

**ARCHIVAL MATERIALS ON CENTRAL ASIA AND AFGHANISTAN: AN
APPRAISAL OF PESHAWAR ARCHIVES**

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ABSTRACT

In view of the strategic position which Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the North-Western Frontier Province of Pakistan occupies in the Sub-continent of Indo-Pakistan, It is safe to presume that its official archives have to extremely important, interesting and informative both as precedents for the elucidation of departmental administration and as raw materials of history. Archival material available in Peshawar Archives forms a unique collection and throws a floodlight on several aspects of the history of Punjab in general and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (NWFP) and Central Asia in particular during the British rule in India.

The paper describes the resources available in the Directorate of Archives and Libraries, Peshawar also known as Peshawar Archives. It is written with the chief aim to bring in black and white the resources of Peshawar Archives to the notice of scholars worldwide.

Keywords: Archives, Archives Central Asia, Archives Afghanistan, Peshawar Archives.

INTRODUCTION

At the time of separation of the province North West Frontier (now Khyber Pakhtunkhwa) was separated from the Punjab, the relevant records of the Civil Secretariat came into its custody. At the suggestion of the Indian Historical Record Commission, the Central Record Office/Peshawar Archives (now Directorate of Archives and Libraries, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Peshawar) was set up in 1946 in the premises of the Peshawar Museum to preserve such material. In the same year a large number of files relating to the Central Asia, Afghanistan and the North West Frontier Province were also transferred to it from the Imperial Records Department at New Delhi. Since that date, there has been a large transfer of government archives and district records to the Central Office, and the government is actively collecting and purchasing manuscripts relating to the administration and history of the Province, Afghanistan, and Central Asia. In 1972, the Central Office (Peshawar Archives) was shifted to the Divisional Council Hall, Peshawar. The shifting was in

pursuance of the government decision to start a public library. The name of the Office was also changed from Central record Office to the Directorate of Archives and Libraries. Due to the increase in the number of books, records, equipment and staff, the Directorate was shifted in 1990 to the present building (Peshawar Archives) constructed at a cost of Rs.36 Million, covering an area of 71,300-sqt. The office has recently acquired a large number of records from the age-old offices of the Deputy Commissioners and Commissioners of Peshawar and Kohat. The records of the defunct offices of the Commissioners and Deputy Commissioners of Peshawar and Kohat contain an invaluable bulk of information illuminating various aspects of the people of Afghanistan and the North West Frontier Province (now Khyber Pakhtunkhwa).

Over a period of 6 decades of its existence, the Directorate has accumulated in its normal work an archival collection of great importance. The Directorate has preserved more than 35,000 files, 20,000 publications from various government departments, 27,500 newspapers, 771 manuscripts and 1,400 magazines/periodicals. More than 300 research scholars have completed their research work with the help of records available in this office. The library attached to the Directorate is a free public library having more than one hundred thousand books.

The archival material preserved in Peshawar Archives range from the historical documents of the British Government of India to the documents related to Afghanistan, official gazettes of the central and provincial governments, memoirs, minutes, transactions, reports of the various committees, commissions and bodies set up by the government from time to time.

The material in the Directorate is kept in the following three sections in an orderly and accessible manner:

- I. Records and Research Section.
- II. Publications Section.
- III. Newspapers and Periodicals Section.

RECORDS AND RESEARCH SECTION

This section contains records of the provincial government starting from 1849 when Punjab was occupied by the British. Most of it belongs to a very early period of the British rule in the Punjab and the-then NWFP. The record is kept in bundles and classified broadly department wise. A list (catalogue) of the material is also available in the office. The record is mainly kept under the following heads:

i) Foreign Department: It includes files of the Foreign Department and ex-Development Department of the British Government of India,

Commissioners and Deputy Commissioners Offices and Political Agents. The most important documents kept under this head are the Kabul Diaries and Khyber Diaries. The Kabul diaries also called Ahwal-i-Kabul were received from the British Agent at the court of the Amirs of Kabul. They reveal relations of the Amir of Afghanistan with the rulers of Persia, Bukhara, Kokand, Khost and his attitude towards the British. The Khyber Diaries give day-to-day accounts of the political conditions of the North-West Frontier and Afghanistan. They shed light on the relations of British government of India with the Amir of Afghanistan the Khyber tribes, tribal feuds, settlements of disputes, interviews with tribal Maliks, rewards for services rendered and punishment for breach of agreements. The record also contains news bulletins received from news writers and secret agents stationed by the British at Jalalabad, Kabul, Kandahar, Kelat, and Herat. These news bulletins contain valuable information about these places and their neighborhood like Persia, Bukhara, Sistan and Kokand, and reveal Russian and Persian influence there. There are a series of news bulletins and diaries, which gives day-to-day accounts of the conquest of Kafiristan by Amir Abdur Rehman, the Amir of Kabul.

