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Abstract

My research focuses on the constitutive role of heritage in imagining the nation's past and defining its present through the case study of Rawalpindi; a city situated in Punjab, Pakistan. The city has historically been neglected in the country's heritage framework in spite of the visible potency of its physical space with the palimpsest of centuries old creations by diverse actors. That all changed when UNESCO listed Rawalpindi among the pilot cities for the Historic Urban Landscape Project. The political configuration of the city's diverse architectural heritage and how different communities interact with it today, raises questions about the genealogy of architectural heritage, the process of selection of national heritage, role of 'ruins' and 'ruin-scapes' in imagining a nation's history, and engagement of heritage in national memory. It further underscores interaction between various religious and ethnic communities with the city's heritage, and the role of historiography in making heritage a political and nationalist project. Re-territorialized South-Asia at the time of Partition of Indian subcontinent fundamentally altered the religious make-up of cities that underwent re-identification on both sides- making them the active sites of post-imperial contestation in the post-colonies. My research traces property allocation policies in the refugee resettlement project regulated by Evacuee Trust, post-partition land laws, urban development schemas, and Rawalpindi's unidentified heritage. The selective recognition of Rawalpindi's heterogeneous past informs the understanding and recognition of heritage in Pakistan's national cultural policies and framework now when heritage of the 'other' is a highly contested issue in South Asia's current political environment.