

Commercial Activity: Intera-Regional Trade & Commerce between Sind and Multan in Colonial period (1849-1901)



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Abstract: *This research deals with the trade relations between two major towns of Karachi and Multan in the colonial period. The aim of this article is to develop a general narrative of the commercialization of crops that led to the growth of intra-regional trade and economy—addressing the issues of how these two centers contributed to the new economic development of South Asia as well as marinating their historical trade relations? Tracing the journey of agricultural production from the village mandis to the international markets, we examine the commercial network and the nature of the interaction. It will also saw the increasing and decreasing trends of trade in the following years. The research aims to draw a conclusion by using qualitative and quantitative methods for assessing its historical importance and analyze these towns as case studies. Karachi and Multan have been the two most populous and largest economies in South Asia. Being the prominent constituents of colonial India, both have a great potential for intra-regional commerce through three channels of rail, road and ports. This research is based on original, unpublished official administrative reports of British Indian Library London and Punjab Civil Secretariat Lahore.*

Key Words: Intera-Regional Trade, Sindh, Multan, Colonial Period, Commerce

Introduction

Being the rulers of India British introduced innovations in the mercantile areas like Karachi and Multan, were experienced significant change. Sind s' trade had long been in the hands of Hindu *Banias*. Shikarpure was the center of their trade and commercial activities. Until 1824, Shikarpur had been under Afghan rule. Its merchants were financed by the Durrani invasions of India, but its fortune declined with those of the Durrani kings and the process accelerated under British rule. In 1839, British cantonment was established in the town of Sukher, and gradually, Sukhur replaced Shikarpur as the economic focus of Upper Sind. The conquest of Punjab in 1849 altered the pattern of Sind s' trade by throwing open the province s' markets and granaries to Sindhi merchants. Sukkur, situated at a crossing point on the Indus, was better placed than Shikarpur to take advantage of the Punjab trade. Sind and Punjab interconnected with the railway. In terms of economic and industrial development, railways played a major role in integrating regional and global markets and increasing trade.

Multan has been an important region for its geographical location, and it was one of the luckiest South Asian s' cities which were able to retain its pre-colonial economic importance by redirection of energies. After British colonial annexation, the Multan town shared the profits of the new overseas commerce as a point where the river routes of Punjab interlinked. India was connected to Central Asia and Afghanistan through Multan. During the colonial period, the districts also witnessed great improvements in their town and trade. The introduction of the railway in the district greatly altered the course of trade, and it was boosted by the infrastructure of roads, railways and port of Karachi.

Inland Transportation and Commerce between Multan and Karachi

After a short period of annexation, the provincial administration analyzed that the agro-products of landlocked Punjab could most easily be exported via Karachi; however, there was a question, what would be the best source for this purpose? Whether river steamers or railway lines were the suitable forms of

inland transportation? The answer was, in the end, finalized in favor of the railway connection. In Punjab after the war of 1857, a large export-import trade developed between Punjab and in international markets via the port of Karachi, having a suitable location on the Lahore Karachi railway; Multan town became a major focus of this rail born trade and commerce.

The Flotilla was not a suitable commercial carrier for logistic purposes. In the plenty spells of low water flow, the steamer's carrying capacity was extremely limited, and troops and government stores gave priority to private cargo. In 1857 commissioner G. W. Hamilton of Multan reported that goods had been detained for months at Karachi port and ultimately had to be forwarded to Punjab on camels. The Bombay Indus Flotilla was disbanded in 1862; five steamers being turned over to the Sind, Punjab and Delhi railway company which was constructing a line from Karachi to Multan town. By the completion of the railway line, the company's vessels would traffic between the railhead and Multan. ([Faqir Chand Arora, 1930, pp., 17-18](#))

