

**EXPLORING THE STRUCTURE AND PRACTICE  
OF KINSHIP GROUPS IN PAKISTAN**

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# EXPLORING THE STRUCTURE AND PRACTICE OF KINSHIP GROUPS IN PAKISTAN

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In this thesis, I examine the structure and practice of kinship groups in Pakistan. For the majority of Pakistanis, kinship is the most fundamental basis of identity, superseding membership to a particular religious sect, social group, or economic class. Kinship groups are based on class, geography, and occupation, following the Hindu-caste structure, a structure that was inherited by Pakistan following the partition of the two countries in 1947. While kinship groups are an important social structure that is critical to local governance, they have been ignored in the literature since the 1970s. This thesis aims to fill the gap in the literature by exploring contemporary kinship structures and the role that they play in local governance, specifically dispute resolution. In order to illuminate relationships between kinship groups and their constituents and how such kinship groups intersect with the state, I examine the space of the *dharra*, which is defined literally as the physical courtyard space where local landlords hold their negotiations. This study of the *dharra* helps to elucidate both the social ties between kinship groups as well as how they connect to institutions of the state. I discuss how interactions within the *dharra* help landlords develop social capital that translates into votes during times of election. Through this research, I discover that the *dharra* continues to be a central local governance mechanism, responsible for dispute resolution. In addition, the *dharra* serves as an important mobilizing mechanism during times of election. Contrary to the existing research on

Pakistan, my research reveals that in spite of the hierarchy within kinship networks, there is some measure of answerability. As kinship groups operate by consensus, they have to be responsive to their members to some degree, and the selection of the kinship leader is somewhat competitive. This study suggests that any study of democracy in Pakistan must consider the role of kinship groups in local governance structures.

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## **PREFACE**

I would like to thank all the voices in Faisalabad who contributed to this project, many of whom have chosen not to be named. In particular, I would like to thank Shandana Khan for her endless support and great help in the facilitation of this field research. I would also like to thank Naeem Ahmed, an influential gatekeeper, who provided me with critical help in Faisalabad. Finally, I would like to thank David Montero for his ceaseless inspiration, guidance, and support.

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

This thesis explores the structure and practices of kinship groups in Pakistan. For the majority of Pakistanis, kinship is the most fundamental basis of identity, superseding even membership to a particular religious sect, social group, or economic class. Kinship groups are based on class, geography, and occupation, following the Hindu-caste structure, a structure that was inherited by Pakistan following the partition of the two countries in 1947. In contemporary literature, Pakistani society has been described in terms of a patron-client framework, emphasizing a feudal-based system, where prominent landlords provide the largely rural population with some measure of security in exchange for labor and political support during election years. However, this literature falls short of examining the complex exchange between the state, kinship groups, and their members. In particular, the existing literature has often downplayed both the agency of the villagers in extracting favors and to some extent accountability from their landlords. There is also extensive anecdotal evidence that these kinship networks play an important role during elections in terms of mobilizing voters and fielding candidates. In the years following partition, social scientists undertook detailed studies on the structure of kinship, often in class-based terms. However, since then it has not been examined systematically. This thesis seeks to fill the gap in the literature on this local structure, which I argue remains vital to understanding the quality of local politics in Pakistan. Building on the strong anecdotal evidence, I will employ an



ethnographic approach to examine the mechanisms through which parties mobilize kinship networks and how kinship networks make claims on parties and the state.

In this thesis, I also examine the present-day structure of kinship networks and mechanisms of local governance through a study of the *dharra*. The *dharra* refers both to public space where landlords receive guests, the symbolic sphere of their influence, and may also refer to a political faction. While the role of the *dharra* is significant to village governance and is probably the first space one enters in a village, it has largely been ignored in the literature on kinship networks—perhaps due to its ubiquity. In this thesis, I argue that *dharra* is a vital institution, as it is the center of local patronage and decision-making. In that way, the interactions that take place in the *dharra* provide important insights as to how landlords preserve their social ties. Further, the *dharra* also serves as an important mobilizing structure or mechanism through which the political parties reach voters. In this thesis, the *dharra* will be treated as both a mechanism of mobilization as well as decision-making. Through this ethnographic exploration, this thesis is guided by the following questions: 1) What is the role of kinship groups in village level governance? 2) How do political parties mobilize kinship networks during the electoral process? 3) How does the involvement of kinship groups in the political process reveal conceptions of trust?

I employ two theoretical concepts to examine the role of kinship networks: Pierre Bourdieu's theory of social capital as well as Charles Tilly's discussion of trust networks. Bourdieu's discussion of social capital is relevant for understanding how kinship structures shape local practices. In particular, I will explore how kinship networks cultivate capital to maintain their political influence through the *dharra* (Bourdieu 2003). Further, Tilly's discussion of trust

networks provides an important lens through which to examine how the incorporation of networks, such as kinship groups, within the state shapes the quality of democracy (Tilly 2005).

