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From Colonial Legacy to Decolonial Praxis: Decolonizing Lahore Museum through Counter-Histories, Memory Politics and Challenging Eurocentrism

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Abstract: The Lahore Museum, a storied repository of South Asian heritage, stands as a poignant site for interrogating the colonial legacy embedded in its narratives and displays. This study explores the process of decolonizing the museum's narratives from colonial narratives, focusing on how they shape and mediate collective memory formation. Engaging with decolonial theory, particularly the works of Walter Mignolo and Hannah Turner, the research examines how dominant Eurocentric narratives have historically framed South Asian cultural artifacts within colonial hierarchies of knowledge. These narratives often perpetuate the politics of amnesia by silencing indigenous epistemologies and disassociating artifacts from their cultural and historical contexts. The study situates the Lahore Museum within the broader framework of memory politics, investigating how colonial era curatorial practices continue to influence contemporary interpretations of South Asia's past. By introducing counter-narratives that reclaim indigenous perspectives, the research highlights the potential of the museum as a space for resisting Eurocentric hegemony and fostering decolonial memory formation. Central to this analysis is the concept of epistemic disobedience proposed by Mignolo, which challenges the universality of Western knowledge systems. Similarly, Turner's critique explores how colonial ideologies shaped museum documentation systems, and the need to dismantle colonial holds over museums/museum narratives. Through a critical analysis of exhibitions and archival practices, the research seeks to illuminate the museum's role in both perpetuating and disrupting the colonial matrix of power. It advocates for a

participatory curatorial approach that foregrounds marginalized voices, contextualizes artifacts within their lived histories, and addresses the erasures inherent in colonial historiography. By doing so, this study contributes to the ongoing efforts to decolonize cultural institutions, offering a framework for reconstructing memory politics in ways that counteract Eurocentric biases and promote a pluriversal understanding of South Asia's rich and diverse heritage.

Keywords: *Counter-histories, Eurocentrism, Memory politics, Cultural reclamation, Epistemic disobedience, Lahore Museum*.

Introduction

One of the most significant historical events that profoundly influenced the development of cultural memory through imperial mechanisms—both within the former Indian Subcontinent and beyond—was the Great Exhibition of 1851. Held in London at the Crystal Palace, designed by Joseph Paxton and initiated by Prince Albert, the Prince Consort, the exhibition marked a turning point in the representation and manipulation of colonized cultures (King and Joshi 138). The event was organized by John Forbes Royle, an Indian-born British botanist and teacher, while Queen Victoria presided over its inauguration (Joshi 138).

Indian exhibits at the Great Exhibition were categorized under "Imperial displays," a term that encapsulated the nature of the event and marked a foundational moment in the distortion of cultural memory (Heritage Lab). As noted by *Illustrated London News*, "although in the British department, we have a right to treat it as foreign, because nine-tenths of the contents will be new to nine-tenths of the visitors" (392). The British exploited this idea of novelty or "not knowing" to reinforce the perception of undivided India as the exotic "other," thereby portraying it as a collection of "conquered possessions" (Grasme). This portrayal served as an archetypal demonstration of imperial dominance.

The structural arrangement of the exhibition further emphasized this intent: artefacts from the United Kingdom, its colonies, and foreign nations were spatially organized in such a manner that Indian artefacts were surrounded by British displays (Grasme). The physical layout symbolized Britain's tightening colonial grip over India, asserting dominance both visually and ideologically. Moreover, India was the only colonial nation whose cultural representations were not curated by its own people; no indigenous officials or representatives were permitted to present their heritage. Instead, John Forbes Royle, appointed by the East India Company, represented India—underscoring the British intent to suppress indigenous voices and control cultural narratives (Heritage Lab).

The manipulation of cultural memory extended beyond such exhibitions to institutions like the Lahore Museum, established in 1856. As a legacy of colonial rule and nationalist discourse, the museum reflects the imposition of Western ideology. Scholars such as Saifurraḥmān Dar and Shaila Bhatti have emphasized its development within the framework of British museological practices. Leah Huff further describes such institutions as "symbols of colonialism, Western imperial expansion, and erasure," designed to house colonial spoils and sustain imperial narratives (SMEA).

