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GLOBAL ECONOMICS REVIEW



Liaqat Ali \*

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Muhammad Shafiq †

## Socio-Economic Transformations and Urbanization in Colonial Multan

Pages: 168 – 176

| Vol. VII, No. I (Winter 2022)

| DOI: 10.31703/ger.2022(VII-I).14

p-ISSN: 2521-2974

| e-ISSN: 2707-0093

| L-ISSN: 2521-2974

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**Abstract:** *In 1849, the British occupied Multan city and carried out transformations in areas like technical, administrative, canal colonies, and irrigation. Religiously and socially, Multan was distributed into three main groups i.e. Hindu, Muslim, and Sikhs. Having strong political backgrounds Muslim families such as Syed, Qurashi, Gilani, and Gardezi also influenced the economic scenario. This study focuses on the socio-economic transformations that were prevalent in the Multan region during British rule. Power and socio-economic backwardness results in an unfair distribution of resources in Multan. The Multan region is chosen for analysis as it was a major centre of structural and urbanization transition and the economic resources that Britain brought to the region along with other parts of Punjab during the colonial period. These include changes to new irrigation systems, improved communications, and land revenue management. The focus of this study is the interaction between communities and colonial states.*

**Key Words:** Multan, Religious Elites, irrigation, Economic Development, Urbanization, Sources of Communication, Agrarian Development

**JEL Classification:**

### Introduction

Multan was one of the ridiculous agrarian lands and famous for cotton and mango crops that were producing 40% of the total crop. (Abd-ul-Haq, 1980) The government recognized tentative agrarian reforms for research on seeds, land types, cultivated machinery, and animal farming. Before Britain, in the past, Multan was a hub for handiwork and old-fashioned *Lungi* as well as extravagantly embroidered cloth which was sent all over India and to foreign countries. (Abd-ul-Haq, 1980) After the 1857 war, Britain decided to utilize indigenous elites as mediators between the government and the masses. There was enormous growth in cultivated land due to political constancy and immensely enhanced communication as well

as irrigation accommodations. Multan's economy was dependent upon agrarian articles and cultivation was chiefly reliant on wells, canals, and rivers due to very slight rainwater. Water accessibility was vital to the economic evolution and comfort of Multan. In connection with this topographical situation, it was classified into three categories; lowland on the river, land nearby to canal irrigation and desert region is unreachable to canals. (Government of Punjab, Settlement Report 1899-1900, 1908) With the expansion of irrigation, wheat anticipated excessive prominence. Most of the cultivation endured at the mercy of rainfall which was the catastrophe of the crop season and always caused dearth and starvation. (Government of Punjab, Punjab District Gazetteers 1904, 1908)

\* PhD Scholar, Department of History, The Islamia University of Bahawalpur (IUB), Punjab, Pakistan.

† Assistant Professor, Department of History, The Islamia University of Bahawalpur (IUB), Punjab, Pakistan.  
Email: [muhammad\\_shafiq@iub.edu.pk](mailto:muhammad_shafiq@iub.edu.pk) (Corresponding Author)

## **Methodology**

The research is mostly based on both official and non-official records gathered by consulting primary and secondary sources which have been deliberated in various earlier publications.

## **Discussion**

Punjab was both the "loaf of bread" and the "army" of the British Indian Empire. Given the practices of the agricultural world, Britain steadily turned Punjab into farmland. [\(Josh, 1979\)](#) West Punjab would bring new infertile land for agriculture and raise agrarian goods. In canal settlement, cultivation was converted into a commercial enterprise. Much of the agricultural production is transported to other cities via Punjab's newly established rail system for export to various ports and overseas arcades. [\(Ali, 2003\)](#) The advent of railways improved the rank of Punjab as a provincial unit and Multan was one of the key donors to the import and export of goods. "The fiscal year 1880-1881 verified that Multan was an imperative metropolitan for the progress of the economy. It was the third major city after Amritsar and Delhi concerning exports and imports". [\(Government of Punjab, Report \(1880-81\), 1882\)](#) Multan's economic evolution transformed its status to the British, and they initiated to realize it as one of their focal markets. Its physical position permitted the British to regulate and monitor the state of Bahawalpur and other nearby areas. Goods and goods are both transported by rail via Multan to major cities such as Jhang, Bahawalpur, Khaniwal, Kabir Wala, Dera Ghazi Khan, and Sindh. [\(Government of Punjab, Report \(1880-81\), 1882\)](#)