The Punjab government Marine Department was established in 1862 to carry out steam navigation on the upper Indus. The government tried to prove that steamers could be operated beneficially, then private cargo system. The experience was not a success due to an inability to acquire vessels with the prerequisite grouping of light draft and powerful engines. The five Marine department's steamers were unable to manage satisfactory cargo to meet expenses because they charged higher shipment rates than local country boats. Hopes to divert the steam navigation of Central Asia to Karachi were not accomplished. Afghan caravan merchants were interested in travelling Via Multan to Lahore and Amritsar. After running up arrears of Rs.1 400,000, The Punjab Flotilla was abolished in 1872. (Ibid, p. 17-18, 57-67)

Now the administration was interested in paying attention to railway line construction. In 1855, Delhi, Punjab and Sind Railway Company started working. In 1865, the railway link from Lahore to Multan was completed. The Indus Valley State Railway from Kotri to Multan town was completely constructed in 1878. ([Public Works Department, Punjab Administration Report of the General Branch for the year \(1884-85\), 1885, p. 13](#)) Commissioner Hamilton of Multan reported in 1860, trade was developing as a result of

increased steam traffic on the Indus River and that the prices of agro products were higher than before and would hope to remain so. (L. Gillion, Kenneth, 1968, pp.1-6.)

In 1863, Commissioner William Ford remarked that the trade of Multan town was growing fast and that the town had become much rich and wealthier since he was here ten years back. According to the fiscal year 1862-63, Multan town exported Rs. 4, 201, 50 in cotton, 24, 007 bales being shipped by steamers to Karachi. In 1862-63 the city also exported Rs. 901, 810 in goods down the Indus in 299 country boats. In value, the country boat trade of Multan was second only to that of Ferozpur, which exported Rs. 4, 093, 470 in goods. ([Punjab Land Administration Report \(1859-60\), 1860, p.86](#)) In the fiscal year 1865-66, the cloth exports of Multan town to Jhang District and Afghanistan was approximately Rs. 3000,000 in the value. ([Punjab Land Administration Report \(1862-63\), pp. 85-86 and Appendix IV](#))

Between fiscal years 1869-70 and 1870-71, the worth and value of Multan s' commerce and trade, excluded railway traffic, rose by nearly Rs. 8,000,000. In 1870-71 Multan, with Rs.22.101 447 in imports and exports, had the largest non- railway trade-in value of any Punjab town. Delhi was second with Rs.16 498 403 worth and Amritsar third with Rs. 10,605,279 in value. ([Punjab Revenue Administration Report \(1870-71\), 1871, pp. 51-52](#))

Exports & Imports through Rail born trade

Multan town became one of the major rail born trade centers of Punjab after the completion of the railway line from Multan to Karachi. The town funnelled exports to Karachi and distributed imports from that port throughout the province. The main exports were cotton, wheat, wool, oilseeds, sugar and indigo; the main imports were European cotton textiles and other European industrial manufactures. Multan also imported fruits, drugs and spices from Afghanistan while exporting to the country indigo, European and indigo cotton fabrics, sugar and shoes. Multan traders and merchants had agents in every major Punjab city, and the large firms of Lahore, Amritsar, Peshawar, Jullundur and Delhi had representatives at Multan. ([Punjab Revenue Administration Report \(1870-71\), 1871, pp. 51-52](#))

The fiscal year of 1880-81 proved the significance of Multan town as an important trade center. Multan town was the third-largest in value in the province of

Punjab after Amritsar and Delhi top of Lahore. ([Punjab Government, Report on the Internal Trade and Manufactures of Punjab \(1880-81\), 1882, pp. 12-17](#))

Table 1. Total value in rupees of imports and exports within the Punjab 1880-81

City	Value of Imports Rs.	Value of Export Rs.	Total value Rs.
Amritsar	31,534,287	13,030,985	44,565,272
Dehli	22,072,933	9,874,125	31,947,118
Multan	8,404,104	3,703,382	12,107,486
Lahore	7,333,518	1,202,717	8,536,035

Some major imports and exports of Multan in the year 1880-81 are as under: ([Report on the Internal Trade and Manufactures of Punjab \(1880-81\), p. 17.](#))

Table 2. Import and export of agro-commodities in tons during the year 1880-81

Commodity	Imports(Tons)	Exports (Tons)
Raw cotton	714	562
European Cotton	85	2
European piece-goods	867	520
Indigo	490	379
Wheat	10,223	541
Seeds of all sorts	3,757	626
Raw silk	49	17
Refined Sugar	2,206	825
Unrefined Sugar	2,384	1,325

