

Between History and Memory: Contemporary Pakistani Shi'a 'Ulama's Reflections on Politics and Sectarian Harmony

Recent scholarship on Pakistani Shi'ism draws on a historical archive that is primarily textual: books, journal articles, pamphlets, etc. authored by Shi'a *'ulama* and notables. However, as the historian Pierre Nora reminds us, history is different from memory. Complementing recent *historical* examinations, this paper asks a distinct yet related question: What is Pakistani Shi'a *'ulama's* memory of the past? Specifically, how do contemporary *'ulama* remember key political moments since the country's inception and how do they conceptualize their present, considering their minority status and sectarianism. In answering this question, this paper at times challenges and at other points supplements and reinforces the textual archive through the creation of a new oral history archive based on interviews with leading Shi'a *'ulama*.

Through undertaking the above-mentioned examination, this paper makes two additional significant contributions: Firstly, the oral history that lies at the heart of this work provides unique insight into the lives and recollections of some of the most prominent Pakistani Shi'a *'ulama*. Secondly, this paper inaugurates the use of oral history as central to scholarship on Shi'a *'ulama* and underscores the importance of studying Shi'a *'ulama's* memory.