

## **Colonial Economy and Agricultural Underdevelopment in Colonial Punjab**

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### **Abstract**

*The British rule in the Punjab had a utilitarian aspect. The development of infrastructure and construction of canal colonies was the most profitable part of it. The colonial interests were served by the policy of patron-client relationship. Rural elites were identified as colonial collaborators and their authority was legitimized through the ownership of the vast tracts of land, an insignia of power and prestige and their connection with the British officials. In return of these privileges rural elites extended their loyalty and support to colonial state to anchor their rule in India. I argue that colonial political economy created and enhanced poverty and under development in Mianwali<sup>1</sup> district. The British saw the protection of tribal structure as imperative for the consolidation of colonial rule in the region. The official indifference vividly demonstrated in the realms of education, agriculture, socio-cultural development and the building of the infrastructure. The indifference of the government leads us to believe that Mianwali had, supposedly no tangible bearing on the politics and economy of the Punjab. On the other hand hardly any investment was done to enhance the agricultural productivity. Uncertain environmental conditions, low economic resources contributed in the economic and*

*agricultural underdevelopment of the region. The agricultural indebtedness, growth of moneylenders, sale and mortgage of land were the result of economic policies of the British which had its adverse fall out on the underdevelopment of the district.*

### **Setting the context**

The Punjab, a province lying in the northwest of British Indian Empire, was annexed by the British in 1849. It gained rapid political significance and extensive economic growth from the late nineteenth century onward. The British resolved to transform the Punjabi society on the pattern of Victorian ideals so they effected economic changes that envisaged mega projects like canal colonies, settlement of land for an organized system of revenue, privileged the Punjab's agrarian development Permanent property ownership rights were given to the cultivators which made environment conducive for the money lenders to spring up in the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Land was converted in to a valuable commodity. Zamindars invested their capital in agricultural lands leading to the proliferation of moneylenders and bankers. Throughout the British rule, state was reluctant to invest in opening an agrarian frontier in areas where agricultural prospects were not compatible with the colonial ideology constructed on the idea that investment must yield economic benefit. Revenue assessments encouraged individualisation in property rights, this caused increasing sale and alienation of land. As agriculturists were more engaged with the money economy, they trapped deeper into debt to moneylenders. Indebtedness furthered marginalization of peasant.

## **Introduction**

Tribalism is deeply embedded in the society of Mianwali. Its roots are deep and ancient.<sup>2</sup> The demographic pattern is composed of various kinships or biradaries in a tribal setup. The dominance of economic interests and sense of superiority of one tribe over another had fostered inter-tribal rivalries. The absence of social cohesion and mutual harmony interrupted any consolidated confrontation against a foreign force. Tribe is a symbol of identity and power of different human\ groups. The district was essentially agrarian in a sense that land and cattles were the only source of livelihood. Living in a terrain where life was an arduous exercise to say the least. The district is bounded on the north by the Attock and Kohat districts, on the west by the Bannu and Dera Ismail Khan, on the south by the tehsil of Leiah, while Jhang, Shahpur districts adjoined it on the East. In the upper half, the district is separated from NWFP by a series of hills encircling the IsaKhel tehsil, which is the tract with a Pathan population.<sup>3</sup> River Indus flows through the district from north to south-west having vast riverine bed. The local leaders emerged from the Khawanins of IsaKhel, Nawabs of Kalabagh, landed aristocrats of Piplan and Wan Bhachran who enjoyed an exalted status being close to the power structure. Whereas the rest of the tribes encountered social and economic marginalization, subsequently this gap exacerbated the inter-tribal misgivings. The physical features of the district have had a profound effect on its inhabitants and their mode of existence. Three features give Mianwali the character of a barani district, 1.the unevenness of its topography 2. The nature of the soil, and 3. the climate. Due to vagaries of climate the predominantly agricultural population of the district has been

subject to the vicissitudes of nature- the single most important determinant of the general backwardness of Mianwali. Historically, dependence on nature for survival has posed enormous challenges to the average peasant.

### **Pre-colonial past**

From ancient times the Salt Range<sup>4</sup> (including the area of Mianwali) had been a basic route for invasions from the north for Turks, Afghans, Tajiks and Iranians and encountered the tumult of the respective rules of Gakhars, Suris, Durranis, Sikhs and the British.<sup>5</sup> Various tribes poured into Mianwali and settled near the fringe of Indus. Awans occupied east of Dhak spur of Salt Range area called 'Khudri', 'Pakhar', or 'AwanKari'. Jats which include Siyars, Bhidwals, Chhinas and Khokhars, came from the Multan and Bahawalpur, settled on the right bank of Indus, on the edge of Thal, were the chief landholding tribes in the district<sup>6</sup>. The prominent Baluch tribes were Lashari, Gishkori, Mamdanis of Khansar the Magassis who were largely concentrated in the south of the district, in the east of Thal<sup>7</sup>. They preferred public services over cultivation, joining army and police as their choicest inclination<sup>8</sup>. Niazis and Sumbals<sup>9</sup> were Lodhi Pathans, the descendants of Behlol Lodhi, migrated from Afghanistan to Hindustan where they rose to power and held influential positions in the palace of Behlol Lodhi<sup>10</sup>. Mianwali Tehsil was annexed by the Sikhs in 1822. Isa Khel, a tehsil of Mianwali was finally incorporated in the Sikh Kingdom until 1836. The Sikhs exacted large tribute from its villages. Under the Sikhs the whole Cis-Indus territory formed one compact government. A great portion of it was held in jagirs. Each jagirdar possessed judicial and executive authority within the limits of his jagir<sup>11</sup>. From 1836 to 1847,

