

LOCALIZATION OF ART DECO AND ART NOUVEAU: TRANSLATING MODERNITY IN ARCHITECTURAL HYBRIDITY

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ABSTRACT

Maulana Zafar Ali Chowk located in the historic neighborhood of Gowalmandi Lahore, is characterized by a dense cluster of early twentieth-century residential buildings. Their façades document a distinctive synthesis of architectural style. This paper examines how international Art Deco and Art Nouveau vocabularies were adopted, transformed, and adapted in this compact urban area through local craftsmanship, locally available materials, and traditional practices. Based on qualitative methodology, the study combines field-based and material surveys, ICOMOS aligned condition assessment, archival investigation. Based on this approach, 15 to 20 selected residences were analyzed located within the square. Findings identify three overlapping forms of architectural hybridity. Geometric Art Deco abstraction, visible in sun burst panels, motifs, terrazzo at the entrance, stepped parapets. While Art Nouveau inspired ornament through plaster lotus, peacock motifs, flowing ironwork. Alongside persistent vernacular traditions such as jharokhas, jalis patterns, and lime plaster prepared with organic additives including mash dal and chana dal. Rather than being mere replicas, these architectural features signify intentional adaptations through which the mercantile middle class responded to the circumstances of colonial modernity. The paper maintains that acknowledging these hybrid mid-scale buildings as heritage requires conservation frameworks that exceed narrow stylistic classification. Without timely intervention and increasing commercial pressures with informal regulatory practices may leads to the loss of an important archive of South Asian urban modernity.

Keywords: Architectural Hybridity, Art Deco, Art Nouveau, Gowalmandi Lahore, Colonial modernity, Heritage conservation, translation in architecture.

1. INTRODUCTION

The architectural fabric of Lahore preserves successive layers of cultural exchange, from Mughal monumentality and Sikh adaptation to colonial and postcolonial reinterpretation. Within this palimpsest, Maulana Zafar Ali Chowkin the

Gowalmandi quarter occupies an underexamined position. Established around 1911 as one of the first planned residential developments outside the Walled City, the precinct housed affluent mercantile and professional families whose homes display an unusual stylistic vocabulary (Bryant,

2020). Façades carry geometric sunburst panels, chevron banding, and stepped parapets characteristic of Art Deco, alongside curvilinear ironwork, floral plaster reliefs, and peacock motifs associated with Art Nouveau. These imported phrases coexist with local features such as jharokhas, jali screens, carved wooden doors, and lime-plaster ornamentation prepared with traditional organic binders (Aslam, 2019), (Zaman, 2021).

Pakistani architectural scholarship has historically privileged two narratives, the Islamic monumental tradition and colonial institutional architecture (Nasim, 2021). Mid-scale residential typologies that document the negotiation of colonial modernity at the level of everyday life remain comparatively absent from academic discourse. Maulana Zafar Ali Chowk demonstrates this neglected record. Despite its concentration of hybrid expression and its historical role as a socio-economically distinctive enclave, the precinct has received little systematic documentation and no comparable protective framework to that afforded by the Walled City of Lahore Authority (Khan, 2019).

This paper addresses that gap. Using an interpretivist case-study approach, it documents and analyses how Art Deco and Art Nouveau languages were translated into a localized architectural vocabulary at Gandhi Square, and what this hybridity reveals about cultural agency under colonial modernity. The argument develops in three steps. First, it positions the case within scholarship on architectural hybridity, transculturation, and translation. Second, it explains the qualitative methodology including observation, oral history, and condition assessment. Third, it presents findings on geometric, organic, and vernacular registers before discussing their collective implications for theory and conservation. The paper concludes that Maulana Zafar Ali Chowk is not an isolated curiosity but a representative case of how global modernities were reworked in everyday South Asian architecture, and that its survival now depends on conservation frameworks attentive to hybrid value.

2. Literature Review

The conceptual armature of this study draws on three intersecting bodies of scholarship: theories of cultural and architectural hybridity, histories of the Art Nouveau and Art Deco movements, and studies of colonial and postcolonial architectural translation in South Asia.

