CHAPTER-II

ESTABLISHMENT OF CENTRAL SECRETARIAT

This chapter deals with the establishment of the Central Secretariat and the role of the Hindus for its institution. No doubt, the whole administration of Maharaja Ranjit Singh was based and dependent on this. Here, we consider why the Maharaja recruited only the Hindus in the Central Secretariat, their contribution and the nature of changes and improvements brought about by the Hindus like Diwan Bhawani Das, Diwan Dina Nath, Diwan Ganga Ram, Misr Beli Ram etc. Prior to a discussion on the establishment of the Central Secretariat, it is mandatory to know about the early conditions of Maharaja Ranjit Singh’s administration.

Soon after his ascension to the throne, Maharaja Ranjit Singh felt the need of a strong centralized State with well-defined political frontiers. He had a Central Secretariat, a council of ministers but no legislature. He was the fountain head and originator of all laws and regulations for administrative purposes. He remained constantly busy in war and diplomacy except that he devoted his attention equally to revenue collection. He availed himself of many sources of taxation including direct and indirect tax and tax upon land, houses, imports and exports. He was constrained to limit his endeavours to the maintenance of a workable system of administration rather than proactive legislation. According to Alexander Burnes, "In a territory compactly situated, he had applied himself to those improvements which spring only from great minds and here we find despotism without rigours, a despot without
cruelty and a system of Government far beyond the native institutions of the East though far from the civilization of Europe."199

In the early stages of his career when Ranjit Singh was busy with the conquest and consolidation of his State he stuck to the conservative system of Government and introduced the necessary changes in stages. Earlier, there was no department of State, no accounts were kept and provincial governors, except for paying the stipulated amount, had a free hand in the settlement of revenue, Civil and Judicial administration. The departmental organization of Maharaja Ranjit Singh’s Secretariat and the institution of the various seals and the circumlocutory arrangements, in particular, will indicate the degree of perfection attained by the Sikh Government. The system of Government adopted by Maharaja Ranjit Singh may be described as a combination of the crude and highly irregular administrative practices prevalent amongst the Sikh Misals and those thought imperative by him.200

The evolution and growth of the Daftars and the machinery of Government at the centre was a gradual process. Till the conquest of Lahore in 1799, Ranjit Singh had no experience of the intricate art of finance or administration. During the Misal period, the constitution of the Government being straightforward and uncomplicated, there was no need of an elaborate Secretariat. The territories then were small and within easy reach and control. A few personal assistants like the Diwan (financial adviser), the toshakhania (treasurer) and a few munshis (clerks) were all that was necessary. Diwan Lakhpat Rai was the Diwan of Late Maha Singh, father of Ranjit Singh. When his father died, Ranjit Singh was only ten years old. His mother Sardarni Raj Kaur became regent during his minority and Diwan Lakhpat Rai assisted her constructively.

Diwan Lakhpat Rai continued in his post till Ranjit Singh attained the age of seventeen when he assumed the conduct of affairs of governance. Besides the Diwanship, there was the equally important post of the toshakhania. This post was held by Misr Basti Ram who had succeeded his father and grand-father in the office.\(^{201}\) During the conquest of Amritsar and Lahore, the Maharaja entrusted him with the charge of Amritsar.\(^{202}\) Misr Basti Ram was helped by Misr Jassa Mal as and when the necessity arose. He had also under him Gurmukh Singh, appointed in the year 1780.\(^{203}\) Gurmukh Singh accompanied Ranjit Singh during the capture of Lahore in 1799 and was then pay-master of the forces and was made incharge of whatever booty the Shukherchakia Chief came to possess at Lahore. For several years, even after the occupation of Lahore, Ranjit Singh did not have enough leisure for the organization of his Civil Government. He remained constantly busy in war and diplomacy and collection of money.

Ranjit Singh kept his troops under his own management and command and appropriated the revenue of the territories as he willed. Ranjit Singh followed this pratice for a few years of his early rule, but as his territories grew extensively with his conquests, the problems of revenue, finance and administration also became complex. But the process of evolution of the Daftars was slow, as except for the province of Lahore and other centrally administered areas, the whole Kingdom was farmed out. This obviated the necessity of evolving a uniform and comprehensive machinery of Government for the collection of revenue which was allowed to vary from province to province.


\(^{203}\) Ibid.
Maharaja Ranjit Singh allowed the Brahmins and the Khatris virtually to monopolize appointments in the Central Secretariat (Darbar-i-Mulla) because the upper classes of the Hindu community had acquired over the centuries a high degree of proficiency in revenue administration and general Secretariat work. Hindus who constituted the Central Secretariat were Diwan Bhawani Das, Diwan Devi Das, Misr Basti Ram, Kirpa Ram Chopra, Diwan Ganga Ram, Diwan Dina Nath, Misr Beli Ram, Misr Jassa Mal, Misr Rallia Ram, Misr Sahib Dyal, Lala Kishan Chand, Rattan Chand Duggal, Rattan Chand Darhiwala and Shanker Das.

