

Narrative Report

Though my fellowship lasted a mere month, it was nonetheless an immensely valuable journey for my research on 16th and 17th century Sufi movements that were active in the region of present-day north Pakistan. I spent two weeks in Lahore, working closely with two scholars based at the Gurmani Centre for Languages and Literature at Lahore University of Management Sciences. Dr. Athar Masood and Dr. Rifaqat Ali Shahid both graciously introduced me to numerous scholars across the city and assisted me in accessing the assorted libraries of Lahore. The main library at the University of the Punjab houses an impressive array of Persian manuscripts, and Dr. Masood (who is faculty at the University of the Punjab as well) connected with the chief librarian. With their assistance, I was able to consult multiple manuscripts directly relevant to my research on the Rawshaniyya Sufi movement—including one particularly valuable 18th century text which I have never before seen referenced in any study of the Rawshaniyya. Dr. Shahid graciously introduced me to multiple scholars, and he arranged six interviews with relevant experts on my behalf. I also participated in the International Conference on South Asian Literary Traditions. This was a conference hosted by LUMS and open to the public. While I certainly hope that the audience found my research compelling, it was, at the very least, an excellent opportunity to meet more than twenty Pakistani scholars engaged in questions relevant to my field.

After two weeks in Lahore, I transitioned to Islamabad for the remainder of my research. A fellow participant from the LUMS conference, Dr. Tanvir Anjum, introduced me to many of her colleagues at History Department of Quaid-i-Azam University. Himayatullah Yaqubi, a research fellow at Quaid-i-Azam, was particularly eager to assist me in my research and open the university's libraries to me. The majority of my research, however, was spent in the Iran-Pakistan Institute of Persian Studies. IPIPS houses the Ganj Bakhsh Library which contains approximately 30,000 Persian manuscripts. With the help of the librarians at the Ganj Bakhsh, I identified 14 manuscripts that are directly pertinent to my dissertation work and, as far as I have been able to ascertain, unavailable anywhere else in the world. The library is currently preparing digital reproductions of these manuscripts for me. At the Ganj Bakhsh, I met another scholar of Persian language and Sufi history. Dr. Ali Abu Turab subsequently invited me to lecture on the academic study of Sufism. The lecture was hosted by Salook, an international Sufi outreach program based in Islamabad. Though I devoted most of my time in Islamabad and Lahore to archival research and meeting local professors and experts, I nevertheless spared appropriate time to attend music festivals, visit historic sites, and share a tea or two with hosts of new friends.

It is difficult to overstate the importance of this fellowship for my dissertation work. I returned home having read or reproduced close to 20 manuscripts that promise to significantly impact how we understand the 16th century Rawshaniyya movement and its heirs and critics. The proselytization and subsequent refutation of the Rawshaniyya altered the social position of Afghans in the northwest Mughal Empire and molded the discourses of early modern Afghan religiosity. Furthermore, Pashto

prose literature emerged for the first time as part of the Rawshaniyya mission. In short, how we understand the Rawshaniyya directly informs how we understand social formation in the northwest Mughal Empire, the nature of Afghan Sufis and saints, and the role of Pashto (and other vernacular languages) in the imaginative structures of belonging and collectivity. Due to the generosity and support of the American Institute of Pakistan Studies, I have made academic contacts and accessed invaluable materials that I believe will position me to contribute to substantially revising our understanding of the Rawshaniyya movement and the ways in which it connects to larger patterns of religion and literature in early modern South Asia.