

Shayan Rajani - AIPS Fellowship Final Report

My dissertation examines the role of regional intellectuals in South Asia—particularly in Sindh—in transforming Islamicate and British textual traditions of geography over the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The AIPS fellowship gave me the opportunity to conduct two months of research at the British Library in London. During this time, I was able to study three sets of sources. Firstly, I was able to examine a wide range of narrative geographies in Persian produced across South Asia and Sindh in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Secondly, I was able to study colonial records documenting early exchanges of cartographic and geographic knowledge between regional intellectuals and colonial officials. Thirdly, I was able to look at geographies produced in Sindhi under the early colonial education system. These sources are key to understanding the emergence of an early modern form of territoriality that crucially informed the colonial tradition of geography and colonial territoriality. This research also contributes to the intellectual and spatial history of early modern Sindh, which is an area of Pakistan Studies that has received little attention until now and is critical to further our understanding of counter-knowledges and counter-geographies that persist in Sindh today.