This thesis is organized into three main sections. The first section discusses the methodology, a discussion of the key actors, and the overall organizing strategy of the thesis. The second section will examine the role of the *dharra* in village level governance and conceptions of social capital. Finally, the third section will examine how kinship network are connected to the state and the role of the *dharra* as a mobilizing mechanism. In the third section, I will also use the idea of trust networks to discuss possible ways that a study of the *dharra* could provide insights into the quality of democracy in Pakistan.

## 1.1 METHODOLOGY

This project seeks to elucidate the following dimensions of kinship networks: 1) relationships between kinship group members; 2) interactions between kinship groups and formal institutions of the state; and 3) the underlying values and practices. To conduct an investigation encompassing these dimensions, I employed ethnographic methods, including interviews with members of different kinship groups and members of formal state institutions. In particular, I interviewed a range of kinship groups, including land-owning and service-oriented groups. Within kinship groups, I spoke to landlords who were in a position of hierarchy as well as ordinary households. As I was looking for links between kinship groups and political institutions, I also interviewed members of the national assembly, members of the provincial assembly, and party workers.

Overall, sixty-five interviews were conducted, representing the actors described above. The interviews were designed to be open-ended to ensure that the interviewees were able to use their own language to discuss the dynamics of kinship groups. This strategy was important, as the literature on kinship groups is outdated, and it allowed me to ensure that I was able to capture the evolution of kinship networks and the concepts that were salient for members. The interviews were conducted either in Urdu, the national language, or Punjabi, the regional language, which also ensured that topics weren't lost in translation. In addition, as I was interested in capturing the dynamic between kinship groups, I also spent significant time observing interactions between members at meetings, village events, and in people's homes. As noted above, much of the existing literature on kinship networks employs the structural patron-client lens. Ethnographic interview and observations techniques allowed me to go beyond a structural analysis and capture the micro dynamics of village-level interaction (Goffman 1983). Such techniques allowed me to gain a nuanced understanding of ties between kinship groups and the concept of reciprocity, which will be discussed in detail below.

My research focused on kinship groups in and around the city of Faisalabad, a major industrial hub in Punjab, Pakistan's most populous, agricultural province. Gaining access to villagers was initially a challenge. As I will discuss further below, villagers were incredibly mistrustful of outsiders, especially outsiders affiliated with American institutions given the overall tension in the larger political relationship between the United States and Pakistan. During my fieldwork, the North American Treaty Organization's supply routes between Pakistan and Afghanistan had been closed due to a U.S. military-led helicopter attack that targeted a Pakistani military installation and caused the deaths of several Pakistani soldiers. Moreover, although the assassination of Osama Bin Laden in Pakistan had taken place a year earlier,

resentment still lingered among the population that the American-led constituted a direct breach of Pakistan's sovereignty. Given the charged political atmosphere, people were suspicious about the nature of my research, especially as I was examining politically sensitive relationships. To gain access to the networks and individuals, I often relied on trusted local gatekeepers who could facilitate an introduction to the network. My research assistant proved to be extremely important in navigating the networks and finding the necessary gatekeepers, as he had lived in Faisalabad his entire life and had worked as a journalist covering political news, so had made contacts within various kinship networks. In particular, one of the individuals that my assistant introduced me to became an important mediator. This mediator had extensive connections within parties and local communities as he had been involved in several political campaigns and had also stood for local elections himself. While he was not directly responsible for organizing my interviews, he nonetheless facilitated my access to others, who would guide us regarding local networks. To further build the trust of individuals, I agreed not to tape the interviews. I wrote notes by hand and later typed them up on my computer. In addition, all the names of the interviewees have been changed and the names of the geographic areas have not been included to preserve their anonymity. This exercise in negotiating access to trust networks became a form of social mapping, allowing me to identify the broader kinship structures and gatekeepers. Tilly uses the term "trust network" to refer to social networks where members share collective risk for any "malfeasance mistakes, or risks" (Tilly 2005: 4). He argues that kinship groups are often trust networks, as the boundaries are tightly policed and there is extensive pressure to perform according to established rules. To gain access to kinship networks with closed boundaries, I had to adapt my original sampling approach. Instead of using a snowball sampling approach, I had to use my local contacts to identify a gatekeeper who could then facilitate an introduction to the rest

of a network. Once I had access to the network, to some extent, I still employed a snowball sampling approach. This exercise in social mapping enabled me to determine nodes of influence as well as the parameters of the network.

The timing of my fieldwork proved to be critical in observing interactions between kinship networks and state institutions as national elections were anticipated to take place in early 2013. The announcement effect of the national elections was palpable and precipitated a small number of rallies and meetings that I attended. The announcement effect also led to popular discussion regarding elections, especially regarding the selection of local candidates. The fact that the election was at the forefront of everyday conversation facilitated my interviews to some extent. I was not able to witness formal election activity, but I asked people about their participation in the 2008 election when exploring the role of kinship networks in politics. There is always the risk that people erroneously remember past events. However, as I was more interested in larger mechanisms involving kinship networks, not individual behavior, I was able to triangulate responses that I received regarding the overall role of kinship groups in elections.

