WHITE ROSE SOUTH ASIA CONFERENCE 2021

SPACE, PLACE, AND TEMPORALITIES

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PAPER ABSTRACTS

Panel A: Ecology & Development

Divya Chandramouli, Harvard University. 'Beyond the Glitter of Pageantry: Colonial Imaginings of Space, Time, and History in 20th century Ceylon'

This paper focuses on two pageants that took place in Ceylon, in 1921 and 1923, both organized by the Gampaha Horticultural Association and attended by many thousands of people from all over the country. These pageants took place against the backdrop of fierce debates, both in the chambers of Ceylon's Legislative Council as well as in the colony's newspapers, about how "natives" ought to be represented in the Legislative Council. I use this political context to analyze advertisements for the pageants, the proceedings of the pageants, as well as testimonials written by pageant attendees, all published in The Times of Ceylon and The Ceylon Observer during the 1921 and 1923 festivities. I argue that the pageant organizers deployed these descriptions of the pageants in order to control and promote a particular temporal narrative about the colonial state in Ceylon.

On the one hand, this narrative gazed towards the past, presenting Tamil and Sinhala histories as separate and distinct episodes in "the ancient glories of Ceylon." The fact that these historical episodes were presented as separate and distinct served to naturalize differences between Tamil and Sinhala communities, suggesting to pageant attendees that these differences were rooted in the very distant past of the island, rather than in the political transformations that unfolded through the British colonial period.

On the other hand, pageant organizers were equally committed to presenting a particular vision of futurity, highlighting the colony as a space of abundance, a space that was modern, progressive, and almost-but-not-yet worthy of self-rule. Countless descriptions of Gampaha as "an untarnished fairyland, beflowered and festooned," published during the pageants, marked the pageant' grounds as spaces of rebirth - as utopias, while exhibits on education, sanitation, and urban planning positioned the colonial state's 'modernizing' institutions as the gatekeepers for this prosperous and utopic future.

Divya Chandramouli is currently a PhD candidate in the South Asian Studies Department at Harvard University. Her dissertation, drawing on archival sources and oral histories, traces the journeys of Tamil drama artists who traveled, performed, and lived across 20th century south India, Ceylon, and British Malaya. In studying these journeys, she asks how traveling artists and their performances impacted the cultural and political lives of the communities they performed for. Divya is the co-chair of Operation Uplift, a graduate professional development initiative recently launched in the South Asian Studies department. She received her MA in the Social Sciences at the University of Chicago, and received her BA at Mount Holyoke College.

Dustin Barter, University of Cambridge. 'Opposing Hydropower Hegemony: International Institutions and Civil Society in Myanmar'

The global push to decarbonise economies is encouraging hydropower projects as a primary source of baseload power in many parts of the majority world. Proponents argue it is the cleanest baseload energy source and promise prosperity, yet tend to disregard broader political economy and cultural realities. Weak institutional arrangements mean hydropower's commodification of the commons often creates severe, unmitigated ecological and social costs, precipitating significant opposition. These tensions are particularly acute in Myanmar, where hydropower projects planned for the borderlands, to power urban centres and neighbouring countries, are fuelling decades-old contestation between the central state and ethnic minority administrations. Localised contestation finds itself intertwined with global capital and geopolitical contestation, as these projects form key components of China's Belt and Road Initiative.

This paper will examine how domestic civil society and non-state actors contest hydropower hegemony in Myanmar by appealing to notions of spatiality that transcend impacted areas and circumvent international development agencies more orthodox approaches. Adopting an interdisciplinary framework, the paper embeds this contestation within broader political economy, cultural and ecological analysis. Specific case studies of opposition to the Myitsone and Salween dams will illustrate these complex dynamics, suggesting that localised movements achieved the greatest results often in spite of, rather than because of, international development agencies. This conclusion suggests the need for a major

adjustment in how these agencies engage with domestic civil society movements in the majority world.

Dustin Barter is a John Monash Scholar undertaking a PhD in Development Studies at the University of Cambridge, where he is examining the influence of international institutions on domestic civil society development in Cambodia and Myanmar, with a specific focus on land and infrastructure contestation. He has worked in the aid sector for more than a decade in Southeast, Central and South Asia, and East Africa with national and international organisations. His work spans the development, humanitarian and peace nexus, including topics such as civil society, sovereign debt relief, land use, humanitarian advocacy, women's rights, forced displacement and youth empowerment.

Sara Varanese, Rutgers University. 'The flowing city: deconstructing urban boundaries in the premodern settlement of Ekamra'

The proposed paper focuses on the premodern settlement of Ekamra, present-day Bhubaneswar in Odisha. Ekamra's urban structure and development was deeply connected to the local natural landscape and to the path of the Mahanadi river delta. On one hand, the city thrived by harnessing the particularly abundant water resources of its site. On the other hand, this local water landscape was connected to a regional ecology characterized by the Mahana- di delta, whose silting processes transformed the topography of river courses and coastline over the long period, affecting in turn historical settlement patterns.

Through a landscape-based, relational approach I highlight the functional relationships between interconnected components of the urban space, particularly temples, canals, and wa- ter tanks. I reveal how these relationships structured the city and, expanding outwards, tied it to broader landscape processes. Ekamra's hydraulic system flowed into and harnessed the broader river basin. Its temples, sites of pilgrimage, were reached through travel routes that crossed both the landscape and the city, entering the built environment of Ekamra through a 'pre-urban' area where satellite temple complexes and water tanks facilitated the transition into urban space and connected the urban core to important travel routes.

The material record shows that this premodern city was not a rigid structure, nor a closed fortress. It instead was a dynamic system that expanded by building into, and negotiating with, the surrounding wilderness. By connecting urban history to broader landscape geography and processes, I deconstruct the dichotomy between urban and rural space, reconfiguring the urban area as an extensive hydrologic landscape. By understanding architectural material through patterns of use and movement, through relationships and connections, I show how the urban core was a permeable environment, in constant exchange with its landscape through both travel routes and ecologic systems.

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Sara Varanese is a doctoral candidate in the Art History department at Rutgers University, New Jersey, USA. Her research focuses on architecture, urban landscape and ecology in me dieval South Asia. In particular, she is investigating the premodern urban structure of Bhubaneswar, Odisha, as an extensive hydrologic landscape. She is also researching Bhubaneswar as a Pasupata centre, as revealed by its temple complexes and iconographic programs. Sara has a background in architectural heritage and conservation from Polytechnic University in Turin, Italy. She received her MA in Art History and Archaeology from SOAS, London.

