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**AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF PAKISTAN STUDIES
FINAL REPORT**

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A. Professional Aspects of Grant Experience

These past nine months of dissertation research in Pakistan under the auspices of the American Institute of Pakistan Studies have proved invaluable for my personal and professional development. I have formed and cemented friendships, refined my language skills, expanded my personal library and amassed enough data for a lifetime of work. The trick now will be to review, synthesize, edit and re-present all this raw experience into something more tangible. Something resembling a dissertation.

Though based in Lahore, I have traveled extensively this past academic year with frequent sojourns to Karachi, Islamabad, Multan, Bahawalpur and Allahabad (southern Punjab). Given the nature of my work, most of my contacts, interviews and time were centered around the circles of Chishti-Sabiri Sufi disciples in these locales. Through numerous meetings arranged by AIPS, both formal and informal, I also had occasion to

meet several people that I may not have otherwise encountered, many of whom have added to my research in unanticipated and productive ways. In addition, I have cultivated personal contacts with faculty members at Karachi University, the National College of Arts in Lahore, the International Islamic University (Islamabad), Qaid-e Azam University, and the Islamic Ideology Council (Islamabad). Collectively, these relationships have added depth, insight and novel perspectives to my research.

I currently plan to remain in Pakistan for an additional six months under a grant from the Social Science Research Council. While continuing with my interviews and library research, I hope to move from research to formal writing during this period. As part of this process of integration and inscription, I also plan to give a series of lectures through the American Cultural Centers in Islamabad, Karachi and Lahore in late October. In addition, I will be presenting papers on my research at the American Academy of Religion and American Anthropological Association conferences in the fall.

B. Details of Academic Assignment

My research project is primarily ethnographic in nature. Living in Lahore in 1995-1996 while studying Urdu at the Berkeley Urdu Language Program (BULPIP), I developed a number of personal contacts within the Chishti Sabiri Sufi order. In the interim years, I managed to keep in close touch with several key members of this group. Returning to Lahore last September, I was pleased to find that I had not been forgotten. During these past nine months, most of my time has been spent among these circles of disciples. I've conducted hundreds of hours of taped interviews, traveled extensively with the followers to attend *urs* celebrations throughout the country, and explored the

order's two large libraries (in Karachi and Allahabad) along with several personal manuscript collections. Contacts with university faculty members have certainly provided further dimensions to my work, but the bulk of my energy and time has been spent conducting ethnographic research. Anthropological research is only as good as the quality of your relationships, and my work was facilitated primarily via the contacts of my advisors (primarily Professor Carl Ernst of UNC-Chapel Hill). While AIPS offered to provide further institutional affiliations, I actually avoided these formalities in favor of developing my own personal contacts.

The materials demanded of research would naturally vary depending on the project, but I'll throw in a few suggestions for what it's worth. While nearly everything imaginable is available in Pakistan (for a price), I would recommend that any research scholar bring his or her own laptop computer, complete with extra batteries. I brought along my own tape recording equipment and digital camera as well, both of which have proved invaluable. I would not recommend lugging along a printer, however—I purchased an HP color printer in-country for a very reasonable price. In my experience, everything else—food, clothing, toiletries, etc—is abundant and affordable. The real issue (beyond finding a suitable place to live) is transportation. I opted for a motorcycle. Through undeniably dangerous it's relatively cheap, easy to park and highly maneuverable through traffic—and the experience has done wonders for my peripheral vision and reflexes too.

C. Administrative Aspects of Grant

In the numerous trips I made to Islamabad, I always found Nadeem Akbar and the staff at the AIPS office to be professional, accessible, friendly and eager to help. Most recently, Nadeem has gone out of his way to help me secure a visa extension. The new AIPS office building is ideally located and very nice, and the computer facilities were especially welcomed. Living in Lahore, however, the office staff and resources were often simply too far away to be of much assistance.

In the spirit of constructive criticism, I will offer a few concrete suggestions as well. AIPS did very little to ease my transition into the country. In particular, it would have been useful to have some basic assistance in searching for and securing housing. While I would not expect the AIPS staff to act as real estate agents, some general advice regarding the nuances (and dangers) of renting in Pakistan would certainly be welcomed by any grantee stumbling off the airplane with mountains of luggage in tow. In fact, I think that AIPS could do a lot more to provide its grantees with basic logistical information **before** their arrival in country. For example, a packet of materials providing such items as local maps and concrete advice regarding local medical facilities and reputable doctors would be extremely useful. Given my own personality and work habits, I honestly appreciated the hands-off approach, but some basic logistical support, particularly during the first few weeks, would have been most appreciated. I personally relied heavily on friends in those initial weeks, but for a person coming to Pakistan for the first time the transition could certainly be unsettling.

D. Overall Critique and Commentary

In retrospect, it would have been useful if AIPS could have provided me with a list of university faculty members and institutions (libraries, NGOs, government agencies) with interests and resources relevant to my research needs. These contacts eventually emerged, but a gentle push in the right direction would have been very helpful. I would appreciate more organized social gatherings as well, with opportunities to interact with other grantees, administrators, and interested local university faculty.

On the whole, however, it was a pleasant and productive year. I am immensely grateful to AIPS for its generous financial support over these past nine months, and hope that the work which eventually emerges from this intensive year of research will reflect well on all the people and institutions that have made my stay in Pakistan so rewarding.