Niazi tribes were fighting against Sikhs along the Indus and Kurram. Prominent among them were Isa Khel and Sarhang Niazis.<sup>12</sup> The second Sikh war broke out in 1848. Isa Khel Niazis supported the British in this war. On 29<sup>th</sup> Mar, 1849, the Punjab was annexed and the district became formally a part of the British Empire<sup>13</sup>. The tradition of cooption drew in the times of Ranjeet Singh, when local religious leaders tried to develop good relations with the Sikhs, As a result Sikh rulers exempted local people from paying land taxes and octroi in lieu of peaceful relations with the Sikhs. In addition to that the rights over lands, wells, breeding of cattle, collection of *zakat* in the villages and a cash amount of two thousand annual for the maintenance of *langar* were also handed over to the *sajjada nashin*, of the *khanqah*<sup>14</sup>.

### **Development of Infrastructure under Colonial Rule**

The British government substantially established itself a few years after annexation in the subcontinent. The most crucial task before the British leaders was to control the unruly and violent people of the Punjab<sup>15</sup>. A semi-military centralised system of government was devised, and a board of administration was set up in April 1849 which worked till Jan 1853 under the control of three men. The most prominent were John and Henry Lawrence. The Most experienced civilian and military officers were deployed and empowered with wide administrative and judicial powers<sup>16</sup>. A centralized administrative system consisting of police and judicial systems was setup with a renewed demarcation of boundaries of the district. To enforce this system effectively, they needed to reformulate a power structure on land which primarily meant search for new allies. As a result a class of landowners was created to support the British Imperial ideology and also to

serve as a nexus between state and people by means of lucrative grants and privileges.

To redefine and reconstitute a power structure on land, a vigorous reorganization of boundaries was carried out in the district. On 9<sup>th</sup> Nov 1901, the NWFP province was separated from the Punjab<sup>17</sup>. Mianwali District with its three tehsils of Mianwali, Bhakkar and Isa Khel, was made part of the Rawalpindi Division<sup>18</sup>. The executive head of the district was Deputy Commissioner who was also working in the capacity of District Magistrate and Collector, with two Assistant and Extra Assistant Commissioners at the head quarter. Each of the tehsils was in charge of a Tehsildar. Each Tehsildar was assisted by two Naib Tehsildars. There was also a district and office Kanungo<sup>19</sup>.

Mustafa Kamal Pasha aptly describes that “Armed with a laissez-faire creed, the British saw a social revolution in land relations as the only durable state. They viewed the old jagirdars and the other privileged groups of ancient regime as guardians of status quo<sup>20</sup>.” The British produced a class of rural intermediaries who not only dominated the politics of Punjab for unlimited time period but also helped British to control society. These colonial elites acted as recruiting agents, made forced recruitments in the army, supported the British in materializing their imperialist policies, and set up supportive political party i-e unionist party in the heart of Punjab. In lieu of their services, the colonial government rewarded them with lucrative grants which transmitted through successive generations<sup>21</sup>.

The British needed the support of local elite to strengthen their social and political control over the territory and to bring into submission the unruly tribes particularly of in the areas of

Bannu and Marwat<sup>22</sup>. The chiefs of Isa Khel served as henchmen of the British against all anti-imperialist movements in the area. They extended their support to the British both in cash as well as in kind in their quest for Jagirs and grants<sup>23</sup>. Thereupon, Khawanins were generously rewarded by their patrons with the grants and special life jagirs. One of the Khawanins of Isa Khel, Umar Khan acted as a Kardar or agent in the Southern Villages of Isa Khel. He helped in digging out the canal and brought new tracts under cultivation, hence enhancing the possibility of the revenue collection. In lieu of his services, he was allowed to partake half the income from the Kotri-alum-pans in the Isa Khel Ilaqa<sup>24</sup>. One of the Chief leaders of Isa Khel, Shah Nawaz Khan lost his life in fighting against Sikhs at Kaneri on 18<sup>th</sup> June 1848. His son Abd-ur-Rahim Khan was awarded a pension of Rs 500 per annum and the title of Khan Bahadur was conferred upon him<sup>25</sup>.