Earlier the accounts of his revenue receipts and expenditure were at first kept by Rama Nand Sahu, a banker of Amritsar who held the octroi of Amritsar and farmed out the work of the salt mines of Pind Dadan Khan. In 1805, Holker advised the Maharaja to organize a regular treasury. In the times of financial crises, as in 1808, the revenues of the State were mortgaged to the banker and advances secured to meet the civil and military expenditure.

The evolution of the Daftars, however, was a gradual process. G.L. Chopra mention in Maharaja Ranjit Singh First Death Century Volume, A Sarishta-i-Diwani came into being in 1805, under Kirpa Ram. In 1808, Diwan Bhawani Das became the head of the Daftar named after his name-the Daftar-i-Bhawani Das. He organized the fiscal system in the newly conquered territories. He was appointed Finance Minister in 1811. The same year a new Daftar entitled the Sarishta-i-Daftar was established to control general expenditure and income. Diwan Bhawani Das created a Daftar-i-Maliyat, which controlled the land revenue and all other sources of income (Jama Kharch-i-Sairat), tributes and presents.

204 Fauja Singh, Some Aspects of State and Society under Ranjit Singh, New Delhi, 1982, p. 112.
(nazranas), escheats and forfeitures (Zabti), excise (Abkari), registration fees (Wajuhat-i-Moqarari) and custom and excise duties (Chaukiyat). With the control of major sources of income, the Daftar-i-Maliyat branched out. When Ganga Ram joined the service, a military accounts department came into being and other Daftars to control the accounts of the royal household (tauzihat) and the toshakhana came into being and were placed under Misr Basti Ram. In 1821, the Daftar-i-Shahzada was created to keep accounts of the income and expenditure of the assignments and jagirs of the royal princes. Soon after, a Daftar-i-Darogha to look after the octroi, custom and excise duty receipts was established. A Daftar-i-Roznamacha established in 1816, recorded the daily credit and debit entries. Soon after the Daftar-i-Moharyani came into existence. Its function was to affix the royal seal and charge commissions on documents of payments. In 1822, the Daftar-i-Mulla or the Supreme Department was created to supervise the overall functioning of the financial administration.

Diwan Bhawani Das joined the service of Maharaja Ranjit Singh in 1808. The Diwan himself, his father and his grandfather had held the very important post of Diwan or revenue minister under the Kabul Government. At Kabul he used Persian, Arabic and Turkish terms for various departments. The Maharaja appointed him to the position of Bakshi and also Wazir-i-Mal. Before the appointment of Diwan Bhawani Das, Ranjit Singh had no Daftar or regular system of accounts in the capital. The Diwan was the first to organize the offices. He also

208 Amarnath, Zafarnama-i-Ranjit Singh, p. 81.
210 Amarnath, Zafarnama-i-Ranjit Singh, p.81.
supervised the pay office for troops as a finance office. Diwan Bhawani Das, established a regular treasury and organized different departments to deal with various items of income and expenditure.\textsuperscript{211} It is possible that he introduced the system of Kabul Government under which he formally served. Another officer closely connected with accounts was Diwan Devi Das who was the keeper of Royal seal, brother of Diwan Bhawani Das.

In order to assist Bhawani Das in his work of department organization Maharaja Ranjit Singh invited Ganga Ram who was known as a man of ability and was recommended to the \textit{Maharaja} by Bhai Lal Singh and Sardar Himmat Singh Jalwasia\textsuperscript{212}. Ganga Ram accepted the offer and was accorded a cordial reception on his arrival at Lahore. Diwan Ganga Ram joined the service of Maharaja Ranjit Singh in 1813.\textsuperscript{213} Ganga Ram and his father had held important posts in Delhi under the Mughal Emperor and after that they joined the service of Sindhias of Gawalior. He had great experience to his credit. Under Ranjit Singh he became the head of the military office and the keeper of the royal seal. He was made one of the principal pay-masters of the irregular troops. Diwan Ganga Ram simplified the system of keeping records. He organized the \textit{Abkari} (excise) system. In 1815, Diwan Ganga Ram invited Dina Nath, his close relative, to Punjab and placed him in that office.\textsuperscript{214}

Dina Nath was an able, astute and cool headed person. He worked with intelligence and diligence at Lahore \textit{Darbar}. Dina Nath, because of his intelligence and business like approach soon caught the attention of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. He first attracted the attention of the \textit{Maharaja}
after the capture of Multan in 1818 when he made out the lists of those entitled to rewards with great rapidity and clearness and adjusted the accounts of the province of Multan, which the first Nazim Sukh Dyal had thrown into great confusion.\textsuperscript{215}

