

BOUNDING NATIONS, MAKING CITIZENS': EVACUEE PROPERTY AND CITIZENSHIP IN POSTCOLONIAL SOUTH ASIA (1947-65)

My project examines the breaks in legal and political regimes that undergirded British India's 'long partition' in both India and Pakistan. I examine how understanding partition as a long drawn-out process rather than a discrete event allows us to see how people affected by partition resisted, remoulded, and challenged state-centred narratives around partition, as well as how partition contributed to postcolonial state building in both dominions.

Evacuee property—the property left behind by departing populations—is central to my project. In it I examine two contradictory and interlinked questions arising in the wake of large-scale migrations: the protection of the property of those who left either dominion (termed 'evacuees'), and the rehabilitation of those who entered ("refugees"). Ostensibly held in trust by both nations, this property was effectively nationalised and allotted to refugees. My project examines how both countries saw management and redistribution of evacuee property as a crucial project to assert legitimacy. In both states, I argue, laws around evacuee property took remarkably similar positions, based on 'reciprocity'—the need to ensure laws in both dominions were consonant, *pending* an (unachieved) bilateral settlement.

As a legal history project, I examine this question at various levels—through interdominion negotiations, the law-making process—Constituent Assembly and parliamentary debates, provincial assembly debates, and in the courtrooms as well. Utilizing case-laws and case-file records uncovers how migrants retained significant agency. By using newly available constitutional and legal rights, both refugees and evacuees took advantage of the law. Furthermore, I argue that land reform and redistribution projects by which both states marked a break with the British Raj, such as *Zamindari* abolition and debates around the right to private property, were also used to force out 'troublesome' minorities in East Pakistan and India. Understanding this helps in linking partition to a global history of migration in the 1940s; Israel, for instance, explicitly relied on Pakistani and Indian legislative models.

Cold war politics was not absent from this discourse. Large-scale statist developmental projects, often funded by foreign aid from both blocs also feature in my story as means of transforming refugees into productive citizens. This took various forms—developing new cities, both as markers of sovereignty and as industrial townships, and river valley projects (particularly to control over the Indus). In Bengal and Assam, a largely one-way migration into India provoked tortuous negotiations between a large minority population *and* politically and legally active incoming migrants. In both dominions then, forced evictions from private property went hand in hand with displacing refugees to forested land.

As I am emphasizing both on commonalities and differences, research in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh is crucial to my work. While a lot of recent work has happened on evacuee property and refugee rehabilitation, it has only been able to concentrate on one flank of the border. My knowledge of Urdu, Bangla and Hindi, in addition to English, has aided my work so far. Over 2019, I researched at the National Library and the West Bengal State Archives in Kolkata, the Bangladesh National Archives in Dhaka, and the National Archives in Delhi. I am currently engaged in archival work in the Indian Supreme Court,

I am applying for the AIPS short-term travel grant to enable me to conduct research in Lahore and Islamabad over a three-month period. As an Indian citizen, an AIPS affiliation is particularly important for me to obtain a visa.

In Lahore, I want to research at the library of the University of the Punjab, which has newspapers and periodicals in English and Urdu around the partition. I will also look at the Punjab Provincial Archives and the Punjab Public Library, which have copies of legislative assembly debates in addition to tabled figures on refugee rehabilitation. I will further conduct research at the High Court record room. Along with these, I plan to use private archival sources in Lahore as well.

In Islamabad, I want to examine government files microfilms at the National Documentation Centre and the National Archives, which contain information both on refugee resettlement and large developmental projects in Pakistan. This will significantly add to the historiography on partition as well as adding to our understanding of the creation and consolidation of the two sub-continental nation-states.