

AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF PAKISTAN STUDIES
AIPS Grantee Final Report

Name: Cabeiri deBergh Robinson

Grant Category: Pre-Doc. Research

Host Institution:

Institute of Kashmir Studies,
University of Azad Jammu & Kashmir

US Home Institution:

Department of Anthropology
Cornell University

Field of Specialization:

Socio-Cultural Anthropology

Period of Grant: Dec. 23, 1999- June 21, 2000, Sept. 1, 2000- Nov. 30, 2000
(Departed Pakistan 23/12/00)

A. Professional Aspects of Grant Experience:

Comments will be appreciated on such factors as the value of the experience professionally and personally, its value to international understanding, your specific accomplishments in terms of teaching, research, publications, adequacy of professional resources and available associations with other academic people.

During the tenure of the AIPS grant I completed the ethnographic and archival research for my dissertation. I worked with two refugee communities in Rawalpindi and Islamabad, participated in the yearly migration of nomadic Bakerwals from Punjab to Kashmir, developed contacts with Kashiri political representatives, and conducted extensive archival research in the National Archives of Pakistan

I had opportunities for substantial and helpful interactions with scholars at the Quaid-e-Azam University, the Institute of Regional Studies and the Lok Virsa. Library collections leave a great deal to be desired and I suggest that the AIPS/ CORC resource center be equipped with a software package allows the AIPS user to inter the US interlibrary catalogues so that researchers do not spend an undo amount of time trying to access resources or use resources under restricted conditions that may be available at a research institution in the US.

I gave three public lectures in Pakistan during my tenure as an AIPS scholar:

Lecture "Mediating a Peaceful and Sustainable Resolution to the Kashmir Dispute: A Role for Civil Society and South Asian Intellectuals," Presented to the Fulbright Alumni Association of Pakistan Annual Meeting: Fatima Jinnah Women's University, Rawalpindi, Pakistan. (December 8, 2000).

Lecture "Walking from Punjab to Kashmir with the Bakerwals: The Anthropological Method as Social Science Methodology," Presented at the Area Studies Center, Quaid-e-Azam University, Islamabad, Pakistan. (December 6, 2000).

Paper "Culture Change and Kashmiri Language: The Role of Kashmiri Refugees in Pakistan," Presented at Kashmir Solidarity Day, Lok Virsa Institute, Islamabad, Pakistan. (February 14, 2000).

Before my departure from Pakistan, I was approached on several occasions and asked to give a lecture on my research. Because I was finishing my archival research at the time, I committed to presenting my research results when I return to Pakistan in June 2001 and I have completed the analysis of my research materials. I have been asked to speak by the American Center, the Institute of Regional Studies, and the chairperson of Political Science at the

University of Karachi. The director of the Institute of Regional Studies has asked me to submit a manuscript for publication in their monograph series. I am currently working on two articles that have been commissioned for publication in edited American collections on migration and refugees.

B. Details of Academic Assignment:

Research Scholars and students are invited to comment on availability of research materials, faculty co-operations and guidance, problems of gaining access to materials, suggestions for materials researchers ought to bring with them, etc. as may be helpful to other scholars pursuing similar interests.

In all of my interactions with Pakistani scholars, government officials, and bureaucrats, I was extended great respect and aid in accomplishing my research goals. The most difficult permission to secure for this project was the NoC from the Ministry of Kashmir for residence in AJK. That permission was granted to me as a Fulbright scholar and withdrawn before the beginning of the AIPS grant. We were not successful in renewing that permission. However, I was not hindered in any way in my research with Kashmiri refugees in Pakistan. The National Archives of Pakistan gave me full and complete access to the materials which I wanted to see in their collections. The permission process was bureaucratically complex, but once I had supplied all the requested documentation, it was forthcoming.

Excellent software for Urdu word processing is now easily and cheaply available in Pakistan. Anyone working extensively in with Urdu language will benefit greatly from a PC computer which can use this software.

C. Administrative Aspects of Grant:

Suggestions for changes to aspects of program administration.

Information on housing, equipment, social opportunities and what to bring from the US.

The move to the new office/ house in F6/4 created a wonderful possibility for a real study and research space. I know that AIPS/ CORC intends to build the library with bibliographers in residence. One can see that over the course of several years, this will be a real resource for scholars in residence.

One infrastructural improvement that should be made immediately will be fairly inexpensive to implement: the computers which will be equipped with internet access should also be equipped with a university soft-ware program link that allows browsing the library resources available at major research institutions in the US. While I was conducting the archival research for my project, it would have been very useful for me to have had access to the directly into the university network with connections to RLIN/ Madcat and the international dissertation abstracts. I needed information on what collections I could expect to be able to access in the USA in order to decide whether or not to spend in-country research time tracking down sources. (In my case I needed early years of the Civil and Military Gazette. I eventually had a colleague at Cornell do the search for me, and once I had confirmed that I could get those resources through the Interlibrary network, I was able to spend valuable field time working with materials available only in the Pakistan National Archives).

I do hope that the center will be provided with chairs for the study room and library so that proper use can be made of the conference and library tables.

During the course of my grant, I had wonderful opportunities to meet many other AIPS grantees and often we were able to help each other in ways that were professionally rewarding and personally enriching. Several of those interactions have already developed into working relationships that I expect to be greatly helpful in my development as a scholar. However, because I was resident in the Islamabad/ Rawalpindi area for much of the period of my grant, I had the opportunity to meet many other fellows who often did not meet each other, or later met by my introduction. I hope that the AIPS will continue to host a weekend social/ working meeting, I think rather more often than once a year as many scholars, especially the senior fellows, often stay for much shorter periods.

