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**RESEARCH PAPER****Religion and British Raj: Religious Development in Multan Division during Colonial Period****Khuram Majeed\*<sup>1</sup> Dr. Qaswar Abbas<sup>2</sup>**

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**\*Corresponding Author** | [khurramjee119@gmail.com](mailto:khurramjee119@gmail.com)**ABSTRACT**

Like other regions and countries around the world, religion and religious development have remained an important aspect of South Asian culture. In some instances, people's religious habits were thought to be the primary determinant of their identity. This article aims to comprehend and identify the fundamental theological tendencies that affected Multan's division under British administration. South Asia in general and Multan in particular have seen a movement toward a diversity of religious views. Muslims, Sikhs, and Hindus were the most well-known and prominent religious groups that contributed to Multani culture. Christianity was the new religion that took off in Multan and other nearby locations. There were a few locals who converted to the new religion, but the number of conversions to the new infrastructure of religious buildings (churches), which became a part of Multani society, was not great. In this research study, only the materials that have been documented, both primary and secondary sources are used. According to the study's findings, religious peace predated the arrival of the British and was a feature of society. However, as rulers changed and society and culture changed, a number of problems arose.

**KEYWORDS** British Raj, Hindus, Multan, Muslims, Religion, Sikhs**Introduction**

The invasion of India brought about significant shifts in the social, cultural, and political life of the people (Rind, et al, 2021). Since medieval and modern times, when Muslim invaders and rulers converted a substantial portion of society into their own religion and culture, these tendencies have been prevalent. Even though all of these things happened during the Mughal and Sultanate periods, this pattern was more prevalent in the northern part of India, which eventually became a new country called Pakistan, with religion serving as the central tenet of that nation's political and social system (Khan, 1980). In a similar fashion, Multan was conquered by Muslims in the eighth century, and as a result, Muslim culture and religion had a significant impact on the city. Prior to the 20th century, it was more typical for Muslims in South Asia to be identified not as Muslims but rather by their ethnicity (Turks, Persians, Arabs, and Afghans) or their place of origin (Sherazi, Gilani, Gardezi, Bareilvi, Dehlvi, or Bilgrami) (Whitehead, 1937). Because of the British viewpoint on India, religious tensions became more accentuated under British authority. The growing inclination toward revivalism among Muslims has only served to make the issue worse. The British view of India's social setting was heavily influenced by cultural imperialism, often known as the power dynamic that exists between the ruling elite and the governed. Meanwhile, in addition to Muslim organizations like Anjuman-i-Islamia Punjab, (1869), Anjuman-i-Himayat-i-Islam, (1884), Anjuman-i-Khuddam-i-Kaaba

(1913), Majlis-i-Ahrar-i-Islam (1929), and Khaksars (1931), Hindu groups like Brahma Samaj (est. 1828), Arya Samaj. (Raza, 1988).

The region known as the "City of Saints" in northern India includes Multan, which developed into one of the religious centers of the time. During this time period, Islam and Hinduism were Multan's two most prominent forms of religious practice (Dasti & Kausar, 2013). Sikhs ruled Punjab prior to its colonial occupation by the British, and it was during this time that the religion of Sikhism was widely disseminated across the province in its several constituencies. Because it was also the official religion of the state, many people were compelled to adhere to its teachings (Latif, 1963). After establishing a formal government in India, the British authorities focused on the development of the civilization and culture according to their own European cultural teaching. As a result, religion was one of the significant aspects that the British authorities attempted to administer. Because of this, the strategies and ideas that were implemented by the British authority in India were also implemented in Multan. Multan was not an exception to this rule; rather, it was the norm (Durrani, 1991). With the support of the "Divide and Rule" philosophy, communal uprisings were started in various parts of India. These uprisings were rarely known to the Muslims and Hindus who were living peacefully in the region. The majority of these uprisings within communities were witnessed to begin occurring during the turn of the 20th century. The religious agenda was employed by the British, along with the military and governmental authorities, to justify their invasion of Subcontinent (Sandhu, 2009).