Dina Nath, by his ability and political acumen rose to the highest position of power and influence in the affairs of the State. He demonstrated energy and intelligence of an extraordinary kind, and in 1826, on the death of Diwan Ganga Ram, he succeeded him as the keeper of the Royal Seal and head of military accounts\textsuperscript{216}. In 1834 on the death of Diwan Bhawani Das, he was made the head of the Finance Department.\textsuperscript{217} Thus, he became finance minister of Maharaja Ranjit Singh towards the end of the Maharaja’s reign and possessed great influence during the latter years of his life. Besides these Hindus, there were some other notable Hindus who helped Diwan Bhawani Das in the establishment of the Central Secretariat and worked under him as his subordinates.

Rattan Chand Darhiwala was appointed, in 1829, in the postal department on Rs. 200 a month, with certain assignments from the revenues of Peshwar and Hazara. He was a Darbar Munshi from 1831 to 1849.\textsuperscript{218} Rattan Chand Duggal was, appointed incharge of the Maharaja’s private seal and held the office for several years.

Lala Karam Chand was one of the important Munshis of Ranjit Singh.\textsuperscript{219} His forefathers had held administrative positions at the Court of the Mughals. For sometime, he was placed as the head of the revenue

\textsuperscript{215} Lepel Griffin, \textit{The Punjab Chiefs: Historical and Biographical Notices of the Principal Families}, p.137.
\textsuperscript{218} Lepel Griffin, \textit{Chiefs and Families Note in the Punjab}, p. 448.
\textsuperscript{219} Sita Ram Kohli, \textit{Maharaja Ranjit Singh}, New Delhi, 1933, p. 286.
office and was responsible for maintaining the seal of the Maharaja. But when Diwan Bhawani Das arrived in Lahore, Karam Chand worked as his subordinate.\textsuperscript{220} For the greater part of his career he remained attached to the revenue department, in the details of which, he was an acknowledged expert.

Shankar Nath was appointed at Lahore Darbar in 1820 and was placed in Kanwar Kharak Singh's treasury office.\textsuperscript{221} Afterwards he was transferred to the Central Record Office, in which he remained till the annexation of the Punjab.

Two other Hindus occupying important positions were Misr Rallia Ram and Misr Sahib Dyal. In 1812, the Maharaja appointed Misr Rallia Ram the chief of the department of customs. Sahib Dyal was son of Rallia Ram and he first entered the service of the Maharaja as Munshi in the customs under his father. In 1832 he was transferred to the office of the paymaster of the regular army. These people helped Diwan Bhawani Das to establish his Central Secretariat. Officers were appointed at various levels of administration according to their caliber. According to Shahamat Ali, Diwan Bhawani Das established twelve Daftars or offices where the civil and military business of the Government was carried out,\textsuperscript{222} but he gives no further details. Diwan Bhawani Das first of all introduced five departments later on their number increased to twelve. Each of these Daftars was entrusted to the care of a responsible courtier who worked under the personal direction of the Maharaja.

\textsuperscript{221} Lepel Griffin, \textit{The Punjab Chiefs: Historical and Biographical Notices of the Principal Families}, pp. 253-54.
\textsuperscript{222} Shahamat Ali, \textit{The Sikhs and the Afghans}, p. 9.
The earliest seal of Ranjit Singh bears the Sambat 1856 (1800 A.D.).\textsuperscript{223} This would show that Ranjit Singh used his seal for the first time after the occupation of Lahore, that is nine years after his succession to the leadership of the Sukharchakia confederacy, or four years after his personal assumption of power. In 1803 Diwan Devi Das was made incharge of the seal with the caption, "\textit{Sabd sarista-i-hazur shud}" (the document has been sealed in the presence of the \textit{Maharaja}).\textsuperscript{224} When the pay orders were submitted to the \textit{Maharaja} for approval, they were thus sealed to denote that the orders had been correctly rendered in writing. Diwan Bhawani Das organized the State treasury quite methodically. He divided the financial transactions into the following \textit{Daftars}:-

1. \textbf{Daftar-i-Abwab-ul-mal (Daftar-i-Maliyat) or Land Reveune Department}: This department dealt with the accounts of the revenue receipts of the \textit{Maharaja}’s Kingdom. It was sub-divided into four sections.

   a) \textbf{Jama Kharch-i-Taaluqas or Pargnas}: This section maintained the accounts of the land revenue realized from the \textit{Pargnas}.\textsuperscript{225}

   b) \textbf{Jama Kharch-i-Sairat}: This branch dealt with the income from octroi charges, taxes from salt mines, etc.\textsuperscript{226}


\textsuperscript{224} Ganda Singh(ed), \textit{Maharaja Ranjit Singh First Death Century Volume}, p, 101; It is therefore, abundantly clear that Diwan Devi Das must have been appointed by Maharaja Ranjit Singh in or before 1803 and not towards the end of 1809 as state in Lepel Griffin’s \textit{The Punjab Chiefs: Historical and Biographical Notices of the Principal Families}. However, according to Diwan Amarnath, \textit{Zafarnama-i-Ranjit Singh}, p. 40. Dewan Devi Das first came to the \textit{Maharaja}’s court in 1808. But we agree with Diwan Amarnath’s view because he was contemporary of Maharaja Ranjit Singh.


