



A study on historical development of landownership and landed aristocracy in Pakistan

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ABSTRACT

Landlordism is still considered an expression of power and superiority in Pakistan like many other countries in the world. This paper is aimed at: (1) to explain the very basic concept of land ownership; both in religious and social context, (2) to sketch historical pattern of land acquisition and its exploitation for exerting social control and political pressure and keeping the masses' economic down to earth. The history of Indo-Pak demonstrates the gap between original Islamic landownership principles and actual historical practice, firstly by the first Muslims of India, then by the British and most recently by contemporary Pakistan. Conversely, post independence of Pakistan, after going through various waves of military–landlords–politico–bureaucratic rule, oligarchy has reached to such a state that even the current political administration draws its chief share from landlords. The study suggests that for economic development and uplift of the pro-poor farming community, overcoming social and political injustice and getting rid of the clutches of landlordism is the dire need of the time and society.

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1. Introduction

In the past, all human beings distributed the shared land for deriving their benefits. However, with the passage of time, this concept underwent changes. Holding land is considered a symbol of power, especially in Pakistan (Khan, Dasti, & Khan, 2013). Both politically and economically, its ownership symbolizes influential position in the society. Landownership has been defined in various ways over the ages or times. Therefore, the conceptual framework for understanding landownership has varied from region to region and time to time because it has been influenced by culture, traditions and religious faith. Several studies show that concentration of landownership is not conducive for economic development (Cinnirella & Hornung, 2011). Concentration of holding land and absentee landlordism are the cardinal hurdles which have retarded socio-politico-economic pace of progress

in Pakistan in particular and the Muslim world in general, which is a clear violation of Islamic teachings of landownership (USAID, 2010). The study is more descriptive in nature focusing on explaining the landownership in Islam and its true picture in the society of Indo-Pakistan. The remaining of the paper is arranged into following components, Concept of Landownership in Islam, Landownership in Ancient India, Landownership in the Delhi Sultanate (1206–1526), Mansabdari System in Mughal India (1526–1857), Landownership in Colonial India (1857–1947) and Landed Aristocracy in Pakistan (1947–1970).

2. The concept of land ownership in Islam

In Islam, landownership is limited in scope, where division and distribution of landownership has been encouraged. According to Islam, land belongs to Allah, and in human terms, the person who cultivates it. Possession of land more than necessity is also forbidden. Allah Almighty says in the Holy Book, the Quran, “All that is in the heavens and on the earth belong to Allah.” (Surah-An-Nisa (4): 126 & 134) In another place, it is stated, “To him belongs whatever is in the heavens and on earth.” (Surah An-Nahl (16): 52) Moreover, Allah Almighty says, “His is the Kingdom of the heavens and the earth and all that lies between them.” (Surah al-Zukhruf (43): 85; Surah Al-Maidah (5): 120) In addition, it is stated, “For to Allah belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth and what is between them. He creates what He pleases.” (Surah Al-Maidah (5): 18 and 40). Furthermore, Allah Almighty says, “The earth belongs to Allah, He gives to His servants as He pleases and the end is (best) for the righteous.” (Surah Al-Araf (7): Part of ayat 128). Allah is the Creator-Owner and Lord Sovereign of water, air, sunshine, etc. and has delegated to man the power and authority to utilize and exploit the resources (Afzal-ur-Rahman, 1980; Ibrahim, 1989). The owner has right to hold land until it is utilized properly, otherwise he has to give up the right of possession (Yusuf, 1977). There are scores of references to land in the Qur’an that provide for and respect property rights (Qur’an 2: 205, 2: 220, 4: 2, 4: 5–6, 4: 10, 4: 29, 16: 71, 38: 24, 59: 8). Private property rights are well established but constructed as a sacred trust based on tawhid (doctrine of unity), khalifa (stewardship), and amana (trust). Property and land vest in God, but are temporally enjoyed by men and women through responsibility or trust (Qur’an 2: 30, 36: 54; see Moors, 1995). According to a literal religious philosophical tradition, man is allowed to use resources such as land but can never own it. Abdul-Rauf quotes extensively from the Qur’an and Sunna (tradition of the Prophet) to conclude that there is a concept of dual ownership (human–God) under Islamic principles (1984, p. 19). The existence of rights to own (raqaba or full ownership), enjoy, or alienate land is not in the main contested, but these rights are conditional on their legitimacy as derived from Islamic principles.