Moreover, the record also contains printed copies of correspondence that passed between England and Russia regarding Central Asia, records relating to important events, travelers and traders coming to India from Central Asia, and the position of Afghanistan in the so called "Great Game" and its recognition as a neutral or intermediary zone between India and Russia for preventing their respective possessions from immediate contact bears great importance and special mention.

ii) Military Department: Files kept under this head are comprised of the papers of Commissioners offices and Development Department. The record deals with the construction of roads, cantonments, forts, and pickets, recruitment of soldiers and levies. They also give details of the movement of armies and encounters with Pathan tribal Lashkars. The record also sheds light on the Khyber Field Force, Tirah Field Force, and Kuram and Malakand Field Forces. Some papers relating to the Indian Mutiny of 1857 are also kept in this section. The record is a good source for knowing the attitude of the people toward the British during the Indian Mutiny.

iii) Finance Department: It also contains files of the ex-Development Department of the pre-partition period. It contains record of finances from the British period to 1990. It includes papers relating to the control of currency, income and expenditure on various projects, budget estimates of different provincial departments, pay, pensions, gratuity,

conditions of service and other rules and regulations of government servants and provincial departments. It also includes notifications, circulars and orders issued by the finance department from time to time.

iv) **Revenue Department:** The collection contains records of both the pre and post partition period of India. It contain papers on the grant of Jagirs by the British to local Khans, Maliks, Nawabs, settlement reports relating to Peshawar, Kohat, Hazara and Derajat, settlement of revenue disputes promotion of agriculture and economic conditions of peasants. It also contains facts and figures of census, forests and famines.

This department also contains files of the Local Self Government Department, Commissioners, Deputy Commissioners and Political Agents. There are also files related to the construction of roads, bridges, education, and sanitation. The record also includes a memorandum drawn up by Sir H. B. Edwards, the Commissioner of Peshawar, on the elimination of all non-christian principles from the government departments of British India, are to be found full of interest and information by those interested in Christian missionary and social reforms.

v) **Home Department:** It contains record of the Home Department, Police, Jails, Medical, and Education. This record possesses prime importance in the Peshawar Archives containing rich material of the British period. There are files related to the Political offenders e.g. those who participated in the Mutiny of 1857. The file of Police department, which are also kept in this section, relate among other subjects to the detection of the crimes, enforcement of law, recruitment of police force, construction of police stations and maintenance of peace and order. There are some confidential diaries submitted by the District Superintendents of Police to the Commissioner of Peshawar division. The papers of Jail department give an insight to the number of prisoners, their health and the training imparted to them in arts and crafts during their term of imprisonment. The record of Education shed light on the state of education in Punjab in general and Peshawar division in particular, the number of schools, Madrasahs, the establishment of new schools on western lines and the opposition of the orthodox Muslims who had serious doubt about the intention of the British bears special mention. There are also papers relating to the establishment of the Punjab University and the Public Library Lahore.

vi) **General or Miscellaneous:** This section includes papers on archaeology, geology, mineralogy and salt mines. A statement of population of Peshawar, Kohat, and Hazara in 1854-55, H. B. Edwards'

letter to the secretary to the Chief Commissioner of Punjab, about the establishment of a public library, a museum and a theatre at Peshawar and Raverty's letter regarding his Pashto edition of the Gospel are some of the other important documents that deserve a special mention.

Besides the above, there are some district files containing information on various subjects. Among them are gazettes, newspapers, copies of local news supplied by the scouts especially employed for this purpose, and documents dealing with the rise of the Wahabis or Hindustani Fanatics in Peshawar, the murder of their leader Said Ahmad and their political activities, notes, and news about Kabul, Kandahar, Sistan, Persia and Russia. It also includes proceedings relating to the dispute between the Amir of Afghanistan and the Shah of Persia over Sistan and notes on British missions to Kabul and other countries.