In the report on Multan city trade in 1880-81, the district Deputy Commissioner stated that the Indian yarn got preference than European by the weavers of the town. Textile manufacturers of Multan were in great demand in Afghanistan. This significant increase was the result of the opening of many new shops and large buying by Afghan traders and merchants. Jhang, Bahawalpur and Sindh were the main center for silk re-exporting. After two years of pause in reporting, Bokhara, Kokhand and Herat were in resumption as

silk importers in 1880-81. ([Report on the Internal Trade and Manufactures of Punjab \(1882-83\), 1884, pp.17-18](#))

Total import and export of Delhi were Rs. 70, 079,200, Amritsar was 37,240,171, Lahore was 17,679,814 and Multan was 10,416,921. With trade comparison in the year 1882-83, Multan town stood fourth in the value and worth for its rail and river born trade, after Dehli Amritsar and Lahore. ([Report on the Internal Trade And Manufactures of Punjab \(1882-83\), 1884, pp.22-24](#))

Table 3. The total value of imports and exports of Multan during the year 1882-83

City	Imports Rs	Exports Rs	Total Rs.
Dehli	43,422,514	26,656.886	70,079,200
Amritsar	27,725,133q	9,515,038	37,240,171
Lahore	10,867,704	6,830,110	17,697,814
Multan	7,466,149	2,950,722	10,416,921

Statics of Punjab internal trade and Manufactures report for 1882-83 showed that the commercial future of Multan was not bright. Afghan traders tempted the opening of a railway line connected to Sibi and Baluchistan to take a route away from Multan, while the city should take advantage of the development of

rail traffic with Karachi. As trade with Sind appeared to be avoiding the Multan route in order to escape paying town duties, the Municipal Committee was advised to consider a reduction in duties. ([Punjab Internal Trade and Manufacture Report \(1882-83\), pp. 29-30](#)).

The internal trade report for 1883-84 analyzed that Multans' octroi rates were actually not too much. Trade became limited within the town because rural railway station was connected the provincial market places and things could be shipped easily and directly to their mandies and other destinations from these stations. ([Punjab Internal Trade and Manufacture Report \(1883-84\), p.29](#))

Between 1883 and 1885, Punjabi rail-born commerce with Karachi extended very much. For the years 1883-84 imports with Sind and including Karachi was 15%, and the total value of exports was 30%. ([Punjab Internal Trade and Manufacture Report \(1883-84\), p.29](#)). For the year 1884-85 imports with Karachi was 35%, and the total value of exports was 40%. ([Punjab Internal Trade and Manufacture Report \(1884-85\), pp. 16-17.](#))

Multan town developed its trade connection with Karachi, and Multan became an importer than exporter. With the comparison of the years 1884 and 1885, the import of 1885 was increased. The town's imports of European piece-goods increased from 654 tons in 1883-84 to 2662 tons in 1884-85, within the same years, exports by rail of wheat increased from 1147 tons to 5655 tons. The Internal Trade Report for 1884-85 concluded that fears about the future of Multan regarding trade proved baseless, but imports took a major portion of its regional economy its economy. The trade of the district Multan was similar to the Multan town. Lahore was the next station for trade. According to the Punjab Internal trade report, for the years 1885-86, trade-in Lahore was decreasing. While the bulk of the trade remained the same, it decreased in value by two lakhs of rupees. The trade of Lahore consisted principally in the import and export of railway plant and rolling stock, wines and spirits and unclassified articles and in the imports of cotton piece goods, wheat, ghee and sugar. Export of wheat from Lahore was almost inappreciable. ([Punjab Internal Trade Report for the Year \(1885-86\), 1887, p. 14.](#))