## **Economic Transformation in Multan by Agriculture**

In Multan, the agricultural advancement had released new paths of commercial growth for the native public and the zones. The British colonial period in India is generally divided into three major interrelated periods. The first stage was from 1757 to 1813 which was known as a colonial merchant, the second phase

covered the era from 1813 to 1860 as a regulator of national power and revenue collection, and after 1860 was the third stage as they spent capital on several segments such as railways, irrigation and afforestation, and various others to contest in the worldwide market. [\(Kumar, 2012\)](#)

## **The Expansion of Canal Settlements and its Influence on Multan**

From 1885 to 1926, Britain boarded an effective agrarian enlargement plan. In 1885, it began in Western Punjab and sustained until the completion of Britain's regime. Throughout this era, nine canal settlements were established. [\(Ali, 2003\)](#) According to the colonization scheme, a system of canals was assembled on uncultured land, prominent to conceivable migration to the area from further parts of Punjab. [\(Ali, 2003\)](#) Multan's terrestrial site is central and was part of three main Punjab colonization schemes. Multan was a portion of the Sidhnai Colony, which was settled between 1886 and 1888 with a total land allocation of approximately 0.25 million acres. [\(Ali, 2003\)](#) To fascinate people, the lowest subsidy was set at 50 acres. The Lower Barid Doaab Colony was the second settlement, initiated in 1914. The land initially allocated for this scheme was 1.19 million acres but, later on, it was condensed to 0.9 million acres in 1916. [\(Ali, 2003\)](#) The last major settlement project began in 1925 and continued until 1940. It was the Neeli Bar Colony. In this scheme, the land was distributed into two main categories. 1 million acres were perpetual and 2.71 million acres were non-permanent and are again subdivided into public and private lands. [\(Ali, 2003\)](#)

It is worth noting that dominant clans of prominent religious elites such as "Gardezi, Qurashi, and Gilani were given 0.19 million and 262 acres of land in lower Bari Doab". Its inhabitants grew between 1881 and 1921, but this was due to the colonial plans of Lower Bari Doab and Sidhnai. [\(Ali, 2003\)](#) In 1921, there were 1647 towns but at the time of division, the number had increased to 2287. [\(Raza, 1968\)](#) Multan is surrounded by three different channels i.e. the Sidhnai Canal, the

Delinquent Canal, and the Sutlej Canal. The Sydney Canal relied on Ravi. The Sidhna Canal Structure consists of Abdul Hakim Canal and the Fazl Shah Canal. (Emerson, 1912) Of the four flow channels in Chenab, Sikandarabad was the most effective. Its second canal scheme was Doorana Lantana and Wali Mohammad on Boson regulators. (Emerson, 1912) Matithal was the third aqueduct serving Kabir Wala and Multan whilst Balochan Wah was the fourth and last waterway that flows through Shujabad and serves about 20 villages. All canals were controlled by the department of Irrigation and directly or indirectly irrigated Multan land and reinforced the economy. (Emerson, 1912)

### **Economic Transformations in Multan by Irrigation**

Multan gained popularity due to the growth of agriculture, the settlement of Abadkar, and the allocation of land under the canal colonial settlements. Farming products require an adequate supply of water. The largest area of Punjab has been irrigated with riverbeds, wells, canals, water tanks, etc. (Mufakhar-ul-Islam, 1997) In Punjab, the natural resources of irrigation were rain and rivers. Wells and canals were imperative resources for artificial irrigation. There are two types of wells i.e. Pakka and Kachcha. "The Kachcha wells had dug into the earth without brickwork. In certain areas, they operated with the Persian wheel. The utilization of wells was the exclusive resource of irrigation restrained to the non-canal settlements. The assessment of irrigation through the Wells was exaggerated for a diversity of reasons i.e. the area, the nature of the soil, the charisma of canal irrigation, competence of leaseholders, and several wells". (Emerson, 1912)

