

## **Phalia: Past is Another Country!**

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### **Abstract**

This paper looks into the process of transformation in a small town of northern Punjab, namely Phalia. It has a history that goes back to ancient times. It had a very small population in 1947, which grew about nine times by 2011, when the small village changed into a thriving town with distinct qualities of urban life. It has been linked to the globalized world through exchange of goods, labour and migration. Distinct changes have happened in demography, land use, occupational structure, social structure, production relations, political leadership, local administration, infrastructure, construction, commercial and educational institutions, and culture at large. There were sad events as well, such as demolition of historic mound. Main factors behind such transformation have been identified as being local, supralocal and macrosocial – integration with the national and global markets, spread of education, social mobility, remittances, and above all the rural-urban migration. The government and political leadership has little role in boosting the growth of the town, rather it has grown due to multiple other factors but most importantly the individual initiatives and survival instincts of its inhabitants. The study provides guidelines for further studies on this theme in other towns.

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### **Introduction**

This paper aims at analyzing the process of urbanization happening in small towns of Punjab. The town of Phalia has been chosen for the analysis of the process. Phalia lies in Mandi Bahauddin district in the northern region of Punjab, Pakistan. The main questions pursued here include: how a village transforms into a city in terms of demography; which factors contribute to this transformation; how change is perceived by those who can see it comparatively; is urbanization inevitably connected with industrialization; how the political administration and leadership affect the level of development; how the culture has been transforming; how the linkages with the outer world have impacted the process of transformation? In sum, the aim is to identify the various

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processes, bringing about change, and to identify the prominent characteristics of the city, and to see them changing with time.

The approach used is holistic as far as the society under observation is concerned, but the selected aspects of change are dealt with specifically in the local context. The holistic approach helps explain the nature of evolution and transition Phalia has gone through. This study of a 'microcosm' is expected to inspire other such studies in the towns of Pakistan who undoubtedly are experiencing similar transformations.

## **Methodology**

This is a case study, aimed at exploring the evolution of, and transition from, a rural to an urban society. The study is based on various techniques of data collection, used in urban anthropology,<sup>1</sup> which has urbanization as its major focus. These include: oral history, informal interviews, personal observation, physical survey, official data records, and literature review. Time series maps<sup>2</sup> are also used to elaborate change. Map A shows old district Gujrat, Map B shows district Mandi Bahauddin, Map C presents Phalia as it was in 1947, and Map D shows the situation in 2011. Information gained from the informants is given in quotes at certain places in order to retain their originality; nevertheless their information is used throughout the paper.

The research hypothesis is: 'The town of Phalia has been expanding on its own dynamism, largely determined by its residents, as well as the macrosocial trends'. Here the 'city' has been taken as the 'dependent variable' which has been affected by factors, both external and internal to it. Here, the ethnographer's method is used to deal with a broader subject, but with the care that it does not end up in oversimplification of the case study. True, the city has been acting as an agent to affect and respond to the in-migrants' lifestyle, choices, and struggles, but that is not the main focus of the study, rather it is mentioned briefly to describe the city, not the community living in it, as it can be taken up in another study. So, the study is conducted to show the temporal and spatial dimensions of change happening in a once

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<sup>1</sup> Urban anthropology relies on fewer informants with better knowledge of the subject of study than urban sociology which uses larger samples.

<sup>2</sup> These maps are constructed by the author by using road and settlement details from Google satellite image and by modifying it to show the population, roads and important places of the past and present. Technical help by Hameeda Ghani, Department of Geography is acknowledged in finalizing them.

‘peasant’ community, which ultimately has transformed itself to be called an ‘urban’ community.

Among the urban anthropology’s tasks one is to examine the types of cities. The approach used is that of studying local and supralocal factors and the link between these two in the city. The residents’ perception used in this study is an un-documented aspect of the history of the town, available only in fragments. To substantiate the findings of the oral history data, official data and related researches are also used. The historical background is largely based on secondary sources, which was inevitably needed to explain the process of transformation. Personal observation of the author was very much relevant as the town has been her native town, and a five decade long span of time could be analyzed for this paper. Oral history and physical survey were carried out in December 2011 to collect data for this paper. The official data was used to trace the history of geographical, demographic, administrative, economic and commercial growth of the town.

### **Theoretical background**

The question of placing Phalia on the continuum from village to city makes one to look into the indicators in the sociological tradition. This defines cities in terms of geographically bound forms of social organization, where relatively larger number of people settle; they are heterogeneous, and some of them engage in non-agricultural occupations while some are specialists. A city must serve a market function according to Max Weber, and is under a partial regulatory authority. Relationships among people are partial and secondary, based on a social bond, such as a rational law.

In Pakistan, a settlement inhabiting over 5,000 people is considered as urban. The description given by Bardo and Hartman<sup>3</sup> also applies perfectly to the present scenario of Phalia to declare it a city. Here the regulatory authority is vested with the town/tehsil administration. It enforces tax and regulates market operation. The city is expanding and very little open space is left inside it; and if there is any, it is uninhabited but not used for agricultural purposes. This was not the situation a decade ago. Now the people know only a small fraction of those others walking on the street. Then, mostly the people knew each other, at least in their neighborhood, but after massive in-migration, a large number of people have now become strangers to their neighbours especially in the new settlements. Now the burgeoning market operates

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<sup>3</sup> John W. Bardo and John J. Hartman, *Urban Sociology A Systematic Introduction* (Itasca-Illinois: F.E. Peacock, 1982), p.4.

on largely market related relations and not on those based on family and community ties. Since a large number of buyers come daily from outside, the salesmen are no more interested to oblige or respect the buyers as a local resident. Mostly the small cities in this part of the Punjab are not ethnically heterogeneous, Phalia is no exception.

Closely intertwined with the urban anthropology are the concepts and methods of urban sociology. The theorists of urban sociology were believed to be facing three challenges around the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century's. Tracing these, Sassen finds that:

These challenges arise out of the intersection of major macrosocial trends and their particular spatial patterns. The city and the metropolitan region emerge as one of the strategic sites where these macrosocial trends materialize and hence can be constituted as an object of study. Among these trends are globalization and the rise of the new information technologies, the intensifying of transnational and translocal dynamics, and the strengthening presence and voice of specific types of socio-cultural diversity. Each one of these trends has its own specific conditionalities, contents and consequences for cities, ... Cities are also sites where each of these trends interacts with the others in distinct, often complex manners, in a way they do not in just about any other setting. The city emerges once again as a strategic lens for the study of major macrosocial transformations...'<sup>4</sup>

As one would see in the description in the following sections of the paper, Phalia presents a small example of intersection of such local and translocal trends that have been continuing from the past as well. Helmuth Berking claims that 'local contexts form a sort of framework or a filter through which global processes and globally circulating images and symbols are appropriated, thus attaining meaning.'<sup>5</sup> Such processes are obvious in the purchase of the modern items of daily use, cosmetics, garments, foreign goods and linkages with foreign countries through personal contacts. Moreover, global movement of labour, orientation of young men to earn foreign money and trying their luck in various countries, be it through highly risky illegal means, indicate that global

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<sup>4</sup> S. Sassen, 'New frontiers facing urban sociology at the Millennium', *The British Journal of Sociology*, 51: (2000), pp.143–59, available at, <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.14684446.2000.00143.x/abstract>, accessed 23 December 2011.

<sup>5</sup> Sociology of space, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Urban\\_anthropology\\_.m](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Urban_anthropology_.m), accessed 12 January 2012.

connections and references have gained recognition in the small town of Phalia. This connection is pursued for gaining social respect as well. The symbols thus used are big houses and consumerist lifestyle. With enormous pace of market expansion, Phalia has become a modern economic society, where the use of space is largely determined by capitalist and global factors as would be shown in the following sections.

### Literature review

To begin with the name 'Phalia', which the residents believe, was derived from the name of Alexander's horse, which was killed and buried near the battlefield where Alexander and Porus confronted. The mythical nature of this story is further confused by various viewpoints of the writers.<sup>6</sup> The myth is still unresolved but such traditions of oral and partially recorded history refer to the ancient origin of Phalia.

