In 1994, I went to Pakistan for the second time, to Lahore, (Rawal)Pindi, Muzzafarabad and Azad Kashmir, and Peshawar. I was teaching at Groningen University at that point and had arranged to give two talks at Pakistani universities so this gave me some exposure to my peers. The below notes have been retyped and the pictures retaken; hyperlinks and updates in [...] have been added. By 1994, Benazir was the Prime Minister again so things looked very positive although not for the refugees from Afghanistan.

Peshawar: blankets for the refugee camps

30 – 31 January - Lahore

I had a great flight with interesting people to talk to about Pakistan and Urdu literature. It was a wonderful feeling to be back – the smells were present even right at the airport. This feeling and that it was late at night caused me to make a mistake, namely to assume that a particular bus was the one to the hotel, the Faletti [it looks really fancy now]. I thought about leaving it and walking back to the Terminal and didn’t. It turned out to be expensive but (thankfully) not dangerous, really. While I write this, I have been trying to make a phone call to say that I arrived safely but no answer.

I have two Pakistani outfits (shalwar qameezes that I bought in NYC) and that makes it much more comfortable to be walking around. I love taking rickshaws, e.g. to the bookstores on The Mall and the museum. Electricity is unreliable and the air is pretty poluted. I went into the Bazar for a little distance and have loved the day so far.
1 February – Rawalpindi

I am in a hotel in Rawalpindi: what a dump! Had a nice taxi driver who’ll come pick me up for my trip to Islamabad tomorrow. I almost missed the plane this morning and they had to come fetch me with a bus. That’s the advantage of being an obvious foreigner on a domestic flight. Bureacracy is crazy: I ended up going through three kinds of security. The class differences are very obvious (in another setting than one’s own): sweepers, bagage handlers, taxi drivers, and airport officials interact with each other in very stilted ways. I went to the PIA(irline) offices to see if I could do more things while I am here but I can’t. I have to call someone at the Islamic University in Islamabad, Rawalpindi’s neighboring but very different city, because I am giving a paper there tomorrow.

There are no rickshaws here, mainly small busses; electricity is spotty as well. Waiters in the restaurant wanted to sell me whiskey, which I can buy as a non-Muslim, and two American Moslims came to see me to buy them whiskey for `medicine’. I stay away from all that!

2 February – Islamabad

A man is sweeping my room, on his knees!

I visited Islamic University today and met smart people who work incredibly hard and don't have time to complete their PhDs. The women in the audience were in the front and the men in the back. The women wore more clothing than I had been accustomed to till now. I was wearing a shalwar qameez, which they liked. It was obvious they had had a discussion on whether or not to invite me.

In the evening, I met a German woman and Pakistani man who had a business making watercontainers that dot the roofs of many buildings. It is good to have a local contact and I went to their house and had a different view on the water situation.
She is so happy to be able to speak German and he is trying to make everything (especially transport) easier, which is wonderful. I also went with them to a wedding and to Azad Kashmir; see below.

3 February - Taxila

The trip to Taxila was lovely: Lok Virsa museum, Dharmarajika (a Buddhist stupa from the 3rd century BCE), Sirkap (a city built by Demetrius around 180BCE), and Janlian. I met many interesting Kashmiris and saw the Taxila bazar. It is an industrial city with railroads, cement factories, pottery, woodwork.

Kashmiris on vacation in Taxila

In the evening, I went to a wedding. The bride sat ‘on display’. I also met some Bosnian refugees, who are Muslim but seem a bit out of place in this culture. They live in camps; the mother only speaks Bosnian but the others are trying to learn English. I then met some people in the hotel who were pretty anti-Jewish, which is not unusual here. Talked a lot to the German woman about life here as opposed to Europe.

Me, the bride, and two Bosnian refugees

4 February - Muzafferabad

My (now) friends picked me up to go to Murree and then Muzaffarabad to visit friends who grow silkworms and then back via Abbottabad [now infamous]. There are drug check points everywhere, this being close to the border with India. It had been raining so the road was in pretty bad shape but we were in a jeep going past ravines and through mountain passes. Quite an amazing trip; we got back very late! There are many refugee camps along the road because of people who have fled Occupied Kashmir.

