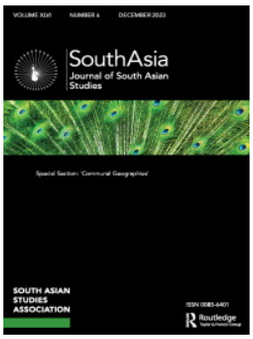

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Communal Geographies: An Introduction

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ABSTRACT

This paper introduces a special section comprising eight papers that delve into complex geographies of communal identities in modern South Asia. It situates these papers at a significant intersection of spatial histories and historical geographies of the region, with a focus on exploring the intricate relationship between community and religious identity on the one hand, and space and scale on the other. We take a broad view of communal geographies, reconsidering spatiality through community histories that encompass diverse contexts such as local *mohalla*s and national statistics, rural and urban settings, and secular and religious spaces. It illustrates how religious communities have mapped their identities onto everyday arenas like borders, gurdwaras, homes, markets, mosques, shops, streets and temples. Drawing from various disciplinary and theoretical perspectives and employing methodologies ranging from archival research to oral history and ethnography, this special section expands our understanding of how social practices and religious interactions leave their footprints on geography.

KEYWORDS

Borders; Christian; communalism; everyday life; geographies; Hindus; Muslims; partition; spatiality; temple; urban

Communal geographies are vividly and violently present in contemporary South Asia. In September 2023, India hosted the G20 Summit, during which the government referred to India as 'Bharat' in invites for a dinner party, and in the placard placed in front of the prime minister during the summit itself. While those in support saw the naming as a move to distance the country from the geographies and legacies of 'colonial slavery', others denounced it as another bid by the Hindu nationalist government to Hindu-ise the land and its citizens.[1] This was but a recent, and internationally noted, intervention into India's communal geographies. August 2022 saw the 75th anniversary of the independence of India and Pakistan from the British empire. 'India@75' was advertised by the government as an opportunity to 'celebrate and commemorate 75 years of progressive India and the glorious

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1. See, for example, Alexandros Beltes, 'Bharat: Why the Recent Push to Change India's Name Has a Hidden Agenda', *The Conversation*, September 8, 2023, accessed October 26, 2023, https://theconversation.com/bharat-why-the-recent-push-to-change-indias-name-has-a-hidden-agenda-213105.

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history of its people, culture and achievements'.[2] In this narrative, the commemoration presented an opportunity to reflect on anti-colonialism, the freedom movement, and India's successful claiming from Britain, in Prime Minister Narendra Modi's words, of the mantel 'mother of democracy'.[3] For others, the anniversary was a painful one, providing further opportunity to reflect upon the partition of India and Pakistan, the violence that took place immediately around partition, and its lasting communal geographies.

Places and spaces of worship, for instance, have come to be at the centre of religious claims that politically assert and mobilise community identities, whether through the Babri Masjid demolition in 1992 or the still raging controversies over the Gyanvyapi mosque in Varanasi.[4] Simultaneously, stated 'secular' decisions by the state reveal the entanglements of territory with one's religious identities, and the explicit marginalisation of Muslims through spatial policies. These include the 2018 National Register of Citizens (NRC) for Assam, which has displaced 1.9 million people, mostly Muslims, from their homes and rendered them stateless, following shortly after the expulsion of hundreds of thousands of Muslims from Myanmar's Rakhine state;[5] India's 2019 revocation of Article 370, along with 35-A, which sidelined Kashmiris' (largely Muslims) rights to land ownership and permanent residence, and allowed non-Kashmiris (primarily Hindus) to purchase land and settle in Kashmir;[6] and the 2019 Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), which proposes to open the doors for citizenship to undocumented immigrants from Pakistan and Bangladesh, provided they are not Muslims.[7]

Moreover, anxieties over perceived transgressions of spaces by women and men, and regulatory mechanisms to strengthen segregated spatialities between the supposedly corrupt public and the pristine private, between desirable intimacies and undesirable bodies, have proliferated. They can be seen in the communalisation of COVID-19, with the declaration of the Tablighi Jamaat congregation at Delhi's Nizamuddin Markaz mosque in March 2020 as a superspreader event, along with popular xenophobic metaphors of 'Corona Jihad' and 'Muslim Virus'.[8] They can also be seen in the criminalisation of interfaith marriages between Hindu women and Muslim men under the supposed 'love jihad'.[9] Together, these various acts of naming, segregation and exclusion express a geography that maps power and hierarchy through community identities and religious markers.

While the present moment is critical, many scholars locate the rise of communalism in South Asia particularly to the 1920s, when religious identities were hardened. Taking the last hundred years, from the 1920s to the 2020s, as its arena, this special section, comprising eight articles and this scoping and situating introduction, explores

2. Government of India, 'India@75', accessed July 18, 2022, https://indiaat75.nic.in/.
3. Government of India, 'Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav', accessed July 18, 2022, https://amritmahotsav.nic.in.
4. A. Noorani, *Destruction of the Babri Masjid: A National Dishonour* (Delhi: Tulika, 2017); S. Gopal, ed., *Anatomy of a Confrontation: The Babri Masjid–Ram Janmabhumi Issue* (New Delhi: Penguin Books, 1991).
5. Abhishek Saha, *No Land's People: The Untold Story of Assam's NRC Crisis* (Noida: Harper Collins India, 2021).
6. Dalbir Ahlawat and M. Raymond Izarali, 'India's Revocation of Article 370: Security Dilemmas and Options for Pakistan', *The Round Table* 109, no. 6 (2020): 663–68.
7. Abhinav Chandrachud, 'Secularism and the Citizenship Amendment Act', *Indian Law Review* 4, no. 2 (2020): 138–62.
8. Hannah Ellis-Petersen and Shaik Azizur Rahman, 'Coronavirus Conspiracy Theories Targeting Muslims Spread in India', *The Guardian*, April 13, 2020, accessed April 21, 2020, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/apr/13/coronavirus-conspiracy-theories-targeting-muslims-spread-in-india.
9. Charu Gupta, 'Hindu Women, Muslim Men: Love Jihad and Conversions', *Economic & Political Weekly* 44, no. 51 (2009): 13–15; Charu Gupta, 'Allegories of "Love Jihad" and *Ghar Vapasi*: Interlocking the Socio-Religious with the Political', *Archiv Orientalni: Journal of African and Asian Studies* 84, no. 2 (2016): 291–316.

the geographies of communal identities in modern South Asia. The venture marks the conjuncture between the spatial histories and historical geographies of South Asia.[10] In particular, our special section combines the geographical mapping of communities with attention to their historical contexts and shaping of community identities. Conjoining histories of communalism and geography, and coordinated by a geographer and a historian, the eight papers in this collection examine the interface between community and religious identity on the one hand, and space and scale on the other. Ways in which community identities have unfolded and been reimagined have determined their geography. In turn, the configurations and divisions of spatiality have not been fixed, stable or static, as their meanings have been constructed, changed and evolved dynamically. Communal geographies are thus as relational, intersectional and temporally specific as other spatial configurations, such as economy, society or population, but lack the disciplinary and analytical histories provided by economics, sociology or demographics.

