

COLONIAL TRANSFORMATION IN THE DISTRICT OF SHEIKHUPURA, 1849-1947

Abstract

This research paper analyses the British colonial transformation in the district of Sheikhpura. The geographical, revenue, judicial and administrative changes have been understood in the sense of establishing a controlled society in the district. This paper sheds light on colonial changes in the district of Sheikhpura under the British raj from 1857 to 1947. The phenomenon of introducing a new administrative and revenue mechanism in Sheikhpura was a project that was not detached from imperialistic ambitions and designs of colonial power in whole of India. The new colonial administrative system, including the reorganization and demarcation of boundaries and setting up centralized administrative machinery particularly a strong revenue, police, and judicial system. Ironically, it was devised to effectively protect the “world monopoly of industrial production” in the British India. It was enforced effectively by a reconstitution of the power structure of the land which meant search for new allies. At the end the article examines the origin of new towns and tehsils in Sheikhpura after the advent of British rule. It observes that British colonialism altered the whole scenario in Sheikhpura which was considered of crucially important for initial colonial control in this district.

Keywords: Sheikhpura, British, Imperialism, colonialism

The era of British colonialism in the district of Sheikhpura has been divided into three stages. The first stage of colonialism stretches from 1600 to 1757, it deals with the period of monopoly of natural trade and extraction of revenue.¹In this stage British traders monopolized the trade with the other European traders as well. The East India Company promoted the export of cotton textile silks from Sheikhpura for British industrial interest. The British accumulated important raw material from the district and promoted British industrialization during eighteenth century. The second stage of British colonization begins with the conquest of India in 1757. This stage deals with the exploitation through trade. Surplus was collected by the means of taxes and land revenue. British textile industries flourished but it got revenue through Indian districts like Sheikhpura and Nankana Saheb.² Owing to these factors Sheikhpura faced economic drain in the second stage of colonialism.

The third stage of British colonialism starts from 1860 up till the independence of India in 1947. It spread the process of industrialization not only in Indian districts like Sheikhpura but also in North America and Japan.³In this period the role of East India Company as a trading partner of British interests came to an end and British authorities took the control directly in this district. The People of Sheikhpura started to show reaction against the monopoly of imperial

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rulers directly and the seeds of nationalism began to grow rapidly.⁴As Bipan Chandarastated, 'The cardinal change in the ideology of colonialism occurred in this stage, when colonial people united for national cause in order to get final rid from the benevolent despotism.'⁵Sheikhupura became the garrison town for British imperialism. This last stage of British colonialism in Sheikhupura ended when the people of the district got final independence from the shackles of imperialism in 1947.⁶

Generally speaking, after the annexation of the Punjab, government established the Board of Administration to run the administrative set up of the provinces. During this period, the Board of Administration declared some amendments in different districts of colonial Punjab including Sheikhupura. The British Board of Administration introduced stern policies so that the whole district could be kept under the colonial control.⁷

The British Government made some geographical changes in the district of Sheikhupura as well. The whole region of Rechna Daob and Jhang, from river Jenab to river Ravi was included in Gujranwala District. After the occupation of East India Company in the Punjab the temporary headquarter of this sub-division had been established in the Sheikhupura.⁸In 1851-1852 two districts were made of this sub-division and their headquarters were made in Sialkot and Gujranwala. The district of Gujranwala was extended from River Ravi to River Chenab and that was extended to four tehsils of Gujranwala, Hafizabad, Ramnagr and Sheikhupura. Sheikhupura did not have a separate position or significance.⁹ In 1855, Sheikhupura tehsil was included in Lahore district and was separated from Gujranwala. When Sheikhupura was included in Lahore, Shahdara was made the tehsil headquarter.¹⁰Sheikhupura was detached in the Sharqpur tehsil of Lahore.In 1893 from the Hafizabad tehsil some area was excluded from Hafiz Abad and the tehsil of Khanka Dogra was established.¹¹ In 1910 tehsil of Sharaqpur was again detached from Lahore and included into Gujranwala.¹²In 1913 all those areas which were included in Jaranwala tehsil of Lyallpur district, now those areas were excluded from Jaranwala tehsil and included in Shiekhpura.¹³The Revenue Secretary of Punjab sent a written notification in 4 April 1919 that headquarter would remain in Sharqpur and the headquarter of the Tehsil of Sheikhupura would be persisted in Khanga Dogran.¹⁴The Tehsils headquarters of Khanka Dogran and Sharaqpur were abolished. The Governor of Punjab issued immediate notification that Shahdara will be made as Tehsil headquarter and all the towns beyond River Ravi would be excluded from Lahore and included in the district of Sheikhupura.¹⁵ This condition was carried on until some regions of Sialkot, Lahore, and Lyallpur were incorporated in the district of Sheikhupura.¹⁶The Sharaqpur and Khanka Dogran Tehsils of Gujranwala were detached from Gujranwala.¹⁷The government of Punjab issued a written agreement to make the Fort of Sheikhupura a separate district in 15th September 1917.¹⁸In 1918 Financial Commissioner of Lahore sent a letter to Secretary Financial Commissioner and suggested to lessen the area of Gujranwala.¹⁹Acting Secretary accepted the proposal of Government of India but he put a condition in front of Government that the Final Report would be prepared on less expenditures due to the repercussions of the First World War.²⁰