Panel B: Citizenship & Community

Aaron Antony, University of Hyderabad. 'Spatiality and Social Movements: Analysing the Place and Space of Shaheen Bagh'

India recently witnessed a series of protests against the promulgation of Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) because of its communal and discriminatory articulation of citizenship. Among the spontaneous, voluntary, and often unorganised forms of protests led by students and young Indians springing from universities and spilling on to the streets, the protest gathering at Shaheen Bagh, a Muslim, working-class neighbourhood in New Delhi bordering Jamia Millia Islamia came to symbolise the spirit of the anti-CAA movement.

For more than a hundred days, Shaheen Bagh saw a determined sit-in led by Muslim women demanding the repeal of CAA. Contrary to the familiarised articulation of protest in India, this space was marked by unapologetic religious assertion, dispersed leadership and complete adherence to peaceful means. The occupation of the public 'place' and the organic evolution of the protest 'space' attracted wide participation from the civil society and inadvertently inspired several 'Shaheen Baghs' across the country.

The proposed paper discerns the place and space of the said neighbourhood not merely as a socially-removed container of collective action but as constitutive and even causative of the discourse surrounding the anti-CAA movement in its physical, social and temporal capacities. It probes how and why such a protest space materialised there instead of state-sanctioned protest sites like Jantar Mantar or Ramlila Maidan. The answer, I argue, lies in the spatial constitution of everyday life and collective identity formation in Shaheen Bagh. Drawing from the works of Henri Lefebvre on space, Doug McAdam et al. on contentious politics, and more recently, the coalescing of both by Byron Miller and Deborah G Martin, I invoke Shaheen Bagh's case to advocate for the continued application of space as an analytical tool in the larger theorisation of contentious politics and social movements.

Aaron Antony is currently pursuing his PhD at the Department of Sociology in the University of Hyderabad, India. His thesis titled "Changing Nature of State and Judiciary: A Sociological

Analysis of Select Supreme Court Judgements" deals with how the Indian state and its judiciary have engaged with political assertions deemed 'anti-state' like the Maoist movement and the recent protests against Citizenship Amendment Act. His research falls under the domain of political sociology, within which he looks closely at the Indian state, its engagement with the Constitution, dissent, identities, and cultures of protest.

Rajarshee Narayan Chowdhury, Jawaharlal Nehru University. 'Planning through Fear: Urban Aspirations of Becoming World-Class'

The proposed essay will seek to establish a conceptual connection between fear and citizenship as it is articulated in the urban margins. Understanding fear as beyond the immediate risk of harm, the paper instead conceptualises everyday anxieties as shaping (a) claim-making upon the state i.e., how demands may be framed, positioned and articulated; (b) mediating between relations within *an* urban marginal community. Taking up the example of *Kathputli Colony* (lit. artists' colony) in the Indian capital city of Delhi, earmarked as the first slum and squatter settlement to be upgraded under the Public-Private Partnership (PPP) in-situ rehabilitation scheme; I seek to follow the lives of beneficiaries as they have changed since their movement into makeshift lodgings as arranged by the private contractor. Losing one's home and becoming dependent upon the state for subsequent rehabilitation has altered the social fabric of the community leading to a blurring of the lines between what constitutes immediate danger and something that is not likely to manifest into tangible harm. Furthermore, the pervasive atmosphere of uncertainty and opacity makes the population vulnerable to rigid techniques of surveillance by the local state (here the Delhi Development Authority or DDA). On the theoretical plane I argue for conceiving urban fear beyond the immediate notions of crime, violence and delinquency to incorporate apparently civic-minded acts such as planning being equally capable of inducing fear in the minds of the populations. Further, it is my expectation that by problematising binaries such as, safe/unsafe; danger/safety; planned/unplanned it becomes reasonably possible to ask the more fundamental question of how such discourses may be deployed as means to an end to serve the agenda of property; in turn a key stepping stone for a city, harbouring aspirations of being and becoming 'world-class'.

Rajarshee Narayan Chowdhury is a Ph.D candidate at the Centre for International Politics, Organization and Disarmament, New Delhi, India. His research topic is titled, Urban Fear, Territorial Practices and Citizenship in Globalising Cities: Case Studies of Delhi and Istanbul. In this he is pursuing an ethnographic approach by studying the neighbourhoods of Kathputli Colony, New Delhi and Tarlabasi, Istanbul. Previous academic presentations at conferences include the British Association of South Asian Studies (BASAS); Political Studies Association (PSA) and at the Indian Institute of Human Settlements (IIHS). Areas of interest include urban geography, planning and citizenship.

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Siddharth Sridhar, University of Toronto. 'Changing Spaces, Changing Fortunes: Decolonization and the Nattukottai Chettiars'

A small caste of salt-traders in the 17th century in the arid south of the subcontinent, the Nattukottai Chettiars leveraged a unique family and community organizational structure to establish themselves as the major sources of short- and medium-term credit for cultivators in British-colonial Burma, Ceylon, and Malaya in the 19th and 20th centuries. Historians and anthropologists have studied the Chettiar community's unique forms of 'caste-banking', their reliance on British imperial expansion, and the impact of nativistic citizenship laws passed in these Crown colonies between the 1930s and 1960s. Importantly, scholars like Rudner (1994) have paid close attention to the spatial articulation of the Chettiar caste-banking system out of the very structure of the Chettiar household and across the seas. Mahadevan (1978) and Mukherjee's (2015) attention to the instability of the information sharing systems of the Chettiars in the 1920s and 1930s also highlights the impact of globally integrated commodity markets on the spaces and times of money-lending in the Bay of Bengal. However, there remains a significant gap in how we understand the impact of decolonization and the rise of the nation state on the Chettiar community specifically, and more broadly on the commercial and diasporic relationships that constituted the Bay of Bengal in the early 20th century.

My proposed paper analyses Privy Council commercial litigation involving Chettiar family-firms to build out the legal-structural articulation and disarticulation of the Bay of Bengal as an inter-colonial space of economic activity in the late 19th and early 20th century. Taking the legal space of the Bay of Bengal as a historically significant infrastructure of the British Empire, my paper follows the concrete process of the transformation of the empire into distinct nation-states, uncovering the process and afterlife of imperial collapse and the articulation of a new world-system in the Indian Ocean.

Siddharth Sridhar is a 3rd year PhD student in the Department of History at the University of Toronto. His dissertation, "Developing an Empire: Plantation Rubber and Peasant Agriculture in the Bay of Bengal" follows the emergence and decline of British imperial regimes of development in the Bay of Bengal oriented around plantation and peasant commercial agriculture. Siddharth earned his MA in Asian Studies and BA in History at the University of Texas, focusing on the history of caste and capitalism in the South Asia.