Abbottabad, picture from the internet

The roads
5 February - Peshawar

The taxi driver I’ve had a few times came to pick me up an hour early (6am) and didn’t want to charge me but I gave him 120 Rp anyway. Now I am at the airport, waiting for my flight to Peshawar.

What a culture shock! I landed but there is a strike going on and the only taxi drivers not on strike were a bit wild looking. I was going to stay at Dean’s but because this is a dangerous city I’ve chosen the Pearl Continental, the most luxurious hotel I’ve ever been in. It’s wonderful but has a secret service feel. I took a shower, washed my hair, and then took another bath! The electricity and phones work! I then went into the city but, because of the strike, the museum is closed. I bought six (Afghani) rugs that I’ve asked them to ship. We’ll see if they arrive. It is hard to walk on the streets; people (men) just push me into the road. The only women who are out walking wear full burkas but they too walk around the men. Middle class women use cars/taxis to go places so I am wearing jeans and a long-sleeved shirt rather than my shalwar qameez.

The food is wonderful: mulligatawny soup, chicken masala, do pyaza, chicken karachi, all kinds of spinach, chapati, roti, yoghurt … The thinly sliced ginger was delicious, something to replicate.

6 February - Peshawar

It is a Sunday but it doesn’t feel that. I went to reserve a trip to the Khyber Pass for tomorrow (leaving at 8.45 from Dean’s hotel). Then, I went to the Peshawar Museum, aka Victoria Hall, where I met some students who I’ll have tea with later today. The Museum again has a lot of Buddhist sculptures which Pakistanis say they like! The Museum itself is a beautiful building and there are manuscripts and miniatures in the upstairs space. I then wanted to walk to the Bazar and the Fort, which was built in 1526 to watch over the Grand Trunk Road, but a demonstration seemed to be in progress so I went back along the Governor’s House and Leprosy Hospital. There are many begging women on the street and I feel very guilty about my being able to retreat to my hotel. I do give them money but it feels hopeless.

Pollution is terrible outside; it is good to have a steady supply of hot water in this hotel! It is also good to have this as a base and to venture out for several hours at a time. In a little while I’ll visit the Mosque.

Went to the mosque through the bazar; quite tricky with people trying to sell hash, weapons, perfume, bangles, etc! I bought a few Pashtun hats (80 Rp each). There are so many policemen on the streets; it
feels as if something is brewing. The Assembly for this part of the country (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa) is right across the street and there is a lack of confidence motion against the ruling Pakistan Muslim League (N) by the Pakistan People’s Party and others.

7 February – Khyber Pass

I got up early and was very excited to go to the Pass today. Fortunately, there was one other person who joined the jeep tour, a lawyer from California. First, we had to get a permit to enter the Tribal Areas and then an armed guard to accompany us through this area. We saw a dusty town full of gun stores, stopped at bakeries, passed the fortress of one of the main drug barons, Ayub Afridi, and saw Afridi women outside in the Tribal areas, wearing colorful clothing. The trip was out of this world! So glad I went!
8 -9 February - Lahore

Some frustrations on the flight back to Lahore: nothing is easy here. The plane was loaded with Pathan men who were carrying electrical appliances. I am now back in Falletti’s in a much better room with a window, which is needed because the electricity will be out 3:30-5:30 pm. The electrical supply is bad in the winter because the water level in the hydroelectrical lakes is low. I had walked to The Mall and bought a few more books and some miniatures and prepared a little for my talk. On the morning of the 9th, I walked to Punjab University, 25 minutes away, and gave a talk to at least 50 students and faculty and had a good time. One of the teachers took me to a celebration at Aitchison College, a very elite school from students from age 5 – 18. After graduating from Aitchison, these students go to elite institutions abroad. The College is pretty Western-oriented, which is obvious from the suits that most men wear rather than the Pakistani Shalwar and the lack of head scarves for the women.

I had a wonderful time but am happy to be heading home! Some further pictures appear below.
| Colorful transportation | New mosque in Islamabad, built with Saudi monies |