

TERMINOLOGY FOR ARCHAEOLOGY IN THE PAKISTANI LANGUAGES

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Abstract

This article focuses on the local terminology for archaeology in Pakistan. Archaeology has been practiced and taught in this part of the world since the British rule in the subcontinent. Throughout its history natives have worked side by side with foreign archaeologists in the field and also in the popularization of archaeological information. Native archaeologists and scholars have been involved in the process of transmission of archaeological knowledge to the local people. They not only translated archaeological publications into local languages but also reinterpreted archaeology and produced works in the Indo-Pakistani vernaculars. Especially in Pakistan, their works are available in the form of poetry, articles, books, and so on. Apart from this, the Pakistani archaeological departments have also contributed to the translation, and transmission of archaeology and heritage in the country by installing bilingual (English-Urdu and English-Sindhi) signboards at heritage sites and also through publications in the Pakistani languages. These publications and signboards offer important information about the current state of archaeological knowledge in Pakistan. The main objective of this study is to prepare an account of terms used for archaeology in different languages of Pakistan so as to understand how it has been translated, interpreted, and represented in the country. In this article, the author has outlined the local terms used for archaeology in the Pakistani languages to highlight the definition and meaning of archaeology in Pakistan.

Keywords: *Archaeological Terminology, Archaeology, Pakistani Vernaculars, Knowledge Transmission, Archaeological Signboards, Archaeological Publications.*

Introduction

Translation and transmission of cultural information into national languages is very important because no one can make people understand a language they do not know. It is wise to communicate with people in their own language. Using vernaculars as a mode of communication has helped archaeologists to transmit cultural knowledge at the public level. In Pakistan, the tradition of transmitting archaeological and cultural knowledge in regional vernaculars through translations, books, popular articles, poetry, and fiction is almost a hundred years old.¹ Mostly reproduced from the works – fieldwork reports, articles, and books – of archaeologists, the literature on heritage and archaeology is available in Urdu, Sindhi, Punjabi, Pashto, and other Pakistani languages. However, the tradition of translating and disseminating cultural knowledge in Sindhi and Urdu is comparatively stronger than in the other languages of Pakistan. In Sindhi, it started with the discovery of the ruins of a protohistoric settlement called Mohenjo Daro located in the Larkana district of Sindh whereas the earliest Pakistani archaeological publication in Urdu is the translation of Sir John Marshall's guidebook on Taxila, which is an early historic city of Pakistan located in the Rawalpindi district of the Punjab province.² It is to be noted that both of these sites, i.e. Mohenjo Daro and Taxila, were discovered by Marshall. With regard to Mohenjo Daro, Lahiri states that Marshall knew that the 'news ... [and] his pen would succeed in appropriately projecting the work that had given birth to a new beginning for India's ancient past'.³ Through his publications, Marshall inspired and motivated a generation of local archaeologists, intellectuals, and writers who later on following his steps, penned poetry, articles, and books in Sindhi and Urdu, although most of these writings were reproduced from Marshall's works. And, in Sindhi, poetry was also written on Mohenjo Daro, the Indus Civilization.⁴

Later on, after the creation of Pakistan in 1947, the archaeologists, as well as the non-archaeologists (writers, scholars, and intellectuals), involved themselves in the process of translation, dissemination, and transformation and translation of archaeological knowledge into regional languages and published a number of books on the archaeology and the archaeological heritage of Pakistan. Except for Ahmad-din Siddiqui who assisted Sir John Marshall in the excavations at Taxila and Mohenjo Daro⁵ and Moulvi Muhammad Hameed Qureshi, most of those archaeologists worked with Sir Mortimer Wheeler, as, 'a fully developed concept of popularization of archaeology was the brainchild of Sir Mortimer Wheeler'.⁶ Here, it is pertinent to mention Waliullah Khan's Urdu book on Gandhara which he dedicated to

