

AIPS Short-Term Research Grant Final Report

Project Title: Afro-Asian Solidarity in Urdu Magazines, 1947-1990.

Author's Name: Haider Shahbaz

Dates for Project: Jan '24 – April '24

Location: Pakistan

1. Significance to Pakistan Studies

My research focuses on the anticolonial relations between Pakistan and Africa during the long period of decolonization, especially the ways in which radical Urdu magazines from Pakistan wrote about anticolonial social movements and literatures in Africa. I hope to show that even though racist images of poverty and underdevelopment prevailed in both colonial and postcolonial Pakistani representations of Africa throughout the twentieth century, radical Urdu magazines focused, instead, on a modern and revolutionary image of Africa, calling attention to struggles for national liberation, economic sovereignty, and the movement against apartheid. My research contributes to Pakistan Studies by showing Pakistan's literary and cultural relations with other postcolonial sites, especially Africa, and by highlighting the important yet severely understudied work of radical Urdu magazines and the impact of Afro-Asian solidarity on literary and political cultures in twentieth-century Pakistan.

2. Key Outcomes and Deliverables

Outcomes: I was able to look at the archives of radical magazines like "Mehnatkash," "Awaz," "Lail-o-Nahar," "Surkh Parcham," and "Imroz". I was also able to interview editors and contributors to these periodicals like Ishrat Afreen and Kishwar Naheed. This archival research substantially inspired my research on Afro-Asian literary and political cultures and provided a historical foundation to my dissertation on anticolonial relationality. I am excited to work more with the archival material I was able to collect due to the generous support of the AIPS.

Deliverables: My archival research on Urdu periodicals has allowed me to begin writing my dissertation chapter on the representations of anti-apartheid struggles in Urdu periodicals. I have submitted this chapter to a peer-reviewed journal and I will also be presenting this research in a symposium at the Annual Conference on South Asia in Madison in 2024.