

TNA ACTIVITY REPORT

SEEING THE UNSEEN: LOCATING THE WOMEN OF INDEPENDENT INDIA'S UNHEARD DALIT MASSACRES

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Introduction

The main aim of this doctoral project is to foreground the female narratives of selected Dalit massacres from independent India using feminist geocriticism and digital cartography. The study primarily looks at the interconnections among caste, space, and gender in selected Dalit massacres namely, the Kilvenmani massacre of Tamil Nadu (1968) and Marichjhapi massacre of west Bengal (1979). The research question focuses on understanding how caste and space plays a role in determining the female (gender) experiences in a Dalit massacre. Both fictional and non-fictional texts are used in the project. The initial phases of the project such as database creation and analysis, publishing of the methodology (Justin and Menon 2021), results (Justin and Menon 2023a; Justin and Menon 2023b) and proposals (Justin and Menon 2024) have already been done along with the preliminary mapping using QGIS.

Methodology

The project makes use of a hybrid/mixed methodology that is a combination of feminist geocriticism (qualitative) and digital cartography (quantitative) to validate the hypothesis that caste and space determines the gender-based (female) experiences in a Dalit massacre. The database of female survivors was compiled manually from both fictional and non-fictional texts. The data on the female survivors is derived from literary and visual texts, newspaper reports, historical texts, oral history, and documentaries among others. The final phase of the project including creation of a website for the project and the creation of hyperlinked web-maps using ArcGIS pro and ArcGIS online was carried out during the CLS INFRA TNA stay at UNED-LINHD.



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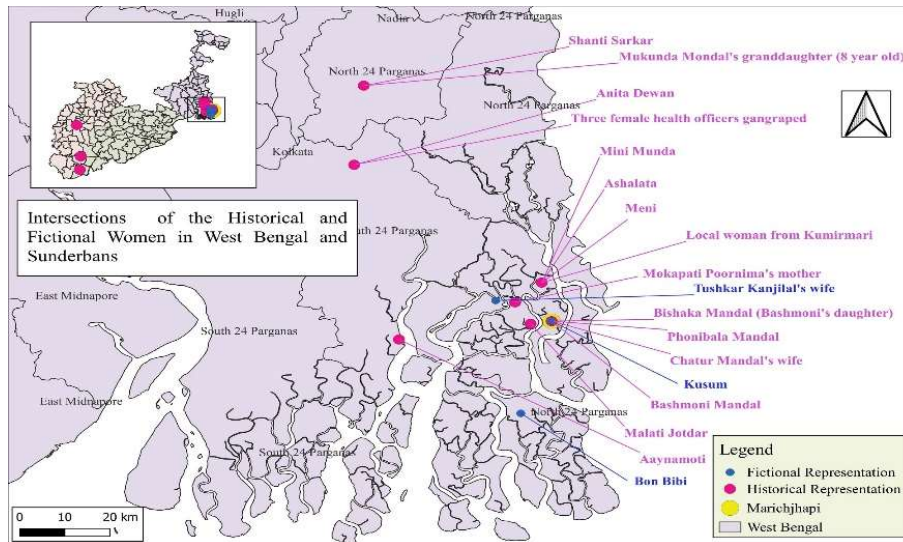


Figure 1: Prototype of the initial visualization of the real and fictional female survivors of the Marichjhapi massacre using QGIS.

At UNED-LINHD – Research Visit and Outcome

The fellowship at LINHD-UNED was utilised for the final stages of my doctoral project. Thanks to my mentors at my host institution, Prof. Salvador Ros Munoz and Alvaro Perez Pozo who helped me with the creation and publication of the spatial archive of the female survivors. By spatial archive I mean not only a website with the details of the project including the methodology, analysis and results but also maps with hyperlinks to the details of a particular massacre. The base map or the primary map created is a list of the major massacres in independent India and each point is hyperlinked/hypermapped to a detailed map of the real and fictional female survivors of the massacre. Both Prof. Munoz and Alvaro helped me with the hypermapping process using HTML codes and advanced ArcGIS pro Javascript API.

