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Role of the All-India Muslim League in the Political Transformation of Colonial Multan (1935–1947)

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ABSTRACT

The political narrative of Colonial Multan (1935-1947) is the reflection of the changing landscape of Muslim politics in Punjab and British India. Pirs, sajjada nashins and Unionist Party dominated Multan initially but by the end of colonial rule, it emerged as an important hub of Muslim League politics. This research paper covers role of All-India Muslim League in changing the political scenario of Multan after Government of India Act, 1935. It maintains that League's growth in Multan was not rapid, but rather it emerged as a result of alterations in socio-economic circumstances, development of canal colonies, rural patronage network, religious mobilization, and discontent over Unionist politics. The study highlight's role of pirs, gaddi nashins and Muslim landed elites as a major force responsible for altering allegiance of Unionist Party from British to Muslim League, especially after Lahore Resolution of 1940. In the realm of electoral politics, religious symbolism and public mobilization and rural networks, Muslim League succeeded in making Multan a bastion of Muslim nationalism. The paper also looks into influence of district-level politics, canal colonization, rural elites and local religious families in consolidating influence of Muslim League prior to 1945-46 elections. The study employs archival sources, district gazetteers, scholars' works and contemporary political discourse, to look into the transformation of colonial politics in Multan and its impact on the Pakistan Movement.

Keywords: All-India Muslim League, Colonial Multan, Punjab Politics, Unionist Party, Pirs, Sajjada Nashins, Canal Colonies, Pakistan Movement, Elections 1945-46, British Punjab.

1. Introduction:

One of the most important political changes in the history of Muslim nationalism in Punjab was the political metamorphosis of Colonial Multan in the years 1935 to 1947. The city of Multan, as it was called in the old times and it was the “City of Saints”, had its own socio-political structure, having religious authority, landlords and colonial rule. Under British rule, district gained importance due to its agriculture richness, canal colonization projects, and prominent religious families. All India Muslim League emerged in Multan which in one way or another set the political course of district and linked it with Pakistan Movement. Prior to 1930s, politics in Multan mainly dealt with power of hereditary landlords, tribal chiefs and *pirs* who had close links with British administration. The elites tended to be proponents of Unionist Party (Punjab backers) that espoused cause of rural, agricultural interests. According to Ian Talbot, Unionist Party was based upon “Muslim, Hindu and Sikh landed elites” working under British rule. British administration considered Multan as a politically stable district because of the loyalty of local elites in this region in terms of administrative control and agricultural productivity.

The Government of India Act, 1935 brought a major transformation in the political scenario of Punjab through the provision of provincial autonomy and increase in the voting population. Through these reforms, new opportunities for party competition and political mobilization were opened up. The Unionist Party was initially in power but the Muslim League slowly began to gain momentum through religious preaching, political mobilization, and links with other influential pirs and *sajjada nashins*. According to Francis Robinson, “Muslim League went from being an elite to a mass political organization during the 10 years leading up to Partition”. This transformation was related to the socio-religious fabric of the society in Multan. A significant factor in mobilizing rural Muslim voters for the League was the religious leaders, like the pirs of Golra, Musa Pak Shaheed, and others of the families of the shrines. Muslim League's growth in Multan also showed rising Muslim fears about the economic dominance of the Hindus, Congress politics and concerns about political marginalisation under ‘Democracy’. During Congress ministries, 1937-39, many Muslim elites began to see the Muslim League as only protector of political aspirations of Muslims. This political change gained momentum after Lahore Resolution, 1940 which provided ideologically guided direction to Muslim nationalism. The present paper aims to discuss the role of All-India Muslim League in transformation of politics of Colonial Multan from 1935 to 1947. It examines the decline of Unionist influence, role of pirs and landed elites in political arena, the impact of canal colonies and importance of elections in 1945–46 and creation of Muslim nationalist consciousness in Multan.

2. Literature Review:

Both the political history of Colonial Punjab and the history of the emergence of the Muslim League have received ample scholarly attention. But the impact of Multan on Pakistan Movement is still comparatively under-studied. Punjab historians have tended to examine the situation in Lahore, urban nationalism and provincial leadership, and left the southern Punjab districts like Multan under-researched. Ian Talbot's book *Punjab and the Raj* is one of the basic books in the study of colonial politics in Punjab. Talbot suggests that British depended largely on rural elites and canal colony beneficiaries to keep the peace. Talbot says that “agricultural patronage and landed influence”¹ were the very bases of Punjab politics. It makes special sense in context of Multan, where the political was largely dominated by the rural landed families. In his book “*Empire and Islam: Punjab and Making of Pakistan*”,² David Gilmartin has focussed on the role of religious authority in rural Punjab. He suggests that *pirs* and *sajjada nashins* were intermediaries between colonial government and rural society. Gilmartin argues that: “religious authority gained political significance when it linked local loyalties to larger communal identities.”³ This structure is useful in elaborating the success of Muslim League in Multan after 1940.

Francis Robinson⁴ points to the changing of the institutional forms and growth of a mass political movement in the form of Muslim League. Robinson suggests that the elections that were boycotted in 1937 compelled Jinnah to rebuild the League and to reinforce province to province ties. Punjab was particularly significant since it was the biggest Muslim majority province in British India. The book “*Muslim League*” carried out by M. Rafique Afzal⁵ gives detailed insights into provincial politics and electoral strategies. Afzal says that the League faced tough time in Punjab due to

¹ Talbot, I. (1988). *Punjab and the Raj, 1849–1947*. Manohar Publications.

² Gilmartin, D. (1988). *Empire and Islam: Punjab and making of Pakistan*. University of California Press.

³ Gilmartin, D. (1988).

⁴ Robinson, F. (1974). *Separatism among Indian Muslims*. Cambridge University Press.

⁵ Afzal, M. R. (1987). *A history of the All-India Muslim League*. Oxford University Press.

domination of Unionist Party initially. But following 1940, the League was able to effectively harness rural Muslim opinion by establishing linkages with the influential pirs and landlords. In the book “The Sole Spokesman”⁶, Ayesha Jalal contends that Jinnah had been able to successfully rally multiple Muslim interests to the banner of Muslim League through the framework of constitutional politics. Jalal states that League's success lay in its ability to rely on ideological mobilization along with cooperation with the provincial elites. Other scholars, like Sarah Ansari⁷ and Hamza Alavi⁸, have also pointed out the socio-economic effects of the canal colonies of Punjab. The canal irrigation revolutionized the situation of districts like Multan and brought new agricultural opportunities and enhanced economic position of Muslim landlords. The advances led to political prominence of rural elite who in turn became the supporters of the Muslim league.