The process of urbanization and development in the localities earlier designated as 'rural' and presently as 'urban' presents an interesting picture. Study of any such case study can lead to knowledge and understanding of the multifarious processes going on at various social levels. The big urban centres and metropolitan cities are no doubt well documented but the small centres are usually ignored by the researchers, owing to their marginal importance in the region or economic and political profile of the district or province they lie in. On such study by Hasan and Raza (2010) in the town of Uch and Chiniot

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<sup>6</sup> Name of Alexander's horse was 'Bucephalus', or 'Asphala', and it was probably buried near the left bank of River Jhelum as to drag a dead horse for about 30 kilometer was unlikely. Jhelum city is claimed to be given the name 'Bukephalia'. (Anjum Sultan Shahbaz, *Tarikh-e-Jhelum* (Jhelum: Book Corner, n.d.), p.26. This claim can also be contested on the ground that the horse was killed on the left bank after crossing the river and not the right bank. The village set up in its memory must be on the left side of river. Malik is also not fully sure about the name of the town Phalia, being built by Alexander. Ikram Ali Malik, *Tarikh-e-Punjab*, Vol. 1 (Lahore: Salman Matbooaat, 1990), p.23. Captain A.C. Elliot, deputy commissioner of Gujrat writes about ruins of forts at Phalia, Kadirba and other towns of the district 'each of which was at some time the home of a Sardar and held a gang of robbers'. See his, *The Chronicles of Gujrat* (New Delhi: Nirmal Publishers, 1986 reprint), p.32. The fort referred at Phalia lies at about four kilometer from Phalia, in the north of town Pindi Lala, under the name Atar Singh. It is locally known as 'Ker Baway Da', where an abandoned fort lies with pond where Sikh women used to come for 'purity'. It has arches, basements, a magnificent dome of mosque style, and about forty houses nearby.

(Punjab Province) and Mithi (Sindh Province) provides useful insights pertaining to migration, socio-political processes and economic development spurred by migration and remittances.<sup>7</sup> The authors point out the impact of remittances as being: giving owned land on contract or sharecropping; improved schooling; female seeking more education; more urban values; nucleation of family; migration from rural to urban or from smaller to bigger urban center, and popularity of urbanism.<sup>8</sup> They find small cities losing their power due to exodus of their educated people. Arif Hasan (2009)<sup>9</sup> indicates that the growth of cities, towns and villages in Pakistan has been largely unplanned, people-directed, haphazard, illegally effected at time, involving mafias as well, and giving maximum expression to the genius and skills of people who have been surviving on the 'people's solution' in the face of governments' inefficiency and mal-governance, as well as lack of concern or competence to handle the population bursting out of the seams of towns and villages.

Demographically, the study of a small town is very critical as it may deviate from the growth patterns of bigger cities. The census data reveals that in 1998, 27.7 per cent Pakistanis lived in 418 urban centers having a population less than 50,000. This number has been varying: 198 (1951), 287 (1961), 368 (1972), and 359 (1998), showing a steady decline in the proportion of total urban population residing in them, which was as 45.1, 41.0, 37.9 and 32.3 per cent respectively.<sup>10</sup> Another worth mentioning point is that in the Punjab the number of cities with population less than 25,000 has been shrinking during 1951-1998, but increasing in Sindh and Balochistan, the reason being concentration of industrial activity in major cities of Punjab.<sup>11</sup> The number of such small urban centers (under 25,000 population) in Punjab has been recorded as: 135 (1951), 153 (1961), 157 (1972), 126 (1981), and 101 (1998). The total urban population of Punjab has been increasing steadily from 3.59 million to 22.69 million during 1951-1998.<sup>12</sup> Intensity of migration has

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<sup>7</sup> Arif Hasan and Mansoor Raza, *Hijrat aur Pakistan mein Chhotay Shaher* (Karachi: Ushba Publishing International, 2009).

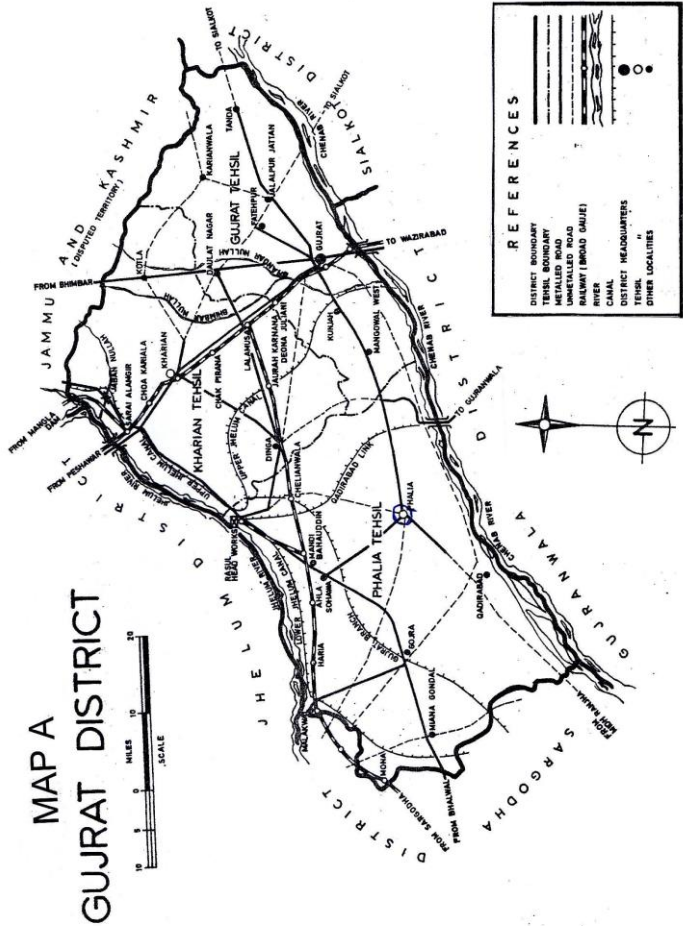
<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.49-52.

<sup>9</sup> Arif Hasan, *The Unplanned Revolution: Observations on the Process of Socioeconomic Change in Pakistan* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2009), 1<sup>st</sup> edn. 2002.

<sup>10</sup> Hasan and Raza, *op. cit.*, Table 13, p.198.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p.90.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, Table 14, p.199.



been found low (12.72 to 6.36%) in the district of Gujrat during 1981, and also low in district Mandi Bahauddin in 1998, as Phalia was included in it in 1993.<sup>13</sup> The percentage of reasons reported for migration from other districts to the present one (in 1998 census) in urban Punjab was study 1.34, marriage 12.88, movement with head 45.28, business 8.13, employment/transfer 16.7, and others.<sup>14</sup> This indicates business and family migration as two major reasons. A study conducted in 1994 in Phalia about reasons behind in-migration revealed education and preference for an urban society as two major reasons.<sup>15</sup> On the whole, the reasons for urban growth in the Punjab (1981-1998) have been natural increase 74.2 per cent, re-classification 11.3 per cent and internal (within country) migration as 14.5 per cent.<sup>16</sup>

Banerjee presents an authentic account of the agrarian society of the British Punjab (1849-1901),<sup>17</sup> explaining the growth of commercial aspects of agriculture, land revenue system and the social structure linking the zamindar and other castes, *kammis* in particular. Regarding cultural aspects, Kismet<sup>18</sup> has written with the insight of an ethnographer, explaining lifestyle, customs and rituals, agriculture, education, leisure activities, and economy of various areas of the Punjab in the first half of 20<sup>th</sup> century. The work contains material on almost every page which can help explain the situation in Phalia. Eglar's classic study<sup>19</sup> was conducted in the village Mohla, near Gujrat, 52 kilometer from Phalia, which is culturally not different noticeably from Phalia. She has given an authentic account of the society, economy, culture and especially women's lives. Tandon,<sup>20</sup> a resident of Gujrat, has written on the social and cultural history of the district. He recorded the social history because it was absent from the contemporary records and it provides an essential backdrop to serious study of history of any area. Written mainly from the

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<sup>13</sup> Khalida Mahmood and Razzaq Ahmed, 'Urban Growth: A Case Study of Pakistan', *Pakistan Perspectives*, 15:2, pp.163, 165.

<sup>14</sup> Hasan and Raza, *op.cit.*, p.192.

<sup>15</sup> Nayyar Sultana, 'Reasons Behind Migration to the City of Phalia' (Karachi: Department of Sociology, University of Karachi, 1994).

<sup>16</sup> Hasan and Raza, *op.cit.*, Table 9, p.194.

