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EDITORIAL



Community engagement in archaeology and heritage in Pakistan

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EDITORS' COMMENT

We are delighted to be able to host this outstanding collection of papers on community engaged heritage projects in Pakistan, written by eight specialist from that country. As so eloquently expressed by our guest editor for this issue, Uzma Z. Rizvi, the Global North has for too long acted as gate keeper for what material from other parts of the world gets published in international journals. Consequently, it would seem much more appropriate for this collection, entirely written by archaeologists and heritage professionals from Pakistan for such professionals in Pakistan, to also be introduced by an archaeologist of South Asian descent. Therefore without further ado, we wish to cede the ground to Uzma Z. Rizvi, who is much better placed than we are to describe the depth and significance of the contributions to this exciting issue. Sarah De Nardi and Thomas Kador.

Introduction

This special issue is designed to draw attention to community-engaged projects that have been ongoing in Pakistan through archaeology, museums, and heritage work. Although the focus is on contemporary practices, this project is a future-oriented endeavour as it provides an alternative view of what is possible in the archaeology of Pakistan. Given the strength and range of the articles within this collection, I anticipate this journal issue will become a touchstone for many future projects in the region.

This collection builds on and is within the context of other work done in Pakistan related to community-based archaeology and heritage projects (Ali et al. 2013; Coningham and Lewer 2019; Dogar et al. 2020; Hameed and Ahmad 2020; Hussain 2019; Khan 2011; Mumtaz 2017; Siddiqui 2018; Somuncu and Khan 2010). The case studies in this issue come from archaeological sites ranging from interior Sindh in the south, all the way to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) in the north; we read about innovative work being done in newly renovated museum spaces in Karachi and at one of the oldest museums in Lahore, as well as reading about the experiences of an Indigenous Kalash curator in Chitral. This collection of articles focuses on museum practice, interdisciplinary approaches to youth education in museums, the relationship of local legends to conservation and preservation, and archaeological survey and its impact on local communities. Significantly, this issue productively interrogates the relationship and role of archaeology and heritage to the challenges faced within the Global South in post-colonial (but not entirely decolonized) nations, including, but not limited to: challenges in education, infrastructure, economic inequality, and accessibility.

As community archaeology and heritage scholarship demonstrates, there are many ways by which communities are understood, engaged with, and considered around the world; Pakistan is no exception (Supernant and Warrick 2014; Waterton and Smith 2010). In 2015, I had the opportunity

to spend time with archaeologists, heritage specialists, and community development groups in Pakistan discussing the notion of community and how we might think of community archaeology and heritage specifically in Pakistan. This special journal issue emerged as a result of the many conversations that grew out of that exchange and a need that we recognized to engage a more participatory form of archaeology as a way to decolonize archaeology. In these conversations, speaking against traditional archaeological practices was acknowledged as difficult. This was in part because of the colonial legacy imprinted on the practice of archaeology in Pakistan, as well as the way by which access to archaeological sites and artefacts is part of the brokering of power relations in the country, domestically and internationally (for international power plays, see Meskell 2019). Thus, the tactics and strategies to dismantle various forms of power became very localized (Kalash, this issue), and focused more on access to certain kinds of training (Majeed, this issue) or accessibility for differently abled students in museum design (Ibrahim, this issue). This discussion of community transected conversations about poverty, education, and disability studies, and it became very clear that archaeologists and heritage and museum professionals were thinking about forms of participatory practice when doing community-based work because they by necessity had to consider other vectors that impacted the ways through which people exist in the world (see Kalash; Ibrahim this issue). As Sonya Atalay points out, '... research does not exist in a vacuum; it cannot be separated from it in the contemporary world. Remaining mindful of the connection of research to contemporary society is particularly important in archaeology, because the field deals with the heritages of living people' (2012, 56). The more we spoke about community archaeology in our conversations, the more it seemed that the 'it' was the practice of 'doing with and for' people, rather than the practice of 'doing to' people. It also became increasingly important that this journal issue be by and for Pakistani archaeologists. The extractive nature of the Global North academy extends into the ways by which publications in international journals take place, and thus, in order to start to balance the playing field, the articles in this special issue are all by Pakistani professionals.