In recent scholarship, too, importance of religious symbolism and shrine politics in Punjab has been highlighted. The studies with *pirs* and *sajjada nashins* have shown how the networks of shrines were used as instruments of electoral mobilization in the 1940s. In Multan, religious power is frequently equated with political power. In spite of all these contributions, there is need for a detailed study exclusively focusing on political metamorphic changes in Multan due to the impact of the Muslim League. This paper aims to do this by adding the political, religious, and socio-economic perspective in the context of local environment of Colonial Multan.

3. Historical Background of Multan:

The history of colonial Multan is a fascinating one. The history of colonial Multan is very interesting. Multan had its unique political and religious identity even before the British annexed it. Historically, Multan has been a trading, Sufi culture and regional administration center. Multan became a very religious place in whole of Punjab due to presence of shrines like Shah Rukn-e-Alam and Bahauddin Zakariya. Prior to advent of British rule, political power in Multan was divided among religious leaders, local rulers, and tribal chiefs. Multan was conquered by Sikh rulers during reign of Maharaja Ranjit Singh and the city was reorganized as a result. The religious elite, however, continued to hold some sway over rural society. Multan was annexed by British after Second Anglo-Sikh War in 1849. Colonial administrators made notice of the importance of local religious and landed elites and integrated them into new administrative system. Multan is a district that has been described repeatedly in district gazetteers as a district in which “religious influence and agricultural leadership” created rural society. Canal irrigation had introduced a new economic change in Multan. Sidhnai Canal, Lower Bari Doab Canal and other irrigation projects allowed more area to be cultivated and more productivity in agriculture. These canal colonies established a strong landed class that was very close to the colonial government. In return, loyal families were rewarded with land grants, titles and political power. The families rose to prominence in politics of district Tiwanas, Khakwani Nawabs and other pirs. This system brought unity to Unionist Party in early twentieth century.

4. Reforms of 1919 & Formation of Unionist Party:

The Reforms of 1919 favoured heavily the regional and provincial politics in India. These reforms were found to be disastrous for national movements as it encouraged favouritism and parochialism in province of Punjab in particular. This was a parochialism and regionalisation of politics “mostly

⁶ Jalal, A. (1985). *The sole spokesman: Jinnah, the Muslim League and the demand for Pakistan*. Cambridge University Press.

⁷ Ansari, S. (1992). *Sufi saints and state power: The pirs of Sindh, 1843–1947*. Cambridge University Press.

⁸ Alavi, H. (1972). The salariat and emergence of class politics in Pakistan. *The Journal of Commonwealth and Comparative Politics*, 10(3), 211–225.

based on personalities but ideas” which suited the Raj and was particularly successful in Punjab in dynastic feudatory politics.⁹ British, however, implemented some reforms in administration, under name of Montague-Chelmsford Reforms. It said that it would ensure at least 70% of seats in provincial legislature would be elected, not more than 20%.¹⁰ The reformists introduced a way to “institutionalization of already existing political divisions between interests of rural and urban sector.”¹¹ In urban constituencies, the persons, paying about 2000 rupees income tax, would be considered eligible for contesting elections. In rural constituencies, only such persons would contest the elections, who would belong to agricultural tribes, according to Alienation of Land Act, 1901.¹² The political loyalty with British was also given preference in rural areas. Consequently, British officials such as Zaildars, Jagirdars, Sofedposh and Lambardars were enfranchised while common people were marginalised.¹³ This rural-urban division led to creation of Unionist Party in 1923. Montague-Chelmsford Reforms of 1919 further strengthened British ties with landowner class, when it “increased franchise and transferred control of certain subjects of provincial administration such as education and self-government, to ministers responsible to a new legislative council.” Following the announcement of Reforms of 1919, the elections were held for Imperial legislative council in which Syed Rahim Bakhsh Shah contested and “was elected unopposed for reserved seat of Multan, Sahiwal, Dera Ghazi Khan and Muzaffargarh. He served concerned people for sixteen years with vigor and enthusiasm.”¹⁴

The first Montague-Chelmsford Council was entirely rural in character and enjoyed the sole support of landed interests of province, there were 71 elected members, out of which there were only 15 who could be considered as townsmen, whereas 10 of these 15 were landowners.¹⁵ Muslims had the largest solid group in the council. The composition of new councillors revealed that a Muslim group with the sponsorship of Hindu rural members and support of British authorities would be a significant group one that would dominate politics in Punjab in future. Muslim and Sikh landowners like Firoz Khan Noon, Ahmad Yar Khan, Daultana, Makhdum Reza Shah Gilani, Sunder Singh Mijitha and Jogendra Singh Bedi were amongst those who were appointed to the new legislative council by Montague-Chelmsford Reforms in rural areas. With them sat representatives of developing class of rich peasant Jats like Chaudhri Lal Chand and subsequently Chaudhri Chhotu Ram. For first council in 1920-23, agricultural members worked as a "rural bloc" in an informal manner. Its members and politicians in the provincial legislature of Punjab had rural and agricultural background and functioned together and in an informal manner but it was not until this time that it became “a cohesive force, it was welded into a political party by Fazl-i-Hussain immediately after this”. Unionist Party was with assistance of British administration the sole representative party with an agricultural ideology. At the same time the informal coalitions of rural magnates held their own to create the Unionist Party.”¹⁶ This points to the fact that Fazl-i-Hussain was able to organize a group of enlightened and progressive people among conservative

⁹ Iftikhar H. Malik, *Identity Formation and Muslim Party Politics in the Punjab, 1897-1936: A Retrospective Analysis* Modern Asian Studies, Vol 29, No. 2 (May, Cambridge University Press, May 1995), p. 312

¹⁰ Qalb-i-Abid, *Muslim Politics in the Punjab 1921-47* (Vanguard Books Pvt Ltd, Pakistan, 1992), p.32

¹¹ Ian Talbot, *Provincial Politics and The Pakistan Movement the Growth of the Muslim League in North-West and North-East India 1937-47*, Oxford University Press, 1988), p.85

¹² Land Alienation Act, 1900 was introduced by British, which divided the population into agriculturist and non- agriculturists in province.

¹³ Ian Talbot, *Punjab and the Raj 1849-1947* (Manohar publications, New Delhi, 1988), p.78

¹⁴ Ashiq M. Khan Durrani, *Tarikh-i-Multan* (Bazm-e-Saqafat Multan, Oct 2007), p.327.

