

A JOINT NCCU-NCSU CONFERENCE PROPOSAL

“CONTEXTUALIZING PAKISTAN: FROM WITHIN AND WITHOUT”

Despite on-going challenges to doing research in Pakistan, the country remains important to key issues in the social sciences and humanities. To highlight this continued importance, we propose a joint NCSU-NCCU conference (April 4-5, 2014) to crystallize new directions in the study of the country. This conference will examine how interconnections between local, regional, national and global forms of identity—both within and outside of South Asia—impact what it means to be “Pakistani.” The conference will also explore questions concerning how these interconnections can shape the humanistic and social scientific study of Pakistan in the 21st century.

Despite a variety of directions in recent research on Pakistan, much focus remains on geopolitics, security studies and questions about the socio-cultural roots and structure of the Pakistani state. This research has been augmented by work on Islamic politics and movements that address the relationship between state and society. To supplement these areas of study, our joint conference focuses on how forms of socio-cultural and historical interconnection shape national, regional and local identities within Pakistan. It approaches these identities through their real and imagined interconnections, both inside and outside the territorial limits of the Pakistan. Historical scholarship on Pakistan notes that a nationally grounded identity that derives from a less territorially oriented two-nation theory is potentially problematic socio-culturally. It is less noted that similar national-level identity issues also historically apply to Pakistan’s provinces, which were either divided territorially and/or defined by socio-cultural identities that extended beyond state borders. Since Pakistan’s creation, it has continued to be marked by internal and external migrations and displacements. These phenomena (e.g., migration to the Persian Gulf and the arrival war refugees from Afghanistan) continue to play major historical and socio-cultural roles in what means to be Pakistani.

Our joint conference aims to examine how historical and socio-cultural interconnections shape and influence identity in Pakistan. It does not move away from the study of state and society but, instead, examines how “external” connections (i.e., the “without”) at the national, regional and local levels can contour identities (and conflicts about it) “within” Pakistan. The conference will be organized around two themes:

1. The first theme examines how regional and local identities within Pakistan are/were shaped and constituted by “external” phenomena (e.g., historical legacies that predate Partition, identities that Partition undid and/or re-imagined, socio-cultural formations that extend from beyond the state’s territorial limits and/or the geography of post-1947 and 1971 Pakistan). Whether focused on or in Sindh, Punjab, the northern administrative units, Baluchistan or Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, we hope to bring into comparative dialogue work on regional and local identities that have been shaped by (but not subsumed by) state-centered narratives about the nation of Pakistan.
2. The second theme focuses on continuities and disruptions that have shaped (and continue to influence) the networks of movement that link Pakistan’s territory to other locations in the Indian Ocean region and the world at-large. While these networks (linked to employment, trade,

pilgrimage, imperial connection and religious affiliation) often predate the creation of Pakistan, they continue to historically and socio-culturally shape identity in Pakistan. This second theme aims to bring together studies about networks of movement to explore, as under the first theme, how life “outside” of Pakistan contours and shapes what it means to be Pakistani.

A main goal of this conference is to draw new bodies of research into conversation with older scholarship on state and society so as to develop a vision of Pakistan Studies that is mutually shaped by historical and socio-cultural phenomena which are both “outside” and “inside” the territorial boundaries of the Pakistani state.

PROPOSED CONFERENCE SCHEDULE (April 4-5, 2014)

Day One

Date: Friday, April 4th

Time: 1:30 to 5:30

Location: North Carolina Central University’s Department of Language and Literature

1:30-1:45 Opening remarks by conveners Matthew Cook (North Carolina Central University) and David Gilmartin (North Carolina State University).

Session 1 (1:30-3:30): *The Inside and the Outside in the Creation of Pakistan*

1:45-2:30 Venkat Dhulipala (UNC, Wilmington)

2:30-3:15 Lucy Chester, (University of Colorado, Boulder)

3:15-3:45 General Discussion Directed by Local Session Chair

3:45-4:00 Coffee break

Keynote Lecture

Date: Friday, April 4th

Time: 4-5:30pm

Location: North Carolina Central University’s Department of Language and Literature

Potential Speaker: Alyssa Ayres (U.S. State Department)

Day Two

Date: Saturday, April 5th

Time: 9:30 to 5:30

Location: North Carolina State University’s Department of History

Coffee: 9:30-10:00

Session 2 (10:00-1:00): *Provinces and the Construction of Pakistani Identity*

10:00-10:45 Cabeiri Robinson (University of Washington, Seattle)

10:45-11:30 Iqbal Sevea (UNC-Chapel Hill)

11:30-11:45 Coffee break

11:45-12:30 Nosheen Ali (Habib University, Karachi)

12:30-1:00 General Discussion Directed by Local Session Chair

1:00-2:00 Lunch Break

Session 3 (2:00-5:45): *Networks and the Construction of Pakistani Identity*

2:00-2:45 Shetal Chhabria (Connecticut College)

2:45-3:30 Matthew Cook (North Carolina Central University)

3:30-3:45 Coffee break

3:45-4:30 Hafeez Jamali (University of Texas at Austin)

4:30-5:15 Rob Nichols (Richard Stockton College)

5:15-5:45 General Discussion Directed by Local Session Chair