With the construction of railway in Mianwali, the district was opened to external economic influence. The means of communication substantially improved with the opening of first Sindh-Saghar railway in 1886 and Mari-Attok branch was completed in 1892. The Bannu-Kalabagh railway was opened in 1913. The Kalabagh-Bannu railway ran through the Isa Khel Tehsil<sup>26</sup>. It led to commercialization of agriculture<sup>27</sup>. The prices of agricultural exports now began to affect prices of products in Mianwali. This meant that production in Mianwali had to respond to the demand outside the district. Railways made the old mode of communications redundant; as a consequence the old trade centers lost significance and decayed. For instance, Kalabagh was once a significant place for boat building but with the commencement of railway service in 1886, the river transportation was rendered obsolete. As a consequence not only the trade declined but also the

manufacturing of boats suffered fatally<sup>28</sup>. There was no substantial trade and commerce in the district either. The principal exports of the district were sult, alum, iron vessels, wheat, oil seeds, wool and bones<sup>29</sup>. The major imports were iron, cotton piece goods, thread, silk, sugar and timber<sup>30</sup>. Darya Khan was a large wool market, located along the eastern bank of River Indus. It is located in the midst of a desert called *Thal*. Goats and camels were extensively bred in Thal to acquire wool; the latter were also used for transportation. Wool was locally collected there and was also brought from Dera Ismail Khan District and transported to Multan and Karachi from the district in small quantity<sup>31</sup>. Kalabagh, Bhakkar, Mianwali and Isa Khel were small centers of trade. A considerable amount of grain and goods from Bannu and Marwat were transported to Isa Khel and then across the river to Kundian and Kalurkot. Now all merchandise was dispatched to Kalabagh through rail so the opening of Kalabagh-Bannu Railway bypassed the trade route of Isa Khel and it reduced its significance<sup>32</sup>. Prior to the opening of the railways, a good harvest often caused a glut in the rural economy, while in times of famine no immediate relief could be provided to famine-stricken people. Prices depended on local conditions. With the introduction of railways, prices were mostly determined by the markets. So Thus, railway provided a huge impetus to the commercial agriculture.<sup>33</sup> The *barani* or rain-fed tracts of land in Mianwali produced surplus grains which were sold in the markets of Kalurkot and Harnoli. It is pertinent to mention here that there were no large markets in the district. Every railway station itself worked as a small center of export<sup>34</sup>. 'Khudri circle' which was an uneven and ravine eaten area, all grain from here was collected at Massan railway station and Mari railway station received all grains and salt from Kalabagh salt pits.<sup>35</sup>



### **The classification of soil and agricultural performance**

The soil of the Indus valley was full of alluvial deposits. The natives had classified the land on the basis of its productivity. However according to report of 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> settlements, the land was classified as irrigated and unirrigated and not in accordance with the inherent qualities of the land.<sup>36</sup> The whole area remained under a gradual process of destruction and renewal due to floods and unpredictable weather conditions and so no one class of soil existed here. The productive power of different soils varied due to the relative thickness of the alternate layers of sand and silt.<sup>37</sup> Barani cultivation occupied 73% and 77% of total cultivated area in the Mianwali and Isa Khel Tehsils respectively.<sup>38</sup> In the south of the district, Thal the sandy desert area, is divided into Thal Kalan and Dagggar. Thal Kalan includes the entire eastern part of the area. The tract situated in the west of Thal Kalan is called Dagger. Chahi and Barani lands extended through out the area where as Sailab and Chahi Sailab were only confined to the riverine tract. Nahri and Nahri Sailab were common in Isa Khel Tehsil. Naledar Soil was tough due to flood water coming down from hill torrents. The wells irrigated only 7 acres of land in Mianwali and 5 acres in Isa Khel. Only 3% of the cultivated area in Mianwali and 1% in Isa Khel contained Abi cultivation. Here lands were not manured except in drought when they were ploughed with the help of spring water. In the year of drought, the lands were ploughed with spring water. Loss of bullocks during drought caused more problems<sup>39</sup>. The agricultural productivity was depended on the rain fal. There was no regular rotation of crops, the land was generally divided into two blocks, sowing one with Kharif and the other for Rabi. The arrangement was reversed after a few years.<sup>40</sup>

There was a sharp decline of Kharif against Rabi, which was a principal harvest as it depended on well irrigation, whereas Kharif crops could not be produced due to flood waters in the riverine areas.<sup>41</sup> secondly the hot wind forcefully blowing in the Thal made cultivation difficult.<sup>42</sup>

<b>Harvest</b>	<b>Crops</b>	<b>Bhakkar including Sadat Miani villages of Mianwali Tehsil</b>	<b>Bhakkar including Sadat Miani villages of Mianwali Tehsil</b>	<b>Mianwali excluding Sadat Miani villages</b>	<b>Mianwali excluding Sadat Miani villages</b>
<b>Kharif</b>	Bajra	7.1	2.5	28.5	13.4
	Jowar	5.0	1.8	5.5	4.2
	Moth	10.0	4.0	4.7	1.0
	Other	9.8	10.2	5.3	2.0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>31.9</b>	<b>18.5</b>	<b>44.0</b>	<b>20.6</b>
<b>Rabi</b>	Wheat	36.6	33	31.2	39.5
	Barley	4.2	2.4	3.8	1.6