There are also printed proceedings of the Foreign Department of the Punjab government, which cover the period from 1890 to 1900. There are reports on the manufacturing of arms in the tribal territory, permission to propagate Christianity, economic resources and trade routes. There is also a collection containing a number of files belonging to the office of the Commissioners of Peshawar and Derajat divisions and Special Branch. The files of the office of Commissioners contain information on land revenue, local routes, loan to peasants, canal and irrigation, mines and royalties, income tax, Darbars, boundary demarcation amongst other related topics. The record of Special Branch consisted of history sheets of renowned personalities of NWFP like Khan Abdul Qayyum Khan, Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, Arbab Sikandar Khan Khalil, Haji Sahib of Turangzai, papers are also related to Red shirts, Muslim League and Congress activities. It also contains reports related to the Pukhtunistan issue, Khilafat movement, anti-Pakistan activities of the Red Shirts, and daily situation reports of Red Shirts, Khilafat and Khaksar activities and election of 1945.

vii) **Documents of the Pre-British Period:** The Record and Research Section also contain a total of 377 documents of the Sultanate, Mughal, Afghan and Sikh period. Notable among these are the Farmans of Ghiasuddin Balban, and Bahlol Sikandar Lodhi about the construction of a Khanqah, a Mosque, and Serai in Delhi and the grant of land to Imamzada Sheikh Mubarak, several Farmans of Akbar regarding the grant of land and inams to certain individuals, Farmans of Aurangzeb about the restoration of temples in Benaras, and letters of Zenat Mahal written by Bahadur Shah.

Apart from the above there are several original letters of appreciations, Rahdaris, Rokars, applications and official correspondence between the Sikh rulers and the British government, royal decrees conferring grant of land, appointment and sanction of stipends, maintenance of allowance. A glance at the Mughal period documents provide an interesting study as to how the British influence was creeping in such as the system of fixing revenue stamp on all court papers.

PUBLICATIONS SECTION

This section contains printed records of both the pre and post partition period and forms a valuable source of information on the history of Pakistan, India, and Afghanistan from 1848 to 1998, the tribal belt along the Durand Line, relations of the British Government of India and Afghanistan and the like. The record of this section is arranged under the following heads:

- Gazettes of NWFP, 1905 to 1985.
- Gazettes of West Pakistan, 1956 to 1970.
- Gazettes of Pakistan, 1948 to 1987.
- Gazetteers: Contain complete record of the Imperial Gazetteer of India
- Gazette of India and Punjab: It contains record of the gazettes issued by the British Government of India from 1885 to 1936. It also contains Gazette of Punjab from 1901 to 1939.
- Legislative Council and NWFP Assembly debates: contain complete record from 1932 to 1998.
- Publications of the Asian Development Bank, 1990 to 1998.
- Proceedings: the record is comprised of the proceedings of Imperial Record Department, Government of India from 1849 to 1873, proceedings of Home Department, Punjab from 1873 to 1899, Proceedings of Foreign Department from 1849 to 1899 and proceedings of the Forest, Agriculture, Political, Health, Police, Education and Public Health Departments of the Government of Punjab and NWFP from 1861 to 1940.
- Senate debates, 1985 to 1992.
- Book reviews published in the weekly "Economist" from 1988 to 1990
- Addresses and speeches of Presidents of the Government of Pakistan and Chief Ministers and Governors of NWFP from 1958 to 1996.
- Law Record: comprises of various acts passed by the government from 1912 to 1982, government circulars and judicial record of NWFP from 1901 to 1981, regulations from 1873 to 1973 and rules and orders about government servants from 1905 to 1987.

- Records of various departments: comprises of the annual administrative reports of NWFP from 1901 to 1977, annual administrative reports of Punjab from 1849 to 1895, and annual administrative reports of Agricultural Department, NWFP from 1935 to 1965. There are also annual reports of the India Famine Commission from 1880 to 1898, reports of Cooperative Societies of NWFP from 1920 to 1954, reports on the state of education in India in general and NWFP and Punjab in particular from 1886 to 1948, annual reports of the Archaeological Survey of India from 1874 to 1912, Economic Survey of Punjab and NWFP from 1940 to 1965. In addition there are several reports of the geological, police, public health, revenue, settlement, transport, and Judiciary departments of Punjab and NWFP in the pre-partition period. It also gives details of prices and wages in the British India.
- Publications of learned organizations, 1938 to 1980: It contain record of publications of learned societies/organizations like Indian Historical Commission, copies of Museum Journal, reports of the National Archives of Pakistan and National Archives of the UK from 1953 to 1967, copies of the journal of Punjab Historical Society from 1923 to 1953, copies of the journal of Punjab University Historical Society from 1960 to 1962, Catalogue of works published by the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal from 1943 to 1983, Supreme court reports from 1963 to 1977 and copies of education policies of Pakistan.
- Budget: it gives statistics of the budget of the government of Assam, Bengal, Bihar, Bombay, Burma, Central Provinces, Government of Nizams, Madras, Orisa, UP, Sindh, Punjab, Baluchistan and NWFP from 1931 to 1946. Copies of Budget of NWFP, Punjab, Sindh, Baluchistan and Azad Jammu and Kashmir from 1947 to 1990 are also included in this section.