Most of the scholarship, as well as the data, on riots, large-scale public violence, cow protection movements, the issue of music before mosques and disputes over religious sites in late colonial India shows an embedding of space, scale and site politics. Equally, perceived 'secular' geographies of borders and boundaries, shops and markets, and homes and streets increasingly witnessed communal mappings. However, the historiography and scholarship on communalism often addresses and conceptualises geography as an inherent but not an explicit component.

This special section deploys communal geography as a distinct conceptual category and a primary framework to re-evaluate and rewrite the changing configurations of spatiality that were mapped through communal histories. Drawing on the impressive body of work outlined below, it brings spatial analysis to the fore. Encompassing local *mohalla*s and national statistics, rural and urban arenas, 'secular' neighbourhoods and 'religious' sites, the papers show how borders, gurdwaras, homes, markets, mosques, shops, streets and temples became important in everyday life for the geographical mapping of religious communities, and how spaces, scales and sites came to embody communal identities. It expands existing literature in several ways. In terms of community, its papers on Christian internationalism (Krishnan) and Burmese ethnic violence (Saha) exceed the Hindu-Muslim focus of most communal literature. Its analyses of commerce and economy (Vanaik), demographics (Gould) and constitutional franchise (Parveen) create new and exciting disciplinary conversations. In terms of temporal emphases its papers, which transgress 1947 as historical rupture (Ahmad) and link the ancient to the present (Mukherjee), use their spatial foci to provoke new historical insights.

As such, this section is an inherently transdisciplinary collaboration, bringing together scholars of anthropology, English literature, geography and history, who

10. For examples of these sub-disciplinary moves in practice, see, for instance, Sanghamitra Misra, *Becoming a Borderland: The Politics of Space and Identity in Colonial Northeastern India* (London: Routledge, 2013); Matthew H. Edney, *Mapping an Empire: The Geographical Construction of British India, 1765–1843* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1997); Nilanjana Mukherjee, *Spatial Imaginings in the Age of Colonial Cartographic Reason: Maps, Landscapes, Travelogues in Britain and India* (London: Routledge, 2020). On these disciplinary moves in general, see Courtney J. Campbell, 'Space, Place and Scale: Human Geography and Spatial History in *Past and Present*', *Past and Present* 239, no. 1 (2018): e23–e45; C.W.J. Withers, M. Domosh and M. Heffernan, 'Introduction', in *The SAGE Handbook of Historical Geography*, ed. M. Domosh, M. Heffernan and C.W.J. Withers (London: Sage, 2020): xxvii–l.

collected for an online workshop in March 2022.[11] The case studies here include sites in present-day Pakistan, Myanmar and India, ranging from urban studies of historic Delhi, Bombay (now Mumbai) and Madras (now Chennai), regional studies of South and North India and the Bamar and Chin villages in Burma (now Myanmar), to explorations of the abstract, Euclidean spaces of census statistics. In the two sections below, we, first, provide overviews of communal historiography, drawing attention to its spatial tones and nuances. Second, we provide a more systematically spatial overview of communal geographical historiography, moving from the scale of the international to that of the body.

Spatial histories of communalism: Before, after and beyond partition

The daily social intercourse between Hindus and Muslims, and the relative malleability and fuzziness of religious and cultural boundaries between thirteenth and early nineteenth century India has been a subject of much interest and debate.[12] Simultaneously, there have been sophisticated histories of the phenomenon and growth of communalism in the colonial period. Largely negating the role of colonialism, C.A. Bayly insisted on a prehistory and continuity of communalism through the land wars, especially over religious buildings, in eighteenth century India.[13] However, Romila Thapar pointed out that there were no overarching religious communities in the pre-colonial days, where the sense of religious identity seemed to have been related more to a particular sect than to a dominant Hindu or Muslim community.[14] Reflecting an elitist and nationalist bias, Bipan Chandra saw communalism as 'false consciousness', a modern by-product of colonialism, in opposition to nationalism.[15]

At the same time, various scholars have pointed out that the British aided the processes of the politicisation of religion through discursive and classificatory policies and practices of urban morphology, municipal laws, orientalising perceptions, ethnographic accounts, missionary activities, shrinking employment opportunities, divide and rule, and the decennial census. The census, for example, was used not just for enumeration but also for comparison and communal composition.[16] Locating the rise of communalism in the 1920s, Gyanendra Pandey suggested that it was a colonial construct but one which then became a nationalist construct.[17] Joya Chatterjee focused on the growth of Hindu *bhadralok* communalism, and their active support of partition,[18] while the works of Francis Robinson and Patricia

11. This was funded and co-organised by the Independent Social Research Foundation as part of Stephen Legg's Mid-Career Fellowship (2021–22). With thanks to Lars Cornelissen for his help on the day.
12. Richard M. Eaton, *The Rise of Islam in the Bengal Frontier, 1204–1760* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993): 269–315; Asim Roy, *The Islamic Syncretic Tradition in Bengal* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983).
13. C.A. Bayly, 'The Pre-History of "Communalism"? Religious Conflict in India, 1700–1860', *Modern Asian Studies* 19, no. 2 (1985): 177–203.
14. Romila Thapar, 'Imagined Religious Communities? Ancient History and the Modern Search for a Hindu Identity', *Modern Asian Studies* 23, no. 2 (1989): 209–31; 209.
15. Bipan Chandra, *Communalism in Modern India* (New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 1987).
16. Arjun Appadurai, 'Number in the Colonial Imagination', in *Orientalism and the Post-Colonial Predicament*, ed. Peter van der Veer and Carol Breckenridge (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993): 314–39; N. Gerald Barrier, ed., *The Census in British India: New Perspectives* (Delhi: Manohar, 1981).
17. Gyanendra Pandey, *The Construction of Communalism in Colonial North India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1990).
18. Joya Chatterji, *Bengal Divided: Hindu Communalism and Partition 1932–47* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

