

Evolution of Archives in Ancient, Medieval and Modern Through the Ages : Its Management and system of Record Keeping

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In ancient times, before the art of writing was introduced in India, record of thought or events was kept by memorizing. Generally record was kept by signs, drawings, pictures or engravings on a variety of clay, wood, stone, rock-wall, caves, leaves or animal skins. The system of recording ideas and incidents changed with the progress of civilization as alphabets and writing materials were properly introduced. Archival institutions in Europe probably had their origins in the ancient Greek civilization. It was in 1302 that the first Archivist was appointed in Bologna for weeding of papers. It is also said that from Italy the idea of archives administration travelled to England. In 1578 a State Paper Office was established by Queen Elizabeth. France was not lagging behind and it was in 1790 the archival institution was named the *Archives Nationales* of Paris. The United States Government established a National Archives by the Act of 19 June 1934. Although the modern concept of archives keeping travelled from England to India during the time of the East India Company, yet it will be not wrong to say that India had already known the problems and had tried to solve them much earlier than European Countries. But the Record office existed in India during Buddhist times. The "*Arthashastra of Kautilya* (cir.300B.C.), which may be called the Imperial Code of Governance of the Early Mauryas , is such a remnant". During the middle ages, the Muslim rulers in India used to have record repositories. The royal household establishment was divided into thirty-six Departments known as *Kar-khana*. The *Akbernama* gives a description as to how Akbar had established a Record Office in 1574 on the advice of Abul Fazl who himself made use of the records preserved there for writing his book *Akbernama*. Maintenance of records also may be gathered from *Ain-I Akbari*.

It was practically after the battle of Buxar (1764) the present day Archival system came into being but with major changes both in structure, technology, management and system of record keeping. A General Record Office was established at Fort William. The East India Company records were divided into pre- Mutiny and post Mutiny records with some modifications. Another major break through was noticed in the system of record keeping when the H. L. Smith Committee placed some proposals. The system of record keeping and its management is being followed even during the post-colonial period but the scope of the users for consultation of records has been increased.