Narrated by Hazrat Aisha (R.A), “He who cultivates land that does not belong to anybody more rightful (to own it)”. Urwa said, “Umar (Hazrat Umar-third Caliph of Islam) gave the same verdict in his Caliphate.” (Sahih Bukhari: Volume 3, Book 39, Number 528). Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon with Him) says that land belongs to the person who transforms an uncultivated piece of land to a cultivable land. And no one else could be the owner of that land forcefully. In case he leaves that land, and does not cultivate it for three years, he would lose the ownership of that piece of land. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) also says, “The person having land more than his necessity should give it free of cost to others for cultivation”. (Al-Haq, 1954, pp. 4–11) The Prophet (PBUH) says, “Whoever has land should cultivate it himself or give it to his (Muslim) brother gratis; otherwise keep it uncultivated,” narrates Hazrat Abu Huraira (R.A). (Sahih Bukhari: Volume 3, Book 39, Number 533).

The concept of *mukhabara* was also outlawed by the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). *Mukhabara* means a deal in which land is leased against one-half, or one-third, or one-fourth of its production which was forbidden because cultivators were deprived of their due rights. (Haq, 1977, pp. 21–28) Narrated by Rafi bin Khadij, my uncle said,

Allah's Apostle sent for me and asked, "what are you doing with your farms?" I replied, "We give our farms on rent on the basis that we get the yield produced at the banks of the water streams (rivers) for the rent, or rent it for some *Wasqs* of barley and dates." Allah's Apostle said, "Do not do so, but cultivate (the land) yourselves or let it be cultivated by others gratis, or keep it uncultivated". I said, "we hear and obey". (Sahih Bukhari: Volume 3, Book 39, Number 532)

The practice of Ottoman Empire related to land administration is utilized to determine that the effective and efficient land management system, registration and land titling have been the persistent features of Muslim world. As it is observed that the some aspects of Islamic land principles and practices are almost similar to the current international standards of land or in other words, it can say that they offer an alternative pattern or standard. However, the all diversifications of Islamic land models and principles actually support the goal for security of tenure, offer a refined, cultured, and alternative framework to the international government. The main purpose of Islam is the creation of a society where every person may obtain their basic rights (defined in Quran) and enjoy their life. This is consistent with the ideals of democracy and explains why democracy can flourish in Islamic societies. Islamic approach also includes some moral and material economic regulations, and Islamic teachings particularly emphasize the social justice. Moreover, the concepts and arrangements of Islamic property have a great impact on the implication of individual ownership and also access to land and secure tenure.

3. Landownership in ancient India

In ancient India, the rural population of Indus region was largely settled population, clustering along rivers and flood channels which gave popularity to Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro. The Aryans are regarded, according to the annals of history, as the immediate successors of the Indus Valley Civilization. The Aryans had a simple social structure in the initial stages. The sacred *Rigveda* divided Aryans into three distinct classes: the *Brahmanas* (priests), the *Kshatriyas* or *Rajanyas* (warriors, rulers), and the *Vesh* (agriculturists). (Habib, 1995, pp. 60, 61) The organization of society had large variations. These variations can be inherited, developed, or required. The Indian landlordism had multilayered structures in the society. The early medieval Indian social structure clearly shows that the peasants enjoyed autonomy of production because they had complete control over their land. The peasants were inferior in rights than the landowners, who were superior in rights. The peasants were bound to pay taxes to the landowners because the latter were the owners of the land who could claim any type of tax. However, the king was the owner of the whole land in early medieval times. The king was also called *Bhumidah*, the giver of land. (Jha, 1987, pp. 169, 170)

The Gupta and the post-Gupta times introduced a new system of peasantry, whereby new peasants replaced the old ones. It shows that the owner had all rights to do anything according to his will. Then the caste system further enhanced this feudalistic mode of control. The conditions of peasants were improved by providing their shares in the following manner: (a) lease holding, (b) share cropping, and (c) system of serfdom. The concept of peasant was used in medieval times from Buddha to Gupta with different connotations.

However, another term for peasant is *Ksetrika* or *Ksetrin* which means controller of land, and sometimes cultivator or agriculturist. (Jha, 1987, 169–173) There were various degrees of control over land. This control of land established the superiority of the landlord over the peasant. The Indian concept of landownership is more or less feudalistic in nature, which represents a class of landlords and a class of peasants living in an agrarian society.

4. Landownership in the Delhi Sultanate

The seventh- to twelfth-century India witnessed many changes in feudal structure and agrarian relationships. This era also witnessed the emergence of a class of landed aristocracy as an intermediary class which enjoyed the revenues of one or more villages. (Gopal, 1989, p. 16) The principle characteristics of the agrarian system of the period included the mode of distribution of the surplus (production). (Qureshi, 1944, pp. 121, 122) The assignments of revenue collection were assigned to the officers of the king. (Habib, 1995, pp. 75–77) These officers were administrative-in-charge along with having the charge of revenue collection. They could change the previous practice of revenue collection, land assessment, measurement of land, and concession. The entire kingdom was divided into subdivisions on its basis. (Qureshi, 1944, p. 86) Moreover, the officers were sub-ordinate to the kings.

