

The Dynamics of Regional Identity: The Case of Tulambah

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Abstract

Tulambah has survived its name from the ancient period till the recent times passing through the annals of History by taking diverse claims and responding to the ever-changing regional identities. This paper intends to explore the regional dynamics of identity by taking the case of Tulambah. Tulambah's place in history and its oscillating position in geo-historical structures of this region proves that town has shown a considerable detachability to contextualize itself in different geographical, political and administrative settings. This detachability has kept the town alive and available as a record of the past history.

Key words: Sub-continent, Multan, Regional History, Tulambah, Punjab

Introduction:

History is a vast field of knowledge that not only narrates the events occurred in the past but tries to explain the reasons and causes behind those events. It also helps us to understand the changing identities and status of cities and states in the historical discourse due to changes in geography and

administration. Those narrations and events, sometimes, can be found in local tales, containing the expression of rise and fall of dynasties and empires, forming local history. Thus, local history studies the history in geographical context based on local expression concentrating on local communities. Further, local history becomes national history when it is based on vast documentary evidence placed in a comparative context.¹ Thus, by studying the both documentary sources and local tales these changing identities and their connection with geography and dynasties can be understood on consolidated grounds. Therefore, the comparative study of the two interlinked phenomenon would help us revive our local histories. Henceforth, in Pakistan there are many cities longing for the attention of historians to evaluate their identities in historical discourse and Tulambah is one of them. Tulambah is a historical town present-day situated at a distance of 47 km from Khanewal and at a distance of 100 kilometers (62 mi) from Multan, on the eastern edge of the Ravi River.² The evaluation of the identity and the history of the town can help us to understand the regional history.

There are different opinions and traditions regarding the name of the town. According to a tradition, Tulambah was the throne of King *Pirhar*. After the death of *Pirhar* his son, *Kumb* ascended the throne and due to his affinity, the town started to be known as *Kumbah*. However, the town was known with the name of *Kumb* or *Kumbah* till the invasion of Muhammad bin Qasim.³ While the word Tulambah is believed to be discorded form of *Kumbah*. According to another tradition the city was founded by *Raja Tal* who belonged to the family of Sialkot's ruler King *Salbahan*. He came here from the north, while in the local language north is called *Ubhah*. Therefore, the fort he constructed was called *Tal Ubhah* that means the *Northern Tal*.⁴ Therefore, the word *Tal Ubhah* was later pronounced as *Tulambah*.

1 Tulambah in Ancient Times:

Tulambah was sacked by every invader who came in sub-continent with intent to invade Multan.⁵ The town has honor to give passage to Alexander on his campaign to India. He called

a meeting at the junction of River Ravi and Chenab which was attended by the rulers of different local states including Tulambah. In this meeting, local tribes had accepted the suzerainty of Alexander and presented him precious gifts.⁶ However, after the death of Alexander, Seleucus⁷, his successor in India, was defeated by Chandragupta Mourya in 303 B.C.⁸ In mid-2nd century B.C during the rule of Indo-Greek King *Menander*, Tulambah was one of the greatest centers of trade in the region.⁹ The city was inhabited in the lap of a huge hillock having fertile soil, forests, gardens, and lakes. The city had towers everywhere to deploy troops in case of threat.¹⁰ However, archeological sites founded by Dr. Muhammad Rafiq Mughal in 1963 tell us about the presence of a prosperous city. From these sites, a red-colored bowl, has been found containing the name of the king Menander as Menandra. Furthermore, there is a famous rule of the *Rai* Dynasty in Sindh from 485 A.D to 632 A.D. The dynasty was founded by Rai Diwaj who was succeeded by Rai Sahiras. However, Sahiras II was one of the most famous rulers of the *Rai* dynasty and he died in battle against the King of Nimruz. During the rule of this short-lived dynasty, Multan and its adjacent states were included in Sindh and *Ray* Sahiras had divided its territories into four different provinces Multan being one of them. Therefore, Tulambah had lost its independent status and it was included in Multan province. After Sahasi II, Chach ascended the throne in 632 A.D and consolidated his rule on other parts of the empire including Multan and Tulambah. During the rule of Raja Chach, Hiuen Tsang¹¹ visited Tulambah who stated that Tulambah was largely stretched country and people cultivate surplus crops of grain, wheat and barley. The ruler was Brahman and was famous for goodness. However, the same writer mentioned, the states of Multan fell under the administration of Tulambah and became the tributaries of Tulambah.¹² He went on saying that there were teachers and scholars of different countries teaching in a university.¹³ Anyhow, after Chach's death Raja Dahir managed to consolidate his rule over Sindh in 700 A.D and it seems that the fate turned to Multan in his reign. Tulambah seemed to have lost its status of capital and became a tributary state of Multan.

