

**EPHEMERA IN LITERATURES
AND LITERARY WORKS
OF IRELAND AND BANGLADESH:
PEOPLE'S NARRATIVES OF
MARTYRDOM**

SYNOPSIS

Thesis

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by

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Introduction

This study explores the role of ephemera in unravelling people's narratives of martyrdom in Ireland and Bangladesh.

Key Terms

Ephemera

'Ephemera' are the minor transient documents of everyday life, not intended to survive its immediate purpose or which exists for only a short time. In this study, the scope of ephemera has been expanded to include print, visual, verbal, object-based, event-based and digital ephemera.

Literatures

'Literatures' refers to the narratives that emerge out of all a discussion of martyrdom and ephemera in the dissertation, such as naming, making, continuum and subversion.

Literary works

'Literary works' refer to literary writings such as poetry, prose, and painting as well as artistic works and musical references that exist in the ephemera, and those that exist on the ephemera.

Martyrdom

'Martyr' and 'martyrdom' refer to fluid terms and concepts related to the brave, insurgent, rebel, saint, patriot, hero, victim, murdered, killed in action, accidental dead, innocent dead, sacrificed, prison dead, that is explored, focussing on how people in their everyday lives appropriate/misappropriate/ confuse/ deny/replace them.

People

‘People’ refer to the celebrated dead in the following histories of Ireland and Bangladesh, whose everyday lives are discussed. ‘People’ also refer to the related dead in the following histories of Ireland and Bangladesh, whose everyday lives are discussed, focussing on the historically significant. ‘People’ also refer to the common people whose responses to the creation of ephemera have been discussed.

Ireland

1. Chronological history – From the folk histories to the decades leading to the emergence of the nation-state to the end of independence struggles, continuing into the post-conflict period and contemporary times—to explore the evolution and interconnections between them.
2. Community history – Republican, unionist, nationalist, loyalist, Catholic, Protestant, neutral—to explore the similarities, differences, and interconnections between them.
3. Person-based history – Key individuals such as Saint Oliver Plunkett martyred in 1681, the Manchester Martyrs of 1867, the Drumboe martyrs, Easter Rising martyrs, the pro- and anti-Treaty martyrs, Bloody Sunday victims, hunger striker martyrs, Gibraltar Martyrs of 1988, disappeared victims, along with those who sacrificed their lives along with them.
4. Events-based history – Key moments such as Easter 1916, the 1922 War of Independence, martyrs of the civil rights’ movement of the 1960s and 1970s, the Troubles from the late 1960s to the late 1990s, the post-Troubles period, along with events interspersed between them.
5. Party-based history – Key political parties such as Sinn Féin, Democratic Unionist party, and how people understand party narratives.

6. Paramilitary organisation-based history – Key organisations such as Irish Republican Army, Provisional Irish Republican Army, Ulster Volunteer Force, Ulster Defence Association, Ulster Defence Regiment, and how common people die because of the actions of these organisations or due to their involvement with them.

Bangladesh

1. Chronological history – From the folk histories to the decades leading to the emergence of the nation-state to the end of independence struggles, continuing into the post-independence period and contemporary times—to explore the evolution and interconnections between them.
2. Community history – Hindu, Muslim, Bihari, pro-Liberation, anti-Liberation—to explore the similarities, differences and interconnections between them.
4. Person-based history – Key individuals like Titu Mir, Surya Sen, martyrs of the 1952 language movement, martyrs Asad and Motiur of 1969, Sheikh Mujib and family, General Zia, martyr Sikdar of the post-independence Mujib regime, Martyr Noor Hossain of the 1987 anti-Ershad protests, Awami League activist martyrs, along with those who sacrificed their lives along with them.
5. Events-based history – Key moments such as peasants’ revolt of 1830s, 1952 Language movement, mass uprising of 1969, 1971 Liberation War, 1987 protest movement against General Ershad’s military regime, till the 2013 Shahbag protests, along with events interspersed between them.
6. Party-based history – Key political parties such as Awami League, Bangladesh National Party and Jamaat-e-Islami, and how people understand party narratives.