In medieval India under Muslim rule, a great part of land was distributed for cultivation, known as *jagirs*, *waqfs* (endowment lands), and *imams* (land grants). This system of distribution of cultivated land decreased the income of government treasury and exchequer. The only reason was that all the revenue from private coffers went to private nobles and *jagirdars*. The major group of these *jagirdars* was Hindu *zamindars* consisting of *khuts*, *muqaddams*, and *choudhris*. Sultan Ghiyas al-Din Balban (r. 1266–1286) tried to abolish these land grants (*jagirs*, *waqfs*, *inams*, etc.), but he could not do so. Sultan Ala al-Din Khalji (r. 1296–1316) was the first ruler of the Delhi Sultanate, who took steps to abolish these land grants. He confiscated these lands and converted them into crown lands known as *khalsa*. With the passage of time, Sultan Ala al-Din also changed his policy of grants towards nobles, as well as taxation policy. (Niazi, 1990, p. 55) At the time of his accession, Ala al-Din had to bestow almost all types of facilities and grants to the influential people of various communities in order to win their sympathies and support for the stability of his position and rule. (Lal, 1950, pp. 178–180) But when he found himself strong enough in the state affairs, he punished all such turncoats on the charge of their being disloyal to their former rulers and masters.

The concept of landownership during the Sultanate era was based on agrarian system. The king and his bureaucracy or officers were the principle exploiters in the society. This was again the continuation of the old existing tradition of their superiority over the peasants. The revenue assignments were distributed among the ruling class, and they were granted the right to levy the revenue in particular territories. Small pieces of cultivated land or territorial units were termed as *Iqtas*, (Qureshi, 1944, p. 122), while the territory whose revenue was directly collected for Sultan's own treasury was called *Khalsa* (crown lands). *Iqta* was the basic unit of such property. There were three stages of the developments of *iqtas* under the Sultans of Delhi: (Habib, 1995, pp. 82–84).

- (a) Under the early sultans of Delhi, *iqta* was assigned to the commanders. They were required to maintain themselves and their troops out of its revenue;

- (b) Under the Khaljis and the Tughluqs, the *muqtis* (holders of *iqta*, governors) were not absolute controllers of *iqta* because it was a state property. The whole revenue was sent to the king's treasury, and the salaries of the officers in cash were fixed.
- (c) Under Sultan Firuz Tughluq (r. 1351–1388), concessions were granted to the officers for services during political crisis and rebellions. The estimated revenue income was fixed permanently; the transfer of *iqta* was still banned. He also started the practice of paying his troops by assigning them revenue collection. He made revenue collection and some parts of troops hereditary.

There were two principle features of *iqtas*: (a) division of the Empire among tribute-receiving governors; and (b) increment in the revenue demand. Besides the *iqta*, the land grants were generally known as *milk*, *idarat* or *madad-i-maash* or as *inam*. (Habib, 1995, pp. 85–88) The surplus was thus claimed for the king, who exercised his sovereignty and ownership over the landed property. The whole land belonged to the king; the peasants were tools or the warlords of the king.

5. *Mansabdari* system in Mughal India (1526–1857)

Zaheer al-Din Muhammad Babur (r. 1526–1530) invaded India in 1526, and founded the Mughal dynasty. His grandson Jalal al-Din Muhammad Akbar (r. 1556–1605), the third Mughal Emperor, organized the *mansabdari* system in 1574, in the nineteenth year of his rule. (Aziz, 2002, p. 2) *Mansabdari* system classified the functionaries of the Empire as fighters or *ashab al-Sayf* (masters of the sword); clerks or *ashab al-Qalam* (masters of the pen); theologians, *ashab al-Amamah* (religious scholars). (Qureshi, 1966, p. 88) The *mansab* denoted a rank of office, which had its obligations, precedence, and grade of pay. Sometimes *mansab* was for life, but it was generally not hereditary so heirs could not demand continuity of office. (Aziz, 2002, p. 2) The status of the *ashab al-Sayf* (military-men) and *ashab al-Qalam* (clerical and administrative staff) was denoted by military rank. Originally, there were sixty-six (66) grades of *mansabdars* introduced by Akbar but later on only thirty-three (33) grades existed. Every official of the Empire above the rank of a servant held an army rank. During Akbar's reign, the lowest *mansab* was the commander of 10 and the highest the commander of 10,000. *Mansabs* more than 7000 were given only to the princes (sons of the Emperor). (Allami, 2004, pp. 230, 231) Excluding the princes, the *mansabs* were of three types: (a) 7000–3000 – *Amiran-i-Azam*, the greater nobles; (b) 2500–500 – *Amir*, noble; and (c) 400–10 – *mansabdar*, office holder. (Aziz, 2002, pp. 118–120) Commanders of higher ranks (*Amiran-i-Azam*) were of three classes, according to the proportion of horsemen: (a) first class, if the whole command was of horses; (b) second class, if horses were more than half; and (c) third class, if horses were less than half. (Qureshi, 1966, p. 91)

