

AIPS Fellowship Final Report

Project Title: Gendering Property and Islamic Law in Bengal and Punjab, c. 1770-1870

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1. Significance to Pakistan Studies

The central research question of this project is how Muslim women's participation in the legal processes of creating, exchanging, and managing property shaped and was also shaped by Mughal and British conceptions of women's position in Islamic law. Addressing this question will contribute to existing scholarship in three ways. First, my dissertation adds a *longue durée* perspective to the literature on gendered economic development in South Asia which has hitherto focused on the late colonial and postcolonial periods. Second, my project reassesses the modern transformation of Islamic law in South Asia at the intersection of the legal maneuverings by litigants, the normative jurisprudential traditions of the *ulama*, and colonial governance. Finally, the above two interventions urge us to reimagine South Asian Muslim women's place in global connections. The literature tends to see Muslim women's often limited mobility before the late nineteenth century as the basis to portray them as only achieving world historical importance *through* men and not in their own right. My project instead questions (im)mobility as a legal issue that was constantly being negotiated between male Muslim jurists, colonial officials, and women as litigants and petitioners. Seeing the colonial transition as closely tied to the changing conditions of the dispossession of women, my work provides a deeper historical context to the works on gendered patterns of participation in contemporary economic development and social movements in Pakistan and India

2. Key Outcomes and Deliverables

- I. Examined a few dozens of manuscripts of scribal anthologies of letters and documents and jurisprudential treatises in Persian, Arabic, and Urdu produced during the Mughal and early colonial periods.
- II. Preliminarily examined the Delhi Collection of manuscripts at the British Library.
- III. Selected the manuscripts most relevant for my research for further examination.
- IV. Drafted the outline of a chapter of my dissertation.
- V. Collected materials for an independent article project on gender and knowledge in Islam.
- VI. Presented a paper at the 'Indigenous Histories of Encounters in Asia-Pacific' Conference at Cambridge University.