

Significance of Project to Pakistan Studies

On October 23, 2016, I presented a paper at the Annual Conference on South Asia at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. The paper was titled, “The Enchantment of Political Economy: Wealth and its Sciences in Colonial India”.

This paper is part of my dissertation on the translation and reception of classical political economy in South Asia, and it is significant to the field of Pakistan studies in two ways. First, a great deal of the primary source material I presented in this paper was collected in Pakistani archives. Earlier this year, I spent three months in Lahore conducting archival research at the Punjab Archives, the Punjab University Library, the Dyal Singh Trust Library, and the Lahore Public Library. The material I gathered from these institutions shaped the arguments of this paper, and several key sources that I discussed in detail are located in these archives. Despite holding important colonial and pre-colonial research collections, historical archives in Pakistan continue to be hugely under-utilized and, in some cases, completely unexplored. By centering these sources and collections, this paper highlighted the importance of Pakistani archives to the history of South Asia.

The second way in which this paper was significant to the field of Pakistan studies was through its focus on the history of Urdu economic thought. Specifically, the paper discussed a number of Urdu economic texts that were published in the nineteenth century in places like Lahore, Sialkot, Multan, and others. These books show how economic ideas circulated in the colonial public sphere, and how European ideas of political economy were translated into Urdu. In this way, the paper made a contribution to the intellectual history of Urdu, showing how Urdu became a vehicle for vernacular economic ideas. At the same time, the paper also pointed to the pre-history of the economic language that circulates in Pakistan today.