Gossman detailed the rise of separatism and communalism amongst the Muslims in the United Provinces and East Bengal, respectively.[19] Many historians—for example, Sandria Freitag and Suranjan Das—saw cataclysmic collective riots and violence in urban public arenas, bazaars and *mohalla*s as the central index of communalism.[20]

Partition has its own historiography in a way that communalism does not. This is down to its history, in which partition emerged as an historical likelihood relatively closely to its actualisation. The temporal gap between partition being accepted and it becoming reality was historically and, for many commentators, heinously short.[21] This is also down to its geography, in which two countries were produced through dividing territory, most famously through partitioning the provinces of Bengal and the Punjab. Both these histories and geographies are misleading, of course. The processes that led to partition can be traced back decades, whether to shifting communal relations on the ground or through the emerging representational politics in the spaces of India's legislative chambers.[22] And the legacies of partition are felt in the ruptured spaces of the city and of migration.[23] Likewise, the geography of partition exceeded the new borders of the Punjab and Bengal, whether in frontier provinces like Assam, in regions far from the border in South Asia, such as Maharashtra, and in those far beyond it.[24] Partition thus marked significant transitions, which institutionalised a distinct mode of geography, landscape and demography, which continues to haunt current spatial and communal configurations in South Asia.

Despite the spatially and temporally distended genealogies of partition, generations of scholars have contributed towards successive waves of partition literature.[25] In the decade of partition's 25th anniversary, 1970s scholarship focused on elite political negotiations between Indian and British leaders, with an increasing recognition of the complexity and contradictions in the positions of these leading men (they were all men). In the 1980s, greater attention was paid to the rich provincial histories which anticipated and produced partition, while in the 1990s, studies attended to the experience of partition violence, the connections between local communities and national policies, and the ways in which partition was

19. Francis Robinson, *Separatism among Indian Muslims: The Politics of the United Provinces' Muslims, 1860–1923* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1993); Patricia A. Gossman, *Riots and Victims: Violence and the Construction of Communal Identity among Bengali Muslims 1905–1947* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1999).
20. Sandria B. Freitag, *Collective Action and Community: Public Arenas and the Emergence of Communalism in North India* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989); Suranjan Das, *Communal Riots in Bengal, 1905–1947* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1991).
21. On the hurried negotiations leading to partition along unclear and unsettled lines, see Lucy Chester, *Borders and Conflict in South Asia: The Radcliffe Boundary Commission and the Partition of Punjab* (Manchester: University of Manchester Press, 2009).
22. William Gould, *Religion and Conflict in Modern South Asia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); David Page, *Prelude to Partition: The Indian Muslims and the Imperial System of Control, 1920–1932* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1982).
23. Vazira Fazila-Yacoobali Zamindar, *The Long Partition and the Making of Modern South Asia* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007); Uditi Sen, *Citizen Refugee: Forging the Indian Nation after Partition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018).
24. Udayon Misra, *Burden of History: Assam and the Partition—Unresolved Issues* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2017); Oliver Godsmark, 'Searching for Synergies, Making Majorities: The Demands for Pakistan and Maharashtra', *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies* 42, no. 1 (2019): 115–33; Kalyani Ramnath, *Boats in a Storm: Law, Migration, and Decolonization in South and Southeast Asia, 1942–1962* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2023).
25. For a summary of these trends, see William Gould and Stephen Legg, 'Spaces before Partition: An Introduction', *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies* 42, no. 1 (2019): 69–79.

commemorated.[26] Gyanendra Pandey's *Remembering Partition*, though framed through the interpretative lenses of violence and memory, was one of the few to explicitly interpret partition through its geographies.[27] Here he explored the connections between the local and the national, and the tripartite partitioning of a country, of provinces and of bodies.

Regarding independent India, especially in literature from the 1980s, studies on communalism have explored but also tried to move beyond the question of partition legacies. Emphasising the primacy of high politics and elite mobilisations for vested interests, Paul Brass took an instrumentalist approach and explored communal violence through institutionalised pogroms.[28] Ashutosh Varshney argued that where locally embedded and mutually dependent 'inter-community civic engagement' is missing, communal identities lead much more to mobilisations and brutal violence.[29] However, the largest and most sophisticated scholarship has emerged on the consolidation of a muscular, militant Hindu nationalism and governance, and a rightward shift towards Hindu majoritarianism, which has penetrated deeply into the everyday territorial, political, social and religious life of India as never before.[30]

Extremely rich and insightful, there has been an overwhelming focus in this scholarship on North India and Bengal, on Hindu-Muslim relations and on riots.[31] From the standpoint of our special section, this vast scholarship has variously acknowledged implicitly or explicitly the importance of geography in this calibration of communalism. At the same time, as has been pointed out, it has sometimes taken space just as a given backdrop and location, an analytic frame rather than an analytic object.[32] Spatial binaries implement and institutionalise religious divides, while also at times underlining spheres that are fluid and messy. In their histories of communal geographies, the papers in this volume point to other regions and arenas, bringing in the Bamar and Chin villages in colonial Burma and Christians in South India into our narratives. While foregrounding spatial dynamics, they also describe everyday spaces and sites, besides cataclysmic events and mobilisations.

