

Minorities, Urbanism, and Belonging in Lahore

1. Research Highlights

Prior to arriving in Pakistan, the project evolved from the original subject, focused on the settlement of Afghan refugees in Lahore to include a diversity of minorities and their spatial practices, focusing on Pakistani Christians as well as Afghan refugees and, to a lesser extent, Pakistani Hindus. The primary research focus was three-fold: 1) delve into the history of settlements and the making of “minority” populations in the colonial and postcolonial periods; 2) trace more concretely settlement patterns across the city of different minority communities; and, 3) observe the diversity of spatial arrangements and socio-ethical practices of minorities building and living in community. The field research undertaken was highly productive and will contribute to a book project as well as other scholarly works. I primarily focused on Christian minorities during this research trip and will return next winter to complete the research, including the sense of belonging of other minority communities.

To undertake the research as originally planned, I developed a three-fold research agenda: interview key members of minority communities (academics, NGO/civil society activists, and religious leaders); undertake historical archival research; interview and observe diverse members of minority communities and their neighborhoods and living arrangements.

The work contributes significantly to my research, opening new avenues of understanding the place and sense of belonging of minorities. The research undertaken provides a foundation for me to return to Lahore next year to complete the research, drawing on the contacts and information I gathered during this AIPS-supported trip. The research focused first on uncovering the historical

processes of the making of minorities, including extensive reading of early Christian missionary reports and investigating the shifting legal status of Afghan refugees from the late 1970s on. I delved into the intimate interconnection between missionary work and the colonial state, particularly the role of land in the “canal colonies”. Further, I explored the continuity of the stigma of dalit caste status in Muslim Pakistan that informs both Hindu and Christian social status today. Finally, the work led me to a new network of civil society activists and allowed me opportunities to connect with members of various minority communities, residing in different neighborhoods. I was thus able to spend significant time in various neighborhood, such as Youhanabad, Iqbal Town, and elsewhere where significant minority communities are found.

Significantly, for Pakistan studies, the research is raising three important issues. The first is documenting the historical interlink between colonial economic expansion (canal colonies) and conversion to western Christianity, analyzing how the colonial state was directly involved in spreading, or attempting to spread, Christianity. Second, the research traces how fluid and flexible the Pakistani state has been towards minorities, such as allowing for huge numbers of Afghan refugees and supporting Christian institutions. This story counters dominant representations produced and circulated in western academia and media. Finally, the research contributes by showing how minority communities live in relationship to neighbors, highlighting cultural ethics of community and neighborliness. One can add to this, that the research points to the many incidences of anti-minority violence is primarily rooted in personal/individual conflicts.

2. Key Outcomes & Deliverables

Outcomes

1) Discovered a new library associated with the Jesuit center with many sources on both Christianity and Islam in Pakistan;

- 2) Created a close working relationship with several Pakistani NGOs and legal activists'
- 3) Established personal relationships with a number of minorities based on my participation in NGO workshops, visiting their homes in several of the major neighborhoods populated by diverse minorities.

Deliverables

- 1) Organized and conducted a workshop on dialogical research for PhD students in the Center for Public Policy and Governance;
- 2) Participated in a roundtable discussion at IBA, Karachi, on the craft of history and the legacy of Sir Syed for Pakistan Studies to a first-year class of over 100 students and several faculty members;
- 3) Gave opening remarks to a workshop conducted by the Center for Justice and Equality to Christian sanitation workers;
- 3) Working on a conference paper that will be presented in fall 2022 on minorities and belonging;
- 4) The research, once completed, will contribute to a book project comparing the experience and sense of belonging of particular minority communities across South Asia.