\textsuperscript{226} Bhagat Singh, \textit{Maharaja Ranjit Singh and His Times}, p. 178.
Wajuhat-i-Moqarari-o-Abkari: This section kept the accounts of income from the profit of justice or court fees and charges corresponding to the stamp duties of modern times. The receipts under this head were collected in different ways. First of all, certain charges were levied for the redress of grievances by means of judicial decisions. Fines paid to atone for criminal acts provided another item which may be put under this head. Then there were the proceeds from various charges levied on petitions by the people addressed either to the Sikh ruler or to one of his ministers. Lastly, the payments made for the affixation of the Royal Seal, on all kinds of private contracts.

Abkari (excise) included all charges imposed on the sale of opium, bhang, spirits and intoxicating drugs. The income derived from this source was comparatively insignificant.

Chaukiyat (customs and Excise Duties): Duties were levied on all articles irrespective of their origin or destination. Uniform rates of duties were fixed on all articles without making distinction between articles of luxury and necessity. It is said that Ranjit Singh's taxation embraced, "everything, every locality, every thorough fare, every town and village, every article wherever sold, imported or exported domestic or foreign." Even the agriculture produce on which land tax had been paid did not escape duty. While passing from one side of the country to another the produce would pay these charges as many times as it met a customs line, so that before reaching its destination its original price got sometimes doubled or multiplied manifold. The charges were generally accepted in cash. There was no tax on salt. Salt mines were leased to

228 Bhagat Singh, Maharaja Ranjit Singh and His Times, p. 206.
229 Lepel Griffin, Ranjit Singh, New Delhi, 1905, p. 145.
merchants. However, the customs were neither oppressive nor unjustified because if it had been so, thus writes N.K. Sinha, the merchants could have changed their routes and conveyed "their goods though the territory of a less exacting chief."\textsuperscript{230} According to Steinbach, yet the duties, though levied at every ten or twelve miles, are light. To save themselves the trouble of constantly recurring payments, the merchants generally contract for the conveyance of their goods a carvon from one point of the country to another. This party who takes charges of the goods, paying all duties in the States through which they pass, should any chief, however, impose a vexatious tax, the conductor of the carvon has the option of changing the route, and conveying the goods through the territory of one who has the power to protect and the inclination to encourage the transit of traffic through his dominions.\textsuperscript{231}

d) **Nazarana (tributes and presents):** This section dealt with income from presents. *Nazarana* was also a tribute paid to the ruler on different occasions and under various circumstances by the subject of the State especially by prominent vassals and dignitaries.\textsuperscript{232} Sometimes it was in the form of a fixed annual charge from a subordinate chieftain. Sometimes it was the Prince paying to conqueror for the retention of a piece of territory by a defeated Prince. *Nazar* was paid to the *Maharaja* by ordinary officials of his Government also. This *nazars* could be put into two categories one, the fixed amount that was paid by the subordinate chiefs as those of Kulu, Mandi, Suket and Bilaspur and the second comprised

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offerings and sarwarnas at court. Nazrana was given in the form of cash, horses, shawls and swords. The Maharaja received 80,000 rupees from the Sultan of Bahawalpur and the same price and some horses from Multan Vakil. After sometime Ranjit Singh received 25,000 rupees and 16 canons from Jahadad Khan as nazarana. During the same year Damodar, the Kabul Vakil presented nazarna of 50,000 rupees and some horses.

Zabti (escheats and forfeitures) was also a source of considerable income to the Sikh ruler, who often punished his delinquent officials with fines or forfeitures of property or both. Besides, in several cases, he withdrew grants of land from the descendants of his deceased Sardars. These were sometimes retained by the State while sometimes they were re-granted to others in lieu of cash payments.