After a brief indication, it was admitted that Multan was considered the 3<sup>rd</sup> foremost agrarian region after Delhi and Amritsar because of its economic and agrarian growth. Till the 19<sup>th</sup> century, indigenous as well as religious elites and common individuals who had sequences of power and were key recipients of all benefits either by land grantors or symbolic engagements were

assisting the British in the accomplishment of its tactics and undertakings of schemes. These pious rich persons were the same who reinforced the instituting of Khair-Ul-Madares. Those supporters, who said welcomed this institution, were known as Gilani, Bukhari, Qurashi, and Gardezi. "Britain left blessings in the form of management which was not inadequate to law and order, canals, bridges, schools, irrigation, telegraph, railways, roads, and

### **Social Structure and Social Transformation in Multan Employing Communication**

#### **The Local Elites**

In Multan, the political scenario was a decent model of an outdated setup. The inhabitants can be categorized into three classes i.e. religion, caste, profession, and tribe. The occupation and tribes manifested self-discrimination because culture and religion had an insightful influence on the occupations of the residents. (Shafiq, 2013) Britain's key intentions were to stable economic variations and uphold political constancy. The colonial management utilized native elites as a barrier between Britain and the public. After the British, these indigenous elites expanded power to dominate the masses by dividing India into two new states. The function of these elites moved from mediators to guardians of sacred shrines to masters and mentors. They also obliged the British in connection with influential powers and appointments. Notable clans who had assisted in various offices and received British honours include Gardezi Syed, Qurashi, Gilani Syed, Saddozai, Badozai, Khakvani, and Mullazai as well as Boson, etc. (Gilani, 1995) Syed and Qurashi were the leading recipients of such dogmas who executed the duties of indigenous officers well before the colonial age. All the colonial strategies like Court of Wards, free Jagir, Revenue, *Tirmtax* (grazing), and Land Alienation Acts were in favour of the native elites, containing Jagirdars, Pirs, and *Sajjadanashin*. (Government of Punjab, Report for the Year 1865-66, 1867)

### Court of Wards

The British familiarized “the Court of Wards under The Punjab Court of Wards Act 1903 in which the Executive District Officer (Revenue) was its head in respect of the individual and the property of the ward”. These indigenous leaders also established posts in local management as honorary magistrates (*Zaildar*) (Government of Punjab, Punjab District Gazetteers: Multan District Statistical Table 1913, 1913) and were granted huge land grants. (Government of Punjab, Settlement Report of Multan District 1880, 1880). “In 1849 since the British East India Company, all the *Waqf* properties devoted to various Sufi tombs came under the Company’s administration through this Act. This Court was a legitimate figure shaped by the Company. Its tenacity was to defend estates and heirs when the heir was believed to be slight and incompetent of acting autonomously. Due to the local distinctiveness of the big shrines and socio-religious position of their genetic custodianship, several spiritual rich classes were rewarded and granted land in collaboration”.

“During the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and 1920, Syed and Qurashi clans victimized liability, and their assets were taken under the supervision of this Court”. (Government of Punjab, Settlement Report of Multan District 1880, 1880). “During the settlement, these Pirs and guardians were again granted territories for the conservation of socio-religious organizations under their supervision and they also composed taxes on the behalf of the Government”. (Buhler, 1996). “These indigenous pious elites trace their heredity back to the Holy Prophet or Pious Caliphs. Britain deliberated them as good arbitrators between them and the masses”. This affiliation was like a patron-client link because they acknowledged special treatment from the British. The following are examples of this.

### Gardezi Syed

“From Gardezi Syed, Syed Morad Shah was the chief focal advocate that went to oblige the Britians when Multan was encircled in 1848”.

(Gilani, 1995) “He departed Multan and he was on way to his inherent town, Koran Balouch, when these white men reached Sardarpur, they needed witty locals who knew the area and its people”. He was one of the most respected Syed, with his wit and sharp wit, he was recommended by the locals. He was proximately summoned by the major and, for safety and security, asked to remain in the British camp and create an area accessible to British multitudes. He recognized his proposal and began serving in the British Army. On June 8, 1849, Morad was employed as Peshkar of Shorkot. In 1850, he was promoted to Tehsildary and served in various places for 13 years. (Gilani, 1995) Relations with Britain flourished and he built his career by managing the area and the post office well. In 1864, Morad was appointed as an additional commissioner, and the following year he was appointed deputy of the indigenous peoples of Bahawalpur State. (Gilani, 1995). “After Morad’s death, his son Syed Hassan Bukhsh Gardezi was appointed as Member Municipal Committee in 1882, Vice President of the Municipal, and then Honorary Judicial Magistrate in 1891 and acknowledged the title of Khan Bhadur in 1899 and then reached Provincial Durbar in 1905”. (Gilani, 1995) “Like his father, his reliability was indisputable. He donated 8000 rupees from the First World War fund to Britain”. (Jones, 2011)

