul Bashar Mohammend Shafiqul Islam, 44 men worked removing the corpses, each removed 100 (which seems to be an assumption), and this is the basis of his estimate that 4,400 bodies were disposed of, not counting others washed away by the river, etc. Tripathi, *Colonel*, 122.

67 My count based on *MM*. Chowdhury, "Age" once spoke of 62 identified victims at Chuknagar and at another point only of 37. Both figures are surprisingly low.

68 Accounts by Kalidahi Mondol and Someer Biswas, *MM*, 52, 162. Ershad Ali, a witness also included in *MM* (54–55), mentions eight more Muslim deaths – among them five being children –, as described in Tripathi, *Colonel*, 119–120.

tani troops was to drive Hindus out of the province by arbitrary killings, sexual violence and looting in cities and countryside, prompting them to flee to India. In total, 7 to 9 million Hindus escaped to India within a few months.[69] Even at Chuknagar, the army squad did not want to kill all Hindus (otherwise, they would have needed to organize the massacre differently); instead, it wanted to spread terror. Yet, numerous Hindu survivors of the massacre in Chuknagar, who had been on their way to India, reconsidered and stayed in East Pakistan or deferred their flight because they were robbed of their possessions during the massacre, their relatives needed immediate medical attention or the loss of close relatives made them return home fatalistically, regardless of would happen to them.[70] Matching this 'failure', nobody within the Pakistani military seems to have ever taken responsibility for the massacre.[71]

However, many people who were not directly affected were possibly prompted to flee from other places after hearing the news about this mass murder, although I have no evidence to support this. After all, the carnage at Chuknagar was very much unlike what Wolfgang Sofsky described as the epitome of a massacre (without spelling out his sources and probably mainly expressing his phantasies): total destruction of the target population, their homes and their memory, without leaving survivors, very much like conceptions of genocide.[72] On the contrary, often perpetrators do not try to cover up a massacre; instead, they seek publicity and media coverage for it, which has been practiced for centuries.[73] The Chuknagar slaughter was contradictory in this light: never officially acknowledged, not accompanied by propaganda (or hardly even by words) and without leaving pictures, trophies and graves, it did by necessity produce so many survivors that it can hardly be understood as anything but an act of intimidation, terror, and, thus, communication. On the acoustic level, then, the medium of communication was the shots, which remained so vivid in civilians' memory.

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69 See Gerlach, *Extremely Violent Societies*, 136–140.

70 Accounts by Kamola Roy, Monoranjon Roy, Nogor Biswas, Aswini Kumar Mondol, Ruhidas Chandra Roy, Kalidashi Mondol, Srimoti Anarotee Tarafdar, Krisnopodo Roy, Khuku Rani Joardar, Nirmul Kumar Roy, Swaramati Mondol, Komol Kanti Biswas, Bimol Mondol, Binoy Roy, Khokon Roy, Shomoresh Mondol, Saraswati Mondol, Aynamoti Golder, Sree Ashok Mollick, Mukundo Bihari Roy, Someer Biswas and Rajkumar Roy, *MM*, 27, 35–36, 44–45, 46–47, 51, 52, 53, 66–67, 83, 85, 86, 100, 105, 110, 119, 123–124, 126, 129–130, 138, 142–143, 163, 167.

71 Bose, *Dead Reckoning*, 125.

72 Wolfgang Sofsky, *Traktat über die Gewalt* (Frankfurt a.M.: Fischer, 1996), chapter "Das Massaker", 176–190, esp. 176–177. As a side note, what Sofsky describes resembles very much a long scene in Elem Klimovs film *Come and See* (1985), which is discussed in chapter 5 of this book.

73 See Christine Vogel, "Einleitung", *Bilder des Schreckens: Die mediale Inszenierung von Massakern seit dem 16. Jahrhundert* (Frankfurt a.M. and New York: Campus, 2006), 7–14, here 8.

