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Article:	Historical Study of Kohat District: (1849-1947)
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ABSTRACT

Kohat is the capital of the Kohat District in Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtun Khwa province. The current study investigated Kohat's administrative history during the British period and measured the gradual change in the administrative profile and British-locals relationship over time. The study's primary focus variables were administrative changes. The study relied on documentary and official sources to collect factual data, while interviews were used to learn about social memory and people's perceptions. The data was arranged thematically and was also cross-checked. Finally the study is written in narrative and descriptive style.

Keywords: administrative history, British period, British-locals relationship

Introduction:

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) of Pakistan contains large number of well-populated, beautiful, industrial, agricultural and traditional cities like Mardan, D.I. Khan, Mingora, Kohat, Abbottabad, Bannu, Haripur, Charsadda, Chitral, Swat, Swabi and historical provincial capital city Peshawar. This study explored the history of one of the most historical cities of KP known as Kohat.

Background of the Study

Kohat city, located in the Kohat District of Pakistan, serves as the capital of the region. It is situated in a rugged and hilly area, nestled between the valleys of Bannu and Peshawar. Kohat District is divided into four *Tehsils*: Kohat, Lachi, Gumbat, and Dara Adam Khel. Total population of the city is 228,779 (2017).¹ Kohat is situated at an altitude of 489 meters and the absolute area of the city is 2,545 square Kilometres. Kohati Dialect of Hindko and Pashto are the languages of communication in Kohat. An almost 2km tunnel is built between Kohat and Peshawar in association with China.² Apart from the settled area, the district has a tribal belt attached with it which includes the famous Adam Khel Pass. There have been many changes in the boundaries of the district since Independence.

In Buddhist time period, two kings named, Adh and Kohat came to this area and settled alongside the northern border of this district. King Kohat named the city of Kohat after his name and Raja Adh to the ruins of an old fort on the hill side north of Mumandzai, which is 4 miles away village to the west of Kohat. This is how the region of Kohat was given its name.³

After Buddhist time period, the rich heritage of Kohat can be traced back to ancient times when the illustrious Emperor Babur graced these lands with his presence, bestowing upon it a legacy of grandeur and significance. Emperor Babar's expedition started in Kohat in 1505 AD, and the district was ruled by the Bangash and Khattack tribes who still own senior positions in different fields in Kohat. The District was a part of Mughal Empire from Emperor Akbar, who faced the ruthless invasion of Nadir Shah. in 1738 AD. In 1810, after the fall of Shah Shuja, Kohat was rented out to Mirza Girani for Rs. 33,000.00. When Azim Khan was defeated by Ranjit Singh in 1832, Ranjit Singh sent a Sikh Governor, Author Singh to Kohat and the city went into the possession of Sikh Government in 1834.⁴

In the year 1848, the flames of the second Sikh war ignited. Seeking shelter, Colonel G. Lawrence sought solace in the embrace of Kohat. There, he found sanctuary under the watchful eye of Khawaja Muhammad, progeny of the esteemed Sardar Sultan Muhammad. After the war, Kohat became a part of the British Empire on March 29, 1849. It was then added to the Peshawar District.⁵

In 1857, the war of freedom broke out. Captain B. Henderson was the Governor of KP during this time period. He passed away in Kohat on August 21st, 1861. After that, Captain

¹ Kohat District Demographics, <https://kp.gov.pk/page/kohatdistrictdemographics>

² Ahmad, Abdullah, *The Historical Background of Pakistan and its People* (Karachi: Tanzeem Publishers, 1973)12.

³ Ahmad Paracha, *KohatKaZehniIrtiq* (Peshawar: Zia Art Press, 1984), 04.

⁴ *District Census Report Kohat*, Computing and Issuing Authority, 1961.

⁵ *Gazetteer of Dera Ismail Khan District 1883-84*, Lahore: Sang-e-Meel Publications, 2002.

Munro and Captain Shortt took over and governed the city until 1866. In 1875 Kohat Pass Troubles started which lasted two years till 1877. During Kashmir War 1947, Pashtuns tribes assembled in Kohat before leaving for Kashmir to capture the area for Pakistan.⁶ After independence Kohat became a district of the KP of Pakistan.

Problem Statement

No significant research work has been done on the history of Kohat. There is only one work explaining the early history of Kohat⁷ and one work exploring the history of Kohat during the British period.⁸ It is thus possible to explore the history of Kohat during the British period due to the availability of Gazetteers and other official sources. One of the possible mechanisms to explore the regional history of Kohat from a local perspective is to utilize the social memory of the community. Oral history has been used by historians as a technique to explore a humanist view of history adding human emotions, passions and feelings in the narrative of history. Thus in order to overcome a problem of the lack of written sources, this study has utilized the social collective memory of the people of Kohat along with the existing documentary sources.

Significance of the Study

This study adds new information to the existing literature by adding in it a significant aspect of the regional history of Kohat. Moreover it records valuable traces of past from people's memory and adds it in the existing body of literature. The study has explored the administrative history of Kohat district thus it is also be a valuable addition in the regional history studies. The study is also socially relevant as it is exploring a gradual process of social change in a particular region.

Objectives of the Study

- 1) To explore the British administration in Kohat.
- 2) To find out the relationship of British with the local people of Kohat.

Research Questions

- 1) What was the pattern of British administration in Kohat?
- 2) How the British and locals had maintained their mutual relations?

Delimitation(s) of the Study

The Kohat district comprises four *Tehsils*, namely Kohat, Lachi, Gumbat, and Dara Adam Khel. However, the current study solely concentrates on the Kohat city, disregarding the other three *Tehsils*, which are not included in the research.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Kohat has been widely discussed by different scholars but very less scholarly work has been done on the socio-economic history and demography of Kohat. Few books have been written particularly about this region. Following areas, topics and aspects are covered.

Review of Related Literature

⁶Ibid.