¹⁵ Qalb-i-Abid, *Muslim Politics in Punjab 1921-47* (Vanguard Books Pvt Ltd, Pakistan, 1992), p.32-33

¹⁶ Ian Talbot, *Punjab and Raj 1849-1947*, p.80-81

and reactionary land-lords of the rural areas. The basic concept was to help backward communities and to serve economic improvement of neglected rural areas and to propagate ideology of inter-communal harmony. However, an analyst should keep this fact in mind that “British administration played a key role in uniting rural representatives and bringing them together to form a more united political party in future.”¹⁷ “It is the business of reformed government to assist, encourage and help backward classes in preference of enlightened classes,”¹⁸ said Fazl-e-Hussain. Under system, according to Montague Reforms (1919), a ministry was formed in January 1924. Mian Fazl-e-Hussain founded National Unionist Party having 24 Muslims zamindars and 6 Hindu Jats. It is alleged that party was ‘non-communal’ and ‘sacrificing the interests of landed classes’.¹⁹ In Unionist Party, Muslim politicians and feudal-lords split into many groups, which showed their personal variations and interests neglecting their basic ideological differences. One group was Shahab-ud-din, Main Ahmed Yar Khan Daultana and their associates and other group was Noons, Tiwanas and their associates.” This was an important political move by Punjab Government as inclusion of Pirs among landed gentry created a convergence of interests between feudal lords and Pirs in domain of future politics in Punjab. Pirs and Sajjada Nishins as religious leaders of the local community had a tight link with the British administration and with the Unionist Party and defined no special religious interests in council except in support of the Land Alienation Act and the Unionist Party and thus being integrated within the structure of British authority nurtured the religious influence of these local leaders.²⁰

5. Elections of Legislative Assembly in 1937:

Punjab's politics changed for good when the Government of India Act of 1935 came into existence. The new opportunities of provincial autonomy and expanded electorates brought about political competition. Political parties had to win a wider suffrage and not solely colonial backing for the first time. The Unionist Party was initially in control of the political scene due to their rural support base. It was led by Sir Fazl-i-Hussain and subsequently by Sir Sikandar Hayat Khan and acted on behalf of those who were involved in agriculture and advocated for communal harmony among landlords, who were all Muslim, Hindu and Sikh. In Multan, Unionists were largely dependent upon influential landlords and pirs. Local elites largely determined political preferences of rural voters, in general. After 1935, the growth of electoral politics in some ways undermined the traditional patronage system and raised the significance of political mobilization.

The Qureshis were members of Unionist Party and Makhdum Murid Husain was given the ticket in the bye for a vacancy in Provincial Assembly arising due to the demise of Syed Rajan Baksh Gilani in 1936. Thus he was the first in his family who was elected member of the Punjab Legislative Assembly in 1936. He continued to be a member of the Provincial Assembly until 1945. He again ran against electoral contest in Unionist Party ticket in December 1945 and lost to Syed Raza Shah Gilani who was of Muslim Leaguer party. He was conferred with the honours of Nawab and Khan Bahadur by British Government for his much-appreciated services. In 1935 too, he was knighted in British Empire. Nawabzada Major Ashiq Husain Qureshi, son of Nawab Riaz Husain Qureshi also contested the election of Legislative Assembly in 1937 on ticket of Unionist Party and was successful. Later on, he was appointed minister by *Malik Khizer Hayat Tiwana*. Qureshi family was never against government and thus they benefited while Gilanis were with

¹⁷ Ibid., p.81

¹⁸ Iftikhar Haider Malik, *Sikandar Hayat Khan A political biography 1892-1942* (Islamabad, 1985), p.3

¹⁹ Tahir Kamran, *Unionist Party aur Fazl-i-Hussain ka Kirdar* (), p.110

²⁰ Ibid. Saiyid Muhammad Husain delivered a speech in Punjab Legislative Council, while commenting about tense relationship among the Muslims and the Hindus.

Unionist Party but were still supporters of Muslim League. It is interesting to note that Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ah Jinnah never visited Multan. It can also be stated that all the dignitaries of Multan Division were present, such as *Nawabzada Major Ashiq Husain Qureshi*, *Makhdumzada Syed Willazat Husain Gilani*, *Syed Raza Shah Gilani*, *Syed Nasir-ud-Din Shah*, *Khan Bahadur Haibat Khan Daha*, *Mian Ahmad Yar Khan Daultana* and *Nawab Muhammad Mustaq Khan Gurmani* contested Provincial Assembly elections on the ticket of Unionist Party in February 1937 and succeeded. It is therefore quite clear that *Qureshis*, *Gilanis*, *Bosans*, *Gurmanis*, *Khakwanis*, *Dahas* and *Daultanas* were members of Unionist party. In such a situation, no one dared raise banner of Muslim League in Multan for next 30 years after its establishment. The District Administration which was favoured to select big landlords and which officially supported them to make them suitable and popular among common persons. The landlords were members of Unionist Party, for they knew they would be successful in elections if they were supported by official. In meanwhile, Unionist Party put up the large land owners of the district for the elections of 1936. The following candidates were nominated by *Malik Sikandar Hayat* for his party tickets; *Maj. Asaduddin (OBS)*, *Director of Operations at Lahore Cantonment Board (LCB)*, *Makhdumzada Syed Willazat Husain Gilani*, *Syed Raza Shah Gilani*, *Syed Nasir-ud-Din Shah*, *Khan Bahadur Haibat Khan Daha*, *Mian Ahmad Yar Khan Daultana* and *Muhammad Mustaq Khan Gurmani*. The elections of 1936-37 were the remarkable successes of candidates from unionist parties of Multan district. The results of 1937 provincial elections showed that Unionist Party became the only winning party, after getting 99 out of total 175 seats. Muslim League and Congress failed to do well together in elections and secured only 19 seats as “in new era of provincial autonomy, levels of power remained firmly in hands of rural collaborators with British rule.” Another observer Professor Copeland commented about cause of failure of Muslim League in the elections, “The election manifesto of Muslim League, prepared under leadership of Mr. Jinnah had no difference in any matter with that of the Congress.” Ian Talbot has also commented about weaker position of Muslim League that League could not stiff resistance to Unionists, “being nothing more than a small clique of Lahore lawyers rather than a political party.” Furthermore, it was almost exclusively dependent on support of Unionist Party in the field of All-India politics. In 1937 elections, the results indicated that biggest problem that had to be overcome in Muslim League was that it could not “undermine Unionist Party’s entrenched position in countryside”²¹ otherwise the League will not be able to get benefits in the new phase of autonomy, being introduced in provinces of India. Some political awakening spread in common people of the district after elections 1936-37. In Multan District, pace of political activity became brisker within a year after election. The workers of political parties started propagating agenda of their parties. District Muslim League was established. Unionist Party and Congress started to take proactive steps in politics. These Political Parties held their meetings more often in Tehsils and Districts. Now people had come to know a lot about electioneering process. The workers of the district constituencies started visiting their constituencies and issues of their people could be addressed. The direct outcome of the elections in 1936 was this political awakening.

