

**Urdu in Karachi before Pakistan:
Language Politics & Indian Ocean Commercial Connections, 1914-1946**

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The narrative of Urdu's history in Karachi almost always begins in 1947 with the creation of Pakistan and the migration of North Indian Muslims. However, this paper uncovers a deeper history of Urdu in Karachi, centered on the *Anjuman Taraqqi Urdu* (Association for the Advancement of Urdu), South Asia's oldest Urdu promotional association. In 1914 the *Anjuman* established a provincial branch in Karachi. During the late colonial era a cohort of Sindhi scholars and Urdu-speaking merchants in this branch advanced Karachi as a new Urdu center in the hopes that Karachi's imperial commercial ties would open up new Indian Ocean horizons for Urdu and that Urdu could connect Sindhi literati to wider intellectual networks without excluding Sindhi literature. In this paper, I discuss *Rays of Urdu (Shuae-yi Urdu)* the magazine published by the Karachi *Anjuman* in the early 1940s. This magazine advanced Urdu educational schemes in Sindh and showcased poetry lauding Karachi as "Queen of the East (*Mallika-yi Mashriq*)" projecting Urdu across Asia through the city's commercial connections. For example, the magazine's cover art depicted Karachi as the sun spreading rays of Urdu across the Indian Ocean. While Sindhi and Urdu politics ultimately became antagonistic, these ties between Urdu and Sindhi scholars in the *Anjuman* continued into the mid-1950s, which suggests alternative relationships to Urdu beyond exclusive national language policies. In turn, this offers the possibility of telling a non-national history of Urdu in Karachi across the Partition divide and in conjunction with Sindhi and the city's oceanic commercial networks.