The notion of hybridity entered architectural discourse through postcolonial theory, particularly through Homi Bhabha's articulation of the "Third Space" as a zone of cultural negotiation in which colonial authority and indigenous expression are mutually destabilized (Bhabha, 1994). For Bhabha, hybrid forms are not derivative compromises but generative sites where new meanings emerge through the splitting and re-articulation of cultural signs. (AlSayyad, 2001) extends this framework into the built environment, arguing that hybrid urbanism constitutes an active mode of identity formation rather than a passive consequence of cultural mixing. (Ptichnikova, 2020) similarly positions hybridization as an enduring condition of architectural production rather than an exception. These theorizations are useful in South Asian contexts, where colonial encounters were structured by simultaneous resistance, accommodation, and selective appropriation.

Within Indian architectural historiography, (Metcalf, 1989) and (Tillotson, 1998) have demonstrated how the Indo-Saracenic style operated as both an instrument of imperial legitimation and a site of negotiation with regional traditions. (Wright, 1991) makes a parallel argument for French colonial urbanism, observing that administrators sought continuity with local pasts to buttress the colonial order. (Crinson, 1996) introduces the related notion of informal imperialism, in which architectural influence operated through trade and cultural penetration rather than direct administrative control. (Crinson, 1996) integrates these perspectives within a broader narrative of twentieth-century modernism, arguing that local hybridity's constituted resistance to homogenizing international styles. (Aslam, 2019) and (Bryant, 2020) apply such frameworks specifically to Lahore, tracing how Mall Road and other colonial

precincts developed through layered stylistic experimentation rather than direct stylistic transplantation.

Scholarship on the Art Nouveau and Art Deco movements provides the second body of literature. (Greenhalgh, 2000) characterizes Art Nouveau as a self-consciously modern aesthetic that drew on natural form, asymmetrical composition, and integrated ornament to break from nineteenth-century historicism. The movement's early manifestations in Brussels, particularly Victor Horta's Hôtel Tassel of 1893, established a vocabulary of curvilinear iron, vegetal relief, and continuous spatial flow that subsequently spread across Europe under regional names such as Jugendstil and Modernism. Benton, Benton, and Wood in 2003 trace the parallel emergence of Art Deco from the 1925 Exposition Internationale des Arts Décoratifs et Industriels Modernes in Paris, identifying its defining features as geometric abstraction, vertical emphasis, sunburst and chevron motifs, stepped massing, and the use of industrial materials including chrome, terrazzo, and stained glass. Both movements selectively borrowed from non-European sources (Benton, Benton, & Wood, 2003). Egyptian, Mesoamerican, African, and Asian motifs were filtered through European tastes for symmetry and stylization, producing what, they describe as a global yet hierarchically asymmetric visual culture. The third body of scholarship concerns architectural translation as a mode of cultural transfer. (Kuheylan, 2019) develops the concept of architectural translation to describe the recontextualization of forms, materials, and meanings as they move across cultural geographies. Translation in this sense is not literal copying but adaptive reinterpretation, conditioned by climate, available materials, labor traditions, and symbolic systems. This perspective resonates with broader projects of decentering modernist historiography by recognizing the agency of local craftspeople and patrons.

Within Lahore specifically, scholarship on hybrid mid-scale architecture remains thin. Studies of Mall Road (Aslam, 2019) and the Indo-Saracenic monuments such as the Lahore Museum (Bryant, 2020) dominate the literature, while residential

precincts of the late colonial era are largely absent. The Indo-Saracenic style itself, exemplified by the Lahore Museum of 1894 and the Mayo School of Arts of 1875, has been widely interpreted through Metcalf's framework as a deliberate fusion of Mughal, Hindu, and Victorian motifs designed to project imperial continuity with regional pasts (Metcalf, 1989). Yet this same line of analysis has rarely been extended to residential architecture of the early twentieth century, where stylistic negotiation occurred without state direction and through patron-led decision-making. Existing accounts of Gowalmandi appear primarily in journalistic writing and unpublished documentation. (Zaman, N., 2021) conservation report on Pirzada Mansion and (Zulfiqar, 2018) study of the jharokha as a regional element provide important precedents but do not address the wider phenomenon of stylistic hybridity at the level of the urban block. The result is a substantive gap between theoretical literature on hybridity and detailed case-based documentation of how it operates in early twentieth-century Lahore residential architecture.

