

Maharaja Ranjit Singh's Rule in North West Frontier (1818-1839)

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Abstract

The North West Frontier, a region of great strategic importance, has been a target of many great empires through the annals of history. It has been subjected to many invasions, looting, and plundering by various empires and armies. The Persians, Macedonians, Muslims, Mongols, Sikhs and the Britishers invaded the region, despite their efforts, foreign forces encountered fierce resistance from the local population, making their presence increasingly challenging. Frontier during the time period 1799 till 1849 saw the fall of Durrani rulers, growth of the Barakzai brothers and the rise of Ranjit Singh. This paper examines the governance of Maharaja Ranjit Singh in the northwest frontier region, with a specific focus on the timeframe spanning from 1818 to 1839. Maharaja Ranjit Singh, renowned as the architect of the Sikh Empire, effectively amalgamated and governed a heterogeneous and strategically significant territory encompassing present-day Pakistan, India and portions of Afghanistan. The trademark of his rule was a combination of military shrewdness, diplomatic finesse, and innovative governance. Ranjit Singh introduced significant reforms in governance structures, revenue administration, and military arrangements, thereby bolstering the region's stability and prosperity. In this research article, an attempt is made to determine how the local chiefs and tribes of the frontier gave a hard time to the army of Ranjit Singh, especially the mujahideen movement of Sayyid Ahmad Shaheed in 1826.

Keywords: Ranjit Singh, North West Frontier, Sayyid Ahmad Shaheed, Sikh Empire. Durrani Empire.

Introduction

Owing to its geographical location, the North West Frontier region plays a pivotal role in the overall history of the subcontinent. Professor Arnold J. Toynbee termed the region as the "Cross roads of Civilizations" (Toynbee, 1953). It has worked as a gateway for many centuries for foreign invaders. In recorded history, the region saw the invasions of Persians, Greeks, Mauryan, Huns, Mongols, Mughals, Sikhs, and Britishers (Qadir, 2015). The strategic location of the frontier brought chaos and hardship to both the invaders and the local people. This paper examines Ranjit Singh's (1780-1839) rule over the Northwest Frontier region from 1818 to 1839. The death of Ahmad Shah Durrani in 1773 led to a power struggle among his successors, who fought the throne. The resulting civil war, led by his sons, caused the decline of the Durrani Empire and weakened its control over the frontier; as a result, the Barakzai brothers rose to power and the disintegration of the Empire took place. (Singh, 1962).

King Zaman Shah, returning back from Lahore to Kabul, on the way crossing river Jhanai (Chinab), twelve of his guns were lost in the river. The King sent a letter to Ranjit Singh: "If you will get out my guns and send them to me, then in return for it, I will give you Lahaur." Ranjit Singh, after great efforts, got out eight of the guns, and sent them to the king. The king, agreeably

to his promise, gave Lahaur (Lahore) to Ranjit Singh and he immediately took control of it (Court, 1888). In 1799, Ranjit Singh founded the Sikh Empire, laying the foundation for future expansion and power. He later conquered the Sikh holy city of Amritsar from *Bhangi Misl*.¹ Having consolidated his rule over Punjab, he turned his attention to the North West Frontier region, and waited for an opportunity to attack. At the dawn of the nineteenth century that opportunity came, when the Barakzai brothers were in civil war, they had no unity among themselves. Maharaja Ranjit Singh capitalized on this situation, swiftly capturing a significant portion of the region with minimal opposition (Sabir, 1986). To challenge the authority of the Sikhs, Sayyid Ahmad (1786-1831) aimed to bring about the reemergence of Islam and Muslim dominance in India. According to him, a practical step needs to be taken for the rise of Islam. He started a holy war against the Sikhs and selected the North West Frontier region for his Jihad Movement. He gave a tough time and made it hard for the Sikhs to rule on the frontier. In the battle of Balakot in 1831, he got martyred while fighting against the Sikhs (Nadwi, 1974). To Quote Dr. Altaf Qadir's book, *Sayyid Ahmad Barailvi, His Movement and Lagacy from The Pukhtun Perspective*, "They (Mujahideen) wandered in different places for many years and often acted as tools for local chiefs. They were compelled to change their centers from time to time and failed to settle in any one place. The followers of Sayyid Ahmad became hopeless and ended support, considering it waste of their resources." (Qadir, 2015). The tribesman created some hurdles, but due to the great policy of Ranjit Singh, first controlled them through the distribution of jagirs (Sultana, 1998). Second, through his great commanders, such as Hari Sing Nalwa, Ventura, and Avitabile. The frontier region, comprising Dera Ismail, Bannu, Tank, Hazara, Kohat, and Peshawar, and extending up to Khyber Pass, was under almost complete control of Maharaja's empire (Fauq, 1962).

Literature Review

The existing literature on Maharaja Ranjit Singh's rule is mostly produced by the Punjabi researchers, with a notable gap concerning his rule of the North West Frontier Region. Hari Ram Gupta, who produced extensive literature, dealt with the Sikh Rule in Punjab and limited information about the different areas of the frontier (Gupta, 2008). Similarly, other writers have provided information about Ranjit Singh's Rule over Peshawar region. For Instance, Muhammad Ali Malik, who earned a doctorate for his work on Sikh rule in Peshawar, provides extensive information about the Peshawar region but does not cover other areas of the North West Frontier (Malik, 1993). Additionally, Altaf Qadir's work offers comprehensive information related to Sayyid Ahmad Barelvi's Mujahideen movement. While this work is helpful, it does not provide information about Maharaja Ranjit Singh's rule in the North West Frontier region (Qadir, 2015). This study aims to fill these gaps and provide a detailed account of Ranjit Singh's rule in the northwest frontier region.