Accordingly, this study investigates the intricate relationship between memory and amnesia in the Lahore Museum from a decolonial perspective, challenging traditional Eurocentric norms. It aims to contribute to the decolonization of museum narratives by amplifying subjugated voices, re-imagining representation, and constructing dynamic memory-scapes that resist historical erasure. This paper argues that the establishment of the Lahore Museum was a strategic colonial project designed to exert authority over cultural and historical narratives by manipulating collective memory across temporal dimensions—past, present, and future. It further argues that the Lahore Museum embodies a Eurocentric, colonial legacy in its curation and presentation, but also holds potential for counter-histories and decolonial transformation.

A key challenge facing museums today is the need to decolonize and democratize their narratives to serve as inclusive repositories of a nation's diverse history and culture. This research focuses on the Lahore Museum and explores how it narrates the past for present and future audiences. It also examines whether the museum presents a counter-history that challenges Eurocentric perspectives through alternative, locally rooted interpretations of history and culture.

The concerned study adopts a decolonial perspective towards the museums in a post-colonial context and qualitative methods for the interpretation of ideas, views, and experiences. It uses comparative discourse analysis of display narratives and historical realities. It collects data from the Lahore Museum through book collections, site visits, and interviews with officials, such as the Chief Librarian, curators, and local and foreign visitors. Moreover, it includes observations of contests by the Museum against Eurocentric narratives through seminars, conferences, and events. The term, 'Phygital', coined by Yaxi Liu in *Reconceptualizing the Digital Humanities in Asia* is apt for this project as both physical and digital sources are put into use for the fact-checking and narrative analysis (Liu 06).

In the *Darker Side of Western Modernity: Global Futures, Decolonial Options* (2011), Walter D. Mignolo asserts epistemic disobedience against Eurocentric knowledge hierarchies. It includes Decentring Eurocentrism, Border Thinking, Decoloniality, and Shifting the Geography of Reason. Parallel to this, the research follows Mignolo's theoretical framework from "Museums in Colonial Horizon of Modernity" (2001), which criticizes museums and universities as colonial institutions that shape knowledge and being (Mignolo 72-73). He argues that decolonization begins with unlearning colonial justifications to create new understandings beyond Western interpretations (Mignolo 72)." Similarly, Hannah Turner's *Cataloguing Culture* explores how colonial ideologies shaped museum documentation systems, particularly at institutions like the Smithsonian. She argues that these practices institutionalized biased representations of Indigenous peoples, reinforcing power

hierarchies and exclusion (Turner 05). The book calls for re-evaluating cataloguing methods to support ethical, inclusive, and decolonial museum practices (Turner 193).

This framework thus allows the study to look at the way Lahore Museum seeks to challenge Eurocentric knowledge systems that have defined the region, seeking to dismantle the European lens with which the world continues to view it. Decolonization includes both social and intellectual processes for the active questioning of colonialism's lasting effects. This relates to other ramifications and issues, including cultural, economic, and political ones. The overall aim of decolonization is to stand against the power relations, Eurocentrism, and systematic inequalities embedded during the colonial times. Conceptualized by thinkers Walter D. Mignolo and Hannah Turner, decolonization extends beyond political independence to include the liberation of the mind and rediscovery of cultural identities.

Trophies of Empire: The Politics of Absence, Memory Erasure, and Selective Narration

The Lahore Museum stands as a symbolic battleground of competing historical narratives—where colonial ideologies persist through curatorial choices and silences. Initially conceptualized by British colonial authorities, the Museum functioned not as a neutral space of knowledge but as an imperial project designed to validate colonialism through selective storytelling. Under the guise of “civilizing” the "third world" (a term coined by Alfred Sauvy), the British rationalized their colonial ambitions by crafting a false historical consciousness, exemplified in the narratives promoted by figures like Macaulay (Sauvy 83). Walter Benjamin’s assertion that “history is written by the victors” is especially pertinent here—the Museum emerges as a text authored by the colonizer, imposing dominance over both the present and the past.