This paper situates itself at the intersection of these literatures. It applies postcolonial theories of hybridity and translation to a specific micro-urban site, drawing on stylistic histories of Art Nouveau and Art Deco to identify global lineages, while attending to the vernacular grammar that mediated their localization. In doing so, it contributes both an empirical case and a methodological model for studying mid-scale hybrid environments in South Asia.

3. Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative case-study design grounded in an interpretivist paradigm. Buildings and styles are treated as culturally constituted artefacts whose meanings emerge through historical practices, material conditions, and social use. Rather than seeking generalizable findings through statistical sampling, the research aims for analytical depth in line with established standards for architectural heritage documentation.

Site selection followed a purposive sampling logic. Three early twentieth-century planned residential areas of Lahore were initially considered such as

Model Town, Krishan Nagar, and Gowalmandi. Comparative reconnaissance discovered that Model Town's garden-city villas exhibited restrained ornamentation, while Krishan Nagar's grid-iron layout produced heterogeneous but stylistically modest expressions. Gowalmandi, and specifically Gandhi Square, emerged as the most concentrated site of hybrid stylistic experimentation. Its origin as a semi-gated enclave for affluent mercantile families circa generated an architectural environment characterized by multi-storey façades, elaborate ornamentation, and cosmopolitan stylistic references uncommon in adjacent precincts.

Within the square, a sampling strategy was applied to building selection. Fifteen to twenty residences were identified as representing the range of stylistic, typological, and conditional variation present at the site. Selection criteria included visible Art Deco or Art Nouveau ornamentation, retention of original façade composition, evidence of vernacular elements, accessibility for documentation, and the presence of long-term residents who could provide oral testimony.

Data collection proceeded in four overlapping phases. The first phase involved historical and archival research, drawing on published sources. The second phase comprised systematic photographic and aerial documentation. A high-resolution camera was used to capture streetscape views, individual building elevations, and detailed views of ornamentation. Shadow patterns at varying times of day were used to record relief depth and confirm material variation.

The third phase consisted of detailed material and construction analysis. Non-invasive visual and tactile inspection identified primary materials including brick masonry, lime plaster, mortar with traditional organic additives such as mash dal and chana dal, timber, and ironwork. Photographic documentation captured texture, weathering, and the presence of contemporary repairs in cement plaster, ceramic tile, or synthetic finishes. The fourth phase involved field-based ethnography through informal interviews and sustained conversations with residents, shopkeepers, and property owners. Key informants included the Union Councilor of Gandhi Square, the current

owner of the historically significant Bajaj Building, a long-standing resident whose family has occupied a 1930s residence since Partition, and a tandoor proprietor with fifty-five years of continuous presence in the precinct. These narratives provided interpretive context regarding ownership transitions, alteration histories, and the lived meaning of architectural change.

Data analysis combined three approaches. Formal and stylistic analysis examined façade composition, proportional systems, and decorative logics, comparing observed elements against documented characteristics of Art Deco and Art Nouveau. Comparative analysis at intra-city and inter-regional scales positioned the site against precedents in Brussels, Barcelona, Paris, Miami, and other early twentieth-century urban centers where these movements had distinctive expression. A condition assessment matrix aligned with ICOMOS principles for the analysis, conservation, and structural restoration of architectural graded each building across categories of structural integrity, material deterioration, alterations, and threats including façade overpainting, ornament removal, and informal commercialization.

Triangulation across these data streams strengthened analytical reliability. Oral testimony regarding pre-Partition use was cross-referenced against visible architectural evidence and archival accounts. Stylistic identifications were verified against published pattern documentation and comparable international examples. Material observations were compared with construction descriptions in oral interviews and earlier conservation literature. Although interview accounts and visual evidence cannot fully substitute for primary archival documentation where it is unavailable, their convergence supports the credibility of the interpretive findings presented in the following section.