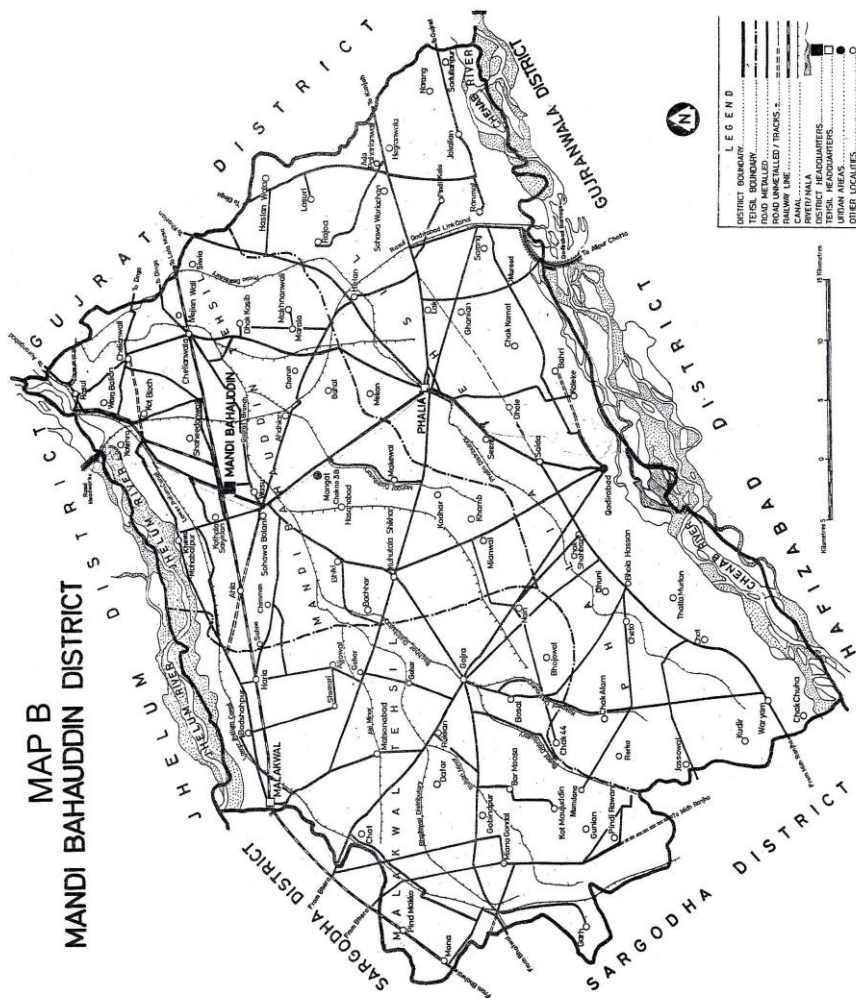
<sup>17</sup> Himadri Banerjee, *Agrarian Society of the Punjab (1849-1901)* (New Delhi: Manohar, 1982).

<sup>18</sup> Chowdhri Muhammad Husain Kismet, *Punjab kay Dehat Mazi kay Aa'inay main* (Lahore: Izharsons, n.d.).

<sup>19</sup> Zekiye Eglar, *A Punjabi Village in Pakistan* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1960).

<sup>20</sup> Prakash Tandon, translated by Rashid Malik, *Punjab kay Sow Saal* (Lahore: Fiction House, 1996).





perspective of a Hindu Punjabi, it covers the process of the onset of modernization around 1870 when the British introduced modern legal and education systems. He describes the educational system, secular aspects promoted by it, transportation system, peasants' life and concerns, inter-religious interaction, festivals, etc. The socio-cultural patterns thus formed continued with little variation in the area under study.

The gazetteers of British Punjab Government and census reports of Government of Pakistan are useful for quantitative data and history. The gazetteers inform that after the Mughal control, Nadir Shah invaded district Gujrat in 1738. After the annexation by Ranjit Singh in 1810, the district was divided into talukas; eight in the beginning, out of these, three – Gujrat, Kadirabad, and Khari Kariali – were kept under direct management. The 'remainder of the district was, with few exceptions, either framed to contractors for the revenue, or granted in jagir on condition of military service. These were further subdivided into zails'.<sup>21</sup> Phalia Taluka had five zails: Helan, Phalia, Jokalian, Pahrainwali, and Wasusohawa. The present tehsil boundaries were fixed in 1856 after a series of shuffling. Earlier three tehsil headquarters were at forts at Gujrat, Kunjah and Kadirabad, but in June 1849, the last two were changed to Kharian and Phalia respectively.<sup>22</sup>

## Geography

Phalia is situated at 32.43° N latitude and 73.58° E longitude, with an altitude of 672 feet (205 m) above sea level. Climatically it is semi-arid, with average annual rainfall of 50 mm. It has hot summer but mild winter. At nine mile in its south lies the River Chenab with its active flood plain. The alluvial terraces make a large part of the town area. The rich alluvial plain is irrigated now by canals, earlier by wells. The Phalia branch of Upper Jhelum Canal supplies water to this area. A natural drain, Budhi Nala flows in the east of Phalia.

Presently the town lies at the road connecting Gujrat to Sargodha, through Kunjah, Mangowal and Malikwal. Historically the town lied on the main road that once connected Delhi to Peshawar. These

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<sup>21</sup> For details on administrative history of the district see, *Punjab District Gazetteers, Volume XXV-A, Gujrat District*, 1921, p.5 (Lahore: Superintendent Printing, Punjab Government, 1921), pp.198-201.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.* Name of Sardar Atar Singh is given in *ibid.*, pp. 210. Sardar Gyan Singh Khatri, Lamba, of Pindi Lala got the title of Sardar from the Sikh government and was recognized by the British as well for his services during the mutiny. *Ibid.*, p.215.

days the Grand Truck (GT) Road is used for this link developed by the British. Earlier, till the Mughal times, the route passed to the south of GT Road through the town of Phalia. The broad road (unpaved till 1970s) was prepared for movement of soldiers; on one side for cavalries and troops on the other. The dusty track lined with three rows of big banyan trees,<sup>23</sup> specially planted at every six miles for taking rest. The famous *baolies* dug in the Potohar region or near Kharian (GT Road) were not built here.<sup>24</sup>

### **Social, cultural and economic history before 1947**

The town has an ancient history dating back to the time before the invasion of Alexander, who came to this district in 326 BC. Raja Porus' famous story is proudly inherited by this region. Raja Porus was said to be brought before Alexander in Helan, a town lying just 14 kilometers from Phalia. Helan is also known to be named by the Greeks after a lady 'Helen' loved by Alexander. A twelve meters high mound, locally called, *tibba*, was made artificially by picking clay from the surrounding area for keeping army in an elevated position for security purpose.<sup>25</sup> The broken pieces of the used pots came out of the breaches on its margins till recently. Such mounds were common in this area for safety but their exact time is not possible to determine.

The area remained under the Mughal and Afghan kings till the Sikhs overtook it. In the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Sikhs divided the area of present day district of Mandi Bahauddin into three talukas (sub-divisions), with Phalia, Qadirabad (or Kadirabad) and Dinga as their centers.<sup>26</sup> On 13 January 1849, the final battle fought at Chillianwala, brought the area under the British. In the bloody battle between the British forces, under commander Lord Gough, and the Sikhs, both sides suffered heavy losses.<sup>27</sup> An old man related an informant of this study the sorry side of the story as follows:

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<sup>23</sup> Some of the trees survived till recent years.

<sup>24</sup> Information collected from informants of the study.

<sup>25</sup> A similar but higher mound (50 feet) in Mong, near Rasul is taken as of historic significance, confirmed to be as ancient as Alexander's invasion. Cf. General Cunningham, in *Punjab District Gazetteers*, *op.cit.*, pp.16-7.

<sup>26</sup> It is not precisely the same area as boundaries have undergone changes during the British administration.

<sup>27</sup> The war is known as the Second Anglo-Sikh War. Detail of the war events is available in, J.H. Lawrence-Archer, *Commentaries on The Punjab Campaign* (Lahore: Universal Books, n.d., 1<sup>st</sup> edn. 1878), pp.42-87, and Appendix E, pp.138-71.

The British army was huge, covering about three miles of the track from Dinga. The officer-in-charge was leaning on a tree when a fatal shot hit him. The soldiers were waiting for his command to open fire while the enemy had advanced too close. The officer was detected to be dead quite late. Then the British army was in serious confusion and trouble. Anyhow they fought and defeated the Sikh army. The dead and wounded soldiers, all were put in mass graves, 10x40 feet long. The reason was that if soldiers return to their families with cut-off limbs, no one would then be ready for recruitment in the army. Some were buried underneath branches, leaves and earth. When we went there two three days after the burial, we could hear the sighs of living men. Afraid of the British power, we dared not open the 'graves'.<sup>28</sup>

The battle fought at Gujrat 39 days after the battle at Chillianwala, again a bloody and revengeful one, gave decisive victory to the British and passed the command of this district to them. The terror of the colonial masters was enormous. People were so sick of British recruitment that they used to hide their young men when British officers came in their village. One incident can tell a lot: 'My grandmother hid behind the door with a *toka* (hand axe) and hit the officer when he entered the house. She spent long years in jail for this murder.' According to a local resident:

The British used to ask the local landowners to persuade locals for recruitment in the army. This they did to the poor people in the name of free clothes, free food, and salary added on it. These recruits went to army and were mostly killed as well while their families were not informed. Their salary used to come for some time after. The wounded and amputated soldiers were usually left in the battlefields as if they returned home; no one would come to army in future. A mother of a sepoy reached the field and she recognized him lying wounded, amidst the dead. He asked her to drag the dead bodies around him to make a safety wall against the wild animals for the night. In the morning he limped back home.

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In addition to this oral statement, see the photographs of mass graves at, [http://www.azkhan.de/MyWebalbums\\_PhotosPakistan\\_Chillianwala.htm](http://www.azkhan.de/MyWebalbums_PhotosPakistan_Chillianwala.htm).