Rise of the Sikh Empire

The ascendance of the Sikhs in Punjab was made possible by Maharaja Ranjit Singh's impressive personality and leadership skills. Prior to his leadership, the Sikhs were not a united force and

¹ Sardar Hari Singh founded the Bhangi misl, which was known for its use of the drug hemp(bhang). As a result, both the misl and its follower were known as 'Bhangis'. This misl was powerful, controlling two important cities: Amritsar and Lahore. The headquarter of Bhangi misl was Amritsar. In 1770, Hari Singh Bhangi was killed in battle, and Jhanda Singh became the head of the Bhangis. Under Jhanda Singh leadership, the Bhangi misl waged a war against the ruler of Kashmir, Ranjit Deo, and forced him to pay an annual tribute. However, with Jhanda Singh's death the fall of Bhangi misl began. Eventually, Ranjit Singh defeated their Sardars and took control of both Lahore and Amritsar from the Bhangis. K.S.Narang, *History of the Punjab 1500-1858*. Delhi: Kapur Printing Press, Kashmere Gate, 1969. P.248-49.

lacked organization², relying solely on combativeness. They were able to put up strong resistance against Mughals and Afghans (Sultana, 2010). Guru Govind Singh fought many great battles formerly with the emperor of Delhi, and he ruled over his people with great honor (Lal, 1846). In Ranjit Singh, they found a great leader to unite them and provide a common purpose against their enemies to gain political power. According to Dr. Razia Sultana, Ranjit Singh had the ability to unite scattered Sikh factions to establish a state of the Sikhs by the Sikhs and for the Sikhs. The occurrence of succeeding events approved the capability of the Sikh leader, Ranjit Singh, to materialize the prime ambition for living in Punjab of the Sikh community (Sultana, 2010). In Maharaja, they found a leader that they had previously lacked (Sultana, 2010). In 1798-99, Zaman Shah returned to Punjab for the last time. Confused about either eliminating the Sikhs or making peace with them, he received news that his brother Mahmud had revolted in Afghanistan. Consequently, he abandoned his plan to attack Lahore and returned to Afghanistan. During King Zaman Shah's journey from Lahore to Kabul, a mishap occurred while crossing the Chenab River (Jhanai), resulting in the loss of twelve cannons. The King promptly wrote to Ranjit Singh, proposing a deal: retrieve the lost guns and send them to Kabul, and in exchange, Lahore would be given to him. Ranjit Singh successfully recovered eight cannons after considerable effort and returned them to the King. True to his word, King Zaman Shah ceded Lahore to Ranjit Singh, who promptly assumed control (Qadir, 2015). In 1801, the Ranjit Singh coronation took place, a Royal Durbar was organized at the Fort of Lahore, and a large number of people attended the ceremony to present their greeting to their Maharaja, Ranjit Singh. After becoming Maharaja, his main aim was to strengthen his position, which was not an easy task, particularly the challenge of improving the economy, that took several years to achieve. (Maharaja Ranjit Singh, New Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat, August 2003). He raised a competent army that was more or less trained like the military of the East India Company (Grewal, 2008). Maharaja was well aware of the fact that the Sikh army was inadequate to meet up with challenges of the time and he could not hope to defeat the organized armies of East India Company and Afghans with this army. Therefore, he decided to form an army on the European model and reshape the entire setup of the *Khalsa* army. Ranjit Singh was attentive to the value and significance of cavalry and infantry, which had become the most crucial part of the army (Malik, 1993). His court consisted of aristocrats and government representatives from diverse nationalities and religious backgrounds, which encompassed several prominent European figures and military leaders. Among them, notable individuals such as Jean-François Allard, Jean-Baptiste Ventura, Paolo Di Avitabile, and the Claude August Court played a crucial role in the expansion and development of the Sikh Empire. (Yasmin & Bilal, 2021). He appointed these Europeans to train his army and formed infantry and artillery units, which were significant changes from the *Khalsa* army's prevailing military tradition. He modified the style of fighting and adopted a steady fire from a gun and musket in place of the guerrilla mode of attacks. He knew very well that, to survive at the time of decline, the old styles of warfare were not purposeful enough against the extremely trained and disciplined British army. He also paid attention to another neglected portion of the Sikh military, which was artillery, and increased its gun reserve and production on a large scale. With the improvement in these two fields, these changes gave a new look at the *Khalsa* army (Cheema, 2018).

² The region of Punjab was divided among twelve Sikh Misl, which were autonomous, led by an individual sardars each with their own territory. These sardars were always ready to engage in conflict with each other and the Sikh confederacy was in danger of collapsing. To prevent this, they needed a leader who could lead them and unite them. This is where Ranjit Singh enters the picture. He was able to bring them together under his leadership and unified the Sikhs. *Maharaja Ranjit Singh*, New Delhi, Lok Sabha Secretariat, August, 2003. https://eparlib.nic.in/bitstream/123456789/56245/1/Maharaja_Ranjit_Singh_English.pdf

During the early nineteenth century, Maharaja consolidated his empire by conquering various areas. In 1802, he captured Amritsar, followed by Kasur in 1807, Pathankot in 1808, Kangra and Jammu in 1809 and Attock in 1813. Ranjit Singh defeated the Afghan army near Attock, at Chuch, in 1813. Under his leadership, Sikh captured the Cis-Indus areas in the North-West Frontier 1815-1816, making him the ruler of the territory adjacent to the Sutlej River. He captured Multan and annexed Kashmir in 1818 and 1819, respectively. (Maharaj Ranjit Singh, New Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat, August 2003). In 1809, Ranjit Singh signed a treaty (The treaty of Amritsar dated 25 April 1809³) with the British that he would not attack the areas south and east of the Sutlej. Ranjit Singh adhered strictly to the treaty terms, abstaining from any aggression towards the specified regions mentioned in the treaty (Douie, 1916). To quote Alexander Burnes when he visited Punjab, “On the 11th we crossed by the ferry boats at *Huree Ka Puttun*, and landed in the Punjab at the village of that name. There are twenty-three boats at this ferry, and it is protected by a party of 400 horses, whom the ruler of the Punjab has stationed here to prevent the fanatics of the Seik (Sikh) creed from passing into the British territories” (Burnes, 1834). This statement shows how strictly Maharaja followed the treaty’s terms. When he accepted this treaty imposed by the British, restricted him from expanding his territories beyond the eastern bank of the Sutlej River, permanently preventing him from bringing the Cis-Sutlej Sikh states under his political influence (Suri, 1961).