Panel C: Environment & Crises

Arif Hayat Nairang, University of Minnesota. 'Farming a Ruin: Living with "Bad" Weather in South Kashmir'

A year after the military clampdown, communication blackout, and the abrogation of the region's autonomy, the land laws of the erstwhile state were altered making all Indian citizens eligible to buy land in Kashmir. Most diasporic scholars and journalists feared that this change in land laws was going to undo the hard-earned land reforms and posed a grave danger to the ecological riches of Kashmir valley at the hands of big Indian capitalists. However, my fieldwork in the villages of South Kashmir observes that more than worrying about the political and ecological impact of this landmark event, Kashmiris engaged in apple industry were anxious about the unpredictability of weather. The Indian government had timed the event perfectly for just when the "notoriously turbulent" South Kashmir was *obsessing* about the idiosyncrasies of the harvest season.

Based on ethnographic fieldwork where farmers read their landscape as a political and ecological ruin, and a critical reading of a letter complaining of incorrect weather forecasts written by a Kashmiri farmer in the early 1990s to All India Radio, I illustrate that the farmers understand Kashmir as an apocalyptic place of ceaseless ruination. Life in such a place is manifested by an urgency to relate with the time of the now. I argue that the Kashmiri farmer's often *obsessive* concern with the weather reflects a similar urgency. This paper highlights an unexplored temporality of the conflict in Kashmir, that is, the apocalyptic perspective of the Kashmiri farmer. I posit that weather becomes the signifier of this perspective and of a life *obsessed with the time of the now* as the unpredictability of weather disturbs the present more than the political violence which Kashmiris have learnt to live with over the years.

Arif Hayat Nairang is a PhD candidate at the Department of Anthropology in University of Minnesota. His dissertation research is focussed on understanding how people living in South Kashmir relate to the crisis and violence in their milieu through play and humour. A Kashmiri himself, he uses his own experience of living in South Kashmir along with ethnographic fieldwork conducted for the past one year- one of the most turbulent times in the history of the region, to produce the first ethnography of South Kashmir. In his dissertation project, he argues that play and humour become the expression of a life with an apocalyptic perspective as it responds to the exigencies of time in Kashmir.

Jay Prakash Sharma, Syracuse University. 'Voices from the margins: life in a tribal village amidst a global pandemic'

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused an unprecedented impact upon human society across the globe. Evidently, it is going to have far reaching consequences touching upon almost every single aspect of our lives, yet the magnitude and severity of sufferings will remain as differentiated as our societies and people are around us. The horrific suffering endured by migrant workers during their mass exodus from Indian cities in the wake of the government-imposed lockdown leading to a humanitarian crisis is a telling example.

Through this proposed paper I explore how a pandemic of this scale was perceived, experienced, and responded to in a small village in the West Singbhum district of Jharkhand inhabited predominantly by Ho tribe community. With a population of around 400, the main source of livelihood for the community is subsistent farming apart from a considerable number of its resident dependent upon daily wage labor in construction, farming and services sector. Around 10 percent of the residents are migrant workers who have moved to cities in search of better wage and job opportunities. I was in the midst of conducting my fieldwork when the pandemic arrived in India and the resulting lockdown was announced and thus had an opportunity to closely observe its impact as I too was locked down with them. In this paper I will be discussing different phases of the pandemic— initial infection spread, economic lockdown and restriction upon people's movement; arrival of the migrants; staggered unlocking and everyday life—from a perspective informed by the Ho community.

I argue that although the narratives around the pandemic made way into the village through mainstream, popular and social media, the Ho community's response to it was mediated by local socio-cultural and political contexts. The pandemic, indeed, elicited varying feelings ranging from anxiety and hopelessness to indifference and factitious reactions, however their responses during each phase mentioned above were expressed through idioms that sit uncomfortably with the mainstream narratives. These inconsistencies in the narrative must also be seen from the backdrop of a history checkered with practices of exploitation, oppression, and alienation.

Jay Prakash is currently a PhD candidate at the Department of Anthropology, Syracuse University, New York. His topic of research is Revisiting Subaltern Politics: Memory, Spirituality and Law in the West Singbhum district of newly formed tribal state of Jharkhand, India. As a part of doctoral dissertation he is conducting an ethnographic study of a local movement against mining and land dispossession among the Ho tribe community of Kolhan region in the state of Jharkhand. He holds a BA degree in Russian Language, Literature and Cultural Studies from the Jawaharlal Nehru University. He attended Tata School of Social Sciences for doing an MA in an interdisciplinary course, Development. He worked in the development sector for three years before enrolling in the Delhi School of Economics, Sociology Department for an M.Phil. program. He has presented his prior works at various conferences/forums held nationally and

internationally including 11th Historical Materialism Conference, London; Centre for Development Studies, Thiruvananthapuram, India; 53rd Indian Society of Labour Economics (ISLE) Annual Conference, Udaipur, India; 47th Annual Conference on South Asia, Madison; Medusa Graduate Conference, Toronto 2019. He has also published papers in various academic journals.

Nishant Beniwal, Open University. 'Litigating a religious right to nature (in India)'

The focus of environment protection challenges in India has largely been a claim based on the right to clean environment. As opposed to a right to clean environment that has been derived as sub-set of the constitutionally protected right to life, the right to practice religion is a right granted explicitly under the constitution. There is also an additional right to conserve one's distinct culture. Given that mainstream religions originating in the Indian sub-continent (Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism) and tribal (indigenous) practices consider nature and its elements as a part of the divine, this paper proposes to consider and assess the likelihood of success of a claim for protection of the environment or its elements based on a protection of religion and culture rights standpoint. The paper also proposes to evaluate whether this approach is likely to have a higher possibility of success, when it can be claimed that the natural element under threat is a 'sacred' space and hence entitled to protection *ipso facto* (as was the case in the Niyamgiri decision of the Supreme Court). While there have been a few judicial decisions granting personhood to natural entities, the legal basis has primarily been an environmental protection consideration as opposed to a religious or cultural protection. Hence, an additional aspect to be considered in this paper is whether based on a religious or cultural argument, the environment or its specific elements could be granted personhood and therefore ultimately destruction of the same, whether direct or indirect, present or in future (relevant in the case of a climate change claim), can be argued to be a violation of right to practice a religion or conserve a distinct culture. Finally, the paper would evaluate whether, these approaches can be a relevant strategy for a successful climate change litigation in India.

Nishant is currently a post-graduate researcher at the Open University Law School, Faculty of Business and Law, Open University. His topic of research is enforcement of climate change obligations in the south Asian context primarily through a litigation based approach relying on strategies adopted in climate change litigation across the world. He recently presented his research at the Uppsala Forum focussing on a climate change and justice theme. He holds a masters degree in climate change law and policy from the University of Strathclyde, Glasgow, Scotland and a bachelor degree in law from National University of Juridical Sciences, Calcutta, India.