Such have been the memories of the colonial rule in the district so well known for its martial race and brave soldiers, who, in fact, joined army out of poverty and deceit.<sup>29</sup>

The boundaries kept changing for the district of Gujrat, in which Phalia was originally included as a capital of the tehsil, which was established in 1856 (Map A). Earlier Qadirabad was set as capital but it was shifted to Phalia in June 1849. The boundaries were also changed in 1911 and 1941. The last change came on 1<sup>st</sup> July 1993, when Mandi Bahauddin was upgraded to a district,<sup>30</sup> Phalia continued as a tehsil headquarters (Map B).<sup>31</sup>

Recalling the past, informants reported that the pre-partition society was not a friction-free one. They remembered:

Before partition we used to live with the Hindus and Sikhs. Hindus were in majority in our town. We used to play with them. When Sikh children's turban opened we used to play with it by making it a rope. Muslim children were much braver than others. We used to play in the dark streets late at night. There was no reason to be afraid. The wild animals like pig were not there. In fact in 1958, a dam broke in the River Chenab in India, which swept a pig farm with it so the animal came to our area.

About Muslims, it was remarked that they were also very quarrelsome and aggressive in their daily routine, as they fought violently, killing each other at small pretexts. An informant told:

Once I saw a heap of 'weapons of murder' lying with the police, before it was to be auctioned. That included big knives, axes, swords, 'balam', 'burchhas', etc. Such are the

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<sup>29</sup> A lot has been written about military recruitment in the colonial Punjab. The district of Gujrat has been shown as the 'largely recruited area' in Punjab, according to the Indian Army Recruitment Manual, Punjab. See map on page 87, in Tan Tai Yong, *The Garrison State, The Military, Government and Society in Colonial Punjab, 1849-1947* (Lahore: Vanguard, 2005).

<sup>30</sup> Mandi Bahauddin was developed as a railway station after the construction of Lower Jhelum Canal was completed in 1899. The railway line thus caused development of towns of Dinga, Pindi Bahauddin and Malikwal. Phalia was 14 miles away from it, so it remained marginalized. Mandi Bahauddin was later developed as a grain market, a municipality, and a planned city, with a population exceeding 12,000 in 1930. It became a town committee in 1937 and a municipality in 1941.

<sup>31</sup> There was a time in the 1970s when there was news about shifting tehsil headquarters from Phalia to Mandi Bahauddin, to which the resident showed their great resentment.

weapons common with the rural folk to kill the wild animals even today. The Muslims were not even afraid of police and when escorted to the courts hand-cuffed, used to sing *dholas* and *mahiyas* (folk songs).

It was to show bravery and contempt for law, yet the crime rate was much lower than today. About social interaction it was reported:

Both Hindus and Sikhs could enter Muslims' houses but Muslims could not enter theirs. While building a temple, Muslims were invited to work but after its completion were not allowed in. The Hindu community of Phalia was in majority but a sense of conflict was there. They never ate anything cooked by Muslims. We used to sing in our childhood:

*'Allah Mian meenh wasa  
Saadi kothi daney pa*

*Khakriyan kharboozay la  
Hinduan di kothi daddu pa'*

(O God, give us rain, grow melons, fill our house with grain and Hindus' house with frogs').<sup>32</sup> Anyhow, there was only one doctor, a Hindu, namely Bal Mukand;<sup>33</sup> who served all with the modern medicine.

### History of settlement

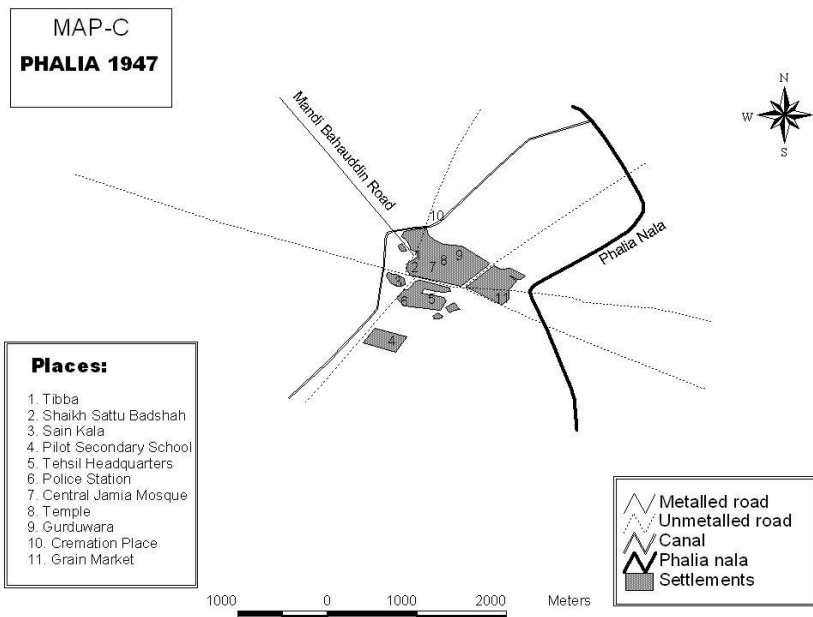
Apart from the local landowners of pre-partition days, there were two major categories of people migrating to Phalia. (a) Migrants from India, mostly from the East Punjab, who settled under the allotment scheme of the government. (b) These included mostly those who made short distance migration from the surrounding rural areas. It was a chain migration as well in certain cases. These were persons of menial castes. Mostly the people living in the surrounding villages came to Phalia. Very rarely those from other towns came, as they used to approach their nearby towns.<sup>34</sup> A negligible number of people from Kashmir and

<sup>32</sup> Prakash Tandon has affirmed such a friction and intolerance. For instance see his *Punjab Saga (1857-1987)* (New Delhi: Penguin Books, 1988), p.97.

<sup>33</sup> A lot more detail was revealed by the informants but cannot be reproduced here for brevity.

<sup>34</sup> The *kammis* had started migrating to urban centers because of unhappy economic conditions around the turn of 19<sup>th</sup> century. See Himadri Banerjee, *op.cit.*, chapter 7, pp.175-200. They were encouraged to migrate after the abolition of barter system in village society. They migrated to cities and abroad to cash their skills. See also, Arif Hasan, *Bezabta Inqilab, op.cit.*, p.6, and, Hasan and Raza, *op.cit.*, p.38.

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa also came here in later years. There were many reasons to come here. An informant reported:



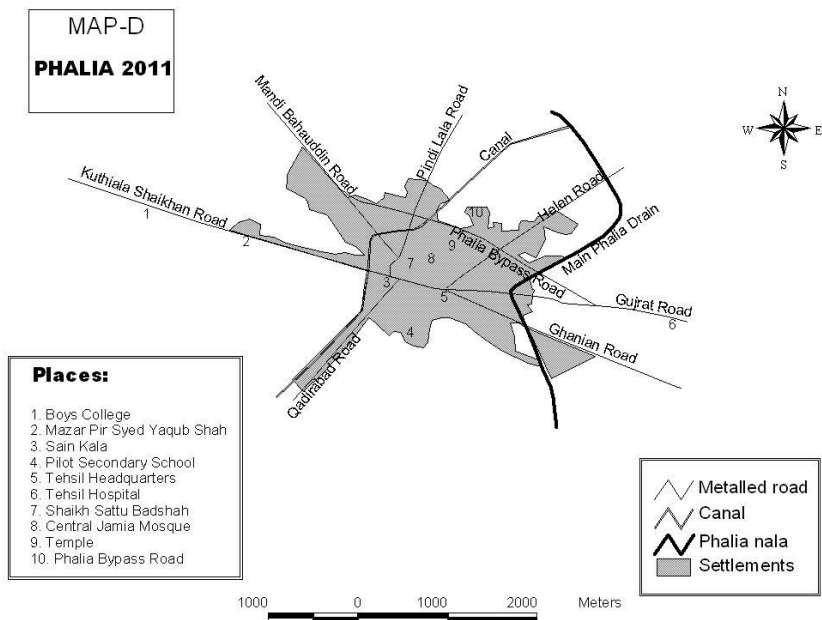
My grandfather was invited by the local landlords to settle here as they needed our handicrafts (woven cloth) so they let us settle on the *shamlat* (community ownership) land. Later we invited the dyers family from a nearby village and let them settle on the land allotted to us.

The migrants brought diverse skills and dynamic spirit for the local economy. Those from India rarely became tenants but engaged in petty business or government jobs. Phalia has attracted people mostly from its periphery; however, it has also sent migrants out to other cities and countries. This is discussed in the section on remittances.

### Demographic profile

The population of Phalia is estimated to be around 25,914 in 2007.<sup>35</sup> Like the industrial cities of 1800s USA, the locality of Phalia has been

<sup>35</sup> Estimate given with reference to World Gazetteers at, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Phalia>, accessed 4 January 2012.



expanding in its physical structure that ‘radiated’ outward along main roads mostly because of migration from rural areas.<sup>36</sup> It was reported that:

The population of the area taken as included in Phalia was far less than 4,000 in 1947, and cannot be ascertained now. Later union council boundaries were demarcated so that the familiar areas of Phalia were included in other union councils.