The concept of community in relation to archaeology and heritage in Pakistan: Transliterations and translations

Through our discussions in 2015 and beyond, it became clear that there were different ways of coming to the word/concept of community. A strength of this collection is that it provides some of that diversity of meaning and possibility within a Pakistani context. 'Community' as a word has been imported into Urdu and exists in transliteration. As such, it seems important to trace how the concept of community archaeology and heritage has transliterated into archaeological practice in Pakistan. These articles give us key insights into this process. Additionally, it is helpful to think through what the words associated with community might be in various languages of Pakistan. The translation of the word community then allows us to utilize the world-making that language frameworks provide in order to think through how to integrate community-based or participatory-research approaches within archaeological and heritage work in Pakistan.

In order to collect some words that could translate the word/concept of community, I conducted an informal survey of my own social community on social media and asked how they might define community.¹ I received over 70 responses and much discussion ensued over the various ways one might think of the word. Many people suggested سماج (*samaaj*), a meaning which is more aligned with society, and قوم (*qaum*) which tends to be a citizenry or a group of people who share language, culture, descent, history, and/or ethnicity. These are difficult to use in phrases linked to archaeology; for example, to say one is doing قیومی (*qauumi*) آثار قدیمہ (*asr-e-qadeema/archaeology*), gives a sense that overlaps significantly with that of nationalist archaeology, which is not actually what community-based projects are about. Another key cluster was around the word برادری (*biradari*), which has a kin-based, clan-like affiliation and status, and, similarly, around قبیلہ (*qabeela*), which is directly linked to the concept of tribe. Both can be geographically bounded, but in so far as the tight connections and links within a group are prescribed, these forms of 'community' are born into, which is not

usually the assumption when writing about community-based work in other contexts. Those thinking more along the lines of loose associations, gatherings, and collections of individuals suggested words like جماعت (*jamaat*) or انجمن (*anjuman*). Another form of grouping that is often thought of in relation to community is the word گروه (*giroh*) or فرقه (*firqa*), both of which mean group, section, faction, or fraternity. A very large number of respondents linked the meaning of community with معاشره (*muashra*), which is translated often to society. A few responses from the KP area suggested words like *barasari* or *baibandi*, and Abro, Shaikh, and Chandio (this issue) provide examples of how community might be understood in Sindhi with words like جاتی (*jati*), ذات (*zaat*), قوم (*qaum*), قبیلہ (*qabeela*), and سماج (*samaaj*). As Abro, Shaikh, and Chandio note in their article, each of these holds within it a general meaning of community but it is related to specific collections of people. If we break away from the definition of the type of people who are part of the collection or group, and think more about what community-based practices and participatory work do, what these practices are actually about, we may encounter words like فلاحی کام (*falahe kaam*) which translates to welfare and/or social work. It is interesting to think through this idea of welfare and the ways in which so much of community archaeology and heritage does or can have an element of community welfare built into its praxis. Perhaps most interesting is the word شراکت (*shirakat*) which bridges the words community and engagement or contribution. It provides a sense of belonging through doing and being. Although rarely used within community-based archaeology or heritage circles, incorporating this word into our translations and understandings of community archaeology and heritage may open up many new ways of thinking about how to envision our practice (see also Hussain 2019).

This exercise tracing the potential meanings of the word ‘community’ was not presented with the intention of providing an exhaustive or comprehensive discussion, but, rather, to open up the query so that we may consider language within the context of archaeological practice in a non-English speaking context. Of course, much like the word ‘community’, the word and concept of ‘archaeology’ is also transliterated into the vernacular, although آثار قدیمہ (*asr-e-qadeema*) is technically the agreed-upon translation. As archaeology, a colonial discipline, was enforced upon a particular landscape, one might consider the word and concept of archaeology itself as transliteration – a transliteration then being open to a different translation when put into a different context. Perhaps it is in those spaces between transliteration and translation that the potential for a decolonial intervention may be possible. It is in that space that we may claim that the ways in which archaeology and heritage is practiced in Pakistan translates in a different way, based on the local histories, including the violence of colonialism and the continued forms of alterity that maintain themselves upon the landscape. This special issue balances itself upon that line between a transliteration of a type of practice and a translation, ultimately asserting that these texts are their own way of doing something – a third way. As we read these case studies within the English-reading world, we must remember that a majority of everything presented here is translated for us to understand and exists in a world that communicates in languages outside of ours, and, thus, the onus falls upon us to grasp the significance of their work and actions.