The annual pay of *mansabdars* started from rupees 350,000 with intervals of 50,000 between *mansabs* of 7,000 and 5,000; rupees 250,000 with intervals of 25,000, between *mansabs* of 5,000 and 1,000; the *mansab* of 20 received 1,000 rupees. (Aziz, 2002, pp. 52, 53) Pay was in cash or by the revenue of a *jagir* (an area of land which was not given to the *mansabdar* as his property, but he could use the revenue from the land for his expenses and pay). The *mansab* could be increased or decreased on the wishes of the ruler and reports of performance. Two lists of *mansabs* were maintained, *Hazir-i-rikah*, present at court, and *Tainat*, on duty elsewhere. Military command was at the will of the Emperor. Akbar held

that anyone could be a military commander and he often appointed commanders who had no military knowledge or experience. (Allami, 2004, 234)

Mansabdars were given control over an area of land or a *jagir*, whose revenue was to be used for maintaining troops. If not given a *jagir*, they were paid in cash. It was a normal practice to pay for only eight or ten months in the year. (Qureshi, 1966, pp. 106, 107) The *mansabdars* were allowed to keep 5% of the income of the *jagir*, or 5% of the salaries received of their subordinate staff. (Habib, 1995, p. 96) The accounting system was complex, and the *mansabdars* usually borrowed money for expenses, and when they died, their private property was seized against any outstanding balances. With a corrupt system of accounting and inspection, very few *mansabdars* kept their units up to strength. When a *mansabdar* was ordered to take part in an expedition, he was required to parade his unit outside the palace, and the Emperor inspected it from a window in the palace. (Allami, 2004, p. 233)

The word *zamindar* gained popularity in India during the Mughal period. It was used to denote the various holders of hereditary interest, ranging from powerful, independent, and autonomous chieftains to petty intermediaries at the village level. Before the Mughals, the chieftains were designated as *Rajas*, *Rais*, and *Thakurs*, etc. The small intermediaries were termed as *choudhris*, *khuts*, and *muqaddams*. The *zamindars* of Mughal India can be classified into three broad categories: (a) the autonomous chieftains, (b) the intermediary *zamindars*, and (c) the primary *zamindars*. (Chandra, 1982, p. 53; Hasan, 2005, p. 136) The chieftains were the hereditary autonomous rulers of their territories and enjoyed practically sovereign powers. The intermediary *zamindars* comprised the various types of *zamindars* who collected the revenue from the primary *zamindars* and paid it to the imperial treasury. Intermediary *zamindars* comprised of *choudhris*, *deshmukhs*, *desais*, *muqaddams*, *qanungos*, and *ijaradars*, etc. (Hasan, 2005, p. 143) They were the holders of proprietary rights over agricultural land.

6. Landownership in colonial India

The course of history has been changed with the passage of time because transitions occurred from Sultans of Delhi to Mughals, and then from house of Taimur to colonial system introduced by the British in India. The system of land taxation was centrally organized by the Mughals and finally elaborated by the British colonial administrators. (Merillat, 1970, p. 10)

Under the British rule, the social and economic structure of India took a new shape, which was more or less helpful for the British for collecting revenues. During the initial stages of the British rule, they followed a policy of subduing the local Indian natives. But with the passage of time, the British realized that warfare is not the solution. They tried to seek some new ways of making the Indians subservient. They sought the political patronage of the local landowners for consolidation of their rule in India. (Naemullah, 2003, pp. 109, 110) The colonial system affected the local land revenue system of India in the following ways: first of all, the concept of private property was introduced, which was more or less same as was in Britain. Secondly, the British tried to introduce efficient system of governance. Thirdly, the British introduced their own legislative system in India (Alvi, 2000, pp. 37, 38).

Land revenue, under the British Government, consisted of a certain proportion of the crop, and it varied from place to place or area to area. It was submitted to the local *Raja*, or the revenue official. The sharing of the crop as a payment to the ruler was a duty of the peasant. The British administrators instituted the system of revenue collection in cash instead of

in kind, unlike the Mughal. The appointment of administrators as well as irrigation system was borrowed from Mughal by the British. (Merillat, 1970, p. 10)

In Madras and Bombay, cultivable land was given to the local Indians for cultivation. It was not hereditary. The government collected revenue or taxes from the *zamindars*, who served the interests of the British Government in India. (Sharma, 1985, pp. 70–73) It was more or less permanent settlement, but the underlying philosophy was to tame the local Indians.