The per cent growth rate of population in District Gujrat has been - 0.5, 4.6, 11.9, 19.8, 4.9, 14.4, and 43.2 in consecutive census years from 1901 till 1972. In 1972, Phalia was declared a town, as it then had a population of 8,565, women being 47.2 per cent, with literacy rate of 33.3 per cent. Only 61 persons were non-Muslim. Household size was 6.2 and total number of households was 1376.<sup>37</sup> In 1981, Phalia town had grown to 13,193 persons (female 47%), with an inter-censal increase of 5.23 per cent per annum.<sup>38</sup> Then overall literacy was 29.8 and adult literacy rate was 41.6 per cent. Only 148 persons were non-Muslims.

<sup>36</sup> Bardo and Hartman, *op.cit.*, p.28.

<sup>37</sup> Government of Pakistan, *Population Census of Pakistan 1972 District Census Report Gujrat* (Islamabad: Census Organization, Ministry of Interior, States and Frontier Regions, 1977), p.103.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p.21



Household size was 6.9.<sup>39</sup> In Phalia Town Committee area, in 1998, there lived 21,678 persons, women being 49.4 per cent. Adult literacy rate was 68.9 percent. The attainment level was primary 3023, and matric or above (2267 male and 1501 females). Gender difference still prevails. Out of a total 3062 houses there were 94.9 per cent pucca and 4.3 per cent semi-pucca houses.<sup>40</sup> The household size was 7.0. Male population was 50.56 per cent. The inter-censal rate of population growth (1981-1998) was 2.96 per cent per annum.<sup>41</sup> In 1998, the non-Muslim population was only 294 persons in the total population of 21,578.<sup>42</sup>

### **Economic development**

*Irrigation:* The branch of canal that passes through Phalia comes from the Upper Jhelum Canal which comes from the Mangla Dam. When the canal was dug near Mandi Bahauddin, the water table in the areas lying on the slope in east became high. In the beginning it was a pleasant sign for people who had little sources of drinking water. Women happily filled pitchers, but this was the beginning of the menace of waterlogging in this area.<sup>43</sup> Later on, the drains were dug to lower the water table. Main Phalia drain lies in the eastern part of city. The earliest hand pump was installed here in the veterinary hospital in 1940s.

*Agriculture and feudalism:* Before canals came, a large part of land was rain-fed, fallow, uncultivable, or rangeland, which needed clearing. A resident told:

My grandfather and his brothers cleared over 20 acres of land near Helan to grow wheat on it. Pleased by this, the British administration gave them the property rights, but when they could not pay the land revenue, they had to withdraw ownership.

The feudalism in the area was also a gift of the British masters who bestowed favors, honors and titles along with estates to those who worked for the benefit of the *Raj*. The agriculture department was

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<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p.143.

<sup>40</sup> Government of Pakistan, 1998 *District Census Report of Mandi Bahauddin* (Islamabad: Population Census Organization, Statistics Division, 2000), p.256.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p.56.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p.256.

<sup>43</sup> This happened despite the early warning given by experts in 1921, due to already existing high water-table (10-20 feet). See *Punjab District Gazetteers, op.cit.*, p.191.

established here soon after independence as Tehsil Phalia has been among the top largest land revenue earning tehsils in Pakistan, even when its size was cut down in 1993. For Ayub era's 'modernization in agriculture', tons of paper was sprinkled over the locality as information campaigns for HYVs, use of fertilizers, and such other new techniques of farming. The feudal control, culture and mindset still prevail in fragments, especially among the older generation of local residents, but the new generation is refuting it. People who found their rural set-up oppressive came to Phalia. How they can bow to the same at a new place? Rather a good deal of social, economic and spatial mobility has allowed increasing number of people to be emancipated. Education has proved the surest catalyst. Many children of previously low caste families of Phalia have migrated to big cities.

*Architecture:* Phalia has been a part of Indus Valley Civilization, epitome of which – Harappa – is about 100 miles southeast. Here main sources of water have been originally wells and canals in the British era. Before canals were dug, drought also caused famine, and people could not bring food due to shortage of means of transportation. The old building of tehsil administration was built of bricks made with mud of the nearby pond. Very small size bricks were used in the 1920s. The building has been broken recently to replace with a modern one. The old styled mud and brick houses, inherited from the Indus Valley Civilization, are rapidly being replaced with concrete and steel structures.<sup>44</sup> New shopping plazas, commercial and residential buildings are built with latest styles. Use of wood is now reduced; it is seen only in doors, windows or furnishing. Use of glass, sanitary items, and pre-fabricated material has increased. The few old style houses, still intact, present a good contrast to show the stages of development. The town is expanding enormously and the new styles are appearing everywhere, in the central market area,<sup>45</sup> outskirts, or in the old residential area alike. The income from remittance and from traditional landownership is preserved in the new buildings. A grand house is a sign of pride and social status, so every one is after it.

*Industrial:* The earliest factory, though very small in scale was introduced in Phalia by a family which came here from Gujrat. It was to

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<sup>44</sup> The comparative census data and physical survey confirm this. See footnote no.37.

<sup>45</sup> Off to the Jamia Masjid Street a shopping plaza is being built, where the approaching street to it is hardly six feet wide.

fill soda water (carbonated water) bottles in three flavours. For a long time there was no ice factory in Phalia, and it was brought in from Mandi Bahauddin. It was set up in 1970s. In 1960s, there was a ginning mill, few flour grinding mills and cotton-combing units. Wood-cutting machines also became popular. No big industry was set up. Tractors came here in the Ayub's 'Decade of Development'. Long ago, a small balloon making and a small card board unit were established. The only popular industry, which is ancient too, has been of brick kilns, which earlier used coal, now use waste product of rice mills. Now, there are six rice mills, seven brick kilns, one flour mill, all primary industries, employing a very small number of people. A few people have fixed machines at home to make small items of hosiery, etc. Home-made products are rare. Some women stitch clothes as an informal activity. The earlier sources of generating income are rural in style – decorative handicrafts, poultry, livestock, making dung-cake – and these are dwindling. The popular fields of women's employment are teaching and health. Few women now work as housemaids but are paid very little. Children work as family helpers, at shops, motor workshops, restaurants, and in large number in running the *chingchi* rickshaw, a relatively modern development.

*Commerce:* To support business, facilities have largely been extended by the private sector. Apart from the old branch of National Bank, at least six other banks operate now. Money transfer is available. All major mobile phone companies have franchise offices here. Courier service (TCS), cargo service and a large network of transport catalyze business. Lahore can be reached in about three and Islamabad in four hours on well-built roads. From Gujrat to Phalia the dual carriage road is recently built, and work is on the Phalia-Mandi Bahauddin track. Only the Phalia-Mandi Bahauddin track was metalled before partition to link it with the nearest railway station. The Islamabad-Lahore Motorway is about 30 kilometer away.

*Transport:* Till the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, people of Phalia rarely went beyond few miles, as the only means of transport were animals or cart; their relatives lived nearby at a manageable distance. Later the train connection was developed through Mandi Bahauddin station, about 20 kilometers away. Gujrat station was 52 kilometer away. The self-sufficiency, however, proved deceptive at times. Now the bazars are impassible and the roads are very busy with heavy and light traffic. Horse-driven carriage (*tonga*) is banned inside the city limits, only rickshaw can ply.

## Infrastructure

*Health:* Health infrastructure before partition was fragile. A government health centre operated for mothers. Another was meant for midwives training. The tehsil headquarters hospital was built after partition. There was only one clinic of a Hindu doctor. As he left, two medical practitioners came to the area; one of them got the abandoned clinic, the other got midwives' centre as his house. Now the town has one big new tehsil hospital, two maternity hospitals run by the government, about 13 clinics and 10 small hospitals in the private sector. Approaching big hospitals in district headquarters is a matter of just twenty minutes.

*Education:* It was a rare facility in 1947. There was one boys' primary school set up by the local committee in Phalia, which used to pay about 15-30 rupees to the teachers from its own funds. Later it was taken up by the government. In nearby villages there was only one high school in Phalia, where only 24 boys studied in matric class in 1952. One primary school was set up by the Sikhs at Pindi Lala about three miles away. Educated people were in great need after partition. Availability of qualified teachers was an issue. In Phalia teachers from Gujrat, Kharian or other districts used to come for teaching. The schools network spread afterward. In 1960 there was a girls' middle school and a boys' pilot school with technical/vocational training components for future employment. Now the city has degree colleges for boys and girls, vocational institutes and a number of educational institutes in the private sector. A respondent reported: 'My uncles went to Rawalpindi for his training as JV teacher in 1950s, and I went to Lala Musa for the same in 1956.' Amidst the dearth of facilities, children stayed away from schools due to added reasons of their involvement in income-earning activities, usually as herders, worker in brick kilns, or labourers in family enterprises. So it was commented by a teacher: 'Lucky were children who could find a school nearby and were sent to school by their parents. Mostly those were children of lower class, landless, and occupational groups who excelled in higher education'. The landowner families got their land subdivided due to inheritance; their children did not study properly and nowadays they are working as compounders in health department, army or government servants, or have gone abroad. Only the families who got education could make steady progress and got in the intellectual leadership of the town. These are those who had no land as major source of income.