2. **Daftar Awab-ul-Tahweel or Income and Expenditure Department:** This Daftar was concerned with the records of accounts of income and expenditure sent by officials. Ranjit Singh set up treasuries in all Pargnas with the requisite staff. The payment of the salaries of the Pargna officials was made from the local treasury. Other requirements in respect of money were also met out of the Pargna treasury. These local treasuries were placed in the charge of officers called tahweeldars. The tahweeldars were cashiers with whom the Government money was deposited or through whom it was expended. At first this department under

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235 Ibid.
236 Karam Singh Historian (ed.), *Bahumulle Itihasik Laikh*, p. 128.
tahweeldars dealt with accounts of a varied nature, including incomes derived from different sources and expenses incurred in numerous ways.\textsuperscript{239} This comprised the accounts of multifarious natures such as the accounts of the central treasury, of the paymasters, of the army, of purchases, of buildings, of cloth merchants and of jewelers etc.\textsuperscript{240} But when separate offices to record income and expenditure of different branches of the administration were set up, the work of this office became more limited. The accounts of the expenses incurred in the local manufacturing of guns, rifles, gunpower and shells were also kept in the offices of the tahweeldars.

3. **Daftar-i-Taujihat or Royal Household Department:** The third department was in charge of the accounts of the Royal household. It was divided into two sub-divisions of the imperial household expenditure or *Daftar-i-Akhrajat* and the pay department *Daftar-i-Mawajib.*

   a) **Daftar-i-Akhrajat:** This *Daftar* dealt with expenditure. It comprised the expenses incurred under the following heads.

   1. *Inam* (rewards, gifts)
   2. *Ibitia* (purchases)
   3. *Istabal* (stable)
   4. *Istimal* (goods or material used or consumed in manufacture of things)
   5. *Tamir* (buildings)
   6. *Tahaif* (presents)
   7. *Khillat* (robes of honour)
   8. *Khurish fil* (feed of elephants)
   9. *Dharamarth* (charity)

\textsuperscript{239} Ganda Singh(ed), *Maharaja Ranjit Singh First Death Century Volume*, p. 114.
10. **Ziyafat** (entertainment)
11. **Mukula Saggam** (feed of hounds)
12. **Tama Sher** (feed of lions)
13. **Jagirat** (grants of land)
14. **Langar Khas** (royal kitchen)
15. **Musaidat** (advances of money)
16. **Kiraya** (fare of hired camel and carts)
17. **Madid Kharch** (aids and advances etc.)

b) **Daftar-i-Mawajib or Pay Office:** This *Daftar* was a pay office. This office maintained the accounts of pay and other emoluments in the various Government departments, such as the army, the civil staff, the clerical establishment and the menials. In order to cope with the swelling work and expansion of the civil and military organizations, this department was divided into several sub-heads such as (a) *mawajib fauj sowari* (Irregular Cavalry); (b) *mawajib piyada mutayyana qilajat* (infantry garrisoning forts); (c) *mawajib sair Jamaat* (miscellaneous companies and guards quartered at Government buildings, ferries, etc.); (d) *mawajibamla* (establishment).

4. **Daftar-i-Roznamacha or Audit and Accounts Department:** The fourth *Daftar* came into existence in 1816. This office was set up to register account of daily expenditure and income through the treasurer in relation to miscellaneous items under various heads. The items entered in the *Roznamacha* were later posted under their appropriate heads. This *Daftar* was headed by Abdul Karim.

5. **Daftar or Sarishta-i-Hazur:** It may be called imperial or Maharaja’s own department. It was created in 1803. It attended to the Maharaja’s

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correspondence with heads of other States and foreign high dignitaries. This office kept the Maharaja’s privy and personal seal to be affixed on important documents. The same seal was to be put on all orders verbally given by the Maharaja. Without this seal no order was executed. The Diwan’s office charged a certain sum for putting this seal on every paper. The keeper of the seal paid a fixed amount into the imperial treasury annually. According to Ali-ud-Din Mufti, Devi Das, who was incharge of finance and the farmer of privy seal was never a defaulter in the payments of revenue and regularly paid the money to the banker.\textsuperscript{245}

6. **Daftar-i-Toshakhana or the Ragalia and Treasury:** Toshakhana is literally a store room, a wardrobe or a chamber where rare and valuable articles were kept. Toshakhana was divided into two parts: Toshakhana Khas and Toshakhana Behla.\textsuperscript{246} Toshakhana-i-Khas was established in 1818.\textsuperscript{247} The head of the Toshakhana Khas was called Toshakhania. Misr Beli Ram was incharge of Toshakhana Khas during the reign of Maharaja Ranjit Singh.\textsuperscript{248} His Uncle Basti Ram had been the treasurer of Maha Singh,\textsuperscript{249} the father of Ranjit Singh and continued to hold major appointments under Maharaja Ranjit Singh for about twenty years. On his death in 1816-17. Beli Ram who had already served Toshakhana establishment for about seven years as the first assistant, was made to succeed his uncle.\textsuperscript{250} The office of the custodian of the toshakhana like that of the Deohriwala or Chamberlain was one of great importance on the

\textsuperscript{247} Ganda Singh (ed.), *Maharaja Ranjit Singh First Death Century Volume*, p.106.
\textsuperscript{248} Ibid; B.J. Hasrat, *Life and Times of Maharaja Ranjit Singh*, pp. 267, 290.
household establishment of the Maharaja.\footnote{251} Owning to his efficiency and intelligence and above all his fidelity to the interests of the State, the young Misr Beli Ram soon was held in high esteem by the Maharaja who appointed him as the Chief Manager and the Controller of the treasury.