	Gram	13.0	31.1	11.5	32.7
	Taramin a	2.3	4.0	3.5	2.1
	Other	12.0	10.6	6.0	3.5
	<b>Total</b>	<b>68.1</b>	<b>81.5</b>	<b>56.0</b>	<b>79.4</b>

*Source: 3<sup>rd</sup> Settlement Report, P.12*

At the first regular settlement, wheat was cultivated on 57% area of the whole land. The decrease in cultivation was partly due to the erosion of excellent wheat growing lands in the riverine tract.<sup>43</sup> Partly due to the introduction of gram which was a profit-yielding cash crop. The average area under gram cultivation was just 12 percent.<sup>44</sup> Barley was used as fodder, extensively sown in riverine land. The average area under Barley cultivation was 5.2 percent of the total area cultivated.<sup>45</sup> Tara mira, sarshaf (rape seed), tobacco were grown mainly on wells.

Multiple factors contributed to the low agricultural produce. These included the primitive system of cultivation, irregular ploughing and weeding. The cattles used were in miserable state. The less availability of resources and uncertain prospects resulted in haphazard methods of cultivation. Frequent and unpredictable flood forced natives to migrate to the higher villages with their cattles. By the time wheat crop was ready the village was deserted.<sup>46</sup> The only positive and noticeable change was the increase in barani cultivation in Maira lands<sup>47</sup> in the northern part of Bhakkar Thal and the southern part of Mianwali Thal.<sup>48</sup> There had been a considerable increase in the number of well. The number had increased to 90% from 1906-07 to 1926-27. In the absence of canal irrigation, well irrigation

provided a significant alternative in enhancing the rural economy of the district. It was a costly affair and was mostly used in the area adjoining the high bank. However, the dread of river and uncertain prospects precluded a land owner to sink well.

The Assessment Report of 1903, gave a vivid account of the condition of the thal people.

“The prevailing note among the Thal people was their poverty—a poverty not only of resources but also of enterprise and intelligence. A continual struggle with nature in their most niggard and capricious mood left them too exhausted for any further effort. They had to undertake an immense amount of the dullest kind of labor on the poorest of diets, and for the meanest of rewards.”<sup>49</sup>

### **Effect of colonial policies on the economic life**

The socio-economic spheres of district vividly reflected the official indifference which substantiated the perception that Mianwali had no economic and political significance on British agenda. There was hardly any investment on agriculture in Mianwali when the British engineered substantial economic development in the rest of the Punjab. The most notable were Canal Colonies which had transformed the complexion of the central Punjab. The investment on Mianwali District was not considered cost effective as it was not likely to yield desirable output. Hence the agricultural prospects were not in consonance with the British ideology which believed that investment must yield economic benefits. The soil structure, aridness of the terrain, the depth of water level and uncertain

environmental conditions made it really difficult to think in terms of investing any big capital in the agriculture of Mianwali. The only interest of the government was extraction of revenue.

With the arrival of British rule in Mianwali and introducing new arrangements on land through the instrument of the 'settlement,' several changes were initiated in the agrarian structure. The first thing was the settlement of land between State and Peasant.<sup>50</sup> It had two purposes: **1** The assessment of the land revenue extracted from the peasantry and **2** The framing of the record of rights. Under this policy, the land was converted into a private property and independent proprietors could own land, which made a wide scale of transfer of land by sale and mortgage easier.<sup>51</sup>

In assessing the colonial impact on Mianwali, it is important to note that under British, no substantial changes or policies were introduced in the agrarian frontier of Mianwali, neither in the level of technology. The traditional pattern of cultivation was continued to be followed in Mianwali. However policy of settlement, integrated the rural economy of Mianwali with the larger colonial economy. The process of commercialization was accompanied by a rise in prices of the agricultural commodities. The noticeable feature was that agricultural prices soared quite exponentially *vis-a-vis* the price of non-agricultural commodities. Hence the commercialism punctuated agriculture.<sup>52</sup> The colonial economic policies had an explicit fallout on the district, most important was the accelerated prices of agricultural products and lands. The area under tenants-at-will increased in both Tehsils of Mianwali and Isa Khel due to the extension of cultivation. The bulk of the landed area was cultivated by tenants-at-will or land lords, subsequently the

occupancy of the tenants had less land to be worked on.<sup>53</sup> They paid revenue with *malikana* in cash or kind. The batai rate was exacted by landlords at the rate of 1/3 and sometimes 1/2.<sup>54</sup> The tradition and mutual relationship between land lord and tenants determined the rent rate in each village. In some villages land lords provided seeds in proportion to the share of revenue paid by the tenants.

