

Hashim Ali

Research Proposal

“Students Strike Back: Youth Life and the Promise of Post-Colonial Pakistan”

In the subfields of South Asian Studies and Global Sixties scholarship, the role of post-colonial Pakistani youth is underrepresented. Scholars of the Student Movements in 1960s Pakistan have mostly focused on the street protests as an “event” without delving deeper into the “process” of cultural production. In my dissertation, I provide answers to the following questions to provide us with a deeper and broader understanding of this generation of radical youth activists and student life in general: what constitutes the “Tashkent Generation” in the Pakistani context? What were the gender dynamics of this generation? How did the local and the global forces intersect in this epoch? What can the millennial generation learn, if at all, from the embodied practices and radical political demands made by the post-colonial, post-Partition generation of the 1960s? This dissertation challenges the premise of prevailing scholarship that insists on defining the “political” within the realm of “institutionalized politics.”

Covering the period 1880-1969, *I argue* that the international material archive of Pakistani youth culture that incorporates physical traces in the form of songs, manifestoes, memorials, posters, autobiographies, fashion-style, underground literature and their oral narrations establishes the self-expression of students actors, both male and female, as subjects of history and equally political. The aim of this dissertation is two-fold: (1) to reconstruct a genealogy of the formation of youth culture in post-Colonial Pakistan and (2) to create an oral/visual archive of the 1960s generation in Pakistan. The Global Sixties methodological framework that explores the local/global interaction/imagination offers the most effective lens through which to conceptualize the cultural politics of the nascent Pakistani nation-state, otherwise absent in the existing historiography on Pakistan.

The Pakistani context constitutes the formation of student revolt that led to the overthrow of President Ayub’s government. This involves unpacking the dynamics of the student revolt and the robust youth-culture. In order to capture this experience, I am creating an oral archive of the 1960s generation. There is a rich body of oral historians who have documented the 1968 revolt in Europe and America. Influenced by the method of Luisa Passerini, my study will approach oral testimonies as subjective self-narration rather than just facts. The process of remembrance by the activists and their insistence on its validity as history is key here. Both Lal Khan’s work *Pakistan’s Other Story: The 1968-1969 Revolution* and Iqbal Butt’s work *Revisiting Student Politics in Pakistan* include oral testimonies from the veterans of the revolt. My methodology departs from these authors by mainly focusing on three local sites of resistance namely Lahore, Rawalpindi and Lyallpur/Faisalabad. Secondly, besides interviewing student activists, I will interview self-identifying hippies from the 1960s generation and some marginal female figures whose only entanglement with this group was their age and interaction in these educational institutions. I will ask three sets of questions: What is your educational and family background? What was your involvement in the revolt? How did your experience in the 1960s impact your future careers? I will ask these questions in an unstructured way in order to help them reflect on their experience as college students and their involvement or not in student elections. My goal is to elicit in detail the experience of these actors and their interaction with the urban landscape in the time of upheaval.

I will be conducting oral-interviews with the 1960s generation by skype and in person. I will also be curating my personal research archive of material culture (songs, posters,

manifestoes, memories, photographs etc.) will be conducting my research at the following locations: Lahore, Pakistan. Punjab University and Islamabad, Pakistan. National Archives.