Maharaja Ranjit Singh’s Campaign of Frontier

Having subdued all the Zamindars and chieftains who had claimed any semblance of independence within the Doabs created by the rivers Sutlej, Beas, Ravi, Chenab, and Jhelum, Ranjit Singh was now in a position to advance securely against the more formidable and resourceful Pathan kingdoms of Multan, Dera Ismail Khan (Mankera), Dera Ghazi Khan, Peshawar, and Kashmir. between 1818 and 1823. Despite the Pathan satraps of these territories enjoying strong support from fiercely loyal Pathan tribes and backing from the rulers of Kabul, Ranjit Singh ultimately succeeded in his endeavors (Suri, 1961). Political chaos in Kabul provided an opportunity for Ranjit Singh to attack Peshawar. Ranjit conquered Khairabad and its surrounding area along the western bank of Indus in October 1818, which had been under the rule of Firoz Khan, Khattak chief. On November 20, 1818, he attacked Peshawar and captured it. The governor of Peshawar, Yar Muhammad Khan Barakzai, fled to Yusufzai territory. To save the city from destruction, the

³ The treaty of Amritsar runs as follow: WHEREAS certain differences which had arisen between the British Government and the Raja of Lahore have been happily and amicably adjusted; and both parties being anxious to maintain relations of perfect amity and concord, the following articles of treaty, which shall be binding on the heirs and successors of the two parties, have been concluded by the Raja Ranjit Singh in person, and by the agency of C. T. Metcalfe, Esquire, on the part of the British Government.

Article 1: Perpetual friendship shall submit between the British Government and the State of Lahore: the latter shall be considered, with respect to the former, to be on the footing of the most favored powers, and the British Government will have no concern with the territories and subjects of the Raja to northward of the river Sutlej.

Article 2: The Raja will never maintain in the territory which he occupies on the left bank of the river Sutlej more troops than are necessary for the internal duties of that territory, nor commit or suffer any encroachments on the possession or rights of the Chiefs in its vicinity.

Article 3: In the event of a violation of any of the preceding articles, or of a departure from the rules of friendship, this treaty shall be considered null and void.

Article 4: This treaty, consisting of four articles, having been settled and concluded at Amritsar, on the 25th day of April, 1809 Mr. C. T. Metcalfe has delivered to the Raja of Lahore a copy of the same in English and Persian, under his seal and signature; and the Raja has delivered another copy of the same under his seal and signature, and Mr. C. T. Metcalfe engages to procure within the space of two months a copy of the same, duly ratified by the Right Honorable the Governor General in Council, on the receipt of which by the Raja, the present treaty shall be deemed complete and binding on both parties, and the copy of it now delivered to the Raja shall be returned. J. D. Cunningham, *History of Sikhs*, reprint. Delhi: S. Chand and Co., 1955. P.406-407.

leading sardars and common people paid a tribute of Rs. 25,000 to the Sikhs. Jahandad Khan was made the governor of Peshawar by the Maharaja but he did not provide him with soldiers or other war weaponry. When Ranjit Singh left for Punjab, Yar Muhammad Khan attacked Peshawar and removed Jahandad Khan from the governorship. However, Ranjit Singh did not act against Yar Muhammad Khan for approximately four years. In June 1822, Ranjit Singh asked Yar Muhammad to pay a tribute of Rs. 40,000 and provide a number of horses. Additionally, Maharaja required him to give an annual tribute to Rs. 20,000 (Gupta, 2008). Muhammad Azeem Khan, a ruler of Afghanistan was unhappy with Yar Muhammad Khan for paying a big amount of money to the Sikhs. As a result, he retook Peshawar and called for Jihad against Sikhs. Azeem Khan's elder brother, Abdul Samad Khan, was tasked to get the support of Yusufzai and Khattak chiefs. He tried to persuade the chiefs that Muhammad Azeem Khan would cover all expenses of the war. To trap Sikh troops, Muhammad Zaman Khan destroyed the Attock Bridge. However, Ranjit Singh, aware of the strategic importance of the Northwest Frontier, had already reinforced his army in Nowshera (Tariq and Qadir, 2020).

Battle of Pir Sabaq, Nowshera 1823

The ruler of Kabul also recognized that if the advance of the Sikhs in this region was not halted promptly, he risked losing his Indian territories of Peshawar, Bannu, and Derajat entirely, just as he had previously lost Multan, Mankera, and Kashmir. In response, Sardar Muhammad Azim Khan set out from Kabul and reached Peshawar in early January 1823, rallying support for a Jihad or holy war against the Sikhs (Suri, 1961). Sikhs were ready for this encounter. Maharaja crossed the Kabul River at Akora with a special part of his army. Singh led the remaining force on the left bank to keep an eye on the expected enemy attack from Peshawar on the right bank (Sultana, 1998). There is a difference in opinions regarding the number of troops in both armies. According to the Sikh official sources, there were 45,000 Khattak and Yusufzai volunteers led by Syed Akbar Shah and Abdul Samad Khan, while the *Khalsa* army had 25,000 volunteers led by General Ventura. However, most sources suggest that the Pukhtun numbered twenty thousand and the Sikh twenty-five thousand. The Ulama and common people were encouraged by Muhammad Azeem Khan and Syed Akbar Shah to join the Jihad against the Sikhs. Azeem Khan even announced the Jihad in Kabul and spread a message saying, "whoever wants to sacrifice his life for the sake of God should join our forces for Jihad" (Tariq and Qadir, 2020). Abdul Samad Khan, who had been sent by Azeem Khan to gather the forces of Khattaks and Yusufzai, became engaged in the fighting with the opponent forces on the plain to the north of the Kabul River, between Nowshera and Pir Sabak. Azeem Khan himself did not participate in the war did not even cross the river and no valid reason has been given for his inaction. It is stated that after nine years, Alexander Burnes came to acquire in Peshawar that Azeem Khan feared his wealth or, alternatively, that his soldiers were destroyed on northern banks (Caroe, 1958). During the first phase of the war, the Afghan army held the upper hand as they were positioned on the mountains. Whenever Sikh soldiers tried to climb up, they were fired and had large stones thrown at them. At first, the Sikhs were unable to break into the position of *lakhkar* (lashkar), but eventually succeeded. During the initial encounter, Sikh leader such as Sahaye Singh and Mahan Singh along with many Sikh soldiers, were killed, causing the Sikh army to retreat. After the Afghans came down from the mountain to their camps, the Sikhs launched another attack under the leadership of Sardar Phula Singh. A brutal fight broke out between the two armies, resulting in the deaths of many Sikh leaders, including Phula Singh, Gurba Singh Manas, Karam Singh Chahal and Balab Dhar Singh, along with two hundred soldiers. Ranjit Singh then took charge of the Sikh army and launched a full-scale attack on the enemy. The *lakhkar* (lashkar) were caught from two sides by the Sikhs, and many Afghan soldiers were killed. The Afghans faced heavy artillery from the Sikhs, making it difficult for them to stand together. The Maharaja army captured *lakhkarians* (lashkar) individually and killed them (Tariq and Qadir,

