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Ecologies of Water Governance in Pakistan: the Colony, the Corporation, and the Contemporary.

Through ethnographic examination of the irrigation network, I propose to study state-citizen relations, bureaucratic care, conceptions of property, and of the licit in Pakistan. The irrigation regime in the Punjab hinges on the 1873 Canal and Drainage Act. A particular focus of my research is water theft case law. I examine discourse around and actual case law records on water theft – instead of reading these as signs of state failure, the usual verdict when it comes to statecraft in Pakistan, I ask whether these may be better seen as rewriting the social contract, and as commentary on the im/proprietary of a property regime in water. Research at the British library will complement archival research in Pakistan, and enable me to understand the conversations and debates that formed the background to the 1873 Act. I will focus on: conversations around instituting a property regime in water, the rate of water taxation, and the relation between the 1873 Act and other pieces of legislation around the same time.