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Role of Lambardar in the Malia Collection Process and Its Procedure in District Mandibahauddin

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Abstract

The research is titled 'The role of Lambardar in the Malia collection process and its procedure in district Mandi Bahauddin. The study had seen how beneficial can be the role of Lambardar in the Malia collection process and how much Lambardar as a stakeholder is important in this process. Interviews of almost every stakeholder of this Malia collection process were taken such as local landowners of villages of Mandi Bahauddin, Chokidar, government officials like Tehsildar and the Lambardars of different villages. It was seen that the tax collection process was well structured and the Lambardar had the key role in this process. Although there were some recommendations like in many villages (other than chaks) had no Chokidar who help the Lambardar in collecting Malia. So it was difficult for big villages to collect Malia on time as there was no subordinate to help them in collecting Malia. It was recommended that Lambardars should have subordinates to collect Malia so that it can be gathered on time and the process should become smoother.

Key Words: Lambardar, Malia, Chokidar, tax, Status

Introduction

Lambardaris was a designation given to the powerful families of zamindars in the sub-continent under the British Raj. Lambardar is also known as Numberdar, a compound English word in which 'Number' means a percentage of the land revenue and 'Dar' means holder, owner etc. In the middle of the 19th century when prominent farmers slowly started accruing large lands they became powerful. Most influenced among them were given the designations of Zaildars and Lambardars. The British gave them some official powers to strengthen

them, out of which collecting land revenue was the most important one. Other than this their duties were to assist government officers, maintain cordiality among the locals, report regarding various social phenomena of the village and many other. The main purpose was that the British wanted someone from the locals who were already the headman of the village. As the headman had the confidence of the villagers and had informal administrative powers. So that it would be easy for the British to retain their indirect hold.

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The primary objective of the British was to collect land revenue from the locals. It is the revenue that is imposed on those landholders who are using the canal irrigation system, so basically it is “water tax”. The terminologies used in Punjab for that water tax are *Malia* and *Mamla*, in Sindh, it is known as *Dhal*. The concerned village accountant (*Patwari*) sends *fard* to *Lambardar*. After that *Malia* is collected under the supervision of *Lambardar* by the *Chokidar* according to *fard*. It is collected after each harvest of the Rabi and Kharif crops. For fruit farms like citrus farms, the tax is collected twice a year. Fruit farms gave *Malia* twice due to their excessive use of water. After collecting all the revenue it was deposited to the concerned department.

To run the state affairs, funds were always required. The people were unable to pay their taxes as imposed by the monarch because people specially countryside people were living away from the city centre. For the collection of land taxes from landholders, the king appointed his representatives (Feudatories, Nobility). The land tax varied from region to region but was compulsory for every landholder to pay. ‘The land revenue collection is a practice from the times of monarchy. Feudal lords were assigned by the kings to collect land revenue from their respected areas. Local farmers were asked to pay one third or one-sixth of the total crop yield as land tax. As a reward of their services to the monarch they were given titles and other perks’ (Maloney 1974).

The model presented in the World Bank economic review whose title is prospects for agriculture land taxation in developing countries is in alignment with the research domain. It was written that those developing countries whose economy is based on agriculture should make the local landholders put their political interest in the collection of land tax. The government should use land taxes to invest in those very locals from whom they gather land tax. By making their lifestyle better and by giving them political strength they will be encouraged to pay land tax. Otherwise, it will be hard to make them pay taxes due to poor “Administration; progressive tax rates based on landholding”. To counter these issues the government should pull up the local taxation system

and promote the local administration to make the land tax effective (Skinner 1991).

‘In Sri Lanka, the headman is locally known as *mudaliyar* was a very powerful position in the times of British. In the Kandyan province of Sri Lanka, *mudaliyar* should be from a good family of pure Sinhalese. The government policies increased the powers and duties of head man in their areas’ (Roberts 2008).