6. Foundation of All India Muslim League in Multan:

At the outset, Muslim League struggled to get membership in Multan. There were many local elites who regarded League as an urban party that had no interest in rural issues. But Muhammad Ali Jinnah understood value of Punjab and made an attempt to form alliances with the provincial leaders. Sikandar-Jinnah Pact of 1937 granted autonomy to Unionist Muslims to enjoy

²¹ Ian Talbot, *Provincial Politics and The Pakistan Movement the Growth of the Muslim League in North-West and North-East India 1937-47*, Oxford University Press, 1988), p.86

membership of League, within framework of Unionist Party. This spread the Muslim League influence in the districts of Punjab, including Multan, in a slow manner. The establishment of Multan Branch of All India Muslim League was a product of political developments experienced at the Provincial capital (Lahore) during their education at Lahore and it was in November 1936 that a group of young educated citizens members of the middle class decided to start a branch of the All-India Muslim League in Multan. Agha Aziz Mirza and Syed Saeed Ahmad Shah Bukhari who had obtained their law degrees from Lahore and Delhi respectively, decided to establish a branch of All India Muslim League in Multan. Agha Aziz Mirza was elected as President, Syed Saeed Shah Bukhari as General Secretary whereas Muhammad Akram Khan was elected as Propaganda Secretary and Abdul Sattar Hamid was made office Incharge. This group of workers, who are a few young workers began to work under the guidance of Provincial League. This was called the district branch whereas the city branch was yet to be founded. It should be noted that other political parties such as All India Congress Party, Hindu Mahasbha, Ahrar Party, Zamindara League, Unionist Party etc had already established their branches in Multan. Initially Muslim League did not succeed in mobilizing the masses as a result of opposition from local land lords (Zamindars). The Muslim League's branch office was accommodated in a room in house of Syed Saeed Ahmad Shah Bukhari who resided close to Chowk Ghantagarh (Town Hall). Initially, the opposition of ruling Party- Unionist was strong and people did not join Muslim League Party. But after Sir Sikandar Hayat Khan had attended Muslim League Conference at Lucknow on 13th October 1937, and had agreed with Quaid-i-Azam that he would co-operate with Muslim League and would encourage people to join the Party, Muslims in Multan started joining Muslim League. During this period, the rule of Congress Party in eight provinces has adversely affected the interests of Muslims of Sub-Continent. In their rule, Hindus were attempting to establish Hindu Raj and raising tri-colour flag of Congress Party. They came up with Wardaha (educational) scheme and attempted to bring in idea of a single nationality and a single ideology for the whole population of Indian Sub-continent. But these schemes of Hindus were opposed and rejected by Muslims. Muslims rallied around Muslim League because of aggressive policies of Congress during its brief tenure from July, 1937 to October, 1939. In such a situation Syed Zain-al-Abid Din Gilani joined the Muslim League in 1939 and merged his 'Anjuman Fidayan-i-Islam' established in 1931 with Muslim League. He was made President of district branch. The same year Syed Ali Husain Shah Gardezi, Syed Ghulam Nabi Shah Gilani, Syed Sher Shah Gilani (later on he contested election of Central Assembly seat and was elected unopposed in December 1945 on Muslim League ticket), Syed Willayat Husain Gilani, Syed Rehmat Husain Gilani, Abdul Karim Kasif, Mr. Muhammad Husain Nasir, Mr. M. Shakir and Syed Mukhtar Husain Gardezi joined the Muslim League. Thus in 1939, a branch of All Muslim Students Federation was founded in Multan and Muhammad Azim Khan Saddozai, a student of Government Emerson College, Multan was elected its President and Col. Muhammad Sadiq Awan as Secretary. Prior to Pakistan Resolution (23rd March, 1940) elections for the office bearers of Muslim League district branch were held and Syed Zain-al-Abid Din Gilani was elected President in 1939 and Syed Saeed Ahmad Shah Bukhari (Advocate) was elected General Secretary. The members began to come from other localities as well, in this regard the family of Sahibzada Nusrat Ali Advocate joined Muslim League. His younger brother Sahibzada Nawazish Ali Advocate who was in Sahiwal also became part of the Party. Support of family of *Gilani* and *Pathans (Khudakka Saddozais, Baburs and Azam Khakwani)* joined Party) made Muslim League a popular party in Multan city soon. Kiri Afghanan and Pir Darbar area came to be the centres of its activities as they were adjacent to Masjid Wali (Ali) Muhammad.

7. Lahore Resolution (22-24th March 1940) and Popularity of Muslim League in Multan:

The Lahore Resolution of March 1940 brought a revolution in the politics of Punjab. The resolution was an inspiration for Muslim League activists in Multan and it added to the ideological foundation of Muslim nationalism. The League was a remedy to political insecurity of the Muslims in a Hindu dominated system. Muslim leadership highlighted a political autonomy to define Muslim identity. The League's message was extended throughout Multan through public gatherings, the newspapers, student groups, and religious groups. There was a growing number of urban professionals, traders and students getting involved in the movement. Women also were involved in League activities in form of public meetings and fundraisers. There was still a male dominated political arena in rural areas; however, female Muslims in city contributed to political mobilization. The one of greatest importance in rise of Muslim League in Multan was the support of pirs and sajjada nashins. The religious culture of Multan endowed the shrine custodians with significant power in rural society. "Authority of pirs was based on networks of spiritual allegiance that transcended local communities,"²² writes David Gilmartin. During 1940s, these networks started playing a significant political role in Multan. Initially many custodians of shrines were pro-union due to their close relationship with the British administration. But the political situation began to change slowly and they started to incline towards the Muslim League.

The Lahore Resolution of 1940 was a significant factor in this change. The League began to define itself as a protector of Muslim identity and Islamic political rights. Such a message was welcomed by religious leaders because it reinforced their own social clout. Some of the important shrines' *sajjada nashins* urged their adherents to vote for Muslim League candidates in the elections. The political mobilization took place on platforms of Friday sermons, shrine gatherings and religious festivals. In rural areas of Multan, a pir's approval was likely decisive in elections. The peasants and tenants in general cast their votes in accordance with directions of their spiritual leaders. This religious mobilization proved to be a great reinforcement to Muslim League in the lead up to 1945-46 elections.