Permanent settlement was introduced by the colonial administrators in Bengal in 1793. Through permanent settlement, Indians were given the right of private ownership of land by the British for the first time in colonial India. (Merillat, 1970, p. 12) The British administrative system was ruthless and harsh for the peasants and working-classes. The peasants were under the debt burden of their landlords. This permanent settlement gave right to the *zamindars* or *jagirdars* for the ownership of land, and peasants or farmers were deprived of their rights to the land. The colonial system deteriorated the peasant class by using different tactics to use them as tools. The local *jagirdars* and *zamindars* took benefits from these conditions.

The next step was the *Ryotwari* System, which was aimed at curtailing the powers of tax farmers, village headmen, moneylenders, local warlords, and other relevant officers. (Gilmartin, 1998, p. 20) It was basically a disadvantage for the poor peasants. *Ryotwari* and *Zamindari* Systems, both existed on the parallel grounds. Later, with the advent of nineteenth century, a new system of administration was introduced in the Punjab. The system was headed by village men, while the joint holdings of family and the jointly shared villagers' land were assessed by this system. The British were owners of the land, and the real aim was the attainment of supremacy over the locals. The officers or the administrators were the agents of colonial administration for collecting revenue. The major duties assigned to these administrators were the payment of revenue to the exchequer.

The composition of this system was based on intermediaries like *zamindars* and *jagirdars*. (Naemullah, 2003, pp. 112, 113;.) In this system, the officers were only the facilitators between peasants and the government, but with the passage of time, they started demanding hereditary claim on the property as well as the officer-ship. The British were generally ignorant of the conditions of peasants and their only concern was with the tax collectors and their proprietors. (Alvi, 2000, p. 39) These *zamindars* and *jagirdars* were rewarded by the British. They were mostly appointed for a specific tenure, for a specific *jagir* or land for the collection of revenue payable to the British Government.

Introduction of the new idea of property holding in India by the British was also part of the institution of efficient government. The British Government in India followed the foot steps of the Muslim rulers regarding land settlement, (Frykenberg, 1979, p. 44), but the concept of landownership was a development on the part of colonial administrators in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. (Beg, 1998, pp. 19, 20) These developments brought about changes in economy and society. The fate of the civil government was bound up with landownership, while the fate of the landowners was tied to the state.

The British Government categorized the landowners into three types: (a) *Umara*, (b) *Zamindars*, and (c) small *Zamindars*. This categorization was only given to those loyal landlords and landowners who served the interests of the British. The right over the land was reserved with the British Government. The locals were only given the right of the holding of land for a limited time, and later on, land was again under the control of the British

Government, which was supported by these local landowners. Some of the landowners were assigned the duty to provide camels and horses for the war purposes.

The British did all this intentionally to suppress the locals by using the tactics of reforms in the structure and administration, and landownership. With the passage of time, Punjab and Bengal came under the settlement system of the British Government. Later on, Sindh also became the victim of landlords, who were supported by the Britishers. (Naeemullah, 2003, pp. 115–121) Sindh was separated from Bombay in 1935, but the settlement program was extended to this part also.

7. Landed aristocracy in Pakistan (1947–1970)

The origin of the landed aristocracy involved in the political system of Pakistan can be traced back to pre-partition politics. (Hussain, 1979, p. 44) Their politicization was due to these reasons: (a) because they wanted to secure their interests in colonial set-up, and (b) the British used them to consolidate their rule in India, especially among the rural peasantry (Shafiqat, 1995, pp. 67, 68).

As Pakistan came into existence in 1947, the Pakistan Muslim League (PML) was the principle party that took over the charge of the country. But it failed to keep its primacy, and was consequently swept out of power. (Aziz, 2001, pp. 32, 33) Some of the non-Muslim League groups or political parties were anti-feudal. The stance of these political parties was reflected in their manifestos and their party programs. The major political parties which were anti-feudal included Krishka Proja Party of Bengal, Momins of Bihar, Khudai Khidmatgars or Red Shirts of NWFP, the Ahrars and the Khaksars, etc. The Jamiat-ul-Ulema-i-Hind (JUH) and the Jamaat-i-Islami (JI) were traditional and conservative in religious outlook, but certainly non-feudal in their leadership and composition. According to Khursheed Kamal Aziz, however, the post-1947 developments increased the power, and enlarged the number of landed aristocracy. Bureaucrats, army officers, politicians, and industrialists served and strengthened the landlords. (Afzal, 1976, pp. 1–61; Aziz, 2001, pp. 28–35)

PML, a political party, was dominated by landlords because of lack of educated leadership and stagnation of the ideas in the party. After the sudden death of Muhammad Ali Jinnah in 1948, and especially after the assassination of Liaquat Ali Khan in 1951 – the first Prime Minister of Pakistan – landlords or the *zamindars* got the chance to highjack the leadership of the PML due to the vacuum in the political leadership, which became a hurdle to democratic development later on (Aziz, 2001, p. 30).