European colonialism, as J. H. Plumb observes, was anchored in a fetishization of historical origins (51). The British obsession with archiving and cataloguing

antiquity underpins their establishment of institutions like the Lahore Museum. This obsession was not about honouring local heritage but rather controlling the narrative, asserting epistemic authority, and erasing indigenous memory. As Milan Kundera notes in *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting*:

> The first step in liquidating a people is to erase its memory. Destroy its books, its culture, its history. Then have somebody write new books, manufacture a new culture, invent a new history. Before long that nation will begin to forget what it is and what it was. The world around it will forget even faster. (Kundera 159)

This is a process that is vividly enacted in museum spaces through selective exhibition and omission.

The politics of absence—visible in the Lahore Museum's silence on British atrocities—reinforces cultural amnesia. The strategic exclusion of colonial violence from museum plaques exemplifies this. While museums ought to function as repositories of national memory, curators often perpetuate sanitized versions of the past (Bhatti 44, 45 and Kelly). The narrative curated within the Lahore Museum privileges imperial legacies while marginalizing local histories.

Literary works like George Orwell's *Burmese Days* and E. M. Forster's *A Passage to India* echo similar critiques, exposing the duplicity of the British Empire's moral facade. Orwell's portrayal of imperial officers and Forster's exploration of the cultural divide reflect how colonial authority thrives on manufactured superiority and epistemological control. The coloniser's manipulation of knowledge was not limited to fiction but extended into real-world institutions. The British Empire's control over the colonies affected the psychological and cultural consciousness of the natives; with

museums like the Lahore Museum serving as crucial instruments in this imperial project.

As David Robinson argues, the British Empire constructed itself in the image of a classical trajectory, likening its mission to that of the Greco-Roman empires ("The Gift of Civilization"). Macaulay, a key architect of colonial education policy, envisioned this "civilizing mission" as the transfer of European superiority to the "newly civilized" populations of the Global South. His belief in the enduring legacy of British arts, morals, and laws illustrates how colonialism was justified through a narrative of cultural inheritance:

> The sceptre may pass away from us. There is an empire exempt from all natural causes of decay. Those triumphs are the pacific triumphs of reason over barbarism; that empire is the imperishable empire of our arts and our morals, our literature and our laws. (qtd. by Simpson in "The Gift of Civilization")

Such narratives were instrumental in the curation of museum displays, transforming artifacts and historical memory into instruments of imperial ideology.

Shashi Tharoor, one of the prominent Indian politicians and former diplomat, critiques the global silence on colonial violence in museum spaces, particularly within institutions located in former colonies (*Al Jazeera*). The Lahore Museum embodies this silence: while statues of Queen Victoria, Edward VII, and George V are prominently displayed, no mention is made of the imperial violence associated with their reigns (Bhatti 44, 45). Museums, which should function as public archives of national memory and identity, often fall short of this role. As Kelly notes, they disseminate carefully curated knowledge that withholds critical truths, thereby perpetuating colonial superiority.

While dominant narratives celebrated British cultural supremacy, not all colonial actors were complicit. Charles Bradlaugh, as noted by Shahid Siddique, actively opposed white supremacy and aligned himself with anticolonial efforts. Likewise, Sara Suleri, in *The Rhetoric of English India*, highlights the nuanced resistance of figures like Warren Hastings, who defended the Mahabharata and indigenous intellectual traditions. These figures challenge the myth of unanimous colonial complicity and complicate the binary of colonizer vs. colonized.

Shashi Tharoor's critique of the absence of colonial wrongdoing in museums across former colonies (*Al Jazeera*) underscores the need to reinsert these "counter-histories" into public memory. His observations further validate the Lahore Museum's failure to decolonize its institutional narrative. The museum's structure, with its minimal representation of Punjabi culture—reduced to a single glass case (Bhatti 44, 77)—epitomizes this suppression. Indigenous culture is rendered invisible, reinforcing Eurocentric hierarchies.