Dalit studies and gender histories in India have brought innovative perspectives to bear on communal geographies. There is a long history of the different ways in which the caste of a place was naturalised—boundaries of villages were identified with caste; areas of ponds, wells and rivers were marked by caste; landfill sites had caste—thus revealing a 'spatial delineation of issues of power, hierarchy and

26. Joya Chatterji, 'New Directions in Partition Studies', *History Workshop Journal* 67, no. 1 (2009): 213–20.
27. Gyanendra Pandey, *Remembering Partition: Violence, Nationalism and History in India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).
28. Paul R. Brass, *The Production of Hindu Muslim Violence in Contemporary India* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).
29. Ashutosh Varshney, *Ethnic Conflict and Civic Life: Hindus and Muslims in India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2002).
30. For the colonial period, see William R. Gould, *Hindu Nationalism and the Language of Politics in Late Colonial India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004). For contemporary times, some recent writings are: Tanika Sarkar, *Hindu Nationalism in India* (Ranikhet: Permanent Black, 2021); Thomas Blom Hansen and Srirupa Roy, ed., *Saffron Republic: Hindu Nationalism and State Power in India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022); Dibyesh Anand, *Hindu Nationalism in India and the Politics of Fear* (New York: Palgrave, 2011).
31. See Margrit Pernau, 'Riots, Masculinity, and the Desire for Passions: North India 1917–1946', *South Asian History and Culture* 12, nos. 2–3 (2021): 244–60.
32. Gould and Legg, 'Spaces before Partition'.

inequality'.[33] The colonial period too witnessed segregation of physical space along caste lines. In fact, colonial state-making and the efflorescence of colonial studies of caste stratification coincided with projects that etched social stratification and spatial inequity into the built environment.[34] Separated into 'pure' and 'polluted' sites, public spaces of temples, water bodies, schools and streets have become significant sites of Dalit struggles in the modern period, as they have attempted to conceptualise an egalitarian spatial and ecological thought through alternative metaphors.[35] Even though urban spaces have continued to be segregated along caste lines, many Dalits see the move from the village to the city as empowering.[36] It provides them more diverse employment opportunities and a degree of anonymity, which makes it difficult to enforce caste restrictions.[37] More significantly, Dalits have claimed their rights over rural and urban sites through the installation of statues of Ambedkar and other Dalit icons in various public spaces—schools and colleges, government lands, bus stands, street corners, crossroads, villages, roadsides, common areas—thus producing new symbolic conceptions of spatial equality and self-esteem, questioning the burdens of caste.[38]

Gender studies have also contributed significantly to a spatial rethinking of communalism, and here we flag three ways in which they have done so. First, academics have formulated the private/domestic/female and public/political/male distinctions that the reformers and nationalists drew in colonial India, whereby the Hindus claimed a superior, autonomous, stable and pure domestic-private space, located within the body of the ideal woman, thus drawing strict boundaries around gendered spatialities.[39] However, women in colonial and independent India have challenged these dichotomies through their ubiquitous presence in public spaces, providing sites for fluid configurations of religion and gender relationships in everyday life. In modern India, social reforms, women's education, growth of print, political participation, urbanisation, and diverse jobs also opened new spaces for women, however limited. For example, even while laws have been tightened to regulate their spaces, urban modernities provide locations for 'deviant' women. Red light areas have expanded

33. Dilip M. Menon, *The Blindness of Insight: Essays on Caste in Modern India* (Pondicherry: Navayana, 2006): 59; also see Susan Bayly, *Caste, Society and Politics in India from the Eighteenth Century to the Modern Age* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).
34. Juned Shaikh, 'Imaging Caste: Photography, the Housing Question and the Making of Sociology in Colonial Bombay, 1900–1939', *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies* 37, no. 3 (2014): 461–514; 492.
35. For further details, see Mukul Sharma, *Caste and Nature: Dalits and Indian Environmental Politics* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2017).
36. For Ambedkar's experience of space, mobility and the disruption of caste hierarchies, see Jesús F. Cháirez-Garza, 'Touching Space: Ambedkar on the Spatial Features of Untouchability', *Contemporary South Asia* 22, no. 1 (2014): 37–50; Jesús F. Cháirez-Garza, 'Moving Untouched: B.R. Ambedkar and the Racialization of Untouchability', *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 45 no. 2 (2022): 216–34.
37. Nandini Gooptu, *The Politics of the Urban Poor in Early Twentieth Century India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001): 146; Ashis Nandy, *An Ambiguous Journey to the City: The Village and Other Odd Ruins of the Self in the Indian Imagination* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001): 12.
38. See various essays in Gary Michael Tartakov, ed., *Dalit Art and Visual Imagery* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2012); Badri Narayan, *The Making of the Dalit Public in North India: Uttar Pradesh, 1950–Present* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2011); Maxine Loynd, 'Understanding the Bahujan Samaj Prerna Kendra: Space, Place and Political Mobilisation', *Asian Studies Review* 33, no. 4 (2009): 469–82.
39. Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1994): 117–21; Tanika Sarkar, *Hindu Wife, Hindu Nation: Community, Religion and Cultural Nationalism* (Delhi: Permanent Black, 2001).

and sex workers enjoy greater clientele even while they face increasing stigma and middle-class anxieties regarding not just their moral and social hygiene but also their community and the transgressions of nocturnal communal policing that they allow.[40]

Second, Sumathi Ramaswamy cogently delineates how the modern map and the nation-space was carved on the body of Bharat Mata, where her bodyscape took the shape of a sacred geographical genealogy, with a fixed and bounded physical space and a specific location.[41] Third, a substantial body of work has explored how bodies of women become signs and territories on which the rioting communities of men are inscribed. The horrific partition violence against women signifies the forcible conversion of geo-space and body-space.[42] This collection of papers draws from such insights, as it explores and expands their innovations through its spatial histories and historical geographies of the shaping and hardening of communal identities.

Religious communities: Scales and spaces of everyday life

Below we explore some of the ways in which geographers and others have explored to date the relationships between scale and space, and briefly introduce the papers that constitute this special section. The scalar foci are the international, the state, borders, cities and smaller spaces. Across these scales, during the growth of communalism in the early twentieth century, diverse categories and identities were homogenised and consolidated, as Hindus, Muslims and religious minorities came to be perceived and constructed as cohesive wholes. With this sharpening of sectarian identities and increasing violence, spatial dichotomies, hierarchies of spaces and control over areas, based on differentiation of Hindu and Muslim bodies, became a critical foundation of boundaries of urban *mohalla*s, bazaars and colonies.[43] What these tensions highlighted was and is the impossibility of separating out the geographies of space and scale. Partition was an obvious example of this, being realised through the splitting of states, provinces, communities and, most immediately traumatic, of bodies.[44] But more abstract imaginings of communities have always been envisaged and targeted through tangible, smaller spaces. This does not mean, however, that the scale of communal experience is always that of the local and the settled. More quickly than is often acknowledged, communalism internationalised and was campaigned for across the globe.[45]