The British conquest of Punjab, completed in 1849, initiated a series of complex social, political and economic transformations. The British supplanted the preexisting ruling class and brought an end to the Sikh authority that had been established in 1799 by Ranjit Singh. It was in the same year (1799) that the Society for Missions to Africa and the East was established on April 12 in London. This organization would later become known as the Church Missionary Society due to its close association with the Church of England (Roseberry, 1987). It is a name under which thousands of men and women have labored to bring Christianity to obscure and uncared-for parts of the world. The Evangelical Revival and Humanitarianism both had a significant role in the development of the robust missionary movement that emerged in the nineteenth century. Together, these two extraordinary eighteenth-century Christian missionary forces laid the groundwork for the vibrant missionary movement that emerged in the twentieth century. The goal of the work done by missionaries was to deliver the heathen from the torments of hell. They were imbued with a fundamentalist, messianic sense of purpose. Between the years 1790 and 1800, the energy that was generated by these forces resulted in the formation of five new missionary organizations. These organizations were the Glasgow Missionary Society, the Scottish Missionary Society, the Baptist Missionary Society, the London Missionary Society, and the Church Missionary Society. The Baptist Missionary Society was founded in order to "take Christianity to India." This was its sole mission from the beginning (Bilal, 2018).

### **Literature Review**

On the subject of the history of colonial Punjab and Multan, a number of books and articles have been written and published. These works present the collective history of the Province of Punjab and the Multan region. In order to identify the research gap that this study investigates, a number of published books and papers are analyzed. Chhabra, G. S. (1963). The book "Social and Economic History of the Punjab: (1849-1901)" provides a detailed sketch of life and culture in the Punjab province during the second half of the 19th century. In this book, the religious life of the people of the Punjab is also mentioned briefly,

with the focus being on all of the major religious beliefs in the Punjab province, including Hinduism, Islam, and Christianity. According to the author, religion was an inherent component of the culture that existed in the Punjab province, and this component evolved over the course of time (Chhabra, 1963). Another work that takes a similar approach is "Imperial Rule in Punjab: The Conquest and Administration of Multan 1818-1881 (Studies in the Economic and Social History of the Third World)" by Royal Roseberry. This book focuses on specific periods of Sikh and British control in Multan, with particular emphasis to the social and economic history of the Multan region. The book is organized in a chronological order to understand the events in Multan during the colonial rule (Roseberry, 1987). In their book "Colonial Punjab: Perspectives in Social History," Tahir Kamaran and Hussain Ahmed Khan analyze the communal conflicts from a different point of view. This book provides a framework of cultural life in colonial Punjab, but it is compiled in a way that does not focus on any one particular region. Instead, the book is written in a generic style. (Kamaran & Khan 2021). Since the topic of religion is discussed in Muhammad Abrar Zahoor's article titled "Colonialism and the Construction of Religious Identities in Punjab: The Case of Muslims," it is clear that this issue has been given some consideration. The author is of the opinion that throughout times of colonial rule, religious identities were formed that had previously been unknown to the native inhabitants of the area in the form of differentiation. The establishment of Muslims in the Punjab province as a distinct group throughout the time period of colonial rule is the primary subject matter covered in this article (Zahoor & Gujjar, 2019). Another book of Indu Banga's, the first section of this volume is titled "Pre-colonial and Colonial Punjab: Society, Economy, Politics, and Culture." The essays in this section focus on various aspects of precolonial social, economic, and cultural life in northwestern India, beginning with geographical and cultural perspectives on the early Punjab and the migration and settlement of Jatts by the seventeenth century. They then move on to examine various aspects of colonial social, economic, and cultural life in the Punjab. The Sahiban in Punjabi literature, heroic poetry in Punjabi, and cultural life in the Punjab under the reign of Maharaja Ranjit Singh are some of the subjects explored in this book. The second section consists of twelve essays that investigate the many different aspects of change that occurred as a result of colonial rule. These essays discuss topics such as the reactions of peasants, agricultural laborers, conservative Hindus, and Dalits to the colonial environment; the politicization of Punjabi migrants in North America; the convergence of communitarian and nationalist concerns prior to the Jallianwala Bagh massacre; and the organization of administrative space, epidemics, customary law, and Christian missionary activity. This book does something fresh and innovative in the field of regional history, while also raising crucial concerns about the methodology that historians should use in their work and how diverse fields can benefit from one another (Banga, 2005).