Enduring Erasures: From Archive to Trophy in the Marginalization of Indigenous Cultures

The Lahore Museum's evolving curatorial choices reflect a troubling continuation of colonial attitudes toward indigenous culture. According to the 1929 ground plan, the Museum originally included a dedicated Punjab Gallery, designed to honor Punjabi heritage through everyday cultural artifacts such as *"earthen pots, brass utensils, musical instruments such as the dolkhi, a seated bride, shawls, anklets, models of fruits and vegetables, a cooking stove, and hookay"* (Hameed et al. 03 and Bhatti 44, 54, 77). However, this gallery has since been replaced by pre- and proto-historic collections and the Sikh Gallery. The rich, lived culture of Punjab is now relegated to a single glass case within the Ethnological Gallery, where it is indistinctly displayed alongside items from Swat, Kalash, and Balochistan (Bhatti 44). This

curatorial demotion reflects more than mere oversight—it indicates an institutional disregard for local cultural identity that echoes the colonial legacy of cultural erasure.

Historically, colonialism imposed cultural hierarchies that privileged imperial narratives while suppressing native traditions. This symbolic sidelining of Punjabi culture contributes to what may be called museum-induced amnesia—a loss of cultural memory resulting from the selective representation of history. As Nick Merriman argues in *Beyond the Glass Case*, museums should offer access to the full scope of a nation's historical and cultural identity (03). Instead, the Lahore Museum's present curation results in what Merriman aptly calls *"manipulation and exploitation of the past"* (04), distorting public understanding of indigenous heritage.

Museum officials often justify this imbalance by citing the logistical constraint that only 10% of the Museum's artifacts are on display, with the remaining 90% in storage. However, this excuse cannot absolve the institution of its ethical responsibility to foreground local culture in a meaningful way. The ongoing neglect of indigenous artifacts does not merely represent curatorial oversight; it risks erasing cultural memory altogether. If younger generations are denied access to visual, tangible reminders of their heritage, the recovery of that identity becomes increasingly difficult. This erasure is not incidental but rooted in colonial museological practices. Colonial museums curated indigenous artifacts not for preservation but as "trophies" symbolizing imperial conquest. The rediscovery of Gandharan art during British rule (Jain) illustrates this dynamic—ancient civilizations were displayed as relics of a primitive past, recontextualized through a Western gaze. As Saifur Rahman Dar notes, many significant South Asian objects were labelled "missing" or "discarded," minimizing their cultural value (81), further entrenching the colonial strategy of epistemic dominance through selective remembrance and silence.

The act of recontextualization aligns with the concept of "trophyism", wherein artifacts were showcased to emphasize British superiority. Briefel's notion of

"imperial objects" further highlights the exhibition of colonized cultures as subservient to British taste and control. This symbolic violence persisted post-independence, with major revisions to gallery curation at the Lahore Museum only occurring as late as 2021. Orwell's reflection in *Shooting an Elephant*—on the performative burden of empire—resonates with how museums functioned as stages for imperial authority. The Lahore Museum, with its selective visibility and archival omissions, thus becomes not just a site of memory, but of forgetting, suppression, and control.

Reclaiming Memory: Post-Colonial Revolutionizing of Lahore Museum Narrative and the Oriental Gaze

This research now turns to the Lahore Museum's evolving strategies to counter cultural amnesia and reclaim the historical memory of the region. While much scholarly attention has been given to the rewriting of history by postcolonial nation-states, the decolonization of museums remains an underexplored frontier. As Khan and Afzaal argue, the politicization of historical narratives has persisted since 1947, with elites in both India and Pakistan shaping public memory in official spaces (01). Yet, beyond textual revisions, museums like the Lahore Museum serve as crucial, embodied sites where cultural memory can either be suppressed or revitalized.

Susan A. Crane, Professor of Modern European History at the University of Arizona articulates, opines that museums are not merely repositories of artifacts; they are dynamic cultural institutions where the interplay of individual and collective memory, identity, and history is actively constructed. Through their displays, museums mediate the production of knowledge, shaping what societies remember—or forget.

