

AIPS Grantee Final Report

Yvette C. Rosser
Name

Doctoral Dissertation Research
Grant Category

Dr. Tariq Rahman, Quaid-e-Azam, Islamabad
Host Institution

UT Austin
Home Institution

Curriculum History
Field of Specialization

Period of Grant:

My grant was to have begun in September 1998 but due to an official travel ban resulting from the US bombing of Osama bin Laden's suspected camps in Afghanistan, I had to delay my plans and I arrived instead during the war-like situation in Kargil in 1999. During the 1998 and 1999 school year, I had planned to spend time in Pakistan and Bangladesh but was unable to go to Pakistan until June. Because I was not able to complete my research in Pakistan in 1998-99, AIPS graciously agreed to extend my fellowship in to the next year. That fall, I was scheduled to leave for Pakistan again on October 23, 1999. Then on the eleventh, General Musharraf staged his military coup. Even though there was no official travel ban, my family was very reticent for me to go until the situation could be accessed. I was finally able to organize childcare and leave again for Pakistan in February, 2000—luckily, there were no wars, no air strikes, no coups, or other serious diplomatic incidents.

Summer 1999	arrived June 18, 1999 via the Delhi-Lahore bus departed August 28, 1999 on a flight from Karachi to Dhaka
Spring 2000	arrived February 22, 2000 in Karachi via Gulf Air departed March 17, 2000 via the Lahore-Delhi bus returned April 8, 2000 via PIA flight from Bombay to Karachi departed April 29, 2000 via Gulf Air from Karachi

Professional Aspects of Grant Experience

Comment 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.

My research experiences in Pakistan, sponsored by the American Institute of Pakistan Studies, were of great value both professionally and personally. I met many interesting and informative historians, intellectuals, social activists, educators, and ethnic nationalists. I lived and traveled with Pakistani friends, making my stay there very convenient and safe. I was welcomed and treated with respect everywhere I went. There was a positive response to my topic of research and people were friendly and helpful. I collected materials relevant to my dissertation and area of academic interest, including textbooks, curriculum materials, and taped interviews with historians and other scholars. I learned many details about Pakistan

that have contributed significantly to my interpretation of the data and the work I am doing on comparative historiography in South Asia.

I have always hoped that my work on the politics of history and nationalist narratives in social studies textbooks would be of "value to international understanding". There is a growing interest in the study of textbooks as a contested site for nationalist discourse and identity formation. Questions such as "whose history gets into the textbooks and why", have informed several recent studies in Israel, India, Bosnia, Japan, Germany, and Spain. There are, as well, on-going initiatives in Pakistan to eliminate the negative rhetoric from the history textbooks and to write less ideological history—several current social studies textbooks published by OUP Karachi are representative of these efforts. I hope that my work will offer insights into these questions.

Teaching:

The value of my AIPS experience in terms of teaching is not applicable in my current situation since I am still ABD and not yet employed. When I complete my Ph.D. I will use my background and experiences in Pakistan in future professional activities. In this context, I have presented papers at several academic conferences drawing from the materials I collected in Pakistan:

- * In May 2000, I presented a paper at a conference sponsored by the World Sindh Institute in Washington, D.C. The paper was titled, "The Diabolical Raja Dahir: Historical Dissonance and Sindh's Quest for Identity," — other guests and presenters included K.R. Malkani of the BJP, Mumtaz Ali Bhutto of the PPP, and Afrasiab Khattak, chair, Pakistan Human Rights Commission, and others.

- * In October 2000, I delivered a paper titled "Denial of History and Loss of the Self in the *Pakistan Studies Curriculum*," at a conference sponsored by the Association of Third World Studies (ATWS) in Denver, Colorado, (possible publication forthcoming in the ATWS journal).

- * In March 2000, at The Comparative and International Education Society (CIES) conference, in San Antonio, TX a Sindhi friend of mine delivered a paper I had written titled, "Comparative Historiography: The Politics of History in South Asia." I could not deliver the paper since I was able to arrange my trip to Pakistan and would have to miss the CIES conference, though my paper had been accepted. Therefore Rakshanda Mahar delivered the paper in my absence.

I also presented at several seminars while in South Asia:

- * In July 1999, in Islamabad, I delivered a paper titled, "Comparative Study of Social Studies Textbooks in Pakistan, India, and Bangladesh" sponsored by the Islamabad Social Sciences Forum. [Now renamed COSS, the Council on Social Sciences is an active group of intellectuals headed by Dr. Inyatullah, founder of the Foreign Relations Department at Quaid-e-Azam University.]

- * In April 2000, I delivered a paper, "Ideology versus Education: The Islamization of *Pakistani Studies Curriculum*," in Karachi, sponsored by Dr. Rahat Saeed of the Irtiqa Institute, at a symposium "Re-Examining the Ideology of Pakistan."

- * In July 1999, I delivered a paper in Dhaka, titled, "Pakistani Historians and the Bangladesh War of Liberation," sponsored by the Centre for Development Research, Bangladesh (CDRB)

and the American Institute of Bangladesh Studies (AIBS); the paper discussed the slant of official information available in Pakistan about the breakup of the East and West wings of the country. [Representatives from both the Indian and the Pakistani High Commissions to Bangladesh well as several retired Bangladeshi ambassadors attended the seminar which received lengthy write-ups in Dhaka newspapers.]