A contingent comprising of Pathans and Gilanis attended the session of All India Muslim League at Lahore, from 22-24th March, 1940. They were organised by Syed Zain-al-Abid Din Gilani and brought to Lahore. He was a man of great qualities. He was a popular person among masses. He had great organising capabilities. He was a very fine speaker. He was the moving spirit among Muslim Population of Multan. In these circumstances, office bearers of Provincial Muslim Students Federation, namely Ashiq Husain Batalvi, Maulana Abdul Sattar Khan Niazi along with a nominee of Muslim League Provincial High Command Zaman Mehdi (a retired Deputy Commissioner) visited Multan in 1941 and a public meeting was organised in Bagh Lange khan in which Ahrar Party workers also participated because of their close relations with Zaman Mehdi. In 1940, Quaid-i-Azam made Zain-al-Abid Din Gilani a member of working Committee of Muslim League. In such a situation Prof. Inayat-ullah, Secretary of Provincial Muslim League visited Multan on 10th August 1942. He met all office bearers of District Muslim League and discussed prospects of a separate branch of Muslim League for Multan city, because more than sixty percent population of Multan living within Municipal limits were Muslims. All the members of Gilani family were very active in organizing the Muslim League. A meeting was held at the residence of Syed Ghulam Nabi Shah Gilani inside Pak Gate on 14th August 1942 and the host was elected President of the city branch whereas followings were elected naib (Vice) Presidents; *Fazle Husain Qureshi, Syed Abdul Jalil Gardezi, Hafiz Muhammad Azam Khan Khakwani, Barrister Sheikh Muhammad Siddique Babar, Makhdumzada Muhammad Qasim Shah of Sher Shah, Syed Abdul Ghani Bukhari (Vice President Cantonment Board)*. Hakim Ghulam Mujtaba Qureshi (Municipal

²² David Gilmartin, *Empire and Islam*

Commissioner) was elected General Secretary, *Maulvi Mahboob Ahmad Ansari* as Secretary whereas Sufi Abdul Ghafoor Ludhianvi Propaganda Secretary and Khawaja Manzoor Husain as Treasurer. Ghulam Qasim Khan Khakwani also joined Muslim League in 1942. There was a rise in political activities of the Muslim Leaguers in Multan after the visit of Professor Inayat-ullah. People celebrated 23rd March every year, as Pakistan day. They would have large public meetings in Bagh Lange Khan after a grand public parade on Circular Road of the city and blow slogans for Pakistan. The traders were used to closing their shops and each was supposed to raise slogans against British. The demand for a separate homeland for Muslims was emphasised annually and Muslim Leaguers of Multan branch played their role. The students of government, Muslim students of Emerson College, also took part in movement and were working under the guidance of their leaders.

Meanwhile, a number of branches of Muslim League were established in the city and an office in city was opened near Pul Shiwala. Muslim League got the support of many of the workers of Ahrar Party and Khaksar Party. In a few days' city head office, near Pul Shiwala, turned into the hub of all political activities and was established as district head office and the Divisional head office. There were several public meetings on different occasions in Multan at which eminent Muslim Leaguers Mian Mumtaz Muhammad Khan Daultana, Prof. Inayat Ullah, Sardar Shaukat Hayat Khan, Ashiq Husain Batalvi, Maulana Abdul Sattar Khan Niazi, Syed Zaman Mehdi, Abdul Saeed Anwar, Maulana Sher Muhammad, Raja Ghazanfar Ali Khan, Maulana Azhar Husain Zaidi and Maulana Abdul Badauni participated and spoke to people. These activities made the Muslim League popular among Muslims. Meanwhile a seat of Provincial Assembly of Mailsi Tehsil was left vacant and a Muslim Leaguer, Mian Mumtaz Muhammad Khan Daultana was elected in 1943 in said Tehsil by a bye-election. This is the first win of Muslim league in Division. In same way, Syed Saecd Ahmad Shah Bukhari General Secretary Multan Muslim League branch defeated Sheikh Fazl Husain Qureshi nephew of Nawabzada Major Ashiq Husain Qureshi, a unionist minister in the Punjab Cabinet in bye election of Multan Municipal Committee seat in 1944. Thus, Muslim League created a very good impression in the eyes of rural population and caused a great damage to Unionist Party. Over time, Muslim League slowly gained popularity among masses and people of Multan took to the call of Quaid-i-Azam. Incredible as it may seem, members of the Gilani family were truly committed to noble cause of Muslims and maintained their allegiance with the Muslim League till the establishment of Pakistan. Syed Zain-al- Abid Din Gilani and Syed Ghulam Nabi Shah Gilani (cousin), remained President of district and city branches of Muslim League Party respectively till 1949. During elections for office bearers of Muslim League of the area in March 1945, Syed Zain-al-Abid Din Gilani secured position of President and Syed Shaukat Husain Gilani the Vice Presidency while Syed Saeed Ahmad Shah Bukhari got position of General Secretary and Syed Abdul Ghafoor position of Propaganda Secretary. During year 1943, elections of city branch were held in which Syed Ghulam Nabi Shah Gilani was elected President and Sardar Muhammad Azim Khan Saddozai as Vice President whereas Syed Mukhtar Husain Shah Gardezi was elected as Secretary and Abdul Sattar Hamid as office Incharge." However, Unionists started to oppose ideology as it was associated with imperialistic system of rule by British.

8. Decline of Unionist Party and Episode of Second World War:

At the time of the beginning of the Second World War in 1939, she was at a very important time in British's life. There was only one party, which commenced its support for British. It was the local landlords who recruited maximum people in the National War Front of Punjab, they encouraged the recruitment of the army and in most of the time they did it by force. Due to the experiences of Punjabi landlordism towards British, it was expected that leading families of

Unionist Party, would help the British at the time of adversity, even against propaganda of Congress. Sir Sikandar presented Recruitment Bill in Punjab Assembly. While delivering a speech in Punjab assembly, he gave assurance for “Punjab’s fullest cooperation in event of war-to stand by British through thick and thin, with its manpower and all, its resources.” The socio-economic fabric of Multan changed drastically with the establishment of canal colonies. Previously desolate areas were made productive through irrigation by British. The colonial administration divided land between loyal military officers, chiefs and influential landlords. This policy developed a strong landed aristocracy that was closely tied to state. Canal colonization led to commercialization of agriculture and provided integration with other economic activities in Multan. The cultivation of wheat and cotton increased rapidly, thereby increasing the wealth of landlords who were Muslims. But canal settlement also brought about social inequities. The peasants were economically dependent and large land lords controlled vast agricultural land. This hierarchical system enabled landlords to exert their influence over local political affairs. These networks were effectively used by Muslim League in 1940s. A number of influential landlords changed their allegiance from Unionist Party to League because they realised that political climate was changing. After this year 1940, Unionist Party faded and one of most significant developments in Multan politics was this. There were a number of reasons for this drop. Firstly, the collapse of leadership of Unionists with the death of Sir Sikandar Hayat Khan. There was a growing lack of unity within the party and ideology. Second, growing appeal of Muslim nationalism undermined the Unionist emphasis upon inter-communal cooperation. For many Muslims, the League seemed to be a better protector of their political interests. Thirdly, League had succeeded in making the Unionists appear to be 'collaborators of British administration'. This critique was especially being felt by younger Muslim activists and students. Fourthly, Unionists starting to lose support from pirs and landlords due to growing popularity of Pakistan Movement. The Muslim League got many of the elites on its side because political survival was encouraged. Unionists fell apart for the reason that they could not vie with “Muslim nationalism's” emotional pitch²³, writes Ian Talbot. Such a trend was very prominent in Multan.