2020). The Pakhtuns fled from the Sikh army saying: “*Toba Toba, Khuda Khud Khalsa Shud*” (God forbid, but God himself turned a *Khalsa*) (Sultana, 1998). It is stated that two thousand Sikhs and three thousand Pukhtuns were killed. There was a great fight between the famous personalities of both religions: Islam and Sikhism. They were Akali Baba Phula Singh, and Shaikh Muhammad Shoaib, a Muslim spiritual leader known as *Todery Baba*. Phula Singh was killed during the fight, while Muhammad Shoaib was seriously wounded and died a few days later (Tariq and Qadir, 2020). Pir Sabak’s defeat broke the heart of Muhammad Azeem Khan. He became ill and left the command of the army to Dost Muhammad Khan before leaving Kabul. However, his health deteriorated in Lataband and he died in 1823. His position was then taken over by his son, Habib Ulla Khan (Malleon, 1984). After his victory, the Maharaja marched on Peshawar, but instead of establishing direct rule, he appointed the old rulers of Peshawar Valley as his tributaries. They were required to pay an annual tribute and recognize the government of Punjab as a higher authority (Sultana, 1998). The Battle of Pir Sabak resulted in Ranjit Singh’s supremacy from Peshawar to the Khyber Pass (Malik, 1993).

Invasion of Banu

Ranjit Singh led a large army across the Indus River, passing through Isakhail and Marwat with ease, without facing any opposition from the local. He eventually arrived near the town of Banu and stayed there for some time. (Sabir, 1986). In 1825, Maharaja captured Banu, but later gave it to the Nawab of Dera Ismail Khan, who was required to give an annual tribute of Rs. 60,000. In 1832, an army of 2,000 cavalries with four small guns under the leadership of Tara Singh was sent to establish peace and order in Banu. However, they were confronted by a large number of Banuchi, who were helped by four to 5,000 Waziris. The Sikh army found it difficult to face such a large number of soldiers and so Maharaja sent a new force under Alexander Gardner to assist Tara Singh. After a few months of fighting, the Sikh army emerged victorious, but they destroyed the fields, gardens, fruit trees, forts, and villages of the Banuchis. In 1835, the Waziris and Afridi of Kohat and Khyber gathered in Banu. When Maharaja came to know about this, he sent 5,000 strong army members to Banu. The Banuchis did not fight with the Sikh army, but the Waziris of Kanigurm gave the Sikhs restless resistance for four months. Ranjit Singh strictly instructed his troops not to fight with Waziris in the Waziristan hills. In 1836, Banu was under the direct control of Lahore. Again, in 1838, the Sikh army in Banu was attacked and forced to leave an area with heavy damage. Maharaja ordered Suchait Singh and Prince Nau Nihal Singh to attack the Banu. They fought with the chiefs of Waziris and Banuchis for a few months, destroying their forts and villages. The Waziris were forced back into the mountains, and the Nawab of Tank fled to the mountains of Waziristan (Gupta, 2008).

Dera Ismail Khan

At that time, Derajaat was under Multan’s rule (Sabir, 1986). Dera Ismail Khan was annexed on November 9, 1821. In 1822, Maharaja gave this to Nawab Hafiz Ahmad Khan. After his death in 1825, his son, Sher Muhammad Khan, became a ruler. His reign from 1825 to 1836, but his lack of interest in the administration led him to retire from the affairs state (Gupta, 2008). In 1836, the Sikhs took direct control of Dera Ismail Khan and appointed the Lakhi Mal as its Kardar. Lakhi Mal died in 1843, his son Diwan Daulat became a ruler of the area (Sabir, 1986).

Hazara Under the Sikhs

The decline of the Durrani empire led Hazara to rebel against weak Durrani rulers, which gave Ranjit Singh the opportunity to capture the district. He was ultimately successful and Maharaja annexed it in 1818 (Panni, 1969). Bhai Makhan Singh captured it, but he was killed by the Muslim chief of Hazara. After his death, Maharaja appointed Hukan Singh Chimni as Hazara’s new ruler.

However, he failed to establish a strong Sikh rule, and instead worsened the situation. In order to take the firm control of the area, Ranjit Singh prepared a huge force for the expedition of Hazara under the leadership of Prince Sher Singh. Other commanders included Sardar Fateh Singh Ahliwalia, Dewan Ram Dayal, General Ilahi Bakhsh, Sham Singh Atariwala, Ganda Singh, Lamma Sheva Singh and Ahir Singh. Their expedition was successful in subduing the chief of Hazara and making him pay money (*nazrana*), along with Muhammad Khan chief of *Guldhri* and *Sarbiland Khan*, the Zamindar of *Turbela* and other chiefs. After a Successful expedition, Prince Sher Singh and his commanders returned to Lahore (Malik, 1993). Hazara was ruled over time by various governors. The first governor was Hukma Singh Chimni who ruled between 1814 and 1819. A tyrant ruler publicly hung a Yusufzai chief, Sayyid Khan, in 1819. Diwan Ram Dayal, a young man of just 19 years, became the ruler of Hazara in 1819. However, he was ruled for a few months before being killed by the Yusufzai troops. Despite his short rule, he was admired by Ranjit Singh. After Ram Dayal's death, Amar Singh Majithia, also known as *Kalan*, became the new governor of Hazara and was ruled from 1820 to 1822. He fought hard against Yusufzai and earned a name for himself among them. Hari Singh Nalwa succeeded Amar Singh as the governor of Hazara in 1822 and ruled till 1837. He was a cruel and tyrannical ruler feared by Pathan mothers w Mahmood et al., 2014 who used his name to scare their children by saying "*Harya raghle da*" (Harya was coming). His approach was "tooth for a tooth and eye for an eye." Under his leadership, the Sikh Empire launched several expeditions and battles to suppress revolts and establish regional control. In 1824, Sarbuland Khan was defeated. In the same year, he led a successful expedition of Gandgarh in collaboration with Maharaja Ranjit Singh. He also crushed the rebellion of Paindah Khan of *Darband* in December 1824. Hari Singh continued to face challenges from rebellious chiefs, in 1825, he executed the Tarin chief. The following year, he won the battle of Darband, although it was a tough fight. In July 1832, he successfully suppressed another revolt of the Paindah Khan. In 1836, Fatah Khan of Panjar revolted, and Hari Singh attacked and destroyed his village. Fatah Khan was compelled to sign a tribute deal with the Sikhs. After Hari Singh Nalwa, Maha Singh became Hazara's new governor (Gupta, 2008).