Total trade traffic of Multan station during the last two years was as follows. Total imports from Punjab were 817,586 in Munds, and 34, 83,210 was in value. The ratio of the trade from other provinces was 722,518 in Munds, and 47, 38,329 were in value. The total exports within Punjab and other provinces were 775,324 in Munds and 55, 60,422 in value. (Ibid.p.14) The growing importance of Multan as a commercial center was noticed. In the years 1885-86,

the rail born traffic had increased by 20% in value and nearly 50% in weight. There was a slight falling off in imports of European twist and yarn and cotton piece-goods caused by the large imports of those articles in 1884-85. The principal increase in imports was in railway plant and rolling stock. There was a marked increase in exports of raw cotton, indigo and wheat. 20,979, raw cotton, 30,404, indigo and wheat 260,923 Munds were exported from Multan during the years 1886-88. Multan town became the principal exporting center for indigo, which was grown in the same quantity in the districts of Multan, Muzaffargarh and Dera Ghazi Khan. In fact, indigo trade had engrossed to such an extent that 3,500 maunds of indigo were imported into Multan by rail for re-export. The manufacture of indigo in this district was worth noticing, but its price was low. However, its price was Rs. 66 per maund, one rupee higher than last year. ([Punjab Internal Trade and Manufacture Report \(1885-86\), p.15](#))

Wool was the major article imported between the years 1886-87 from other Punjab stations via Multan from Delhi, Amritsar and Lahore. Total quantity in munds imported from Multan to other Punjab stations and from other provinces were 425 with 23,320 values in rupees. Small exports of grain mean a small inflow of money. For the year 1887-88, total imports to Multan from other Punjab stations and from other provinces was 548 in munds, and 28,409 was in value. (Punjab Internal Trade and Manufacture Report (1885-86) p. 22.)

In imports, chief increase in value had occurred in commodities like unrefined sugar, about 20 Lakhs of rupees, grains 6/4, opium 6 and raw silk 5/4. Dried fruit, nuts, Brass and copper, Iron, European cotton twisted yarn, dyes, non-intoxicating drugs and chemicals 3 to 5, kerosene oil, umbrellas, manufactured leather. The whole increase in unrefined sugar was imported from North-Western provinces and Outh, and the good-sugar cane crops of those territories was a sufficient explanation of the phenomenon. The increased import of all grains was the result of the poor crops of many districts of Punjab in the year under report. All other items of increase might put down to the ordinary fluctuations of trade depending partly on the increase of population and wealth but more upon the depletion of stock caused by low imports of 1886-87. Decrease in imports has occurred for the most part in Indian cotton piece goods 19 Lakhs of rupees, European cotton 6 and

drained sugar Lakhs. Dyes and tans, unwrought copper, Indian tea, other metals and salt were in value of 1/4 and 2/2 Lakhs. The results were instructive; in the External Land Trade Report, it was shown the European and Indian cotton was being more and more appreciated in the countries to the West and North West of Punjab, and that disregarded casual fluctuations, and increased export of those commodities was going on. In a general way, it might be taken that the purchasing power of population was

indicated by the number of commodities exported and retained for consumption that was total imports of such commodities by rail and river minus total exports by rail, river and roads. ([Punjab Internal Trade and Manufacture Report \(1885-86\), pp.1-3](#))

While imports into the Multan as the selected station was Hides and skins, Hides, Dressed. The total traffic of Multan for three years had been as under ([Punjab Internal Trade and Manufacture Report \(1885-86\), p.9.](#))

Table 4. The total value of imports from Punjab and other provinces for the years 1886-1889 in Rs

Block	1886-87 Rs.		1887-88 Rs.		1888-89 Rs.	
	Munds	Value	Munds	Value	Munds	Value
Imports						
From Punjab	896,178-	38,90,871	1,148,800-	39,06,65	576,770-	39,41,472
other Provinces	208,778-	34,76,596	235,653-	33,71,711	229,372-	32,81,404
Total	1,104,956-	73,67,467	1,384,453-	72,78,365	806,142-	72,22,836

Table 5. The total value of exports from Punjab and other provinces for the years 1886-188 in rupees

