

fuelled new conflicts. Additionally, fears remain as to the use of the law and policies to perpetuate conflict. One aspect of such conflicts is related to attempts at land appropriation by state and other actors using the terms 'archaeology', 'sacred site' and 'heritage', with post war years witnessing a surge in this trend amidst heightened ethno-nationalism and militarisation. The presentation examines the use of such terminology by the state to appropriate land and exacerbate existing and create new conflicts. Amidst this, fears exist among minorities of state driven policies of appropriating their lands and sacred sites in order to change demographics with implications for identity politics and reconciliation in Sri Lanka.

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## **DARK TOURISM: NEW ROAD MAP TO RESISTANCE, WITNESSING AND HEALING IN CONTEMPORARY SRI LANKA**

*Pachiyanathan Ahilan*

This research paper examines the complex interplay between Sri Lanka's tumultuous past, marked by civil war and the systemic erasure of traumatic histories, and the emerging concept of dark tourism. Dark tourism refers to visits to locations that have historically been connected to the areas of dark heritage such as sites of atrocity, death, disaster, and human depravity as a potential pathway for healing and justice. The physical landscape of Sri Lanka is permeated with remnants of violence, such as mass graves and abandoned sites, which serve as



poignant reminders of collective suffering. Utilizing the classical Tamil literary concept of *thinai* (a poetic device based on ecozones), the paper characterizes the war affected landscape as *Kaya perunthinai* (wounded earthscape) as where the state machinery's internal colonial tendencies have suppressed narratives of trauma and loss, particularly among minority groups. The discourse on justice remains largely unaddressed by the state and the NGO initiatives, creating a vacuum that dark tourism could fill. By preserving sites of sorrow and allowing for public engagement with these histories, dark tourism acts as a form of resistance, fostering collective memory and agency among marginalized communities. This approach not only aids in confronting physical and psychological traumas but also serves as a cathartic process for survivors, ultimately positioning the acknowledgment of dark pasts as essential for preventing future atrocities and promoting healing.

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## **DILEMMAS OF RE-PRESENTING HISTORIES: CHALLENGES TO DEVELOPING EXHIBITION MARKING 200 YEARS OF MALAIYAGA TAMILS IN SRI LANKA**

*Mirak Raheem*

In 2023 members of the Malaiyaga Tamil community marked 200 years since their first arrival in Sri Lanka. Different sections of the community, including NGOs, politicians and religious leaders, held a series of commemorative events across the country to remember the complicated and painful history of a community who were brought by the British colonial authorities as indentured labourers to work on plantations. The Collective for Historical Dialogue and Memory (CHDM), which I was a part of, collaborated with the Institute for Social Development (ISD), a