In the British rule on the subcontinent and even before that, landholders used to give land taxes. In 1892 a survey was done by Baden-Powell in which large landlords and peasants who owned their own lands used to pay their land tax by themselves, this type was known as *Raiyatwari*. On the other hand, small farmers who were known as *raiya* used to give the 6th portion of their production to the king or his representative, usually the village’s headman. When the British started ruling the subcontinent they continue collecting the same tax but at a more modest rate. Besides that, other villages had a different kind of taxpaying mechanism. Villages usually create unit estates by joining each other this was done mainly in the zone from Punjab to Uttar Pradesh. The main thing bounding the landholders of those unit estates was that all of them were from the same clan or their family tree joined at any place. These forms of villages were owned by elites or elders of the same *biradari* or it was governed by *panchayat* (Maloney 1974).

Review of Literature

The background to land irrigation and taxation as noted in the previous chapter also elaborates on the importance of the *Lambardar*. *Lambardar* or village headman is the representative of the government to the people; simultaneously he is a representative of the people to the government. It is his duty to collect the tax (*malia*) from the *zameendar* and then deposit it to the government. Studies have found that *Lambardar* are effective in the collection of taxes and maintaining a bridge between the government officials and the villagers. A recent article reported that there are about 5,500 posts vacant for *Lambardar* of the officially sanctioned 38,500 posts in Punjab (The Nation 2019). The article further stated that village headmen appointed under the Punjab Land Revenue Act 1967 do not

only collect tax but also performs other duties like reporting of encroachment and reporting an epidemic in the village or reporting a breach in the canals. He also submits reports about the crops in the village.

As we have said that the primary role of the *Lambardar* is the collection of *malia*, this process takes place through a hierarchy. On this, we can say that Max Weber's theory of bureaucracy [\(Downs 1965\)](#), can be applied to the first objective. The first objective is to study the role of *Lambardar* in the *malia* collection process. The *Lambardar* is the centre man in the collection process; he has men above and men below him. The process is completed by a number of institutions coming into action.

In the past decade, governments have also recognized the necessity of headmen in expanding the tax net. A majority of the Pakistani population practices agriculture and it is from this sector that Pakistan can truly benefit. An article published in DAWN reported that *Lambardars* would be reinstated to expand the tax net. With the re-establishment of the institution, the headman would also be given incentives [\(DAWN 2006\)](#). It was aimed that the *Lambardar* would bridge the gap between public and government and through him, the government will be able to increase their tax net.

Lambardar or the headman as a mediating authority plays a significant role. His primary task is the collection of tax and then submitting it to the government. For the completion of his task, he has a helper known as *chawkidar*. Before the partition of the subcontinent, under the administration of the British Raj, the British had imposed three different kinds of land administration and taxation system. Namely, these were *Zamindari*, *Ryotwari* and *Mahalwari*. The headman was allowed to collect a percentage over the tax. For his work "he received *haq-i-lambardari* or *panchotra* which was the fifth of the collected amount" [\(Hussain 2017\)](#). The position or status of the *Lambardar* simultaneously can be both achieved and ascribed. Initially when the British inaugurated the system the headman from the villages had to be chosen making the position an achieved status. When a *Lambardar* was selected and he started performing his duties the

post became a hereditary post making it an ascribed status as well [\(ibid\)](#).

Society is an interwoven fabric of individuals and the institutions they erect. Where an individual is to perform his functions to keep his current status, he is also performing other functions unofficially. Similarly, the *Lambardar* collects taxes and performs his duties as per the constitution but being a member of the society he must also perform his duties in the society. These functions fall in the sphere of his social worth. The *Lambardar* is also responsible for reporting any epidemics in the village or any encroachment to the roads passing by the village. Other than his primary task of tax collection he is to inform the government of crimes in the area, report deaths, report anti-social activities and the care of government properties [\(www.lawmatespak.weebly.com, 2002\)](#).

Lambardar receives 12.5 acres of land from the government or he can receive five percent of the tax collected from the landlords. Sometimes the *Lambardar* can come in a position of power. Often the *Lambardar* is a landlord himself and he can influence the general public in the village. In some cases, the villagers are working on his land as tenants. This involves the headman in power relations of the village politics [\(Shah, Hussain, & Rehman, 2019\)](#).

The village headman has historically been involved in the village political sphere. They were installed by the British to ensure their rule in Punjab [\(Awan 2016\)](#). The same is also discussed in another article, noting that the British appointed the ruling aristocracy by giving them the offices of *Tehsildar*, *Zaildar*, *Lambardar* and *Qanoongo*. They would be elected from the village but worked for the British to collect taxes to generate revenue and then crop was further gathered from the village yield to be exported to the world market [\(Agha 2016\)](#).