The Government of Punjab issued a notification and after the final approval of Governor of the Punjab a new district was established on November 1, 1919 which was named as Sheikhupura.²¹The tehsils of the district of Sheikhupura were named as Khanka Dogra and Shurqpur. Ironically speaking, along with the certain geographical changes, British raj strengthened their position in the district administratively as well. M. L. Karry was appointed as the first Deputy Commissioner of this district who served in the Sheikhupura since November 1919 to February 1921.²²In 1922 Government made some changes in the district of Sheikhupura again. The Shurqpur old tehsil of the district of Gujranwala was divided into two tehsils of Nankana Sahib and Shadara.²⁷Several towns of the Raiya, the tehsil of the district of Sialkot were shifted in the district of Sheikhupura.²⁸Several towns of the Chunian tehsil of the district of Lahore were included in Sheikhupura.²⁹

These were the geographical changes that took place after the British arrival in the district of Sheikhupura. The basic need for a separate district was felt due to the distance of Khanka Dogra and Sharaqpur tehsils from district head quarter.³⁰It was difficult for local inhabitants in getting justice. Further, crimes were common in the district of Gujranwala and it was difficult for the colonial administration to get proper control of the district.³¹These were the basic realities which forced the administration to take decisive step for the maintenance of law and order situation in this district of the Punjab.³²

There is no an iota of doubt that the social theory of panopticism 33 by the French philosopher Michel Foucault literally applied on the British-India that how British exploited the people of this district and imprisoned the people by introducing colonies.³³Indeed, the basic theme of this social theory was to systematically control the population through unseen forces and subtle means. ³⁴ According to the theory of panopticism the dominant social forces play pivotal role to keep individuals under constant surveillance by introducing the consolidation of power and knowledge apparatuses. In this way, with the participation of public and non-institutional figures of the mother country, the apparatus of power was introduced by the dominant forces.³⁵In this social theory, the people became the principle of their own subjugation.³⁶ The British introduced the administrative and revenue policies not only in Sheikhupura but also in all the Districts of British-India by introducing the dual government in British-India.³⁷

Lord Clive was the person who introduced the strong system of double government in India that was applied in Sheikhupura as well. Under this mechanism the criminal justice system worked under the Nawabi Officials of Sheikhupura but civil and fiscal matters were controlled by the colonial authorities. ³⁸ When Warren Hastings came to power in 1772, he took complete control of judicial system.³⁹ Under the new judicial system of 1772, in every district of India two courts worked the civil court or diwaniadalat and a criminal court or faujdari adalat.⁴⁰ The system of both courts was divided in accordance with the English system. The civil court was under the European District Collectors but the European members were assisted by Brahman pundits and Muslimmaulvis, who assisted British District Collectors in order to understand the indigenous laws. ⁴¹ The Criminal court worked under a Kazi and a Mufti but they were to be headed by the European Collectors. Under this judicial system, the