Also, I found that many of the meetings which began as social and became an exchange of insights and ideas, happened in the residential space of the Fulbright house, where AIPS scholars often rented short-term accommodations. I hope that the residential accommodations on the second floor of the new office will become a scholarly community space for the researchers who come to Pakistan under the auspices of the AIPS and facilitate deeper interactions and a space/ time to learn about other current research.

Finally, I would like the board to know that I was very concerned by some recent developments in the relationship between the AIPS and the American Center/ American Embassy Culture and Education secretary & attache.

The Fulbright Foundation changed directors at the same time that a new attache for education was appointed. I observed after September 2000 that the relationship between the AIPS and the American center representatives was less supportive than it had been previously. The American Center had allowed me to use its extensive video editing equipment in April/May 2000 to do a rough edit of some ethnographic footage, after September, it seemed as if the American Center was showing less support of AIPS activities and scholars. I was invited to meet the new attache in my status as an Fulbright Alumni, but no similar invitation was extended to AIPS grantees. I am concerned that the new attache does not seem to be aware of the nature and activities of the AIPS in promoting American/ Pakistani academic exchange and that time should be spent acquainting her with the AIPS.

AIPS grantees have recently lost a number of privileges which were previously extended, such as use of the American commissary. While access to American products, the sports facilities, and the purchase of alcoholic beverages is of course not the first concern of the AIPS, I do know that many grantees did avail themselves of these privileges in the past and that for long stays in Pakistan it was a welcome privilege to be able to serve wine on Thanksgiving, Christmas, or Easter in our own residences. On a more practical basis-- I was extremely grateful to be able to purchase monthly hygiene products which are difficult to find and embarrassing to purchase from Pakistani shops even in Islamabad. The changed relationship between the AIPS and the attache has made the reinstatement of these privileges extremely difficult and precarious.

A representative from the AIPS board might devote some time to her on a coming trip to Pakistan. A positive understanding between the American Center officials and the AIPS allows Mr. Nadeem to deal effectively with unexpected situations as they arise. An American representative of appropriate status will be able to provide the new attache with a full and positive understanding of the AIPS in Pakistan.

D. Overall Critique and Commentary:

Please comments on any additional aspects of the program and the grant experience not covered in this report if you believe it will assist in developing a better program and a more fruitful grant experience.

I have conveyed the following comments to several of the past and present AIPS officers when we met in Pakistan, including Dr. Wilma Heston and Dr. Hank Kennedy, but I do want to take this opportunity to commit this to writing:

I was offered several grants to conduct dissertation research in Pakistan, including several for the period in which I accepted this grant from the AIPS. One of the grants which I declined was a Fulbright-Hays Doctoral Dissertation Research Abroad Fellowship (1999-2000) which I declined against the advice of my dissertation advisor who felt that it would be an unwise career move to decline a more prestigious award in order to take an AIPS grant. I made the decision to accept the AIPS grant because I knew that especially given the sensitive nature of my research and the bureaucratic structure of Pakistani academic and research institutions, the institutional support which I would have in Pakistan as an AIPS scholar could not be matched by the abstract prestige of a funding agency with no in-country administrative structures.

The AIPS support in securing an NoC from the Ministry of Education was invaluable in this research. That NoC not only helped me to get my visa, but it also served as the primary way in which I was able to document the legitimacy of my research activities to a number of Pakistani government institutions, most importantly the National Archives of Pakistan which issued me a security clearance card on the basis of my AIPS NoC. The AIPS affiliation also allowed me to network contacts in academic institutions and government ministries who often agreed to meet with me immediately on the strength of my affiliation with the AIPS.

In addition to the institutional aspects of the AIPS grant and the respect and seriousness with which scholars and government officials welcomed me as an AIPS grantee, the personal hospitality and professionalism of the Deputy Director in Pakistan, Mr. Nadeem Akbar, has been an important part of my grantee experience in Pakistan. When one is in a foreign country for an extended period of time (I was in Pakistan for 22 months on Fulbright IIE and AIPS fellowships), the quality and caring of personal interactions become a foundation which supports the intellectual research activities. Mr. Nadeem always made himself available to help me solve professional difficulties when they arose and he was extremely helpful in co-ordinating the activities of my research assistant when I was traveling or in touch only by email. However, Mr. Nadeem also evidenced a deep ethic of personal care; he helped me find medical care when I was injured in a motorcycle accident, he provided his home and cell numbers to my research assistant when we traveled for long periods away from populated areas so that my assistant could reach him if there was any trouble or if I became ill or injured, and he contacted me by phone to inquire into my well-being if he did not hear from me for an unusually long period of time. These small cares, outside of the technical duties of his job description, made me feel confident that I could count on him for support should an emergency ever arise, and that provided a wonderful sense of security in a country where, by matter of sheer distance, one can not count on family for support in a difficult situations.

My experience as an AIPS grantee, and comparison of that experience with those of dissertation research fellows who came to Pakistan on Fulbright-Hayes or SSRC grants during the time that I was in Pakistan, has convinced me that the infrastructural and administrative support which is extended to AIPS grantees is an invaluable part of the grant and makes it the most desirable grant for dissertation research in Pakistan currently available.