Annexation of Peshawar, 1834

In 1823, Pir Sabak's victory in Nowshera, instead of taking direct control of Peshawar, the Maharaja gave it back to the Barakzai brothers. They were required to pay an annual tribute to the Sikhs, and the Sikh army would only come to the area to collect revenue from the Peshawar people. At that time, they were not concerned with the administration of Peshawar; they only collected taxes (Sultana, 1998). In 1833, Governor General Lord William Bentinck allowed Shah Shuja to prepare his army to obtain the throne of Kabul. Shah Shuja entered in a treaty with Ranjit Singh, asking the Maharaja for assistance in regaining his authority over Peshawar, the Trans-Indus area, Attock, Multan and Kashmir all of which had already been subjugated by the Sikh Maharaja. However, Ranjit Singh did not trust Shah Shuja's commitment to the treaty, as he stated that power truly mattered, making the treaty meaningless (Gupta, 2008). In 1833-1834, a conflict arose between the Afghan ruler and Shah Shuja, resulting in a civil war taking advantage of this situation, and the Maharaja dispatched his most powerful military commander, Hari Singh Nalwa, to annex Peshawar (Narang, 1969). In April 1834, Ranjit Singh ordered his army to march from the Yusufzai hills to Peshawar, while also sending a force of 9,000 under the leadership of Prince Nau Nihal Singh, Ventura, and Court. The Sikh army crossed the Indus River, the Barakzai ruler of Peshawar, Sultan Muhammad Khan, and fled to Kabul, leaving the city to the Sikhs. In May 1834, Hari Singh Nalwa was appointed as the ruler of Peshawar and established the Sikh administration. He commanded a force of 12,000 troops with different Sikh regiments stationed at various border locations. However, Dost Muhammad Khan was eventually able to defeat Shah Shuja in 1834, and he persuaded and assisted local chiefs and tribes to continue their holy war or jihad against

Maharaja's army. In May 1835, a battle took place at Ramkani near Nowshera, where the army of Ghazi was defeated (Gupta, 2008). Muslims and Afghan ruler Ameer Dost Muhammad Khan did not like the presence of Sikhs, so they announced jihad against them. Ameer Dost Muhammad Khan was declared an *Ameer-Ul-Momineen* (leader of all Muslims), and a large force of Ghazis was prepared under the leadership of Sultan Muhammad Khan to attack Peshawar. Ranjit Singh was also present with his army. Maharaja attempted to negotiate a diplomatic agreement with Sultan Muhammad Khan, sent General Harlan and Faqeer Azeez-ud-Din to speak with him, and tried to bribe Sultan. However, when Dost Muhammad Khan came to know of the negotiations between Sultan Muhammad Khan and Ranjit Singh, he marched from Kabul to Peshawar. Upon reaching Jamrud, he discovered many Sikh soldiers and his brother treachery. As a result, he chose not to fight and returned to Kabul with his army (Sabir, 1986).

Battle of Jamrud, 1837

In 1835 Dost Muhammad Khan left Peshawar without a fight, Hari Singh Nalwa led the Sikh army to march upon Jamrud in 1836. Despite facing some resistance from the local tribes, they were able to capture the area. This conquest gave the Sikhs control of the entrance to the Khyber Valley, which made the Ameer of Kabul apprehensive about their attention. He knew that if the Sikhs were continuing their advancement, their next targets would be Jalalabad and then Kabul itself (Surekha, 2014). Ameer Dost assembled an army of 9,000, led by his son, Akbar Khan. Their mission was to march to Jamrud. The army was joined by 20,000 Tribesmen. They reached Jamrud in April 1837, when they found only 800 Sikh troops. Hari Singh was in Peshawar at that time. The Sikh troops were besieged for several days until the garrison walls were breached. At that point, Hari Singh marched Jamrud with 6,000-foot soldiers, 1,000 regular cavalries, and 3,000 irregular troops to assist the Sikhs (Hunter, 1925). The sudden arrival of Hari Singh Nalwa caused panic among Afghans (Surekha, 2014). A great battle was fought between the Sikh army and Afghans. The organized Sikh army had an upper hand and won the battle. However, one of the Ghazi fired two bullets at Hari Singh Nalwa, which led to his death (Sabir, 1986). He told his subordinate to keep his death secret until the arrival of the forces from Punjab. When the news of his death was finally announced, the forces from Punjab had already arrived, causing the Afghans to retreat to Kabul (Surekha, 2014).

Although the Pathan forces did not succeed in capturing the fort, the death of Hari Singh Nalwa represented a far greater loss than their defeat by the Pathans. The news of Hari Singh's death was profoundly distressing for Maharaja, prompting him to set out for Peshawar. After the death of Hari Singh, the Sikh strategy changed. Turbulent areas, such as Hashtnagar and Miranzai, were given to local chiefs, who were granted complete freedom to administer the territories. After his death, Sardar Tej Singh served as the governor of Peshawar (Dani, 2002). After Tej Singh, General Avitabile, one of the most renowned governors of Peshawar, served as the governor from 1838 to 1842 (Imperial Gazetteer of India, Provincial Series, North-West Frontier Province, 1908).

Paola Crescenzo Martino Avitabile, an Italian who served in the army of Ranjit Singh as a military officer. Owing to his successful governorship of Wazirabad, Maharaja Ranjit Singh appointed him to supervise the collection of revenue in the Peshawar Valley. Avitabile was given full authority over the other Sikh governors. He reconstructed the city using a European pattern. He widened the streets and constructed bazaars. He also improved mud walls around the city, built bridges, and improved roads. To deal with criminals, he adopted the laws and customs of the frontier to punish them according to these laws. He also used Islamic laws in the field of criminal justice, which reduced the rate of criminal activity in the province (Lusardi, 2015). However, Shafi Sabir did not agree with Lusardi's statement. Sabir describes the governorship of Avitabile in these terms, "he was the most tyrannical and cruel governor. He would hang people publicly, and although he was not a Sikh, he was even crueller than the Sikhs when dealing with Muslims. He cut off the tongue

of those who spread rumors and hung war prisoners and common people from the pillars of *Muhabat Khan* mosque” (Sabir, 1986).