2 Tulambah in Sultanate Period (711-1526):

In 712 A.D after the conquest of Multan, Muhammad bin Qasim marched to the north along with river Ravi and conquered all the states of *Sahasi* rulers along with Tulambah.¹⁴ During the invasion of Muhammad bin Qasim, the ruler of Tulambah was a hindu who was later converted to Islam.¹⁵ After the conquest Akrama-bin-Rihan Shami was appointed Governor of Tulambah. When Muhammad-bin-Qasim received his dismissal orders by new caliph he was in the area adjacent to the town of Tulambah.¹⁶ Later on *Banu Samah* had established an independent government in 902 A.D. During his reign, Tulambah and Barhamapur¹⁷ were prosperous states.

However, the town was sacked and plundered by Sultan Mahmud Ghaznawi during his campaign to Multan in the early 11th century.¹⁸ During Ghaznawi's invasions Tulambah had gone through sever loss of life and economy. Till the 12th century status and fate of Tulambah remained associated with Multan. Thus, in 1001 A.D Ghaznawi captured Tulambah and in 1025 A.D, returning from his campaign of Sumnath and Delhi, he again invaded Tulambah for not being welcomed by the nobility of the region. Hence, on the orders of Mahmud, the town was blazed and people were massacred while the remaining people had rehabilitated the town.¹⁹

Ghauris obtained rule, in 1173 A.D, from Ghaznawids in Afghanistan. Using his rule in Ghazni as launching pad, Muiz al-Din expanded his rule to India.²⁰ Thus, in 1175 A.D Shahab-al-Din-Ghauri captured Multan.²¹ In this way Tulambah, being the part of Multan at that time, also fell in the hands of Ghauris. Thus, Tulambah remained the part of Ghauri Empire till 1206 A.D. During the reign of Ghauris the town had enjoyed peace and prosperity for being situated near the River Ravi as at that time most of the trade was carried out through rivers. The famous products of Multan were transported to Amritsar via Tulambah.²²

During Slave dynasty in 1206 A.D Multan was granted the status of province pushing Tulambah towards identity crises. After 1218 A.D this region remained on target of Tatars²³ and

in 1221 A.D Tataars²⁴ invaded Multan province including Tulambah. Later, in 1227 A.D Altutmush invaded Multan and Tulambah and included the region in his Sultanate. Furthermore, Tulambah had an honor to help Sultana Razia for recapturing Multan in 1239-40.²⁵ During Slave dynasty the region of Tulambah remained in the blows of Mongol invasions from 1245 A.D 1257 A.D due to its location on the rout of invaders that had weakened the city's administration and economy.²⁶ Henceforth, regional situation was controlled at the advent of Khiljis. In 1305 A.D Mongols came to invade Delhi sultanate once again under the command of Kebek²⁷. The forces of Multan on the orders of Sultan of Delhi rebuffed the Mongol intrusion.²⁸ Once again, a contingent of Mongols invaded Multan under the command of Iqbalmand.²⁹ This time Tulambah became the battlefield and *Shahi* forces managed to have victory with Iqbalmand being killed in the battle. Therefore, it was proved to be the last attack of Mongols and the region became completely peaceful. The people of Tulambah got engaged in cultivation and other social activities.