4. Findings and Analysis

The analysis identifies three overlapping registers of architectural hybridity at Gandhi Square: geometric expressions associated with Art Deco, organic ornament aligned with Art Nouveau, and a persistent vernacular grammar that mediates

both. These registers do not appear as discrete stylistic zones but as superimposed layers within individual façades, producing a distinctively negotiated architectural language.

Maulana Zafar Ali Chowk developed within Gowalmandi at the edge of Lahore's old city, an area transformed successively by Mughal land grants, Sikh-period reorganization, and colonial urban restructuring following the 1849 annexation of Punjab. Pre-colonial markers including Masjid Dai Lado and the spiritual chamber of Chajju Bhagat persist as fragments of an older urban memory. Local accounts trace the origin of these landmarks to the reign of Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan, when the surrounding land was granted to a royal midwife known as Dai Lado, who built a mosque and undertook charitable distributions in the area. Adjacent to her estate, the merchant Chajju Bhagat maintained a small prayer chamber that attracted visitors from surrounding settlements, contributing to the precinct's early identity as a mixed enclave of mercantile and spiritual activity. The construction of Mayo Hospital in 1871 catalyzed systematic urbanization, and by 1911 Maulana Zafar Ali Chowk had been laid out as one of Lahore's earliest planned residential enclaves outside the Walled City. Spatial analysis identifies a semi-structured layout intermediate between formal grid planning and organic adaptation. The square functions as a nodal intersection where multiple streets converge into a centralized open space, with chamfered corner buildings, decorative parapets, and projecting balconies establishing visual continuity across the enclosure.

Land use within the precinct exhibits a predominantly mixed-use character. Ground floors along the primary streets converging at the square are dominated by retail shops, eateries, and small trading units, while upper floors retain residential use or have been partially converted for storage. Secondary lanes branching from the square retain a more strictly residential character, with narrower frontages and deeper plot proportions characteristic of early twentieth-century urban development in Lahore. Most plots demonstrate inward-oriented planning that incorporates courtyards or light wells for

ventilation and daylight. Subsequent modifications, particularly the enclosure of verandas and subdivision of interiors, have altered the original spatial organisation of several properties.

The Partition of 1947 introduced significant demographic restructuring. Hindu and Sikh original owners departed and Muslim migrants from East Punjab arrived, generating new patterns of property division, vertical subdivision, and ground-floor commercialization. Residential verandas, balconies, and courtyards were progressively enclosed; ornamental details were simplified, removed, or overlaid with later finishes. These post-Partition modifications constitute an additional historical layer within the square's hybrid fabric, in which colonial-era stylistic features coexist with pragmatic local alterations driven by social and economic necessity.

The most explicit Deco references at Maulana Zafar Ali Chowk involve geometric abstraction and façade composition. Several residences incorporate stepped entrance profiles, rectilinear framing systems, zigzag bands, and chevron motifs integrated within doors and façade panels. Vertical banding articulated through elongated pilasters and recessed grooves emphasizes height and produces a sense of streamlined modernity comparable to commercial Deco façades documented in Lima's Centro Histórico, Maylands in Western Australia, and Queens Road in Melbourne (Benton, Benton, & Wood, 2003). Iconic motifs reinforce this lineage. Sunburst panels rendered in plaster relief appear above doorways in at least two residences, paralleling expressions on Jefferson Avenue in Miami and the Medical Building on Ashland Avenue in Chicago. Chevron patterns are embedded within timber doors and metal fanlight panels. Star-shaped openings within circular exterior ventilation grilles further extend the geometric repertoire. Whereas international examples typically execute such motifs in metal or sculpted stone, the Maulana Zafar Ali Chowk versions appear in plaster relief and simplified detailing, indicating adaptation to local craftsmanship and materials.

Material expression carries the Deco grammar further. Terrazzo flooring at entrance steps, geometric coloured tile inlays at thresholds, and smooth white plastered façades reflect a concern with surface finish and visual clarity central to Deco identity. Stained glass with geometric segmentation, observed in the Bajaj Building and elsewhere, recalls comparable installations at the Grace Hotel in Sydney and the Eastern Columbia Building in Los Angeles. Decorative metalwork including balcony railings, window grilles, and entrance gates displays rectilinear grids, angular framing, and repetitive linear patterns aligned with the industrial aesthetic of Deco modernism. Stepped fireplaces with stylised sun motifs, observed in several drawing rooms, mirror 1930s residential interiors documented in Miami.