### **Basic Statistics Religious Identities in Multan**

During the first half of the twentieth century, Multan developed into a city that was home to people of a diverse range of ethnicities and served as a hub for religious, economic, and social pursuits. People belonging to a variety of religious groups called Multan home, including "Hindus, Sikhs, Janis, Muslims, Christians, Parsees, and Jews." In 1881, there were a total of 68674 people living in the area, with 29962 belonging to the Hindu religion, 661 to the Sikh religion, 46 to the Jain religion, 36294 to the Muslim religion, and 1711 to other religions. In 1921, there were 84806 people living in the area, and 25339 of them identified as Hindus, 1573 as Sikhs, 28 as Jains, 55864 as Muslims, 1955 as Christians, and 47 as Parsees. In 1931, the population was listed as 119457, of which there were 40424 Hindus, 2960 Sikhs, 2960 Jains, 424 Jain, 72134 Muslims, and 1823 Christians. (Maclagan, 1926). However, no Parsees migrated during this time. The bulk of Multan's residents adhered to the religions of Islam and Hinduism. Not only did the number of Muslims

increase while they were under imperial administration, but they also formed the overwhelming majority of the population. According to the census taken in 1881, Muslims made up 52.84 percent of Multan's population, while Hindus made up 43.63 percent. The 1891 census found that the number of Hindus had fallen by fractions as a direct result of low conversion rates among Hindus to Christianity. As a direct result of this, the census also found that the population of Muslims had increased by fractions. On the other hand, it would appear that the entirety of the Jewish population had left, as there is no evidence from the census that Jews continued to live in the region beyond 1891. There is evidence that the Hindu and Muslim populations became increasingly demographically distinct toward the latter half of the 19th century. These communities are said to have been moving further apart.<sup>132</sup> The number of Muslims started to rise, while the number of Hindus started to fall. In the early 20th century, Hindu and Muslim communal clergy were a driving force behind a significant demographic shift that occurred in Multan prior to the survey that took place in 1921-22 (Muzaffar, Khan, & Karamat, 2017; Maclagan, 1926).

### **Muslims of Multan and Anglo-Muslim Relations**

The Muslims of the Punjab could only exist as a cohesive group due of their shared dedication to Islam. Without this commitment, there would be no Muslims in the Punjab. Landless laborers made up the lowest level of Muslim society, while a small, exceptionally wealthy elite composed of very large zamindars or landowners paid more than Rs. 1000 per year in land revenue fees. (Hasan, 1993). Included in this group was also a middle-class comprised of educated professionals and skilled laborers. However, the aforementioned powerful magnates were not representative of the typical Punjabi Muslim society, which was dominated by a peasant class of very small proprietors and tenant farmers: only 3\*3% of all the agricultural holdings in the Punjab exceeded 50 acres, the majority were ten acres or less, and 25% ranged from one to three 1 acres. This was due to the fact that the majority of Punjabi Muslims were subsistence farmers. (Shafique, 2013).

The Muslim community as a whole appears to have lagged behind the Hindu and Sikh populations in terms of economic development, despite the fact that the Muslim community is deeply divided internally. A closer examination of the information provided by the Punjab Census taken in 1931 reveals that despite their numerical superiority, Muslims constituted up a sector of the population that was comparatively economically disadvantaged. It is essential to take into consideration that this source makes no distinction between the British Punjab and the Punjab States. Furthermore, employees, incomes, dependents, and other aspects of life were categorized according to religious affiliation and caste. Because of this, it is essential to keep in mind that Muslims made up 52% of the population in all of Punjab, while Hindus (including the Depressed Classes) made up 50% of the population and Sikhs made up 14% of the population (Bhatti & Kanwal, 2014).

In order to comprehend Muslim identity in colonial Punjab in general and in Multan in particular, one must first have an understanding of identity, the different sorts of identities, and the factors that shape the identity of an individual or community. Although "identity is a highly elusive category," it is possible to understand it through the socio-cultural and political expressions of a community (Rahman, 1998). This is according to Tariq Rahman, who states that "identity is a highly elusive category." Self-perception is the first point. A person can simultaneously identify as a son, daughter, wife, mother, weaver, doctor, colonel, professor, Mughal, Pathan, Shaikh, South Asian, or Pakistani. This is called multi-identity. In Punjab, people identify as Arains, Mirasis, Jats, Quraishis, Rajputs, Bhattis, Dogars, and Manika, Jalloka, Bangsinka, Piranika, Ilyaska, Gajeeka, etc. As a result, identity is largely dependent on how one perceives and expresses themselves,

in addition to being "situation- and context-bound" (Rahman, 1998). This notion of Muslim identity is directly applicable to Muslims living in Multan, and the industrialization of Punjab led to a sharper mechanism. The Muslim political elites of Multan District directly controlled the religious affairs of the Multan District, and they had a strong following among the masses of Multan, in both the rural and urban areas of the district.

