MARGINS AND MARGINALITY: PAKISTANI STATE AND SOCIETIES
Pakistan Workshop 2010, Rookhow, Cumbria, 7-9 May 2010

This year's Pakistan Workshop provided an intellectually vibrant space in which to reflect on margins and marginalities in Pakistan and Pakistani communities. Scholars presented papers on a variety of topics, ranging from whether Pakistan is or might become a 'failed state' as a result of the legal crisis of 2007, to Musharraf's controversial National Reconciliation Ordinance, to the US drone attacks.

   Iain Edgar and David Henig gave a stimulating paper on the importance of Islamic 'dream-incubation' practice, *istikhara*, for Muslims across the world. The paper offered an ethnographic comparison of such practice among Pakistanis, British Pakistanis and Bosnian Muslims, marking *istikhara* as 'culturally informed'.

   Other papers explored marginality in relation to gender, migration and identity. Pnina Werbner presented a case study of middle-class British Pakistani women across two generations. She argued that these women experience a 'double consciousness' of home and identity that involves both belonging and alienation. In their papers, Fun Hang So and Zubaida Metlo discussed how family prestige and cultural identities are crucial for migrant Pakistani women.

   A number of papers analyzed issues relating to health and the body, and their relationship to religion, cultural values and politics. Kaveri Harriss discussed narratives of women's illness in a British Pakistani context, and presented inter-generational relationships among female British Pakistanis through collective narratives of hardship and struggle. In her paper, Mwenza Blell explored how social factors such as family, marriage, religion and questions of identity play a significant role in determining how British Pakistanis deal with infertility and make use of new reproductive technologies. On HIV/AIDS, Ayaz Ahmed Qureshi gave a broad exposition of Pakistan's response to HIV/AIDS at a state policy level, as well as examining social stigmas around HIV in Pakistani society in their cultural contexts.

   Zohra Ahmed, Martin Sökefeld and Sarah Beyeler gave presentations highlighting the lack of common understanding between the Pakistani government and some Pakistani NGOs and madrasas on issues of law enforcement and religious intolerance. They reminded us that such groups on

the margins are not always religiously oriented, and those that are have their roots in economics and politics as well as religion. In the post-9/11 environment, there is a complex overlap between sectarian violence in Pakistan and the development of transnational jihadist networks. Some of the sources of these phenomena are embedded in the socioeconomic conditions and class tensions described by Mariam Abou Zahab and Urs Geiser in their papers.

A number of papers looked directly at issues of class, status and power. Anushay Malik's paper offered a view of struggle among the social classes in Pakistan's big cities through an examination of the Pakistani labour movement. Jürgen Wasim Frembgen's study found that marginal professionals such as itinerant ear-cleaners claimed noble descent to assume higher status. In a paper on class, power and patronage, Hassan Javaid emphasized the importance of the ownership of land as a source of power in Punjab, showing how landed elites have played a central role in the politics of that region.

There has been a dramatic spread of information technology in Pakistan in recent years, with the proliferation of mobile phones and satellite television channels, among other media. This technological change has played a significant role in the dynamics of Pakistani culture. Stephen Lyon's paper about mobile phones and 'people power' analyzed the impact of the mobile phone on political trends in Pakistan, arguing that the technology has reshaped social organization at different levels. Paul Rollier also discussed mobile-phone use, this time in the expression of religious emotions, focusing on the exchange of Islamic text messages among Pakistani youth at religious events. More broadly, Muhammad Aurang Zeb Mughal in his paper argued that increasing access to urban centres, transport, media and technological advances has prompted striking changes in temporal and spatial organization in rural areas.

At the end of the three-day event, participants paid thanks to Pnina Werbner for her long affiliation with and services to the workshop on the occasion of her retirement. ●

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