Besides this, in the given context, it is significant to understand the historical relationship between museums and colonialism. Western institutions reframed the origins of museums to obscure their ideological underpinnings. By recasting ancient "cabinets of curiosity" into modern museums, the West effectively masked its imperial motives, embedding nationalism, colonialism, and Enlightenment ideals within

museum culture. Scholars such as Elizabeth Rodini and Adam Geczy have exposed how the West's narrative of museum development actively conceals its extractive and ideological foundations, projecting universality while erasing the colonial violence that facilitated such collections.

In response to such power dynamics, cultural amnesia—a direct consequence of colonial 'epistemicide'—former colonies have deliberately undertaken the process of museum decolonization. The Lahore Museum, in particular, has undertaken steps toward self-decolonization, attempting to interrogate and dismantle the colonial frameworks embedded within its own foundations. By reconsidering how indigenous culture and regional histories are represented or omitted the museum engages in a slow but meaningful reclamation of identity and curatorial autonomy.

The decolonization of the Lahore Museum is not merely about updating its content but about restructuring its epistemological foundations. It challenges inherited colonial narratives and asserts a space for indigenous histories to be retold on their own terms, marking a critical intervention in the discourse of memory, identity, and representation. Significant critical works like Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's *Decolonising the Mind* (1986) also critiques the colonial imposition of European languages in African education and argues that reclaiming indigenous languages is essential to cultural liberation. Like the Lahore Museum's prioritization of Urdu, Ngũgĩ asserts that language is central to restoring identity and resisting epistemic control: *"Language carries culture, and culture carries... the entire body of values"* (Ngũgĩ 16).

One of the most evident interventions the Lahore Museum has undertaken in its decolonization efforts is the prioritization of Urdu in its curatorial practices. Urdu being a language of national and local importance, the inclusion of it fostered a linguistic shift that directly challenged the colonial legacy of English dominance. The museum's increasing use of Urdu in its labels, signage, and descriptive texts represents an intentional effort to restore narrative agency to local communities.

As Bhatti notes, Urdu labelling has been systematically prioritized, with many artifacts now described exclusively in Urdu, including entire exhibits such as the *Life of Buddha* and the *Arms Gallery* (Bhatti 73). Anjum Rehmani also reinforces this commitment in his work, where he integrates Urdu terms like *Jatakas* and *Tankas* to describe Gandharan objects, bridging the gap between technical knowledge and cultural accessibility (Rehmani 05, 28). This approach ensures that indigenous epistemologies are not sidelined but instead centred in the museum's interpretive framework.

The symbolic and practical impact of this language shift is also visible in the museum's physical and structural presence. The term '*Ajaib Ghar*' is inscribed above the museum's entrance, reclaiming the space through a local linguistic identity (Bhatti 20, 33). Gallery titles such as *Gandhara Gallery / گندھارا گیلری* are presented bilingually, and explanatory texts are positioned with English on the left and Urdu on the right, subtly indicating a preference for the local language while maintaining accessibility for foreign visitors. This dual-language format both decentres colonial linguistic hierarchies and invites broader public engagement with heritage materials.

Such institutional practices resonate with the broader global movements for linguistic decolonization, such as those advocated by Professors Coburn and Deer, and recognized by UNESCO's designation of 2022 as the start of the International Decade of Indigenous Languages. The Lahore Museum, in its capacity as a guardian of heritage, is thus not merely displaying objects but also actively restoring the cultural and linguistic ecosystems in which those objects once lived.

While challenges in presentation remain, the emphasis on Urdu repositions knowledge production within a local frame, contesting colonial epistemologies that privileged English as the sole medium of intellectual legitimacy. Through this linguistic shift, the Lahore Museum moves beyond token inclusion and toward

meaningful decolonial engagement, reestablishing language as a site of resistance, identity, and memory.

One of the most concrete examples of decolonizing efforts within the Lahore Museum can be traced in the ongoing transformation of the Pakistan Movement Gallery, long regarded as a "repository of the monumental historical events" that shaped the Indian Subcontinent's freedom struggle (Bhatti 46). Traditionally, the gallery narrated a powerful visual history of "liberation" (Bhatti 46), marked by images arranged chronologically to depict mass movements, political milestones, and the sacrifices of key figures like Muhammad Ali Jinnah and Allama Iqbal. These displays offered not only historical documentation but also a site of national memory, echoing Susan A. Crane's assertion that museums function as "cultural institutions" where "collective memories and identities" are curated and performed.

