

AIPS FINAL REPORT: JOSHUA BARTON SCOTT

With the generous support of the American Institute of Pakistan Studies, I devoted a full two months (September-October 2007) to research in London. As described more fully in my application, my dissertation project explores the effects of print culture on the perception of charismatic religious authority in South Asia by investigating key religious scandals of the colonial period. I ask how participants in the emergent print public discussed cases of alleged religious corruption and, more broadly, how the public sphere served as a zone of critical debate about religion. The key scandal that I researched in London revolved around the Pir Pagaro, but I also used my time there to research four other scandals.

This was my first trip to London and to the British Library, so my first task was to familiarize myself with the resources available to me. Once adjusted, I worked very assiduously on a range of materials.

Most pertinently, I read through all the relevant files within the massive collection of the personal papers of H.T. Lambrick. Lambrick was a colonial functionary stationed in Sindh who was closely involved with the Pir Pagaro affair, and who later published a narrative account of the period (*The Terrorist*, 1972). I took extensive typed notes on over twenty different files, having read through many more. These files include letters sent back and forth between Delhi and Karachi, Lambrick's own handwritten personal reflections, typed reports on the pir and the Hurs (his anti-colonial band of followers), records from the 1890s Hur uprisings, a manuscript for *The Terrorist*, photographs of the pir, newspaper clippings in Sindhi and English, a full transcript of the 1930 trial, deliberations over whether to execute the pir, plans for the education of his sons in England, and much more. This collection of papers alone would provide ample material for an inquiry into the Pir Pagaro and the Hurs. In addition to the long hours immersed in the colonial archive, I also took a cursory look at two postcolonial publications in Urdu. They mostly treat the life of the current Pir Pagaro, a prominent politician, but also touch on historical topics. One of them of them (*Pir Pagara ki Kahani*) is available in

American libraries; the other is not, and I will photocopy the relevant portions upon my return to London.

While in London, I also researched four 19th century scandals. First, I focused on the Maharaj Libel Affair of 1861-62. In addition to reading through court transcripts and other legal materials, I also made use of hard-to-find secondary works available at the British Library. My most time-consuming task was to sift through period newspapers on microfilm— notably the two major Bombay English-language dailies of the 1860s, the *Times of India* and the *Bombay Gazette*. I also read through the court records of an 1870 case—the so-called Parsee Priest Defamation case—that will offer a useful comparative angle on my discussion of religious authority in the 1860s. The British Library copy of the case seems to be the only extant copy, and other scholars seem not to have researched it.

In the process of researching the Maharaj Libel Affair, I decided to add another scandal to my roster: the Agha Khan Affair of the 1850s and 60s. A split in Bombay's Gujarati Khoja community in the 1850s resulted in bitter contestations over the proper practice of Islam and the spiritual rectitude of the Agha Khan. Several trials erupted from this intra-community conflict, as did print media debates in Gujarati and English. The British Library holds a unique compilation of press accounts (*A Voice from India*) that tie the Agha Khan to the Enlightenment discourse of priestcraft, thereby making him ineluctably interesting for my project. In addition to this compilation, I also documented coverage of the Agha Khan and the Khojas in the Anglophone Bombay press of the 1860s (available on microfilm). Alongside the press accounts, I read through legal materials from the 1866 court case, including both a transcript of the trial and an opinion published by Judge Westropp on exempting the Agha Khan from appearance in court. I further explored publications by and about the latter Agha Khans, including a 1903 history of the Agha Khans, a letter of protest to the 1937 governor of Sind by Karim Goolmali, and an undated postcolonial Urdu pamphlet entitled “Agha Khani Musulman Kaise?”. I decided it would be interesting, at some point, to track the shift from “charisma” to “celebrity” in the public persona of the Agha Khans in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Finally, I used my time at the British Library to familiarize myself

with the secondary literature on Ismaelis in South Asia, both in English and French (e.g. Michel Boivin, Dominique Sila-Khan, Françoise Mallison).

The third scandal on my plate in London was the Tarakeswar Murder Affair, which gripped Calcutta from 1873 forward. This sensational murder launched an entire subgenre of Kalighat paintings, and the largest collections of this subgenre are housed in London. To research these scandalous images, I first used the British Library's extensive holdings in secondary literature on Kalighat paintings to construct a catalogue of extant images. I then looked at the four paintings held by the British Library. I was especially excited to venture forth to the Victoria and Albert Museum, where I spent an afternoon in one of their research rooms, examining the roughly twenty paintings housed there. I typed up my visual analyses of each image, and I also acquired protocols for duplication services. In addition to my work with these paintings, I also read through the microfilm holdings of the 1873 issues of the Calcutta paper *The Englishman*.