### Qurashi

Another specimen of indigenous celebrities is the Qurashi who were spiritual leaders and whose ancestry was dedicated to Baha-Ul-Haq Zakaria. This heredity was sustained and several descendants became *Sajjadanashin* of the holy sanctuary in Multan. During the Sikh kingdom, numerous lands and allied properties of tombs were seized. During the victory of Multan in 1818, Ranjit Singh secured property amounting to 3500 rupees per annual for the sanctuary of Baha-ul-Haq Zakaria but Divan Sawan Mal paid 1600 per annum to the *Sajjadanashin*. (Gilani, 1995) “Makhdoom Shah Mahmoud, an inheritor of Baha-ud-din Zakaria, reinforced Britain against the Sikhs and, as an

incentive, he acquired 2000 rupees and half of the land of the Mauza as a personal gift of the land grant”.\_(Gilani, 1995) He also served the British in the 1857 war. Shah Mehmud himself took to the battlefield with Col. Hamilton. He provided security services for British camps and military equipment and artilleries. In 1860, Markham was awarded Begi Wala Bagh and eight *Chahat* worth 550 rupees and an annual Jagir of 1780 rupees as a reward for military service.\_(Gilani, 1995). On the day of his funeral in 1865, native establishments observed a public holiday as a symbol of admiration and homage by closing courts, offices, and schools. His son, Markham Bahamas Banks, was appointed Deputy Director and then chosen titular magistrate and member of the municipality in 1877.\_(Gilani, 1995)

### Gilani Syed

The Gilani Syed was another elite group that Raj favoured and supported. The Gilani trace their ancestry down to the four great caliphs of Islam, Imam Hassan, and Hazrat Ali Murtaza. Many of Gilani's descendants persisted as adjacent and reliable companions of the British. The first example was Syed Muhammad Sadar-ud-Din Shah who, after his father Makhdoom Syed Muhammad Ghous, selected *Sajjadanashirin* in 1878.\_(Gilani, 1995) Syed Muhammad Sadar-ud-Din Shah was added to the provincial Durbari. “He served in the Multan District Prison for 4 years as an honorary guest. He was a member of Anjuman-e-Raousa and invited to the coronation in Delhi Durbar in 1911”.\_(Gilani, 1995) His son, Haji Syed Ghulam Yassin, the eldest son after Sadar-ud-Din Shah, became *Sajjadanashin*. Ghulam Yassin also held various posts from 1918 to 1922, such as Honorary Magistrate. “From 1918 onwards, Ghulam Yassin remained an undisturbed member of the Municipal Committee and then Vice-President. In nutshell, the administration of Multan was made up of the Zaildar, Tehsildar, and Lambardars to control the administrative arrangement”.\_(Gilani, 1995)

Petty-rich classes were also at the height

of society like Syed, Qurashi, Gilani, etc. Pathan and Balouch were from the fighter class and Syed and Qurashi embodied the spiritual leader. “These groups held bulky regions of land which were given and gifted by the white men for their devoted link and support. 1.375 million Acres out of 2.14 million lands were held by Syed and Qurashi, and Pathan, as well as Balouch, held 0.124 million acres”.\_(Banerjee, 1982) Multan's indigenous supremacy was shaped by the British, which consisted of loyal servants, to help them govern efficiently. In the complete era, the spirituals turned into landowners who obliged the British for their devotion and turned into the dominant class.

### Sufi and Pir

Till the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Multan was a multi-ethnic city obliging a population of world-leading religions. It was also a centre of Sufi activities and deliberated the city of saints and virtuous people. Tombs of Sufis like Muhammad Youssef Gerdezi, Sheikh Baha-ud-Din Zakaria, Shah Shams Sabzwari, Sheikh Sadar-ud-din Arif, Syed Musa Pak Shaheed, Sheikh Rukn-ud-din, and Hafiz Muhammad Jamal Multani, etc. are present in Multan.\_(Abd-ul-Haq, 1980) Muslims not only formed a certain bulk but also enlarged their power till 1857 under the colonial government. The Muslims enlarged than Hindus in fractions comparatively. Society was based on social order and tribal systems with different customs, traditions, and rituals. Many castes and clans followed Islam and Hinduism equally.