However, this space—once celebrated for its tribute to anticolonial resistance—was recently found in a state of unexpected disarray. Curious about the reason, I consulted the museum's curator, Miss Iffet, who explained that the gallery was undergoing a "deliberate transformation, transitioning from its traditional colonial perspective to one that embraced a post-colonial viewpoint." This curatorial shift reflects a broader decolonial strategy: to reframe national history not through the lens of colonial oppression, but through the autonomy, courage, and cultural sovereignty of its people. As she noted, the objective is to move beyond a reactive portrayal of subjugation and instead assert a narrative of *intrinsic valour and indigenous agency*.

The curatorial intervention here mirrors the theoretical concerns of Frantz Fanon, particularly in *The Wretched of the Earth*, where he emphasizes the need for postcolonial societies to reconstruct their history on their own terms: *"A national culture is not a folklore... it is the whole body of efforts made by a people in the sphere of thought to describe, justify and praise the action through which they have created themselves"* (Fanon 233). The Museum's rethinking of the Pakistan Movement

Gallery thus exemplifies this shift—from viewing colonized subjects as mere victims to recognizing them as agents of their own destiny.

Similarly, in Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's *Decolonising the Mind*, the act of reclaiming narrative and language from colonial structures is a foundational step toward cultural decolonization. Ngũgĩ argues that control over storytelling is a tool of imperial domination, and decolonization involves reasserting the right to self-narrate: *"The bullet was the means of the physical subjugation. Language was the means of the spiritual subjugation"* (Ngũgĩ 9). Just as Ngũgĩ advocates for indigenous linguistic and narrative sovereignty, the Lahore Museum's re-articulation of its galleries is an act of narrative resistance—rewriting the past from the standpoint of those who lived and shaped it. Pakistan Movement Gallery is not merely being redesigned—it is being decolonized. Through this act, the Lahore Museum challenges colonial historiography, reclaims interpretive authority, and restores dignity to the memories of a people whose struggles were often filtered through imperial lenses. The shift is more than curatorial; it is epistemic—a reclaiming of knowledge, history, and selfhood.

Decolonizing Lahore Museum: A Journey of Discourse, Revelation, and Reshaping Cultural Narratives

The Lahore Museum has recently intensified its commitment to decolonization through a series of public engagements, including seminars, lectures, and curated exhibitions that foreground indigenous voices and historical perspectives. These initiatives are not only academic in scope but also serve as cultural interventions aimed at reclaiming agency over representation and re-centring indigenous narratives in the museum space. As Leipold et al. argue, the first step toward meaningful change lies in "deep and thoughtful discourse," which enables the "dissemination of crucial knowledge" (Bhatti 72). Since 2023, the museum has embarked on a "transformative journey aimed at breaking free from the clutches of cultural hegemony and colonial influence."

The inaugural event, "*Conversations on Culture and History: Focusing on Decolonization in Pakistan*," held on February 18, 2023, set the tone for this shift. The conference brought together eight scholars who offered interdisciplinary insights on cultural reclamation, historical amnesia, and the relevance of decolonialism in the 21st century. Some presentations explored the nuances of indigenous culture and historical legacies, while others addressed the need to dismantle Eurocentric frameworks that continue to dominate Pakistani cultural institutions. These efforts mirror global movements—such as those by African and Latin American civilizations—to "challenge the European gaze" and regain control over the curation of their cultural heritage.

An especially notable development was the "*Stories in Stone*" exhibition curated by Khaleeq ur Rehman in June 2023. Featuring Neo-Gandhara art, Neo-Chaukhandi carvings, and carve-inlays, the exhibit directly confronted colonial-era portrayals of the Gandhara civilization. Previously, as Bhatti observed, the Lahore Museum had "not disrupted its colonial-era gallery representations" (Bhatti 39), and Gandhara art had often been mischaracterized by British scholars as "backward and incompatible with the modern world" (Said 9, 33, 47). In contrast, the new exhibit reclaims Gandhara's legacy by highlighting its inherent glory, essence, and philosophical depth—a cultural and aesthetic reclamation that counters colonial depreciation.