Ireland and Bangladesh have been chosen because of the following reasons:

1. Historical connections made by the martyrs – Easter 1916 influencing the Chittagong raid of 1930s; translation of 7th March speech of *Bangabandhu* Sheikh Mujibur Rahman exhorting people to fight and sacrifice their lives for the nation, into Irish, connecting the people's struggles in the two countries.
2. Official acknowledgement connections – Government of Republic of Ireland acknowledging the genocide of 1971.
3. Contributions – Irish barrister Nora Shariff's social services during the 1971 War; Irish lawyer Sean MacBride's aborted investigation of martyrdom of Sheikh Mujib; and both of them being conferred the 'Friends of Liberation War' honour by the government of Bangladesh.
4. Similarities in people's narratives in naming, making, continuums and subversions of martyrdom
5. Historical range – Comparisons between a country like Bangladesh and the Republic of Ireland that have already achieved independence to a country like Northern Ireland seeking the same.

Research Problem

Martyrdom has become an overused and underused, changed and unchanged, risky and irrelevant concept, at the same time. In this regard, it is important to identify the exact nature of the sacrifices of people.

Research Objectives

1. Locating the 'martyr' figures and martyrdom movements as named in history
2. Analysing the considerations, contestations and contexts behind the naming of martyrs

3. Tracing the various disjunctions in each of the people's narratives of martyrdom
4. Exploring the role of ephemera in the martyr narratives and martyrdom movements
5. Understanding the methodology of exploring 'people's martyrology' in both the countries
6. Analysing the representation of ephemera in literary works and how it builds a narrative of 'people's martyrology'
7. Initiating the building of a martyr ephemera archive, constructed from the religious and political ephemera collections but as a separate category
8. Relevance of the study for policy debates

Research questions

1. Why are ephemera and their oral interpretations useful in exploring people's narratives of martyrdom?
2. Where and how are these ephemera and their oral interpretations to be collected?
3. What are the terms used by people to name those who have died due to historical and political reasons? What are their reasons for using these terms?
4. How do ephemera and their oral interpretations of ephemera enable the formation of these terminologies?
5. How do ephemera and oral interpretations of ephemera explore the contexts of people's narratives of martyrdom?
6. How do continuums and subversions of martyrdom explore people's narratives and how are they comparable between the two countries?
7. How do ephemera and literary works interact with one another to represent people's narratives of martyrdom?
8. What is the relevance and use of these narratives in contemporary times?

Data

Ephemera have been collected from the following:

Archives in libraries and museums:

1. Ephemera Collection, Northern Ireland Political Collection, Linen Hall Library, Belfast, Northern Ireland, UK
2. Political Artefacts, Northern Ireland Political Collection, Linen Hall Library, Belfast, Northern Ireland, UK
3. Northern Ireland Political Collection, Linen Hall Library, Belfast, Northern Ireland, UK
4. Troubled Images CD-ROM, 2001, Linen Hall library, Belfast, Northern Ireland, UK
5. Eileen Hickey Irish Republican History Museum, Belfast, Northern Ireland, UK
6. Political Ephemera Collection of Peter Moloney, Tower Museum, Derry/Londonderry, Northern Ireland, UK
7. Museum of Free Derry, Derry/Londonderry, Northern Ireland, UK
8. Liberation War Museum, Dhaka, Bangladesh
9. 1971: Genocide-Torture Archive & Museum, Khulna, Bangladesh
10. Heritage Archives, Rajshahi, Bangladesh

Museum displays:

1. Ulster Museum, Belfast, Northern Ireland
2. Decorative Arts and History, National Museum of Ireland, Republic of Ireland
3. Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka, Bangladesh

Holdings of memorial sites and organisations:

1. Jalladkhana Killing field memorial site, Mirpur, Dhaka, Bangladesh
2. Forum for Secular Bangladesh and Trial of War Criminals of 1971, Dhaka, Bangladesh
3. *Projonmo '71* (Children of the Martyrs of Liberation War), Dhaka, Bangladesh
4. Muntasir Mamoon Collection, Dhaka, Bangladesh
5. Martyrs' Memorial Collection, Rajshahi, Bangladesh

Merchandise at souvenir shops:

1. Union Jack Souvenir shop. Newtownards Road, East Belfast
2. Sinn Féin shop, Falls Road, West Belfast
3. GPO Museum Gift shop, Dublin

Holdings with the following individuals:

1. Family members of martyrs and victims in Ireland and Bangladesh
2. Producers of ephemera like artists, ballad singer, documentary makers in Bangladesh
3. Preservers of ephemera like government officials, military personnel, historians, museum trustees in Bangladesh