The final scandal that I researched in London was the Coulomb Affair that beset the Theosophical Society in 1884-1885. Cambridge University maintains a special archive ("The Blavatsky Papers") on this scandal, as collected by the Society for Psychical Research. It is a unique resource, and it was well worth the trip up to Cambridge. Due to clerical confusions on my Saturday trip, I was not able to make photocopies; I will definitely do so when I return to London. My primary focus will be the unique collection of press clippings in the file. In addition to my trip to Cambridge, I also read through a range of rare published materials available at the British Library, typing up extensive notes. These include Emma Coulomb's *Some Account of My Intercourse with Madame Blavatsky from 1872 to 1884*, Richard Hodgson's *First Report of the Committee of the Society for Psychical Research, Appointed to Investigate the Evidence for Marvellous Phenomena Offered by Certain Members of the Theosophical Society*, Edmund Garrett's *Isis Very Much Unveiled*, JDB Gribble's "A Report of an Examination into the Blavatsky Correspondence," H. R. Morgan's *Reply to A Report of an Examination into the Blavatsky Correspondence by J.D.B. Gribble*, John Murdoch's *The Theosophic Craze*, and Arthur Lillie's "Koot Hoomi Unveiled," plus anonymous pamphlets like "Hints on Esoteric Theosophy" and "Is Theosophy a Delusion?". Additionally, I read through the pertinent microfilm holdings of the newspaper *The*

Indian Spectator. Finally, I perused the opening pages of the hotly contested Mahatma Letters that set off the entire scandal. The British Library owns the originals, and it was wonderful to look at them; in the end, I concluded that the published versions adequately represent the original manuscripts, minus the tortuous handwriting.

In addition to my time in the archive, I made sure that I availed myself of other intellectual resources available in London and Cambridge. I met with Prof. Sarah Ansari of Royal Holloway College, who has published on Pir Pagaro; it was very useful to hear her account of her research in Karachi. Through a friend at Cambridge who studies the British Empire, I met several South Asianist postgraduates. I attended a conference at SOAS commemorating the anniversary of 1857, and I also attended a meeting of SOAS's Indian Art Circle (visual anthropologist Clare Harris spoke about her work with Tibetan photographs from the early 20th century). Finally, as it was my first trip to London, I visited key historic sites and museums: as an aspiring scholar of the British imperial enterprise in South Asia, seeing the sights of London was a crucial experience for me, and one that added immeasurably to my understanding of the colonial period.

From London, I traveled to Delhi to continue my research under the auspices of the American Institute for Indian Studies. My research in India has included much work that will be pertinent to Pakistan studies as well. In Delhi's National Archives, I delved deeper into the British state's response to Pir Pagaro and the Hurs. I located about half a dozen files regarding the Hurs, the Pir, and the Martial Law imposed in Sindh. These all hail from the period after 1935, when Sindh ceased to be under the jurisdiction of the Bombay Presidency. They shed new light both on the conditions of martial law and on the preparations to deport the pir to East Africa. My extensive typed notes on these files will be crucial to my dissertation. In addition to my work in the National Archives of India, I also conducted research in the Nehru Memorial Library. I focused my time there on the extensive microfilm collection of colonial period newspapers. I combed through issues of both *Dawn* and *The Bombay Sentinel* that are pertinent to the Pir Pagaro case, —differences in coverage between the two papers suggest how the Muslim-League affiliate *Dawn* used news of the pir to appeal to a Muslim readership.

While working in the National Archives of India, I tried to further contextualize the Pir Pagaro case through further research into its Sindhi context. In the process, I came

upon a roughly contemporary Sindhi scandal that I plan to include in my dissertation. The National Archives contains two files, one of them quite large, about the banning of Dayananda Saraswati's *Satyarth Prakash* in Sindh in the early 1940s due to the controversial 14th chapter's criticisms of the Prophet. The ban came to be a *cause célèbre* for both the Muslim League and the All-India Hindu Mahasabha, each calling upon its national membership to scrutinize Sindhi politics. The *Satyarth Prakash* springs from the Bombay reformist milieu that I explore elsewhere in my dissertation, and this scandalous debate over the limits of criticism's hold over religious authority fits snugly into my work's theoretical purview. It should also further the aims of AIPS—the ban and ensuing scandal offers a useful window into communal politics on the eve of Partition and into the fate of Hindus in Sindh. I continued my research into this scandal while at the Nehru Memorial Library. English-language dailies like *Dawn* and *The Bombay Sentinel* offered some coverage of the ban, but I found far richer material in the Hindi-language instrument of the Arya Samaj: *Arya*. I spent some time perusing the Arya Samaj affiliate Urdu paper *Rozana Milap*, but it focused less on religion and more on world news—this scandal, after all, had serious competition in papers from 1943-45, and often lost out to Gandhi, Jinnah, and Hitler. I also availed myself of the Nehru Library's manuscript collection. They have extensive archival holdings of papers from the All-India Hindu Mahasabha. I sifted through this massive archive to sort out the documents that pertain to the Sindh *Satyarth Prakash* ban, and I requested hundreds of photocopies.

In conclusion, I have accomplished quite a bit during the past months. In addition to all my discrete archival finds, I have also learned an immense amount about archives in general. On my return trip to London this August, I will be a much savvier and much more efficient researcher, and I will carry my new skills forward into the rest of my professional life. My concluding research stint in the U.K. will bring me once again to Cambridge, as well as to London's National Army Museum, and, most importantly, back to the British Library, where I have new questions to pursue and old files to photocopy (I decided not to accrue large stacks of paper until the return trip). Again, many thanks to AIPS for its generous financial support.