

International Scene

NANCY BARTLETT AND MARJORIE BARRITT, editors

The National Archives of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan

TIMOTHY A. SLAVIN

Abstract: The National Archives of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan presents a fascinating paradox for archivists interested in the work of their colleagues abroad. Faced with the separate problems of poverty, illiteracy, and martial law, the National Archives of Pakistan has established and maintained a model archival program for South Asia. The collections housed at the National Archives of Pakistan—a mix of manuscripts from the Moghul rulers to the administrative papers of the first years of government—reflect the multitude of paradoxes which Pakistan has come to represent.

About the author: Timothy A. Slavin is the state archivist for the State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations. From 1987 to 1989 he served as assistant archivist for the Archives of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Chicago. This article is based upon research conducted during a personal visit to Pakistan in January 1989.

FOR A FOREIGNER, PAKISTAN is a country of paradox. There are fabulous mosques and impressive buildings in the face of a per capita income of \$310. A poet and philosopher, Muhammad Iqbal, is one of the country's most revered patriots despite the fact that nearly 76 percent of the population is functionally illiterate. English is considered the *lingua franca*, yet Urdu is the national language, and Punjabi, Pushtu, Sindhi, and Baluchi can be heard in the provinces. The country carries with it a wealth of historic sites such as Lahore Fort and Badshai Mosque built by Moghul rulers in the seventeenth century, and yet Pakistan, as a country, is only forty-four years old.

Pakistan was born on 14 August 1947, a result of the British decision to grant freedom to India. A separate Islamic state in the subcontinent was initially the idea of Rahmat Ali, a graduate student in England. The idea was further shaped by Pakistan's founder, first president, and revered patriot, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, who fought for the partition of a Muslim state from India from 1933 until 1947. The struggle for partition was herculean, and the granting of independence in 1947 was one of the few moments of celebration that Pakistan as a nation has enjoyed.

The responsibility for documenting this struggle has fallen primarily upon the National Archives of Pakistan (NAP). Initially established as a separate program in 1974, the program has grown from a one-room collection of historical papers to a 73,000 cubic foot storage facility located in the government's secretariat compound in Islamabad.

Upon partition from the English Crown in 1947, resources for any particular geographic region were split between India and the newly formed Islamic Republic of Pakistan. A calculated formula ensured that what were previously British resources—everything from buildings to guns to horses—were divided equitably. Archives, how-

ever, were not included in the formula. Extant records left by the British were either burned, lost, or sequestered into one of the provincial archives. Archives in each of the four provinces that currently comprise Pakistan—the Punjab, Sind, Baluchistan, and the Northwest Frontier Province—were deeded to Pakistan.¹ Likewise, British governmental records regarding the administration of these areas were also given to Pakistan.² The Directorate of Archives and Libraries, however, was not established until 1952.

Although the Directorate of Archives and Libraries had no direct jurisdiction over each of the provincial archives (this being left to the province), it did seek to secure those records that concerned the founding and early development of Pakistan. Chief among these were the records of Pakistan's founder and first president, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, or as he is referred to among Pakistanis, *Quaid-i-Azam* (The Great Leader). Also preserved in this project are the extant records of the All-India Muslim League, which served as the political power behind the development of Pakistan in pre-partition days. Because of the lack of any central repository, the directorate oversaw the placement of these and other historically significant materials into the libraries of various universities in Pakistan. The materials have since been placed in the National Archives of Pakistan.

In 1966 a plan for the establishment of the National Archives of Pakistan was pre-

¹The geographically separate province of East Pakistan gained independence from Pakistan after a civil war in 1971, and is now known as Bangladesh. The fifth province in West Pakistan, the Kashmir, is considered "disputed territory" between India and Pakistan. Maps of Pakistan outline the four main provinces, and include the Kashmir as a shaded area.

²Some materials, however, were destroyed by the British. Most notable among these were reports on the activities of the Maharajas of India, who served as the autonomous rulers of the Princely States. On orders from Sir Conrad Carfield, all such reports were burned in June 1947.

sented to the government. This plan was not formally enacted until 1973, when the National Archives of Pakistan "scheme" was approved with a budget of 175,860 Rupees (approximately \$9,000 based on the current inflated exchange rate). The archives then consisted of a one-room collection of the *Quaid-i-Azam* papers placed under the administration of the Ministry of Education.