Methodology

The research was done in a village named Chak#25, tehsil Malakwal, District Mandi Bahauddin. Interviews were taken and recorded by almost every person who had relation in the *Mali* collection process like landholders, *Tehsildar*, *Chowkidar* and *Lambardar*. Everybody told their

duties and procedure. In the experiment questions about *Malia* collection process were asked by the researcher. The researcher also used the observation method to know things in depth.

Table 1. Duties of Stakeholders

Stakeholders	Duties
NehriPatwari	The NehriPatwari survey the particular area and note down the types of crops irrigated by water tax (<i>Malia</i>) payers. Then he reposts the <i>MaalPatwari</i>
Maalpatwari	Maalpatwari then make <i>fardand</i> send them to the <i>Lambardar</i>
Lambardar	Lambardar made chits, on which the amount of tax is written and give it to <i>Chokidar</i> . After the gathering of <i>malia</i> , he also deposits in the bank
<i>Chokidar</i>	<i>Chokidar</i> take chits from Lambardar and gave to every landholder then collect <i>Malia</i> from them and give it to Lambardar
Landholder	His duty is to receive his chit and submit his <i>Malia</i> before the due date

Table 2. People Satisfied by the Process

People	Response
Landholder 1	Yes
Landholder 2	Yes
Landholder 3	Yes
Chowkidar	Yes
Lambardar	Yes
Tehsildar	Yes

In the table above, it was asked that was everyone is satisfied by the *malia* taking process. Everyone seemed satisfied, but everyone had his own reason.

Results and Discussion

Malia Collection Process as per the Village Lambardar

Firstly, the NehriPatwari does a survey of the crop whether rabi or Kharif. He marks the quantity of the crop cropped by the landowner. If the landowner has fruit farms, he notes down the area and what sort of fruit has been cropped. This is to say that, *malia* is not over all the land owned by the person but rather the area which has been cropped and the type of crop used. For example, if a landowner has 50 acres of land but has cropped about 30 acres of wheat. It is over the crop gained from these 30 acres that the *malia* is collected from. Once the survey is complete, *nehriPatwari* hands over the survey to the *maalpatwari*. It is the *maalpatwari* who calculates the *malia* that is applicable to the landowner. This record he prepares is known as *fard* or *farddhalbash*. This *fard* is handed over to the *lambardar*. It is according to the *fard*, that the

lambardar will collect *malia*. For the purpose of *malia* collection, the government has appointed two individuals to the *lambardar*. These are *chokidar* and *begari*. Both of them come from the same village. The government facilitates them by giving them 2 acers of land. *Lambardar* prepares chits of *malia*. He writes the name of the landowner on top and then writes the *malia* and here the *das chokidara* is also added. This is 8 rupees per *murabba*. This is the *chokidars* loyalty or reward or commission. These chits are distributed to the landowners. Sometimes a final date is given on top which must be met by the *zamidar*. If the date is not met a fine (20-25 rupees) is applicable. Often the landowner gives the *malia* on spot to the *chokidar*.

Once the collection is complete, the *lambardar* goes to the tehsil, where the recovery clerk gives a chit to the *lambardar* which notes the amount deposited by the *lambardar*. The money is then deposited in the National bank. Here three slips are prepared. One is kept by the bank for their own record. The second is given to the clerk of the revenue department. The third is kept by the *lambardar* for his own record. There can also come

a situation when the zamindar does not have the full amount of *malia*. Now if the relations between him and *lambardar* are good, the *lambardar* can deposit the remaining amount from his own pocket. Which is later on returned by the land owner to the *lambardar*. However, this only happens if the relations are on a personal level or good, to say the least.

The question arises that what would happen if the *lambardar* is removed from this process? The respondent noted that the revenue collection process is a long and oftentimes an arduous process. If the *lambardar* is removed, then there would be some other government-appointed person to collect this tax. He would not be able to keep up with the process. The *lambardar* however, is a member of the village, living in the village and also has a hold in the village. If he is replaced by some other person from the village, even then it would have its own problem. Some people from the village cannot write so they won't be able to prepare *chits* or are weak in the calculation, so he won't be able to calculate the tax. In the village *lambardar* is the most effective way of collecting *malia*. It is also because he has a hold in the village, he is politically and socially influential. If someone is not paying the *malia* he can report the *tehsildar*. People also respect him, this respect also helps him in the collection of revenue.