Wheeler, who was his supervisor in the Department of Archaeology and Museums (DOAM), Government of Pakistan.⁷ Wheeler is very renowned in Pakistani academic circles for his works, particularly the establishment of the Archaeology Department in independent Pakistan, the idea of making archaeology popular in a “language intelligible to the local bird-scare”⁸ and the archaeology training schools at Taxila and Mohenjo Daro in which he trained a generation of local archaeologists who continued his legacy and kept his memory alive in India and Pakistan.⁹ The first two archaeological publications that appeared in Urdu after the creation of Pakistan came from the side of the archaeologists namely Moulvi Muhammad Hameed Khan Qureshi and Muhammad Idris Siddiqui of the newly established DOAM. Qureshi translated Marshall’s *A Guide to Taxila* and Siddiqui wrote a book on the Indus Civilization.¹⁰ Muhammad Waliullah Khan writes that Qureshi’s translation of the *Guide’s* first edition was for the first time published in 1924 which makes it the first archaeological book written on Pakistani archaeology in the Urdu language.¹¹ Later on, DOAM also published the excavation report of Bhanbhore in the Urdu language, and, moreover, a number of archaeological publications in the form of, both original and translated, books and articles covering a wide range of topics were also produced by the Pakistani archaeologists and non-archaeologists.¹²

This article is about the terms used for archaeology in Pakistani literature and other forms of written communication (e.g. signboards of the archaeology departments). The aim of this article is to highlight how it has been represented, translated and popularized in Pakistan. In the Indo-Pakistani subcontinent, archaeology was introduced to local people with the establishment of the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) in 1861.¹³ However, the answer to how archaeology was translated, and written in local languages in the subcontinent is not very well known. In this article, an attempt has been made to prepare an account of terms used to describe and denote archaeology in the different languages of Pakistan.

This article offers a short definition of archaeology which is followed by a description and inventory of vernacular terms used for archaeology in Pakistan. Next, it includes a discussion in which different local terms for archaeology have been examined in the light of the views of the historians of archaeology, heritage experts, and archaeologists, and lastly, a conclusion.

Definition of Archaeology

Archaeology is a field of study, the knowledge of the past of human beings that is based on cultural material which includes ancient

mounds, pottery, artefacts and, so on. It is derived from the Greek word “arkhaios” meaning “ancient” and “beginning”, and arkhaiologia means “the study of beginnings” or “the study of ancient times”.¹⁴ This shows that archaeology is not the knowledge of the complete past, but is limited to a specific time i.e. the archaic period.

However, materials and artefacts of not only ancient but also of modern or contemporary past can be investigated and studied using archeological methods.¹⁵ As, with the growing interest and focus of archaeologists in the archaeology of the recent past, which focuses on the present societies or “that which exists synchronically”, archaeology has been now described as a discipline that covers all periods of history, from prehistory to modern history, and is much more than the study of ancient past.¹⁶

Pakistani terms for archaeology

In Pakistan, the word archaeology has been translated into different local languages of the country. One will find out that each language has a different word for it, for example, in Urdu it is called *Āthār-i-Qadīmah* *Īlm-i-Āthār-i-Qadīmah*, *Āthāriāt*, *Khandrāt*, and *Qadīm ‘Ulūm*;¹⁷ this term has its basis in Urdu from Sir Syed Ahmad Khan’s *Āthār-us-Ṣanādīd*. In Pashto *largoony asar*;¹⁸ and the Sindhi terms for archaeology are *ilm asar-i Qadeema prachin wasto vigyan*, *khojna khato* and *jhoni wath vigyan* (see Table 1).¹⁹ Among them, the Sindhi terms *prachin wasto vigyan*, *khojana khatu* and *jhoni wath vigyan* for archaeology and *prachin vastu vigyani* for archaeologist have been found in pre-1947 archaeological publications in Sindhi, and, interestingly, this terminology is missing in post-1947 Sindhi literature about archaeology. There might be several reasons for their abandonment by the Sindhi authors. But one plausible reason can be the Urdu name of the newly established Department of Archaeology of Pakistan which is *Maḥikmah Āthār-i-Qadīmah* (محکمہ آثار قدیمہ) and its popularity, as post-1947 Sindhi terminology for archaeology is derived from it.²⁰ Whereas, the Pashto *largoony asar* has a recent history. It was first used by Rafi Yousafzai (Dr. Rafiullah Khan) as the title of his poem, although by *largoony asar* the writer did not mean archaeology *per se*. The poem, *largoony asar*, deals with the theme of traditional handicrafts which have now been drained by dealers out of Swat.²¹ But nowadays it has become very common in the new Pashto media, in which it is used for archaeology, ancient remains and artefacts.²² Furthermore, generally, the Urdu terms mentioned above are very common in Pakistan; they are used to denote archaeology in all languages of the country.