Sayyid Ahmad Mujahideen Movement

The Sayyid Ahmad Mujahideen movement is a vital part of the history of the Northwest Frontier (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa). His movement demonstrated his passion and love for Islam, and he was greatly loved and respected by the people of the time in his struggle against the enemies of Islam. Even today, people in the region still hold him with high esteem. Sayyid Ahmad was born on November 27, 1786, in Raebareli (Mahmood et al., 2014). In 1826, he declared jihad against Sikhs (Mahmood, et al., 2014).

Sayyid Ahmad aimed to bring about the re-emergence of Islam and Muslim dominance in India. He believed that the absence of Jihad and the willingness to make sacrifices for the sake of Islam were the main reasons for the downfall of Muslims in India. According to him, that practical step needed to be taken for the rise of Islam. He traveled to various parts of India to encourage people to wage Jihad against the Sikhs. At that time, the entire Indian Subcontinent was under the influence of non-Muslims, including the British in the east and Sikhs in the west.

Why did he select the Northwest Frontier region as a launching point for his movement? This was because of several reasons. The life of Muslims under the Sikh rule in the frontier region was particularly difficult. Moreover, the Pashtuns, who were a martial race, also the people of this area had and still have a great respect and love for Islam. Finally, he hoped that Afghan rulers would support his movement. To this end, he wrote letters to Afghan and other Muslim rulers, they included; Yar Muhammad Khan (ruler of Peshawar), Ameer Dost Muhammad Khan (ruler of Kabul), Sultan Muhammad Khan (ruler of Kohat and Banu), Said Muhammad Khan (ruler of Hashtnagar), Shah Mahmood Durrani (ruler of Hirat), Nasrullah (ruler of Bukhara), Sulaiman Shah (ruler of Chitral) and Paimda Khan Taoli (ruler of Amb and Darband). The main objectives of the Sayyid Ahmad Jihad movement were the Creation of Islamic state, removal of un-Islamic practices from society, freedom from the tyrant rule of Sikh, and spreading awareness about the Jihad (Mahmood et al., 2014).

Sayyid Ahmad wrote a letter to Maharaja Ranjit Singh, in which he urged the Maharaja to convert to Islam or submit to Islamic authority and pay jizya (tax). He warned that if Maharaja was not prepared to do either, war would be an inevitable outcome (Nadwi, 1974). In response to his invitation, Ranjit Singh dispatched a large, well-equipped force of 7,000 troops led by Budh Singh (Mahmood, et al., 2014). Sayyid Ahmad also assembled a force of consisting of 900 mujahideen, who launched a surprise attack on the Sikh army on the night of 20th December, 1826. Mujahideen fought bravely and forced the enemy army to retreat. By the morning, they defeated the Sikh army (Nadwi, 1974). In the battle, 700 Sikh soldiers were killed, while 82 Mujahideen lost their lives. Following this victory, many locals and chiefs joined Sayyid Ahmad’s cause, including Fateh Khan Panjtari, Raees of Khadokhel, Ashraf Khan Raees of Zaida. The most well-known chief among them was Khadi Khan of Hund, who offered his town headquarters for Sayyid Ahmad’s forces. This offer was accepted by Sayyid Ahmad (Shah, 2021).

After his defeat, Budh Singh left Akora. With the victory of Mujahideen, a great number of people joined their causes. Sikh commander Budh Singh stationed his army in Hazro, a small town in the fertile Chuch Valley. On January 11, 1827, a meeting was arranged in Akora, which was attended by many chiefs and Mujahideen. At the meeting, Sayyid Ahmad was elected an Imam and referred to as *Amir-ul-Mominin* by his followers. His name was recited in the Friday khutba. A battle broke out between the mujahideen and Budh Singh’s forces; however, despite great hardship, Budh Singh managed to hold his position. After the battle, Sayyid Ahmad returned to his territory

(Gupta, 2008). After suffering consecutive defeats at Akora and Hazro, the Sikhs wanted to avenge their losses and began preparing a well-armed and organized army of 35,000 soldiers at *Shaidu* (Mahmood, et al., 2014). When Yar Muhammad Khan and his 20,000 troops arrived at Pir Pai, a village situated west of Nowshera on the southern bank of Kabul River, to fight against the Sikhs in open battlefield, he informed Sayyid Ahmad of his arrival. Sayyid Ahmad assisted by Fateh Khan of Panjtar, Ashraf Khan of Zaida, Khadi Khan of Hund and 5,000 soldiers, arrived to meet Yar Muhammad Khan. Sayyid Ahmad crossed the Kabul River near Nowshera with 80,000 tribesmen and they were joined by Barakzai brothers. Meanwhile, the army of Budh Singh was positioned in Shaidu, a village South of Akora (Qadir, 2015).

The Sikhs had a reserved army of 20,000 led by Hari Singh Nalwa, standing near the Attock River. It is stated that just before the start of the battle, Sayyid Ahmad was poisoned by Yar Muhammad Khan. Despite his illness, Sayyid led his army in the battle. Sayyid's forces had an upper hand in the battle and killed many enemy soldiers. The Mujahideen were about to win the war when Yar Muhammad suddenly announced at once from the battlefield "defeat, defeat" and fled away with his army (Mahmood, Nasiruddin and Rizwan, 2014). The treachery of Yar Muhammad resulted in the killing of large number of Sayyid's and his allies' troops. The united force of Mujahideen was crushed by the Sikh army (Qadir, 2015).

After victory against General Ventura and the killing of Yar Muhammad Khan, Sayyid Ahmad's attention turned to the Sikhs in Hazara. He wanted to drive Sikh out of Hazara. Paindah Khan, who was a great supporter of Sayyid Ahmad, was defeated by the Sikh army in the battles of Ashra and Amb. Sayyid Ahmed united with Paindah Khan troops and a great battle was fought with the Sikh army at Phulra a place located on the right bank of the Siran River. The Sikh army adopted the policies of 'hit' and 'run.' During the battle, Sayyid Ahmad's nephew, Sayyid Ahmad Ali Shah and Mir Faiz Ali were killed. Sayyid left the field and was chased by the Sikh Army. Small skirmishes took place in which the Sikhs emerged victorious (Gupta, 2008).