Panel D: Colonialism, Space & Resistance

Kelsey J. Utne, Cornell University. 'Persisting in Place: Representation and Resilience of Delhi Graveyards, 1857-1945'

This paper explores the connections between property rights, colonial cartography, and the urban necrogeography in British North India. While current historiography recognizes the complex negotiations between state and non-state actors underlying colonial era land use, it largely does so by examining proposed infrastructure projects rather those at risk of displacement or even obliteration. Instead, this paper centers a particular type of land use case: South Asian burial grounds. Unlike most spaces of everyday city life, burial sites are uniquely embedded within the land itself and imply a sense of permanence and immobility.

This paper asks: to what extent did prosaic commemorative sites (such as graveyards) resist reappropriation by the colonial state and constrain British efforts to control Delhi's landscape? In order to grapple with the inconsistencies and variability of colonial maps over time, I georectified 19th and 20th century maps of the city. The process of georectification transforms the image files of a scanned maps of Delhi, rendering each one legible to standardized geographic coordinate systems. Doing so permits me to accurately overlay these maps with one another, as well as with current day GIS data. By comparing these maps, I trace the changes in burial ground locations in the city over the course of the British Raj period as represented in these maps. This paper suggests that the ostensibly silent dead played a significant role in colonial state's ability to reshape urban spaces.

Additionally, the presentation will introduce an interactive webtool that conference attendees can use to compare the emergence and disappearance of burial grounds across maps of Delhi from 1857, 1893, 1912, 1922, 1939, 1945, and present day.

Kelsey J. Utne is a history PhD candidate at Cornell University, where she specializes on memorialization and public history in late colonial and early postcolonial South Asia. Her dissertation, "Corpse Politics: Disposal and Commemoration of the Indian Interwar Dead, 1919-1939," traces the intersecting histories of necropolitics, heritage, and colonialism. It explores how the materiality and commemoration of the dead altered the physical, bureaucratic, and social landscapes of South Asia in the final decades of colonial occupation. Her research has been supported by the Social Science Research Council, the American Institute of Indian Studies, and the Fulbright Program.

Pradeep Sangapala, University of Alberta. 'Terra Incognita to Anuradhapura: The production of a new spatial consciousness of the Holy City in later-19th century British Colonial incorporation of Lanka'

Anuradhapura, the ancient and sacred city in Sri Lanka, has multiple representations as a holy city, place of pilgrimage, archaeological site, and tourist destination. These are created and contested by multiple actors within specific political, cultural, and historical contexts. The modern constructions go back to the late-nineteenth century when the British colonial officers made Anuradhapura a place of significance. The British produced new knowledge of Anuradhapura, which substantially reconceptualized the existing social relations of the people with the historical and religious materials of the place. Along with materializing the colonial order, the British familiarization of Anuradhapura reproduces the history of Anuradhapura, which was inconsistent with the native Sinhalese Buddhists consciousness of the place.

This study explores how the British approached the then 'unknown' territory of Anuradhapura in the backdrop of the colonial incorporation of the island to the British Empire. It aims to understand how the British familiarized Anuradhapura by using multiple spatial practices, such as surveying, cartography, and archeology. The broader aim of the study is to theorize the 19th-century transformation of Anuradhapura and to understand the 'fetishization' of place from a 'social space' perspective.

I will consult various archival materials such as British colonial administration reports, maps and statics of the colonial government, and correspondence between natives and colonial authority. Also, the study rests on two extensive field studies in Anuradhapura in 2017 and 2019. The study suggests that British colonial order 'spatially fetishized' and 'commodified' Anuradhapura. It expands the contemporary scholarship of planning, geography, and social space in postcolonial Sri Lanka.

Pradeep Sangapala is a fourth-year Ph.D. candidate at the School of Urban and Regional Planning at the University of Alberta. He studies the intersection of colonialism, nationalism, and planning in regard to the planning and making of the first town in postcolonial Sri Lanka, i.e., the New Town Anuradhapura of 1949. He has been teaching introduction to human geography and planning to the undergraduate students at the University of Alberta. He has degrees from the University of Moratuwa, Sri Lanka, and Ball State University, USA, and also participated in CapAsia, Asia-based field semesters, in India and Nepal.

Saanika Patnaik. 'Incarcerated Journeys of Rebellion, Interaction, and Belonging – A Glimpse at the Spatial Dynamics of South Asian Penal Histories in Melaka'

In my paper, I look at the spaces occupied by South Asian colonial prisoners. I specifically study the spatial confinement of transported convicts, especially those who were transferred to lands overseas. In the case of transported convicts, it is crucial to perceive space as a mobile concept. Physically, prisoners were driven from their homes, to the local holding cell, to the ship, and finally to the overseas prison. Each of these spaces was defined by a dialectic

between the prisoners, a South Asian, and the prison officer, a Britisher or an employee of the British Empire. Furthermore, each of these spaces involved acts of rebellion and submission in various degrees. My paper particularly focusses on the movements and rebellions characterising the transportation of convicts in the nineteenth century to Melaka, a British settlement in the Malay peninsula.

Beyond the prison, I also highlight the lives of these South Asian prisoners as penal labourers in various spaces within Melaka, which provided opportunities to mingle with the local population. In addition, the space of festival celebrations allowed more chances for such interactions. As a result, it is not surprising to see that many convicts chose to remain in Melaka after their terms, rather than return to their homes in South Asia. By looking at the penal histories of transported convicts, my paper brings to light the tensions between the South Asian individual and the colonial state, involving negotiation, compromise and coercion, which spanned not just the boundaries of South Asia, but also sailed the Indian Ocean and entered the Malaysian archipelago.

I am a Master's student of History, recently graduated from Leiden University in the Netherlands. Before that, I completed my Bachelors in History from Ashoka University in Sonipat. I am interested in researching maritime history, the socio-cultural histories of communities, and identity politics. For my Master's thesis, I studied the pluralities, hybridity's and marginalities in the social landscape of nineteenth century Melaka. I surveyed the various communities present and their historical roots in the region, as well the relations of these groups with each other and the colonial regime. For leisure, I like reading, writing, visiting museums, and watching films.

Panel E: Postcolonial State

Shaunna Rodrigues, Columbia University. 'The Pluralism of Place: Azad's Challenge to the Nation and Nationalism'

Abul Kalam Azad has always been interpreted as a composite nationalist who shaped the conception of the nation for Muslims in India. In contrast to this reading of Azad, this paper argues that Azad was deeply critical of the idea of a nation and nationalism. Instead, his understanding of the context in which Muslims could politically participate on their own terms was deeply shaped by his reflections on the concept of 'place'. This paper traces the shifts and reconfigurations in Azad's conceptions of place, from the idea of '*Dar-ul-Islam*' (abode of Islam)*,* to '*Watan' as* a normative site for different currents of culture' and

eventually as an Islamic critique of nationalist formulations of 'pure land' or 'soil of the motherland'.