On the Victims' Side

Civilians' most common reactions to the events involved crying, wailing and screaming. This mostly happened after the shooting when women, as well as men, were horrified and grief-stricken because of the violence and the loss of their relatives.[74] Women were also described as "howling" after the killings,[75] or such sounds were attributed to groups or crowds rather than individuals, including to wounded people. "We then lifted the dead bodies from the pond, the air was filled with screams, wails and screaming", Pushpo Rani Roy stated.[76] People cried, wailed and screamed during the massacre as well. Recalling how they fled by boat, Atiar Rahman described: "It was only the sound of howls that pierced our ears".[77] According to an earlier account by A. B. M. Shafiqul Islam concerning the events that took place at the market, "Repeated brush fire by the troops made the entire crowd quiet for a brief period. A few moments later, screaming of the victims created a terrible scene there."[78] During the massacre, many called for help.[79] Often, it was severely injured men who asked or, according to one statement, "shrieked" for water (a reference to the last rites in Hinduism before death) and died soon afterward.[80] Meena Gain, who was 11 in 1971, could not forget the last thing her father, who was hit in the head by a bullet, uttered to her mother, stating: "Whenever I recall that 'ma', that sad last cry of my father, fire runs through my blood."[81]

It is beyond the scope of this chapter to go into detail regarding the scholarship on the history of crying. Suffice it to say that weeping does not simply equal emotion, although emotions are often involved. Practices of weeping are not nec-

74 About women: accounts by Purno Chandra Roy, Ershad Ali Morol, Bukul Dashi, Komola Jowardar, Mukundo Bihari Roy, Sree Ashok Mollick and Shuraf Chandra Tarafder, *MM*, 24, 54, 57, 82, 115, 138, 159. About men: accounts by Ershad Ali Morol, Krisnopodo Roy, Mukundo Bihari Roy, Bolai Goldar and Jogodish Das, *MM*, 55, 66, 143, 149, 169. For screaming and crying children, see the accounts by Bolai Krishna Kundu, Shomoresh Mondol and Aynamoti Golder, *MM*, 33, 123, 130.

75 Account by Komol Kanti Biswas, *MM*, 100. For a man who "howled", see account by Shomoresh Mondol, *MM*, 123.

76 *MM*, 141. See also the accounts by Shomoresh Mondol, S.M. Atiar Rahman, Monimohon Roy and Arobindo Das, *MM*, 123, 137, 148, 154.

77 *MM*, 87. See also the accounts by Kamola Roy, Gopal Krisno Sarkar and Bimol Mondol, *MM*, 27, 102, 104.

78 Quoted in Nandi, "Killing Fields".

79 Accounts by Probodh Chandra Roy and Shorola Mondol, *MM*, 62, 160.

80 Accounts by Md. Ansar Ali Sardar, Shomoresh Mondol, Monimohon Roy, Tulaiboti Boiragi and Shorola Mondol, *MM*, 70, 123 (quote), 148, 151, 161.

81 *MM*, 127.

essarily natural but depend on culture, habits, era and even fashion, along with religious dogma, rites and an individual's age and social role. Tears are a way of communication, often enacted, highly ambiguous and multifunctional.[82] All of this makes weeping and crying an important topic of historical inquiry, although it is strongly under-researched. That said, some of the crying during and after the Chuknagar massacre was apparently automatic, involuntary, and indicative of strong emotional involvement: above all, stress, pain, fear and terror. In addition, much of the weeping at Chuknagar was collective, reconfirming family ties.[83]

A few survivors report that they were asked not to cry but to save themselves, or to stop crying for other reasons, although no restraint on religious grounds is mentioned.[84] One man was threatened with sticks by residents who told him not to cry because they were afraid that the army would come and start another shooting.[85] Another said regretfully: "One has to cry when one's father is dead. But the Almighty didn't grant us that time."[86] When the massacre was going on, children were crying or screaming out of fear, heat or hunger. Many adults felt that this endangered them because it could attract the attention of the shooters.[87] Some parents, trying to silence their children, threw them into a pond or the river or held them under water so that some drowned.[88] In this context, crying appeared as a

82 See Tom Lutz, Crying: *The Natural and Cultural History of Tears* (New York and London: W.W. Norton, 1999); Thomas Dixon, *Weeping Britannia* (Oxford et al.: Oxford University Press, 2015); Anne Vincent-Buffault, *The History of Tears: Sensibility and Sentimentality in France* (Basingstoke and London: Macmillan, 1991); Kimberley Christine Patton and John Stratton Hawley, eds., *Holy Tears: Weeping in the Religious Imagination* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2005).