Sayyid Ahmad became disheartened with the treason and disloyalty of the Khan's of Peshawar. With his followers, he decided to move out of Peshawar and fight against the Sikhs in Hazara and Kashmir. Sayyid Ahmad moved to Hazara and placed his camp at Balakot, a small village in the Kaghan valley of Hazara, which was a secure location for the mujahideen (Mahmood, Nasiruddin and Rizwan, 2014). Prince Sher Singh was sent by Ranjit Singh to deal with the mujahideen and finish them off for the final time. Sayyid's forces were also ready for battle with the Sikhs, but due to their location, it was hard for the Sikhs to attack them. Despite the natural defence provided by their location, Prince Sher Singh and his army did not lose hope of winning the battle. However, the treachery of the local people made it easy for Sikhs to attack the mujahideen. The locals informed the Sikhs of where to attack. On May 6, 1831, the Sikh army reached Matikot and launched an attack on Sayyid's forces (Nadwi, 1974). A brutal battle was fought, the mujahideen showing great courage and bravery. However, they were overwhelmed by the Sikh force and eventually defeated. During the battle, Sayyid Ahmad Shaheed, Shah Ismail Shaheed, and many other mujahideens embraced martyrdom (Mahmood, et al. 2014).

Causes of the Failure of Mujahideen Movement

The failure of the Jihad Movement was not unusual. One of the reasons for the failure of Syed Ahmad's efforts was miscalculation. The Mujahideen desired to set up a government designed for an Arab society dated 12 centuries earlier, while Pukhtun's and their society were different from the Arabs of the Seventh Century they were living in the nineteenth century had seen major empires, which had established different dynasties in India, and Pakhtun's had fought proudly against them (Qadir, 2015). The Jihad Movement aimed to restore Islamic glory in the sub-

continent, but it fell short of its immediate goals for various reasons. Insufficient funds, equipment, and training for Mujahideen were the key factors. In contrast, the well-equipped and numerous Sikh armies possessed modern weaponry, organized structures, and training from European officers. Mujahideen lacks all of these characteristics. Syed Ahmad anticipated Afghan government support for the Jihad in the chosen region but this hope went unfulfilled (Rafique, Bukhari and Chaudhary, 1983).

The movement was compromised due to the selfishness and deceptive actions of Pathan Chiefs, including the betrayals of Sardar Yaar Mohammad Khan and Sultan Mohammad Khan. According to Dr. Jehanzeb Khalil, “chieftains of the area were neither sincere to Syed Ahmad nor Islam” (Khalil, 2000). According to Ishtiaq Husain Qureshi “the main reason was the narrow selfishness of the tribal chiefs. Many of them did not understand the full implications of the establishment of non-Muslim rule in such proximity to their homeland” (Qureshi, 1974). The effectiveness of the movement was also undermined by the significant role played by jealousy and rivalry among tribal chieftains in the area. (Ahmad, 1997). Khadi Khan, Raees of Hund, is prominent example of this fact. He initially supported Syed Ahmad, but due to jealousy against the Khan of Panjtar, he considered the shifting of the Mujahideen base from Hund to Panjtar a personal affront and started to support Sikhs against Mujahideen (Qureshi, 1974).

The majority of Mujahideen lacked the training to administer an Islamic government and did not adequately shape public perceptions. Given their limited numbers, establishing control over a vast territory is a challenging endeavor (Khalil, 2000). In the past, the Ulema collected *ushr*, which was a tenth of the land's yield, as a significant part of their livelihood. However, when Syed Ahmad Shaheed established an Islamic state, his government took over the responsibility of collecting *ushr*. This change caused dissatisfaction among the Ulema, as they lost their previous privileges (Ikram, 1995). Therefore, they were in front of opposing the Mujahideen, and some mullahs began preparing for the uprising (Jalal, 2008).

Furthermore, Syed Ahmad could not maintain a balance among the opposing groups of Pakhtun. There were several instances in which *tarburwali* (rivalry between cousins) damaged the Jihad. Amir Khan Khattak came to Sayyid Ahmad upon his arrival at Hashtnagar and took bai'at. This motivated his nephew Khawas Khan, who opposed his uncle, to join the Sikhs merely to oppose him (Qadir, 2015). Although the Jihad Movement led by Syed Ahmad Shaheed did not succeed in overthrowing Sikh rule in Punjab, it significantly influenced the Muslim mindset. Despite lacking proper training and equipment, the Mujahideen fought for Islam, igniting the desire for an Islamic state among the Indian Muslims.

Administrative Division of Frontier, Justice, Revenue Collection, Forts and in Frontier Under Maharaja Rule

Maharaja Ranjit Singh empire was divided into three zones. The first zone, which was the stronghold and center of the Sikh Empire, comprised the Punjab region, from the Sutlej to the Jhelum, and came under Maharaja rule in 1810. The second zone comprises the *subas* (provinces) of Multan and Kashmir. The third zone consists of areas such as Peshawar, Hazara, Dera Ismail Khan, Dera Ghazi Khan, and Banu-Tank, which are located on the border of the Sikh Kingdom (Sultana, 1998).

The frontier region was difficult to administer, as there was always a threat from the ruler of Afghan and the free tribes living in the hilly areas. This is why the governors of the frontier were given more freedom than the others. Hari Singh Nalwa and Avitabile were the great example of this. However, Ranjit Singh kept in mind the great importance of the area, and kept check and balance on the governors, as peace was important for the whole kingdom. On one occasion, General Avitabile, the governor of Peshawar, punished some inhabitants of the area and destroyed

their houses. Ranjit Singh, upon hearing of this, sent a letter for General Avitabile and instructed him to return the money to the victims and rebuild their houses at his own expense. This shows how careful Ranjit Singh was about the frontier affairs (Sultana, 1998).

The Peshawar province came under the control of Maharaja in 1823, but it was not directly administered by the Sikh government. Instead, the Barakzai brothers were responsible for governing this area. In 1834, the Maharaja army annexed Peshawar, which came under Maharaja's direct rule. Hari Singh Nalwa was made as its first ruler. The province was divided into five parganas: Hazara (3 taluqas, tehsil), Peshawar (5 taluqas, tehsil), Kohat (3 taluqas, tehsil), Banu (2 taluqas, tehsil) and Dera Ismail Khan (3 taluqas, tehsil) in total, there were 16 taluqas. The province was headed by a governor (Gupta, 2008). Ranjit Singh did not create new laws or rules. Instead, he based his government and administration on the existing laws in each area. He respected and honored the customs of each region and ran his administration in accordance with these laws (Malik, 1993).