Tasleem Abro, Nilofer Shaikh, and Muhammad Amin Chandio set the tone for the special issue in their future-oriented article about the survey at Nather-jo-Daro, Pakistan. In a self-reflexive and considerate manner, the authors work through the many ways that the local population, those who lived in and around the archaeological sites, interacted with them during site surveys. The article brings to the forefront how communities learn about their own potential roles in archaeology. Abro, Shaikh, and Chandio argue that the lack of archaeology in the educational curriculum at all levels, particularly in rural contexts, impacts the ways by which they can/cannot have certain kinds of conversations with people they meet during survey. By highlighting the possibility of archaeological practice to integrate an educational component, they provide us with some recommendations on how to proceed further with community-based programmes that focus on education. They also underscore the reciprocal benefit of community engagement in archaeological practice, that ‘healthy exchange that is favourable for both parties’ that is the result ‘when we involve the local communities, through excavation and other methods’.

Abdul Hameed and Shaista Sher draw our attention to different forms of knowledge that circulate as legends that they encounter during archaeological surveys that they argue impact preservation and conservation of historic sites in KP Province. The legends at the four sites covered in their article narrate tragedies that befell those who have disturbed the sites, and, thus, they argue, the effect of 'bad luck' and the negative consequences some legends recount as the result of not showing respect to sacred sites act to maintain and protect the sites from vandalism. Hameed and Sher also discuss the centrality of the legends in current public knowledge about the archaeological sites, and how this central role of legends in public awareness needs to be accounted for within South Asian contexts. As the authors note, 'legends associated with the site should not be neglected, rather, they need to be documented and highlighted to ensure the protection of the sites and monuments'.

Legends, folklore, and storytelling are also at the heart of much of what Sayed Gul Kalash relates in her description of the need to preserve Kalasha intangible cultural heritage. In this unique piece, the curator of the Chitral Museum talks about the realities experienced by Indigenous communities in Pakistan, including, but not limited to, issues of education, poverty, sexual harassment, and public awareness. A key feature of this piece is the clarity with which Kalash illustrates the entangled nature of these socio-political realities of infrastructure and their relationship to archaeology, heritage, and tourism. She emphasizes these connections, as 'it is through working on all of these needs in concert that we will be able to do heritage work as well'. She provides a powerful case for the preservation of Indigenous cultures in Pakistan that emerges from a holistic approach to community upliftment and enrichment; one in which the core premise is one of education.

Education and learning are key tenants in Tehniyat Majeed's article as well. Focused on the 2015 summer internship programme for young adults conducted by the *Inheriting Harappa* Project at the Lahore Museum, this article provides an overview and discussion of the significance of such programmes for stakeholders and the role such programmes can take in creating an awareness and connection to the deep past (in this case, third millennium BCE.). As a special exhibition on the Harappan Civilization, *Rediscovering Harappa: Through the Five Elements* exhibited Harappan artefacts from the museum's permanent holdings in conjunction with interpretive artworks that had been produced by the 'artist-interns' within the internship programme. In a highly textured and engaged manner, the internship provided opportunities for curatorial research documentation and artistic production to college students, under the mentorship of museum experts, an engagement with the 'intersection of the intangible and tangible' that resulted in 'cultivat[ing] a sense of ownership with the Harappan cultural legacy'. This programme was innovative, experimental, and the first of its kind at the Lahore Museum.

Similarly, innovative programming, as well as carefully crafted exhibition design, are described in the case study of a museum addressing issues of accessibility and social inclusion by archaeologist, curator, and director, Asma Ibrahim, regarding the work done at the State Bank of Pakistan Museum & Art Gallery, Karachi. As the Museum underwent recent renovation, she and her staff had the chance to ensure that the building structure and exhibits were centred around interactivity and accessibility, to engage the many diverse communities who visit, as 'the community is not only able-bodied people'. Ibrahim emphasizes the need for an approach where museums are 'accountable to and supportive of communities because it is people's active participation in museum activities that keeps heritage alive'. Her article provides a broad overview of design strategy, activities, and programming that aim at providing a museum-going experience that is inclusive and accessible, making it vanguard in Pakistan.

Together these five articles provide many facets through which to deepen understandings of the relationship of archaeology and heritage to community, infrastructure, education, and tourism. These articles also open up the myriad of ways that community (as a concept) may be understood, employed, and critiqued in a Pakistani context, while also providing comparative models of community archaeology and heritage within a global framework.

Key issues in community archaeology and heritage in Pakistan

Several key themes intersect within this issue, including: education and accessibility; preservation and conservation; and museums and tourism. The question of education in general and specifically of archaeology in public consciousness is a theme that emerges in all of the articles. This issue is one that often comes up at archaeology conferences and in meetings addressing how to make archaeology more accessible to the public and responsive to community needs. Although not a matter exclusive to Pakistan, there are particular ways in which the concern around education and literacy are related to public policy and government initiatives, and thus many of the authors feel the responsibility of trying to educate publics on issues related to archaeology and heritage. The articles in this issue provide possible ways forward to integrate educational initiatives through community-based archaeological projects and museum initiatives. Whether we look to the work being done at the State Bank Museum (Ibrahim, this issue), Chitral Museum (Kalash, this issue), or the internship programmes at Lahore Museum (Majeed, this issue), it is clear that museum professionals thinking about communities are finding ways to integrate public education.