Like other courtiers of the day, Misr Beli Ram also made full use of his influence and position in the Darbar to advance the interests of his family. He succeeded in securing high appointments for his brothers, Rup Lal, Megh Raj, Ram Kishan and Sukhraj. Rup Lal was the Nazim of the Jalandhar Doab, one of the richest provinces in the Khalsa dominion. Megh Raj was the custodian of the treasury at Gobindgarh (Amritsar)\footnote{252} and Ram Kishan was made Chamberlain to the Maharaja who always treated him with special kindness. Sukhraj, the youngest of the five brothers, joined the army. Thus the Misr family became a very powerful family at the court. During the Wajarat of Jawahar Singh in 1843-44, Misr Megh Raj succeeded his brother Beli Ram as the Chief Toshakhania and continued to serve, for sometime even under the British Government after the annexation of the Punjab.\footnote{253}

The other noteworthy family associated with the Toshakhana or treasures at the Sikh court was that of Misr Jassa Mal. He started service as a clerk in the treasury under Basti Ram\footnote{254}. After the death of Misr Basti Ram, Misr Beli Ram his nephew, who stood high in favour and confidence of Ranjit Singh was appointed chief Toshakhania. Misr Jassa Mal still only a petty writer or Munshi under Misr Beli Ram. Jassa Mal

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\footnote{251}{Sita Ram Kohli, \textit{Catalogue of Khalsa Darbar Records}, Vol. II, p.304}
\footnote{252}{Lepel Griffin, \textit{Chiefs and Families Note in the Punjab}, p. 362; B.R. Chopra, \textit{Kingdom of the Punjab (1839-1845)}, Hoshiarpur, 1969, p. 31.}
\footnote{254}{Carmichael Smyth, \textit{A History of the Reigning Family of Lahore}, p.152.}
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was a good scribe and could write exceedingly well the landa characters in which the treasury accounts were kept.\textsuperscript{255} He remained, therefore, for the most part of his early days in service, on camp duty with the Maharaja. It was during these tours that Jassa Mal came into frequent notice of Minister Raja Dhian Singh who subsequently became the patron of the family. Raja Dhian Singh, who was on bad terms with Misr Beli Ram, persuaded Ranjit Singh to appoint Jassa Mal, whom he presented as a most upright man of great abilities, to the charge of all the money and valuables received from Kashmir, then newly conquered. Raja Dhian Singh obtained for Jassa Mal the independent charge of the \textit{Behla Toshakhana} when this service treasury was created in 1817-1818 as a separate treasury.\textsuperscript{256} Jassa Mal was soon able to secure lucrative appointments for his two elder sons Amir Chand and Bhagwan Singh in the Revenue Department and the third Lal Singh was taken as his personal assistant on the \textit{Toshakhana} establishment. In 1834-35, after the death of Jassa Mal, the post of the chief treasurer in the \textit{Behla Toshakhana} was conferred upon his youngest son Lal Singh, who subsequently became a very important person in the State.

Misr Beli Ram had in his careful custody \textit{Khillats}, ornaments, gold, silver, pearls, diamonds and other rare articles. The important State papers, such as treaties and documents concerning the foreign relations of the Lahore Government were also consigned to the custody of the \textit{Toshakhana}. The smaller \textit{Toshakhana} contained things of common use which the Maharaja generally gave away to the visitors. It was a small service treasury for cash and such other things as were in daily requisition. The activities of this service treasury were growing every day.


as there was going on, at the court, a very frequent exchange of presents and ceremonies and visits between his Government and the representatives of the neighbouring rulers such as the British, the King of Kabul and the Amirs of Sindh.257

The *Toshakhana* department maintained separate accounts of the *Zar-i-naqd* or cash received in the treasury and the *Zar-i-jins* or the goods and precious metals kept in its custody from time to time.258 The goods included gold, silver, utensils of precious stones and the *pashmina* and exotic goods of Kashmir. This department also looked after the repair of the old and manufacture of the new articles of the above description and for that purpose it had, on its permanent establishment, a number of goldsmiths, engravers, and other skilled artisans.259 The fort of Gobindgarh in Amristar was the principal repository of the valuable property of the State.260 In this fort were deposited the articles of the *Toshakhana* or the royal wardrobe. Most of the *Toshakhana* stocks were kept in the fort of Lahore and Sheikhupura.261 *Toshakhana* also contained rare and valuable articles won as trophies of war. The unique and priceless *Kohinoor* diamond was also preserved in the *Toshakhana* under the care of Misr Beli Ram.262 *Toshakhana* was the central point of all monetary/fiscal transactions. Payments were made from here to the clerks, to needy persons to thousands of people who ministered to the varied wants of the Maharaja's house-hold, purveyors, artisans, horse dealers and others. The *Toshakhana* papers contained several inventories