83 For a summary of influential anthropological studies that emphasize that death rituals, including collective crying, strengthen social ties in various cultures, see for example Peter Metcalf and Richard Huntington, *Celebrations of Death: The Anthropology of Mortuary Ritual* (New York et al.: Cambridge University Press 1991), 43–61.

84 Accounts by Ershad Ali Morol, Komol Kanti Biswas and Shomoresh Mondol, *MM*, 54, 100, 124. Like other religions, Hinduist teachings discourage weeping and crying when a person dies, but crying is nonetheless customary then: Shirley Firth, *Dying, Death and Bereavement in a British Hindu Community* (Leuven: Peeters, 1997), 67–68, 143; Axel Michaels, *Der Hinduismus* (Munich: Beck, 1998), 153; but see John Stratton Hawley, "The Gopis' Tears" in Patton and Hawley, *Holy Tears*, 94–111.

85 Account by Jogodish Das, *MM*, 169.

86 Account by Rabindranath Boiragi, *MM*, 106. This part is marked in the text as literal quote.

87 Accounts by Bolai Krishna Kundu, Md. Nazrul Islam Sarder, S.M. Atiar Rahman and Rajkumar Roy, *MM*, 33, 120, 136, 166.

88 Accounts by Kali Dashi Roy and Pushpo Rani Royin, *MM*, 58, 141. Monoj Kanti Roys father recommended to gag his son before dying himself; see account by Monoj Kanti Roy, *MM*, 117. Similar acts of despair – infanticide of parents to silence their children in hiding, facing destruction – are known from the persecution of European Jews (see Gerlach, "Echoes").

dangerous sound to be avoided. Moreover, on a few occasions, people told others to remain silent so as to not infuriate the troops.[89] One survivor recalled that the troops themselves "asked everybody to make not a single sound" at the riverbank before lining people up and starting to shoot them.[90] Here silence symbolized subjugation and control.

Few talk about warning shouts at all: in one case each, these were shouts by a mother and a father to their family and in another case by people running away.[91] Some remember that "huge uproar" (which was not further specified) started among the crowd at the riverbank after the firing or possibly already before the firing.[92] This would mean that the troops did not maintain their control over sound (and order) for long. But there was also no kind of organized acoustic alarm among either the refugees or the locals.

These statements create an impression of passive victimhood and attempts at evasion. Virtually nobody seems to have opposed the troops by force. The only known exception consists of a Muslim man, seemingly an autonomy activist, who was shot dead by troops when holding a scissor in his hands, perhaps to confront them.[93] The only other challenges posed to the troops that the interviewees spoke of came from women who shouted at troops either in vain (sometimes falling to their knees and grabbing the legs of the soldiers) not to kill their relatives[94] or to shoot them too after they had killed their husbands or sons. According to the accounts, except for one instance, the troops refused to do so, in some cases saying that their bullets were reserved for men.[95]

Once again, one should also think about the absence of sounds that one could have expected. None of the statements contains anything about people praying and religious chants and songs, neither when they were facing death themselves nor when their relatives were dying or they were being confronted with the dead bodies of their loved ones. Many people cried, screamed and wailed loudly in both situations, as was said before, but apparently there were no audible rituals

89 Accounts by Krisnopodo Roy and Komola Jowardar, *MM*, 66, 81.

90 Account by Bijoy Kumat Roy, *MM*, 108.

91 Accounts by Ershad Ali Morol, Bukul Roy and Shuvash Chandra Tarafder, *MM*, 54, 113, 158.

92 Accounts by Nogor Biswas and Munkundo Bihari Roy, *MM*, 44, 142.

93 Account by Ershad Ali Morol, *MM*, 54. Bose, *Dead Reckoning*, 118–119 mentions another incident (cf. ibid., 125).

94 For example, accounts by Surjo Rishi Moni and Aynamoti Golder, *MM*, 76, 129.

95 Accounts by Shorola Mondol, Kalidashi Mondol, Someer Biswas and Debola Bairagee, *MM*, 28, 52, 162, 172. In one place, several women were shot after such a confrontation: account by Shoromoresh Mondol (but he did not witness the scene himself), ibid., 124.

