

ABSTRACT

This dissertation explains the contribution made by the Muslim landed elites to the separatist politics in the colonial Punjab. It aims at presenting the narrative of the origin and development of Muslim nationalist consciousness as a result of Muslim landed elites' conflict with the classes of moneylenders and professional urban middle classes. The research focuses on studying the phenomenon of Muslim separatism in the Punjab from the standpoint of Marxian notion of class conflict as most of the studies on Muslim nationalism are based on essentialist interpretation of this phenomenon. This study views the emergence of consciousness of Muslims as a distinct cultural community in interrelationship between class interests of Muslim landed aristocracy and imperial institutions. The Muslim landed gentry was nurtured and patronized by the British colonial state. The post-annexation Punjab witnessed tremendous modernization of infrastructure of roads or railways and agricultural colonization. The pastoral-agrarian Punjab thus became integrated into world capitalist market with the export of its surplus wheat, cotton and oilseeds. The agricultural production was revolutionized by technological innovation and as a consequence, social organization in rural and urban areas was developed in accordance with imperial interests. When the British introduced institutions like District Boards, Municipal Committees and Legislative Council to have representation of rural and urban elites; the landed and mercantile classes pursued conflicting interests. The Muslim landed classes championed the cause of Muslim communal interests in the Punjab to shield their economic and political position against the growing mercantile classes. They entrenched themselves in the imperial political institution by securing their nominations which solidified communal identity. The Punjab National Unionist Party was established by Punjab landed notables in 1923 and it played a remarkable role in the construction of Muslim identity and also served as counterweight to nationalist ideology of the Congress. The development of Muslim communal consciousness showed the imprint of pastoral-agrarian society in the Punjab. The constitutional communalism employed by Unionist Party eventually paved the way for the victory of All India Muslim League in its struggle for separate homeland. When All India Muslim