sovereignty of Nawabs was maintained but in reality Criminal justice was supervised by the Warren Hasting. The reforms of Warren Hastings centralized the judicial authority. But Lord Cornwallis brought about some changes in civil justice administration.⁴² Lord Cornwallis separated revenue collection from administration of civil court. The new system was based upon hierarchical structure. The Judicial reforms that were introduced by Cornwallis rejected the indigenous system of justice in Sheikhpuraliterally.⁴³ However; British introduced a uniform judicial administration and civil authority in India. Like all other departments British felt a need to control the police department as well.⁴⁴ The ideas of Michel Foucault in social theory of panopticism had exactly been working in British-India. According to the faujdari system working under Colonial authorities, Zamindars headed the duties of police but they were subordinated to the district magistrates.⁴⁵ The new system served under Warren Hastings but Lord Cornwallis changed this system; he established *thanas* and units in each district. Lord Cornwallis shifted the powers of Zamindars and vested the powers to new officers called as Daroga, who was headed by the magistrates. Darogas were allowed to perform duties in police Department. This system worked in every district of India.⁴⁶ It was the British strategies of least and indirect intervention in India in order to eschew from civil disturbances. British did not bring about revolutionary changes but they brought about change as revivers of decayed system.⁴⁷ British had to legitimize their power by exploiting the local people as their intermediates. By applying the theory of panopticism in India, it could be felt that how people caught up in this mechanism under the colonial period. It worked as a machinery of difference, disequilibrium and dissymmetry in India.⁴⁸ The real subjugation was born mechanically from a fictitious relation. The British word of 'oriental despotism' which they used for Oriental rulers in India was another game of Colonial mentality in order to bring revolutionary change for the people of the Sub-Continent but ironically speaking, people had to confront the worst effects after the arrival of British in India.⁴⁹ The whole administrative and revenue structure was applied in every district of India in order to get maximum revenue for the interest of state. The system of canal colonization undermined the roots of traditional economic mechanism and divided the native people in different groups.⁵⁰ The canal colonies further stretched the British administrative and revenue structure. The ultimate task of Permanent Settlement was to emancipate the individuals from the shackles of indigenous traditions and customs that were introduced by Lord Cornwallis. Sir Thomas Munro introduced the Ryotwari Settlement in order to control the village community of this district.⁵¹

Critically speaking, Jeremy Bentham was the originator of Utilitarian theory. According to this theory the greatest happiness for greatest number and any law would be considered to be ideal that would make for the happiness of majority and it would be the biggest agent of change.⁵² British policy makers adopted the theory of Utilitarianism and Evangelicalism which brought about major colonial transformations for the people of Sheikhpura. The execution of these two intellectual schools of thoughts helped British to assimilate the imperial designs in Sheikhpura permanently and tactfully.⁵³ Lord Macaulay introduced Indian Penal Code in 1835 on the Benthamite theory and Sir William Jones was the person who stressed that Indian administrative structure must be run on Benthamite model.⁵⁴ Lord Bentinck got inspiration from John Stuart Mill another

ardent philosopher of Utilitarianism, who used the term legislation for Indian administration.⁵⁵ Bernard Cohn argues that the British introduced a New Social Order where everybody from people to princes was situated in a hierarchy, and Viceroy was the central person of this hierarchical structure. Thus, there is no denying the fact that British structure of control and power in every department of India succeeded according to Benthamite model.⁵⁶