*Commerce:* Commercialism has made its way in here as well. Land was rupees 150 per one *marla* (16.5 feet square) on the margins of town, and

is now about rupees 200,000 for the same. The price of land here is rightly comparable with other big and small urban centers of the country. The shopkeepers have quick and frequent connection with, and so visit, Lahore, Faisalabad or Karachi to get goods for sale. The market here is thus integrated with national and international market. Chinese imported goods are everywhere. The shops are growing at geometric rate. Many non-locals own shops here. Among those who come to shop are non-local, as well. The foremost sign of town a visitor finds is in the form of regular or temporary shops at the outskirts of the town.

### **Impact of remittances/foreign income**

The districts of Gujrat<sup>46</sup> and Mandi Bahauddin have been well known for work-related out-migration. The first acquaintance of the residents with foreign income was made in the 1950s. The residents of Phalia, too, participated in the waves of out-migrations of the 1960s (mostly to Europe), 1970s (Middle East) and the later decades (diverse destinations in Asia, Africa, Europe, and North America). The city is well connected within the international labor migration process of the recent decades in which thousands of young men have migrated to a large number of countries across the globe. Almost every fourth house has such a person. Unemployment, spirit of adventure, and connection with kin/friends already living out there have been the main reasons behind this. The level of motivation for such work-related migration has been very high because of the visible impact of remittances seen in building of big houses, modern shopping centers, and purchase of land or economic assets by the families of overseas Pakistanis. Those going out use all fair and unfair means and at times are trapped by the recruiting agents/agencies whose credentials they do not bother to verify. Money for such an investment is supplied by the family regardless of its economic position; mostly loans are taken or land/assets are sold for the expected amount of remittances is believed to pay all such loans in a year or two. The stories of mishaps<sup>47</sup> during this migration are also rampant,

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<sup>46</sup> During 1972-81, 41,254 persons (34,248 from rural and 7,006 from urban areas) went abroad from District Gujrat, and they live there. *District Census Report Gujrat, op.cit.*, p.11.

<sup>47</sup> The district of Mandi Bahauddin is well-known for exporting its labor force today, in continuation of its tradition of surplus labour to be recruited in the British army. This district was carved out of District Gujrat, famous for its martial race, proudly having three Nishan-i-Haider, the top most military award. See *District Census Report Gujrat, op.cit.*, p.7. Though District Gujrat was ranked 7 at national and 5 at provincial level, hence put in the top-quartile of the districts in Pakistan, yet the areas included in Mandi

but both the push and pull factors are too strong to discourage any one. A family has built palatial house on main road from income of its five sons working abroad. No one can resist such 'symbols of status'. A peasant family has built a restaurant and marriage hall on its land which lied previously on the canal bank, which is now turning into a thriving business avenue. The feudal power is thus being turned into commercial power. Landowners have built rice-husking mills as well, thus showing inclination for industrial sector income as well but the present industries are small scale primary industries, and do not employ a significant number of persons. These, therefore, cannot become an incentive for jobs encouraging migration to urban centre.

### Caste and social ranking

A noteworthy change has come to the caste structure<sup>48</sup> within the last decade. Now castes are nothing more than just a memory of the occupations of the past. The son of Allah Rakha *nai* (barber), however, has retained his family occupation; earlier he had a barbar shop, now a men's saloon of modern type. Earlier had a barber shop, but now sells stationery. There are no *jolahas* (weavers) or *kumharan*<sup>49</sup> (potter woman) any more. A little section of *mirasis* (bards) is still there; they get money by singing in marriage functions or beating drums or playing the modern musical bands. The *lohars* (blacksmith) have now adopted modern

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Bahauddin District were comparatively backward; Phalia being more so. If one looks at the indicators used for this ranking: education enrolment, literacy, health facilities, piped water, income and wealth, cropped area, fertilizers, tractors, housing conditions, transport and labour force. It could score high in agriculture, education and housing indicators, but lower in manufacturing, cars, bank branches, televisions. Indeed, this method of development ranking does not highlight all the urbanization factors. Aisha Ghaus-Pasha, *Social and Economic Development Ranking of Districts of Pakistan* (Karachi: Social Policy and Development Centre, 1998), p.15.

<sup>48</sup> Traditional caste structure of the area has been described by Zekiye Eglar, *A Punjabi Village in Pakistan, Perspectives on Community, Land, and Economy* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2010), Book I, chapter 3 & 4, pp.45-65, and Book II, chapters 4 & 6, pp.288-96. Also See Sagheer Ahmed, for types of *kammis*, their services and payments, and caste hierarchy in Punjab in his, *Class and Power in a Punjabi Village* (Lahore: Punjabi Adabi Markaz, 1977), pp.67-9, 81-82;

<sup>49</sup> *Kumhar* used to make pots for functions, which were used just once and were then broken. They used to cook bread on big 'loh' (iron plate). They owned donkeys for transporting mud, bricks, grain etc. all this has almost finished in Phalia, but is going on in the peripheral villages.

technical and electrical/gas machines, motors, fans, etc. in about 10 such shops where they make iron tools, do welding, etc. Their hand wheel has vanished. The *machhi* women still sweat on the *tandoors* (traditional ovens), but there are very few such *tandoors* left. The children of most of such *kammi* (menial) caste families have been educated and engaged in modern occupations. They charge money for whatever service (blacksmith, carpenter, cobbler, tailor, cook, or messenger) they provide; there are no more 'hari' or 'sawni' (seasonal) payments; cash economy is very well established. However, caste is till a point of reference for social interaction. The present system of social prestige still counts caste as crucial. Moreover, land, worldly assets, palatial house, cars, big dowries, consumption, political connection and influence, all are put together to assess a person's social rank. The remitted money has no doubt strengthened these factors along with gradually lessening the caste factor.

### Political leadership

In the British times (post 1880), a Sikh, Gyan Singh was the sub-registrar and zaildar of Phalia. His father Sardar Atar Singh (d. 1880) used to live nearby Phalia in Pindi Lala,<sup>50</sup> where the Sikh leader made a boys school and a famous gurdwara. The political leadership of the post-independence era in this area has been reportedly patronizing criminal activities rather they have been initiating and supervising the dacoits,<sup>51</sup> as eye witnesses and victims of such incidents had reported. The police have been no better.<sup>52</sup> The traditional leadership in Phalia has been in the hands of landed gentry whereas there was an exceptional case of a businessman whose family earned money from abroad. He has been different – a migrant from India, owning only an allotted house through the claims for evacuee property. The person now owns a flourishing business and is part of the capitalist class of the city. He has been instrumental in the sale of the historic *tibba* land.

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<sup>50</sup> Description of chiefs of District Gujrat is given in pp.26, 142-65, 248. This book also refers to the way the order of honour and estates were procured by these chiefs. One of these was getting people recruited in British army. See W.L. Conran and H.D. Craik, *The Punjab Chiefs* (Lahore: Sang-e-Meel, 1993, 1<sup>st</sup> edn. 1909), p.147.

<sup>51</sup> These activities of patronizing criminals are also mentioned by Hamza Alavi, *Jagirdari aur Samraj* (Lahore: Fiction House, 2000), p.263.

<sup>52</sup> A victim of a roadside robbery reported that he went to the police station to report where he saw the robber man himself sitting as a staff member and the police refused that there was any such robber on the road as they had just returned from the spot.

### **Cultural manifestation of change 1947-2011**

This section of the study elicits certain indicators of cultural change which are as follows.

*Transport:* ‘Bicycle came here in about 1940 when a British man came riding it from Gujrat. People used to call it ‘*charkha*’ (literally meaning ‘something revolving’) as they heard from those visiting Gujrat for attending their cases in the district courts. People could not believe a moving machine without an animal.’ There was great cultural difference between Gujrat (district headquarter) and Phalia, lying just 50 kilometers away.

*Media:* A resident recalled: ‘I happened to see the Jang newspaper around 1945, when it was printed on brown paper and in its title had a picture of a gun firing at a plane. Radio remained a big source of news after Lahore radio station started operation in 1928. A restaurant owner brought it for the entertainment of his clients. Initially the radio sets had big tubes and operated with batteries. We learnt about the 1965 war from the radio only. Dr. Munir brought the first TV set around 1966 which he put in the bazaar for public. It was operated by battery. Till 1970, one or two newspapers used to arrive in the noon time only’.

Now in 2011, there is one occasional newspaper named *Phalia News* printed from Phalia. *Phalia Times* is the online newspaper of Phalia. Commercial cinema was never built in this area due to restriction of the religious element; now it is no more needed. Only one cable operator, Galaxy Cable Network, supplies about 66 channels in the city area as well as the surrounding villages in about six kilometer square. The number of its users is beyond 7000 in the city alone. The nearest radio station operates from Mandi Bahauddin – Hamara FM 98.