practiced that would have been common under normal circumstances[96] – very much unlike, say, in the case of Polish or Soviets Jews in the early 1940s when they were facing imminent death or when their relatives had been massacred. Why not? In the ensuing panic, when people ran away and tried to hide, there was no time for rituals and mourning – but what about afterward when the military squad had left and there was no immediate threat?

The scene was ghastly enough, but Hindus, who believe that dead bodies are threatening and impure,[97] must have felt a special horror when they had to step over, or on, corpses and literally wade through blood as they returned to the massacre site because the bodies were lying so densely.[98] And yet, many did search for their relatives, dead or alive. However, very few interviewees spoke of what can be identified as the performance of any death rituals, and if they were performed, these were usually silent ones and mentioned by people who were children in 1971. Some said that people poured a bit of water into the mouth of the dying or of all the dead people around, which is a common last rite of cleansing.[99] One man demanded water, shouting that he was dying.[100] Some fled to a Hindu temple to be saved by Bhagaban and waited there; the military eventually shot many men dead at this place.[101] More fortunate were some of the Hindus who fled to a mosque.[102] Floating the dead body of a loved one into the river can also be regarded by Hindus as a substitute for a proper funeral. Most of this was done by Muslims, and the rest by Hindu relatives.[103] A few interviewees were denied by – likely Muslim – residents permission to either take the dead body of a relative with them or give it proper treatment on the spot,[104] or the situation did not

96 See Firth, *Dying*, 67–68, 77; Saifur Rashid, "Meaning and Rituals of Death: An Insight into Selected Ethnic and Religious Communities of Bangladesh", *Vietnam Social Sciences* 5, 193 (2019): 87–88; Michaels, *Hinduismus*, 149–150; Susan Thrane, "Hindu End of Life: Death, Dying, Suffering, and Karma", *Journal of Hospice and Palliative Nursing* 6, 12 (2010): 339.

97 Michaels, *Hinduismus*, 149–153.

98 Accounts by Probodh Chandra Roy, Mukundo Bihari Roy and Khokon Roy, *MM*, 62, 115, 119.

99 Accounts by Chand Rani Das (11 years old in 1971) and Purnendu Gain (9 years old in 1971), *MM*, 131, 133. See also Michaels, *Hinduismus*, 149.

100 Account by Shoromoresh Mondol (12 years old in 1971), *MM*, 123. People may also have asked for water because of severe loss of blood.

101 Accounts by Shonjeet Gain and Purnendu Gain, *MM*, 111–112, 133.

102 Account by Nitai Gain, *MM*, 74; another version of the same man's story is in Bose, *Dead Reckoning*, 119.

103 Examples of the latter are in the accounts of Surjo Rishi Mondol and Chand Rani Das, *MM*, 76, 131.

104 Accounts by Nogor Biswas and Komola Jowardar, *MM*, 44, 82.

allow it, and they still expressed regret about it after 29 years. One said: "We have a deep sorrow that we could not make a funeral for my father."[105]

The urge to flee must have been great, and people, especially women and minors, may have been too overwhelmed to perform rites if many relatives had been killed at once. Yet, the absence of chants, prayers and other rituals also indicates the social position of Hindus under the circumstances, their fear, subordination and subjugation in a hostile environment even after the troops had left. For loud noise is, in many situations, understood as a challenge and an attempt to dominate the public sphere.[106]

In contrast, some Muslims did report having (or were reported to have) started chanting, mostly in small groups, to demonstrate their loyalty to Pakistan and, thus, avoid becoming targets. Most of these chants were religious, which were uttered when military men demanded it as a marker of identification and on other occasions.[107] More rarely, people reported having shouted political slogans like "Pakistan Jindabad" (Long live Pakistan), either instead of religious chants or in addition.[108] Without knowing the troops, the expectation of these local Muslims, judging from their chanting, was that the operation was aimed at the Hindu minority rather than political opponents of the regime. However, their prayers did not seem to have any religious function in this situation; they were instead a marker of difference. Muslims too do not mention that they sang or prayed for the dead or the wounded after the killings. One man buried his father without proper burial cloth.[109]