British applied the colonial changes in the district of Sheikhpura.⁵⁷ The British colonial authorities established strong roots in this area so that they could construct staunch foundations of colonial rule. The Interior Secretary, Home Department, Government of India, Sir Michael O'Dwyer presented a administrative proposal, a Deputy Commissioner, Assistant Commissioner, Superintendent of Police, Civil Surgeon and Assistant Civil Surgeon would run the whole administrative set up of the newly established district of Sheikhpura.⁵⁸ In the district of Sheikhpura Deputy Commissioner was broadly classified into three main types like revenue, judicial and general departments in colonial era. The three categories in fact reflected the three traditional functions of the collectors of the Land Revenue etc. For instance Magistrates were responsible for law and order and general administrators were concerned with the overall Government and conditions of the district in all aspects including economic, political and social etc.⁵⁹ The Deputy Commissioner had multifarious duties. He was the district Coordinator for all the Government Departments in the district. There were three Sub divisions namely Sheikhpura, Shahdara and Nankana Sahib. Every Sub division was managed by an Assistant Commissioner who was also Sub divisional Magistrate. He along with his Executive Magistrates was responsible for law and order situation in his area of jurisdiction.⁶⁰ Each tehsil was controlled by a Tahsildar having the powers of Assistant Collector who was assisted by Naib Tehsildars, Girdawars, Patwaries, Numberdars and chowkidars. The main function of the Revenue Administration was to prepare record of rights and recovery of Government dues from land owners' etc.⁶¹ The head of Revenue Department was the Deputy Commissioner who was assisted by an extra Assistant Commissioner, three sub division collectors, four Tehsildars and twenty nine Naib Tehsildars. There was generally one Girdawar Qanoongo and six to ten Patwaries, village head man called Numberdars and Chowkidar were the basic persons to assist the Revenue Department in discharging their duties.⁶² The district was managed by the Deputy Commissioner who was District Magistrate as well as District Collector. District Magistrate was responsible for law and order and other allied matters of whole of the district. In this capacity he was assisted by Additional District Magistrate, Additional Deputy Commissioner, three Sub Divisional Magistrate and ten *Ilaqa* Magistrate.⁶³ The Judicial and Finance Commissioners were appointed as well. The Judicial Commissioner was the head of police, justice and social welfare while the Financial Commissioner was the head of Revenue matters in the district of Sheikhpura.⁶⁴ The Judicial administration of the district was under the charge of District and Sessions judge assisted by ten Additional District and nineteen civil judges. While the Executive Magistrates had limited jurisdiction under local and special laws.⁶⁵ Jon Lawrence was the most authoritative person of the province and he had controlled the administrative matters of each district of the Punjab. He advised his administration to contact the people directly so that they could share their problems freely.⁶⁶ After making a district the Board of

Administration strived to make the administrative policies strong. It was merely this reason that the British divided the duties of every position so that the whole mechanism of the district of Sheikhpura could be run smoothly.⁶⁷

Further, British authorities got the services of responsible officers in every domain of the administrative set up.⁶⁸ The British adopted all the strategies to provide strong foundations to administration. The Colonial rule consolidated the administrative, revenue, police and judicial system in the district of Sheikhpura so that they could control the people of Sheikhpura peacefully.⁶⁹ All these British administrative and judicial transformation in Sheikhpura altered the native mechanism and culture and introduced the colonial culture on the name of modern culture.

In the district of Sheikhpura, Notified Area Committee came into existence in 1919. The newly appointed Deputy Commissioner M.M.L. Karry was appointed as an I.C.S. The first meeting of the Committee held under the president ship of Mr Karry in 1920.⁷⁰ In this proceeding the Vice President Mr. Abdul Majeed attended the proceeding as an Assistant Commissioner.

After making a district the post of Extra Assistant Commissioner was introduced and he was considered as a Vice president of the Committee.⁷¹ The first Secretary of the Committee was Nazir Hussain. He was the person who built an Office of the Committee. Nazir Hussain served for the Committee till 1921. Babu Ali was the Accounts Officer of the Committee.⁷² When British authorities permitted to exchange the things and permitted to lay tax. In 1924 Committee appointed Taj Ram for the collection of tax. Sanitary was appointed for the cleanness of this region. In 1925 Committee arranged clean water for the citizen of this district.⁷³ In 1930 Committee passed a resolution for getting Electricity from the Hydro Electric Department from Shahdra.⁷⁴ In 1931 the convenient of electricity was provided to the district of Sheikhpura from the place of Shahdra. Sir F.B.D.E. Montmorency the Governor of Punjab visited the district of Sheikhpura and recommended more changes for the district in order to get complete satisfaction of the people.⁷⁵ In 1933 citizens of the district were divided into nine wards. In 1934 Government revived the establishment of the Municipal Committee which consisted twelve members.⁷⁶ Like all other cities of India, the Municipal Committee of Sheikhpura gave two hundred rupees in the Silver Jubilee Fund of George V of England. After the death of George V, his elder son Prince of Wales Edward sixth was appointed as the king of England. His ceremony was celebrated in Sheikhpura in 1913.⁷⁷ In 1938 the Committee appointed twelve members more, Sheikh Kramat Ali was the newly appointed president and Malik Muhammad Anwar was appointed as the Vice President.⁷⁸ When British declared war against Germany, the Second World War began. In 1940 Sir Chottu Ram and Sir Henry Duffield Craik came to Sheikhpura and got the support of the people of the district of Sheikhpura during the Second Great War.⁷⁹ In 1945 Germany and Japan surrendered and the Second Great War ended. England and America got brilliant success. The victory celebrated in the whole India as well. Committee organized to celebrate this victory properly so that the British could win the hearts of the people of the district of Sheikhpura.⁸⁰