A second register draws on Art Nouveau's vocabulary of organic ornament and surface articulation. Several façades incorporate plaster medallions and relief panels featuring lotus-inspired forms, stylised floral arrangements, and peacock-like compositions positioned within parapet centres, façade panels, or entrance surrounds. These motifs depart from strict geometric abstraction and suggest organic growth and decorative flourish. Comparative analysis identifies parallels with Casa Joseph Fabregas in Barcelona, Górnośląska Street in Warsaw, and Casa Cambiagh di A Ferminii in Milan, all early twentieth-century buildings where vegetal ornament and figural relief structure façade composition (Greenhalgh, 2000).

The peacock motif merits particular attention. The bird carries deep symbolic resonance in Indian visual culture, appearing extensively in Vedic literature, Mughal-period painting, and decorative arts. In Hindu tradition it is associated with deities including Saraswati, Lakshmi, and Krishna, signifying purity and spiritual elevation. Within Gandhi Square, peacock reliefs are integrated into façade ornament that simultaneously references European Art Nouveau idioms. This convergence is not stylistic accident but a meaningful intersection of regional iconography with cosmopolitan aesthetic ambition. Lotus medallions function within a similarly doubly legible register: as Art Nouveau-

style organic ornament and as a long-standing South Asian symbol of purity and creation.

The execution of these elements differs significantly from European precedents. Where Horta in Brussels and Guimard in Paris integrated organic ornament structurally, dissolving the distinction between decoration and form, the Maulana Zafar Ali Chowk motifs are primarily surface-applied. Their realisation in plaster rather than sculpted stone or cast iron reflects local material economy and the established competence of Lahore's craftsmen in lime-based finishes. This is not a diminishment but a translation: the language of organic ornament is rendered through the syntax of regional craft.

The third register sustains traditional South Asian elements within hybrid compositions. Jharokhas, projecting balcony elements with carved or molded brackets, appear in upper-storey treatments of several buildings (Zulfiqar, 2018). Jali-like perforated panels are incorporated into parapet centres, executed either as brick lattice or plastered geometric cut-outs. Carved wooden doors with floral or geometric panel compositions persist in residences less affected by commercial conversion. Terrazzo or mosaic flooring, ornamental ceiling cornices, and patterned ventilation openings define interior hierarchies in upper residential floors.

Material practice reinforces this vernacular grounding. The primary construction system is brick masonry bonded with lime mortar and finished with lime plaster. Local craftsmen prepared plaster compounds with organic additives including mash dal and chana dal, ground pulses incorporated to improve binding properties and reduce surface cracking. This technique, sustained through generational craft transmission, allowed elaborate cornices, parapet detailing, and plaster reliefs to be executed across façades. Wooden brackets, railings, and joinery completed the construction repertoire. Iron grilles and railings, introduced later, displayed both geometric Deco-aligned configurations and curvilinear Nouveau-aligned compositions.

Inscriptive practices further document hybrid identity. Building dates are carved into plaster panels above entrance lintels or embossed in

cement render. Building names are integrated into recessed panels. The Bajaj Building, named for its original Hindu mercantile owners, retains such inscription despite changed ownership after 1947. Sacred symbols including Om and Sanskrit invocations such as Arihant appear at thresholds, indicating the pre-Partition religious composition of the original residents and persisting as material traces of demographic transformation.

Application of an ICOMOS-aligned condition matrix identified considerable deterioration across the sampled buildings. Lime plaster surfaces exhibited cracking, weathering, peeling, and localized loss. Cement-based plaster repairs introduced moisture retention problems incompatible with the original breathable lime systems. Replacement of original wooden doors with steel shutters and the substitution of decorative ironwork with welded contemporary grilles compromised stylistic integrity. Vertical extensions, water tanks, and service installations partially concealed original roofline articulation and parapet detail.