In 1947, Pakistan was, indeed, predominantly agrarian, underdeveloped, and newly independent nation. This decade observed numerous pitfalls in administration and bureaucracy. The newly born country was inefficient in governance as well as in civil services. The pre-1947 bureaucracy, governance, and administration of united India, and civil services were better than that of post-1947 of Pakistan. The post-1947 administration of Pakistan was politicized for the personal interests of politicians, bureaucrats, army officers, landlords, and industrialists. In this decade, the state was in dire need of strong and efficient officers and administrators, and efficient and stable government, and therefore, depended more on the politicians, bureaucrats, and landlords. The first few years of the newly born Pakistan were crucial for its survival and stability. The landlords and the political leadership put the Herculean task of building a nation-state aside after Jinnah's death. Landlords, by hook or crook, occupied the key positions in the administration, and gave a severe setback to the

prestige and position of the country. These incapable landlords blessed their kith and kin boldly, and neglected the deserving officers. They joined hands with the army to strengthen their power over the government and administration of the state. The initial political shocks in the form of successive changes in regimes gave an upper hand to landlords for shaking the roots of this newly born country. These landed aristocrats got support through various means. The basic three levels supporting the landlords weakened the state authority directly or indirectly. These three levels were (a) personal contacts or personal relations, (b) favors, and (c) caste/*biradri* system, which corrupted the governmental machinery. (Aziz, 2001, pp. 35–40) The three major pillars of the state, judiciary, executive, and legislature, also safeguarded the interests of these politician-cum-landlords for securing their ends.

To abolish *zamindari* system and landholdings, three programs of land reforms were introduced. First introduced by President Muhammad Ayub Khan in 1959, and second and third, by Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, the Prime Minister of Pakistan in 1972 and 1977.

Ayub's era (1958–1969) is termed as “Golden Era” in terms of economy, but black era in terms of political scenario. It has been criticized because he showered countless powers to landlords in the name of land reforms, Green Revolution, and Basic Democracies System. This large-scale indirect favor to *zamindars* and landlords strengthened them for doing anything right or wrong at their own ends. (Aziz, 2001, p. 43) The first land reforms, introduced by Ayub, met with failure due to injustices of implementing agencies and local civil administration. On the other hand, the personal interests of the members of the elite groups not only influenced the industrial investment but also the political constituencies that became the victims of it. The allies of the Ayub government secured their own interests, and the local masses and peasants were far from these basic necessities and facilities, which were introduced in their names. Second land reforms, introduced by Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, also met with failure due to injustices of implementing agencies and local civil administration (Syed Tahir, 1996).

Under Ayub and Bhutto, these land reforms remained ineffective, and at very low level, very few social and economic changes occurred in Pakistan. The land reforms by Ayub and Bhutto tried to bring radical change in the structure and distribution of wealth but in vain. Ayub was not successful in the implementation of his land reforms, but Green Revolution had a considerable impact on the agricultural sector. Bhutto's land reforms also failed to bring sociopolitical and economic changes at a large scale. These reforms only reduced the ceiling for individual landholdings, and big landowners evaded the reforms through transferring land to other members of their families. (Ali, 1992, p. 94) According to economic analyst Ronald J. Herring, the reforms only aimed at a forced sale of marginal land by some landlords to some tenants, rather than a genuine redistribution of land or alteration of agrarian structure. (Siddiq, 2007, p. 184)

There is no respect and status for *muzara'as*, *haris* or peasant classes, especially in Sindh and to some extent in Punjab, but only for those who served the interests of landlords. (Ali, 1992, p. 94) Like the senior civil servants, the Pakistan army officers turned into landed aristocrats by receiving generous land grants. Most of the retired army men were given the agricultural land, and all of a sudden, they became landlords. Land was granted to military personnel in all the four provinces of the country, at highly subsidized rates varying from Rs. 20 to 60 per acre. Some of the army generals who benefited from the grants include General Ayub Khan who got 247 acres, General Muhammad Musa got 250 acres, and General Umrao Khan got 246 acres (Siddiq, 2007, pp. 174–183).

