

AIPS 2018 Junior Scholars Conference on Pakistan Studies

Title

Lord of the District and next to God: Policing and Governance in the Punjab

Abstract

The strike of the baton and barrages of bullets coupled with clouds of tear gas have become familiar etchings in an opus of police violence across the postcolonial world that is almost as old as the institution of modern policing and its colonial origins. One might be tempted to reduce the police to a tool of law enforcement when confronted with this anthology. However, I contend that policing was not simply coercion and domination from above, it was also governance from below at the level of the *beat*, the territory a police officer patrolled.

I draw out a textured narrative of everyday policing in colonial Punjab in 3 temporal scenes (1850s, 1880s, 1930s) that complicate conventional narratives of ‘swift justice on horseback’. I argue that the non-regulation Punjab province was the ground for legislating Indians in the same way that Bengal had been the arena for legislating India, a century earlier. Punjab was the site where the next phase of colonial governance, with a shift in emphasis from land regulations to population governance, occurred. Within this shift, the police were the ‘visible’ hand of the colonial state penetrating Indians’ daily lives; crucial to the colonial production of difference and the construction of a fractured colonial subject-citizenship. I delve into the nexus of the police and law to draw out the nuances of police power in an account that goes beyond exceptional moments of colonial violence to shed light on the daily making and re-making of the colonial state through the police.

Short Bio

Hailing from Karachi, Pakistan, I am a 3rd year PhD Candidate in Modern South Asian History at the History Department, Tufts University. In 2013, I started my academic career in History as a Master’s Fulbright Scholar at Tufts under the guidance of Professor Ayesha Jalal and Professor Kris Manjappa. My dissertation, ‘**Empires of the Beat: Policing the Empire, Governing the Colony, Negotiating the Post-colony**’, reframes histories of policing as histories of governance. It focuses on the development of policing in Sindh and Punjab, provinces of colonial India and later post-colonial Pakistan, in the 1840s and the movement of policing practices and personnel across the British empire to Hong Kong and Kenya in the mid 19th century and early 20th century. Currently, I am away on field research partly funded through an AIPS Junior Fellowship.