Response from the Landowners

The landowners Liaqat Ali was living in the village for about 25 years. He owned about 5 acres of land. The *malia* he deposited was around 2000 to 2500 rupees. This he deposited every 6 months. *Lambardar* sent *chokidar* to collect the *malia* from the landowner. On his land, he sowed *kamad*, *kanak*, *pathay*, *jwar*. For *kamad* the *malia* is about 500- 550 rupees per *qila*. It is 250-300 rupees per *qila* for *pathay*. 55-600 rupees for *kanak*.

If the landowner does not have the money, the *lambardar* gives the landowner some days to deposit his *malia*. This time can be about 15 *dnag* (days) to a month. Sometimes the *lambardar* deposits the total amount from his pocket. Later on the *chokidar* collects the money from the landowner.

The *Lambardar* is often helpful to the villagers. If a person needs some sort of help, if the villager wants to go to the police station he contacts the *lambardar*. The *lambardar* also visits at times of happiness and sorrow. They also give some money to the villager. This helps the *lambardar* to build up his reputation in the village for elections.

Chokidar: Muhammad Zaman was the *chokidar* in the village. He was indigenous to the village. His father was also appointed at the same post. Zaman himself was in the position for about seven to eight years. He recalled that the *gardawar* brought the *pard* from the tehsil office. This was to be separated by the *chokidar* and *chits* be prepared. These were then dispatched to the landowners by the *chokidar*. It is then the *chokidar's* duty to collect the tax. Some people give it on the spot while some give it after a day or two. If by the last date the tax is not collected, the name of the landowner is given in the tehsil office that he has not paid his tax. Again, if someone cannot pay because of his financial standards being poor, the money is added from the *lambardar's* pocket. It is later on collected by the landowner when he has the money to repay him. If someone does not pay intentionally, the *tehsildar* can send his men to recover the tax from them. He told us that the *malia* for the summer crop was more than the winter crop. Once the tax is collected the *chokidar* is the one who deposits the tax.

Tehsildar: One way that the tax is collected, is that the *lambardar* collects the tax from the village and deposits it to the *vasilbaki* (post at the revenue department). Another method is that the *lambardar* meets the *patwari* and collects the money from the *lambardar*. The *patwari* then deposits the tax at the *khazana Sarkar*. The official method is that the *lambardar* would collect the tax at the village and gather the tax and deposit it at the bank. If someone has been reported a defaulter, the *patwari* approaches the defaulter and collects it. If still, he does not pay the *tehsildar* has the official authority to have a warrant of arrest and seize his land. Which is then sold off at auction. *Lambardar* is the village officer, he is continually in contact with the tehsil office. It was in the last Kharif that the tax was doubled.

The responses above show the importance of *lambardar* in the tax collection process and in the

village. It would be difficult if he is removed from the equation of the data collection process.

Conclusion

To conclude, Lambardar or the village headman cannot be replaced. He is the face of government in the village and all those actions that can or will affect the village directly or indirectly are consulted through the headman. Even for the purpose of Malia collection, it will be hard to eliminate the Lambardar as the coming official will lack social support. This means to say that the headman in tax collection uses his social status to collect Malia. Even in some cases, the Lambardar has to put his own money to complete the missing amount if some landowner is short of money. This helps the government in tax collection as all the Malia is

deposited on time and the replacing entity will not make much space for such landowners and cause a social disturbance.

Recommendations

During the study, the researcher finds out that many villages other than *chaks* have no *Chokidar* due to which the Malia collection process gets delayed. Those villages including *Chaks* which have *Chokidars* get a very low commission on collecting Malia due to which the *Chokidar* show very less efficiency in collecting Malia. The researcher recommends that every Lambardar should get a subordinate (*Chokidar*). Secondly, the commission of *Chokidar* should be according to the area of land on which he collects Malia so that he can show his full efficiency.

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