It was at this juncture that Atique Zafar Sheikh was hired as the director general. Since then, Sheikh has been the prime mover behind the growth of the National Archives of Pakistan from its one-room dwelling to its new building. Educated in library science in England, Sheikh has sought to raise the awareness of archives within the country by promoting educational workshops and seminars, hosting symposia and seminars, and becoming an active player in the South and West Asia Regional Branch of the International Council on Archives (SWAR-BICA).

Separate reorganizations occurred in 1977 and 1979, when the National Archives of Pakistan was first moved into a bungalow in the residential section of Islamabad, and then (in 1979) into a 20,000 cubic foot factory in the commercial section of Islamabad. Shortly after this second move, plans were formulated for the construction of a formal National Archives of Pakistan building to be built in the secretariat block in Islamabad. The administrative building of the National Archives of Pakistan was completed in 1988; ground was scheduled to be broken in 1990 for the NAP storage facility.

Located in the new and surprisingly clean city of Islamabad, the location of the National Archives of Pakistan administration building is a clue to the status of the program. The building is located in the N-block of the Pak Secretariat in Islamabad, a relatively undeveloped section of the Secretariat, situated at the base of the foothills of the Himalayas. Security in the Secretar-

iat is tight, especially since the assassination of President Muhammad Zia al-Haq. The military presence is heavy and persistent, with numerous checkpoints required for passage into the various blocks. Verification of my appointment was checked three separate times; holding a letter of introduction from the director general—procured after a series of correspondence describing the reasons for my visit—was mandatory.

The National Archives of Pakistan Administration Building is a stunning addition to the rows and rows of governmental office buildings that comprise the Secretariat. The building itself consists of 150,000 square feet of floor space; a little less than half of which is scheduled for records storage. The facility houses the administrative offices, Records Storage Section, Repair and Preservation Unit, Microfilming and Photostating Unit, Publication Units, Private Collections Section, Newspapers and Periodicals Section, and an exhibit hall.

The staff of the National Archives of Pakistan consists of twenty-one officers—nineteen of whom are professional archivists with some training or education in archival methods.

The collection policy of the National Archives of Pakistan is divided into three categories: public records, newspapers and periodicals, and private collections.

Public records is a growing area of collecting for the National Archives of Pakistan. Prior to 1974, not a single file was transferred from any government office to the National Archives of Pakistan; the disposition of records was made on an ad hoc ministry-by-ministry basis. Initial efforts in records management have resulted in ten ministries actively transferring material to the archives. Materials usually transferred are "A" category materials, considered to be the vital (and permanent) records of a ministry. Such materials are transferred to the archives after five years and microfilmed for security reasons. The hard copy

is retained and the material is cataloged for use by the ministry. The material remains under restriction (for use only by the ministry) for a period of thirty years, after which it is open to researchers.

A pending bill before the National Assembly, entitled "Archival Legislation," seeks to place tighter controls on the transfer, destruction, and/or retention of the records of the ministries. This legislation calls for the transfer of all permanent records of the ministries to the archives and the erection of a records management system that would oversee the eventual disposition of the records.³

The acquisition and microfilming of newspapers and periodicals represents the largest area of activity for the National Archives of Pakistan. The collection dates from the prepartition days of British rule and includes such papers as *Pioneer* (published in Allahabad from 1895-1933); *Civil & Military Gazette* (1873-1932); *Indian Public Opinion* (1866-76); and the *Mofussilite* (1848-73). Likewise, the filming of contemporary newspapers such as the *Pakistan Times*, the *Dawn*, the *Muslim*, and the *Jung* (in Urdu) is also a part of this project.

Besides overseeing the transfer and security microfilming of governmental records and the preservation microfilming of newspapers and periodicals, the National Archives of Pakistan also has an acquisitions committee charged with the collecting of private manuscript collections. There is competition for such collections within Pakistan, especially among the museums and provincial archives.

The largest private collection, the Quaid-i-Azam Papers, consists of approximately thirty-seven containers of material spanning Muhammad Ali Jinnah's life from his

days as a student in England until his death, just shortly after independence, in 1948. Reflecting its popularity with researchers, the collection has been processed and is available for research. A descriptive catalogue (to the item level) and an accession list are available from the National Archives of Pakistan for a nominal charge.⁴

The private papers of Jinnah's sister, Miss Fatima Jinnah, are also available at the National Archives of Pakistan. Fatima Jinnah was her brother's life-long companion, and considered by many as his only confidante in certain political matters. She served as an elected delegate to the Bombay Provincial Muslim League Council and was instrumental in establishing colleges and schools throughout Pakistan, most of which were for women. She also coordinated efforts and sought to provide services for Muslim refugees emigrating to Pakistan in 1947. This collection details the political life of Pakistan from the death of Muhammad Ali Jinnah in 1948 until his sister's death in 1967.