Ghazi Malik³⁰ founded Tughluq dynasty in 1320 A.D. and Tulambah fell under the rule of Tughluqs. Firauz Shah commissioned a cantonment in Tulambah that is still known as *Firauz Chaoni* among locals.³¹ Tulambah was sacked by Tamerlane in October 1398 A.D during the reign of the Tughluqs.³² Tamerlane himself advanced from north to Multan and crossed a junction of two rivers and marched to Tulambah.³³ On Saturday he encamped in a ground in front of Tulambah fort.³⁴ However, according to Farishta³⁵, Tamerlane moved further without invading the Fort or city due to the lack of time but it seems contradictory to the reality. Rather, he subjugated the local landlords and his army had killed thousands of people of the town. However, after taking a huge amount of ransom he left Tulambah and the town remained intact in its place till the beginning of the 16th century.³⁶

In 1405 A.D army of Delhi Sultanate mounted an attack on Multan during the reign of Khizar Khan³⁷ in order to recapture its territories. The Sultanate and Khizar Khan's armies met at Tulambah and the ruler of Multan was defeated. Soon after

battle at Tulambah, Khizar Khan forwarded to the Sultanate and in 1414 A.D he took over the crown of Dehli Sultanate and founded the Sayyid dynasty.³⁸ Moreover, in 1430 A.D the Governor of Kabul, Shaikh Ali, marched to Multan on the behest of Shahrukh Mirza³⁹ but the intrusion was repulsed by Governor of Multan at Tulambah and Shaikh Ali ran away. In 1431 A.D Shaikh Ali again marched towards Multan on stimulation of Jasrat Khaukhar⁴⁰ and captured Tulambah.⁴¹ It is stated in *Tarikh-i-Mubarak Shahi* that Tulambah was razed to the ground after being besieged by the army of Shaikh Ali. However, it is believed that after the plunder of Tulambah he did not proceed further and returned to Kabul.⁴² The third invasion of Shaikh Ali has been recorded in 1432 A.D when Sultan of Delhi Sayyid Mubarak Shah pushed him back from Tulambah to Kabul.⁴³

During the rule of Sultan Muhammad, the region of Multan and other parts of Sultanate fell a prey to anarchy. Consequently, in 1444 Shaikh Yousaf Quraishi was selected as an independent ruler of Multan by its people. Meanwhile, Ray Sahra Langah⁴⁴ had tied his daughter's knot with Shaikh Yousaf and then had captured the rule deceptively.⁴⁵ After his death in 1459 Hussain Shah Langah⁴⁶ succeeded. Hussain was very fond of education and always proved to be respectful to the erudite scholars. Perhaps, in his regime, Tulambah had witnessed the rise in education.⁴⁷ Moreover, during his time Sufism was also promoted in the region which had later given birth to Sufis like Maulana Fatah Ullah Tulambwi and Maulana Aziz Ullah Tulambwi. Mahmud Khan Langah ascended the rule of Multan as well as Tulambah in 1503.⁴⁸ During his regime many rivers of the region had either changed their routs or had lost their existence to drought.⁴⁹ Hence, in 1504 the River Ravi also had shifted its flow three Kilometers north of the town and the town of Tulambah started to be ravaged gradually.⁵⁰ While the people leaving the old town started moving close to the river in order to settle. Resultantly, the present-day town of Tulambah came into existence while the old town was transformed into ruins.

Tulambah had the honor to receive the founder of Sikhism and he came into contact with Sajjan *Thug*. However, Sajjan has tried to set the trap for both Guru Nanak and his musician but Guru Nanak became aware of his intentions and invited Sajjan to the congregation of contemplation. Hence, Guru Nanak had started singing his *Kalam* in the congregation and the *Kalam* penetrated in the heart of the Sajjan thug.⁵¹ Thus, he begged pardon and promised to abandon the life of cheat.⁵²

3 Tulambah in Mughal Period:

During the rule of Mughals, Multan had status of province in 1525 and Tulambah was under the administration of the Multan province as *Parganah*.⁵³ In 1540 Shair Shah Suri expelled Humayun out of the Sub-Continent⁵⁴ and in 1541 Multan came under the rule of Shair Shah. Tulambah being located on an important trade route had seen many new developments and construction in the regime such as a Caravan *Sarai* which is famous among people with the name of Shair Shah Suri's Sarai.⁵⁵ Besides, in these years Multan had lost its status of the province but Tulambah was still part of administration of Multan.