40. Ashwini Tambe, *Codes of Misconduct: Regulating Prostitution in Late Colonial Bombay* (Delhi: Zubaan, 2009); Stephen Legg, *Prostitution and the Ends of Empire: Scale, Governmentalities and Interwar India* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014).
41. Sumathi Ramaswamy, *The Goddess and the Nation: Mapping Mother India* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010).
42. Ritu Menon and Kamla Bhasin, *Borders and Boundaries: Women in India's Partition* (Delhi: Kali for Women, 1998); Urvashi Butalia, *The Other Side of Silence: Voices from the Partition of India* (London: Hurst, 2000); Jill Didur, *Unsettling Partition: Literature, Gender, Memory* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006).
43. Nabaparna Ghosh, *A Hygienic City-Nation: Space, Community, and Everyday Life in Colonial Calcutta* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020); Stephen Legg, 'A Pre-Partitioned City? Anti-Colonial and Communal Mohallas in Interwar Delhi', *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies* 42, no. 1 (2019): 170–87; Jim Masselos, 'Power in the Bombay "Moholla", 1904–15: An Initial Exploration into the World of the Indian Urban Muslim', *South Asia* 6 (1976): 75–95; Kaustubh Mani Sengupta, 'Community and Neighbourhood in a Colonial City: Calcutta's Para', *South Asia Research* 38, no. 1 (2018): 40–56.
44. Pandey, *Remembering Partition*.
45. Bérénice Guyot-Réchard and Elisabeth Leake, ed., *South Asia Unbound: New International Histories of the Subcontinent* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2023).

While geographers in India have contributed to rich scholarship regarding religion, there has been less concerted study of communal spaces. A survey of Indian geographers' output from 2016–22 could list numerous works attending to sacred landscapes, religio-political spaces, eco-religious movements and holy heritage cities, but little attending to communal politics, violence, or communities.[46] The review does note, however, the international connections between religious sites of national significance—for instance, historical ties between Ayodhya and Korea. This hints at the much broader scholarship which has sought to consider religious communities and communal politics beyond a local, regional or national frame alone.

The Haj represents perhaps the longest standing international movement impacting communal perceptions and experiences in India. The pilgrimage of Muslims to Mecca has been studied as a growing logistical and political dilemma for the British empire.[47] But it was also a lens through which Indian Muslims were pathologised, as the epidemiological risks of international travel were considered and accentuated.[48] Forms of explicitly political Muslim internationalism would emerge following World War I, which raised the prospect of an anti-imperial pan-Islamic union that would only fade as modern Turkey emerged in the place of the Ottoman state and a Constantinople focused *khilāfah*.[49]

More broadly the connections between the processes of globalisation and communalisation have been explored in a wide-ranging collection edited by Deana Heath and Chandana Mathur focusing on diasporic politics in the past and near-present.[50] The concept of Aryanism, underpinning much Hindu caste-thinking, has also been examined for its historical connections to geographers' conceptions of colonial environments and its structuring of imperial racial networks more broadly.[51] Recent work has explored different sets of international communal networks, tracing the mobile lives and campaigns of Hindu internationalists using their travel writings, whether published or private.[52] Sneha Krishnan's contribution to this special section further expands the range of writings on religious communities in international frames. She deprovincialises communal politics, emphasising its influence not only within immediate political boundaries, but also in its interconnectedness with and impact on discourses at the global level. Krishnan employs the term 'communalism' as used by Protestant Christian women, which extended beyond mere conflict, and instead

46. Rana P.B. Singh and Ravi S. Singh, 'Cultural Geography', in *Progress in Indian Geography: A Country Report, 2016–2022*, ed. Suresh C. Rai (New Delhi: Indian National Science Academy, 2022): 84–123.
47. John Slight, *The British Empire and the Hajj* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015).
48. Saurabh Mishra, *Pilgrimage, Politics, and Pestilence: The Haj from the Indian Subcontinent, 1860–1920* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2010).
49. Gail Minault, *The Khilafat Movement: Religious Symbolism and Political Mobilization in India* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982).
50. Deana Heath and Chandana Mathur, ed., *Communalism and Globalization in South Asia and Its Diaspora* (London: Routledge, 2011).
51. Ishan Ashutosh, 'Mapping Race and Environment: Geography's Entanglements with Aryanism', *Journal of Historical Geography* 62 (2018): 15–23; Tony Ballantyne, *Orientalism and Race: Aryanism in the British Empire* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002).
52. Charu Gupta, 'Masculine Vernacular Histories of Travel in Colonial India: The Writings of Satyadev "Parivrajak"', *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies* 43, no. 5 (2020): 836–59; Stephen Legg, 'Hindu Nationalism in the International: B.S. Moonje's Travel Writing at the Round Table Conference', in *South Asia Unbound: New International Histories of the Subcontinent*, ed. Bérénice Guyot-Réchard and Elizabeth Leake (Leiden: Leiden University Press, 2023): 227–45.

delved into the complex issue of constructing a religious community identity within an emerging Indian nation shaped by colonial categorisation practices that defined minority status. Her paper thus explores dissenting Christian women in interwar Madras, who mobilised an international ethics against both imperial and nationalist dogmas. This was used to problematise their positioning as minorities, to explore new dynamics of social change, and to tease the gendered, religious and age-based assumptions undergirding the figure of the 'new Indian woman'.

The rise of the Hindu Right in India since the 1990s required a complex interthreading of spaces and scales. As Rupal Oza made clear in the landmark edited collection, *Violent Geographies*, '… the Hindutva project has, since its inception, been a spatial strategy crafted in ideological and political terms to create a Hindu *rashtra*'.[53] But elsewhere, Oza has also made clear the 'contrapuntal geographies' that united India and the USA after the attacks of September 11, 2001, against the supposedly fanatical Muslim male.[54] The Hindu Right had long cultivated an image of the threatening Muslim subject as violent, anti-national and dangerously reproductive.[55] This image rapidly became consonant with images which had been compatible but separately forged in the USA and Israel. The November 26, 2008, attacks in Mumbai led to further security ties with Israel as the Indian government sought to position itself as part of an international 'counter-terrorism' network and to use shared technologies to police religious minorities at home.[56]

While specific to the geopolitical configurations of the new century, these processes fit into a longer standing trend by which social and everyday life has become communalised. This has often involved it becoming more territorialised as, in spite of internal differentiations, various religious communities came to be formed into mutually antagonistic ethnic enclaves, with relatively autonomous economic and cultural spheres. The state, in both colonial and independent India, has played a critical role in this spatial concentration and segregation of religious communities. In this collection, Nazima Parveen provides another perspective on how space came to be read via abstract communal logic, through her study of how constituencies were re-envisaged in the interwar period, with voters limited by class and divided by community. Using cases across North India in the 1930s, she shows how the abstractions were tailored to local political scenes through successive constitutional acts and governmental reports. Expanding the meanings of communal geographies beyond distinct neighbourhoods or *mohallas*, she instead refers to official processes through which wider residential areas were redefined as political constituencies. Elections thus served as a critical means by which politically charged communal geographies were perpetuated and reproduced in the 1930s–1940s.