Beyond physical deterioration, oral testimony identified systemic regulatory threats. The Union Councilor of the area observed that Maulana Zafar Ali Chowk does not fall under the Walled City of Lahore Authority's heritage jurisdiction and remains outside consistent enforcement under the Lahore Development Authority. Property transactions frequently proceed through informal stamp paper documentation rather than fully regularized procedures, fragmenting accountability. Encroachments have absorbed portions of streets, front setbacks, and original verandas into commercial use. The current owner of the Bajaj Building described the conversion of its drawing room into an embroidery workshop, while a long-term tandoor proprietor traced his establishment beneath a former residential garage to post-Partition economic adaptation. Another resident reported the active commercial reuse of his ancestral residence for film and advertisement shoots. These accounts converge in describing a precinct where heritage value is locally recognized but institutionally unprotected, generating accelerated and uncoordinated transformation. The cumulative pattern is one of incremental loss

in which each individual modification appears minor, but their aggregate effect threatens the integrity of an entire urban fabric.

5. Discussion

The findings specify that Maulana Zafar Ali Chowk cannot be read through any singular stylistic lens. Its built fabric is the product of negotiated translation in which global modernism, regional ornament, and vernacular construction are layered within individual façades. Three substantive implications follow for theoretical understanding, conservation practice, and South Asian architectural historiography, each developed in the subsections below.

The patterns identified at Maulana Zafar Ali Chowk support theorizations of hybridity as active cultural production rather than passive imitation (Bhabha, 1994), (AlSayyad, 2001). The selective adoption of Deco geometry and Nouveau ornament by the precinct's affluent mercantile patrons reflects deliberate aspiration toward cosmopolitan modernity. At the same time, the persistence of jharokhas, jalis, and lime-plaster craftsmanship demonstrates continued investment in regional material competence. This double commitment, aspirational without being mimetic and traditional without being nostalgic, exemplifies what Bhabha describes as the productive ambiguity of the Third Space. Mercantile families with exposure to global commerce engaged with international modernist languages, but did so through a craft economy that remained distinctly local.

This reading complicates accounts that frame colonial-era architectural change in South Asia as either imposition or resistance. Maulana Zafar Ali Chowk presents neither imperial dictation nor reactive vernacularism but rather a third condition of mediated translation, in which architectural decisions enact cultural negotiation at the scale of everyday life. The peacock motif, doubly legible as Art Nouveau organic ornament and as a Hindu spiritual symbol, condenses this dynamic in a single decorative gesture. Such elements demand interpretive frameworks attentive to overlapping legibility's rather than to single stylistic origins.

The findings also pose challenges for conventional stylistic taxonomies. Standard accounts of Art Deco emphasize geometric abstraction, vertical emphasis, and industrial materiality (Benton, Benton, & Wood, 2003), while Art Nouveau is associated with organic ornament, structural integration of decoration, and curvilinear form (Greenhalgh, 2000). Gandhi Square's buildings fulfil aspects of both descriptions while violating their boundaries. Sunburst panels rendered in plaster rather than chrome do not lose their Deco affiliation but acquire a different material register. Floral medallions executed in lime relief rather than wrought iron remain identifiably Art Nouveau in iconography while operating within a different craft economy. This suggests that stylistic categories must be applied as analytical tools rather than as fixed identities. Hybridity is not a deviation from stylistic purity but a primary mode through which global movements were realized in non-metropolitan contexts.

The conservation implications are substantial. Existing protective frameworks in Lahore, including the jurisdiction of the Walled City of Lahore Authority, are oriented toward singular architectural narratives, primarily Mughal monumental and certain colonial institutional buildings. Gandhi Square's hybrid mid-scale residential fabric does not fit these categories and consequently lacks formal protection. The findings indicate three specific dimensions of vulnerability that conservation policy should address.

First, material vulnerability requires technically informed intervention. The progressive replacement of breathable lime plaster with impermeable cement-based finishes generates moisture retention and accelerated decay. Conservation guidance should mandate compatible materials, including the preservation of traditional plaster compounds with organic additives where craft knowledge persists. Second, regulatory vulnerability requires institutional response. The administrative ambiguity in which Maulana Zafar Ali Chowk remains outside both heritage jurisdiction and effective planning enforcement has produced accelerated informal transformation. Extension of heritage designation,

supported by tailored guidelines for hybrid mid-scale residential precincts, would partially address this vulnerability. Third, interpretive vulnerability requires scholarly recognition. Without academic documentation framing Maulana Zafar Ali Chowk as significant, public discourse and policy continue to treat it as residual rather than valuable. The present study contributes one element of the documentary base needed to reverse this neglect, but sustained scholarly engagement and institutional advocacy will be required to consolidate the precinct's recognized heritage status.