At first, I was introduced to ArcGIS online through my meeting with Prof. Maria Luisa De Lazaro Torres from the faculty of Geography and History. This meeting was helpful in getting acquainted with the ArcGIS platform as I was only experienced with using QGIS for my research. I was also given access to UNED ArcGIS accounts and cloud which enabled me to experiment with the basic features and visualisations. I was also introduced to Prof. Joaquin Osorio Arjona from the faculty of Geography and History by Prof. Munoz. I received training and advice on the possibilities for analysing my data using ArcGIS pro from Prof. Arjona which I am planning to include in my thesis and the project. Summarising the data and cluster analysis are some of the methods that were suggested by both Prof Arjona and Prof. Munoz. Thus, I was specifically trained in acquiring basic skills needed for developing literary cartography such as creating spatial data, creating interactive maps with clickable metadata, spatial archiving, critical cartography with special focus on feminist geography as an under mapped space among others.

Besides the training in ArcGIS pro and online, I was also introduced to and trained in WordPress. I am from a pure literature background and getting assistance from experts really helped me to save a lot of time while setting up a website for the project. With the help of Alvaro, we were able to embed a hyperlinked base map of Dalit massacres on the website. The screenshots of the project website and the map/spatial archive is given below (the page is still until construction). I have also received inputs from Prof. Munoz regarding the structuring and organisation of content in the project website.



Figure 2: Screenshot of the project website <https://mappingmassacres.iti.ac.in/>

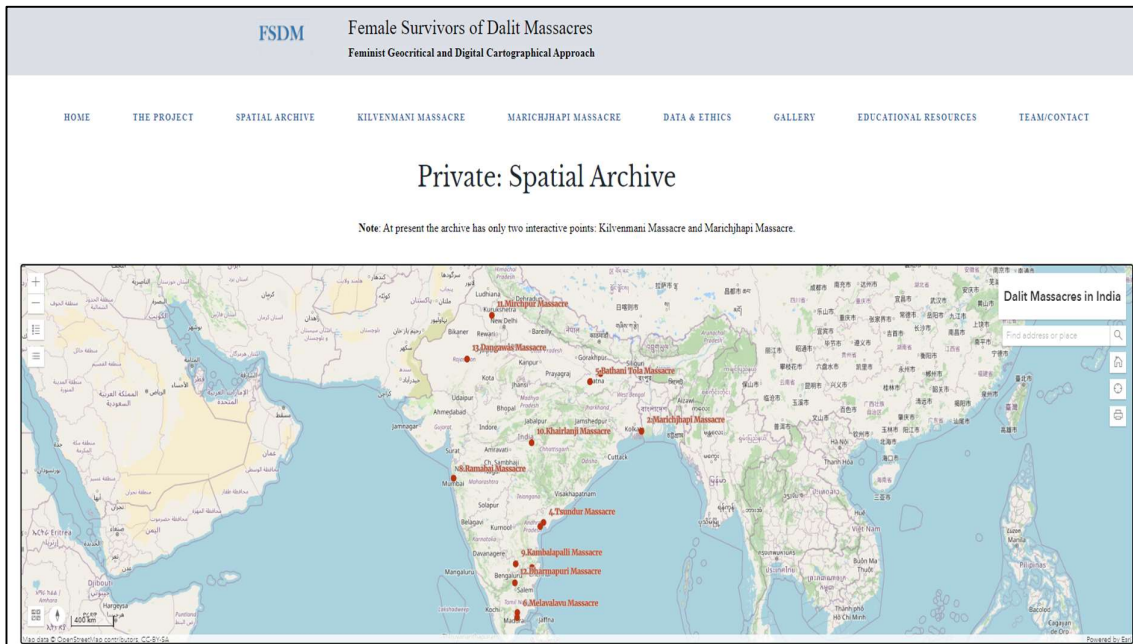


Figure 3: Screenshot of the spatial archive

The final interactive mapping visualization will contain information about the identified women in multimedia (images, sound, videos etc..) along with their narratives thereby serving as a (spatial) platform to organize and archive the same. The project is still in its early stages of development and is not fully developed. But the fellowship and the mentoring that I received at UNED-LINHD helped me to start materializing the project. I am particularly grateful to Prof. Munoz for the long research discussions we have had during which he pointed out the ways to improve my data and the research project in future even after completion of my thesis work.

Considerations over future work

This project is originally inspired from several projects on racial violence and displacement including the Colonial Frontier Massacre Project (Australia). Such projects need constant updating and maintenance to extrapolate the results obtained from one incident to the other. Therefore, in future I aim to expand the theory and methodology of research applied to the Kilvenmani massacre and the Marichjhapi massacre to other prominent Dalit massacres from India. I am particularly interested in generating reproducible and open-access DH projects, pedagogies and research that can serve as a prototype for further similar research.

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