These conceptions of place, which were formulated during a critical juncture in Indian politics extending from 1919–1950, are assessed based on how Azad negotiated the temporalities of variegated legal spaces - such as the empire, the colony, the *khilafat*, *imārats*, India as federal dominion, the partitioned Subcontinent, and the territory of post-colonial India. This paper argues that the legal age, legal speed and constitutional time of these legal spaces determined how Azad outlined his political project of democratically consolidating and politically mobilizing Islamic ideas about place. In the process, it seeks to highlight his emphasis on the political forms and affect of place as the basis for a transformative institutional and legal relationship between 'Indian Muslims' and the rest of the Subcontinent.

Shaunna Rodrigues is a Ph.D. Candidate at the Department of Middle East, South Asian and African Studies, Columbia University, New York. She also holds an M.A. and M.Phil in Political Science from Jawarharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. Her work focuses on intersections between Dalit and Muslim political thought, Islamic justifications of constitutionalism in India, and minority conceptions of the public in South Asia. She is the South Asia Editor at www.borderlines-cssaame.org

Alisha Elizabeth Cherian, Stanford University. 'Walking in the City-State: Everyday Memories, Histories, and Narratives of Indian Spaces in Singapore'

This paper investigates informal practices that have gone into producing Indian spaces through exploring memories and histories that complicate and augment neat official narratives and representations of place in Singapore. Racial formations in Singapore have been spatially organized by the colonial state and later the postcolonial state. At present, The Singapore state manufactures and maintains racial minority demographics through an immigration policy that ensures Indians remain a racial minority category at approximately 9%, compared to Chinese at 74%, Malays 14%, and 'Others' 3%. Through racial quotas, public housing in Singapore replicates these national demographics in racially mixed neighborhoods, diluting the presence of racial minorities across the island. However, there are still certain spaces that are designated and/or imagined to be Indian spaces.

The urban landscape is an archive of the social relations that have produced it over time (Ingold 1993), made up of both the built environment as well as people's attachments to place stored in spaces that combine memories with material record (Finkelstein 2019). An analysis of the urban landscape through methods which take people's memories and senses of geography (McKittrick 2007) seriously can reveal everyday and alternative histories of place-making and formations of publics. The proposed paper will attempt this through

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utilizing a participant mapping exercise that takes flânerie as methodology (Boutin 2012), drawing on walking interviews (Brown 2005) with people with relationships to these spaces where these spaces are mapped out through interlocutors' semiotic and phenomenological descriptions. The stories gathered about three Indian spaces – two residential neighborhoods imagined to be more 'Indian' though housing quota policies would say otherwise and a state planned and designed Indian heritage district – reveal how these situated memories and stories can unsettle dominant narratives of nationhood, belonging, and identity.

Alisha Elizabeth Cherian is currently a PhD candidate in the Anthropology Department at Stanford University. Her research explores contemporary race relations and the racial category of "Indian" in a postcolonial, post-indenture plural society structured by state strategies of racial integration. She investigates the lived experience of race through everyday encounters and interactions of people of South Asian descent both within their own racial category and across other racial categories in public urban space in Singapore. She has completed a BA in Anthropology and Drama with a correlate in Asian Studies from Vassar College and an MA in Anthropology from the University of Chicago.

Debjani Dasgupta, University of Sheffield. 'Spatial Imaginations of 'Good Governance' and Changing Institutional Values of Local Governments'

Since the 1990s, there has been a prevalence of different sets of global ideas about the nature and delivery of 'good government', ranging from those that emphasised human rights and democratic accountability (e.g. DFID) to the World Bank's more functional focus on administrative efficiency and service delivery. Local governance structures provide a key terrain, where such global agendas come into operation and interact with the local political agendas. Far from remaining 'closed', 'invited' or 'claimed' spatial practices in abstract terms, these local spaces turn out to be sites where the citizens actually engage with the local state through their everyday practices. This paper tries to look at the spatial imaginations implicit within these global development agendas of good governance, and find out to what extent (if at all), they are responsible for changing institutional values at the local level.

Since 1978, the Indian state of West Bengal was a front-runner in establishing a structure of local government institutions or *panchayats* in India. The state witnessed a regime change (from Leftist /social-democratic to rightist populist) between 2005 and 2018, and was also the preferred site for implementation of two separate donor-sponsored programmes on local governance – one by the DFID-UK, and the other by World Bank. This makes West Bengal *panchayats* a strategic site for operationalising global discourses of 'good governance' which might then be re-interpreted by the local political dynamics. Findings of this research indicate that global ideas and resources do play an important role in transforming the

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institutional culture at the local level, but it is not a straightforward process. The process is complex and multi-layered with key state actors (in the recipient countries) playing a major role in contesting / reinforcing / facilitating the course of institutional change.

Debjani Dasgupta has just defended her PhD thesis in International Development from the University of Sheffield, UK. Her research seeks to understand the factors shaping opportunities for 'effective' people's participation in local governance structures under different political regimes - based on the case of the Indian state of West Bengal. As a Chevening Scholar, she did her Masters in Poverty and Development from the University of Manchester, UK. Prior to her arrival in the UK, she worked for 15 years as a development practitioner in India, in the fields of gender, education, planning, poverty and rural development.

Panel F: Queer Geographies & Dissidence

Ina Goel, The Chinese University of Hong Kong. 'A queer geography of New Delhi – Negotiating the 'hijra' identity through cultural mapping'

With an estimated population of half a million, *hijras*, a 'third' gender community that is mostly physically castrated, occupy a unique and contradictory place in India. Hindu mythology deifies them, and British colonists demonized them. Caught between precarious webs of cultural stereotyping and postcolonial projects of biopolitical ordering, the hijra community typically live by seeking voluntary donations in exchange for blessing, performing at weddings, begging, and engaging in sex work. Existing within ambiguous kinship networks governed by internal councils requiring patronage of senior gurus, hijras undergo mandatory apprenticeship to a symbolic 'house' society providing access to commune life. There is a division of territories between different hijra communes that is crucial in determining hijra livelihoods and their spaces of work in New Delhi - be it work done as ritual workers or sex workers. Such lifestyles contribute towards producing counterculture in India that is often in opposition to the heteronormative state order. During fieldwork, by employing innovative tools of participatory research methods, mapping exercises with members from the hijra community revealed many aspects of their geographic exclusion, mostly through their vernacular spatial knowledge. This paper discusses those maps and shows how community mapping enables in experiencing the 'urbanness' of a city, through the sociality and practices of precarious networks of queer minorities in India. In doing so, this paper will investigate the complex interplay between multi-layered hijra identities and their territorial networks in understanding landscapes of New Delhi. Subsequently, this paper will highlight relations between place, space, and power in negotiating the hijra identity through cultural mapping.