Socially, Pakistani society can be classified on the basis of tribes, castes, and languages. The society is very much conscious of class, caste, and social status. During the Muslim rule in India, Indian society was divided into two broad classes, the *Ashraf* or the nobles and the *Ajlaf* or the lower classes. This social stratification also continued during the British rule in India. Pakistani society inherited this social stratification from medieval and colonial India. The upper classes are still trying to keep this division in order to preserve their high social status. Pakistani society is still dominated by the feudal values and traditions. The landed aristocracy infiltrated its members in the army, bureaucracy, and political parties. (Ali, 1992, pp. 92–94) For the landlords, it does not matter which party rules or what type of government comes to power. They enjoy their privileges whether there is Martial Law or democracy. In many cases, an average citizen has to go to the landlords in order to get things done in the civil administration. (Hijazi, 1996, p. 68) In this way, the landed aristocracy is the channel available to the public for accessing the civil administration.

Agriculture is the mainstay of Pakistan's economy, and agriculture is the source of livelihood of 86.9% of the total population. Majority (75%) of the people of Pakistan live in rural areas. Agrarian stratification is a system, which divides society into various strata on the basis of agriculture. The landed aristocracy is the product of this agrarian stratification system in the country. (Hussain, 1979, p. 44) The feudal values in Pakistani society have largely influenced the country's political culture, which can be defined as a, "set of beliefs, attitudes, values and orientation towards political object in a given political system" (Shafqat, 1995, p. 67).

The unequal distribution of wealth as well as its accumulation by a small segment is entirely prohibited, and the state being of Allah's def med laws as well as the individual's right is obliged to act and rectify any wrongs by diverting that wealth from where it stagnates to where it fructifies into social well-being. Islam also gives clear direction for free lands which are not result of anybody's labor, that those must be equally shared by people of the Islamic state. Free land includes Mines (Mineral and other natural resources), forest, and grazing land which are owned by the state (Malinumbay & Salal, 1998). But, however, there are large-scale landholdings in Pakistan where only 5% of the landowners hold 70% of the total agricultural land and they enjoy more political advantages and economic benefits (Syed Tahir, 1996). This wealth inequality can be accounted for income inequality, low economic growth and poverty in general and more common in rural Pakistan. The relationship between income inequality and economic growth can be well documented by incorporating the example of Japan. The concentration of landownership to a small group "absentee landlord" mostly in rural areas of Japan was common in earlier years where landlords enjoy social and economic privileges. But the reforms introduced after World War II, resulted in a dramatic fall in income and wealth concentration at the top, redistribution of assets and reforms in institutional structure were accompanied by one of the most impressive and sustained economic growth in the history. However, the situation is in reversal due to a recent substantial deterioration in the distribution of property and the problem of income inequality as well as unequal distribution of wealth is a growing concern among Japanese people (Bauer & Mason, 1992; Moriguchi & Saez, 2008). In short, it would be sufficient to comment that landownership and wealth concentration are both damaging for the economy and society.

The contemporary set-up in Pakistan is the legacy of the colonial India, where landlords exerted influence over masses through their close collaboration with the British administration. This political-structural relationship gave birth to two types of authority patterns

in the country (Shafqat, 1995, p. 72); the first one is traditional authority pattern, which is based on centralization and authoritarianism. This authority pattern is permanent, and it has hereditary succession. The traditional holders of authority in the rural setting are either the landlords or the *Pirs*, who considered themselves more superior, powerful, and prestigious due to religious knowledge and actions in addition to possessing land. These power-holders provide patronage to their followers, and develop the basis of patron–client relationship. The second authority pattern is legal-rational authority pattern. It is temporary and only for 5 years in a single term, unlike traditional authority pattern. It has no hereditary succession. Landlords have traditional authority, but they want to legalize their authority at least for 5 years in a single term through elections of the National Assembly or Provincial Assemblies in democratic system of Government in Pakistan.

8. Conclusion

From the discussion, it can be inferred that the concept of landownership prevailing in Pakistan contradicts with that of its Islamic concept. Islamic concept of landownership is progressive, and Islam does not allow absentee landlordism. It is also crystal clear that the concept and meaning of landownership from ancient India to Mughal Empire and from Colonial period to Pakistan has been experiencing various changes. Therefore, the conceptual framework for understanding landownership has remained ambiguous and controversial. However, land is considered a symbol of power, and its ownership symbolizes influential position in society, both politically and economically. In spite of land reforms by Ayub and Bhutto, Pakistan is still under the clouds of landed aristocracy and it has to cover a long distance if it wants to come out of this colonial legacy.

The study highlights the system of landownership and landed aristocracy in a historical consideration, and demands further research on how this type of social injustice is hindering economic development and social welfare of the majority poor farming community of the agro-based country. The study suggests that for economic development and uplift of the pro-poor farming community, overcoming social and political injustice and getting rid of the clutches of landlordism are the dire needs of the time and society. The future research should be focused on (a) why this system is so successful and prevalent even in this modern world by highlighting social, economic, and political impact of education on the community?; (b) How can the country be brought out of the whirlpool of landed aristocracy, an anti-thesis to education and development?