Sr. No.	Nomenclature	Language	Meaning in English
1	<i>Āthār-i-Qadīmah</i> (آثار قدیمہ)	Urdu, Panjabi, Balochi, Pashto, and others.	Ancient remains.
2	<i>‘Īlm-i-Āthār-i-Qadīmah</i> (علم آثار قدیمہ)	Sindhi, Urdu	The study of ancient remains.
3	<i>‘Īlm-ul-Āthār</i> (علم الآثار)	Urdu	The study of remains.
4	<i>Āthāriāt</i> (آثاریات)	Urdu	Grammatically incorrect (see discussion).
5	<i>Qadīm ‘Ulūm</i> (قدیم علوم)	Urdu	Ancient Studies.
6	<i>Khandrāt</i> (کھنڈرات)	Urdu, Pashto, Sindhi, Balochi	Ruins.
7	Largoony Aasar (لرغونی آثار)	Pashto	Ancient remains.
8	Parachin wasto Vigyan (پراچین وستو وگیان)	Sindhi	The study of ancient material.
9	Khojna Khato (کھوجنا کھاتو)	Sindhi	Exploration department.
10	Jhoni wath Vigyan (جھونی و تھہ وگیان)	Sindhi	The study of old material.

Table 1. Pakistani terms for archaeology.

Discussion

It is immensely significant to outline that of all the terms used for archaeology in Pakistani languages *Āthār-i-Qadīmah* is the most popular and it can be noticed in all languages spoken in the country. The reason for its popularity, as it seems, is the Urdu name of Pakistan’s Federal Department of Archaeology and Museums (hereafter DOAM).²³ Apart from DOAM’s institutional usage of the term (see Figure 1), the best example of its use in academia or in higher education institutes is Oriental Museum, Durham University’s website where the detail of the event “Taxila in Focus: 100 years since Marshall” are given in both English and Urdu in which the word “Archaeology” and “Archaeological” are translated in Urdu as *Āthār-i-Qadīmah*.²⁴ The following excerpts are copied from the website mainly to highlight the use of *Āthār-i-Qadīmah* beyond Pakistan.

*His collection included images of archaeological excavations, as well as artefacts, architectural monuments, and sculptures from sites dating from prehistoric times through to the Colonial period.*²⁵

اُن کے مجموعے میں ما قبل تاریخ سے لے کر نوآبادیاتی دور تک کے مقامات سے آثار قدیمہ کی کھدائی کی تصاویر کے ساتھ ساتھ نوادرات فن تعمیر کی یادگاریں اور سنگ تراشی شامل ہیں۔²⁶

In the above quotes, it can be clearly observed that the word “archaeological” is translated as *Āthār-i-Qadīmah* (آثار قدیمہ), which is also used for “archaeology” on the navigation bar of the event that can be seen by clicking on the Urdu (اردو).



Fig. 1. Bilingual Urdu-English signboard of the Pakistan’s federal archaeology department, Islamabad.

On the other hand, archaeological signboards are another evidence of the use of the word *Āthār-i-Qadīmah* by the Pakistani archaeology departments. For example, the title “archaeological sites” is also translated as *Āthār-i-Qadīmah* and it can be noticed, particularly, on the signboards informing about the archaeological sites installed by the provincial archaeology department of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (see Figure 2). And on another signboard, the term “archaeological site” is interpreted in Urdu as *Khandrāt*, which in local parlance gives the meaning “Remains” “the deserted and/or haunted structures”, by Khyber

Pakhtunkhwa’s Department of Archaeology and Museums (see Figure 3). However, in one of the old signboards erected along the road in Taxila informing about the nearby cultural heritage the term *Āthār-i-Qadīmah* is used for Remains (see Figure 4). Keeping in view its popularity and use at the global level, it is thus argued that its use and adoption at the government level has contributed to its popularity and establishment, convincing the general public as well as specialists.