NEWSPAPERS/PERIODICALS SECTION

Peshawar Archives contain a good number of newspapers and other periodicals which have played a significant role in shaping the political and social destiny of the sub-continent particularly of the region now comprising Pakistan. These periodicals and newspapers are also an invaluable source of information about the Russian-British rivalry during the 19th and first half of the 20th centuries. For writing modern history, files of contemporary newspapers and periodicals form an invaluable source. Unfortunately, in Pakistan, there is no healthy tradition of preserving copies/files of newspapers. In this respect Peshawar Archives is fortunate to possess a number of renowned but now defunct newspapers and periodicals. The most important among these are:

- Al- Hilal: copies of 1914, 1913, and 1927.
- Weekly Progress: edited by Allah Bukhsh Yousafi, record of 1940.
- Weekly Hamdam: Record from January to October 1940.
- Daily Sarhad: Record of 1934, January 1927 and complete record of 1938.
- Khyber Mail (Pashto): Complete record from 1942 to 1945.
- Khyber Mail (Urdu): Few copies.
- Khyber Mail (English): Complete record from 1935 to 1988.
- Weekly Manshoor: Record of 1939, 1940, and 1944.
- Albalagh: Record of 1916, 1912, and 1915.
- The Civil and Military Gazette: 1950-1962.

RECORD AVAILABLE ON MICROFILMS

The following record has been microfilmed and is readily available to users:

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| 1. Budget of NWFP, 1970 –1988 | 33Rolls 16MM |
| 2. Khyber Mail Newspaper 1934-1956 | 10 Rolls 16MM |
| 3. Khyber Mail Newspaper 1950-1988 | 52 Rolls 35MM |
| 4. Record of the National Finance Commission | 2 Rolls 16MM |
| 5. Congress-cum-Red Shirt Activities 1930-1947 | 3 Rolls 16MM |
| 6. Political Movements and Personal Papers 1898-1900 | 1 Roll 16MM |
| 7. Record of All India National Congress Sessions | 2 Rolls 16MM |
| 8. Mohmand Country Affairs, Haji Sahib Turangzai and his son. 1927 Vol-I and II | 1 Roll 16MM |
| 9. Record of the Intellegence Bureau 1920-1940 | 26 Rolls 35MM |
| 10. The Civil and Military Gazette, (Newspaper) Lahore, 1950-1962 | 32 Rolls 35MM |
| 11. Pakistan Time (Newspaper), 1948-1992 | 107 Rolls 35MM |
| 12. Record of the Special Branch NWFP, 1929 to-date | 38 Rolls 16MM |

CONCLUSION

All the records kept in Peshawar Archives are indeed original and primary sources of history. In addition to the official records of the NWFP and Punjab governments, Peshawar Archives has the honor of possessing either the original documents, as described above, of the Pre-British or their photographic reproductions, transcriptions or translations. Attached to some of the documents are important maps and plans, describing particularly the physical features of lands surveyed and the routes used for military operations &, strategic points etc. They include Afghanistan, Sistan, Dardistan, Kokand, Persia, Russia, and Bokhara.

For the early history of Punjab in general and the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (NWFP) and Afghanistan in particular, we have to rely almost entirely on the archaeological evidence; and commendable as their contribution have been, archaeologists themselves admit that they are yet on the threshold of history. For the later periods, however, archives or written records are the most reliable raw material of history. They are most reliable because they mirror the minds of their authors and are free from personal bias. They contain what their authors wanted to convey. Many of them are official records and are preserved in the Directorate of Archives and Libraries Peshawar, also known as “Peshawar Archives”. Most of them relate to the British rule and throw a floodlight on the political, social, and economic history of Punjab, Durand Line, Afghanistan, Central Asia and the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa during the British period.

It must be kept in mind that the coming generations will never forgive us if, on account of our neglect or indifference, we fail to bequeath it to them as a well-preserved legacy. Our next duty is to set up sound machinery for the speedy survey and salvage of all archival wealth and the preparation of guides, calendars and indices.

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