261 *Ibid*.
262 Maharaja Ranjit Singh when at his death bed was persuaded by the *Brahmins* to make a gift of the *Kohinoor* diamond to the *Hindu* temple of Jagan Nath. Beli Ram refused to make over the diamond on the ground that it being not in a fit state of mind could not make the quest. Lieut Colonel Steinbach, *The Punjab; Being A Brief Account of the Country of the Sikhs*, p. 13; Sohan Lal Suri, *Umdat-ut-Tawarikh*, Daftar-III, Part-V, (Eng. Trans.) V.S. Suri, 1974, p. 694.
of confiscated property. The papers of the *Behla Toshakhana* are almost intact for the periods from 1816-35 and again from 1841-46. These comprise massive reams. The papers relating to *Toshakhana Khas* comprises only one bundle and this too is, unfortunately, neither complete nor very intelligible. There were three keys to the treasury. One key was with Misr Beli Ram, second with Fakir Nur-ud-Din incharge of the fort and third with Sardar Hukam Singh *Thanedar* of Lahore. The three keys applied together could open the gate of the treasury. Misr Basti Ram and Misr Beli Ram and then Misr Megh Raj had been looking after the *Toshakhana* very efficiently.

There were a number of other *Daftars* such as:

1. **Naqal Daftar or the Copying Office:** This copying office would naturally be established in conjunction with the office for the original work. This *Daftar* may be understood to date back to the same year as the establishment of the *Sarishta-i-Hazur*, i.e., 1803. The Maharaja’s orders finally approved by him or judgments in judicial cases were sent to this office. To say nothing of the State, ordinary private even officers necessarily had *Naqal* sections attached to them from the very start.

2. **Daftar-i-Daroga or Octroi and Excise Department:** The Daroga was the head of the Octroi and Excise Department. The seal of this *Daftar* bears inscription "Ram Dayal" and is affixed under the caption *Sabt Daftar-i- Darogha*.

3. **Daftar-i- Moharyani or Royal Seals and Commission Department:** This Daftar came in 1834 with the seal "Akal Sahai Mohar Daftar-i-Mubarik 1897" under the caption "Mohar-in-Mutabiq-

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i-Amar-i-Ala Shud" or "Sabt Srishta-i-Moharyani". This Daftar was supposed to affix the seal of the Maharaja and charge commissions for such affixation from the payee—the commission to be deducted from the amount ordered to be paid from Toshakhana.

4. **Daftar-i-Shahzada or Prince Department:** Prince department seems, from the seals of this department on the parwans, to have originated in 1821 with the seal "Sabt Sarishta-i-Shahzada 1878". This Daftar was created to keep accounts of the income and expenditure of the assignments and jagirs of the royal princes.

5. **Daftar-i-Khas or Daftar-i-Mulla or Special Royal Department:** This Daftar was headed by Diwan Singh, was instituted in Sambat 1822 with the seal "Sat Gur Sahai Khurm Rai" with the Caption "Mandraj Daftar a Mulla Shud." This supreme department was created to supervise the overall functioning of the financial administration. This Daftar-i-Khas was established in 1823 with either of the two seals "Akal Sahai Daftar-i-Khas 1880" and "Akal Sahai Diwan Singh" under the Caption 'Tahrir Yaft'.

These Daftars seem to have passed through several changes, relating to the details of organization in subsequent years. With the passage of time some of these Daftars were abolished and a few amalgamated with others.

Hari Ram Gupta mentions some more Daftars which were the following:

1. **The office of the Wazir or Prime Minister:** Dhian Singh was Wazir or Prime Minister of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. He was

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266 Ganda Singh (ed.), Maharaja Ranjit Singh First Death Century Volume, p. 112.
267 Ibid.
268 Ibid., p. 110
269 Ibid.
Maharaja's chief adviser in all matters. All important papers, documents, petitions and representations were first scrutinized by him and he jotted down his opinion. Then they were placed before the Maharaja for final orders. The Maharaja's orders were executed by him. The Maharaja issued orders in many cases without consulting the Prime Minister.

2. **Darogha-i-Deorhi Mulla or Lord Chamberlain:** This office was of great importance as nobody could see the Maharaja except through him. The first person to hold this office was Khushal Singh and after him Dhian Singh.

3. **Dabir-ul-Mamlikat or Foreign Office:** Faqir Aziz-ud-Din headed this department. It dealt with foreign relations with Afghanistan, Cis-Satlej States whose representatives live at Lahore, East India Company, Nepal and Sind. Fakir Aziz-ud-Din prepared the drafts which were modified according to the instructions of the Maharaja.

