

AIPS Short Term and Lecturing Fellowship
Final Grant Report:

Mubbashir Abbas Rizvi

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Project Title: Thal Development Authority and the Contentious Promise of National Development.

The short-term fellowship and lecture grant by AIPS was valuable for my preliminary research on the southwestward expansion of irrigation and development projects in the early years of Pakistan. The fellowship also allowed me to present my doctoral research and re-establish contacts with academics and intellectuals in Pakistan. These engagements will greatly help me as I gear up to publish my research findings and pursue my next project on irrigation and postcolonial development in Central Pakistan.

The legacy of Thal Development Authority was in the news during the summer of 2012 in respect to the debate surrounding the establishment of a new Saraiki Province in Southern Punjab. Thanks to the help of AIPS grant and resourceful staff like the Director Mr. Nadeem Akbar, I was able to access primary archive documents at the National Documentation Centre in Islamabad that give detail account of land assessment, settlement of colonies like Liaquatpur, the consideration regarding allotments to different types of farmers, the settlement of pastoral communities, the regulation of Powindah (seasonal migrants from Afghanistan). At the National Documentation Centre, I was able to consult minutes from cabinet meetings, correspondences, and memos of foreign consultants who were brought in to assess and implement the various projects like the settlement of the villages, detailed correspondences between local bureaucrats and the higher branches of interior ministry.

However, at the NDC archives, there was a degree of confusion among the staff about how much access I could have to de-classified files. Initially, I was given the impression that I will be able to access and electronically save declassified files but in the final days I was told that I would only be able to save or print cabinet decisions and not the minutes of various meetings, memos and consultations. This was due to a new policy that was being fleshed out by the interior ministry. I am reporting this in my final report as to warn any future researchers who might be interested in doing archival work in National Documentation Centre in the national cabinet block Islamabad. I also made contacts with community leaders in Sargodha and Mianwali to conduct some interviews and document oral histories about the changes brought about by TDA projects, the implementation of ground water schemes, and the expansion of agriculture. I also got a chance to consult Saraiki periodical, meet community leaders who see the TDA projects as a crucial element in the subjugation and weakening of distinct local communities.

In addition to archival and field research, I had the good opportunity to give lectures and establish contacts with scholars at Forman Christian College (Centre for Public Policy and Research), Quaid-e Azam University (Pakistan Studies Centre) in

Islamabad and young academics and journalists at Punjab Study Group in Lahore. At FC my talk was attended by a diverse group of academics from various institutions like Government College University, Beaconhouse National University, Punjab University and also by provincial level civil service officers. In this talk I emphasized the cultural and historical significance of large infrastructural projects in producing a close identification between state and rural Punjab. My talk at QAU analyzed the vicissitudes of Punjab Tenants' Association to discuss the difficulties faced by rural grass roots social movements that gain momentum and link up with resourceful NGOs and urban activists. The talk analyzed the recent history of Punjab Tenants Association. The Punjab Study Circle is an interdisciplinary forum where academics from LUMS, BNU and QAU gather to discuss emerging scholarship as it pertains to contemporary politics in Pakistan. I participated and presented a paper in a panel entitled: "Water Politics in Punjab from Colonial to Present Day". Majed Akhtar a doctoral student in Cultural Geography at University of Arizona and Mushtaq Gaadi, a lecturer at Quaid-e Azam University, Islamabad, joined me in this panel.

Finally, this fellowship was invaluable for me in giving me the opportunity to get feedback on my monograph and reconnect with scholars in Pakistan. I also had the opportunity to locate some important archives and establish research contacts for my project on TDA.

Best
Mubbashir Rizvi