In the Thal area, tenants at times had to pay only land revenue and earned no profit out of their crops due to the malfunctioning of Thal wells. In the absence of canal irrigated land, wells had to be sunk frequently as cultivators faced drought and exploitation of the money lenders quite often. To avoid them they had to rely on wells. Despite that his capital came handy for the cultivators.<sup>55</sup> Prior to the settlement there was no fixed land revenue. The British made an inflexible policy of paying a fixed amount of land revenue within a stipulated time period. The revenue had to be paid in cash, which made it difficult for the small land holders of the district to cough up. The rise in prices of land and the agricultural products caused increased rural indebtedness. The British land revenue system caused anxiety among the zamindars and they refused to accept fixed assessment. It therefore contributed to the accelerating rate of land alienation. With the state demand fixed entirely in money terms, land itself entered the arena of the market, to be traded like any other commodity. In crisis the effect of the imposition of market relations on land was quite pervasive. In the context of a backward agriculture, exchange of land became prevailing practice among cultivators to avoid a disaster. As the land became a valuable commodity, a new trading and money lending class came from outside the agricultural community.<sup>56</sup> They further squeezed the entire system of money lending. According to which if the mortgager

did not redeem his land in a specified time the land was alienated to the Sahukar (money lender).<sup>57</sup> Thorburn, the settlement officer of Bannu District reported that the land owning Muslim tribes of the Western districts including Mianwali were generally indebted due to the fixed assessment. Many experienced officials advocated that it was imperative to make assessment especially in the riverine tract of the province, flexible.<sup>58</sup> To pay revenue, the petty zamindar at times had to sell their produce at unfavorable prices and borrowed cash from money lenders to pay off revenue.<sup>59</sup> Hence the payment of land revenue had also a role in the depletion of zamindar's stocks after the harvest. Consequently, a new credit group emerged who were connected with trade in agricultural commodities. They advanced credits to the peasants for buying seeds and meeting other agricultural needs at exorbitant rate of returns. Their actual aim was to get hold of crops in case of nonpayment of debt. Their twin role as village grain dealers and money lenders placed them in a dominant position where they could dictate their harsh terms and conditions on the debtor zamindars or cultivators.<sup>60</sup> Money lenders were far more active and mobilized in the relatively fertile regions, where the agricultural produce could be easily sold. It was much easier for the money lender to. This domination of the village grain dealer cum money lender continued in the 1870s. It was estimated that 80% of the owners, 20% of the occupancy tenants and 10% of the tenant-at-will were indebted.<sup>61</sup>

Late nineteenth century crisis of indebtedness among Punjabi landholders precipitated the passage of alienation of land act in 1900. Sir Denzil Ibbetson, the author of the Punjab Census report 1881 maintained, "As long as they are loyal to and contented with their rulers the internal peace of the country is secure and the professional agitator powerless. And most of all

the loyalty and contentment of the sturdy yeomanry from whose ranks we draw our native soldiers, the safe foundation upon which our rule can rest secure.”<sup>62</sup> The act allowed the permanent alienation of land among members of agricultural tribes while sale by agriculturists to non-agriculturist tribes was virtually prohibited. The maximum period of usufructory mortgage was fixed at twenty years. The aim of legislation was to eliminate the loopholes in the act and to curb the growing influence of moneylenders. These policies created a binary between agriculturist and non-agriculturist tribes.<sup>63</sup> The impact and effectiveness of the act can be observed in the light of colonial policy towards the enactment of this act. The large scale alienation of land was alarming as it gave setback to the colonial policy of sedentarised peasantry, crucial for the extraction of land revenue and agricultural prosperity. The alienation of land was perceived as the threat to rural stability and the imperial ideology which was tied to the rural tribal structure. The colonial state confronted the perceived threat of “rural revolt” against the loss of ancestral lands.<sup>64</sup> Colonial economic policies created a cob web of moneylenders in the Punjabi countryside who were urban commercial community, having no link with the rural tribal structure. In a tribal idiom, land is the insignia of status. To be a tribal leader, it was imperative to be a landlord. Land defined and legitimized the status of a tribal leader. To protect the tribal system, British constructed policies to prevent land passing in to the hands of non-agriculturists. Through the land alienation act, the structure of rural power underpinning the land, was protected in which land was of prime significance.<sup>65</sup>

The control of land through an act indicated that the British government had established a superior and distinguished political status of land holding class upon non-agriculturists.<sup>66</sup> A



prominent British official provided the critique, H. J. Maynard wrote: "Government had conveyed the impression that it regards itself as patron of the Zamindar, and it identifies political advantage with his contentment and well-being, not with the contentment and well-being of the whole mass of its subjects."<sup>67</sup> The British perceived that legislation would effectively preclude the transfer of land from cultivators to urban financiers and would also increase the value of agricultural land. However this control was transitory and moneylenders discovered another alternative and a new type of mortgage named, 'Benami transaction' was introduced.<sup>68</sup> The act created a new class of agriculturist moneylenders who had conducted their business on harsher terms which forced the peasant to surrender his land. Large land holders gained ownership of relief to the rural poor as government claimed, it rather exacerbated their distress. The debt was continuously on the rise, the agriculturists were entangled in revenue payments in the midst of economic crisis. The act ousted prominent Hindus from 'agricultural tribe' and extended patronage to leading Muslim land holders of the Punjab, and gave the entire scenario communal overtones.<sup>69</sup>