Other private collections of note include the Ahmad Hamid Lakha (a Karyana merchant from Hyderabad) Collection of nearly 450 volumes of printed material, scrapbooks, periodicals, and photographs concerning the Pakistan Movement (the collection is in six languages—English, Urdu, Sindhi, Gujrati, Pushto, and Punjabi); the Khalil-ur-Rehman Dawoodi Collection, consisting of 1,350 volumes on the history of Muslims in India (mostly in Urdu, Persian, Arabic, and Punjabi); and a newly acquired Oral History Archive, consisting of interviews with people involved in the Pakistan Freedom Movement.

Researchers attempting to gain access to the materials in the National Archives of

³Because the legislation was not yet debated by the National Assembly, it was considered "confidential." Atique Zafar Sheikh, director general of the National Archives of Pakistan and one of the drafters of the bill, offered this information.

⁴*Descriptive Catalogue of Quaid-i-Azam Papers*, v. I-V (Islamabad, Pakistan: National Archives of Pakistan, 1971-87); *Accession List of Quaid-i-Azam Papers*, v. I-IV (Islamabad, Pakistan: National Archives of Pakistan, 1971-73).

Pakistan can expect courteous treatment. All requests for visits are handled directly by the National Archives of Pakistan, thus avoiding endless delays from a burgeoning bureaucracy. Materials not currently under restrictions are immediately accessible, and some collections which have been micro-filmed may even be accessible at other sites in the country, on loan from the National Archives of Pakistan.

The National Archives of Pakistan also boasts a strong conservation program. The microfilming of public records from the ministries (for security purposes) as well as that of newspapers and the private collection has resulted in more than 7,000 rolls of microfilm. The National Archives of Pakistan has on staff a full-time conservation officer, trained as a chemist with education in preservation science received abroad. The result has been astounding; in a country where acid-free paper and stock is not available (and importing is financially prohibitive), the National Archives of Pakistan has stabilized many of its collections and greatly reduced many conservation hazards, primarily through preservation microfilming. A two-week practicum on the "Conservation and Preservation of Archival Material" was sponsored by the National Archives of Pakistan in July 1980 for archivists throughout Pakistan. A collection of lectures given at this workshop has been published, and includes lectures on fumigation and cleaning, paper testing and dating, laminating processes, and binding.⁵

In addition to serving as a central repository for archival records, the National Archives of Pakistan has also sought to publicize its holdings and promote their use for researchers. A permanent exhibit on the Pakistan Movement opened in the new

administration building, with a similar traveling exhibit being offered in such cities as Karachi, Lahore, Peshawar, Rawalpindi, and Quetta. Educational materials on the history of Pakistan, including photographic histories and monographs by noted historians, have been distributed to numerous schools in the country.⁶

Published finding aids to the larger collections are available at very reasonable costs. A complete (item level) catalog of the Jinnah papers is available in five volumes, as is an accession list to the collection. An inventory of the microfilm holdings of the National Archives of Pakistan is also available and includes published volumes held in both the reading room and library.⁷

In 1984 the National Archives of Pakistan also began to publish a scholarly journal, the *Pakistan Archives*. Publication ceased from 1985 to 1988 after two issues but was scheduled to resume again in 1989.

The first issue presents both the views of foreigners toward Pakistan's archives and an overview of the archival scene in Pakistan offered by Pakistanis. The issue includes articles by A. W. Mabbs of the Public Records Office in England (and former president of the International Council on Archives), B. C. Bloomfield, director of the India Office of Library and Records in London on sources available concerning Pakistan among his collection, and a report on a fact-finding mission on archives in Pakistan funded by the Pakistani government and conducted by Martin Moir, deputy archivist of the India Office of Library and Records.⁸

⁶*Great Leaders and Great Cities* (Islamabad, Pakistan: National Archives of Pakistan, in Urdu, n.d.); *Movement for Pakistan* (Islamabad, Pakistan: National Archives of Pakistan, in Urdu, n.d.).

⁷*Microfilm Holdings of the National Archives of Pakistan*, v. 1 (Islamabad, Pakistan: National Archives of Pakistan, 1976).