Holdings on digital platforms:

1. Official websites of museums in Ireland
2. Official websites of justice campaign organisations in Ireland
3. Social media pages of family members of martyrs in Bangladesh
4. Social media pages of commemoration organisations in Ireland and Bangladesh
5. Online performance videos in memory of martyrs in Ireland

Personal holdings of the author collected during the field study:

1. Walking tours of memorial sites and observation of parades in Northern Ireland

2. Walking tours of memorial sites and observation of national mourning day in Bangladesh

Few texts where the following ephemera have been published only once:

1. District survey book
2. Edited book of selected ballads and *punthis* by minstrel
3. Martyr commemoration essay competition booklet
4. Martyr saint Church re-opening book
5. Book on collected photographs of the language movement of 1952

The following ephemera have been used:

Ephemera made of paper like article, booklet, certificate, leaflet, letter, nomination paper, newspaper cutting, press obituary, pamphlet, pin badge, poster, political card, mass card, memory card, stamp, and tickets.

Ephemera made of other material but still transient like banners, graffiti, handkerchiefs, mural, and photographs.

Objects belonging to or associated with martyrs, which are not intended to survive its immediate purpose like bloodstained shirts, mugs, music records, badges, binlid, utensil, trophy, signboard, Roll of Honour but preserved and maintained.

The following interviews in Ireland and Bangladesh have been used:

1. Interviews of families and acquaintances of martyrs for their ephemera and memories of martyrdom
2. Interviews of trustees, archivists and supervisors of martyr memorial sites and museums to understand the processes and reasons for collecting martyr ephemera
3. Interviews of people associated with various martyr organisations

4. Interviews of people associated with various justice campaigns for martyrs' families
5. Interviews of producers of martyr ephemera like a ballad singer and mural artist
6. Exploration of interviews of people in Belfast and Dublin who comment on martyr narratives in their everyday lives—to understand the ephemera they associate with martyrdom
7. Interviews of researchers who have worked on the history of the two countries
8. Interviews of producers of literary works focussing on martyrs and ephemera

Primarily, qualitative data have been collected during field study in Ireland and Bangladesh. For interpretation of the data, the following methodologies have been used:

1. Snowballing and the comparative method – The methodology to find and identify martyrs has changed over time as memories and witnesses have depleted. Now the socio-political situation has changed and 'adjusted' memories of martyrdom are common as a public declaration of identifying people as martyrs in some cases may have implications later. Given such conditions, the snowball method based on the period of study and area of activity is convenient. This method allows quicker identification of places of interest, focused selection of bearer of memories, and pre-interview of interaction with the subjects concerned. In this study, snowball sampling has been used both for identification of ephemera and oral interpretations of these ephemera. One ephemera leads onto the next, like a calendar featuring a memorial certificate, or publication details of republican political card of one martyr leading onto political cards of other martyrs, money receipts of compensation received by martyr families leading the names of various martyrs, whose lives are then delved deep into. For

interviews, participants become key informants from interviewees and referred or recruited subjects for interviews, like the supervisor at Jalladkhana Killing field memorial site, Mirpur, Dhaka, referring to families of martyrs in the area of Mirpur, and telling them to come to the memorial site for the interviews, after which they are interviewed; or the curator at the Museum of Free Derry in Northern Ireland referring to the families of the Bloody Sunday victims, some of whom also work there. Snowball sampling is a non-probability sampling method as not all martyr families in, say Mirpur, have an equal chance of being selected for an interview but only the referred ones do, or not all family members of the Bloody Sunday victims are referred depending on their desire and comfort in giving an interview. The referral depends on the social position, institutional affiliation, political allegiance, economic background and psychological situation. However, participants have also been selected, based on an entirely different position, affiliation, allegiance and background because it is useful to check out as many as possible as pre-selection by the referee will reduce the number of subjects to a focus group. Members of these hidden populations of unknown martyrs tend to be closely connected as they share interests or histories and are involved in the same social group, like the community museums in Northern Ireland, like the republican history museum, the orange museum and the Linen Hall Library which houses ephemera of both communities as well as neutral ephemera. Same is the case with Derry/Londonderry. However, the narrative of martyrdom may reside in one community more than the other. Moreover, the objective analysis of the ephemera and the oral interpretation of ephemera have been compared with one another to validate the claims of each other. For instance, the emblem of the Easter lily is found in republican political cards and posters but during the study of interviews, it was made clear that in some unionist areas, it became a mark of affront, while in some unionist areas it

was not so. Snowball sampling is useful when the data is difficult to find, like martyr ephemera and people who are unbiased regarding martyrdom narratives. Data protection is also enabled because the researcher does not directly choose the ephemera or the participants in interviews.