### Urbanization in Multan under British Rule

After the annexation, Sir Dalhousie placed Punjab under the jurisdiction of an administrative committee. Assessment and Settlement, consideration of interests and rights, and registration of ownership and use rights were carried out by Parliament with remarkable efficacy. In 1853, the council was eliminated and its powers were vested in the Supreme Council.\_(Douai, 1916) “Originally, in Punjab, land revenues were collected from the lands, and a general system of appraisal and revenue collection was applied. This is called

the Mahalwari structure which had been changed over time". The state then turned to *Riayat*, which began to raise income directly from farmers. Britain introduced land settlement to take full advantage of land income. This practice utilized by officials to regulate the land income owed is called land income settlement. The commercialization of crop growth was a result of the expansion of transport. The new sources of transportation like roads and railways caused a quicker movement for numerous agrarian merchandise at inexpensive rates. To raise cultivated regions and revenue, British policy led to a widespread package of colonization. This set-up of canals and irrigation improved the ratio of manufacture and drastic modifications in the agrarian system. "Due to more influx of migrants, urban development helped to look at the progression of population, growing means of manufacture and new facilities like roads and railways which helped the city to become more central and conventional trade and business".

### Major Sources towards Urbanization in Multan

Societies are distorted by subjugation or peaceful immigration. Immigration occurs in search of butter and bread, native land, improved settlement, etc. The migrant groups integrated with existing standards, practices, culture, and customs. It was a centre of farming growth, routes as well as trade, and commerce. The immigration took place because of a few dynamics containing religion but not restricted to farming expansion, allocation of land, irrigation structure, and canal colony. [\(Government of Punjab, Punjab District Gazetteers: Multan District Statistical Table 1913, 1913\)](#)

### Roads and Railways

Roads play an effective part in transportation but Britain participated too little in the building and preservation of roads. [\(Mann, 2014\)](#) The only exclusion to this regulation was the G.T road which strained from Dhaka to Kabul. "From 1833 to 1855, the British reassembled it and made it controllable. After the 1857 Uprising, the

preliminary tactics were made for the process of the state road as 'royal roads to join British India at the regional and district level with a developing railway system'. [\(Mann, 2014\)](#)

### Multan Roads

Primarily, Roads were not metaled in Multan but the un-metaled roads were also in equally decent condition. The major roads in Multan were as under:

#### Multan to Lahore Road

It was the oldest from Lahore to Multan which runs equivalent to the railway.

#### Multan to Bahawalpur

The road from Multan to Bahawalpur via Lodhran is to the east of the Indus Valley Rail Line.

#### 'The Customs Road'

"The road, coming from Pakpattan and the Montgomery, was going towards Mailsi and Lodhran". [\(Roe, 1883\)](#)

#### Lahore Road at Tulamba

"Another road is Lahore Road at Tulamba which runs around the district passing through Shujabad, Siraey Sadhu, and Multan, and then finally crossing the Sutlej into Bahawalpur. Besides these, there are crossroads from Mailsi, Kahrora Pacca, and Luddan to Multan via Duniyapur. The enlargement of roads provided Multan with a chance to associate with nearby cities, markets, and trade centres". [\(Roe, 1883\)](#)

### Railway Lines

Railroads also played an important part in the economic and political expansion and harmony of the colonial Empire. The overview of railroads, one of the British inheritances of dominance, impressively increased transportation between various parts of the subcontinent. It also brought reflective deviations in conduct and culture. Britain was concerned to attach the area to the rest of India. For this purpose, several companies

such as the Sindh Railway Company, the Punjab Railway Company, the Delhi Railway Company, and the Indus Flotilla Company were formed to link all major economic hubs and cities via railways.

### 'Multan, Lahore and Amritsar Line'

"In 1856, the government permitted an inspection to build a railway line from Lahore to Multan and Amritsar. The Punjab Railway Company had been discretely recognized for this purpose. This work on the line started in 1859".\_(Davidson, 1868)

### "Lahore-Multan Line"

"The manufacture of this line started from Sher Shah to Multan. The 11-mile line opened in 1863 to transport the goods yet completely opened in 1865".

