

Lhost, AIPS Travel Grant (March 2019)

*Please provide a one-paragraph to one-page report highlighting the significance of this presentation on Pakistan Studies.*

The paper I presented, “Taking Marriage into Account: Legal Complaints and the Matter of Money in Early Twentieth-Century South Asia” at the annual meeting of the Association for Asia Studies in Denver, CO drew upon Urdu *fatwas*, colonial court records, and legal cases from across South Asia to consider the relationship between marriage, family, and economic claims-making in different legal contexts and under different legal regimes.

Specifically, the paper examined claims that litigants and legal-advice-seekers presented in *fatwa* questions and court cases using economic arguments to ground ideas about marital rights and duties. In addition to contributing to larger histories of Muslim marriage and family economy in late-19th and early 20th-century South Asia, this paper contributes to Pakistan studies through its choice of sources (including *fatwa* collections from places like Lahore) and through its theoretical contributions to discussions of marriage, money, and the family in British Indian and Pakistani society today.

Building bridges between late-colonial legal culture and post-colonial legal culture, this paper connected arguments about marital-familial status in late-colonial South Asia with ideas of legal subjecthood and legal status that circulate in international contexts today through questions of immigration eligibility and visa determinations tied to definitions of the Muslim family and to ideas about “bona fide” family members. In so doing, this paper—and the larger research project from which it comes—provide the backstory to current debates over Muslim divorce among Pakistani immigrants in the UK (as discussed in works like John Bowen’s *On British Islam*) and within US immigration debates over who counts as a bona fide family member and what constitutes a legitimate family tie.

By tracing individual economic arguments for or against marital dissolutions, this paper used ideas of family economy to identify individual claims to legal status and located these claims within the long history of making marriage a matter of legal, rather than of personal, status. It thus contributes to a large body of scholarship on the family within Muslim societies and to a growing literature on ideas of class, religion, and status in postcolonial Pakistan.