2. Participant – observer immersion method - Immersion means collecting data while immersed in the life of the subject area of research. In this method, the observer and the participant reduce as much social and psychological distance as possible. It is also called the participant-observer method. The field study in Ireland and Bangladesh enabled an understanding of the emblems and their oral interpretations, especially the terms used to refer to the dead due to historical and political reasons. A layered information-gathering method has been used. While collecting material from the ephemera archives, the knowledge and the guidance of the librarians, curators and archivists were necessary because material from the ephemera archives were not always listed to item level, and they had to be seen from the perspective of martyr ephemera, that has not been a theme of ephemera collection, either in Ireland or in Bangladesh. Individual immersion researchers may get biased data but in this study, the researcher from India did not have a personal stake in the martyr narratives in Ireland and Bangladesh. There are also limits to cross-checking but in general, the walking tours, surveys of shops selling such martyr ephemera as well as study of social media posts and comments related to martyrdom enabled an understanding of martyrs and ephemera at the level of quotidian existence in the present.
3. Archival methods - Archival methods used in ephemera-based research are slightly different from usual archival methods as they are used to not just collect information but validate or negate findings on existing data drawn from the field. Whenever we find an ephemera related to a well-known martyr, it highlights a less-discussed aspect of his life. For instance, Patrick Pearse is a well-known

martyr of Easter 1916, and much has been written about his philosophy of self-sacrifice. Pin badges, made of paper, with the portrait pictures of his brother William and himself, was circulated to raise funds for St. Edna's school founded by the Pearse brothers, after their execution in the Easter 1916 Rising. Thus, the ephemera comments on the range of martyr afterlives and the utilisation of martyr memories. Archival methods also brought up the names and contexts of deaths of many less-known martyrs in Ireland and those who belong to the category of the mass martyrs in Bangladesh.

A. In the case of archival data, the first is to identify the location of archives and the identity of the same. The archives' custodian may be producing and hoarding archives dominated by social or political ideology. Once it is confirmed that such is not the case, one can go ahead.

B. The nature of the archives must be identified if the focus of the archives is inclusive or exclusive. This is needed as if it is very topic bound, there is a need to look even further to gain a more complete picture of the topic of the research. While in this case, the objective was to look for martyrdom-related ephemera, the topic of many other objects is included and requires selection as far as a reflection of authenticity is concerned.

C. The most important aspect of ephemera use that is also historically accurate (as far as possible within the context of commemorative or artistic reflection in comparison with historical records including field-based primary data. The focus was a structured process of relevance, authenticity, and social connection between the actual and the perceived/imagined or realized.

D. It is, therefore, necessary to be familiar with historical records and understand the issue of not just martyrdom, but the overall history to detect the

nature of ephemera. Once that is firmly located at the core and becomes the base of the research, the next step is data confirmation. If the ephemera data confirm actual generic history it forms one sort of ephemeral information and if it deviates, it forms the second type of data. Ephemera is not about the actual recording of events but the reflection of the same in artefacts.

E. Archival research of ephemera, therefore, becomes the most significant method as it explores the relationship between the actual and the perceived, and depiction of imagination of the same. By filtering it based on the three-tier evaluation process – primary data-ephemera data – confirmation and designation process- it is possible to recognize the value of both primary data and primary reflection on the topical data.

Ephemera, both physical and memorial are two aspects of this research which is focused on an informal society experiencing war in which ephemera production is limited. Thus, mixed methods and methodology are used to capture both the war and the perception and reflection of the same as expressed through ephemera. No single methodology can dominate.

In this mix, we use the two layers simultaneously. Ephemera are in archives but also in the memory so one needs to use and cross-check both. This process benefits the selection of appropriate ephemera the most as the reality of the war and all its fragility are both reflected in remembering and forgetting. Thus, choosing the most appropriate ephemera is backed by the most appropriate real-life data.

