

Abstract

My project explores the practices of ownership and belonging in the context of heritage making through the lived experiences and archaeology of partition in the post-partition city of Rawalpindi, Pakistan. Rawalpindi's architectural heritage which comprises of Hindu, Sikh, Jain, Muslim, and Christian architecture from 18th to 20th century bears testimony to its diverse religious and cultural past. These buildings that belonged to the people from different religious backgrounds became evacuee properties after partition of India and Pakistan in 1947. The non-Muslim owners migrated to India and consequently Muslim immigrants coming to Pakistan started to occupy these buildings. My research focuses on the complexity of ownership and belonging of this pre-partition pluralistic architectural heritage of Rawalpindi in post-partition Pakistani state. Rawalpindi's historic architecture didn't get any recognition until 2014 when UNESCO selected Rawalpindi to be one of the pilot cities for Historic Urban Landscape (HUL) project. While Rawalpindi's historic urban landscape qualifies to be a living heritagescape, it is also an active site of contestation when it comes to bringing its past and present together. Therefore, any recognition of heritage requires one to reckon with the question of whose heritage and for whom? I propose that this invocation of identity and ownership is a palimpsest of memory, nostalgia, everyday use vis-a-vis adaptive alterations/changes, and variety of laws and institutions that regulate these buildings. In December 2023, Lahore walled city authority has expanded its scope to the rest of Punjab by changing its name to Punjab Walled Cities and Heritage Areas Authority. Rawalpindi is among the first few cities in Punjab where preservation and restoration of walled cities is planned in addition to Multan and Bhera. My research will provide an in-depth analysis of selective inclusion and exclusion of conflicted heritage through which post-colonial identities are negotiated and mobilized in the process of negotiation and assertion of ownership as well as to establish claims of belonging.