The people resented the war efforts of Party and saw it as interference in their home lives by government. Unionist-League alliance got a blow with death of Sikander Hayat. The earlier *Sikandar Hayat-Daultana-Shahabuddin* faction was outraged by Khizr Hayat Tiwana's premiership in Punjab, which led younger generation to lean toward the Muslim League. The war efforts of Unionist Party lessened political popularity of party. It seriously affected the rural collaborators of British in Punjab. Suddenly, Muslim League started getting the support of rural allies and the Congress political aloofness provided space for League to flourish. “Thus, the newly emerging political scenario called for a new strategy on part of Unionist members who were left with one option only, either join the League at the expense of Unionist Party or face political oblivion.” The Muslim League started to concentrate on the issue of widening its political activity. League leaders realized that “it had to come to terms with Muslim landlord class of Punjab to play any meaningful role in country’s politics.” During war (1939-1945), Unionist Party demonstrated that it was not an effective vehicle for landlords' interests. The party leaders were worried that as they would introduce a legislation in province which would cater to the needs of their countrymen of rural areas but would not look after interests of urban business community like Sikhs and Hindus, it will upset war effort of party in province. Unionists did not want to lose their support at this critical juncture of war; therefore, the party could not have courage for introduction of such legislation. The close association of urban business class with Unionist Party undermined their

²³ Ian Talbot, *Punjab and the Raj 1849-1947* (Manohar publications, New Delhi, 1988)

traditional support in the shape of their rural allies in villages. Punjab Governor and the Premier became convinced that Indian safety was not dependent upon Congress propaganda, “but on the loyalty of the Punjab.” By 1946, the Unionist Party was widely seen as a middleman in rural areas to meet the demands of conscripted troops and the food supply of rural areas. Thus, Unionist Party found itself on losing side by creating anti-government sentiment in the corners of rural society because of its involvement in the war effort.

9. Organizational Efforts of Muslim League in Multan:

The landlords like Noons, Daultanas and Hayats etc. were the henchmen of Unionist Party in Punjab. They came under the fold of League. Their tremendous socio-economic influence in their hometowns “was a crushing blow to Unionist Party that it could never recover from.” The holding of meetings by Muslim League at Multan in January 1945 in which chief speakers like Mian Mumtaz Daultana, Raja Ghazanfar Ali, Abdullah Malik (ex-communist), Rana Nasrullah Khan of Hoshiarpur and Nawab of Mamdot etc stressed for the organization of Muslims among their ranks for cause of Pakistan. The attendance was approximately 1000-3000 and funds were raised to tune of almost Rs. 5500 was collected. They also criticized the funds collection of Unionists from poor Zamindars as they would be used for Zamindara League. They also blamed the Unionist Party due its deliberate policy not to educate children of backward Muslim peasants. The Leaguer's speakers also invited Muslims to attend session of All India Muslim League to be held at Lahore in April (1945). In elections of 1937, Unionist Party achieved victory due to the much support of leading pirs in Punjab province. Thus, “In 1946, the Muslim league tried to follow the Unionists formula for winning and set up a Unionists like committee, this one a committee of men of religious influence called Masheikh Committee to mobilise the support of the Sufis behind its campaign”. The Muslim League resolved to utilize the mosques to accomplish propaganda and mosques started to be utilized as meeting focuses in districts of Multan. Meanwhile the district branch of Multan started enrollment campaign on a small scale and workers started collecting two Annas from Muslim shopkeepers in the bazar. Following the prayers, a Maulvi of one mosque reminded the Muslims to join the fold of Muslim League, which would make it possible to achieve the dream of Iqbal as Pakistan. The coming together of the most prominent leaders of Unionist Party with the aim of joining the All-India Muslim League breathed a new life into the League. They were extremely significant in rural areas and were welcomed with open arms by League.

After the emergence of Muslim Students Federation in politics, the ideals and objectives of Muslim League came into the forefront i.e. establishment of a separate State for Muslims of Sub-continent. In the same year, it was decided to have general elections to determine the fate of the Indian sub-continent. Meanwhile, a new development took place. Minister Major Ashiq Husain Qureshi was appointed on the Punjab Cabinet in April 1944. He, therefore, resigned form his seat of Municipal Committee (Muslim Ward No. 8). In August 1944 the Unionist Party nominated his nephew Fazal Husain Qureshi to run for a place on the Municipal Committee. Syed Saeed Ahmad Shah Bukhari of Muslim League railed against him. The Muslim Leaguers paid house to house visits and persuaded the populace to vote for Bukhari. Although it was a family seat of the Qureshi family, they were defeated in the election. It was their first success in local politics in the city with the League Party. During this election, Muslim Students Federation made efforts for Bukhari and he started winning due to their efforts. The young group established that they were a positive force for Muslim League Party. Similarly, the students participated in the general elections of 1945-46 and performed admirably. Government Emerson College became the centre of political activities. They worked for the glorification of Muslim League and contributed a lot for establishment of Pakistan. They preached the message of Quaid-i-Azam and popularised Muslim League. They

carried out duties of polling Agents of Muslim League candidates. They had to deal with Unionists, endured numerous hardships during general elections and even had to serve time in prison. They had become a member of non-violent movement and had disobeyed government order, leading to their arrest.