53. Rupal Oza, 'The Geography of Right Wing Violence in India', in *Violent Geographies: Fear, Terror and Political Violence*, ed. Derek Gregory and Allan Pred (London: Routledge, 2006): 153–73; 167.
54. Rupal Oza, 'Contrapuntal Geographies of Threat and Security: The United States, India, and Israel', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 25, no. 1 (2007): 9–32. On colonial readings of Islamic fanaticism through the geography of the frontier, see Elizabeth Kolsky, 'The Colonial Rule of Law and the Legal Regime of Exception: Frontier "Fanaticism" and State Violence in British India', *The American Historical Review* 120, no. 4 (2015): 1218–46.
55. Paola Bacchetta, 'Sacred Space in Conflict in India: The Babri Masjid Affair', *Growth and Change* 31, no. 2 (2000): 255–84; Anand, *Hindu Nationalism*; Charu Gupta, *Sexuality, Obscenity, Community: Women, Muslims, and the Hindu Public in Colonial India* (Delhi: Permanent Black, 2001): 239–76.
56. Rhys Machold, 'Learning from Israel? "26/11" and the Anti-Politics of Urban Security Governance', *Security Dialogue* 47, no. 4 (2016): 275–91.

At the juncture between the colonial and the postcolonial, William Gould's paper in this special section provides an innovative study at the intersection of the disciplines of history, geography and anthropology. Building on studies of the colonial governmentality of the census, Gould shows how the new statistical sciences deployed in the mid twentieth century allowed Indian anthropology to shape conceptions of race and ethnic community by privileging abstract notions of space over lived notions of place. In other words, geographical spaces were downplayed in favour of conceptual or abstract spaces that quantified ethnic separations. These statistics helped to make these places, but they also made the state, granting it authority and allowing it to perform the role of an omnicompetent bureaucracy.

This postcolonial state was dependent upon decades of debates and bitter contestation over what would be the constitutional outcome of Britain's eventual departure from India. Much attention has rightly been dedicated to the (relatively late) acronymisation of Pakistan as the name for a new Muslim homeland in South Asia.[57] But Hindu politics had also shaped the formation of Pakistan, including but not confined to the growing influence of Savarkar's Hindutva logic in the interwar years.[58] For instance, the 'minorities question' came to dominate the three sessions of the Round Table Conference which took place in London between 1930 and 1932.[59] While the surprise agreement of the 'princes' to join an all-India federation led to hopes for a new subcontinent-wide accord, the demand for communal safeguards (by Muslims but also Sikhs, Christians and the 'depressed' classes, led by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar) repeatedly brought the conference to the point of collapse. Ajay Verghese has argued that the colonial splintering of India into British versus Princely Indian political geographies had consequences for the emergence of communal violence. This was true both before and after independence, when the Princely States were absorbed into an all-India federation.[60]

Within the state, communal geographies are structured by region-province and rural-urban divides. Salah Punathil, for example, not only goes beyond the usual Hindu-Muslim question, and instead focuses on Muslim-Christian conflicts, but he also chooses Kerala as his region of study, foregrounding spatial conflicts in non-urban areas that manifest in everyday religious tensions, rather than large-scale crowd violence. He thus remarks:

> Most of the causal studies on communal violence focus only on the temporal context of violence that establish how people are mobilised communally, therefore ignoring the complexities and specificities of reification process and spatiality of violence.[61]

Verghese has also studied tribal violence as connected but separate to communal violence. These connections are region-specific, as studies of Northeast India have shown. Neeladri Bhattacharya and Joy Pachuau argued, when introducing their edited collection, that studies of the Northeast disrupt the confidence of hegemonic

57. Faisal Devji, *Muslim Zion: Pakistan as a Political Idea* (London: Hurst Publishers, 2013).
58. Neeti Nair, *Changing Homelands: Hindu Politics and the Partition of India* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011).
59. Stephen Legg, *Round Table Conference Geographies: Constituting Colonial India in Interwar London* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023).
60. Ajay Verghese, *The Colonial Origins of Ethnic Violence in India* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2016).
61. Salah Punathil, *Interrogating Communalism: Violence, Citizenship and Minorities in South India* (Oxford: Routledge, 2019): 139.

nationalist narratives, uncovering the heterogeneity of the margins (and of space).[62] Violence in the Northeast throughout this collection is framed by the region's geography, both physical (its mountains and plains, its hills and valleys) and political (its frontiers and borders). Jonathan Saha's contribution to this collection expands the geographical remit of our collaboration to include colonial rural Burma and a moment of peasant insurgency. Saha studies the Hsaya San Rebellion (1930–32) as a communal event of anti-Indian violence, interpreted here through the lens of racial and ethnic, rather than national, difference. He discerns a dialectical tension between the role of physical space and ethnic space in the revolt, which played a critical role in shaping more sharply defined communal geographies. Until independence, within the empire in 1935, Burma figured as a border geography for colonial India.[63] It was both an internal border province, having a radically different ethnic and religious make-up to the rest of India, and a buffer province between South and Southeast Asia. Border-making and border policing had always been vividly political in colonial India, but also in the sense of geopolitical relations between the Government of India and neighbours such as China, Afghanistan and Ceylon (now Sri Lanka). The preparations for partition in the mid 1940s ushered in a new era of communal border-making and policing.[64]

South Asian borders have continued to be sites of extreme violence, especially those such as Kashmir which continue to be contested and unsettled. As with the policing of Mumbai and the othering of Indian Muslims, Reece Jones has shown how India reconfigured its border geographies, especially with Bangladesh, in the wake of September 11, yet another space of contrapuntal geographies with the USA and Israel.[65] Nilanjana Mukherjee's paper in our special collection shows how the border itself can become a space of newly sacred geographies and communal mythologising. Her study of the Indian Tanot Mata Mandir in the Thar Desert, near the border with Pakistan, highlights how local and much longer standing traditions have been homogenised into a national, communal ideological organisation of this border site. The temple and its deity have thus been integrated into a broader spatial arrangement influenced by dominant Hindu communal behaviour.