⁷Zulfiqar, Shah, *Kohat Tareekh Kay Ainey Main* (Islamabad: HH313 Publications, 2009)

⁸S. Iftikhar Hussain, *Some Major Pukhtoon Tribes along the Pak-Afghan Border* (Peshawar: University of Peshawar, 2000)

Hamid Hussain in his article “Structural Evolution of the Kohat Fold and Thrust Belt in the Shakardarra Area (South Eastern Kohat, Pakistan)” (2018)⁹ analyses the the Kohat fold and thrust belt located in the northwestern region of Pakistan, its structural evolution, Eurasian plates, anticlines and syncline structure. His whole article is about the geology of Himalayas and the collision between the Indian and Eurasian plates. Though he discussed Kohat but He was studying how the land changed over time in a specific area in Pakistan called Shakardarra. The present research however covered the British administration during British period.

Dr Raheal Ahmad Siddiqui in his article “Through old Kohat”¹⁰ (2015) narrates his visit through the city. He describes the experience of visit in Kohat city and how he saw the roads, streets, famous places, individuals and so forth. He elaborates all the visited areas and places step by step. He said that he entered the city through Cantonment gate which is also called King Gate named after King Faisal in 1985. He described Mohalla Hinduan, Hindu temple, Mohallah Zar-ghar, Mohallah Hamam, Mohallah Kaazian, Kareze Mosque, Sangher (centre of the city is located on a low hill), Tehsil Gate, Tirah Bazaar, and so many other places. He ended his journey at Shahpur Road to the historic graveyard a few kilometres outside the city. This article is based on his own experience of visiting present Kohat city.

Ahmad Paracha, in his book *Kohat Ka Zehni Irtiqa* (1984)¹¹ briefly described the early history of Kohat starting from the period of Buddhist times and bringing it up to the times of Babur. He further describes the general history and overview of Kohat like major roads, universities, collages, hospitals, media, literature, poetry, and famous people of Kohat. The main focus of this research surrounds the British administration during British period, that has been ignored.

S. Iftikhar Hussain, in his book *Some Major Pukhtoon Tribes along the Pak-Afghan Border* (2000)¹² only focuses on the races and tribes settled in Kohat city. He chose the Durrani Empire time period, Sikh time period and British time period. According to him the district was then divided between two main branches of Pashtun races, the Bangash and the Khattaks. Khattaks held the eastern region while the western piece of the Kohat was being held by the Bangash in the Miranzai Valley.

Zulifkar Shah in his book *Kohat Tareekh Kay Ainey Main* (2009)¹³ has discussed the history of Kohat in British time. According to him, a long time ago, Babur attacked the Kohat city in 1505. After that, many important things happened in the city until the British came and made it their own. He described different wars, attacks and battles from Durrani time period to British Empire. He mentioned different deputies, in charge, gov ernors, and rulers of those times. The Britishers had to face many problems in administering the district. The writer described the famous disturbances in the area are the disturbance in Tirah, Kohat Pass troubles

⁹ Hamid Hussain, “The Structural Evolution of the Kohat Fold and Thrust Belt in the Shakardarra Area (South Eastern Kohat, Pakistan),” Geosciences Switzerland, (Aug 2018)

¹⁰ Dr Raheal Ahmad Siddiqui, “Through old Kohat,” TNS, The News On Sunday, (March 2015)

¹¹ Ahmad Paracha, *Kohat Ka Zehni Irtiqa*, 23.

¹² S. Iftikhar Hussain, *Some Major Pukhtoon Tribes along the Pak-Afghan Border*, 17

¹³ Zulfiqar, Shah, *Kohat Tareekh Kay Ainey Main*, 03

(1875-1877), the Bazoti troubles (1867- 1869), and Jawaki expedition (1877-78).¹⁴ But this research mainly focused on the social memory of the people of Kohat during British period.

Olaf Caroe in his book *The Pathans 550BC-1995AD* (1965) describes all the races of Pashtun tribes and their commonality, their differences, areas they are settled in, their cultures and traditions. His book has 10 volumes. He thoroughly elaborated almost all the tribes of Pashtun community including the ones who are living in Kohat e.g. Khattaks, Bangash, Afridi, Orakzai and further more. He covered whole Pakistan however this research only focused Kohat city.

All the above mentioned books have covered different aspects of Kohat District through different time periods but present research is particularly exploring the history of Kohat during British period. It has analysed the British administration of the Kohat city along with finding out the nature of relationship developed between the British and the locals.

METHODOLOGY

The researcher utilized the following approach in conducting this study.

Research Design

The present research is conducted by using historical research design. Data is collected by official documents particularly gazetteers, census reports, newspapers and any other relevant documents. Moreover it also used oral history as a technique to collect information from the perspective of locals. This study followed Qualitative tools to access and execute the research. Interviews are conducted as a method to collect data for recording oral history. Collective memory theory by Maurice Halbwachs is used to support the research.¹⁵

Population

All the relevant documents, reports of census, gazetteers and official and non-official documentary sources are part of population. Senior citizens (both male and females) of Kohat District who had a collective memory of past fall under the heading of population in oral history.

Sampling

From documentary sources, only those sources are selected which are relevant from the questions asked in the present study. For interviews convenient and snowball sampling, which is also called chain method, both techniques are used. First interviewee was chosen through convenient sampling and others were recommended by him. He knew the people who have experience in the required field of study. This method is rather quick and easy. Sampling size consisted of total 13 senior citizens of Kohat (both male and female).

Procedure (data collection)

¹⁴Ibid.,17.

¹⁵ Sarah Gensburger, "Halbwachs' Studies in Collective Memory: A Founding Text for Contemporary 'Memory Studies'", French National Center for Scientific Research (CNRS-ISP), Nanterre University, (November 1, 2016): This theory is about the shared memories, knowledge and information of a social group that is significantly associated with the group's identity.

This study is completed with the help of available primary and secondary sources for data collection. Important economic and demographic data was collected by using the related documentary sources. This data was collected from census reports, gazetteers, books, articles, newspapers and local libraries. For social data, face to face interviews were conducted. Documents and photos are collected during interview upon interviewee's consent which provided the proper background of the study. Interviews are conducted in both structured and un-structured ways. A structured interview required a chronologically ordered collection of profound query relevant to the administrative history of Kohat District and in unstructured interview, almost all the questions rose automatically.¹⁶

Data Analysis

The factual and statistical data is collected from the relevant documentary sources. For collection of factual data, the study relied on the documentary and official sources while for getting an acquaintance about the social memory and people's perception, it relied on the interviews. All the collected data from the interviews regarding the people's perception about the history is arranged thematically. Both of the kinds of information are cross-checked as well. After arranging data in different themes, it is written in narrative and descriptive style.

