

AIPS Fellowship- Du Fei

2023-2024

Abstract: My dissertation investigates Muslim women's contested engagement with Islamic law in their local and transregional economic life during the long colonial transition of South Asia, focusing on Bengal and Punjab. This project questions the widely held assumption about Muslim women were locally confined and economically passive before the social reform of the late colonial period. I will argue that women's (im)mobility was not a mere historical fact but was constantly being negotiated between male Muslim jurists, colonial officials, and women themselves. Specifically, I ask how Muslim women's practices in creating and managing properties shaped and were also shaped by various conceptualizations of women's position in Islamic law. My project examines a range of legal texts from everyday legal documents to scholarly treatises in Urdu, Persian, and Arabic. Methodologically, I will trace the textual and material circulation of legal documents between these genres to ask how different historical actors interpreted women's legal practices in a variety of ways. In doing so, this dissertation aims to demonstrate how the scholarship on the late Mughal, colonial, and the post-colonial periods can build on each other in terms of both *longue durée* historical connection and theoretical inspiration. I am applying for a two-months fellowship to conduct research for this project in the UK.