

Report on American Institute of Pakistan Studies Grant

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Grant Period: May – August 2006

Sites of research – Dhaka, Bangladesh and Geneva, Switzerland

Purpose – conduct interviews and undertake archival research

A summer research grant from the American Institute of Pakistan studies enabled me to complete my research on the 1971 War of Bangladesh. I had started work on this project four years back with an initial grant from the American Institute of Bangladesh Studies (2001), followed by grants from the Harry Frank Guggenheim Foundation (2004-05), and the Vice-Chancellor for Research and Development at UNC- Chapel Hill (summer 2005). The AIPS grant facilitated my travel and research in Dhaka, Bangladesh, and Geneva, Switzerland, which I completed at the end of August 2006.

I started my work in Dhaka on May 8, 2006, and stayed there for five weeks until June 15, 2006. In Dhaka, I devoted my entire time to conduct interviews with veterans of the 1971 war. I conducted 18 structured interviews and had several conversations with public intellectuals, historians, social activists and documentary filmmakers and media journalists. The multiple conversations enabled me to record the divergent memories of the war in Bangladesh for comparison with the memories of veterans in Pakistan that I had collected last year.

I started work in Geneva on August 2, 2006 and finished the work of archival and library research at the Red Cross International toward the end of August returning to Chapel Hill on August 27, 2006. At the Red Cross International, I read all the published reports of ICRC on the 1971 War, as well as, Reports on the Case Concerning Trail of the Pakistani Prisoners of War at The Hague. Additionally, I was given access to the visual documentation, including photographs and videos, and interviewed some of photographers, legal experts and support staff who had covered the war and violence in Bangladesh *in situ* in 1971. Although, the archival records on the 1971 war are not open to the public as yet, I was allowed to read and take notes of the extensive materials covering the 1948 and 1965 Indo-Pak wars, which helped to contextualize and situate the 1971 war of Bangladesh within the larger framework of organized violence in postcolonial South Asia and humanitarian response.

Unfortunately, I was not able to travel to Rome and interview Sister Gertrude, as initially planned, because she was not available. I plan to conduct a telephone interview with her, at her convenience, soon.

In conclusion, I would like to thank AIPS and the board of trustees for giving me an opportunity to complete my research for my book-project on the 1971 war and memories of violence. I am in the initial stage of drafting my book with the support of a writing grant from the Harry Frank Guggenheim Foundation.