

AIPS Summer Research Grant Summary
Shayan Rajani

I travelled to Pakistan in 2013 to identify an archive for my PhD dissertation on colonial rule on the frontiers of British India. The focus of my research is primarily on Balochistan. As little historical research has been carried out on Balochistan, it was difficult for me to ascertain, while in the US, the kinds of primary sources available in the archives on my subject. For this reason, a trip to the archives in Pakistan was an essential part of writing my prospectus.

Because colonial policy with regards to Balochistan was at different times administered from Karachi, Lahore, and Quetta, it was necessary for me to visit the provincial archives in each of the three cities. These visits helped determine the scope of the colonial record. The records proved scant for some of the historical periods and themes, which I was interested in, but very rich for others. My trip also allowed me to assess ease of access to these various archives and helped gauge the feasibility of working in these sites for my dissertation research.

My trip to the Sindh Archive in Karachi and the Sindhi Adabi Board in Hyderabad yielded valuable Persian manuscripts from the eighteenth century. The library at the Institute of Sindhology in Jamshoro housed many useful books in Sindhi from the colonial period.

Equally valuable were the smaller privately-run archives and personal libraries that I was able to visit in Karachi, Hyderabad, and Quetta. Amongst them, the Syed Hashmi Reference Library in Karachi was particularly noteworthy. This institution was founded by Baloch scholar Professor Saba Dashtiari and is run with the support of the Baloch community in Karachi. The library's own publications and its collection of historical documents were immensely useful for my research. The library also houses a large collection of Baloch journals and magazines.

Getting a lay of the archive in Pakistan on this trip has been vital in recasting my dissertation prospectus in terms that, I believe, are more specific, practicable, and exciting.