Ethical consideration

For current research, all the limitations of ethical considerations were followed by researcher. Information gathered by any source was kept confidential. No biasness was showed by the researcher at any stage of research. Offensive language was not used by the researcher in throughout research. Act of honour and respect was an important element of research. Researcher gave priority to the validity and reliability. Information gathered and provided by researcher is valid and reliable. In current research it is a clear and logical relation among the research questions, objectives, analysis and conclusion.

1. British Administration

Kohat is a District among the five districts of KP Province of Pakistan.¹⁷ History of Kohat began with the invasion of this area of a country by Emperor Babur. His expedition started in Kohat in 1505 AD. After that the district was a part of Mughal Empire from Akbar till Nadir Shah captured this area in 1738 AD. In 1832 Ranjit Singh sent a Sikh Governor Authur Singh to Kohat and the city went into the possession of Sikh Government in 1834.¹⁸

In 1848 the Sikh war started against the British East India Company, which was a military fight between them. Colonel G. Lawrence took refuge in Kohat. After the war, Kohat became a part of the British Empire on March 29, 1849. It was then added to the Peshawar District.¹⁹

¹⁶ Walker, M. *Southern Farmers and their Stories: Memory and Meaning of oral History* (Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky, 2006), 86.

¹⁷ *District Census Report Kohat*, Computing and Issuing Authority, 1961.

¹⁸ Ahmad Paracha, *Kohat Ka Zehni Irtiqā*, 04.

¹⁹ *Gazetteer of Dera Ismail Khan District 1883-84*, Lahore: Sang-e-Meel Publications, 2002.

There are primarily two sections in this chapter. The first section provides an overview of the British administration in the Kohat District, which explains how they arrived in the area and what measures they took to control and manage the city after it was annexed to the Punjab. Additionally, the second section discusses the relationships between the British and the leading families in the District.

1.1 Administrative Measures Taken by British in Kohat District

The British annexed the Punjab in 1849, and because they wanted to make sure that the area was peaceful and safe, they gave the job of administering the area to the Punjab authorities. These authorities had to deal with the tribes that often raided the settled districts, and they also had to run the civil government of the districts. This way of doing things stayed the same until the year 1901, when the British created the North-West Frontier Province and Kohat became one of its Districts.

There are further five sections in this section. The first section covers the immediate administrative steps that British took to uphold order in the area. The second section explains the administration of the Kohat district. The third section goes into more detail about the changes in administration from 1849 to 1901. The British district's administrative reforms are covered in the fourth section. The land revenue administration is covered in the final section.

1.1.1 Immediate Administrative Measures

Soon after complete annexation of the Punjab and area now called KP, a Board of administration was established in 1849 which consisted of three members including the Judicial with over-all joint responsibility but each having separate and distinct domain of activities. The country was then divided into Divisions, Districts and *Tehsils* in charge of the Commissioners, Deputy Commissioners and Kardar (later termed *Tehsildars*).²⁰ The Commissioners had appellate authority in both civil and criminal cases and also served as superintendent of police and revenue. Additionally, Assistants were made available to the Deputy Commissioner, who also served as a Magistrate and Collector. Kardar or *Tehsildars* were the lower courts that handled minor civil and criminal cases; they also served as assistant magistrates and deputy collectors.²¹

1.1.2 Administration of the Kohat District (1849-1901)

Frontier Regions, as well as Sikh administered areas in Peshawar, Hazara, Kashmir, Kohat, Bannu, and D.I. Khan, were included in the territories of the then Province of Punjab, which also included the Delhi Territories, which were transferred in 1858. That province was divided into 24 districts. Following that, these areas were incorporated into the five Districts of D.I. Khan, Bannu, Kohat, Peshawar, and Hazara, as well as the Political Agencies formed at the time. As a result, the first Agency was established in Khyber in 1878, then Kurram Agency in 1892, Tochi, Wana, and Malakand between 1892 and 1895.²² The Agencies were placed under the control of the then-Punjab Province and were populated by tribes of different local clans, all of Afghan origin, who also resided in the border princely States. After that, the Punjab Province was divided into

²⁰ Lal Baha, *N.W.F.P Administration Under British Rule, 1901-1919* (University of Michigan, National Commission on Historical and Cultural Research, 1978), 101.

²¹ Muhammad Nawaz Khan, *Pakistan The Evolution of KP and the Tribal Area* (Mardan: Radiant Publishers, 1996), 53.

²² Ibid, 54

eight divisions. "A Board of Administration" was formed, which included two well-known brothers, Henry and John Lawrence.²³ This Board initially governed the above-mentioned five districts and agencies. However, the divisions of Peshawar²⁴ and Derajat were later established. D.I.Khan and Bannu Districts were separated from Liah Division and transferred to Derajat Divisions. Punjab was first administered by a Chief Commissioner before being elevated to the status of Lieutenant Governor Province. A paramilitary force (the Punjab Irregular Force) was formed from disbanded Sikh troops, Gurkhas, British, and locals. They were supposed to meet the needs of the cantonments and garrisons in Kohat, Bannu D.I. Khan, Peshawar, and Abbottabad. The province was administered as a non-regulation province on the basis of the Parliament Act of 1870 and the Indian Legislature Act known as the Scheduled Districts Act of 1874.²⁵ The British tried to control the rough and untamed tribal regions that bordered Afghanistan, but they were unable to do so effectively. In 1849, the British extended their rule into the area that would later become the Northwest Frontier Province. The province was comprised of five frontier districts, namely Peshawar, Kohat, Banu, Dera Ismail Khan, and Hazaara, which had previously been integrated within Punjab. In the year 1901, this province gracefully emerged as a separate entity, carving its own path as the North West Frontier Province.²⁶

1.1.3 Appointment of Different Government Officials

Officers who have served less than three months have not been included in the list. Kohat became part of the Peshawar district after the Punjab was officially annexed on March 29, 1849. Colonel G. Lawrence was the first Deputy Commissioner of Peshawar, but he was transferred to Rajputáná in July 1850. He was replaced by Major Lumsden. Lieutenant Pollock, who came from Derajat, served as Assistant Commissioner in Kohat until May 1851, when Kohat became a separate district and Captain Coke took over. Captain Coke was then succeeded by Captain Henderson in October 1855, who held the district until his death in 1861, with one interruption. Captain Coke and Captain Henderson continued to lead their regiments, but they were under the authority of the officer in charge of Kohat. Shahzada Jamhura, a native of Peshawar, had accompanied George Lawrence to Kohat and then helped Lieutenant Herbert at the fort of Attock until it was taken over by the Sikhs. After that, he joined Lieutenant Taylor in the Bannu district at Lakki. In November 1849, he was appointed as an Extra Assistant in Kohat, a position he held until his death.

