

## **AIPS Junior Fellowship Tenure Report**

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During the tenure of the Junior Fellowship of the American Institute of Pakistan Studies from December 2017 to February 2018, I conducted manuscript and archival research for my doctoral dissertation in the United Kingdom, France, and India. The two-month period was fruitful in terms of accessing primary sources found in various Persian and Arabic collections on topics ranging from Sunni jurisprudential treatises, legal commentaries, political ethics, and imperial regulations from the seventeenth-century Mughal Empire in South Asia. I began my research stay at the British Library, London working for two weeks and later the Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris where I spent one week. At the Asian Manuscript collections of the British Library. I consulted several manuscripts of Persian chronicles and texts pertaining to the implementation of Islamic law at the Mughal imperial level. My stay was primarily focused on the selection of possible manuscripts I wish to use as well as the consultation of a few, which would form part of my primary sources for the dissertation project. In both London and Paris, archivists provided me detailed assistance in tracing crucial sources from their Arabic manuscripts collections. Part of the difficulty lay in locating which manuscripts came from South Asia given that most catalogues combine all Arabic manuscripts from North Africa to China without explicitly mentioning their provenance.

In India, I had the opportunity of conducting research in Delhi and Kolkata. In New Delhi, I visited the National Archives, which houses a small part of the Fort William College manuscripts. However, they form an important part of my corpus as many of them were acquired from the

Mughal Delhi. More significantly, I had the opportunity to spend at least a week at the Noor Microfilm Centre, Iran Culture House at Delhi. The centre has digitized several manuscripts from across Indian libraries. This provides easy access for scholars and saves time on travelling to various parts of the country. The team at the Noor Centre kindly helped me locate digital copies as there appear to be inconsistencies between various catalogues. As they have a repository of several libraries, it was helpful to cross-reference manuscript copies, scribes, dates of compilation, variations in textual transmission, etc., that is not always possible in single collections.

During the second phase of my research, I spent almost a month at the National Library and the Asiatic Society of Bengal in Kolkata. During this long stay, I was able to read a large set of Persian political ethics texts and Sunni jurisprudential treatises from the seventeenth century. The National Library also houses the manuscript collection of Sir Jadunath Sarkar, one of the foremost twentieth-century scholars of Mughal history. The study and notes of *Akbharat* or “court bulletins” and *Dastur al-‘amal* records made by him were extremely valuable for me as I wish to re-examine his translations and corrections with copies available at the British Library in London. Due to bureaucratic difficulties, I had limited success at the Asiatic Society though. The society is currently restoring their museum. However, I was able to access one crucial Persian translation of a legal treatise that is only available in a single copy. At both institutions in Kolkata, I could avail the services of photocopying a few rare nineteenth-century printed works in Persian and Arabic, many of which were lithographed in Lucknow, Lahore, Kanpur, and Calcutta. Unfortunately, many of these are maintained in an extremely poor condition. Nevertheless, I was able to get crucial references, which will help me understand editorial and philological scholarship as well as Urdu translations made in the nineteenth century on precolonial Islamic juridical texts.

Furthermore, during my research trip, I met with scholars and archivists of Persian and Arabic codicology as well as South Asian history. The archivists at the British Library, London and the National Library, Kolkata were extremely helpful in guiding me through manuscripts and printed books, which could allow me to expand the archival base of my dissertation research. Further, meetings with historians of the medieval and early modern period at the University of Delhi and Jawahar Lal University was an opportunity to discuss the progress in my methodological and conceptual approach as well as the feasibility of my dissertation plan.

I wish to thank AIPS for providing me the Junior Fellowship to pursue manuscript research necessary for my dissertation. I will continue further archival trips in 2018 to complete the required corpus for my dissertation chapters. The stay funded by AIPS also gave me an opportunity to outline some core questions and problems of my dissertation as well as begin sketching an early draft outline of the dissertation chapters. First, I was able to acquire a more in-depth knowledge of the primary and secondary literature that would provide the empirical foundations for my arguments. Second, the trip helped me understand the administrative difficulties in accessing collections in India, which may require that I reorganize my research priorities to efficiently undertake the project. Third, I will read and translate parts of the material I collected so far and incorporate significant portions of them in my writing.

I wish to also thank the staff at AIPS who helped me through the process of the fellowship tenure and provided me with prompt and quick clarification on procedural matters.