Again during the reign of Akbar Multan was granted the status of province consisting of four divisions in 1591 A.D. Hence, each division had *Parganahs* as administrative units under it.⁵⁶ Tulambah was serving as one of the five *Parganahs* under Multan division.⁵⁷ However, all these *Parganahs* were semi-autonomous states under their respective divisions and the rulers of these semi-autonomous bodies were called *Zamindars*. According to Abu al-Fazal⁵⁸, *Sahu* family was the *Zamindar* of Tulambah at that time. However, each *Parganah* had its *Qazi* who used to deal with the judicial affairs of *Parganah*. Furthermore, Abu al-Fazal, states that there were three hundred *sawars*⁵⁹ in the fort of Tulambah and five thousand *foot soldiers*⁶⁰ were appointed. Besides, in each *Parganah* there were special representatives appointed by the central government and Khan-i-Khana Mirza Abd al-Rahim was one of the famous representatives appointed to Tulambah.

Shah Jahan had commissioned the construction of *caravan sarai* in Tulambah. This caravan sarai had fallen a prey to

floods in 1750 and it had lost its significance.⁶¹ However, during Shah Jahan's regime, Tulambah had retained the status of *Parganah*. Afterwards, the death of Aurangzeb led to the rise of many princely states in the sub-continent.⁶² In 1726 in this chaotic situation a Daudpautra⁶³ tribe was invaded by Khuda Yar Khan Kahura a ruler of Sindh and Tulambah became the main shelter for exiled Daudpautra tribe.⁶⁴ Moreover, in 1750 Tulambah was invaded and plundered by Ahmad Shah Abdali.⁶⁵ Again, in 1752 he invaded sub-continent again, consequently, the region of Multan and Sindh were ceded to the Afghan empire.⁶⁶ In this way the Afghan *Sidu Zai* rule was established in Multan and Tulambah was also included in this extension.

In 1766 a Sikh *Sardar* Jhanda Singh⁶⁷ plundered and massacred the people of Tulambah on his way to Multan.⁶⁸ However, in 1772 A.D Sikhs, Jhanda Singh and Ganda Singh, again invaded and conquered Multan. Consequently, Haji Sharif, a noble, escaped to Tulambah and commissioned a fort that is still present in the center of the present-day Tulambah town.⁶⁹ Nonetheless, during the rule of Daisa Singh regions of Jhang, Multan and Tulambah were lost by Sikhs.⁷⁰ Taimur Durrani invaded the regions of Multan and Tulambah in winters of 1778 and defeated Sikhs.⁷¹ In 1779 A.D Tulambah was again sacked and plundered by Bhangi Sikhs and Nawab Muzaffar Khan⁷² rebuffed Sikh intrusion in Tulambah. Moreover, in 1813 the dethroned king of Afghanistan, Shah Shuja Durrani, came to Tulambah and the then Nawab of Multan, Muzafar Khan had entrusted him with the responsibilities of Tulambah land property in town.⁷³

4 Sikh Rule:

Though there have been recorded more than seven invasions of Ranjit Singh but the region came under his direct control in 1818.⁷⁴ In 1819, Khushal Singh become the administrator of Tulambah and Tulambah had become the part of Punjab under the Sikh rule. *Bakhu Langriyal* was famous for the plundering and looting of locals in the surroundings of Tulambah. Thus, one of the assistants of Sawan Mal⁷⁵, namely, Daya Ram of Gujranwala had killed Bakhu Langriyal after a tough fight in

the surrounding of Tulambah.⁷⁶ Administratively, during the Sikh rule, Multan was divided into 20 *Kardaris*⁷⁷ and Tulambah was one of the *Kardaris*. There was a *Kardar* and a *Bakhshi* appointed in every *Kardari* in order to collect taxes. There was a department of *Faujdari*⁷⁸ consisting of *Faujdar*, *Thanedar*, *Kautwal*, and *Jamadar*. Besides, there was a department of judiciary consisting of *Muftis* and *Qazis*⁷⁹. At that time the town had a strong lofty wall around the city and there were gorgeous entrance doors while each door had its name.⁸⁰ Furthermore, Ranjit Singh had established three famous red-light areas in Multan, Kahrur Pakka and Tulambah.⁸¹ Besides, Ranjit Singh commissioned the construction of a beautiful Temple at Ram Chauntra and a Bara Darri in the south of the River Ravi. However, adjacent to the southern portion of Bara Darri a vast ground was prepared for the purpose of holding court.⁸² An English traveler namely, Charles Masson visited Tulambah in 1827 A.D and he writes in his travelogue, published from London in three parts, that it is a big densely populated walled city.⁸³ Thus, Tulambah was the city of great importance and attention until the rules of Sikhs. But the changes faced by Tulambah in the British era were destructive for its identity and long-standing history.