Fig 2. Bilingual Urdu-English signboard about archaeological sites in Taxila Valley, Khanpur, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.



Fig. 3: Bilingual Urdu-English signboard showing direction and distance of archaeological site of Udegram, Barikot-Mingora Road, Udegram, Swat.



Fig. 4: The blue color bilingual English-Urdu signboard showing the translation of *remains* as *Āthār-i-Qadīmah*, Taxila-Khanpur Road, Taxila, Punjab

Furthermore, apart from *Āthār-i-Qadīmah*, another Urdu term *Āthāriāt* is also very popular among the Pakistani archaeology community. Like *Āthār-i-Qadīmah*, this term was also coined by archaeologists (see below). In recent years, it has become very common with the publication of the “*Journal of Archaeohistorical Studies (ĀTHĀR)*” which is a multilingual quarterly journal published by the Association for the Archaeological Study of Ancient Societies. Its Urdu name is *Majallah barā’ay Āthāriyāti Tārīkhi Muṭalia* (مجلہ برائے آثارِ تاریخی مطالعہ) in which “archaeo” is translated as “*Āthāriāt*”. With that, *Āthāriāt* in place of archaeology is written a number of articles that appeared in the different issues of the journal, however, at the same time, *Āthār-i-Qadīmah* is also adopted by the authors in their articles.²⁷

Archaeology, *Āthār-i-Qadīmah* or *Āthāriāt*?

In Pakistan, archaeology is commonly referred to as *Āthār-i-Qadīmah*, and in archaeological circles and to academics it is known as *Āthāriāt*. Just because archaeology is based on cultural material, which is

the archaeological record, is it appropriate to call it *Āthār-i-Qadīmāh* or *Āthāriāt*? If not, then what it should be called? And how should be written and read? These questions cannot be answered without explaining these three: archaeology, *Āthār-i-Qadīmāh* and *Āthāriāt*.

The definition of archaeology has been already discussed above. As far as *Āthār-i-Qadīmāh* is concerned, the English translation of *Āthār-i-Qadīmāh* is “ancient remains” or “ancient artefacts”; however, in the Pakistani legislation for cultural heritage, the ancient remains are defined as antiquities.²⁸ Pakistan’s *Antiquities Act, 1975*, which is the basis of all rules related to the cultural heritage of the country, provides the following meanings of antiquity.

- (i) [A]ny ancient product of human activity, movable or immovable, illustrative of art, architecture, craft, custom, literature, morals, politics, religion, warfare or science or of any aspect of civilization or culture[;]
- (ii) [A]ny ancient object or site of historical, ethnographical, anthropological, military or scientific interest;
- (iii) [A]ny national monument; and
- (iv) [A]ny other object or class of such objects declared by the Federal Government, by notification in the official Gazette, to be an antiquity for the purpose of this Act.²⁹

Moreover, in this regard, Ehsan Shavarebi, who is a numismatist and archaeologist from Iran currently working at Kunsthistorisches Museum Vienna, said that *Āthār-i-Qadīmāh* can be used for antiquities and archaeological artefacts, but not for archaeology.³⁰ As archaeology is a social science that is entirely based on the material of the past, ancient objects or artefacts make part of the archaeological record. It shows that both *Āthār-i-Qadīmāh* and archaeology have different meanings and definitions.

