

## **AIPS Junior Fellowship Final Report**

*Research Dates:* January-April, 2016

*Research Location:* London, England

As an AIPS Junior Fellow, I spent three months in London doing archival research at the London Metropolitan Archives (hereafter LMA) and at the British Library (hereafter BL) for my dissertation. My dissertation project titled, ‘Performing Britishness: The Social Club in Colonial Calcutta, 1807-1947’, seeks to trace the social history of the British gentleman’s club as it came to be institutionalized in colonial Calcutta at a time when the very nature of colonialism and imperial rule was going through tremendous transformations. Further, my work goes beyond the post-colonial boundaries of India and Pakistan to include the study of club life in Karachi with Calcutta. The inclusion of Karachi and Calcutta will help me trace the flow of people and ideas, between these two key cities, and bring them under the rubric of colonial associational life. By moving past man made boundaries, my study of the gentleman’s club life in Karachi and Calcutta will highlight how logics of imperialism went far beyond national boundaries in spreading ideas of British superiority.

My research in London, both at LMA and at BL, looked at specific club documents that include minutes of club committee meetings, rules and bye-laws of said clubs, propaganda material for club events published in newspapers at the time. For research purposes I also went through unpublished manuscripts of members of clubs in Karachi and Calcutta during their time spent in India either as an officer of the British Raj or as a businessman. The British Library’s resources were especially useful in my search for specific club documents like The Sind Club, The Karachi Club, The Bengal Club, The Calcutta Tent Club and The Calcutta Turf Club. Such documents will help me understand the life of a colonial officer based either in Karachi or Calcutta and the pivotal role the club came to play in their lives. The clubs, such documents show, served more than just as a social space for its members. The personal memoirs highlight, how the members of the above mentioned clubs, used the space of the club to formulate ways to extend their domination over the Indian sub-continent based on the logic of exclusivity, isolation and superiority. The India Office Records were useful to go through when it came to examining official policies that directly impacted the clubs. Whether it came to the discussion of the royal crest as being a part of The Sind Club’s logo or whether the Bengal Club should be included in the list of buildings toured during the Royal visit of 1910 all adds to the constant struggle of identity that these British clubs bore: were they merely an extension of the British Raj in colonial India or were they to remain outside of any official influence and act in their own created space of a public sphere?

My research at the LMA was focused primarily on clubs that bore direct links to clubs in the Indian sub-continent. The Oriental Club, The United Service Club and The East India Club were formed precisely for officers returning from their colonial duties back to England. The symbiotic ties that linked specific clubs in London to their South Asian counterparts once again addresses my argument that imperialism and its proponents were not restricted by geographical boundaries nor were they fixed in a certain time and space. Through a close study of the colonial club culture in London, Karachi and Calcutta my argument will bring into light the associational

life that these clubs facilitated and their own contribution the shaping of imperial rule both in the metropole and in the colony.

While I was in London for 3 months, other than conducting my research on a Junior Research Fellowship courtesy of the AIPS, I also utilized this opportunity to attend events and talks held at the Royal Anthropological Society, Kings' College and at the School of Oriental and African Studies. These opportunities allowed me to meet and network with faculty members from these institutions who's work and interests overlapped with my own. The results of my research will be presented at workshops and conferences during the upcoming year (2016-17) and will be incorporated into my PhD dissertation, with the tentative completion date of December 2017.