In this district the wealthy zamindars had the power of purchase land, however sometimes they acquired it by mortgage. Subsequently the sale and mortgage of lands was a frequent phenomenon. The lands were as freely redeemed as mortgaged since the market was always available for the transferable land.<sup>70</sup> In the earlier days value of land had increasingly risen and in advancing money on mortgage, the sahuakar went up to the sale price. After the passing of land alienation act, there was an artificial rise in the prices but on the whole act could not reduce the prices of land.<sup>71</sup>

At the level of district the rise of private property in land resulted in the increased transfer and mortgage of land. According to 2<sup>nd</sup> Settlement Report of the district, the total area mortgaged to sahuakar increased from 1.7 to 2.9 percent. With the large increase in cultivation the percentage of cultivated mortgaged area had risen from 3.1 to 9.6.<sup>72</sup> This was so because the sahuakar was inclined to take cultivated land on mortgage.<sup>73</sup>

<b>Period</b>	<b>To Agriculturists</b>	<b>To Non-Agriculturists</b>	<b>Percentage of Total Area</b>	<b>Percentage of Cultivated Area</b>
2 <sup>nd</sup> Settlement	7.1	9.7	16.8	25.3
3 <sup>rd</sup> Settlement	11.0	2.5	13.5	15.6
1930-31	12.6	1.9	14.5	15.9

*Source: Assessment Report Mianwali District, p.18*

Though the total mortgage area decreased from 1906-07 to 1928, it had increased again by 1% because of bad season.<sup>74</sup> Since the 3<sup>rd</sup> settlement, 13396 acres had been sold for Rs 2707998. Out of this area only 532 acres had been alienated in favour of non-agriculturists, mainly Hindus. The transfers were mainly confined to the villages of ‘Wanbhachran, Shadia and Chorwala, owing to the financial difficulties of the ‘Maliks’ of that area.<sup>75</sup>

The statistics indicate that in crisis, the peasant was forced to part with the most valuable cultivated land during the colonial period.

**Statistics of Sales of Land**

<b>Period</b>	<b>To Agriculturists</b>	<b>To Non-Agriculturists</b>	<b>Total Area</b>	<b>Cultivated area</b>
Before 2 <sup>nd</sup> Settlement	4.8	1.7	6.5	9.1
From 2 <sup>nd</sup> to 3 <sup>rd</sup> settlement	8.4	1.4	9.8	9.5
Since 3 <sup>rd</sup> Settlement	2.5	1	2.6	3.2

*Source: Assessment Report of Mianwali District 1932, p.18*

The mortgage debt by 1932 amounted to Rs 5880807 at the 3<sup>rd</sup> settlement, it was 43,82896 and works out to be Rs 128 per cultivated acre of the mortgaged area.<sup>76</sup> The main causes of this huge debt were two. One was the Barani cultivation and the other was thriftless-ness of the people. In such tough hours, money lender was the only best alternative who could only stand for intelligence and thrift.<sup>77</sup> An in depth analysis of the different village surveys in the Punjab revealed that the fixed and inflexible land revenue had placed the

Zamindars in extremely troublesome situation. The small fragmented land holdings, unpredictable weather conditions, failure of crops, consistently rising debt and rigid system of collection of land revenue turned the survival of average zamindar in a precarious situation To meet their ends, they were forced to sell their produce at uneconomic price.<sup>78</sup>

### **Conclusion**

Mianwali was agrarian region with agriculture and herd economy being main sources of subsistence. The development of infrastructure gave a marginal impetus to commercial agriculture. There was hardly any investment on agriculture in Mianwali as investment on canal excavation and agriculture was not an economically viable proposition on account of soil structure, aridness of the terrain, the depth of water level and uncertain environmental conditions. Investment in such circumstances did not appear feasible to the colonial state, where as the British engineered substantial economic development in the rest of the Punjab. The most notable were canal colonies which had transformed the complexion of the central Punjab. The made it really difficult to think in terms of investing any big amount of capital in Mianwali.

A class of landowners was developed in the district who asserted their authority on people through land. The economic policies of the British government like land settlement, introduction of private property and development of cash nexus between state and peasantry, had its fallout on the district. Land revenue system accelerated the rate of land alienation and sale and mortgage of land in the district. Basic trend in the economy was in the direction of the development of underdevelopment with its features of forced commercialization and decline in agricultural productivity. Despite the depressing state of

agriculture, the peasantry was under the compulsion to give a part of its surplus to the state in the form of revenue. With the integration of district in to colonial political economy the average peasant became poor and increasingly marginalized.