5 British Period:

Multan was captured by British along with Tulambah in February. Hence, on 23 March 1849 Punjab was annexed into British territories and the province had gone through many administrative changes.⁸⁴ The province of Punjab stretched from Delhi to Peshawar and was divided into commissionaires, districts, *tehsils*, and *zail*⁸⁵ for administrative reasons.⁸⁶ Multan district was consisting of five *tehsils* namely, Multan, Saray Sidhu, Shuja' 'Abad and Melsi. Thus, for the first time in history the identity of Tulambah was affected by the establishment of *tehsil* Saray Sidhu and Tulambah had been reduced to *zail* under the administration of newly formed *tehsil*. In 1849 a police station was established in Tulambah and at that time the check posts of Pir Mahal⁸⁷ and Amranah (Mian Pakkhi) were under the police station of Tulambah.⁸⁸ However, in the war of independence, once again Tulambah witnessed the bloodshed as during the rebellion one of the commands of

Mujahids had reached Tulambah and there they had been faced by the Colonel Hamilton, the then commissioner of Multan.⁸⁹ Like the other regions, the rebellion was crushed with help of Hayat Shah of Ghauspur and Murad Quraishi, nobles of the region, loyal to the British. Besides, there were some other tribes in Tulambah such as Langriyal who rebelled against British rule and were also crushed with the help of Salabat Sargana and Haraj tribes.⁹⁰ On 1st December 1857, in a gathering headed by Mr. Hamilton, *mujahadin* were severely punished and British loyalists were awarded with rewards.⁹¹ Hence, after the failed war of independence, Tulambah like many other regions has witnessed certain changes. It is stated that one hundred and ten educational institutions were demolished by British government.⁹² In 1862 Islamic rules were abolished from the courts and Indian penal code and criminal procedure code was introduced.⁹³

In 1873 Tulambah was given the status of third category municipality in which there were two government members and four non-government members.⁹⁴ In 1889 a new tehsil was formed with the name of Kabir Wala and the municipality of Tulambah came under the administration of Kabir Wala.⁹⁵ In 1891 the strength of committee members of municipality was increased to eight, among them one member was selected and the other seven were elected members. A railway line was constructed in 1899 in the region in order to transfer goods. Hence, food, grains, leather and cotton were exported from the areas of Tulambah, Mian Channu and Kabir Wala.⁹⁶ However, in 1917 A.D another new tehsil Khanewal was established and Tulambah had become part of it as municipality. From 1917 till partition of Subcontinent, the status of Tulambah as a municipality of Khanewal remained intact.⁹⁷ During the 1880s till partition, there was Hindu in the population while during the partition Hindu population migrated to India and vacuum created by this migration was filled by those Muslims who migrated from India to Pakistan. Among Muslim migrants who settled in Tulambah were Rajputs, Daugars, Gujjars and Taggas.⁹⁸ Present-day the town is located between two cities that were established in British era, namely, Mian Channu and Abdul Hakim.

Conclusion:

Hence, Tulambah has seen many changes in its identity due to geo-political adjustments by the changing dynasties and rulers. It was once the center of a state and later became a municipality in a district that was established later. Its significance also varied on the basis of the political circumstances. Such as for Babur it was nothing more than a hunting area but for Suri it was an important trade route. Thus, in different circumstances and during the rule of different dynasties Tulambah had different geographical importance and a different identity. As mentioned above and also is evident from the course of study, this discussion and conclusion is based on the mixture of official and local sources of history of Tulambah. This paper has tried to blend the local and popular comprehension of the history and identity of Tulambah with the available information in the official records. This methodological aspect has not only enabled the author to bring the town to fore but at the same time has significantly proved the importance of reconceptualization of these different episodes of regional history. Tulambah is one of those places whose historical identity is regularly disrupted with the geo-political adjustments. There are still many places in Punjab, for example, which need not only prominence but also seek construction of proper historical identity.