A significant issue around public education at museums is also the question of accessibility. The State Bank Museum has taken this very seriously and it has explicitly made inclusive and accessible services for its visitors (Ibrahim, this issue). This includes ensuring there are tours specific to the needs of the visitors (wheelchair tours, etc.), as well as ensuring that the space itself is accessible for blind and partially sighted visitors by removing physical barriers and providing touch objects and tactile books. Moreover, most of their signage is available in braille, and they use tactile drawings that are more suitable for the many different ways of learning. The State Bank Museum has also ensured that the museum staff are trained appropriately to support accessibility concerns.

Education, of course, has many different facets that it refers to and addresses. One of the consistent concerns demonstrated in these articles is how to pass on the heritage of the archaeological sites to the next generation. Within the museum context, the Lahore Museum internship directly addresses this through their programming, with some of the programme outcomes on the part of internship participants including engendering a sense of belonging and community through participation and a sense that the work that they did was relevant to a larger world, which led to feelings of ownership of and responsibility to the past.

The apprehension around these issues emerges directly from concerns around preservation. Whether we look to sites like Nather-jo-Daro (Abro, Shaikh, and Chandio, this issue) or what is happening in the Chitral Valley (Kalash, this issue), we see indications that there is a direct link between education and preservation. And here, when we are talking about preservation, it is not just of monuments or landscape, it is also preservation of histories and people's lifeways. This comes across most explicitly in Sayed Gul Kalash's interview in which she draws our attention to how the Kalash and their history are not part of the standard syllabus taught in the Chitral Valley (Kalash, this issue). This is a disservice, not only to the Kalash children but to all the children of the region as they are unable to grow up learning to appreciate a diversity of histories and ways of living. If children in the region grow up without knowing Indigenous communities exist, although they live among them, how will they ever know to respect difference. By not including the history of the Kalash the standard educational curriculum is also erasing a vital component of the history of that land. Such structural violence has longstanding impact on the Indigenous communities in a psychological sense, as well as in terms of access to resources for the betterment and enrichment of their communities.

There is an overarching sense throughout the articles in this issue that preservation and conservation must become priorities for province-level and national government policy within Pakistan to support the type of work which community-based projects are advocating (see also Campbell 2015; Dogar et al. 2020; Mumtaz 2017). These programmes would combine concerns around education and history, and there is a clear sense that this is a need that the Pakistani government needs to take into account. Conversations around preservation emerge as central concerns in Abro, Shaikh,

and Chandio (this issue), Hameed and Sher (this issue), and Kalash (this issue). Abro, Shaikh, and Chandio draw our attention to how, within Sindh Province, there is a deep appreciation for history and culture in a general sense, and yet, there have still been issues related to the damage of archaeological sites. They suggest that a sense of curiosity linked to a lack of formal archaeological education and training, 'forms an unpredictable mixture that frequently can result in damaging the sites' (Abro, Shaikh, and Chandio, this issue).

Interestingly, it is precisely folklore, that Hameed and Sher (this issue) would argue, is supporting the preservation of sites in KP Province. They argue that the local communities know about archaeological sites through oral tradition. These legends provide knowledge but also create a sense of ownership which leads to protection of the sites themselves. Illegal excavations, looting, and grave digging is a global problem, and KP Province is not exempt from having to deal with these issues, apparent in the robust market for antiquities from Northern Pakistan (see Brodie, Kersel, and Tubb 2006). Similarly, in the interview-based article of Sayed Gul Kalash we read about how the buying and selling of antiquities is a complicated issue that museum directors are constantly dealing with, one that implicates the museum system as well as the informal markets. This opens up interesting critiques of museums and their place in the market (Murawska-Muthesius and Piotrowski 2015), and yet, there are complexities in regard to these issues specifically for museums in the Global South that deserve a distinct analytic (Abungu 2019; Vawda 2019).