Bahadur Sher Khan was the most powerful man among the Kohat Bangashes, and Ghulam Hiader Khan had reclaimed his position as Chief of Hangu. Khawaja Muhammad Khan was the Teri Khattaks' Chief, but he had little control over a large portion of the tract. Chauntra, which included Bahadar Khel and Lawanghar, was almost completely independent of his authority. The landowners Jafir Khan and Afzal Khan split the Akora Khattak. Afzal Khan's territory was generally anarchic. Shakardarra belonged to Ghulam Mustafa Khan, the

²³ Ibid,57

²⁴ The Peshawar Division includes the Hazara, Peshawar, and Kohat districts.

²⁵ The Act, Volume No. 1 of Constitutional Documents from 1800 to 1933, p-403) 25/3/1870.

²⁶ Leslie Mallam, *Thirty Years on the North-West Frontier, Recollection of a Frontiersman* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2011), 40.

Sagri Chief of Mukhand. Ghulam Mustafa was an elderly man at the time, and the country was managed by his son, Ghulam Mahmood Khan.

1.1.4 The Administrative Changes (1849-1901)

During the early years of British Empire in the Punjab, various factors led to a change in the administrative machinery. The British had conquered the area from the Sikh Darbar in 1849, and they had come into contact with the rulers of Afghanistan and the tribes living in the Punjab. This was during the time of two wars fought between Britain and Afghanistan, in 1838-41 and 1878²⁷. First, it was thought that because the British were the successors of the Mughal Empire, they had the right to rule the area. However, this idea was later rejected. The British believed that British India should be pushed forward until the River Amu (a major river in Central Asia) in order to gain control over Afghanistan. However, later on this idea was abandoned, and the Amir of Afghanistan was allowed to rule over the country subject to their control in foreign relations and wars. The Treaty of Gandamak (1880) and the Durand Line (1894) were then agreed upon.²⁸ The five administrative districts along with Kohat District and five political agencies with states were administered in a joint system. The joint system was called the "five fingers of a stretched hand."²⁹ First, the Punjab Board of Administration was formed, which was later abolished. Punjab was then given a Chief Commissioner, who was an experienced administrator. Officers who had worked in the Sikh regime or during the Afghan war were appointed to the executive positions in the frontier areas including Kohat District. They had a rich experience in administering tribal areas. This refers to Deputy Commissioner Taylor D.I. Khan, Deputy Commissioner Edward Peshawar, Deputy Commissioner Abbot Abbottabad, and Lieutenant Pollack as Kohat's first Assistant Commissioner.³⁰

1.1.5 Administration Reforms

Kohat was one of the KP districts in the Punjab, which was ruled by the Punjab Government. The Punjab Government introduced a system of non-regulation in order to improve the administration of the district. This system gave people in charge of certain areas more power to deal with criminals. It also allowed the people in charge to have more communication with the tribes living nearby. During the period 1884-97, the British military sent 45 punitive expeditions against the tribes, as well as numerous skirmishes, wars, and uprisings. This was due to the general uprising of 1897, as well as frequent clashes between British forces and the tribes in Mohmand Chitral, Darra Adam Khel Kohat, Afridies, Aza Khel in Mohmand, and Dir. All of these necessitated the frequent dispatch of British armies, and many of the famous generals of the British Army participated. After the system of tribal agencies came into force, the British administrators left the district officers with only a few "tribal tracts" bordering their districts. However, During the Punjab Government's rule over the Frontier districts, including Kohat, for more than fifty years, these areas experienced slow progress and were less developed in terms of administration compared to the Punjab. This could be because the Punjab Government

²⁷ N.M. Khilnani, *British Power in the Punjab 1839-1858* (University of Michigan, Asia Publishing House, 1972), 179.

²⁸ Shakil Durrani, *Frontier Stations* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2021) 75.

²⁹ Roger D. Long, *A History of Pakistan* (Karachi: Oxford Press, 2015) 08.

³⁰ Mohammad Aslam Khan Khattak, *A Patahn Odyessy* (Karachi: Oxford Press, 2004) 12.

focused more on security, law and order, and education in the frontier districts, neglecting other administrative matters.³¹ Additionally, the main importance of this "outpost of the Indian Empire" made it difficult for the district officers to devote the necessary resources to developing the district. The development of canal irrigation, road construction, and trade helped improve the agricultural and economic conditions in the Kohat District. However, compared to the many impressive canal irrigation projects in the Punjab, the Kohat District's efforts in this area were relatively modest. Additionally, although progress has been made in developing education in the Punjab as a whole, the Frontier Districts continue to lag behind.³²

The head of the North West Frontier Province had an important job. He worked for the Government of India and had two main responsibilities. First, he had to handle the relationships with the tribes living near the border. Second, he had to manage the everyday tasks of running the province, like other leaders in different provinces. The people who worked for the head of the province were members of the Indian Civil Service, Military officers, and other government officials. The head of the province had two main advisers - one for the legal matters and one for the finances. The legal adviser was in charge of the courts and the financial adviser was in charge of money matters. The province had some unique features because it was treated differently by the government. For example, it was part of a special department and the important positions were filled by people with political experience. Another feature was that the province had always had a budget deficit. Finally, Colonel (later Sir) Harold Deane, who had served in the area for many years and was well-known and respected by the Pathans, was given the task of administering the province along with Kohat District in 1895. Roos-Keppel, who replaced him in 1919, was a military man without much experience in civil administration. Starting out as an Imperial province, the finances of the Province grew steadily despite deficit spending. However, as the Province's expenses grew faster than its revenue, it became necessary for the government to borrow money from Imperial sources to cover the gap.³³ In 1910-11, the Province's administration was divided into political, administrative and financial branches. Each branch was given its own set of responsibilities and revenue sources, with the Chief Commissioner having the same power as the heads of other local governments. This change helped to stabilize the finances of the Kohat District and make it more solvent. The government spent a lot of money on things like, tribal allowances, border defense, and the Frontier Military Police. The biggest increase in government spending occurred under the heading of "Politics and Police" which includes things like tribal allowances, maintenance of tribal levies, and the Border Military Police. The Frontier Crimes Regulation (a.k.a. the Frontier Crimes Regulation of 1872)³⁴ is an old, primitive law that allows the government to refer cases of crime to a council of elders called a jirga. Kohat District also experienced Jirga system. The jirga is made up of people

