

Ms Samrita Sinha
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Off Mahakali Caves Road
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Mumbai
Maharashtra 400093
India

24 November 2022

Dear Samrita Sinha

Research Grant confirmation of offer – Charles Wallace India Trust (CWIT).

I am pleased to tell you that the CWIT trustees would like to offer you a grant of £1,500 towards the cost of the short UK research visit that you have planned. This grant is to enable you to conduct research into ***Entangled Memories: A Humanistic Reappraisal of WWII in Post Colonial North East India***, as outlined in your application.

Please note that CWIT will not be able to offer you any additional funding to that set out in this letter. It is your responsibility to plan in advance and ensure that you have sufficient funds to cover your international travel and all of your living costs as well as any other necessary expenses for the entirety of your stay in the UK. This could include items such as PCR Covid testing or the purchase of books/journals etc.

Please also note that by accepting this offer, you agree that CWIT does not owe you a duty of care of any kind, and in particular, though not limited to, in cases of emergency, accident, injury or illness, should any occur to you during your stay in the UK. To that extent, we would advise that, prior to your arrival in the UK, **you ensure that you have the necessary means to undertake your studies/research in the UK for the entirety of its duration and have taken out all necessary insurance policies, including health insurance and travel insurance.**

Grant conditions: you must **write a brief report** (maximum 3 or 4 pages of A4 paper), for the CWIT trustees within two months of completing your course and returning to India. You may be disqualified from applying to CWIT in the future if we do not receive this report.

Please read the terms and conditions carefully and if you wish to accept our offer, **please sign and scan a copy of this letter and email it to me ASAP. Please make early contact with Sakshi Sharma at the British Council** (she is cc'd here). British Council colleagues will be able to support your visa application. They will also arrange for you to **collect the grant on arrival in the UK**, on behalf of CWIT.

Yours sincerely,



Ms. Shreela Ghosh
Secretary

Charles Wallace India Trust

<https://www.charleswallaceindiatrust.com/>

Name of the candidate: Samrita Sinha

Institutional Affiliation – Assistant Professor of English at Sophia College (Autonomous), Mumbai

Type of grant – CWIT Short Research Grant

Academic year – 2022-23

Discipline: Arts/Humanities

Duration of stay – May-June 2023 (two weeks)

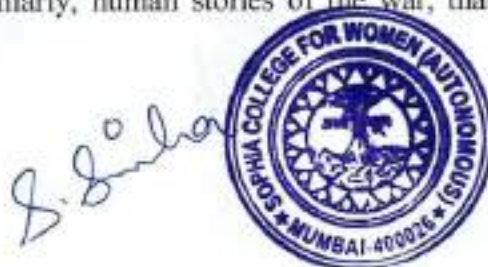
Libraries Visited – The British Library and The Burma Campaign Memorial Library (SOAS)

Title of the Project: "Entangled Memories: A Humanistic Reappraisal of WWII in Post- Colonial North East India"

Report -

The objective of my research was to undertake a humanistic reappraisal of the Second World War fought between the British Allied forces and the Japanese in the Northeastern borderlands of India. This project sought to achieve this objective through locating the undocumented narratives and memories of interpersonal human connections that might have existed between the British officials, soldiers and the native Northeast Indians as a result of their intersecting lives, during the Second World War in Post-colonial Northeast India. This research question gained animus from the proliferation of dominant and hierarchical "official" memories of the war in the recent years in the states of Nagaland and Manipur which have a thriving war tourism industry. These "Official" memories of the multiple battles, such as the Burma Campaign (1944) and the twin battles of Imphal and Kohima, (1942-44) during the Second World War, in Post-colonial Northeast India have been produced and constituted through such memory sites as the multiple war museums and memorials constructed by the colonial stakeholders as the British and the Japanese officials.

As opposed to such public and state sanctioned official remembrances of the war which was an important geopolitical event in these Northeast Indian borderlands of South Asia, the objective of my project was to locate micro-narratives of the war in such cultural documents as the books, literary pieces and memoirs as well as undocumented pieces written by the erstwhile British officials and soldiers who had been part of this war. One major gap in the discourse of the war is that in such official narrativization of the war, the indigenous cultural memories have not been accounted for. Similarly, human stories of the war, that is, stories of kinship and community



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between the soldiers of the colonial Empire and the natives of these borderlands, beyond the locus of conflict and violence do not have a place in the official rhetoric about the war.

An impetus to address a glaring absence of any such humanistic accounts of local entanglements from the perspective of the British soldiers is what motivated my research project. In order to pursue my research, I visited the Burma Campaign Memorial Library at SOAS for about two weeks and read several unpublished manuscripts and rare war books written by the unsung soldiers of the battalions of the Second World War whose predominant objective was to "bring home, as only imaginative writing can, the human anguish, the individual fate that lies behind the historian's necessarily objective and largely generalized narrative of events as they affected nations and peoples rather than particular persons" as said by Dan Davin in his anthology of war short stories called *Night Attack*. This collection offered many interesting perspectives from a humanistic point of view, a soldier's first-hand subjective account of the anguish of war as opposed to a historian's objective voice of truth. An interesting observation in Dan Davin's book is a preoccupation with the eschatological, a humble acknowledgement of the fragility of human existence that the experience of soldiering had brought about. This collection interestingly also had two short stories by women writers, Elizabeth Bowen's "Mysterious Kôr" and Jocelyn Brooke's "The Blanket". In this anthology, I came across what I was looking for, that is stories about the British soldier's Indian experience. Two of the stories were set in India – Alun Lewis's "Ward 'O' 3(b)" and "Bombay Times". Ward O is a special ward dedicated to wounded white soldiers, recuperating. This story though set in India does not recount any interpersonal relations between the white soldiers and the indigenous subjects. It predominantly focusses on a first-hand account of broken white soldiers who are nostalgic, dislocated and internally displaced by the war. "Bombay Times" reports about how the Indian consciousness was completely consumed by the war while also documenting the internal displacement of the British soldiers.

A very interesting finding of this research was coming across the comprehensive selection of newspaper cuttings of the limited British press coverage of this "Forgotten Battle" housed at Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives at King's College, London. These further threw light on how the dominant narratives of world history was constructed by British media and how certain aspects of the WWII were completely relegated to the annals of strategic forgetfulness. These findings were quite useful in my research on how official sites of memory of the WWII in Post-


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Colonial Northeast India were further validated by dominant British discourses that of public memory and history and the role of media in the construction of the narratives of the "Forgotten Battle".

A Piece of War by Arthur Moss was another rare war document that I read. This too is a personal memoir that talks about the war in Burma from an alternate perspective. This book was a significant read as it advances the historical erasure of the memory of the "Fourteenth Army" and the "forgotten army", an army which was assembled from many races drawn from around the empire and beyond. Arthur Moss says – "What we will read is not a heroic drama of battles, or a historical overview of the conflict. It is a personal series of vivid recollections, seen through the pragmatic and bemused eyes of a sergeant dispenser in a field ambulance."

Conclusion – The documents and rare books yielded significant perspectives through which my research questions were answered. These published and unpublished documents foregrounded deeply personal accounts of the minutiae of everyday life on the battlefield beyond the spaces of violence and conflict. Although there are not any accounts of entangled memories, yet an alternate optics of the war is offered in these documents that are records of everyday lives of ordinary individuals who found themselves confronted with extraordinary situations. These deeply personal memoirs that are literary in nature are important postcolonial narratives that of an alternate humanistic documentation of the WWII in Post-Colonial Northeast India.

S. Sinha