4. **Auditor General of Accounts:** Diwan Ganga Ram and Diwan Dina Nath held this office.

5. **Religious Endowments:** Bhais Gobind Ram, Ram Singh and Gurmukh Singh were incharge of this office.

The office functioning proceeded in the following way. When the Maharaja passed a pay order- he always did so orally and in Punjabi - it was written down in Persian by a Munshi, if one was present. When there was no Munshi in attendance, one or the other of the ministers or officers present transferred the order to writing and communicated it to a Munshi, who put it in proper form, in Persian, affixing his department's seal to it. The order was presented to the Maharaja for approval. Illiterate as he was, he had acquired a good knowledge of Persian and was able to understand the gist of his oral order; he suggested amendments or asked
for a revised draft to be submitted. After an order was approved two seals were put on it- one had the inscription, "Akal Sahai Ranjit Singh", in Gurmukhi and the other the inscription, "Mulahiza Shud" in Persian. After being thus sealed, the order went round the various offices concerned. It was first sent to the Sarishta-i-Hazur, where it was recorded and stamped with a seal having the caption, "Az Qarar-i-Hukm-i-Ashraf" and the inscription, "Sabt-i-Sarishta-i-Hazur shud". Then it was sent on to the Daftar of Devi Das, where it was noted and stamped. It was then sent to Daftar of Bhawani Das, where it was taken note of and stamped further. Then it went to the General Secretariat which was organized in 1811 and reorganized in 1820 where it was submitted to a further process of recording and stamping after which it was forwarded to the Naqal Daftar (the copying office). Here it was copied word for word. It was then transmitted to the Daftar of Ganga Sahai for information and record.

A regular circumlocution office existed in Ranjit Singh's time. Not even a pie could be paid out of the State treasury except through a regular channel. It is worthy of note that the Maharaja evolved a more or less meticulous and regular system which he consistently followed. The evolution and stabilization of the various Daftars of the finance department gave it control of almost all financial transactions. All pay orders or parwanas of payment passed through the relevant Daftar whose seal had to be affixed; a copy was kept in the Naqal Daftar. As time went on, one or the other of the various Daftars dropped out of the chain of financial administration. Towards the end of Maharaja Ranjit Singh's reign there is to be found just one seal, namely either that of

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272 Ibid; p. 109.
'Kirpa Ram Sambat 1864' (1807 A.D.) or of 'Har Sukh Rai' the keeper of the Maharaja’s private signet.\(^{273}\)

As regards the total number of offices in the Secretariat diverse opinions have been mentioned. According to Shahmat Ali\(^{274}\) there were twelve Daftars towards the end of Ranjit Singh’s reign, where the civil and military business of the Government arranged. G.L. Chopra in Maharaja Ranjit Singh First Death Century Volume\(^{275}\) has listed as many as fifteen finance offices only. Sita Ram Kohli\(^{276}\) mentions only five major Daftars which, however, are concerned only with finance. But there were many more offices and the number may quite well amount to twelve. Fauja Singh\(^{277}\) gives a list of twelve offices and Hari Ram Gupta\(^{278}\) mentions fourteen Daftar which were dealing with finance.

As the administrative problems of Central Government increased, men of talent and ability drifted to the court of Lahore. Diwan Bhawani Das, Diwan Devi Das. Misr Basti Ram, Kirpa Ram Chopra, Diwan Ganga Ram, Diwan Dina Nath, Rattan Chand Darhiwala, Rattan Chand Duggal, Misr Beli Ram, Shankar Das, Lala Karam Chand, Misr Rallia Ram, Misr Sahib Dayal were men who were employed by the Maharaja as it suited him best in secretarial capacity or as army commanders. Some of them rose to such eminence, that the Daftars under their charge were known by their names and seal of office such as Daftar-i-Devi Das, Sarishta-i-Bhawani Das, Daftar-i Ganga Ram, Daftar-i-Shahzada.\(^{279}\) All these persons enjoyed the great confidence of the Maharaja and shaped the financial and revenue policy of the administration. Every head of the

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\(^{274}\) Shahamat Ali, The Sikhs and the Afghans, p. 15.


\(^{277}\) Fauja Singh, Some Aspects of State and Society under Ranjit Singh, p. 401, Appendix – A.


department took orders from the *Maharaja* directly not through the Prime Minister. Maharaja Ranjit Singh supervised personally the working of all the *Daftars*, discussed with the officials in charge of them the minutest details and determined ultimate settlement. Lastly, for the establishment of the *Daftars*, the whole credit goes to Diwan Bhawani Das. No doubt, other Courtiers and Officials role was not of less significance. On the whole the balance of the Secretariat was heavily titled in favour of one community i.e. *Hindu*.