These curatorial shifts find resonance in literature that challenges colonial narratives. In novels like *Things Fall Apart*, we see how colonialism disrupts indigenous cultures not only through governance and violence but through the erasure and replacement of native belief systems, languages, and historical consciousness. Achebe's portrayal of Igbo society before and after colonial contact exposes the fragility of cultural memory under imperial pressure. Similarly, the Lahore Museum's initiatives are an effort to reclaim and preserve cultural memory. These actions align

with Achebe's literary commitment to reasserting the dignity and complexity of colonized societies through storytelling, language, and representation.

Another notable intervention occurred in May 2023, with the launch of a three-month course titled "*Digital Typography" (*ڈیجیٹل خطاطی**)**, which teaches ancient calligraphic scripts such as Kufic, Nastaleeq, and Thuluth. In light of colonial efforts to erase native linguistic traditions, this course represents a conscious effort to revitalize endangered scripts. It ensures that these traditional writing forms are "not lost to time" and continue to inform contemporary visual and textual culture. In doing so, the museum reclaims not only the aesthetics of indigenous identity but also its linguistic sovereignty—a key site of decolonial resistance.

Through exhibitions like *Stories in Stone*, public dialogues on decolonization, and educational initiatives such as *Digital Typography*, the Lahore Museum is actively dismantling the colonial frameworks that once shaped the curation and transmission of knowledge. This decolonial momentum is further reinforced by the Museum's engagement with contemporary technological advancements. As we navigate an era defined by rapid digital innovation, the Lahore Museum is also taking deliberate steps to align with this progression. The Museum Library, established in 1894 as a vital component of the institution, holds "notable historical significance" (Rehmani 04). Initially consisting of a "humble collection of volumes" housed in a single room, it has since undergone considerable "expansion" (Rehmani 04). The digitization of this collection underscores the transformative potential of education and access to knowledge—what George Washington Carver famously described in his 1896 letter to Booker T. Washington as the power to unlock the "golden doors of freedom." In this context, that freedom denotes liberation from cultural imperialism and the epistemic silencing of colonized histories. The Museum's 2012 initiative to scan and preserve its rare books collection marks a pivotal step in this cultural revival, demonstrating how digital tools can serve as vehicles for historical reclamation and the democratization of knowledge.

The Lahore Museum has implemented an innovative approach known as the "Object of the Day" or "Object of the Month" cabinet, which is featured both within the museum premises and on various social media platforms (Bhatti 25). This initiative involves the periodic selection and display of an object from any of the museum's galleries as the 'Object of the Day'. Each chosen artifact is accompanied by a photograph, a descriptive narrative detailing its origin, a brief historical context, and an invitation for further exploration through research or physical visits to the museum. This method of sharing cultural knowledge is strategically designed to stimulate the curiosity of visitors and individuals at home. By providing a tantalizing introduction replete with morsels of information, the museum endeavours to kindle the interest of a diverse audience effectively. To maximize the reach and impact of these efforts, the Lahore Museum utilizes its official Facebook page, aptly named 'Lahore Museum'.

Conclusion

This paper deliberately links the Lahore Museum's physical and ideological dimensions through close discourse analysis of its narratives. Positioned as an exploration of the museum's discursive reality, the study departs from prior research focused primarily on the institution's physicality or artifact specifics—answering what and when. It addresses the scholarly gap concerning insights into how and why, particularly regarding the narratives enveloping the museum and its collection. This research fills that void by exploring the nuanced dimensions of the museum's discourse.

The Lahore Museum undoubtedly bears profound colonial imprints, reflecting its significance within the historical context of British dominance on the subcontinent, which shaped history-culture perceptions within its halls. Framed as a decolonial effort, the research highlights the museum's struggle against colonial structures and dominant narratives. It argues for epistemic justice by recognizing and validating marginalized alternative knowledge systems. The study thus contributes to

decolonizing knowledge, enhancing inclusivity and equity in academic discourse, especially for Asian museums, through the critical integration of diverse perspectives.

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