³¹ Muhammad Nawaz Khan, *Pakistan The Evolution of KP and the Tribal Area* (Mardan: Radiant Publishers, 1996), 60.

³² Captain H.L. Nevill, *Campaigns on the North-West Frontier* (London: Albemarle Street, 1912) 24.

³³ Ahmad, Abdullah, *The Historical Background of Pakistan and its People* (Karachi: Tanzeem Publishers, 1973)12.

³⁴ Ahmad Paracha, *Kohat Ka Zehni Irtiqa*, 04.

who are chosen by the government, and it can decide whether or not to prosecute the person involved in the crime.³⁵ In Kohat if the jirga decided to prosecute, the person could be sentenced to up to 14 years in prison. If the person wanted to appeal the decision, they could go to a higher court, but it was more common to petition the Chief Commissioner, who could then decide whether or not to review the decision of the Deputy Commissioner.

1.1.6 Land Revenue Administration

The British administration found the traditional land systems in Kohat to be interesting, because that was different from the British system. In Kohat, land was shared among different groups of people, rather than being owned by just a few people. In Kohat District, the main feature of the land tenure system in Kohat exuded elegance through its firm foundation rooted in a collective and unwavering sense of territorial entitlement. This meant that each individual had a share in the land, but they were also allowed to live there together as a group. This system was important because it helped to keep everyone united and ensured that each group had a say in how the land was used. Another interesting feature of the Kohat land tenure was a way that tribes would share their land with each other. They would use a special method called casting lots to decide who gets what land.³⁶ This practice was designed to keep everyone interested in the land and to make sure that the best land is available to everyone. It was also a sign of the democratic nature of the Kohat people. People in tribes would trade land with each other every so often. Sometimes they would only trade land, and other times they would trade houses too. This way of trading land was still happening in places like Kohat, Dir, and Sawat until at least 1901.³⁷ The priestly classes, mullahs and sayyids, were not allowed to own any land, but they were still very important to the community. They were given a certain amount of land, called a seri, to live on. Sometimes this land was given to important Khans or Maliks to help them with their expenses. According to a man called "Daftari," everyone had their own piece of land to farm. The full members of the tribe helped protect the tribe and fight against other tribes. There were also other people who helped the tribe, and they were given land for free. They had to help defend the tribe too. Only the full members had a say in important decisions. The survey made maps of the village boundaries and fields, and kept a record of who owned each piece of land. Next, the settlement officers in Kohat determined the land revenue rights of different individuals in an effort to stabilize the land ownership and establish a permanent record. This process was important because it established the rights of the different classes of landowners in the area, which in turn helped to prevent any disputes about land ownership. The survey operations were also successful in reaffirming the rights of the old proprietary class. There was a place where two people owned the same land, but it wasn't very good except in Kohat. There, the Khan of Teri was considered the main owner of his area after it was settled between 1885 and 1895. He was allowed to collect some money from the farmers who rented his land. At the same time, they were also talking about who had rights to the land. They recognized

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Hamid Hussain, "The Structural Evolution of the Kohat Fold and Thrust Belt in the Shakardarra Area (South Eastern Kohat, Pakistan)," *Geosciences Switzerland*, (Aug 2018)

³⁷ Zulfikar, Shah, *Kohat Tareekh Kay Ainey Main*, 19.

two types of renters - ones who lived there for a long time and ones who could leave whenever they wanted.³⁸

It may be concluded, the separation did not bring certain immediate drastic changes. The administration remained almost the same. Hence, it can be deduced that during the formation of the KP in 1901, the Kohat District, along with all the other Frontier Districts, was considerably behind in terms of advancement in various administrative aspects compared to the other districts of the Punjab.

2. Relationship with British Government

KP was annexed by the British in 1849. The British East India Company led numerous campaigns into areas controlled by Pathan tribes and gained their trust. The early British officers tried so hard to win the hearts of Pathans. The British and Pathans had such a strong relationship that during the Indian Rebellion of 1857, many people in Peshawar and surrounding areas supported the British while the rest of India was mutinous.³⁹

In this chapter, the focus is on the intricate and complex relationship between the British, Muslims, and Hindus from 1849 to 1947. The chapter delves into the various conflicts, both on a large scale such as wars and riots, as well as on a smaller scale including revolts and rebellious behavior exhibited by the Mullas. Additionally, the chapter explores the infamous abduction of Miss Molly Ellis and examines the profound consequences of trust and deception within the society. Moreover, the chapter provides an in-depth analysis of the minor incidents that occurred throughout this time period, which ultimately contributed to the emergence of troubles and riots. These events, although seemingly insignificant at first glance, had a significant impact on the dynamics between the British, Muslims, and Hindus, ultimately shaping the course of history.

During the Sepoy Mutiny in 1857, Kohat didn't join in and stayed peaceful⁴⁰. Later on, the British people made a special place to live in Cherat near Kohat. There were some arguments between different groups of people that caused the road in Kohat to close sometimes in the 1860s. There were also fights between the British and Pashtun tribesmen during the 1860s and 1870s. In 1874, the British made a special area called the Kohat Cantonment. In the 1880s, the road between Kohat, Bannu and Thall was often blocked by a group of people called Wazir tribesmen, which led to big fights between them and the British⁴¹.

