

***Report about Archival Research in Pakistan
in January and February 2016***

Thanks to the generous support of the Deutsche Morgenländische Gesellschaft, I was able to conduct dissertation research in Pakistan between January 6 and February 26, 2016. In the following report, I will provide an brief description of my dissertation topic, an overview over the archives I visited, and the results of my research trip.

Thesis project

My dissertation deals with the history of Muslim voluntary organizations (so-called *anjumans*) in late nineteenth and early twentieth-century Punjab and traces their contribution to the creation of an Urdu public sphere. I look at how groups of local volunteers adopted European organizational models in combination with the printing press in order to propagate educational, social, cultural and religious reforms. By setting up welfare organizations, publishing houses, colleges and universities, voluntary associations created an institutional framework that contributed significantly to the social and intellectual life of late colonial Punjab. Anjumans helped to circulate reformist and revivalist ideas among local Muslim communities and facilitated public debates on these topics. In addition, voluntary organizations effectively mobilized opposition against Christian missionaries and Hindu reform movements in defense of Islam. Their activities contributed to the emergence of a vibrant public sphere which drew on discourses of modernity while being deeply rooted in the religious traditions of the Indian subcontinent at the same time.

Archives

On this trip to Pakistan, I conducted archival research in the following institutions: the Anjuman-i Himāyat-i Islām (Society for the Defense of Islam), the University of the Punjab (New Campus), and the Pakistan Research Society.

The Anjuman-i Himāyat-i Islām is the oldest still operating Muslim voluntary association in Lahore. Founded in 1884, it has since grown into a social welfare empire that runs a number of schools, colleges, orphanages, and a publishing house from its headquarters on Multan Road in Lahore. The same premises also house one of its orphanages and the Anjuman's law college. The organization has preserved some of its historical records which are kept at a small library inside the compound. I spent about two weeks digitizing handwritten meeting minutes, committee reports, records of public meetings and published annual reports by this Anjuman covering the time period from 1884 to 1946. I also spoke with its director, former supreme court judge Manzoor Hussain Sial, and interviewed a number of staff members about the current work of the Anjuman. The material I collected there provides detailed insights into the institutional setup and daily workings of this particular voluntary organization, including its membership, finances, internal debates and decision-making processes.

The next archive I visited was the main library of Punjab University, whose new campus is located on the banks of the canal in the southern parts of Lahore. In the wake of the attacks on the Army Public School in Peshawar and more recently on Bacha Khan University, security at Punjab University was extremely tight. Visitors had to pass multiple checkpoints upon entering campus. Watchtowers with sniper guards, sand sacks at each entrance, and safety instructions in every building were a constant reminder of the threat terrorism poses to educational institutions and indeed all forms of public life in Pakistan. It took me two days to obtain permission for entering the campus along with a library ID. The holdings of the main library proved interesting and are worth to be explored further. I discovered several reports by voluntary organizations, pamphlets from the colonial period, and a full run of the *Paisa Akhbar* from 1930, the most widely circulated daily newspaper in the Punjab province during the colonial period. However, a conversation with the head librarian of the Oriental Section revealed that the library of the Research Society of Pakistan (RSP), also located on the new campus, held more promising material. For that reason, I shifted there to explore its holdings

The Research Society of Pakistan is a semi-independent academic body which is overseen by the Department of History and Pakistan Studies at Punjab University. It publishes a journal and a monograph series and runs a small library. The chair of the History Department, currently Dr. Muhammad Iqbal Chawla, is also the Society's head. I had to obtain his written permission before I could access the library, which is tucked away on the third floor of an obscure building in a remote corner of the campus. When I arrived there, the library was in a condition of complete neglect: floor,

table and shelves were dirty, old shoes and bottles were lying around, thick layers of dust covered the books and empty bees' nests were stuck to their pages. The catalogue was outdated and did not match the existing records because the actual order of the books had not been preserved. But the material I found there proved to be a treasure trove for every scholar working on colonial Punjab. The RSP has an excellent collection of pre- and post-Partition newspapers, including issues of the *Zamindar*, *Inqilab*, *Millat*, *Khatoon*, *Khilafat*, *Comrade*, *Sach*, *Hamdard*, *Subha Sitara*, *Koh-i-Noor* and *Outlook*. The *Zamindar* in particular is an invaluable resource for historians working on the Punjab province in the early twentieth century. It was published since 1911 from Lahore as a daily newspaper under the editorship of Zafar Ali Khan, an important Muslim public intellectual, journalist, political leader and staunch opponent of British rule. To my knowledge, only one other archive in the world (the International Institute of Social History in Amsterdam) holds issues of the *Zamindar*, and that only for the years 1920, 1930 and 1949. The collection at the RSP is not complete, but it has full runs for the years 1911-15 and 1921-27. While earlier runs of the paper are very brittle, later ones are in good condition. I spent about two weeks photographing material from the *Zamindar* and *Inqilab* related to activities of Muslim voluntary organizations.

In addition to newspapers, the RSP holds a collection of pamphlets and books from the colonial period. These include writings and publications related to religious organizations such as the *Nadwat al-'Ulamā'*, publications by organizations and individuals affiliated with the Aligarh movement, reports by various All-India organizations such as the All-India Educational Conference, administrative reports regarding the Punjab, writings and reports by members of political parties such as the *Jam'iat-i 'Ulamā-yi Hind* and movements such as the *Khilafat Movement* and the *Ahrar movement*. Of particular interest for my research were reports, meeting minutes and publications by a number of different *anjumans*. I spent another two weeks digitizing those. On the side, I tried to improve the working conditions at the RSP. I wrote a report about its current state for Dr. Iqbal Chawla, which resulted in a thorough cleaning of the whole place, reorganization of its collection, and efforts to preserve its records.

Results

This field trip has proven very fruitful for my dissertation research. I was able to collect a wide

range of sources that will provide a good foundation for the first two chapters I want to write. From the material I collected at the Anjuman-i Himāyat-i Islām, I will create a case study of this particular *anjuman* to demonstrate the organizational patterns along which voluntary organizations in the pre-Partition period originated and operated. A detailed analysis of its meeting minutes will reveal how this particular *anjuman* debated educational, cultural, and religious reforms within the Muslim community of the Punjab. Reports by other *anjumans* in the province will provide the foundation for a survey of their geographical distribution, infrastructure, social background, financial foundation, and ideological orientation. Newspaper articles provide insights into the range of public activities of these organizations, the debates they created or helped to shape, and how they were received by a wider audience.

In addition to the archival research I conducted, I was also able to meet a number of scholars working on related topics while being in Pakistan. They provided me with further hints about archives and their holdings and where to find additional material. I am planning to return to Pakistan in the fall for another three weeks of archival work and then cross the border to India to continue with my research in Amritsar, Delhi, and Patna.