*Lifestyle:* An obvious change is visible in lifestyle, eating habits, architecture, building material, use of machines, recreation, and children’s games. A local reported: ‘We used to play *phand*, *shah shatapoo*, *muth poor*, *pooro poor*, *kajji cheera*, *baran gat*, *bhando bhandariya*, *gher ghumat*, *veto vitat*, and so on. All such games are unknown to children of today.’ Children’s toys, prams, and accessories have become modern. Children are using pampers in a far greater number. All such changes cannot be reported here due to space constraints. Now kids wear denim and T-shirts and a large variety of infant formula milk is available here. The number of beauty parlours is growing; it was nil in 1995, is presently 30. In 1990, no one knew Ajinomoto (Chinese salt); now thousands know about it. First bakery



started around 1968. In 1985, people had least acceptance for the western dress for males (pant, jacket, necktie, etc.). In 2012, the proportion of local males wearing this dress is no less than the other urban centers of the district. Selling of ladies undergarments in the open by bearded men is now accepted while till the 1990s, such items were purchased secretly by older women. The market has changed the prevalent moral standards in a drastic way. In the past, before 1962, an Eid festival was held in the outskirt of the town, with eatables, jugglers, swings and other such entertainments. Some mischievous act against women by an outsider led the festival to end forever. Two marriage halls operate here, namely: Roshan, and Subhanallah.

*Energy:* A resident narrated: ‘The oldest source of light was oil lamp in which we used mustard oil or butter oil (*ghee*). Around 1947 we started using lantern of kerosene oil. We used to study in its light. Only one big gas light was lighted in the Tehsil square by the committee. In Mandi Bahauddin and Gujrat, diesel generators supplied electricity. Mangla and Tarbela Dams were innovations of later decades. A teacher explained us the word ‘dam’ in 1960s. People used gas lights in marriage functions. Electricity was supplied to residents of the town in 1964 through WAPDA, for which we had to ensure at least three connections in one lane.’ The present day crisis of load shedding is managed at large scale by UPSs and generators, which is another source of income and employment for people.

*Education:* The modern school systems operating at the national level have reached here. ‘The Educators’ and the International Islamic University School are supplementing already working private schools of Al-Ghazali and other such network. The government of Punjab has opened a Punjab College also. The town has been a source of supplying male and female teachers to the villages of the previously larger tehsil Phalia and beyond since the 1950s.

*Manufacturing:* In 1947, the phenomenon of market as such was insignificant since the peasant and non-peasant population produced only whatever was needed – food, instruments, cloth, shoes, services of barber, priest, etc. Self sufficiency and thrift was the rule.<sup>53</sup> ‘If there was

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<sup>53</sup> The non-peasant workers enjoyed less respect than the landowners, yet they were respected ‘not merely [as] private producer but a sort of public servant employed by the rural community.’ Their produce was hardly in surplus.

any surplus of perishable type (onion, vegetable, fruit), it was thrown to be rotten. No transport, no sharing. Women preferred black *khaddi* cloth as it needed less washing. There was no soap so we used *kallar* (saltish white powder of saline land). *Lassi* (butter milk) was used to wash body and hair'. Grain market was set up in Phalia in British period as it was a central town. Carts, donkeys and camels were used for carrying grain, food, construction material or people. A large number of carts came after partition from India through Gujrat with occupancy orders. The village Phalia had *shamlat* (common ownership) land which was under the control of big landowners. The local *lambardars* (headmen)<sup>54</sup> who have been traditionally influential, still reign control of the social and political domains of modern system of local bodies.

*Agriculture:* Phalia has largely been an agricultural community long after the establishment of taluka and tehsil here, as that meant only addition of few offices and acquaintances with the government officials. Local magistrate started deciding local cases which were referred to the district court when needed. Urbanism was infused very slowly. The agricultural mode of life of its residents gradually declined with the change in their mode of earning to non-agricultural occupations. In 2011, one can see a small number of families purely relying on agricultural income rather they have government service, petty business, remitted income, etc. Now a small number of people have milk or draft animals. Cooking of sugarcane juice for making *gur* and women carrying '*bhatta*' (peasant lunch carried to farm) is a story of the past. Now men mostly come home on motor bikes to get their lunch. However, on the periphery of town such farm houses still preserve the old scene. Within the town, no more buffaloes wander in the streets, no more horses neigh inside the houses. *Tonga* (horse carriage) is also banned inside the town; instead a local rickshaw plies to make all routes convenient.<sup>55</sup> The agricultural artisans are therefore reduced.<sup>56</sup>

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For details see, F.R. Khan, *Social History* (Dacca: Shirin Publications, 1967), pp. 69-72.

<sup>54</sup> The headman enjoyed a quasi-official position, granted by the British revenue administration. He was appointed by the government to collect and pay the dues of land revenue from the proprietary family. L.S.S. O' Malley, *India's Social Heritage* (London: Curzon Press, 1975, 1<sup>st</sup> edn. 1934), p.106.

<sup>55</sup> The technologies of transportation have changed fast from animals to bicycle, bus, trucks, cars, rickshaws. The huge number of motorbikes in the main bazaar tells the level of physical mobility and money invested in transport.

*Market:* Availability of consumer items in the market has been a great transforming agent. With increase in the number of cellular transmission, the number of cell phone users and mobile phone shops has shot up. Connectivity with the world is as perfect as any metropolitan area in the country. Rent-a car is a recent addition. The market activity here is largely retail sale, while no warehouses, whole-sale market or business firm can be seen. The infrastructure is mainly focused upon supporting the retail marketing. Even the local production is minimal; the items sold in the market are manufactured elsewhere. Food items are exception. Even the pottery comes from Qadirabad. This lack of local industry provides a reason for out-migration. Due to lack of jobs and poor salary the educated, professional class of Phalia has sought jobs outside while they keep visiting the town until their whole families migrate.

*Gender relations:* Gender relations are changing fast due to the impact of media, education and availability of cell phones. Women of the area have been fairly assertive, mobile and keen to change their life conditions. All sorts of traditions to suppress women (violence, honour, exchange marriage, child marriage, and son-preference) operate here; however, polygamy has been rare. Women have been breaking all these barriers and recording heroic episodes of protest and rebellion.<sup>57</sup> The most encouraging sign regarding gender has been keen desire of the people for female education, willingness to allow them paid jobs, and related mobility, and a certain degree of acceptance in making their choice in marriage. Educated women have been active largely in education and health sector. Less educated women opt for informal activities like tailoring, beauty parlours, etc. Women's job is now largely accepted as a necessity and no shame is attached to it any more.

### **Defacing the past**

The past is fast eroding from the physical scene of Phalia. Even the old canal has lost its beauty for its brinks are now lined with bricks and cement. The most imperceptible disappearance has been that of the water

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<sup>56</sup> Earlier the blacksmith fitted iron horse shoes, now he mends punctures of bikes. Wooden plough has become extinct in Phalia so the old *tarkhan* is now modern carpenter limited to construction work or furniture.

<sup>57</sup> Famous folk story of Sohni Mahinwal has been recorded in the region of Gujrat district. Few years back, a daughter of Phalia jumped into River Chenab with her infant daughter tied on her back, to protest on a forced marriage, against her wishes as she loved a man out of her caste. This is one among many such stories.

tank, once made for water supply in pre-partition days, of 200 feet square with a depth of ten steps. That with the adjacent pond is now filled and a girls' school and shops are built on its area. Both vegetable and grain markets of the yore are shifted to the outskirts of the city, and shops are built instead. In the girls' high school the luxurious lawns, residential quarters and old structures built during British time are replaced by new class rooms, as the need expands. Only a small structure is left. The boys' primary school next to it is all rebuilt with no old sign left. The girls' primary school set up in the Sikh gurdwara has been changing shape. Though its main ornamented hall is still intact, the central platform was removed. One Hindu temple still stands there as a residential place. It is not maintained, though it is protected from any alteration or demolition.<sup>58</sup> The central Jamia Mosque, however, according to the present imam, 'has been renovated at least twice in my observation'<sup>59</sup>; as is visible in the added structures and modern facilities of water supply and shades. The oldest post office in a big hall on Helan Road, was moved to a new building in the 1970s, but that new building also is in a dilapidated condition. The pre-partition health centre near the National Bank is rebuilt as tehsil administration building. The old police station is rebuilt giving it a grand façade. The old tehsil hospital building is taken over by the tehsil administration; a part of it is used to extend the boys' school. The magnificent and historic tehsil building which once was made of very small bricks, made of clay from nearby pond, caused by digging for *tibba* long ago, is demolished. The building had lock-ups for the prisoners and its fort like roof top used to remind of the days of arrow-shooting. The modern has replaced the traditional in a very distasteful way, at least for the residents who value connection with history. Both the oldest (pre-partition) and older lorry *addas* (bus stands) are converted to shops. The old GTS<sup>60</sup> stand is still empty, waiting for the same fate. In the main bazaar there stand some rare old shops with big wooden folding doors but modern shutters and glass windows stand out to dominate. The canal flowing on the borders of the city is now converted into a convenient garbage dump, lined with shops on both sides. The city is left with very few traces of its pre-partition history.