## References

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- <sup>1</sup> Mianwali District is located in the north-west of the Punjab Province and had been most south-westerly district of the Rawalpindi Division of the Punjab. The district comprises of three sub-divisions namely Mianwali, Isakhel and Piplan. The district is spread over an area of 6975 sq.kms.<sup>1</sup> Mianwali is a bordering district of the Punjab province and have common borders with District Kohat, Karak, Laki Marwat and D.I.Khan. See *District Gazetteer Mianwali, 1915*, , pp.1-2 Mianwali District formerly known as 'Kachchi' derives its present name from Mian Ali, a holy man from Baghdad. Sheikh Mian Ali came in 16<sup>th</sup> century during Gakkhar times. He made a temporary stay at a place called 'Mian di Mel' on the bank of the river about a mile north of present town of Mianwali. Later on, he set down on a place called Watta Khel and built the hamlet of Mianwali. Also see Griffen and Massy, *Chiefs and families of note in the Punjab*, vol. (Lahore ;Civil & Military Gazette,1910) vol.2, pp.295-96
- <sup>2</sup> Liaqat Ali Niazi, *Tarikh-e-Mianwali* (Lahore; Sang-e-Meel, 2003) P 172.
- <sup>3</sup> www.mianwalionline.com
- <sup>4</sup> Salt range districts are Jhelum District , Chakwal District , Mianwali District and Sargodha District.
- <sup>5</sup> *District Gazetteer Mianwali 1915*(Lahore;Sang-e-Meel, 1988) , pp.1-2
- <sup>6</sup> The area of Chhina Jats extends across from Chhina, Behal and Notak, on the edge of the kachhi, to Mankera and Hyderabad on the further side of the Thal(desert). The Bhidwals possess smaller tract round Karluwala and Mahni in the neighbourhood of Jhang border. See *District Gazetteer Mianwali*
- <sup>7</sup> Assessment Report Mianwali, 1932, P.6
- <sup>8</sup> *Gazetteer,Mianwali*, p.26
- <sup>9</sup> Their ancestor Niazi had three sons, Bahai, Jamal and Khaku. The descendants of the Bahai were no longer distinguishable. The Isa Khels and Sumbals were the descendants of Jamal and Mushani and Sarhangs were of Khaku.<sup>9</sup> These clans had a dominant position over other clans. These tribes were identified with the names of their ancestors.
- <sup>10</sup> Denzil Ibbetson, *The Punjab Caste*,(Lahore; Govt printing press, 1986) p.76
- <sup>11</sup> Ibid
- <sup>12</sup> Iqbal Khan, *Tarikh-e-Niazi Qabail* (Mianwali, Muslim Bazar, 1988) pp.364-365
- <sup>13</sup> *Gazetteer, Mianwali 1915*, p.40
- <sup>14</sup> Alamgir Shah, malfuzat, Maratib-e-Sultani, p.42

- <sup>15</sup> Ian Talbot, *Punjab and Raj 1849-1947* (Delhi ; Manohar Publications, 1988) p 34
- <sup>16</sup> Ibid
- <sup>17</sup> Ibid
- <sup>18</sup> Ibid
- <sup>19</sup> Proceedings of the Government of the Punjab, Home Department, August 1902, p.363 . The members of the meeting were C.L.Tupper, financial commissioner, Jam Champion, chief engineer, C.Brown, Inspector General of Police, lieutenant colonel, Bate, Inspector General of Jails, Lieutenant colonel Bamber, and Cap.O'Brian, the Deputy Commissioner, Mianwali.Ibid , p. 145
- <sup>20</sup> Mustafa Kamal, *Colonial Political Economy: Recruitment and Underdevelopment in the Punjab* (Delhi; Oxford University Press, 1998) *Colonial political economy*, p.163
- <sup>21</sup> Ibid
- <sup>22</sup> Aziz-ud-Din Ahmad, *Punjab Aur Bairooni Hamla Awar*, (Lahore ; Book Home, 2007) p.131
- <sup>23</sup> Marwats and Bannuchis never paid revenue to the most powerful king like Ahmad Shah of Kabul. Chief of Isa Khel, Dalel Khan was paid 6000 yearly as a charge upon Marwat and Bannu on condition of assisting in collecting the revenue. These revenue assignments were further increased by a fresh Jagir grant of Rs 4000 in Taimur Shah's reign.
- <sup>24</sup> Liaqat Niazi, interviewed on 28 Nov 2007, 10.30 a.m
- <sup>25</sup> Griffin and Massy, *The Chiefs and Families*, p.286
- <sup>26</sup> Ibid, p.289
- <sup>27</sup> *Gazetteer Mianwali 1915*, p.142
- <sup>28</sup> Irfan Habib, *Indian Economy 1858-1914* (Delhi; Aligarh Historian Society Tulika books,2006) P.59
- <sup>29</sup> District Gazetteer, pp.274-275
- <sup>30</sup> Ibid, P.140
- <sup>31</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>32</sup> Liaqat Niazi, *Tarikh-e-Mianwali*, p.275
- <sup>33</sup> *Gazetteer Mianwali 1915*, p.141
- <sup>34</sup> Himadri Bannerjee, *Agrarian Society of the Punjab,1849-1901* ( New Delhi; Manohar Publication, 1982 ) p.20
- <sup>35</sup> Liaqat Niazi, *Tarikh-e-Mianwali*, p.276
- <sup>36</sup> Ibid
- <sup>37</sup> *Assessment Report of Mianwali District, 1932* Mr Naseer Ahmad, Assistant Commissioner Mianwali, p.97
- <sup>38</sup> Ibid
- <sup>39</sup> *3<sup>rd</sup> Settlement Report*, p 16