* In July 2000, I delivered a paper at the Indian Council for Historical Research (ICHR), New Delhi titled, "Elisions in the Moghul Legacy: Akbar in Indian and Pakistani Textbooks".

Publications:

* "Islamization of Pakistani Social Studies Curriculum" has been accepted for publication in a forthcoming volume, *Religious Fundamentalism: Global Perspectives*, edited by Thomas K Carr (forthcoming).

* "Hegemony and Historiography: The Politics of Pedagogy," *Asia Review*, Dhaka, Fall 2000.

* An article on the Talibanization of Pakistani intellectual space will appear in an forthcoming issue of *The Friday Times*, the weekly news magazine from Lahore.

Research:

I was able to accomplish my goals and found enough fascinating and relevant materials to write several articles and use for my dissertation. I am still in touch with friends and colleagues in Pakistan and hope to return there again in the future. It seems sometimes that I stay more abreast with what is going on in Pakistan than in my own country!

Research scholars and students are invited to comment on availability of research materials, faculty cooperation 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.

My only advice to future grantees is try to make as many contacts as possible prior to leaving for Pakistan. Having connections already in place, greatly facilitates any efforts. Living accommodations can always present a problem, especially for woman alone. My first visit to Pakistan in 1997 was sponsored by Predissertation Fellowship from the Social Science Research Council (SSRC). In 1997 I was able to stay at the UGC guesthouses in Islamabad and Lahore. Letters from scholars and officials associated with Pakistani institutions allowed me the privilege of staying at the very comfortable and affordable UGC guesthouses. This is a very advisable possibility for shorter stays. In the Spring of 1997, before leaving for Pakistan, I met Professor Tariq Rahman while he was a Fulbright Fellow at UT Austin. Dr. Tariq was very helpful and I became friendly with his family. The SSRC suggested the name of Dr. Rubina Saigol, a scholar and activist in Lahore, with whom I communicated prior to leaving for Pakistan. Rubina was very informative and introduced me to Dr. Mubarak Ali, a virtual treasure chest of historiography. I also met Dr. Shemeem Abbas while in Islamabad. She has her Ph.D. from UT and is now back in Austin and a good friend. Shemeem introduced me to Dr. Arifa Sayyida in Lahore who was very helpful when I returned in 1999. I stayed at her brother's home in Islamabad in June and July 1999. In March 2000 I spent Eid with Arifa and her family in Lahore. I also became very close to several people in Sindh who welcomed me into their homes like family and drove me around the province for several weeks. Occasionally, there were problems arising from close quarters or differences in schedules when I was sometimes constrained to change my agenda to meet that of my host.

Nonetheless, the positive experience of living with a family rather than at a hotel or hostel was most memorable and definitely preferable, though not without its complications. Had I spend longer periods in Pakistan, instead of just two months at a time, I might have considered renting a flat. But that is not without all of its homemaking obligations.

Then there was the issue of the "domineering macho tour-guide/translator". Several times, I found myself under the guidance of friends and colleagues who took it upon themselves to direct my research. Though I greatly appreciated their dedication and enthusiasm, there were occasions when I was prevented from visiting some of the people I had planned to interview because my host/guide did not agree with their political orientation or some other uncomfortable manipulation of events. Since I was usually quite beholden to them for transportation or accommodations or other necessities, I had little choice but to accept the limitations of certain situations. Had I been traveling independently, perhaps some of my data would have been different. Occasionally, I also wasted valuable time, waiting and waiting for missed appointments or for my "tour-guide/translator" to take care of personal business or some other time consuming obligation which kept us from going ahead with our planned activities. The annoyance of such interference and delays was counter-balanced by the good intentions of my associates and the actual necessity of being under the "protection" of a male while traveling to some of the remote areas of Pakistan, particularly in rural Sindh and Balouchistan. Frankly, without the able help of some of the people I met, it would have been far more difficult to accomplish my research goals given my time constraints.

C. Administrative Aspects of Grant.

Please comment on any aspects of program administration in which changes should be considered. Information on housing, household equipment, food, schooling for children, clothing, medical, social opportunities, and suggestions on what should be brought from the United States are also welcome by future grantees.

I was most impressed by the helpfulness of the officers at AIPS. In particular, Dr. Hank Kennedy was most accommodating. I had all sorts of problems just getting to Pakistan, my visits punctuated as they were by the travel ban imposed in August 1998, the war-like situation in Kargil in June 1999 and the military coup in October 1999. I also had the additional complication of also having to do research in Bangladesh and India during the same period and therefore traveled between the three countries several times. Perhaps the biggest challenge was trying to keep my sons healthy and happy while I was doing my research. There was only one snafu: even though the travel ban was lifted in January, due to some miscommunication, I did not find out that I was free to travel to Pakistan until March. Had I known earlier, I would have taken my sons with me to Pakistan in February instead of going back to Bangladesh. This would have given me more time in Pakistan. I think this problem arose because I did not use the internet as much as I should have while in South Asia in 1998-99. I depended on the mail and phone and somehow the information that the ban had been lifted did not reach me. Nonetheless, AIPS was most helpful. The amount of money was quite generous and allowed me to fly between destinations in Pakistan and to purchase books and other materials. I hope to go back to Pakistan one day soon. I cherish my friends and associates there. Nadeem Akbar at the AIPS office in Islamabad was very helpful during my 1999 visit.