The most notable Muslim political families in the Multan district included the Gardezis, Gillanis, and Qureshis of Multan; Syeds, Shahs, and Dahas of Khanewal; Shahs, Noons, Langahs, and Bokharis of Shujabad; Daultanas, Khichis, and Pathans of Melsi; Kanjus and Baloch of Lodharan; and Bosans of Multan. Notable families such as the Maliks, Harajs, Hinjrahs, Bhattis, Langahs, Siyals, Rajputs, Khokhars, Labers, Maheys, Karloos, Khichhis, Dehars, Sheikhs, and Awans were all strongly tied to the second-order landed aristocracy. Other notable families included the Karloos, Khichhis, Dehars, Sheikhs, and Awans. Gillani, M., & 1938. The government of British Imperialism created a number of lines of connection with the indigenous people of the area. The British encouraged stratified social groupings by utilizing land grants and the spread of western education to establish a loyal class that could play a role in the imperial system of government. This was done in order to develop a loyal class that could play a role in the imperial system of government. They did this by developing a dynamic model that involved nominations coming from indigenous social, political, commercial, and religious elites at all levels of government, ranging from provincial legislatures to municipal and district administration and lower bureaucracy for regional administration. This allowed them to create a representational space for indigenous people on the Council of India, Viceroy's Council, Governor's Councils, and Executive. Rajan Bakhsh Gillani, who lived from 1878 to 1936, was a British representative at every level from 1921 until the year 1929, during which time he passed away. He was a member of the District Board as well as the Central Assembly. They referred to him as the "Father of Multani Municipality" (also known as Baldia ka Bapu). His son Reza Shah Gillani went on to become another influential figure in the city of Multan. The Muslim community of Multan was not an exception; in order to protect their interests, they supported the British government in a variety of various ways. This was more of an insistence on the part of British authorities that Multani society follow their lead and cooperate with them (Abenante, 2008).

### **Hindus of Multan and religious practices**

The number of high classes of Hindus were less- the Rajput and the Jat- in Multan district which were the non-agricultural castes like Brahmans, Aroras and Bhatias. These higher classes of Hindus used to live in the main town of Multan and had great relation with the ruling British authorities and took part in the modern reformations of the time. Multan city was also remained the center for the Arya Samaj (following the teachings of Swami Daya Nand, the founder to Arya Samaj) (Jones, 1976). This sect was also greatly followed in other areas of Multan district such as in Shujabad it was highly followed by the local Hindus (Mir, 2010). Similarly, the other forms of Hinduism, the followers of Shiva were confined to the main city and there were hardly any in the rural areas of Multan to follow the older forms of Hinduism (Gazetteer, 1923).

Another form of Hinduism was the Vaishnava which was practiced widely and had a great number of followers in Multan district which was affiliated with the two reformers movements of Shamji and Lalji. Some of the Hindus also used to worship the river in the Multan district were mostly residents of Southern Tehsil. Hinduism was the second majority religion in Multan district who played a great role in the transformation and retaining of Hinduism within the Multani culture and society. Hindus were part of the British government in different institution in India but in Multan more opportunities

were with the Muslims for their participation in politics and government machinery (Gazetteer, 1923).

### **Sikhs of Multan**

Sikhism was the third biggest religion of Multan during the colonial rule. Sikh rule Multan from 1818 to 1849 before the British advent. During the Sikh rule there was religious harmony in Multan and adjacent areas. Multan was one of the big centers for Sikhism in Southern Punjab. Sikh rule played a great role in the transformation of society in Multan (Khan, 1990). During the Sikh era, wealthy Jagirdars, local functionaries, and Zamindars generously supported local religious organizations. The Sikh emperors, like their Mughal forebears, were held in high esteem and held accountable for the welfare of the state and its constituent territories. The religious communities supported by Multan's kings and tribal chiefs. There were several prominent families within the Sikh faith, including the Bhais, Granthis, Bedes, Sodhis, Udasis, Giannis, and Akalis. The Sikh Bhais were in charge of the temples, while the Granthis presided over the sacred rites of Ardas, Shabad, and Prashad. The Sikh kings also provided them with tax-free endowments. For instance, Kahn Singh, a Granthi who was appointed governor of Multan, received an annual 900 rupee contribution. The seven Bedes and Sodhis were highly regarded because of their connection to the Sikh Gurus. An alternate name for the Bedes is the Nanak Putras. Sikhs had good relation with both the Hindus and Muslims of Multan with a compact society. (Gordon, 1904).