In the year 1944, Muslim League had become a real popular political party in Multan that was why the Quid-i-Azam did not visit Multan. Multan was also provided with a representative at Provincial level. Syed Ghulam Nabi Shah Gilani, Syed Zain-al-Abid Din Gilani, Muhammad Azim Khan Saddozai, Syed Mukhtar Husain Gardezi, Nawabzada Sa' dullah khan and Khawaja Abdul K. Kasif were nominated as members of Provincial League working Cor tee whereas Syed Zain-al-Abid Din Gilani was already a member of working Committee. In 1944, Quaid-i-Azam gave special consideration to formation of Muslim League party and so an organizing committee was formed for Multan division in August 1944. Syed Muhammad Raza Gilani was nominated its President and Syed Ali Husain Gardezi its secretary whereas Maulvi Mahboob Ahmad and Sufi Abdul Ghafoor were nominated for the city. They visited respective localities and roused workers to be ready for the forthcoming general elections. In short, Unionist Party became unpopular within a short time and even rural population voted over-whelmingly for Muslim League candidates during general elections.

Muhammad Nawaz popularly known as "Nazu Bagheela" also was a legendary figure of Pakistan Muslim League National Guard of Multan. He used to carry League flag in his hand, and used to raise slogan Pakistan Zindabad. The same way, Mr. Rab Nawaz Mukhlis and Ghulam Rasool were fanatic workers of League Party who were in habit of keeping League flag fixed on their bicycles raising slogans in favour of Pakistan. Such types of devoted workers popularised Party among Muslim masses. They did their services for creation of Pakistan, which is inestimable. Those individuals posed for arrest to Unionist government in the Punjab, for the noble cause. They were arrested a few times. Jail became their second home and they were never afraid of going to jail. They opposed the British who were proponents of India's unity. The role of the Muslim population of Multan in the Pakistan movement was therefore positive and they rendered great services during the movement. The election of 1945-46 could not ignore students who were to be vital in election campaign. They engaged in systematic propaganda which persuaded the voters of tehsil to give their vote to League candidate. During 1945-46, students of Islamia College walked about 40 miles in thesil. They also organised public meetings, in which they explained the cause of League manifesto for Pakistan. However, well-organized and efficient propaganda by the students gave confidence to the league candidate and helped him to withstand the attacks of district administration for the cause of Pakistan.

Muslim Jouranists also contributed in the movement and wrote in support of just cause of Muslims. In 1936, Muhammad Akram Khan was made Propaganda Secretary of League Party. Later he chose Journalism as his profession and started a daily newspaper "Shams" in Multan. After a few years another worker, Sheikh Muzaffar Husain, also published a weekly paper called 'Zimindar Sudhar'. Both these newspapers became the chief links of League Party in Multan. These news papers had brought Muslim masses of Multan, because both of them were the primary sources of information for people in Multan. Old copies of these newspapers (if available) will be an excellent resource for knowing early struggle for Pakistan in Multan. Another freedom fighter was Syed Sher Shah Gilani who was elected to Party in 1939 and ran for general elections of 1945 - 46 on League's ticket for Central Assembly and was elected a member of Constituent Assembly. Later on, he organised a public meeting in Eidgah ground on 25th January 1947, in which almost all office bearers of district and city league branches delivered speeches. They spoke against Unionist

government and violated section 144, by bringing out a procession. Thus he, along with *Syed Ghulam Nabi Shah Gilani, Syed Saeed Akhmad Shah Bukhari, Muhammad Azim Khan Saddozai, Abdul Karim Kasif, Syed Ali Husain Gardezi, Syed Mukhtar Husain Gardezi, Muhammad Akram Khan, Syed Zain-al-Abidin Gilani, Syed Willayat Husain Gilani, Makhдум Sajjad Husain Qureshi, Muhammad Arshad Chaudhry* and several others was arrested. They were sent to District Magistrate who gave them various sentences of imprisonment from 6 months to 3 years. The services of Mian Abdullah Arain, Syed Ghulam Nabi Shah Gilani and Syed Naobahar Shah are never forgotten as they daily organised processions. They had a great enthusiasm for working for Muslim League. They were pushing the movement in the rural society particularly in Tehsils Multan, Mailsi and kabirwala.

Under influence of Pirs, Syed and Maulvis, Multan has been a centre of orthodox people. A Muslim League was therefore not able to be organized in any of the women's branches. Syeda Zubaida Saeed Jaffery, younger sister of Syed Saeed Ahmad Shah Bukhari who was a student of Islamia College for Women Lahore (1941-44), was the first lady who played active role in politics as a member of Muslim Students Federation. She established a branch of Lady Muslim League at Multan in 1943. She managed to get Begum Syed Willayat Husain Gilani to lead organisation and in 1943, Syeda Zubaida Saeed Jaffery was elected General Secretary. She was able to introduce Begum Willayat Husain Gilani, a veiled lady, to the fore-front. This was an amazing transformation in conservative Muslim society of Multan. Gradually several other ladies joined the women branch of Muslim League. In 1946, Mrs. Anwar Pasha came to Multan and settled here permanently along with her parents. Mrs. Anwar Pasha was a great asset to the Women Branch of Party. She, along with Syeda Zubaida Jafery went door to door and convinced the Muslim ladies during the general elections. Hence, they played a healthy role and helped in the establishment of a separate Muslim Homeland Pakistan. They had the opportunity to hold out ladies' processions regularly in early 1947.

10. Multan Muslim League Campaign in elections 1945-46:

Before the partition, Multan Division comprised Multan, Muzaffargarh, Dera Ghazi Khan, Sahiwal, Jhang, Sargodha and Faisalabad (then Layllpur) and Muslim League had been established in Sahiwal in 1936 with the efforts of young lawyer, Sahibzada Nawazish Ali who was elected as Secretary. Despite opposition of different Unionist chiefs of Baloch land namely *Qureshis, Gurmanis, Darishiks, Jhakars, Lagharis, Khosas, Mazaris* and *Nawabzada Nasrullah Khan* (Babur's family) who were members of Congress Party and Ahrar Party, it was established in Muzaffargarh and Dera Ghazi Khan by Sardar Abdul Hameed Khan Dasti. Abdul Hameed Khan Dasti was a Public Prosecutor and Vice-Chairman of Muzaffargarh District Board. He was the pioneer worker and after convincing Malik Qadir Bakhsh Jhakar as young influential lawyer of area, decided to found Muslim League branch in September 1944. Therefore, Malik Qadir Bakhsh Jhakar was nominated as a President of Party. The issue was presented to Deputy Commissioner in front of Malik Khyzer Hayat Tiwana, Prime Minister of Punjab. Tiwana consulted his Ministers Major Ashiq Hussain Qureshi, Sir Chutu Ram and Sir Nawab Jamal Khan Leghari and with their advice he went to Muzaffargarh. There they met Malik Qadir Bakhsh Jhakar and gave him two acres of land to cultivate and assured him that they would give him the ticket of provincial seat at upcoming general elections. So Qadir Bakhsh moved out of Muslim League, and entered Unionist Party. The Chief Minister also met Sardar Abdul Hameed Khan Dasti and tried to influence him and win over his sympathies for Unionist Party but failed. Due to efforts of Sardar Abdul Hameed Dasti, Mian Muhammad Jilani Gurmani joined Muslim League in 1945 and Muslim League won two out of the three seats in General elections of 1945-46. In early 1947, people of Muzaffargarh

