

## Conference Report

The Annual Conference on South Asia at the University of Wisconsin Madison is the largest gathering of South Asianists in the world. Now in its 49<sup>th</sup> year, it brings together senior and junior scholars for three days of robust and in-depth debate and discussion.

My presentation on the development of the Lahore High Court was important at this conference as it formed part of a very small number of panels (and even papers this time round!), on Pakistan. As such, its role as an outreach opportunity for Pakistan Studies at the conference was important.

More specifically, my research on the Lahore High Court initiates in the late Sikh period (1840's), continues through the British era (1849-1947), and brings it up to about 2016 in modern day Pakistan. Therefore, the long lens this research employs gives it a certain breath, wider scope, and interdisciplinary approach. It also, rarely, connects not just the British and the modern period, but also the Sikh era with developments in the region.

Furthermore, the specific paper I presented at the conference, focused on the British and the modern period, and enabled us to understand the historical and present dynamics of the judiciary in Pakistan. For a country obsessed with the law (even a dictator wants the courts to validate him!), there is little literature on the development of the judiciary, its internal dynamics, its approaches towards law and the trajectory Pakistani courts are following. While the Lawyers movement in the 2000s has received some attention, seldom has the larger context of the judiciary been understood to properly contextualise and understand the phenomenon.

My paper also located the development of the judiciary within the 'human rights' framework, and assessed how it viewed the subject, both in terms of adjudication of cases, and also 'public interest litigation,' something which has spiked in recent years. It also commented on the future direction of the judiciary in Pakistan.

Taken together this paper, part of a larger project, focused on a very important aspect of Pakistan Studies, the study of which will enable a more comprehensive, nuanced, and thorough study of the country and the region.