Ina Goel is currently a PhD candidate at the Department of Anthropology at The Chinese University of Hong Kong and a Visiting Fellow to Anthropos India Foundation. A former DAAD and INLAKS scholar, Ina is also the founder of The Hijra Project, an online platform to spread awareness about the hijras, a 'third' gender community in South Asia. You can follow the project on Facebook – https://www.facebook.com/TheHijraProject/

Sohini Chatterjee, The University of Western Ontario. 'Dissident Mobility and Queer Un/Belonging: Culture, Queer Negotiations and the Politics of Representation'

Ek Ladki Ko Dekha Toh Aisa Laga (dir. Shelly Chopra Dhar, 2019) was touted as the mainstream commercial venture that cemented Bollywood's journey from offering lesbian homoerotic moments on screen to representing a queer relationship between two women for the first time. This paper tries to understand how the film's liberal messaging about queer acceptance is enabled by its centering of queer mobility and interrogates the ways in which mobility is shaped by class, how it establishes its relationship with queerness and queer intimacy in the film, and how it briefly speaks against homonationalism before queerness is folded into the family and the nation-state. India's majoritarian political climate renders a contextual reading of the film where mobility becomes dissident when it militates against culture, family and the state whereas queerness becomes sanitized when it demonstrates a willingness to defer to cultural norms, respectability and filial piety, paving the way for liberal rhetoric of queer acceptance. Moreover, this paper tries to explore how mobility and queerness interact in the film and what their interaction reveals about neoliberal queer subjecthood and queer un/belonging in post-377 Hindu nationalist India.

Sohini Chatterjee (she/her) is a PhD student in the Department of Gender, Sexuality and Women's Studies at The University of Western Ontario, Canada and is the LGBTQ+ Representative at the Gender Equity Committee of PSAC610. Her research interests are broadly interdisciplinary and currently encompass gender, sexuality and resistance movements in India and queer cultural studies.

Themal Ellawala, University of Illinois. 'On the Austere Gaze: Surveillance and Disciplining of Queer Excess on the Streets of Colombo'

This paper is a cartography of how the queer figure moves through public space in Sri Lanka, and the various disciplinary regimes they encounter along the way. My analysis turns on the twin categories of austerity and surveillance, and how these cultural logics circulate and operate in public space. Theorizations of austerity are often limited to the economic, although the humanities have made some attempts to extend the parameters of this category beyond state and transnational fiscal policies. Continuing this labour, I explore the myriad

ways that the neoliberal logic of austerity permeates and saturates the aesthetics of the quotidian, particularly with regard to the sartorial dimension of public urban space. By holding up the figure of the working-class, flamboyant, queer, "male" *ponnaya* of Sri Lanka, I attempt to theorize the mechanics of austerity as it structures aesthetic sensibilities, by inscribing bourgeois values of modesty, simplicity, and purity in dress. Central to the enforcement of aesthetic austerity is the constant surveillance that subaltern gender and sexual subjects experience in public space. I argue that theorizations of austerity must take into account a markedly neoliberal scopic vision that surveils all citizens for signs of excess, and seeks to institute order, productivity, and "efficiency" – notions that are invariably marked by discourses of ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and other social differences. I place in conversation the literature on the neoliberal austere present with writing on ethno-nationalist surveillance in Sri Lanka and more broadly, soldered by my observations and ruminations on queer excesses encountered on the streets of Colombo. Such a theoretical conversation allows for a more nuanced understanding of how the logic of austerity and the impetus for surveillance converge upon the queer figure, and establish conditions of violence in, and exile from, public space.

I am a second-year doctoral candidate in the Department of Anthropology at the University of Illinois at Chicago, where I study gender-sexual ontic and discursive formations in Sri Lanka through the optics of queer theory and postcolonial studies. I am specifically interested in explicating negative space (e.g. absence, silence, inaction, ambiguity) and exploring how the gender-sexual subaltern figure encounters the state and neoliberalism in myriad ways at such sites.

Panel G: Literature

Naveen Zaidi Farhan, University of Oxford. 'Immoveable Graves and Lost *Shajrahs*: the Mohajir in *Khwabrau* and "Hindustan se ek khat"'

Mohajir is a tricky term. It is normally used to denote migrants from North India who migrated to Pakistan during Partition and the decades proceeding it, although the term itself has been heavily politicised. Scholarship has focused on macro-level analyses of Mohajir and their relationship to the Pakistani state, the economy, and violence. Similarly, studies of Partition have stressed the event of Partition itself, and the immediate concerns of refugeehood and trauma. Taking inspiration from Vazira Zamindar's idea of the Long Partition, this paper argues for an approach to the Mohajir that highlights the emotions and conflicting affiliations felt by this group over the decades following Partition. Nostalgia for their former homes, and their dual affiliations with both their previous homes as well as the newly created state of Pakistan does not find place in the official national narrative that

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demands the Mohajir erase any prior affiliation with India. Instead, Urdu literature provides a space for these complex notions of belongings and the anxieties that come with it.

The proposed paper will look at Urdu literature as an archive of Mohajir emotions. It will examine two texts. The first is the novella *Khwabrau* (1990), translated into English as *Sleepwalkers* (1998), by Joginder Paul (1925-2016). The second is Intizar Hussain's (1925-2016) short story "Hindustan se ek khat" (1981). It will argue that the main conflict in these pieces revolves around perceived threats to intergenerational memory. It manifests itself in the anxiety of older generations to hold on to memories of family, homes, and everyday life in India in the face of two challenges: the spatial displacement of families due to Partition, and the appeal of a Pakistani national ideology to the younger generation.

Naveen Zaidi Farhan is a second-year DPhil (PhD) candidate at the Faculty of History, University of Oxford. She is interested in nostalgia, emotions, and history-writing in modern South Asia. Her DPhil dissertation uses a wide range of sources including non-professional histories, oral histories, and cookbooks to explore how Lucknow is articulated, felt, and performed after Partition. She holds a BA in History from the Lahore University of Management Sciences (LUMS) and an MA in South Asia Studies from the University of Pennsylvania which she attended as a Fulbright Scholar.