2.1 Troubles in Kohat

In the 1921 census, there were about 18,000 Hindus and Sikhs and 19,000 Muslims living in Kohat. The people in charge were mostly Muslims. The Hindus had more money and paid more taxes than the Muslims. Before the 1900s, the Hindus and Muslims got along well and worked together. But when the 20th century started, more people in Kohat started to focus on their religion and politics. This caused tensions between the

³⁸ Ayub Sabir, *Kohat Kay Ainey Main* (Karachi: Bang-e-Haram, 1974) 21.

³⁹ Patrick McGinn, *Communalism and the North-West Frontier Province: the Kohat Riots* (South Asia Research, 1986), 139-158

⁴⁰ Richard D Lambert, *Hindu-Muslim Riots* (Lahore: Oxford University Press Pakistan 2013), 89-90.

⁴¹ C.C Davies, *The Problem of the North-West Frontier, 1890-1908: With a Survey of Policy since 1849* (London: Curzon Press 1975)

different religious groups. Some Muslims started to express their political beliefs through their faith. Religious leaders called Ulema presented themselves as defenders of Islam. The Arya Samaj, a Hindu group, also caused problems between the religious groups⁴². In 1909, a small fight happened because of these tensions. In June 1924, a man and a girl from different religions ran away together and people got very upset. In August, a newspaper editor got in trouble for saying mean things about a certain religion. This made the tensions even worse. Later that month, there was a disagreement about where a place for Hindu women to bathe should be built. The government decided to give it to the Hindus. Overall, there was a lot of arguing between different religious groups in the town before the riot happened. A riot is when a big group of people get very angry and start causing a lot of trouble by breaking things, fighting, and being very loud. It can be scary and dangerous for everyone involved⁴³.

However, some Muslim leaders were dissatisfied with this resolution and decided to stage protests. As a means to maintain peace, the police apprehended the individual responsible for the pamphlets and pledged to take appropriate action against them. In an effort to eradicate any remaining copies, the police proceeded to burn all of the pamphlets. Unfortunately, this action upset the Hindu community, as the pamphlets contained depictions of their deity Krishna⁴⁴. In response, the Hindus staged their own protest by refraining from any activities for an entire day, until the police threatened to arrest the organizer of the protest. For a week, the situation remained relatively stagnant, but tensions continued to rise. On September 7th, the Hindu community voiced their grievances to the Chief Commissioner, specifically addressing the issues they were facing from a Muslim individual named Khan⁴⁵. The following day, Das, the pamphlet creator, was released from jail on the condition that he stayed away from the area where the trial would take place. The conflict escalated further due to the claim made by the creators of the offensive song, who argued that it was a direct response to a previous hurtful poem targeting Hindus. Eventually, on September 2nd, Hindu leaders offered apologies for the incident and vowed to rectify the situation. They also reached out to both the government and Muslim leaders, expressing remorse and promising to remove the offensive page from the pamphlets. The initial cause of the dispute was a hurtful poem targeting the deity Krishna, which sparked a heated argument. In response, another individual created a pamphlet containing songs that contained derogatory remarks about Muslims, urging them to relocate and build a temple elsewhere. The playing of one of these songs during a Muslim funeral incited a great deal of anger among the attendees, leading to numerous meetings at mosques and the arrival of enraged preachers from different locations. On the morning of September 9th, a sizable assembly of primarily young Muslim boys amassed in front of Reilly, urging him to initiate an investigation led by Khan. While some members of the crowd accompanied Khan, others ventured into a marketplace that housed Hindu residences. A confrontation ensued, resulting in the death of a Muslim boy and injuries to several others, as Hindus began firing at

⁴² Neeti Nair, "Negotiating a Minority Status". *Changing Homelands: Hindu Politics and the Partition of India* (Harvard University Press 2011)

⁴³ J.G. Elliot, *The Frontier 1839-1947: The Story of the North-West Frontier of India*. (London : Cassell, & Company Ltd, 1968)

⁴⁴ Lawrence James, *Raj: The Making and Unmaking of British India* (New York: St: Martin's Press, 1998)

⁴⁵ Ibid.

them from rooftops⁴⁶. The cause of the shooting remains disputed, with Hindus claiming that the crowd was causing disturbances and setting fire to properties, whereas Muslims allege that some boys were taunting Hindu shopkeepers, prompting the police to intervene. At approximately 12:30 PM, the local army was summoned, and additional assistance was requested as acts of arson and looting persisted. The conflict persisted until around 7 PM when, with the aid of the army, the police finally regained control and dispersed the crowd. Subsequently, the military remained stationed at the city borders to maintain security. In an effort to prevent a potential conflict between Hindus and Muslims upon the release of Das, precautionary measures were taken. However, false rumors were spread by Muslims, claiming that Das had been set free. As a result, an evening gathering was organized at the mosque, where passionate speeches were delivered, expressing the need to protect Islam and warning of potential violence if their demands were not met by the following morning. Despite attempts by some individuals to calm the situation, their efforts were futile. Informants from the police force observed an increasing level of excitement among the crowd, to the extent that some even vowed to separate from their spouses. Throughout the night, groups of armed Muslims marched through the city. On 22 September, a person called Denys Bray visited Kohat and said that the Muslims there were responsible for starting a fight⁴⁷. The local Hindus said that the Muslim people who were in charge were not doing a good job and were treating them unfairly. Bray agreed with them and said that the police did not do enough to stop the fight, even when people were saying mean things about their religion. He also said that the armed forces were involved in stealing things⁴⁸. Another person called Reilly disagreed with Bray and said that it would be very hard for any group of people to stop a fight in that place, especially if a smaller group of people were being mean to a larger group of people and then hurting them. Reilly also said that the fire spreading quickly was a big part of why the fight got so bad. In late September, it was decided that a special judge from Europe would investigate a big fight that happened. They chose someone called Bolton for the job. The leader of the country told Bolton that the government had already been criticized a lot, so his report needed to be very detailed but also not make things worse between two groups of people in the country. The investigation started in early October and by October 10th, a first version of the report was ready. Bolton thought it was not a good idea for someone to burn a paper in a dramatic way, and he also agreed with Bray who was upset that the seriousness of a promise had not been recognized⁴⁹.