Block	1886-87 Rs.		1887-88 Rs.		1888-89 Rs.	
	Munds	Value	Munds	Value	Munds	Value
Exports						
To Punjab	216,467-	19,31,077	495,580-	25,11,519	268,579-	31,19,097
other Provinces	107,755-	18,14,043	95,663-	14,26,235	161,161-	16,15,966
Total	324,222-	37,45,120	591,243-	39,37,754	429,740-	47,35,066
Total traffic	6429,178-		1,975,696-		1,235,899-	
	1,11,12,587		1,12,16,119		1,19,57,9112	

According to the above statistics ([Report on the Internal Trade of the Punjab by Rail and River for the year \(1888-89\), 1889, p. 2.](#)), the trade of the Multan station was flourishing state, imports were fairly steady, and exports were increasing fast. The imports of European cottons, though far below the figure for

1886-87 was as high as that for 1887-88. The chief item of imports was indigo, beer, ghi, refined sugar and in exports, indigo and silk piece- goods were large items. ([Report on the Internal Trade of the Punjab by Rail and River for the year \(1888-89\), 1889, p. 3.](#))

Table 6. Value and weight of imports and exports in rupees with average of five years

Years	Imports		Exports	
	Weight	Value Rs	Weight	Value Rs
1889-90	8,675,974	8,50,91,707	17,091,051	6,98,10,803
1890-91	10,528,305	8,92,06,698	16,189,981	6,52,24,616
1891-92	12,550,706	9,95,85,332	21,217,071	8,27,62,316
1892-93	12,185,885	9,19,98,135	11,823,964	6,63,38,722

Imports by the river had shown an increase both in weight and value but the export which had progressed steadily during the last three years, but with the analysis of last year report, this had declined to a considerable extent, the decrease amounting to 11 lakhs of maunds in weight and 23/2 lakhs of rupees in value. The reason was supposed to the unpopularity of

the water routes for the conveyance of merchandise but to a general fall in the export trade with the corresponding decrease in the rail born trade as well. River-born trade had progressed to the total trade in respect of imports. In exports River-born trade had undergone a slight fall, having been reduced in its proportion to the total Export trade by rail and

railway, from nearly one thirteenth to one-eighteenth. ([-Hari Kishan Kaul, Off. Junior Secy. to Financial Commissioner, Punjab, 20th September; 1893](#))

In Rail trade, there was a significant development in the year 1894-95, both in imports and exports. The imports had a further rise of about 957 thousand maunds in weight and about 8/2 lakhs of rupees in value. The exports, on the contrary, had fallen short of those of the preceding year by 13/2 million maunds, causing a contraction of over 73 lakhs of rupees in the value. The sowing for the Rabi of 1895 was therefore largely retarded, and the consequence was a contraction of 7.1% in the total crop area. The Kharif of 1895 was even less favorable than the Rabi. The rainfall throughout the season was much less than in 1894. The area sown was not much smaller than that of 1894, but a very large portion of it failed to mature for want of rain. The area under crop was 14.5% less than in 1894. There was a very considerable falling off in the area under all the most important food cereals. The cotton crop alone was a good one, in fact, the best known for many years. Prices ruled fairly high throughout the year under report and became much higher towards its close.

Increasing and decreasing trends in trade

The total trade was of the province was decreasing. The total weight of the trade of last year was 39,801,507 *maunds* as compared with 52,776,861 *maunds* in the preceding year, viz., about 24.6% less while the value had diminished from Rs. 22, 70, 06,234 to Rs. 22, 05, 38,528 by 2.8% only. It had observed that the imports had shown some improvements both in weight and value and that the imports had shown some improvements both in weight and value, and the unfavorable results were noticeable in the exports alone. The weight of the exports had decreased by about 13 million *maunds*, but

the difference in value amounts to about sixty *lakhs* of rupees only.