Sanchit Toor, Ashoka University. 'Through Touch and Transgression: Investigating Selves and Spaces in 'Samskara' and 'Angaliyat''

The plots of the two novels, 'Samskara' by U. R. Anantha Murthy (first published in Kannada in 1965) and 'Angaliyat' by Joseph Macwan (first published in Gujarati in 1986), begin at dawn. While the former establishes itself in a space and time with the routined ritual of bathing in a Brahmin household, the latter starts to weave its strands together in the loom in a Vankar's courtyard. The Brahmin *agrahara* and the Vankar *vas* witness contrasting mornings. The respective protagonists, Praneshacharya and Teeho, are established early on as the sites of potential change. Eventually, a death intervenes in the storyline, transforming the everyday negotiations in either case. The selves and the spaces, as a result, seek redefinition and re- contextualisation. Not only the protagonists but also the social positions that they occupy undergo transgression in one way or another in both novels. Praneshacharya and Teeho try to renegotiate with the internal and the external, not necessarily in a contrasting manner. This paper attempts to map these transformations in a comparative study of the *agrahara* and the *vas*—the Brahmin space and the Dalit space that the two stories dwell in, respectively. The parameters of touch, time, and transgression are employed in this investigation. This paper, in particular, reads the bodily and beyond spaces in 'Samskara' and 'Angaliyat' through the radical debate on the phenomenology and archaeology of untouchability developed between Sundar Sarukkai and Gopal Guru. Both the

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novels are critically acclaimed and have been translated into English. Briefly, and finally, this paper also touches on the literary space or 'polysystem' that these novels in translation influence or occupy.

Sanchit Toor is a graduate student specialising in South Asian Literatures in the Department of English and Creative Writing at Ashoka University. His research interrogates the questions of orality, language, touch, and translation. As a Designate Sahapedia-UNESCO Fellow 2020, he is currently preparing a module on the songs and spaces of the peasant women of Haryana. He has presented his research on various platforms, most recently at the New England regional meeting of the Association for Asian Studies. An alumnus of the Young India Fellowship programme, he is also associated with LILA Inter-Actions as a cultural editor.

Wafa Hamid, Jawaharlal Nehru University. 'Against Forgetting: Kashmir, Kaschmir, Cashmere, and the Poetry of Witness'

The historicization of Kashmir has been a field of much contention due to its many ideological narratives and counter-narratives. Even though many authors see 1947 as the point of departure for Kashmir and its religious and spatial politics, new and current research by the likes of Mridu Rai and Chandralekha Zutshi has expanded this understanding far beyond pre-Independence India. However, this historicization faces a dilemma where Kashmiris themselves have been effaced from this picture of Kashmir. This opens an array of challenges: 1) How do we (re)think the history of Kashmir and Kashmiris? Can such 'histories' and their roots be worked through the 'routes' of literature, memory, culture and the movement of people, and not least, the circulation of ideas? Both the spaces and times of history writing need to be rethought. 2) Is it sufficient to think of the history of Kashmir under the rubric of pre-colonial, colonial and post colonial alone? Or indeed through the maps drawn by colonialism reflecting competing understandings of territory which paid little attention to lived histories of memory? My work attempts to broaden this investigation into the roots of Kashmir by bringing in the 'routes' of time, memory, apocrypha, identity, and literature.

The proposed paper focuses on the work of the Kashmiri poet Agha Shahid Ali that explores the possibility of an alternative to a historiography centered on states, empires and borders. Ali's writing becomes a site of mourning and memory, haunted by the *prosopopeia* of voices that create a palimpsest of Kashmir. My work analyses the intimate links between language (its containment, policing and proliferation), duration, and space in relation to migration and translation. It exposes the fault-lines in the concept of nationalism that functions through the policing of voices, borders, and bodies. By addressing the errantry of translation I explore the unstable, transformative, and political nature of borders, and of the multiplicity of belonging and nonbelonging to explore a spectropoetics of space.

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Wafa Hamid is a PhD researcher at the Centre for English Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, India. Her doctoral research explores the themes of borders, borderlands, and translation in context of migration, memory, and identity in Kashmir. She received (FLAGS)Fund for Lesbian and Gay Studies research awards by the LGBT Studies, Yale University, 2018-19; and was a 2018-19 Fulbright Fellow at Yale. She has presented her research work at many international and national forums including Yale University, Delhi University, Jawaharlal Nehru University, Marlboro College (USA), University of Notre Dame (USA), and American Comparative Literature Association (ACLA) among other. She is Essays Editor of Jaggerylit: A South-Asian Arts and Literature Journal. Her research interests include: Critical Translation Studies, Borders, South Asian Studies, Gender and Sexuality Studies, and Comparative Lit.

Panel H: Representation & Identity

Akhil Kang, Cornell University. 'Remembering/Living Jalandhar & My Grandfather'

I visited Jalandhar in August 2019 almost 13 years after having left it in 2007. Jalandhar, a city in the State of Punjab in northern India, with a population of around 1 million, is where I was born and grew up for the first 15 years of my life. The reason for my visit (and return) to a city which I had desperately been trying to forget, and yet hold on to, was because my (paternal) grandfather's health was slowly collapsing and everyone in the family knew that his days were numbered. My relationship with my grandfather, to put it mildly, was (is?) complicated. My kinship ties with him are closely related, not to love, but to violence, abuse, neglect, loss and trauma. Over the years, when I had been avoiding ever visiting the city and choosing any possible excuse to avoid social gatherings that might lead me into the city, I realized that the city itself had become my grandfather. I didn't know at what point I had started relating *every* experience that I had in my hometown to him. Every pleasant memory of the city, of myself, turned bitter. I realized how, my body, would subconsciously shift when I remembered him and the city. My neck would start bowing down on its own, my eyes would start shifting to the ground, my shoulders would start stooping forward - my body would start turning passive. As if, my past was returning to my body through specific locations in my body. I had promised myself in 2007 (as immature I was in 8th grade!) that I would only return to Jalandhar when my grandfather dies. And, thus, I returned, years later, to see him immobilized to a bed, in a hospital emergency ward, several tubes sticking out from his skin and a thick tube emerging out of his open mouth. Few days later, after an excruciatingly painful non-recovery, he passed away.

In this paper, through an auto-ethnographic account, I talk about Jalandhar, through my grandfather, and my grandfather, through Jalandhar. I use Michel de Certeau's idea of moving

through a space through 'joyful and silent experience of childhood' to analyze how a childhood experience determines a spatial practice. I talk about specific moments of childhood, my grandfather remembering pre-partition India, domestic fights between him and my step-grandmother and mother, his attachments to the house, mobility that our chamar family witnessed solely because of him, and draw a parallel with bell hooks' reading of what the domestic has come to be understood by feminists from marginalized locations of race and class. Additionally, I use Navaro-Yashin's idea of materiality and phantasmatic and explore the use of fantasy in remembering a city and how does one re-mark a person during that process. Lastly, I use Alastair Bonnett's and Michelle R. Boyd's work on 'nostalgia' to re-create a memory of the city through an intersection of caste and sexuality, i.e., through my own auto-ethnographic lived experience of dalit-queerness.