Borders can, however, also be spaces for unanticipated and anti-communal politics. On the northwest frontier of India, Abdul Ghaffar Khan emerged in the 1920s as a non-violent freedom fighter and advocate of Hindu-Muslim unity.[66] The political geographer Sara Smith has explored the *Intimate Geopolitics* of Ladakh, the culturally Tibetan region in India's Jammu and Kashmir state. Here Buddhist activists campaign against Muslim population growth, but lovers and relationships endure.[67]

62. Neeladri Bhattacharya and Joy L.K. Pachuau, 'Introduction', in *Landscape, Culture and Belonging: Writing the History of Northeast India,* ed. Neeladri Bhattacharya and Joy L.K. Pachuau (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019): 1–22; 1.
63. Bérénice Guyot-Réchard, 'Tangled Lands: Burma and India's Unfinished Separation, 1937–1948', *The Journal of Asian Studies* 80, no. 2 (2021): 293–315.
64. Hannah Fitzpatrick, 'Imagining and Mapping the End of an Empire: Oskar Spate and the Partition of India and Pakistan', *Journal of Historical Geography* 66 (2019): 55–68.
65. Reece Jones, *Border Walls: Security and the War on Terror in the United States, India and Israel* (London: Zed Books, 2012).
66. Rajmohan Gandhi, *Ghaffar Khan, Nonviolent Badshah of the Pakhtuns* (New Delhi: Penguin Books India, 2008).
67. Sara Smith, *Intimate Geopolitics: Love, Territory, and the Future on India's Northern Threshold* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2020).

The politics of geography and the differential demarcation of spaces reflects power asymmetries that structure patterns of domination and subordination wherever humans gather and settle. These processes are emphasised and heightened in urban areas. Historically, Muslims were important in certain towns and cities, and controlled significant portions of the urban economy.[68] With the unfolding of colonialism, nationalism, communalism and partition in India, Muslims, more than Hindus, saw a decline in their status, contraction in urban geographical spaces, decline in literacy rates and fall in living standards.[69] The base of the Hindu mercantile and middle classes, even amidst colonial adversity, expanded, and they came to dominate many of the professions. The paper by Anish Vanaik in this section explores whether we can retrospectively determine the extent of communal dissociation by exploring trader locations in Delhi's bazars. Exploring the economic geographies of communal interaction, he quantitatively analyses whether Hindu and Muslim businesses in the city had started to self-segregate before partition. While one hopeful narrative of communalised communities sees them returning to trading lives together after times of political violence, Vanaik suggests that in interwar Delhi, commerce may well have been pre-partitioning. Everyday business practices fuelled an intensification in communal conflicts instead of fostering a presumed daily camaraderie.

Vanaik thus provides a market-focused analysis of patterns of urban communalisation that have been more widely studied in Indian cities. They have been exposed as sites where masculinity, femininity, hygiene and community were co-produced.[70] They have been studied as sites where communities claimed territory through processions, the use of music and festivals.[71] In his contribution to this collection, Prashant Kidambi explores the history of sectarian violence in Bombay, showing how specific discord in the city came to be up-scaled and interpreted through the homogenising logic of the communal in interwar India. In the process, Kidambi questions previous writings that have primarily focused on communalism in Bombay through the prism of labour history, thus neglecting a systematic exploration of the broader urban environment and the spatial dynamics of such conflicts. Kidambi particularly underscores the importance of everyday urban spaces and locations in shaping the backdrop and nature of communal discord. Consequently, he analyses two distinct ways in which Hindu-Muslim tensions were spatially manifested during the interwar period. First, he discusses the transformation of ostensibly secular economic spaces like mill districts and market areas into arenas of communal conflict. Second, he examines the frequent clashes between Hindus and Muslims related to sacred sites and ceremonial processions, arguing that these seemingly religious disputes were often ignited by evolving intercommunal norms or were outcomes of contentious municipal policies.

68. Imtiaz Ahmad, ed., *Caste and Social Stratification among the Muslims in India* (New Delhi: Manohar, 1973).
69. Mushirul Hasan, *Legacy of Divided Nation: Indian Muslims since Independence* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997).
70. Gupta, *Sexuality, Obscenity, Community*; Awadhendra Sharan, *In the City, Out of Place: Nuisance, Pollution, and Dwelling in Delhi, c. 1850–2000* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2014).
71. Stephen Legg, *Spaces of Colonialism: Delhi's Urban Governmentalities* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007); Shabnum Tejani, 'Music, Mosques and Custom: Local Conflict and "Communalism" in a Maharashtrian Weaving Town, 1893–1894', *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies* 30, no. 2 (2007): 223–40; Ritajyoti Bandyopadhyay, *Streets in Motion: The Making of Infrastructure, Property, and Political Culture in Twentieth-Century Calcutta* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022).

Delhi is the focus of Saeed Ahmad's paper, which spans the 1947 divide with a focus on the shifting communal politics of the Jangpura-Bhogal locality. Significantly, in alignment with this section's emphasis on community, space, site and scale, Ahmad investigates the physical and discursive creation of neighbourhood space as intertwined with communalism and linguistic subnationalism. Rooted in power dynamics and social cohesions across various societal dimensions, diverse spatial claims were expressed through political and religious processions, petitions and physical conflicts. These communal geographies underscore the significance of local histories and community involvement. The tangible and abstract spaces resulting from Delhi's communal geographies were shaped and influenced by the neighbourhood's evolving community identities, property ownership, power structures, population and socio-economic resources. Ahmad contrasts Hindu disavowing of Muslim religious practices in the 1920s with the establishment of Sikh religious geographies in the area in the aftermath of partition migration.