The import of raw cotton had a small increase, but this was not due to larger local consumption but to an enhanced demand for the export of this article. A firm development in the import of Indian cotton piece goods was noticed. The largest quantity of these goods came from Karachi seaport, Bombay port standing next to in importance. The demand for aniline dyes was increasing, and their import appears to be keeping pace with the demand. The import of other dyes had also expanded largely. The cause of the increase in the import of wheat was that a small quantity of wheat had to be brought in from other provinces, although the Rabi crop of 1895 was not so large or so good as that of 1894, yet the demand for foreign export remained brisk. In the import of Railway materials, there was a large increase owing to the construction of the Wazirabad- Lyallpur Railway. ([Report on the Internal Trade of the Punjab by Rail and River for the year \(1895-96\), 1896, pp.1-3.](#))

On the whole, the block of North-Western Provinces and Oudh stood first in the importance in regard to the trade of Punjab. In imports, its share of the total trade had slightly decreased from 31.76% to 30.23%, and that of Karachi had risen from 27.88 to 30.8, just exceeding the % of the United Provinces. In export, however, the latter Provinces had still a long head; they had received only 34.99% of the total export last year, as against 40.58% in 1894-95. Karachi had made an improvement from 23.28 to 27.63%. As regards the other blocks, there were no remarkable variations, except that Bombay port had progressed from 10.47 to 11.01 in exports, While Calcutta port had gone down from 16.18 % to 13.71 % in imports but gained from 8.45 to 9.8 % in exports. ([Report on the Internal Trade of the Punjab by Rail and River for the year \(1895-96\), p. 7](#))

Table 7. Total imports and exports in maunds and value in rupees for the years 1896 to 1899

Years	Imports		Exports	
	maunds	value Rs	maunds	Value Rs
1896-97	240,874	16,71,610	1,437,321	66,26,948
1897-98	149,151	9,48,106	1,005,297	40,32,578
1898-99	110,814	8,44,077	1,738,575	50,75,847

Imports had decreased both in weight and value, mainly owing to the prevalence of plague in Karachi. The exports, mainly wheat, had decreased both in weight and value. A decrease in imports spread over

most of the articles of trade and was particularly marked in the case of Dyes and Tuns; there was a small increase in Gram and Pulse, oilseeds and railway plants. Other dyes, Grains and Pulse were chief

exports, the weight of which increased from 7 to 11 lakhs of munds. Wheat was the most important article for export within the provinces. The imports and exports were distributed between Sind and Karachi as follows:- ([Report on the Internal Trade of the Punjab by Rail and River for the year \(1900-01\)1901, p. 3](#))

The exports to Sind mostly consist of articles of local consumption. The bulk of the wheat was exported directly to Karachi. Taking the total volume of Provincial trade, including both and river-borne traffic, the chief increase in imports were found in the following articles. ([Report on the Internal Trade of the Punjab by Rail and River for the year \(1900-01\)1901, p. 3](#))

The import of the year report valued at Rs. 3, 30, 79,595 was the highest on the record. More than half of the quantity imported comes from Karachi, and as in previous years, the Delhi city and Sutlej -Jhelum blocks took the large share of the commodity. The import of Leather, Manufactured, was mainly from the North-Western Provinces and Bombay and was taken by the Cis Sutlej and Jhelum- Indus blocks. The total value of the import of this article was, however, exceeded by that of the export.

The decrease was mainly in the import derived from Bengal, the supplies from other sources have

remained normal. The price had risen but slightly, and it was possible that the variation was due only to the action of some of the companies controlling the trade. The decreased import of Cotton piece goods was due to a falling off in the supplies derived from Karachi. ([Report on the Internal Trade of the Punjab by Rail and River for the year \(1900-01\), p. 4](#)) The demand had a foreign one; as a whole, the whole of the increased export went to Karachi. The export of Cotton Piece-goods European was entirely from Delhi city, which took a principal share of the provincial import. ([Report on the Internal Trade of the Punjab by Rail and River for the year \(1900-01\), p. 5](#))

As regards the heavy fall in exports of Cotton Raw, be noted that the export to the North-Western Provinces declined by one-half; the value of exports to Calcutta and Bombay fell in each case by four lakhs in the case of Karachi by 19 lakhs and condition was unfavorable to export trade. The comparatively high rate of exchange during the year operated against exports to Europe; the reason was that the mills in Bombay and Calcutta, which manufacture mainly for export to China and the East, were similarly affected by the high price of the rupee. ([Report on the Internal Trade of the Punjab by Rail and River for the year \(1900-01\), p. 6](#))