Akhil Kang is pursuing his PhD in Anthropology at Cornell University. His project builds an anthropology of the elite and studies savarna and upper caste self-articulation of victimhood and woundedness because of reservation policies in India. He works at the intersection of several fields including anthropology of South Asia, media and affect studies, postcoloniality and gender and sexuality studies. Prior to pursuing his PhD, he worked as a human rights lawyer and researcher in New Delhi.

Gunindu Abeysekera, University of California. 'Anubhāva: Historytelling Through Bharatanatyam Dance in the South Asian American Diaspora'

One significant way to distinguish a culture is through its performance arts. In regards to South Asia, general misconceptions and orientalist stereotypes from the West reduce South Asian dance to a form of entertainment and place it at the forefront of South Asian identity. However, from a South Asian perspective, dance plays a key role in the preservation of cultural history and ancient tradition. Therefore, if a particular dance represents the homeland, what then does the dancer represent? How does their act of dancing symbolize the performance of the homeland and what does it mean when they perform it outside of the nation's borders? One particular classical South Asian dance that allows for such analysis is Bharatanatyam.

Originally called Sadir, this ancient South Indian dance narrated Hindu mythology and folklore and was exclusively performed by a community known as the Devadasis, or "servants of the gods." During the British Raj, colonial officials led a campaign to socially and politically stigmatize the dance to economically degrade the dancers. After India's independence, the new Indian upper class codified the erasure of the Devadasi community, while artists reclaimed and appropriated Sadir, transforming it into today's Bharatanatyam.

After more than seventy years since the legal prohibition of the Devadasi system, dancers from various backgrounds perform Bharatanatyam all over the world today. Since this dance

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has such a controversial history, or herstory, its modern performance provides opportunities to interrogate the social and political implications surrounding it. Using the concept of *anubhāva*, a Sanskrit word describing the evocation of emotion from performing or experiencing an aesthetic that results in a realization of self-truth, I explore how Bharatanatyam also fosters emotive and conceptual understandings of race, gender, sexuality, and diasporic culture. Moreover, by interviewing three generations of South Indian American women who have different levels of experience with Bharatanatyam, this paper and documentary film connects how their reclamation of the dance contributes to discourse of identity and nostalgia without memory in the South Asian-American diaspora.

Gunindu Abeysekera is a recent graduate of the University of California, Irvine's Asian American Studies Master's program and also graduated from UCI in 2018 with his Bachelor's in Film & Media Studies. His family immigrated to the United States from Sri Lanka in the year 2000 when he was only 2 years-old and he has lived in Orange County ever since. As a result, much of Guni's personal and academic interests have involved the experiences of growing up in the South Asian American diaspora. During his time as an undergraduate, he and his friends founded UCI's first ever South Asian Student Union (SASU), a space where students from all backgrounds can actively participate in both celebrating and unpacking the problematic aspects of their South Asian identities. In addition, and with the mentorship of Professor Shroff, Guni had the opportunity to teach his own course on the Bollywood film "Devdas" and postcoloniality through the UTeach program during his final year as an undergraduate. During his Master's, Guni had the opportunity to combine all of his interests for his thesis to create a documentary film on a colonial-banned South Asian dance and its relation to diasporic "nostalgia without memory." His thesis committee members included Professor Judy Wu, Beheroze Shroff, and Dorothy Fujita-Rony, with whose guidance helped him develop a public art exhibition, film screening, and Q&A panel for his documentary at UC Irvine in May 2019. Currently, he and his friend have launched an organization called "YALU: Youth Advancement, Leadership, & Unification" to foster transnational relations between Sri Lankan-American youth and Sri Lankan youth on their home island through a pen pal and language-learning program. Additionally, through YALU, Guni is developing an interactive community-based archive for Sri Lankan American youth called "Project ISLAND: Introducing Sri Lankan American Narratives in the Diaspora," where Sri Lankan Americans can document the migrant histories of their families. Lastly, Gunindu is currently applying to PhD programs for which he plans to study the role of art and performance for Queer Sri Lankans.

Sarica Robyn Balsari-Palsule, University College London. 'Visual Representation, Collective Identity and the Parsi Community'

Using a visual lens, the proposed paper focuses on the collective identity and social relations of the Indian Zoroastrian (Parsi) community in Mumbai. The Parsis in India, a minority

community that fled Persia between the seventh and eighth century due to Islamic persecution, maintain a unique position in Indian society amidst recent broader influxes of Hindutva, rising populism and growing intolerance of minorities. Described variously in the past as mediators, 'compradors' and interlocutors between the Indian native population and the British colonial administration, the paper highlights perceptions that this community has adeptly fashioned its identity amid changing political environments, colonial and postcolonial contexts and shifting social norms. The proposed paper draws attention to the way in which the Parsi community has been located within the interstices of adopted Indian identity and Persian heritage – the 'homeland' and the 'motherland' – noting the symbolically liminal status of Parsi identity and how this manifests in visual terms.

Acknowledging the power of visual imagery to recast personal and social temporality, this paper discusses how sentiments of belonging, nationhood and community are mediated through photographs. Contrasting traditional images from Parsi visual culture with contemporary web-based 'ludic' imagery, this paper explores the possibility of the reinvention of Parsi identity in the twenty-first century. Further, the paper will broadly focus on the visible and hidden relations within the community, noting how communal identity and alterity are constructed by visually and spatially embodied experiences of the public and private sphere. An exploration of the cultural organisation of the seen and unseen – as in the case of the Parsi colonies ('*baugs'*), Towers of Silence ('*dakhma'*) and Fire Temple ('*agiary'*) – provides insight into Parsi spatial formation of identity and relational markers of difference from non-Parsi communities. These private, bounded worlds function as key sites of Parsi memory entangled with historicity and identity.

Sarica Robyn Balsari-Palsule is currently a PhD researcher in the Anthropology department at the University College of London. Her topic of research, 'Occlusion and Visibility: Visual Representation and the Mumbai Parsi Community' focuses on photography and memory production, drawing on the ways in which notions of temporality, identity, remembrance and forgetting are embedded within visual representation. Her research interests include visual culture, memory studies and semiotics. She holds a Bachelors degree in Philosophy and Political Science from the University of Cambridge and a Masters in Social Anthropology from the London School of Economics.