In the present context of global terrorism and Islamophobia, where the Muslim has often been stereotyped as the ultimate 'Other', along with the meteoric rise of the Hindu Right in India, the spatial dislocation and ghettoisation of Muslims has increased in the last few decades.[72] Covering various cities, including Ahmedabad, Bengaluru, Bhopal, Kozhikode, Cuttack, Delhi, Hyderabad, Jaipur, Lucknow and Mumbai, different chapters in a collection by Laurent Gayer and Christophe Jaffrelot show how the intensification in communal violence has radically redefined the geography and spatial location of Muslims, combined with their growing economic, political and socio-cultural alienation.[73] There has been communalisation of architecture and housing, and Muslims have been denied entry in many residential societies and localities. In many villages as well, following riots or even a romance between a Muslim man and a Hindu woman, Muslims have been verbally abused, physically attacked and ostracised, and signs have been put up to deny them entry. At various moments, instructions have been issued not to buy any vegetables, fruits or groceries from Muslim vendors, not to go to Muslim tailors and barbers, and to stop visiting *pir*s and *mazaar*s.[74]

Studying the marginal community of Muslim Qureshi butchers, Zarin Ahmad lucidly discusses their everyday life, urban transformations and the changing meat market.[75] And Nazima Parveen, who is one of the authors in this collection, concentrates on the Muslims of the city to analyse how the relationship between community and space came to be defined through religious demographics, whereby 'Muslim-dominated' areas came to be demarcated and perceived as contested zones.[76] There

72. Mahmood Mamdani, *Good Muslim, Bad Muslim: America, the Cold War, and the Roots of Terror* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2004); Talal Asad, *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003).
73. Laurent Gayer and Christophe Jaffrelot, *Muslims in Indian Cities: Trajectories of Marginalisation* (New Delhi: Harper Collins, 2012); also see Javed Alam, 'The Contemporary Muslim Situation in India: A Long Term View', *Economic & Political Weekly* 42, no. 12 (2008): 45–53; Rowena Robinson, *Tremors of Violence: Muslims Survivors of Ethnic Strife in Western India* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2005).
74. Gupta, 'Allegories of "Love Jihad"'.
75. Zarin Ahmad, *Delhi's Meatscapes: Muslim Butchers in a Transforming Mega-City* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2018).
76. Nazima Parveen, *Contested Homelands: Politics of Space and Identity* (Delhi: Bloomsbury, 2021); also see Rotem Geva Halperin, *Delhi Reborn: Partition and Nation Building in India's Capital* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2022).

has been an increasing carving of a majoritarian communal landscape in large parts of urban and rural areas of India. The discursive framing of Hindu and Muslim spatiality has turned the Indian nation into a geographical entity that reinforces Hindu dominance. As stated by Tanika Sarkar, geography and faith have conjoined to lay the basis for Hindutva's concept of citizenship.[77]

Most studies on changing configurations of community relations have laid emphasis on riots, large-scale mobilisation and state complicity. While extremely significant, the everyday nature of communal consciousness and its manifestation in daily interactions has been equally critical in the segregation of spaces and sites. A recent study on Uttar Pradesh presents a model of 'institutionalised everyday communalism', arguing that rather than instigating large-scale and violent riots, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) have attempted to create and sustain constant, low-key and carefully calibrated communal tension, with frequent, small, low-intensity incidents and petty everyday issues that institutionalise communalism at the grass roots, and 'normalise' anti-Muslim prejudice.[78] At the same time, social interactions, economic practices and rhythms of daily life, while inscribing the pervasive imprint of geography upon religious identities, can reflect both a sharper delineation of segregated sites *and* a fluidity of spaces; unequal geographies *and* friendly exchanges.

This focus brings us to studies of the smaller spaces where communal relations are created, tested and experienced. These spaces can be singular, but they can also repeat wider multiplicities in the local. Sana Hanoon, for instance, has shown how the mosques of South Asia have a shared legal and regulatory history.[79] Deepasri Baul, in contrast, has shown how Hindu nationalists in 1930s Delhi tried and failed to establish themselves in the heart of the city's sacred geography through claiming the site of an alleged Shiv Mandir in the heart of the city.[80] The production of Hindu spaces and attacks on Muslim spaces has been a feature of post-1947 India. Such destructions can cluster and come quickly, such as those in the aftermath of the destruction of the Babri Masjid in 1992.[81] But they can also be incremental and infrastructural, as Sarover Zaidi has suggested in the face of India's reworked and increasingly communal capital.[82]

Everyday life is a multi-accentual concept, which 'consists of transformed and transforming meanings of materiality'—a 'social space' that 'enables and constrains the actions and interactions of daily life'.[83] Spaces are also assigned meanings,

77. Sarkar, *Hindu Nationalism*.
78. Sudha Pai and Sajjan Kumar, *Everyday Communalism: Riots in Contemporary Uttar Pradesh* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2018): ix–x, 3.
79. Sana Haroon, *The Mosques of Colonial South Asia: A Social and Legal History of Muslim Worship* (London: I.B. Taurus, 2021).
80. Deepasri Baul, 'The Improbability of a Temple: Hindu Mobilization and Urban Space in the Delhi Shiv Mandir Agitation of 1938', *Studies in History* 36, no. 2 (2020): 230–50.
81. Stuart Corbridge and Edward Simpson, 'Militant Cartographies and Traumatic Spaces: Ayodhya, Bhuj and the Contested Geographies of *Hindutva*', in *Colonial and Postcolonial Geographies of India*, ed. Stuart Corbridge, Satish Kumar and Saraswati Raju (London: Sage, 2006): 70–84.
82. Sarover Zaidi, 'Words and Sights: What Do Delhi's Present Landscapes Hold for Its Future?', Scroll.in, May 29, 2022, accessed October 16, 2023, https://scroll.in/article/1024868/words-and-sights-what-do-delhis-present-landscapes-hold-for-its-future.
83. John Storey, *From Popular Culture to Everyday Life* (London: Routledge, 2014): 135–36.

depending on the location of who is assigning the meaning, with different communities formatting them in diverse ways. The papers here provide an eclectic mix of sacred and 'secular' geographies, with some viewing cataclysmic moments and events like partition, sectarian violence and state complicity, and others discussing the anecdotal and quotidian ordinariness of where a meat shop is located, disputes over where a mosque, a temple or a gurdwara can be built and who has control over that land, whom from and where to buy one's daily needs.

Encompassing different disciplinary and theoretical perspectives, and methodologies that range from archival to oral, historical to multi-sited ethnographic research, and library to fieldwork, the papers here expand our archival arenas to highlight how social practices and religious relations leave their footprints on geography. The diverse sources indicate greater access to social life, diversity of representation, and recordings of the extraordinary and the everyday. Adopting a spatial lens, the papers here nuance our readings of communalism in various ways as they cover diverse geographical arenas, regions and communities; focus on people and state involvement; encompass explicit violence and daily contestations; and discuss intersections of caste, class and gender with religious identities and heterogeneities.

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