The people who moved from one place to another tried to get on the good side of a group that believes in Hindu traditions and asked the government to have soldiers from that group in Kohat. Mahatma Gandhi strongly said that the Hindus should not go back to Kohat until the government paid them for the damage done in a fight and made sure they would be safe. In 1924, Kohat was the site of widespread communal rioting, prompting Mohandas Gandhi to embark on a 21-day fast as a call for unity.

In January 1925, some Hindus slowly started going back after a meeting where representatives from the Hindu, Muslim, and Sikh communities agreed to give back all the

⁴⁶ Patrick McGinn, *Communalism and the North-West Frontier Province: the Kohat Riots*, 139-158.

⁴⁷ Richard D Lambert, *Hindu-Muslim Riots*, 89-90.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid, 138

things that were taken, fix all the religious places that were damaged, drop all the ongoing legal cases, and promise to get along better in the future. The government didn't want to pay for the damage, but they gave a lot of money in loans to the people who were hurt⁵⁰.

2.2 Rebellions

In 1897-98, there was a big fight between the British and some tribes in Kohat along with all over the India. It took the British almost a year to win and stop the tribes from rebelling. The fight was about different things like politics and religion, and it made the British Empire weak. The British soldiers learned a lot from the tribesmen and also saw their own weaknesses. The fight made the British government and military leaders think about what they would do if there was another rebellion. One result of the fight was that the land where the tribes lived was separated from the rest of Punjab and made into a new province, the North West Frontier Province. The British government also made a special system to govern the tribal areas. The British were able to stop the tribes for a while, but it made the tribes and the British dislike each other even more. This dislike continued until the British left India⁵¹.

Kohat has left its mark on the pages of history due to two significant events that involved attacks on British cantonments by local raiders. One notable incident took place in November 1920 when raiders targeted the residence of Lieutenant Colonel Thomas Howard Foulkes. Tragically, Col. Foulkes was shot and killed during the attack, while his wife was forcibly taken away but managed to survive. However, her injuries proved fatal, and she passed away in December 1920. Additionally, the raiders also looted their house, which was situated within Kohat Cantonment. It is worth mentioning that Col. Foulkes was a distinguished member of the Royal College of Surgeons. Another distressing incident occurred in 1923, when the house of Major Ellis came under attack. During this ruthless act, Major Ellis' wife lost her life, and his daughter was abducted, although she was fortunately recovered later on.

3.3 Abduction of Miss Mollie Ellis

In an audacious move, Ajab Khan, his brother Shahzada and his gang infiltrated Major Ellis' house located in the Kohat Cantonment under the cover of darkness. Unfortunately for them, the Major himself was away on military exercises. Nevertheless, their presence did not go unnoticed, as Mrs. Ellis heard the sound of approaching footsteps and swiftly blew the emergency whistle to alert others. In order to prevent the alarm from being raised, Shahzada cold-bloodedly assassinated Mrs. Ellis and forcefully abducted Mollie Ellis, the Major's daughter⁵². Determined to evade capture, they spent the following day hiding in the hills, strategically distancing themselves from the areas where law enforcement was intensively searching. During their escape, Mollie Ellis, in a stroke of luck, recognized the familiar surroundings when she spotted a distinctive peak known as "the old woman's nose"⁵³. This

⁵⁰ Salman Bangash, "Frontier Ablaze: The Pakhtun Uprising of 1897-98", Research Journal of Area Study Center (Russia, China and Central Asia) University of Peshawar Pakistan (November 1979)
http://asccentralasia.edu.pk/old_site/Issue_72/06_Frontier_Ablaze_Salman.html

⁵¹ *Foreign and Political Department Report India*, Report Showing the Relations of the British Government with the Tribes, Independent and Dependent, on the North-West Frontier of the Punjab, from Annexation in 1849 to the Close of 1855; District Dera Ismael Khan, 1856.

⁵² Shakil Durrani, "Kidnapping of Mollie Ellis by Ajab Khan", *Journal of The News Today* (April, 2023), <https://thenewstoday.com.pk/kidnapping-of-mollie-ellis-by-ajab-khan/>.

⁵³ Ibid, 03.

realization provided a glimmer of hope, as it gave them an indication of their whereabouts and the direction they were heading. Under the cover of darkness, they skillfully crossed the Darra Kohat road and embarked on a westward journey towards the Orakzai tribes, seeking sanctuary and safety. Eventually, they found refuge with the Mamuzai tribe, a fortunate turn of events considering the tribe's leader, the Akunzada, held great spiritual significance and was widely respected. Ajab Khan and his brother Shahzada were suspected of leading a notorious gang of Adamkhel Afridis from Darra, engaging in various criminal activities such as thefts and raids in the nearby town of Kohat. To put an end to their nefarious deeds, a contingent of Frontier Constabulary decided to take preventive measures and apprehend those responsible. It was reported that the main culprits would often disguise themselves as women to escape from their hideout⁵⁴. Consequently, the Constabulary commenced checking all individuals residing in the area, particularly women who were leaving. However, Ajab Khan took great offense at this act, considering it to be a disrespectful affront to local customs. Fueled by anger and a desire for revenge, he vowed to make those responsible pay. Two divisions of the army were immediately mobilised. Tribal Maliks and elders from the Afridi tribes in Darra Adamkhel, Khyber Agency, and other agencies were dispatched to first locate the kidnapper and then use all political and nonviolent means to secure her release. Sheikh Mahboob Ali, Mughal Baz Khan Afridi, and Quli Khan Khattak, three prominent Pakhtun government officials aided the tribal Jirga. Sir Harold Dean, the Chief Commissioner of the KP, personally oversaw the recovery effort from Kohat, Hangu, and Shinwari Fort, which served as the gateway to the Orakzai tribe. Simultaneously, troops began gathering to march into Orakzai and Afridi territory in case Mollie was harmed or did not return.⁵⁵