Taken together, this information also suggests that there was no audible collective action by the Hindus present at Chuknagar. There are research studies which emphasize the partially organized character of the mass wave of refugees from East Pakistan at the time.[110] Judging from the level of sound, it was different

105 Account by Khokon Roy, *MM*, 119. In the book, this part is marked as an original quote. See also Bokul Dashi, *MM*, 57.

106 See, for instance, Wenzel, *Hören und Sehen*, 146, 153–154; Philip Schweighauser, *The Noises of American Literature, 1890–1985* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2006), 40–41.

107 Accounts by Anwar Ali Morol, Ashutosh Nandi, Sheikh Abul Kalam Mohiuddin, Md. Nazrul Islam Sarder, Dalil Uddin Sarker and Shohorjan Bibi, *MM*, 50, 91, 94, 120, 150, 173. See also Tripathi, *Colonel*, 121. One Hindu said that he survived like this even although first responding to soldiers that he was a Hindu: account by Monoj Kanti Roy, *MM*, 118.

108 Accounts by Sheikh Abul Kalam Mohiuddin and Md. Nisar Ali Sardar, *MM*, 94, 96.

109 Account by Ershad Ali Morol, *MM*, 55. According to Tripathi, *Colonel*, 119–120 the same man described the death of his father quite differently and said that he did find the necessary burial cloth.

110 See Partha Mukherji, "The great exodus of 1971: I – Exodus", *Economic and Political Weekly* 9, 9 (March 2, 1974), 367–369.

at Chuknagar, as the crowd of refugees met there accidentally without showing any signs of organization and cohesion.[111]

The Inaudible Third

This section deals with the social environment in which the massacre took place. (Scholarship should emancipate itself from the undifferentiated concept of the 'bystander'.) This social environment did not *generate* the massacre but provided conditions under which it was materializing. According to the descriptions by witnesses and survivors, the role of local Muslim civilians in the massacre varied strongly, and the behavior of some of them was highly ambivalent. A number of them helped the troops – under duress, they claimed – to find residences of local Hindus who were subsequently killed.[112] One Hindu revealed having done this too.[113] Sometimes, Biharis are also mentioned in this context, but this is factually questionable. A group of Muslims dumped many of the victims' corpses in the river the day after the massacre; some under duress, but at least a few received a payment for it. There are conflicting statements regarding who told the men to dispose of the bodies, with some pointing to a local dignitary and others to the Pakistani military.[114] Smaller numbers of what appeared to be dead bodies of Hindus were also buried.[115] Locals who were apparently Muslims were looting the residences of local Hindus and rummaging through the clothes and possessions of those killed to steal their valuables.[116] One Hindu survivor also mentioned having

111 One account by Sardar Muhammad Noor Ali, *MM*, 48 describes organized help (lodging, food and escorts to the border) on the side of the local Awami League office.

112 Accounts by Mohammad Sher Ali Sardar (34 years old in 1971), Krisnopodo Roy and Md. Nazrul Islam Sarder in MM (12 years old in 1971), *MM* 43, 66, 120–121. The first and the third statements are by persons who helped the troops themselves. See also Bose, *Dead Reckoning*, 116.

113 Account by Arobindo Das, *MM*, 153 (17 years old in 1971).

114 Accounts by Ansar Ali Sardar, Afsar Ali Sarkar, Yakub Ali Sardar, Mohammad Sher Ali Sardar, Md. Ansar Ali Sardar, Shuvash Chandra Roy, Ashutosh Nandi, Sheikh Abul Kalam Mohiuddin, Md. Nisar Ali Sardar, Md. Nazrul Islam Sarder, Dalil Uddin Sarker and Ali Badsha, *MM*, 30, 38–39, 40, 42, 70, 79–80, 91, 95, 96–97, 121, 150, 152. See also Bose, *Dead Reckoning*, 121–122.