Glossary

<i>Choudhry</i>	<i>Choudhry</i> was a form of Hindu <i>zamindar</i> (landowner) in the medieval India during Muslim rule.
<i>Ahadith</i> Holy Book-The Quran	Sayings of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) The Holy Quran is a religious book of Muslims which was revealed on the last Prophet of Allah, Muhammad (Peace Be upon Him)
Imam Abu Hanifah	Imam Abu Hanifah (699–767AD/80–148 AH) was the founder of Hanfi School of Fiqah (Islamic Jurisprudence), one of the four schools of Fuqah (Islamic Jurisprudence) in Sunni (One of the several sects of Islam) Islam

<i>Imams</i>	<i>Imams</i> (land grants) were forms of distribution of land to various people for cultivation in medieval India under Muslim rule
<i>Iqta</i>	<i>Iqta</i> was term denoted to the small pieces of cultivated land or territorial units
<i>Jagir</i>	<i>Jagir</i> was a form of distribution of land for cultivation in medieval India under Muslim rule. It was a considerable piece of land given by the state to anybody for cultivation
<i>Khalsa</i>	<i>Khalsa</i> (also known as crown land) is a term which got popularity during medieval India. <i>Khalsa</i> means that land belongs to the king
<i>Khuts</i>	<i>Khuts</i> were forms of Hindu <i>zamindars</i> (landowners) in the medieval India during Muslim rule
<i>Kufr</i>	<i>Kufr</i> means unbelief; In Islam, <i>Kufr</i> means no belief according to Islamic principles. A person who does not believe in Islamic principles is called <i>Kafir</i>
<i>Mansabdars</i>	Rank-holders in <i>Mughal</i> military bureaucracy
<i>Mansabdari System</i>	<i>Mansabdari</i> system means classification of the functionaries of the Empire as fighters or <i>ashab al-Sayf</i> (masters of the sword); clerks or <i>ashab al-Qalam</i> (masters of the pen); theologians, <i>ashab al-Amamah</i> (religious scholars)
<i>Mughal</i>	A Muslim dynasty who ruled India from 1526 to 1857
<i>Mukhabara</i>	<i>Mukhabara</i> means a deal in which land is leased against one half, or one third, or one fourth of its produce. <i>Mukhabara</i> was forbidden in Islam because cultivators were deprived of their due rights. After it was outlawed, the followers of <i>mukhabara</i> were considered the enemies of Allah and His Messenger. Same was the case with land leasing, about which Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said, "Lease of land, any rent or part of land's produce is prohibited."
<i>Muqaddam</i>	<i>Muqaddam</i> was a form of Hindu <i>zamindars</i> (landowners) in the medieval India during Muslim rule
<i>Muqti</i>	<i>Muqti</i> means a holder of <i>iqta</i> . <i>Muqti</i> was also known as governor
<i>Muzara'a</i>	Absentee landlordism
Qutb-ud-Din Ahmad	Qutb-ud-Din Ahmad (1703–1762), commonly known as Shah Waliullah, was a South Asian Muslim scholar, <i>muhaddith</i> (interpreter), and macro-economic and social reformer of 18th century
<i>Pir</i>	<i>Pir</i> is a term used in Urdu language for the English word "hagio"
<i>Rais</i>	<i>Rais</i> was a term which was designated as chieftain before the <i>Mughal</i> era in India
<i>Raja</i>	<i>Raja</i> was a term which was designated as chieftain before the <i>Mughal</i> era in India
<i>Shariah</i>	Islamic law based on the teachings of the Koran and the traditions of the Prophet (<i>Ahadith</i> and <i>Sunnah</i>) is called <i>Shariah</i>
<i>Sunnah</i>	Doings/Actions of Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)
<i>Sahih Bukhari</i>	Authentic book of the sayings of Holy Prophet (PBUH)

<i>Thakur</i>	<i>Thakur</i> was a term which was designated as chieftain before the <i>Mughal</i> era in India
<i>Umara</i>	The British government categorized the landowners into three types: (a) <i>Umara</i> , (b) <i>Zamindars</i> , and (c) small <i>Zamindars</i> . This categorization was only given to those loyal landlords and landowners who served interests of the British
<i>Waqafs</i>	<i>Waqfs</i> (endowment lands) were forms of distribution of land for cultivation in medieval India under Muslim rule
<i>Zamindar</i>	The British government categorized the landowners into three types: (a) <i>Umara</i> , (b) <i>Zamindars</i> , and (c) small <i>Zamindars</i> . This categorization was only given to those loyal landlords and landowners who served interests of the British

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