### **Development of Christianity in Multan**

Christianity is believed to be introduced to subcontinent by the Saint Thomas. Secondly, the missionaries which came to India after the advent of British. Missionaries initially came to the area with the intention of promoting social welfare, but they also desired to provide religious education in accordance with their preferred practices. The various missions were responsible for the management of their own educational institutes for these reasons. These many missions had a variety of goals and purposes, including providing aid, preaching, converting people, disseminating their own teachings and views, and bringing about transformation. The missionaries had been involved in a variety of different social welfare programs; nevertheless, the primary focuses of their efforts had been on health and education. Even before 1860, the Punjab had been visited by missionaries. Amritsar has been home to the evangelical Church Missionary Society (CMS) since 1851. Over time, the Christian Missionary Society (CMS) also opened a school in the cities of Bannu (1865), Dear Ismail Khan (1862), and Bannu (1865). During this time, missionaries placed a strong emphasis on girls' education. Mrs. Annie Briggs, the head of the tiny CMS girls' school in Multan, actively promoted a proselytizing curriculum. Scripture translations, sanitation instruction, hymn singing, and other topics were all part of the formal education system. (Bilal & Dar, 2020).

With the development of Christianity, a number of churches and missionary schools were constructed in Multan. St Marry Cathedral Church, Cathedral of the Holy Redeemer and Methodist Christ Church Multan were the main church in Multan for both the transformed Christians from India and the British authorities in Multan. Similarly, the Christian missionaries also for preaching and imparting education to the locals some schools were open for the public but these schools used to instruct all the citizens of Multan. This was also an effort to convert the Muslims and Hindus to new faith of Christianity. On the other hand, Women hospital was also constructed in Multan. Due to transformation and conversion of the local people of Multan the fourth religious belief in Multan was Christianity. The main Missionary and British government funded schools of



Multan were St. Mary's Convent Girls School Multan and Sacred Heart School Multan (Ali & Naz, 2017).

Multan's progress has been greatly aided by the Christian missionaries. There have been significant social, cultural, and political shifts in Multan and its populace as a result of the CMS's provision of services like healthcare and education. The local communities benefited from the missionary effort to propagate Christianity and from the institutions and businesses that provided education. Many of the Christian missionaries long-standing institutions continue to serve the city and its surrounding suburbs, a testament to their impact on the region (Bilal & Dar, 2020).

### **Hindu Muslim Tensions in Multan in the first half of 20<sup>th</sup> century**

Although Muslims made up the majority of Multan's population, Sikhs and Hindus also made-up sizable minorities. But since the introduction of electoral politics, Multan city has gained a reputation as one of Punjab's most racially and religiously charged hotspots. Villages are often the scene of routine religious conflict. Although the two populations have lived peacefully together for years, an unexpected and trifling incident could spark long-simmering animosities and lead to an outburst of fanaticism in Multan city (Gazetteer, 1923). During the time of the Khilafat Movement, religious tensions on the subcontinent were intensified. When sectarian violence erupted in Multan in 1924, local Muslims did not hesitate to organize in defense of their faith. While the Muslim League had yet to be established in the district, religious leaders known as "Pirs" had already grabbed the reins. Social controls over Hindus were implemented due to the acts of the Ghandhi regime. In Multan city and the cantonment, Muslims successfully fought against Hindu efforts to build temples, and the British government eventually tore down four Hindu temples that had already been constructed (Bhatti & Kanwal, 2014).

Jealousy within the community persisted throughout 1921-1922. Serious riots broke out in Bengal and the Punjab during the Muharram Celebrations. There were relatively few deaths, but a lot of damage was done to property as communal anger at Multan reached very serious heights in the later province. The harmony and peace of society was disturbed with the jealousy imparted in the both the Muslims and Hindu community, although the issues on which the riots originated were not local, riots were at the same time erupted in different places in India. In Multan district the Muslims were in majority and Hindus constitute a great portion of the society but economically Hindus were in a better position for their trade and professionalism like other parts of India which was the main strength of Hindus that they can fight with the Muslims in the form of riots and also in the form of social and political life (Malik, 1982).

### **Conclusion**

Society in Multan was molded and controlled by British authorities with different tactics and methods. Religion was also a part of this all process through which the people of Multan were controlled. The hypothesis for this research study proves that the major divisions were existing among the religious groups but people were not extreme against each other. Before the British rule there were very less conflicts between the major groups in Multan. British through professional opportunities, civilizational tactics, religious differences created rift among the Indus and Muslims. Similarly, declaring the religious minority was also a practice of British time which divide the society more politically and socially.

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