⁸Much of the material in the first volume of the *Pakistan Archives* is derived from papers delivered at three major conferences held in Pakistan and hosted

⁵Ali Ashraf, and Masood Ahmad Khan, *Conservation and Restoration of Archival Material* (Islamabad, Pakistan: National Archives of Pakistan, 1980).

Ahmad Hasan Dani's essay provides a useful introduction to the potential role of archives in Pakistani culture. He focuses upon the obscure and somewhat unsubstantial documentation in Pakistan available from mosques and calls on archives to assume a tripartite responsibility: to preserve "the whole process of man's striving towards his motivation;" "preserving the depth of human feeling and . . . the freshness of human perception;" and "for transmitting the whole tradition, for preserving the actual work of human activity in the words of the actors themselves." Dani, who is professor emeritus at Quaid-i-Azam University in Islamabad, concludes by calling archives "the repository of the inner movements that have inspired the nations to make themselves what they are."⁹

The remaining six articles in the first issue provide a thorough inventory of the major holding of the National Archives of Pakistan, the Punjab Provincial Archives, the government records and private collections available in the Baluchistan Provincial Archives, the Institute of Sindhology (in Karachi), and the Provincial Archives of the Northwest Frontier Province (NWFP). The second issue in volume one also provides essays on the holding of other repositories in Pakistan, including the Lahore Museum, the Library of the University of the Punjab, Peshawar University, Quaid-i-Azam Academy, the Punjab Record Office (Lahore), the Punjab Board of Revenue (Lahore), and the Allama Iqbal Museum and the Iqbal Academy (Lahore).¹⁰ Collec-

tively, the articles in this first volume of the *Pakistan Archives* provide a comprehensive inventory of archival holdings in Pakistan.¹¹

The National Archives of Pakistan is also actively involved in the International Council on Archives (ICA) and is serving as host country for the UNESCO/ICA sponsored "Guide to Sources on Asian History" project. The project is a part of the "Guide to Sources of History of Nations" project initiated in 1959. In 1979, after two feasibility studies determined that such a project was attainable, archivists from Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Singapore, and Sri Lanka outlined the scope of the project, which included the implementation of the Regional Coordinating Committee. Atique Zafar Sheikh, director general of the National Archives of Pakistan, is chair of this committee. The project will also include China, the Republics of Korea and Thailand, and will include summary descriptions of the holdings of public archives, archives of semi-public bodies, libraries, museums, universities, and private archives (political, religious, and business archives).¹² The guides to each country are to be published in English and/or French, and the national language of the country where possible.

From its inception in 1973, Atique Zafar Sheikh has guided the National Archives of Pakistan into a position of prominence among the archival community in South Asia. In the face of such adversity as pov-

by the National Archives of Pakistan: the International Symposium on Archives held in February 1982, the Second General Conference of SWARBICA (South and West Asian Regional Branch of the International Council on Archives), and the second meeting of the Regional Coordinating Committee of the Guide to Sources in Asian History.

⁹Ahmad Hasan Dani, "Archives—Its Place in the Cultural Heritage of the Country," *Pakistan Archives* I (January-June 1984): 16-17.

¹⁰Muhammad Iqbal (1876-1938) is recognized as

the national poet and philosopher of Pakistan. He served as president of the All-India Muslim League, and in his speech at the 1930 Allahabad meeting of the League he called for "a consolidated Muslim State in the best interest of India and Islam."

¹¹These issues have been donated by the author to the Bentley Historical Library's collection of foreign archival journals at the University of Michigan. These journals are available to interested archivists through Interlibrary Loan.

¹²Only Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, Maldives, and Bhutan are not participating in the project.

erty, illiteracy, and a twelve-year period of martial law, the National Archives of Pakistan has grown from a one-room cell of historical papers to a bustling and important archival repository. The future of the program, aided somewhat by the withdrawal of martial law and the introduction of the archival legislation, holds much promise.

In light of its long history of paradox and struggle, the future of Pakistan remains uncertain. Pakistanis are far from political stability, and now must grapple with the

problems presented by a new prime minister, a newly formed coalition government, increasing tensions with India, and Afghan refugees flooding their borders. Pakistan, having developed from a graduate student's idea to a country holding a position of world (and possibly nuclear) power in the period of forty-four years has experienced hardship, turmoil, and even martial law. Yet, through all of this, the National Archives of Pakistan continues to document the struggle and paradoxes that have marked this country.