Hameed and Sher (this issue) also point out that what is crucially needed are government programmes and policies that focus on conservation and preservation of all different types of histories. Similarly, in the example of the preservation of traditional historic wooden Kalash houses in the Chitral Valley, large sums of money and policy were involved in order to see the projects through (Kalash, this issue). Government funding and oversight is imperative to link the concerns around public education and accessibility to any discussion around museums and, in particular, tourism. Tourism in the Chitral Valley, for example, has had a severe environmental impact and has proven to be unsafe for the local population (see Kalash, this issue). Much like the quandary around the buying and selling of artefacts at museums, tourism also falls into a paradox: tourism is needed for local livelihoods, and yet, it is unsafe and negatively impacts ongoing traditions and the environment (Kalash, this issue). More work needs to be done on the environmental impact of tourism in the Chitral Valley and other regions in Pakistan (for a comparative example, see Mustafa and Tayeh 2011).

Some concluding thoughts: The act of slow writing and publishing

It is important to recognize how much work and time went into the production of this issue. I would argue it is always important to recognize such labour, but in cases where English is not a first language of potential contributing archaeologist-authors, how do we reconfigure our publishing venues and make them truly international, not just in distribution, but in the diversity of their authorship and publication priorities. The collection of articles seen here have taken over five years to produce. There have been many rounds of revisions, translations, and adjustments, along with one of the aspects to being an academic in the Global South that no one really talks about – that it is not an activity that is supported with time and funds as it is in some parts of the rest of the world. When the everyday is difficult, carving out the time and headspace to write is a remarkable act. Universities and museums need to find ways to support their staff and faculty in publishing and becoming part of the international dialog; we do see more of that happening, but not enough. It is a testament to the authors that this issue has been published. One of the strategies employed that helped everyone involved in creating this special issue was to breathe some space into the time it took to write and to edit. This was important as slowing down the process provided more time to think through the translations and edits, and allowed me, as the editor, to work with each author individually, supporting each piece to be the best iteration of itself.

This was an inspiring journey, one in which I found my colleagues in Pakistan actively working toward a better tomorrow by providing a rigorous and community-oriented sense of yesterday. And at the core of these projects is the demand for education and awareness; a need that impacts all aspects of archaeology and heritage. It is through the context of education and public outreach that we are able to foster archaeology and heritage discourse in the public sphere in ways that create possible futures within which critical community-based archaeology and heritage projects can be realized in Pakistan. I believe the sentiment expressed by Ibrahim, that ‘history does not exist in museums alone, but between people in a society’, is one that resonated with all of the articles in this issue. It is one that reminds us where we might locate the significance of such community-based endeavours and why we do what we do.

Note

1. Many thanks to Hasan Abbas Nawab, Malahat Kizilbash, Nasir Khan, Sana Shafqat, Safinah Ali, Rubina Anis, Shakir Khan, Naveed Khan, Romeena Kizilbash-Kureishy, William Ellison, Ibad Rahman, Salman Shamsi, Siddharth Singh, Zara Mahmood, Zain ul Abedin, Tabassum Amir Vali, Arsalan Khan, Nasreen Talib, and Javed Talib for extended conversations on the word. Date of survey: July 8, 2020. Facebook.

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Notes on contributor

Uzma Z. Rizvi is Associate Professor of Anthropology and Urban Studies at the Pratt Institute, Brooklyn, NY, and a Visiting Professor at Shah Abdul Latif University, Khairpur, Pakistan. She is the Principal Investigator (with Can Sucuoğlu) of the Laboratory for Integrated Archaeological Visualization and Heritage (liavh.org). LIAVH’s current project focuses on Mohenjo-Daro, Pakistan. Rizvi’s research interests include decolonizing archaeology, ancient urbanism, critical heritage studies, new materialism, and the postcolonial critique. A primary focus of her work contends with archaeological epistemologies and methodologies, and changed praxis based on decolonized principles and participatory ethics. Rizvi has intentionally interwoven archaeology with cultural criticism, philosophy, critical theory, art and design. Her recent monograph, *The Affect of Crafting: Third Millennium BCE Copper Arrowheads from Rajasthan, India* (2018) follows other publications including volumes such as *Archaeology and the Postcolonial Critique* (2008), *Handbook on Postcolonial Archaeology* (2010), and *Connections and Complexity: New Approaches to the Archaeology of South Asia* (2013). Most recently, her article, ‘Archaeological Encounters: The Role of the Speculative in Decolonial Archaeology’ (2019) was published in a special issue on Archaeology and Futurity, in the *Journal of Contemporary Archaeology*. Rizvi specializes in studying third millennium BCE communities in the MENASA region, as well as being a critical voice for global issues related to issues around equity and justice.

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