The Municipal Committee played pivotal role in order to create close connections between the natives and British authorities. The concrete task of the Municipal Committee was to establish strong administrative system in the district of Sheikhpura and to provide the concrete needs to the people of this district.⁸¹ The organization of the Municipal Committee was tremendously flawless, it was the only reason that British got success in getting the confidence of the people of this district and made the living standards of the people convenient and durable. Municipal Committee worked as the agent of British Authorities; it strived to create nexus between natives and authority figures during the Imperial Raj.⁸²

Last but not the least, the colonial transformations in the important towns and tehsils of the Sheikhpura could not be ignored during this period. After the annexation of the Punjab, they strived to establish the towns and tehsils through proper administrative control in the district of Sheikhpura.⁸³ The origin of some new towns and tehsils under the British colonial raj further strengthened the roots of British imperial interest in Sheikhpura. For instance, Sangala Hill was one of the most important and historical towns in the district of Sheikhpura, which was even more historical than that of its district headquarter Sheikhpura. In 1884 it was included in the district of Jhang then it became the part of the district of Gujranwala and it became part of Sheikhpura in 1920.⁸⁴

The city of Sangala mostly remained under the possession of warrior rulers. It was the basic reason that the real beauty of the city destroyed. When British came in the district they spent a lot of money for this town in order to get complete benefit of this fertile land of the district of Sheikhpura. Khanka Dogran is one of the important towns not only of Sheikhpura but also Punjab.⁹⁰ It was famous as a land of Dogras. In 1893 this town of the district got the status of tehsil. In 1920 when Sheikhpura became a district, Khanka Dogran was abolished as a tehsil headquarter under the colonial regime. But in 1893 when Khanka Dogra got the status of tehsil again it was known as a Notified Area of Committee. Under the colonial period Khanka Dogran became a modern town.⁹¹

Jandiala Sher Khan was another important town. In the Mughal period Shr Khan Pathan was accommodated here and Emperor Akbar gave this area to Sher Khan as a Jagir, due to a lot of trees of Jand in the town it was known as Jandiala Sher Khan.⁹² In 1893 this town was excluded from Hafizabad and included in Khanqa Dogran. In 1875 a primary school was built here both for boys and girls.⁹³

The history of Narang is very ancient; Narang was a Hindu tribe and belonged to agriculture class.⁹⁴ After the end of the First World War, from Upper Chenab a branch canal was built in the name of B. R. B. After the opening of this branch canal agriculture advanced. The fertile land led to the prosperity of the people. At that time this region was included in Sailkot. In 1922 this area was included in Sheikhpura owing to administrative division.⁹⁵ In 1926 Railway tracks were built in Narang. After the making of Railway station this town got prosperity. In 1930 a primary school was established in the village of Narang, the school was upgraded to the rank of middle school and later shifted to Narangmindi.⁹⁶

The town of Sharaqpur is famous due to Hazrat Mian Shar Muhammad Sharaqpuri. In 1091 the town of Sharaqpur came into existence. Under British colonial rule, this town was popular owing to its prosperity of markets. The people belonged to profession of trade. People were accustomed to go to Lahore and did trade in this town, as markets were vast in doing the profession of trade.⁹⁷ Prior to the existence of Sheikhpura, Sharqpur was tehsil headquarter. It was a very prosperous town at that time.⁹⁸In 1874 a Municipality was established there. In 1922 when Sheikhpura became a district, Sharqpur became a sub-tehsil and included in Shahdra. In 1929 Government School made for the studies of the girls. Government Elementary School was built in 1932, in order to spread education in the town of Sharqpur.⁹⁹ In order to run the system, the region was divided into sub-units. The smallest unit was known as Parganah.¹⁰⁰Sharaqpur was a Zail. Different villages were attached under one Zail and the administrative works were headed by Numberdars and Zaildars.¹⁰¹ In fact in terms of tehsil, Sharaqpur and Sheikhpura had same significance at that time.¹⁰²

British colonization completely altered the whole scenario in Sheikhpura. They completely changed the traditional structure into modern one by promoting the British mechanism and culture in this district. The traditional values in Sheikhpura were put at stake after British arrival. There is not an iota of doubt that British policy of colonization completely changed the traditional patterns of the district of Sheikhpura into the modern ones.

NOTES

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