Table 8. Figures of total trade between Punjab and the rest of India for the years from 1898 - 1901

Years	Imports		Exports	
	Maunds	Value Rs	Maunds	Value Rs
1898-99	14,895,412	12,55,01,976	22,965,864	10,00,07,007
1899-90	19,919,199	12,06,40,348	20,364,616	11,63,73,967
1900-01	16,771,088	12,81,77,559	15,131,419	9,67,45,016

However, the total value of imports during the last three years had been noticeably fast between 12/2 and 13 crores. In total weight, the import trade of 1899-1900 exceeded that of the preceding year by 5 million maunds and of the year 1901 by three million Munds. That was probably due to the largely increased import of food grains. The total value of exports, which in 1899-1900 exceeded that of 1898-99 about 1/2 corers, fell again in the year 1901 by almost 2 corers. It was a matter of surprise that in the year in which a severe famine lay over a considerable part of the province, the Multan district, though suffering from a short supply of water, was not in a state of famine, Bikaner, Jodhpur and Native States in that direction ([Internal Trade Report of the Punjab 1901, p.5](#)) In the Province the agricultural conditions almost

everywhere were unfavorable, a greater value of goods had been sent out of Punjab than in the prosperous years. The brisk revival of the cotton trade and the export of hides due to the mortality of the cattle in the Southern districts accounted in great measure for this feature of the triennium. ([Internal Trade Report of the Punjab 1901, p.5](#))

As regards District Multan as a whole, the following figures gave indications of the courses and nature of trade. The imports and exports by rail for the Railway stations of the Multan District average of two years 1896 and 1897 in munds. ([Report on the Internal Trade of Punjab by Rail and River for the Year \(1896-97\) 1897 pp. 1-30.](#))

District Multan was an importer of rice, oilseed, oil, sugar, iron and piece goods and an exporter of

wheat, cotton, indigo, bones, hides and saji. There was an excess import of raw wool but cleaned wool was a staple of export. The district was not well suited for sugarcane or for the better classes of oilseeds and rice so that considerable quantities. So too, the surely of ghi in the district did not meet the demands of the city, and large imports were made from Jhang and Montgomery. Iron and piece goods had, of course, to be imported from Europe. The large exports of the district were almost entirely to Europe except in the case of indigo, the chief part of which goes to central Asia. The chief staple of European trade was wheat, cotton and wool. Multan had long been a well-known centre of wheat trade, but in later years, it had to contend with new centers such as Lyallpur (*Report on the Operations of the Department of Agriculture Punjab for the year ending the 30th June 1906*, p. 4.) which had somewhat impaired its prosperity in this respect.

Conclusion

The introduction of the railway in the district greatly altered the course of the trade, and much of the goods formerly going by river or by camels started to go by

rail. In 1894 it was estimated that about 700 munds of grain went by river from Bhera to Sukkur, at a rate of 4/2 annas per mund, and 4,000 munds from Khushab to Multan at a rate of 2 annas per mund; but the carriage of goods by rail, though most costly than the river, was considered so much safer and quicker than it was generally preferred. Cotton was largely exported both in raw and manufactured states. Raw cotton was exported mainly from Khushab toward Multan.

The district agricultural trade was boosted by the infrastructure of roads, railways and canals. By linking the various canal irrigated districts to Karachi and other parts of India through railway, internal and external trade of Punjab in agricultural produce dramatically increased. Multan district was mainly connected with the rest of Punjab through railway lines via Sukhar, Kotri and Karachi. These years saw the rise of Karachi as the major port through which exports of wheat were channelized. Along with this, there occurred a rapid integration of the region with the world market and linking the interior towns with the ports.

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- At that time, another such city was Ahmadabad in Gujarat. Examples of cities which failed to make the transition were Dacca, Murishbad and Surat, see, L. Gillion , Kenneth, *A Study In Indian Urban History*, Ahmadabad; 1968, pp.1-6.
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