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- ⁷ Title of ‘Nicator’ was given to Seleucus by later generation, which refers to ‘victor’ in English “Seleucus the victor”
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- ⁹ Zahur Ahmad Chaudhry, *Punjab Main Baradaryunki Siyasat: 1947-2003*, (Islamabad: National institute of research Quaid-i-Azam University, 2013), 208.
- ¹⁰ Such references can be found in the memoirs of Gen. *Cunningham* and *Hiuen Tsang*.
- ¹¹ Also written and pronounced as *Xuanzang*, visited the region in 7th century.
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- ¹³ Sahu, *Tarikh-i-Sarzamin-i-Khanewal*, 34
- ¹⁴ Ibid. 48-52.
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- ²³ Tartars are Turkic ethnic groups present day resides in Post -Soviet countries.
- ²⁴ A commander in Changez Khan’s army
- ²⁵ Sahu, *Tarikh-i- Sarzamin-i- Khanewal* , 55-56.
- ²⁶ Ibid. 58.
- ²⁷ Also written as *Kabak* and *Kapak* by Amir Khusru, [Zia-al-Din Barni](#) calls him *Kunk* and *Gung* and [Isami](#) calls him *Kubak*. He was a son of Duwa Khan-i-khana of Chughtai Khanate.

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- ³⁷ Khizar Khan was governor of Multan under Firauz Shah Tughluq.
- ³⁸ R.C Majmudar, *The Delhi Sultanate* (Mumbai: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 2006), 125-28
- ³⁹ who was the son of Tamerlane
- ⁴⁰ Sometimes written and pronounced as Jasrath or Dashrath was chief of Khaukhar tribes from 1420-1442. He was famous for ruling Punjab region, Jamu, Haryana and Himachal Pardais
- ⁴¹ Gazette of the district Multan: 1992(Lahore: Sang-i-Meel publication, 1924)
- ⁴² Sahu, *Tarikh-i- Sarzamin-i-Khanewal* , 66.
- ⁴³ Ibid. 67
- ⁴⁴ He has founded the Langah dynasty that lasted for at least 90 years in Multan and ruled under the title of Qutub-al-Din Langah.
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- ⁵⁸ the writer of *A'in-i-Akbari*
- ⁵⁹ horsemen
- ⁶⁰ foot soldiers
- ⁶¹ Gilani, *Murraqá-i-Multan*, 229-30.
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- Gazette of the Multan district*: 1923-24, 55.
- ⁷⁵ The then administrator of Multan.
- ⁷⁶ *Gazette of the Multan district*: 1923-24, 57.
- ⁷⁷ Tehsils.
- ⁷⁸ Police
- ⁷⁹ Muslim scholars and Judges, respectively.
- ⁸⁰ Sahu, *Tarikh-i-Sarzamin-i-Khanewal*, 134-35.
- ⁸¹ Shaikh, *Nagar Nagar Punjab*, 692.
- ⁸² Ibid. 132-133
- ⁸³ Ibid. 134.
- ⁸⁴ J.S Grewal, *The Sikhs of the Punjab* (Cambridge: Cambridge University press, 19990), 107.
- ⁸⁵ auxiliary units or minor sub-division of *tehsils*
- ⁸⁶ Sahu, *Tarikh-i-Sarzamin-i-Khanewal*, 137.
- ⁸⁷ A city in Toba Tek Singh district present day Punjab province of Pakistan.
- ⁸⁸ Sahu, *Tarikh-i-Sarzamin-i-Khanewal*, 143-46.
- ⁸⁹ Ibid.150.

⁹⁰ *Gazette of the Multan district: 1923-24*, 71.

⁹¹ Sahu, *Tarikh-i-Sarzamin-i-Khanewal*, 6.

⁹² *Ibid.* 162.

⁹³ *Ibid.* 164.

⁹⁴ *Gazette of the Multan district: 1922* (Lahore: Sang-e-Meel).

⁹⁵ Sahu, *Tarikh-i-Sarzamin-i-Khanewal*, 163.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.* 165.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.* 166, 168.

⁹⁸ *Gazette of the Multan district: 1923-24*, 100.