The stages are:

- Consult existing data based on appropriate collection methodology
- Consult researchers familiar with similar data collection methodology

- Develop a data collection framework based on the above interactions
 - Explore archives for appropriate ephemera
 - Process the data by employing source tracking
 - Discard superficial ephemera and focus on core ephemera
 - Specify sectors of human ephemera and conduct the search
 - Identify specific subjects and use the snowball technique to identify key informants
 - Summarise findings and cross-check with data and data collectors
 - Finalise and move to the next stage of consulting secondary sources to complete the framework
4. Thematic, symbolic and study of the literary texts

Research Gaps

Despite the overwhelming literature on martyrs in terms of life narratives and on the upsurge of martyrdom against rising debates on nationalism, fanaticism, patriotism, terrorism, at-homeness, exile, the following studies have not been conducted:

1. Research on the unravelling of the term
2. Research on the ephemera archives along with oral interpretations of the ephemera through interviews
3. Research on the mass martyrs as individuals through ephemera
4. Research on various ephemera leading to the building of a martyr ephemera
5. Sustained research on the ways of making the martyr through ephemera
6. Research on the continuums and subversions of martyr-making

7. Research on the relation of literary works and ephemera to explore people's martyrdom
8. Research on common methodologies that connects ephemera studies to people's martyrdom
9. Comparative research between Ireland and Bangladesh with a focus on ephemera archives and people's martyrdom

Chapters

Introduction

Chapter One

People's martyrs and ephemera: Meaning and methodology

- a. Scope
- b. Literature review and research gaps
- c. Data collection
- d. Data analysis

Chapter Two

Contestations in naming of people's martyrs in ephemera

- a. Death and its related ephemera
 - i. Death words' ephemera
 - ii. Burial ephemera
 - iii. Funeral ephemera
- b. Personalities and their related ephemera
 - i. Body ephemera
 - ii. Political, national, and international elite ephemera

- iii. Civilian and banal ephemera
- c. Commemoration and its related ephemera
 - i. Commemorative hymns, objects, and papers
 - ii. Commemorative publications
 - iii. Commemorative events
 - iv. Commemorative souvenirs
- d. Investigation and its related ephemera
 - i. Investigative ephemera
 - ii. Justice ephemera

Chapter Three

Contestations in making of people's martyrs in ephemera

- a. Contestations in people's martyr-making through locations
- b. Contestations in people's martyr-making through processes
- c. Contestations in people's martyr-making through emblems
- d. Contestations in people's martyr-making through propaganda
- e. Contestations in people's martyr-making through community engagement
- f. Contestations in people's martyr-making through oral modes and traditions

Chapter Four

Contestations in the continuums and subversions of people's martyrs in ephemera

- a. The continuums in Ireland
- b. The continuums in Bangladesh
- c. The continuums in Ireland and Bangladesh
- d. The subversions of identities
- e. The subversions of structures
- f. The subversions of purposes

Literary works of people's martyrs and ephemera

- a. Literary works by martyrs in ephemera
- b. Literary works on martyrs in ephemera
- c. Literary works on martyr ephemera
- d. Literary ephemera on martyrs

Conclusion

Relevance and Outcomes

This research lays down the contestations in people's narratives of martyrdom where the role of everyday objects and processes have predominance. Following are the outcomes of this study:

1. Development of the language of the sacrificial economy of the common people in the martyr narratives and martyrdom movements.
2. Awareness regarding the easy confusion and misappropriation of the use of the martyr figure.
3. Awareness of people regarding real-time struggles underneath the huge debates on martyrdom to contribute to a new interaction between microhistory and macrohistory.
4. Development of a category of martyr ephemera, along with an expansion of the scope of ephemera from print to object to digital.
5. Contribution to the scholarship on archiving martyr ephemera in both Bangladesh and Ireland.
6. Development of a mixed method of studying martyrdom and ephemera through snowballing, immersion and archival methods.

7. Thematic, symbolic and objective analysis of literary works in ephemera and on ephemera have been analysed in a sustained manner
8. Awareness of policymakers regarding the advantages and disadvantages of martyrdom for national cohesion or division, thereby adding to the extant scholarship on the relevance of martyrdom in the modern world.

Signature of the Supervisor

Signature of the Candidate