In the Sikh justice system in Peshawar, the governor was assisted by two Qazis, two Hindus, and two Sikhs in making decisions. Avitabile used Gorkhatri (a place in Peshawar) to facilitate justice. However, the Sikh punishment system was considered barbaric and tyrannical. For instance, when a thief was caught, they were sentenced to hanging (Sultana, 1998). For justice, there were several officials in the Sikh administration with specific duties. These included Qazi's (Judge), Naib Qazi, Mufti (expert in Islamic teachings), *Mohtasib* and Sheikh-ul-Islam. The *Mohtasib* was responsible for regulating the measurement of goods, Mufti duty was to give a fatwa, and Sheikh-ul-Islam taught new convertors about God. The government paid them for their services. Additionally, the Hindu pundit dealt with cases related to the Hindu community. The governor ruled as the head of the government and had the authority to give capital punishment (Malik, 1993).

Ranjit Singh adopted a policy of granting jagirs to the local chief's, khan's and Arbab's in turbulent areas in frontier in order to maintain peace in the region. When he first occupied Peshawar, he followed the same approach and gave the city to the previous ruler on an annual tribute. He was aware that people would oppose him, so he put the Barakzai brothers in charge of running the city under their lordship. To avoid turbulent *Mohammadzais*, he did not rule them directly but instead entrusted their rule to Syed Muhammad Barakzai. Similarly, the Sardar of Doaba saved Sikhs from the turbulent Mohmand tribe. Grants were also given to villages near the hills to create a buffer zone between his empire and the problematic tribesmen. He assigned grants to the leaders of remote and strong villages, thereby securing his rule throughout the frontier region. This demonstrates how practical and far-sighted he was. A garrison was established for security reasons and Tej Singh built a fortress in 1837. Only a small area was directly ruled by the Sikhs (Sultana, 1998).

Those jaghirdars who were responsible to collect the money and to maintain peace in their respective areas, their names were; Salamat Rai and Karim Khan for the Mohmand area, Arbab Gujar Khan, Arbab Pir Muhammad Khan and Arbab Abdul Hamid for the Khalil area, Kishan Chand, Gulab Rai, Gul Mohammad and Sardar Mohammad Hassan for the area of Daudzai, Faiz Bakhsh for Bargram area, Sardar Pie Muhammad and Sardar Sultan Mohammad Barakzai for the areas of Hashtnagar and Dauba and Piyara Mall Najaf Khan and Jaffar Khan Khattak for Khattak area. Tej Singh at his time named Arbab Gujar Khan, Arbab Abdul Hamid Khan and Arbab Amir Khan as the Arbabs of one third of Dar Sangu, one third of Tehkal and one third of Dar Banga respectively (Malik, 1993).

To maintain peace and consolidate his power on the frontier, Ranjit Singh constructed a large number of forts and stationed his troops in them. The Sikh army was stationed in these forts and

was ready to act during emergencies. Those forts included; Akora fort, this fort was made by Lahna Singh Sandhanwalia in a village of northern Khattak, situated at the distance of 25 kilometer from Nowshera, Bila Hisar fort, most famous fort in Peshawar. It was in bad condition, reconstructed by the Sikhs, Bara fort, it was built by Mangal Singh Ramgharia on the bank of Bara River, Burje-Hari Singh fort, a minor fort of 7 kilometer from Peshawar on the left side of road, Darband fort, it was used on some occasion as launching pad for the attacks of frontier, Darma fort, Dusrna fort, Fatagarh fort, the location of this fort 16 kilometer west of Peshawar near the entry of Khyber Pass near to Jamrud. Hari Singh Nalwa constructed it, Gandgarh fort, it was located amid the peaks of *Torbela* parallel to Indus, Harkishangarh fort, People started living around this fort due to which a town by the name Haripur developed. This town worked as headquarter for the Sikh whenever Yusufzai's revolted, Jahangaria fort, the fort was located on the distance of 5 kilometer from Akora. It was the place for the Sikhs to administer the Yusufzai area, the Khairabad fort. It was constructed by Prince Kharak Singh, Kron fort, Machin fort, and Mansehra fort, which was constructed by Hari Singh Nalwa, Nowshera fort, the fort situated in Nowshera Khurd on the Grand Trunk Road, Shabqadar fort, which was built by Lahna Singh Sandhanwalia under the management of Tota Ram, Sitana fort, and Srikot fort, built by Hari Singh Nalwa in 1825, and Torbela fort, located on the Darband Haripur Road (Gupta, 2008).

General Avitabile, the governor of Peshawar, ordered the construction of 16 gates to enhance the security of the people and the bazars of Peshawar. These gates were Kabli gate, Andar Shehr gate, Katchery gate, Yakatoot gate, Gunj gate, Rati gate, Rampura gate, Hashtnagri gate, Lahore gate, Kohati gate, Sarkai gate, Tandi Kohi gate, Tabiban gate, Ramdas gate, Dabgari gate, and Bijori gate (Malik, 1993).

Conclusion

Maharaja Ranjit Singh rule over the North West Frontier region from 1818 to 1839 bear a great importance in the history of frontier region. Through strategic conquests and annexations, he united various cultural and religious groups within his empire. The frontier region was a turbulent and difficult to rule. Despite his accomplishments, Ranjit Singh faced challenges in confronting local tribes and the complex dynamics of frontier politics. The Sikhs faced many hardships, starting with the battle of Pir Sabak in 1823 in the Nowshera. Although Sikhs emerged victorious in most battles, they continued to face challenges. The rise of Sayyid Ahmad and his holy war with the Sikhs made it even more challenging to control the frontier region. Nevertheless, Ranjit Singh understood the importance of the region and continued to fight. He gave jagirs and land to local chiefs to control turbulent tribesmen. His ability to control such a diverse and extensive territory is proof of his leadership and vision. Ranjit military maneuvers were branded by tactical intelligence and the active use of modern weaponry obtained from his European advisors. With the exception of Sardar Hari Singh Nalwa and General Avitabile, it was challenging for the other generals to rule the frontier. They have even lost their lives here. Hari and Avitabile were like savages among the savages, their strict policies enabled them to control the frontier. Although Ranjit Singh gained little revenue from the frontier, as most of the revenue was collected by local chiefs, it was still a burden for the Sikhs. However, because of the strategic reputation and significance of the area and its role in defending against Afghans, they did not abandon it. Under Ranjit Singh's rule, the Sikh Empire comprised Punjab and extended to Khyber Pass. During his reign, no foreign invasion took place in the frontier for the first time in 200 years. However, his death on June 27, 1839, marked the start of the downfall of the Sikh Empire, leading to an eventual British annexation.

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