

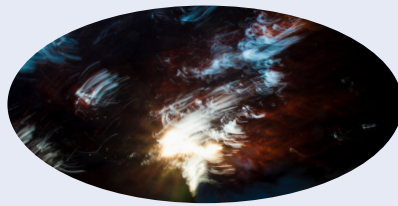


South Asia Forum

Lecture Series

Spring Semester 2020

Everyone is cordially
invited to participate!



ISEK University of Zurich
Andreastrasse 15

7th April 2020

Vindhya Buthpitiya (University College London, Anthropology),
[Photo/Politics in the Sri Lankan Postwar](#), ISEK, Andreastrasse 15,
Room 4.06, 4.15-6pm.

Abstract: This paper is centred on the findings of an ethnographic study of popular photographic practices among members of the Tamil community in Northern Sri Lanka. It explores the ways in which these pursuits were shaped by the trajectory and experiences of a decades-long armed conflict bound to a struggle for self-determination. The social lives of photographs, in their making, sharing, keeping, destroying and concealing, affords extraordinary ethnographic insight into lived experiences of the civil war (1983 – 2009) and the ‘peace’ and politics of its aftermath. Where the causes and consequences of war endure and further marginalise the island’s Tamil community, photography is also mobilised within acts of civilian resistance. The medium makes visible and amplifies demands for justice and redress, underpinning the consolidation of trans/national political claims and solidarities. Where war and image-making have been deemed inextricable in terms of surveillance, securitisation and propaganda, the unruly social and political conjugations of everyday photography reveal instead its emancipatory possibilities. Thereby, these responsive and mediatory forms of photography not only speak to conceptions of loss and resistance, but nation and citizenship. Photography thus enables the expression of shared desires for the future that are personal, political and deeply entangled with notions of belonging and unbelonging to imagined nation and extant state.

8th April 2020

Film screening, [Scratches on Celluloid](#) (Directed by Timothy P.A. Cooper, Vindhya Buthpitiya. Produced by Abeera Rif-Bashir), ISEK, Andreastrasse 15, Room 3.46, 5-7pm.

Summary: In the rapidly changing urban landscapes of Jaffna and Lahore, the social and public space of cinema halls are recognisable for their longevity and resilience amid insurgency, war, and infrastructural breakdown. *Scratches on Celluloid* explores such urban cinemas as symbols of state enforced amnesia and collective attempts to remember.

Between 1983 and 2009, Sri Lanka endured a protracted armed conflict. In Jaffna, the largest city in the Tamil-majority North, cinemas became places of political significance. Government embargoes forced larger spaces to close, making way for “mini theatres”, providing cinemagoers escape from war and the social segregations of caste and class. In Pakistan, film and cinema-going have been the subject of fierce debate. Ever since the closure of the last domestic celluloid processing lab, Punjabi films have struggled to switch to digital technologies. The remaining repertoire of celluloid films circulate between the three remaining analogue cinemas in Lahore.

Conducted through extensive ethnographic research in Jaffna and Lahore the film seeks to contribute to an understanding of how belonging and exclusion are forged in the built heritage of urban cinemas.