115 Accounts by Sheikh Abul Kalam Mohiuddin and Dalil Uddin Sarker, *MM*, 95, 150.

116 Accounts by Anwar Ali Morol, Kali Dashi Roy, Nitai Gain, Shonjeet Gain, Monoj Kanti Roy, Purnendu Gain, Bolai Goldar and Shohorjan Bibi, *MM*, 50, 58, 73, 112, 118, 134, 149, 174. Purnendu Gain (in *MM*, 132) assumes that local Muslims told people at the riverbank not to flee so that they could plunder the possessions after the military would have killed them (see also Bose, *Dead Reckoning*, 121). Numerous survivors state that they lost all their belongings in the massacre. A local Muslim ascribed the looting to the Pakistani troops: account by Sheikh Abul Kalam Mohiud-

done so.[117] One interviewee reported that locals took away all of the clothes, leaving the corpses naked.[118]

Hindu survivors also reported about mixed behavior of residents of Chuknagar and neighboring places toward them. Some denied help by either saying that offering assistance would endanger them, making derogatory remarks[119] or telling them to leave the local settlement.[120] But there are also examples of generous support and shelter provided by Muslims.[121] A few of them, despite refusing to take survivors in, did hand them food.[122] Medical doctors were mentioned favorably in the reports.[123] Medical help was also provided by lays, which included Muslims.[124]

It is especially worth noting here that the accounts contain virtually nothing about sounds of all this. No shouting by civilian Muslims is mentioned, no lowering of voices, no crying, no groaning under the burden of dead bodies to be disposed of, and no sounds of the pillage. As rich as the accounts are in terms of describing other noises, these are absent. All that is there are a few depictions of slogans signaling that people were Muslims and verbal exchanges without further specification of how they sounded.

However, it is unlikely that all of this action was silent. On that basis, there are three possibilities: such noises faded in the *memory* of the witnesses and survivors, they were left out in what they *said* in 2000, or those who *edited* the statements left them out. There is some indirect indication of the second scenario in survivors' accounts, such as in ominous statements like the following: "All our money and belongings were looted by some people."[125] Mikundo Bihari Roy, who was a young man in 1971 and a medical doctor by 2000, described how, after he returned to his village after the massacre, he was beaten up by several men one day after the massacre, stating: "Many of those who beat us that night are

din, *MM*, 94. Given their low number and lack of time, however, the soldiers could have only done a small part of the pillage.

117 See Bose, *Dead Reckoning*, 119.

118 Account by Komola Jowardar, *MM*, 82.

119 Account by Rajkumar Roy, *MM*, 167.

120 Account by Shuvash Chandra Roy, *MM*, 79.

121 Accounts by Krisnopodo Roy, Bolai Goldar (about the rescue of a baby) and Shuvash Vandra Tarafder, *MM*, 66–67, 149, 159.

122 Account by Horipodo Mondol, *MM*, 26.

123 Accounts by Nogor Biswas, Nitai Gain, Komola Jowardar (here about a Hindu doctor) and Binoy Roy, *MM*, 44, 75, 82, 110.

124 Accounts by Ansar Ali Sardar and Md. Ansar Ali Sardar, *MM*, 31, 71; see also Bose, *Dead Reckoning*, 120 (based on the report of survivor Shailendra Nath Joardar).

125 Account by Rashi Bala, *MM*, 77.

still alive but we do not want to mark them out or do not talk about them [sic!].”[126] As in this account, many, Hindus and Muslims alike, assign all guilt of having called in the troops to one local pro-Pakistani Muslim. Only a few Muslim witnesses (or helpers of the troops) named who did what. Hindu survivors mentioned no other name of a person involved except for that one person, and nobody revealed the name of any looter.

U.S. scholars Betsy Hartmann and James Boyce called the conditions in a Bangladeshi village where they did extensive fieldwork in the early 1970s “quiet violence”, referring to the struggle for land and power and against poverty.[127] The accounts about the Chuknagar massacre – some of which, especially those by several Hindu women, were outspoken about how the event threw people into abject poverty for the rest of their lives, which also means that the looting affected them deeply[128] – reflect the silent violence of subjugation that, in all likelihood, prevented certain issues from being detailed. These things are sometimes mentioned, but not described. In particular, this applied to a public hearing like the one where the statements were collected. This raises considerable doubts about the methodology of the researchers involved in it.