In response to the kidnapping, swift action was taken as two divisions of the army were immediately mobilized. To aid in the search for the kidnapper and secure the release of the victim, influential figures such as the Tribal Maliks and elders from the Afridi tribes in Darra Adamkhel, Khyber Agency, and other agencies were dispatched. Assisting them were prominent Pakhtun government officials Sheikh Mahboob Ali, Mughal Baz Khan Afridi, and Quli Khan Khattak. Overseeing the recovery efforts personally was Sir Harold Dean, the Chief Commissioner of the KP, stationed in Kohat, Hangu, and Shinwari Fort, which served as the gateway to the Orakzai tribe. In parallel, troops were assembled to prepare for a potential military operation into Orakzai and Afridi territory, should harm come to Mollie or if she did not return. Upon establishing contact with Mahmud Akhunzada and other tribal elders, the Jirga, or tribal council, determined that sending a volunteer nurse named Lillian Starr from the Mission Hospital Peshawar deep into the tribal areas with supplies for Mollie would be the best course of action⁵⁶. The Chief Commissioner specifically requested the intervention of Quli Khan in the matter. Showing immense bravery, Quli Khan, accompanied by a servant, ventured into the heart of the Tirah, an area that had never been accessible to any Indian or British officer

⁵⁴ Dr. Wilma Heston, Mumtaz Nasir, "Ajab Khan Afridi," *Journal of Khyber.ORG* (September, 2005) (<http://www.khyber.org>) http://www.khyber.org/people/a/Ajab_Khan_Afridi.shtml

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Rahael Ahmad Siddiqui, "[The story of the stationmaster's kidnapping](#)". *The News, Pakistan* (March, 2015) <https://www.thenews.com.pk/tns/detail/558308-kohat-the-story-of-the1-stationmasters-kidnapping>

before. He stayed as the esteemed Pir, or spiritual leader, of the Tribals' personal guest and successfully negotiated with the Tribes to bring Miss Ellis back safely. Fortunately, Mollie was found unharmed and unharassed, as stated by Lillian Starr in her book, where she expressed her understanding that the Pathans, or Pakhtuns, would not harm women in such a manner. She further added that while they may resort to killing, they would not engage in molestation, remarking on the kidnappers' honorable conduct in that regard. In recognition of Quli Khan's bravery and humanitarian efforts, the British Viceroy bestowed upon him the prestigious QAISER-E_HIND medal. Following the burial of Mrs. Ellis in Kohat cemetery, Mollie and her father returned to England⁵⁷.

Upon her return to Kohat in her advanced years, Mollie Ellis openly admitted that the Afridi gang, responsible for her abduction, exhibited remarkable kindness towards her and demonstrated an unwavering respect for her dignity. They diligently attended to her needs, ensuring timely meals and displaying genuine amicability throughout her ordeal. It is essential to acknowledge that it was solely due to her father's pursuit of retribution that Mrs. Ellis found herself in their clutches, as the Pathan tribe, recognizing the immense worth of a woman's honor, would not have taken such action otherwise.⁵⁸

In conclusion, the symbolic bond between the British and the Pathans became so strong that it went beyond a mere political alliance. When the Indian Rebellion of 1857 broke out, a wave of rebellion swept across the subcontinent, with countless regions rising up against British rule. However, Kohat and its surrounding areas stood apart in the midst of this commotion. Here, there was a remarkable display of loyalty to the British, as the local population steadfastly sided with the imperial forces amid a sea of rebellion. In 1849, the British Empire successfully annexed KP into its territories, marking a significant moment in the region's history. This victory was achieved through a series of strategic campaigns led by the British East India Company, targeting the Pathan tribes that dominated the region. In their endeavours, the early British officers showed great dedication to establishing genuine rapport with the highly independent Pathans, leaving no stone unturned to win their trust and create lasting bonds. The unwavering support of the Pathans in Peshawar and its environs proved vital in protecting British interests during this turbulent period. While the rest of India suffered from insurgency, KP remained a bastion of stability and loyalty, providing an important bastion for British forces. This unwavering loyalty, born out of years of careful cultivation, cemented the bond between the British and the Pathans and etched their unique relationship forever in the history books. The extraordinary solidarity shown by the Pathans of KP during the Indian rebellion can be attributed to the deep trust and friendship of the British officers. His tireless efforts to win the hearts of the Pathans paid off, transforming a hostile relationship into one of mutual respect and understanding. Consequently, when rebellion gripped the region, the Pathans, armed with unwavering loyalty, chose to side with the British, even when their other compatriots in India rose up against them.

⁵⁷ Chauburji, "The place where Molly lived" Journal of The Nation (June, 2011)<https://www.nation.com.pk/09-Jun-2011/the-place-where-molly-lived>

⁵⁸ Christian Tripodi, *Edge of Empire: The British Political Officer and Tribal Administration on the North-West Frontier 1877-1947*(New york, Ashgate Publishing 2011), 33.

Conclusion

The British administration in Kohat from 1849 to 1947 was marked by a fascinating blend of colonial rule and local dynamics. Kohat became a strategic hub for the British Empire in their quest to control the volatile region. The British administration in Kohat from 1849 to 1947 witnessed a transformation of the land, as it became a melting pot of cultures, traditions, and ideologies.

The British introduced their administrative structures, implementing a system of governance that merged their own bureaucratic practices with the existing local institutions. This amalgamation created a unique dynamic, as the British administrators sought to maintain control while also accommodating the customs and beliefs of the local population.

The result was a complex tapestry of interactions and negotiations, where power dynamics constantly shifted and local leaders navigated the intricacies of both British rule and their own cultural heritage.

The British administration in Kohat also left a lasting impact on the region's development, with the introduction of modern infrastructure, education, and healthcare systems.

The construction of roads, bridges, and railways opened up new avenues for trade and economic growth, while schools and hospitals provided the local population with access to quality education and healthcare.

The British also played a significant role in the preservation and documentation of the rich history and heritage of Kohat, with the establishment of museums, libraries, and archaeological sites.

The British administration in Kohat from 1849 to 1947 was a period of immense change and transformation, where the blending of colonial rule and local dynamics shaped the landscape and culture of the region.

It was a time of both opportunity and challenges, as the British sought to maintain control while also respecting the customs and traditions of the local people. This delicate balance created a vibrant and diverse society, where the influences of British governance and local heritage intertwined.

Today, the legacy of the British administration in Kohat can still be seen in the infrastructure, institutions, and cultural tapestry of the region. It serves as a reminder of the complex history and the resilience of the people who navigated through this period of colonial rule. The British administration in Kohat not only left a physical impact on the region but also shaped the mindset and aspirations of the local population.

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