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<sup>58</sup> Interview with the resident, who was allotted the building at the time of partition, and who pays its rent as well.

<sup>59</sup> The caretaker of the mosque reported.

<sup>60</sup> Government transport service of buses plying on small and long routes throughout the province now totally replaced by private bus, coach and taxi services.

Even glimpses of the commercial and administrative structures of the 1960 are few.

The historical mound of Phalia has been erased from the face of earth. The ravages of land mafia and market economy are eliminating the history of communities and nations, because of the lust for money and profit. The place was under the control of Town Committee. Once there were graves on the eastern edge of the mound. A tomb of Shaikh Sattu Badshah, with a few other graves, lies on the southwestern side of the mound: it is still intact, as no one can dare hurt it, because of the common faith and respect for the saint lady buried there.<sup>61</sup> Saints still command respect and reign in the age of market economy. Another saint of Phalia, Sain Kala, died around mid-twentieth century.<sup>62</sup> His tomb is also a place of solace and respect for the people. Tomb of Pir Syed Yaqub Shah, a religious leader, was added in the early 1990s.<sup>63</sup> The tomb of a saint at Dogul, about two kilometers from Phalia, is more famous because of the festival and '*urs*' held there in summer. The *do gul* (two buds) of the sapling given to the saint still stand there as two big banyan trees.<sup>64</sup> Such *pirs* and their shrines abound in the area.

### **The demolition of historic *tibba***

To her utter dismay, the author saw the historic *tibba* being demolished on 31st December 2011; bulldozers were removing the digged out earth. The huge amount of earth must have been collected quite laboriously by some men and women in the remote past. It was being removed mercilessly, thoughtlessly, simply out of greed triggered by the expected profit, to be made by constructing shopping plazas there. The *tibba* has been the property of zila (district) council and reportedly it has been sold for 90 million rupees. Though it was not declared a heritage yet no one

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<sup>61</sup> As reported by an elderly resident, 'some graves were also there around the tomb but graves on the eastern side of the mound were gradually washed by rain water, and the bones were visible in the 1940s and 1950s'.

<sup>62</sup> Grandfather of the author had friendship with the saint.

<sup>63</sup> Shah Sahib came to this town around 1957 and stayed in the central Jamia Mosque as the most revered preacher and holy figure; also contested election for the Muslim League. His son Syed Binyamin Shah, once provincial minister of social welfare, was murdered in Lahore in late 1990s, reportedly because of his confrontation with the NGO sector. For detail see Zahid Islam, *Logon kay Sath Sath NGO Tehreek ka Ja'iza* (Lahore: Citizen's Network for Good Governance, 2001), pp.219-22. This account is meant to show that new *pirs* are also added to the community.

<sup>64</sup> Certain details about map, location, history, saints, etc. are available online with pictures as well.

can deny its historic nature and significance. The local bodies and the district administration should have shown sanity to preserve the historic character of the place that was a symbol of pride for the local residents. The same buildings or structures could have been unique if built on the *tibba*. Erasing historical evidences has been so easy in Pakistan and there has not been enough protest on such ‘devastations’. It is a pity that the heritage is not being protected, be it Moenjodaro, Makli, or the *tibba* of Phalia. True, the money may not have morality, but at least the representatives of the people could have thought better. Yet the demolition provides another evidence of Phalia turning into an urban centre by removing a ‘rural’ sign lying in its central business district.

### Discussion and conclusions

The research question pursued by this study can be answered as: ‘The main causes of growth of Phalia have been local, supralocal and macrosocial in nature’. Local factors have been geography, governance, and infrastructure of transportation and communication. Supralocal factors have been historic, political, economic, and global. Macrosocial trends can be identified as including development policies, literacy, human development, media, consumption orientation, and expansion of market and above all demographic changes particularly migration and urbanization. These factors have merged here to give a specific pattern of growth to the town which is yet not recognized as significant in its political and economic character.’ The news appearing in national media about Phalia are only about mishaps and crimes. It was also not prominent in history as such despite an ancient origin. It appears from the study of historical data of the Phalia area, that it had always been shadowed by other towns of the district lying on railway tracks, trunk roads or industrial belt. Inaction or disinterest on the part of local leadership of Phalia seems historically embedded and brewed. That was mainly feudal, created by the colonial administration’s favours, and had no motivation for the uplift of the people who depended on their land or patronage. The religious leadership got a very short span in power.

In the growth of Phalia, one can see the factor of market and urban facilities as the main attractions. It can be compared with a city of modern origin, Mandi Bahauddin, now its district headquarters. Mandi Bahauddin was non-existent in 1901, the year its nearby village Pindi Bahauddin was made railway station. After World War II, a grain market was made in Chak 51, a new settlement nearby, and in 1924, Mandi Bahauddin was made a railway station. Its population surged to amazing 12,000 in 1930. It was declared a town committee in 1937, municipal committee in 1941, sub-division in 1960 and a district headquarters in

1993.<sup>65</sup> This upgrading was caused by population growth spurred by transportation, communication, and administration centered at the town. Moreover expanded health, education and market facilities were obvious reasons. An important factor was its leadership with urban orientation<sup>66</sup> as compared with Phalia, where the landowners dominated the power circles. They have been habitually quarrelsome, fond of litigation, not interested in education of self or others, and had no vision for development of the town in which they enjoyed power. It was only after the market forces took over development process in the 1990s that Phalia started growing rapidly.<sup>67</sup>

According to the residents the local landlords could have developed this area as they were the only ones resourceful and powerful, but unfortunately they lacked the vision to think on these lines. There were signs of development in the surrounding, in nearby towns and villages, such as girls' college or industrial units, but nothing substantial could be thought in time for Phalia, which had a more urban potential than the small rural localities in its surroundings. Small industries and production units (e.g. cardboard and ice factory, sugar mills, textile mills) could have been set-up here to absorb the agricultural produce and human-power, which could have had access to education and training institutes of multiple kinds.

The investment in the processes of migration, infrastructure building and business has been done largely by the people; the government has not made any notable contribution even in creating new job opportunities or building support network. It has just regulated the activities by implementing laws of building, constructing roads, providing water and sanitation or regulating traffic flows. The expansion of city has occurred owing to its own vitality, the genius of its people, and connection or impact of the demographic and economic factors operating at the national and global levels. The pattern of housing

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<sup>65</sup> 1998 District Census Report of Mandi Bahauddin, *op.cit.*, pp.4-5. See also footnote no.27.

<sup>66</sup> These included a number of persons from families of Indian origin who migrated at partition. Since Hindus dominated the market towns, such towns were repopulated by in-migrants. From Phalia, Hindus and Sikhs left in a number far smaller than Mandi Bahauddin, but in greater number than the rural surroundings, where Muslims dominated. This impact of partition displacement is amply discussed by Arif Hasan, *Bezabta Inqilab*, *op.cit.*, pp.2-4.

<sup>67</sup> It is the qualitative difference observed by the author that the change seen in last ten years have been far greater than the cumulative change of the preceding four decades.

expansion indicates a major development. Construction, however, has been depriving the community of its valuable agricultural lands. The number of daily commuters to urban center has increased with new available means of transportation.<sup>68</sup> Geography has contributed to Phalia's growth in that it is a nodal point of seven major routes in the district, is located centrally, and has a rich fertile soil, at a safe distance from river. It was raised to the status of taluka for the same reason. Later, the nodal factor helped people pop in for education and health. A factor added recently has been that of commercial facilities and opportunities.

Phalia has now emerged as a market town like many sister towns of the country. An indication of this is closure of markets on Fridays as the village shoppers do not come due to Friday prayer. Now with the added factors of remittances, migration, and globalization, the aspirations of the residents have changed; from a contented and self-contained community to a burgeoning market, a highly mobile population, and an urge for education which has served a sure source of social mobility. The feudal, patriarchal, and traditional tendencies, still struggling with egalitarian and modern forces, would continue as long as the rural in-migrants keep pouring in the town. The dynamic community, alert to the opportunities, is keen to avail itself of them. The pace of the present vanishing into the past is becoming faster day by day. Taking risk, experimenting and appreciating migration have become the essence of change in the ancient locality of Phalia.

One can conclude that Phalia has developed under its own dynamic spirit owing little to its leadership. The in-migrants have given it new blood and the market activity has vitalized it. The story of growth of Phalia may resemble many other towns in Pakistan but the geographic, historic and ethno-cultural characteristics make Phalia a unique case study of urban growth, an 'unplanned' and 'spontaneous' growth', as was propounded by Arif Hasan.

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<sup>68</sup> Hasan and Raza, *op.cit.*, p.46.