Conversely, there are enough examples in the statements to conclude that by far not all Muslims in the village and the area behaved with hostility toward Hindus.[129] On May 20–21, 1971, such friendly demeanor had little influence, but if, as mentioned above, many Hindu survivors of the massacre returned home and stayed for the rest of Pakistani rule – despite harassment and persecution –, conditions must have existed that at least allowed for their survival. In other words: the social environment was fairly complex.

126 *MM*, 143.

127 Betsy Hartmann and James Boyce, *A Quiet Violence: View from a Bangladesh Village* (London: Zed, 1983).

128 These accounts appear in so far credible despite the fact that the interviewers did ask survivors whether they had received compensation and the respondents may have had expectations of obtaining financial gain through their narrative. See accounts by Nogor Biswas, Kalidashi Mondol, Surjo Rishi Moni, Komola Jowardar, Bukul Roy, Chand Rani Das and Pushpo Rani Roy, *MM*, 45, 52, 76, 82, 113, 131, 141.

129 This is compatible with an opinion poll among young male factory workers and peasants in East Pakistan in 1964 (a year of anti-Hindu riots) in which 30 percent said that Hindus did mostly harm, 8 percent that they did mostly good, and 62 percent that they did neither good nor harm. See Howard Schuman, “A Note on the Rapid Rise of Mass Bengali Nationalism in East Pakistan”, *American Journal of Sociology* 28, 2 (1972): 290–298, here 295.

Conclusion

The large number of available accounts in the case of Chuknagar provides a rare opportunity to reconstruct different aspects of this mass killing in some detail. In this case, paying attention to sounds helps guide the inquiry in certain directions. This massacre was very loud, also in terms of human voice, which points to the fact of how much communication was involved. Attention to sounds reveals the cold, arrogant professionalism of the murderous troops involved, who committed a semi-organized massacre, creating panic instead of gathering their entire target group in one place. Some comparable massacres that claimed the lives of many villagers in East Pakistan were more tightly organized, but survivors also said that there was some degree of beating, kicking and shouting that took place in these incidents – often more than in Chuknagar.[130] By uncovering that although survivors cried and called for their loved ones, they did not perform any audible religious rites before and after their kin's death, the approach brings out their fear and subordination at the time, which interfered with their shock and grief. The same emerges when considering the lack of sounds conveyed that were made by locals who did not belong to the target group(s): subordination of Hindus, also when the statements were made in 2000. Thus, the level of sounds and speaking about sounds reveals social divisions – even decades and several regime changes later, when some education about 'genocide' had taken place.

However, the massacre at Chuknagar hardly works as the embodiment of a 'genocide' against Bangladeshis across-the-board, as propagated in Bangladesh and sometimes internationally, although it does demonstrate how ruthlessly Pakistani troops acted in what they regarded as their own country.

In 1971, Chuknagar was a village with a few thousand residents. It was a rural place, and most of the refugees who had gathered there on their way to India were villagers from other places, some of them being very poor. Many of those who survived remained rural dwellers in 2000, when the accounts were collected. Given this parochial, pastoral context and the fact that this was largely concerned with a massacre by the military from an Islamic state targeting the Hindu minority, the role that religion plays in these stories of death, murder, loss, survival and grief is remarkably insignificant. This point needs further exploration. In how far was this 'religious' violence? In the accounts, just one Hindu and one Muslim expressed regret that they could not perform proper rites for their close family members who were killed although many said in 2000 that they still feel the loss they suffered.

130 Bose, *Dead Reckoning*, 97–113.

Beyond the conflict in East Pakistan, research about sounds can help write a complex social history of persecuted groups, as this study shows. The analysis of auditive experiences, especially when multiple accounts are available, adds a new dimension to this effort and accentuates the social interaction involved. The following chapter sheds, with different methods, more light on the complexity of the processes that led to violence in East Pakistan, including multipolar violence.