used to hold public meetings and started processions regularly and arrested several people during agitation against Khizer government. People of Dera Ghazi Khan were under influence of their respective chiefs but they definitely favoured Pakistan movement. Just as Vehari: Mailsi, Kabirwala, Jhang and Sargodha were under control of landlords. Initially, their political stance was with Unionist Party but in 1944, political landscape of Punjab changed. Earlier, Mian Mumtaz Muhammad Khan Daultana joined Muslim League and later in 1944, he was elected as Secretary of Punjab League. He used his influence and with his persuasion, several other landlords of different areas of the Punjab joined Muslim League. Quaid-i-Azam paid a visit to Mian Ahmad Yar Khan Daultana's house. Later on, Daultana chief convinced the land owning class that a separate Muslim homeland was not against their interests rather it would help Muslim community to enjoy freedom of life, liberty and property.

In the elections of 1945-46, Malik Muhammad Akram Khan Bosan (ML) ran a campaign against Nawab Major Ashiq Hussain Qureshi (Unionist) for Multan Tehsil. In its first results, Major Ashiq Hussain Qureshi (Unionist) was declared successful. He was also made minister by Malik Khyzer Hayat Khan Tiwana. Malik Muhammad Akram Khan Bosan (ML) filed a writ petition against Major Ashiq Hussain Qureshi and later on Akram Khan was declared successful. This was a huge blow to Qureshi family in politics in Multan. In Shujabad Tehsil, Makhdum Muhammad Raza Shah Gilani (ML) defeated Sir Nawab Makhdum Murid Hussain Qureshi of the unionist party. In constituency of Lodhran, ML's unionist party candidate Syed Sardar Ali Shah was defeated by lodhran's unionist party's Machkhool Ghulam Mustafa Shah Shah, who is also a member of Gilani family. The same way Muslim League candidate Mian Allah Yar Khan Daultana (uncle of Mian M. Mumtaz Khan Daultana) won seat in Mailsi Tehsil against the unionist Nawab Dur Muhammad Khan Khakwani. It is of note to be mentioned here that, Mian Muhammad Mumtaz Khan Daultana (ML) contested from Narowal and won the seat. In Khanewal Tehsil, Khan Bahadur Farid Khan Daha (ML) defeated Pir Zahoor Hussain Qureshi (unionist) as father of a Pir. In Jalalpur Makhdum, Diwan Syed Ghulam Abbas Shah Bukhari, an independent candidate defeated Makhdum Syed Rehmat Hussain Gilani (ML) but soon after the elections, Ghulam Abbas Bukhari joined the Muslim League Party. Unionist Muhammad Ibrahim Burq was declared successful in Muzaffargarh Tehsil with Muslim League candidate Sardar Nasrullah Khan Jatui contesting. The minister for education was Mian Muhammad Ibrahim Burq who was appointed by Malik Khyzer Hayat Khan Tiwana (CM. of United 171 Punjab). Ahmad Khan Mushtaq (ML) from Muzaffargarh seat won the election whilst Sardar Jamal Khan Leghari (ML) and Sardar Ata Muhammad Khan Buzdar (ML) were declared successful from Dera Ghazi Khan seat. In Rajanpur Sardar Bahadur Khan Darishak (ML) won the election. Then in 1945-46, they fought and defeated the general elections on Muslim League banners. It may be worth mentioning here that in general elections of the Multan Division, out of 24 seats Muslim League secured 21 seats.

The elections of 1945-46 marked the turning point in politics of Colonial Multan. The Muslim League campaigned with great vigor on slogan Pakistan and its politics was a referendum on Muslim political identity. The Muslim League agitated and raised the slogan Pakistan and elections were a vote on Muslim political identity. Rural voters were mobilized largely through the efforts of religious leaders. The members of Muslim community were encouraged to back League candidates through fatwas, sermons and networks of shrines. The victory of the League in the elections signalled waning power of the Unionists. The Pakistan Movement symbolism started to resonate with Muslim voters more than the politics of provinces of origin. According to Akhtar Hussain Sandhu, the elections in 1946 changed the nature of Muslim League from a political

organisation to the voice of the Muslim India.²⁴ In city of Multan, League victories were a result of successful co-operation between religious mobilization, elite alliances, and rural patronage networks. Multan was a key contributor to the culmination of the Pakistan Movement. Resistance and political gatherings, student activities and religious mobilisation boosted the pro-Pakistani sentiments across the district. The League's propaganda was boosted in local newspapers, which also denounced Congress policies. Muslim students staged rallies and staged public demonstrations in support of Jinnah's leadership. With support of pirs and sajjada nashins, the movement acquired religious status. The rural peasants started viewing Pakistan as an aspiration both politically, and religiously. In 1947, Multan had already firmly sided with Muslim League. The district played a major role in success of League in Punjab and in boosting demand of Pakistan in Punjab.

11. Conclusion:

The political change in Colonial Multan from 1935 to 1947 is a reflection of political changes taking place in Muslim Politics in Punjab and British India. In last ten years of colonial period, Multan developed into an important hub of the Muslim League, since its early days it was dominated by the Unionist Party and British-backed landed elite. This led to the Government of India Act 1935 which opened avenues for political mobilisation and contestation. The Unionists would dominate the political picture by means of a network of rural patronage, but the political landscape shifted and made their position less secure. The rise of Muslim nationalism, Lahore Resolution of 1940 and the discontent with Congress politics led to the expansion of Muslim League. Among the key figures in this change were the pirs, sajjada nashins and landed elites. The Muslim League was deeply rooted in rural society owing to the religious authority and rural patronage network. Political weight of Muslim landlords was further enhanced by canal colonies and agriculture development, which ultimately came to the favor of Pakistan Movement. Elections 1945-46 marked the supremacy of League in Multan and its failure of the Unionist politics. Muslim League harnessed the political feeling of Muslims, their religious identity and rural networks and was able to make Multan a stronghold of Muslim nationalism. The story of Multan during this era provides a reflection of the local political situation and its relationship to the ideological currents of the time. The contribution of the district in the Pakistan Movement emphasizes the significance of regional politics, religious authority and rural mobilization in the making of Pakistan.

²⁴ Sandhu, A. H. (2013). Revisiting the elections 1946 and Punjab politics. *Pakistan Vision*, 14(1), 1–20.