- <sup>40</sup> Ibid, p 99
- <sup>41</sup> Ibid
- <sup>42</sup> *2<sup>nd</sup> Settlement Report*, p 3
- <sup>43</sup> *3<sup>rd</sup> Settlement Report*, p 13
- <sup>44</sup> *Assessment Report 1932*, p.24
- <sup>45</sup> Ibid
- <sup>46</sup> *Mianwali Gazetteer, 1915* , p. 109
- <sup>47</sup> *Gazetteer*, p 102
- <sup>48</sup> Mira land was level land consisting of any add mixture of good loam and sand depending on rain fall.
- <sup>49</sup> *3<sup>rd</sup> Regular Settlement*, p 12
- <sup>50</sup> *Gazetteer Mianwali*, P.134
- <sup>51</sup> Tahir kamran, The land alienation and British Paternalism of the Punjabi Landlord, Journal of Research Society of Pakistan, University of Punjab, 2000, p.25-26. Also see Imran, Ali The Punjab Under Imperialism, 1885-1947 (New Jersey; Princeton University Press, 1988)
- <sup>52</sup> Ibid, p.26. Prior to the annexation of Punjab in 1849, transfer of land by mortgage or sale was limited by two factors--- the laws of pre-emption or communal land holding and the low sale value of agricultural property. Punjabis of each religious community and geographical area valued local customs restricting land sale to outsiders. Panchayat guarded the sale of land to person outside the community, especially in the western Punjab there were strong sentiments against this step. The British removed these checks upon the sale of land to outsiders and non-agriculturists. British distributed the land, gave proprietary rights to the tenants which soared the value of land. Along with the extension of roads and railways, the sale and mortgage value of land was rising. Now the agriculturist was hopeful about some profit beyond his expenses because of the low revenue assessment.
- <sup>53</sup> Irfan Habib, *Indian economy, 1858-1914* ( Delhi ; Aligarh Historian Society, 2006 ) p.146 also see Roy, Tirthankar, Traditional Industry in the Economy of Colonial India (Cambridge; Cambridge University Press,1999)
- <sup>54</sup> *Gazetteer Mianwali 1915* , p.126
- <sup>55</sup> Ibid
- <sup>56</sup> Settlement Report of Bannu district by Thorburn cited in Darling, p.102
- <sup>57</sup> Tahir Kamran, The land alienation and British Paternalism, P.28
- <sup>58</sup> Ibid, p.29
- <sup>59</sup> Himadri Bannerjee, Agrarian society of the Punjab, p.87 also see Mustafa Kamal, Colonial Political Economy, p.169



- <sup>60</sup> Ibid, p.115
- <sup>61</sup> Himadri Bannerjee, *Agrarian Society of the Punjab*, p.114
- <sup>62</sup> Ibid, P.108
- <sup>63</sup> Norman G. Barrier, *The Punjab Alienation of Land Bill of 1900*, Duke University 1966, p 37-38
- <sup>64</sup> Mridula Mukherjee, *Colonializing Agriculture*, p 169 Also see Chandra, Bipan, *India since Independence* (NewDelhi; Penguin Books, 1999)
- <sup>65</sup> David Gilmartin, *Empire and Islam* (Delhi; I.B.Tauris,1988) p. 28
- <sup>66</sup> Ibid,
- <sup>67</sup> p 31
- <sup>68</sup> Maynard cited in Gilmartin, p 33
- <sup>69</sup> In Benami transaction the land is alienated by moneylender in the name of a friend who is a agriculturist, the actual owner is moneylender who signs a bond later. The agriculturist remained the owner of the land just in name but the man who arranged for cultivation and tenancy was the money lender itself. See Kamran, *Land alienation act*, p 50,
- <sup>70</sup> David Gilmartin, *Empire and Islam*, p.33
- <sup>71</sup> 3<sup>rd</sup> Settlement Report 1928, p.13
- <sup>72</sup> Gazetteer, Mianwali p.115
- <sup>73</sup> 2<sup>nd</sup> Settlement Report Mianwali, 1908, p.13
- <sup>74</sup> Ibid
- <sup>75</sup> Assessment Report Mianwali, 1932, p. 18
- <sup>76</sup> Ibid
- <sup>77</sup> Ibid, p.20
- <sup>78</sup> Ibid, p.86