While, on the other hand, using *Āthāriāt* in the place of archaeology is also completely wrong, because the word *Āthāriāt* is grammatically incorrect as we know that the *athar* (آثار) is the plural of *athar* (آثار) and the word *Āthāriāt* is the plural *Āthār* (آثار). It means that *Āthāriāt* is the plural of a plural, and it is grammatically incorrect.³¹ Furthermore, *Āthāriāt* was introduced in Pakistan by Prof. F.A. Durrani, who was a very well-known archaeologist of Pakistan, through a research journal in 1997. The name of the journal was named *Āthāriāt*; only one issue of that journal was published and was discontinued after the death of Prof. Durrani. In this regard, Prof. Farooq Swati said that Prof. Durrani

on the advice of one of his friends who was a scholar of Persian used the word *Āthāriāt* for archaeology without defining and explaining it, and its testimony is the title page of the journal on which archaeology is written in a bracket (in English) along with *Āthāriāt t.* Prof. Swati said that archaeology has its own meaning and academic definition and history and should not be confused with *Āthāriāt*. He suggested that archaeology should be called archaeology.³²

Archaeology in Pakistan is written, read and denoted as *Āthār-i-Qadīmah* and *Āthāriāt*, although archaeology is a different subject. In this regard, the historian of Pakistani archaeology Dr. Ifqut Shaheen said that *Āthāriāt* and *Āthār-i-Qadīmah* are considered archaeology in Pakistan but, in fact, archaeology as practice and theory is a separate subject that has its own history. She said that archaeology is a social science, and it would be correct to call it archaeology.³³ Moreover, Dr. Rafiullah Khan, who is an assistant professor at the Taxila Institute of Asian Civilizations, Quaid-i-Azam University, said that archaeology is being written, read, and popularized as *Āthār-i-Qadīmah* without explaining it. But, if one looks at the meaning of *Āthār-i-Qadīmah*, it will be clear that *Āthār-i-Qadīmah* is actually the archaeological record on which archaeology is based, not archaeology. He further explained that there are no meanings of *Āthār-i-Qadīmah* in Pakistan which indicate that it is archaeology. And also, at the same time, its academic aspect has been neglected which is also a huge shortcoming.³⁴ Whereas, Professor Ibrahim Shah, the Chairman of the Department of Archaeology, University of Peshawar, has a different perspective and suggested that archaeology can be called '*Īlm-i-Āthār-i-Qadīmah* or '*Īlm-ul-Āthār*.'³⁵

Conclusion

Overall, it has been highlighted, in this article, that there are several translations, definitions, and explanations of archaeology in the Pakistani languages and different terms have been used for archaeology in the vernaculars. For example, Urdu has its own set of vocabulary for the word "archaeology", similarly the Sindhi language has its own terms for it. As Urdu is the national language of the country, its terminology for archaeology, especially *Āthār-i-Qadīmah*, is very common in Pakistan and is used in all languages. Ironically, the term, *Āthār-i-Qadīmah*, does not best suit archaeology because this reflects the meanings of the antiquities or archaeological objects. It needs to be understood that ancient artefacts make part of the archaeological record, but they are not archaeology which is the process of discovering antiquity and the study of the ancient past through archaeological records. Given the meaning of

archaeology as a field of study, it is argued that *Āthār-i-Qadīmāh* is not a correct term for archaeology. If there is any correct term for archaeology in the Urdu language, it is, as suggested by Prof. Ibrahim Shah, *‘Īlm-i-Āthār-i-Qadīmāh* or *‘Īlm-i-Āthār*, although they are not very popular in Pakistan and are rarely used in archaeological publications in Urdu.

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⁴ Bherumal Mahirchand Advani, *Qadeem Sindh* [in Sindhi] (Jamshoro: Sindhi Adabi Board, 2008); Dwarka Prasad Rochiram Sharma, *Parachin Sindhi Sabhita Jo Nazaro* [in Sindhi] (Hyderabad, 1944); Jamiatrai, “Panj Hazar Saal,” 16–18; Khan, *Gandhara*; Master Lutfullah, “Mohenjodaro [in Sindhi],” *Sindhu*, October, 1939, 7–10; Molvi Muhammad Hameed Khan Qureshi, *Asar-i-Taxila* [in Urdu] (Lahore, 1951); Vadhvani, “Mohenjodaro,” 8–22; Vasvani, *Johar-i-Nasr*, 133–140.

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