The qualitative case-study approach proved well-matched to the research questions. Drone-based aerial documentation revealed roofline patterns and parapet articulation invisible from street level, while orthophotography supported elevation analysis at scale. Oral histories supplemented and at times contradicted visible evidence, particularly regarding pre-Partition use and the dating of alterations. Comparative analysis with international precedents established stylistic lineages, while ICOMOS-aligned condition assessment generated comparable data across the building sample. The triangulation of these methods proved especially valuable in cases where archival absence would otherwise have constrained interpretation. Several limitations should be acknowledged. Archival sources for the precinct's early twentieth-century construction history are limited, and primary documents associated with original Hindu and Sikh owners are largely inaccessible following Partition.

Oral testimony from residents born after 1947 cannot fully substitute for these absences. The sample of fifteen to twenty buildings, while sufficient for analytical depth, does not capture every variation present at the site. Future research could extend the work through systematic documentation of comparable precincts within Gawalmandi outside the immediate square, and through engagement with descendant communities of original residents now resident in India and elsewhere.

6. Conclusion

Maulana Zafar Ali Chowk documents a distinctive moment in the architectural history of Lahore, when global modernism encountered indigenous craft traditions in the residential fabric of a mercantile enclave. Through systematic qualitative documentation combining drone-based observation, photographic and material survey, oral history, and ICOMOS-aligned condition assessment, this study has identified three overlapping registers of architectural hybridity within the precinct: geometric Deco abstraction, organic Nouveau ornament, and persistent vernacular grammar. These registers are not separate stylistic zones but layered expressions within individual façades, indicating an architectural condition in which global vocabularies were translated rather than transplanted.

Three substantive contributions emerge from the analysis. The first is empirical. Gandhi Square's residential architecture has been substantively absent from Pakistani architectural scholarship despite its documentary richness, and this study provides systematic documentation of selected residences within the precinct, recording stylistic, material, and conditional features while linking them to oral testimony of long-term residents. The second contribution is theoretical. The findings support readings of architectural hybridity as deliberate cultural production rather than passive imitation, and demonstrate how postcolonial frameworks of translation and the Third Space illuminate everyday building practice in early twentieth-century Lahore. The third contribution is practical. The condition assessment and oral history phases identified specific patterns of material deterioration, regulatory vulnerability, and interpretive neglect that conservation policy should address.

The findings further suggest that Pakistan's architectural conservation framework, which currently centers on monumental Islamic and colonial institutional structures, must expand to recognise mid-scale hybrid residential environments as valuable heritage. Without such expansion, precincts like Maulana Zafar Ali Chowk will continue to deteriorate through

accumulated commercial pressure, informal transactions, and incompatible material interventions. Extension of heritage protection to comparable late-colonial residential precincts, accompanied by craft-sensitive technical guidance and community engagement, represents an urgent policy priority.

Several directions for further research follow from these findings. Comparative documentation of Krishan Nagar, Mozang, and other early twentieth-century planned residential areas would clarify the extent and variation of hybrid architectural practice in Lahore. Engagement with descendant communities of original residents, now distributed across India and beyond, could recover archival materials and oral traditions inaccessible from within Pakistan. Material studies of traditional lime plaster compounds, including organic additives, would support both scholarly understanding and practical conservation. Comparative work across South Asia could position Lahore's experience within a regional history of negotiated modernity. Ultimately, the hybrid architecture of Maulana Zafar Ali Chowk demonstrates that the negotiation of global modernity in colonial South Asia did not occur primarily in monumental buildings but at the everyday scale of homes, shops, and streets. Recognizing this scale of cultural production is essential for an inclusive and accurate history of twentieth-century architecture, and for the survival of one of Lahore's most distinctive and overlooked urban environments.

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