### Multan-Kotri Line

This route was subject to various debates until its completion in 1878. The main purpose of the connection between Multan and Kotri was to connect the ports of Karachi, Delhi, Lahore, and Amritsar. The transformation of the Indus River and the delta has been a constant obstacle to its completion. This route was assembled on the left bank of the Indus River. Multan's railway served as a socio-economic modification. After the opening of the railway station, the nature and route of trade transformed, and in 1896 and 1897, there was a record number of imports and exports at the Multan regional railway station. The introduction of rail has changed tariffs, profits, and revenue trends across India. Railroads have also expanded their ability to transport goods, individuals, and imports as well as exports on a large scale because it was also one of the centres of commerce and trade.

"The Colonial proprietorship of the railways had many benefits. Its performance was relatively diverse before and after 1920. From 1850 to 1919, there was a tendency to sophisticated output, output, and profits when the traffic flows were not on a much higher scale. Later on, this benefit started shrinking and the indigenous trade was only

operative because of dejected foreign trade, the freight charges levied on imports and exports. The railway played a key role in assimilating markets and growing trade". (Bogart, 2012) "Local and worldwide economic tendencies moulded the stride of railway structure and the claim for imperative traffic flows to the ports. From a political perspective, railways moulded the cash of the colonial administration and the Princely States. Finally, railroads improved national revenue and merged with the Indian market". (Government of Punjab, Punjab Gazetteer Multan 1883-84, 1885)

### Multan's Rising Wealth via Revenues and Taxation

Multan's progression as the third chief agrarian city showed its economic progress by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century as a prominent core of the economy. Revenue has been deliberated as the pillar of any government, and administration. Multan is the midpoint of agronomic environs and a foremost heir of canal colonies which acquired the consideration of the British for tax and revenue collection. "The revenue assessment was practically as same as it was dominant before the seizure. The government collected taxes or *Mahsool* in kind or cash. The techniques such as *Jinsi*, *Nakdi-Jinsi*, *Zabti*, and *Karari* were adopted for assessment and Multan received a fixed monetary value under British rule". (Maclagan, 1902) In 1849, the first settlement was approved and known as *Charsala* which was based on an ordinary collection of the previous four years. In 1853, a second settlement was made for Lodhran and Shujabad, and some other Tehsils.\_(Maclagan, 1902) After these settlements, "Britain decided to implement regular settlements with the goal of long-term implementation with an enhanced income. Three consistent settlements were introduced for the next ten years but the first settlement was made between 1857 and 1860, yet it was not revised until 1873".\_(Maclagan, 1902) The second was made by Sir Roe in 1873.\_(Kumar, 2012) The Third and last was introduced in 1896. (Maclagan, 1902) "Multan has been one of the

leading regions in tax and endowment collection. Income tax was measured and gathered by the tax department, and Parker was authorized to assess and collect the tax in 1888". (Government of Punjab, Report on the Income Tax, 1891-92, 1892)

Assessment by Parker was increasing every year which proved that Multan was a prosperous city. From 1895 to 1905, the tax assortment grew to 42891 which was conceded by the department of revenue. (Government of Punjab, Report, 1905-06, 1906) Every year, there is intensification in assessment which was a key pointer for prosperity and growth. During 1911-12, 1050 assesses waged 50717 rupees as tax in Multan. (Government of Punjab, Report on the Income Tax Administration Punjab, 1911-12, 1912)

### **Conclusion**

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Since 1849, Multan succeeded as an economic and social core under British rule. Its cultural, agronomic, communal, and economic life was measured among the top donating cities of Punjab. This research has scrutinized the chief

socio-economic fluctuations brought by colonial rule. The agrarian system was exaggerated by profitable crops and private land proprietorship as well as fixed land revenue demands. As a result of irrigation and urbanization and means of transportation, there was growing prosperity and a growing problem of rural indebtedness. The development and introduction of technologies such as railroads, highways, irrigation, and income gathering elevated its status. In this addition, Britain left the impression of a successful admin during the partition of India. In addition, this study demonstrated how the aforementioned transformation and urbanization work in Multani society. Not all communities have benefited from colonial influences. As in other parts of western Punjab, traditional herders did not participate in the development of the canal colony. The land was given to communities that were supporters of the colonial state. The socio-economic transformation and urbanization of Multan laid the groundwork for cooperation with the colonial state and increased tensions between communities.

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