

## **AIPS STRG Abstract- Syed Haider Shahbaz**

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Anticolonial Relation: Afro-Asian Solidarity in Urdu Magazines, 1947-1990. Haider Shahbaz (UCLA) The December 1986 issue of the Urdu magazine, "Mehnatkash" (Worker), published by the Baluchistan Labor Federation from Quetta, Pakistan opens with a picture of Nelson Mandela. Placed in the middle of the very first page, the picture is captioned with the announcement that the Baluchistan Labor Federation has sent a letter to the "racist South African government, appealing for the release of the nationalist leader, Nelson Mandela, from prison." "Mehnatkash" was an anticolonial, Marxist, and feminist magazine that merged political education and literary expression to inform people about social movements in Baluchistan. The magazine also covered social movements in other parts of Africa and Asia, like the Free Mandela campaign. Among Urdu magazines, "Mehnatkash" was not alone in its commitment to transnational solidarity against colonialism, capitalism, and patriarchy. Several twentieth-century Urdu magazines were committed to radical forms of internationalism, and along with their support for local struggles, they regularly published political analysis and creative work from and about different parts of Africa and Asia. With the support of the AIPS Short-Term Research Grant, and in close association with various libraries, archives, and institutions across Pakistan, I hope to start planning a dissertation project that focuses on the important yet severely understudied work of radical Urdu magazines and the impact of Afro-Asian solidarity on literary and political cultures in twentieth-century Pakistan. I am particularly interested in understanding the anticolonial relations between South Asia and Africa during the long period of decolonization, especially the ways in which radical Urdu magazines from Pakistan wrote about anticolonial social movements and literatures in Africa. Were these magazines informed by the increased activity around anticolonialism and solidarity during this period on a global level? And how did these global trends shape particular relations between Pakistan and Africa, especially countries in East and South Africa? Looking at magazines like "Mehnatkash," I hope to show that even though racist images of poverty and underdevelopment prevailed in both colonial and postcolonial Pakistani representations of Africa throughout the twentieth century, radical Urdu magazines focused, instead, on a modern and revolutionary image of Africa, calling attention to struggles for national liberation, economic sovereignty, and the movement against apartheid. The proposed research will be conducted from July to September 2023. I plan to visit the following archival sites: National Archives of Pakistan (Islamabad), South Asia Research and Resource Center (Islamabad), Punjab Public Library (Lahore), and Quaid-e Azam Library (Lahore). Other than "Mehnatkash," I am particularly interested in the archives of radical magazines like "Awaz," "Lail-o-Nahar," "Surkh Parcham," "Imroz," "Jabal," and the circular of the Mazdoor Kisan Party. I have also established contact with Kishwer Naheed and Ishrat Afreen, two important Urdu writers who were involved in editing and contributing to these magazines. I will interview them over multiple sessions to get a better picture of the historical period I am researching as well as a better sense of the political and literary inspirations behind these magazines. These interviews will provide an oral history that will supplement my archival research. I have also formed professional contacts with Dr. Ali Raza and Dr. Maryam Wasif Khan at the Lahore University of Management Sciences (LUMS). Through these contacts, I hope to get further guidance on archival research in Pakistan and create an institutional affiliation with LUMS. The generous support of the AIPS is crucial to the successful completion of my project. It will allow me to research the importance of anticolonial literary and cultural practices in Pakistan through a study of Afro-Asian solidarity in Urdu magazines. Thank you so much for your time and consideration.