## **1.2 FIELD SITE**

I conducted fieldwork in the district of Faisalabad in central Punjab, which includes both urban and rural areas. While findings from Punjab cannot be extrapolated to all of Pakistan, Faisalabad is an important site, as it allows me to locate kinship structures historically as well as explore how they are shaped by forces of modernization. Faisalabad was one of the centers for the canal or agricultural colonies established by the British colonial administration in late 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Although kinship structures have existed in one form or another throughout the history of the Indian sub-continent, the present kinship structure was integrally shaped by the colonial administration. According to Pakistani historians, British land allocation policies greatly influenced the local kinship structures. For example, the British land allocation policies fostered a certain social mobility, as several groups assumed the identity of particular kinship groups to gain access to land. In this way, the land allocation process formalized kinship boundaries in two ways. First, the British created extensive land records that differentiated land-holding groups from service-proving groups. Second, the British conferred local responsibilities on the land-holding groups that enabled landowners to serve as intermediaries between the villagers and the colonial state.

Faisalabad was also one of the seats of industrialization in the 1980s. The process of social transformation that began in Faisalabad with the introduction of a burgeoning textile industry in the 1980s and also continues today provides a unique opportunity to examine the evolution of kinship structures. As Faisalabad's economic base transformed from agriculture to textile, one of the trends that I encountered was that to remain relevant, kinship networks, especially the landowning groups, embedded themselves within institutions of the state. This strategy allowed them to maintain legitimacy and mediate between their members, other kinship groups, and government agencies. A macro-level examination of how kinship structures evolved given the changes in the economy is beyond the scope of this thesis. Instead, I will focus on kinship networks in rural and peri-urban spaces, as the majority of the Pakistani population still resides in these areas and examine their local structure and the local mechanisms by which they interact with institutions of the state.

### 1.3 ORGANIZING STRATEGY

Most of my interactions with members of kinship groups took place in the village and specifically within their *dharra*s. Again, in rural areas, the *dharra* refers both to the physical space established by the landowning kinship groups for public meetings and consultations, as well as an informal governance structure. The *dharra* has a rich and complex history that dates back to the colonial time period, as the administrators appointed by the British used a similar mechanism for local governance and dispute resolution. The *dharra* continues to be a key space within contemporary Pakistani society, as it provides a mechanism to arbitrate local disputes, facilitate collective decision-making, and mobilize resources during times of elections. The *dharra* also elucidates the local hierarchy. For example, as the *dharra* is the site of interaction among kinship structures, it provides insights into local relationships, common practices, and the values informing the practices. Drawing from ethnographic research, this thesis aims to use the architecture of the *dharra* as an organizing strategy for this thesis to explore the structure and practices of kinship groups in Pakistan as well as how they are integrated within formal political structures. Employing this organizing strategy, also allows me to address the issue of agency and structure. That is, by focusing on the interactions within the *dharra*, I am able to depict the agency of the actors within the village hierarchy from the landowning groups to the service-oriented kinship groups as well as how their access to the *dharra* is shaped by their local position.

In addition to being an important organizing strategy for this thesis, focusing on the *dharra* also reveals the gendered dimensions of society in central Punjab. That is, with a few exceptions that I will discuss below, the *dharra* is largely a male-dominated space. My access to the *dharra* was during exceptional times. For example, people usually convene at the *dharra* at

night after business hours. When I met with the landlords at their *dharra*s, I would usually formally request a meeting, which was held during the day, so that norms of propriety could be observed. Even in the daytime, my ability to walk into the *dharra* would require a particular protocol, given both my gender as a female and my status as an outsider. For example, when arriving to a particular *dharra*, I would wait in the car while my research assistant would locate the landlord and ensure that I would not be interrupting a male-dominated meeting. If a meeting was in session, I would be taken into the private residence of the landlord and introduced to the landlord's wife. This took place in an area of the house where my male research assistant could not join me. Once the landlord was ready, I would be hurriedly ushered into the inner, private room for the *dharra*, minimizing my exposure in the public sphere. As I learned, the *dharra*s usually had two spaces, a public area where the villagers could informally gather and an inner private room reserved for private meetings and VIPs. The findings that I describe below should be considered in light of my limited or privileged access to the *dharra*. In some instances, my privileged access enriches the study, as it allowed me to examine the gendered nature of the space. However, in spite of the fact that I was not visiting the *dharra* during peak visiting times, villagers would sometimes hear that I was meeting with the landlord and would know that he was therefore available at his *dharra*. As a result, they would trickle in with to bring their complaints and to pay respect—allowing me to witness the exchanges. However, there were countless incidents where I was not able to witness particular negotiations between the landlords and other kinship groups or members of political parties. In such cases, I address the gaps through the insights of my research assistant and rely on the existing literature to guide me.



## 2.0 LOCATING THE DHARRA HISTORICALLY

The *dharra* arose from a feudal system, where the landlord would hold a local court to address the management of his land, undertake dispute resolution, respond to particular claims, and manage relationships with other kinship groups. The *dharra* refers to this space of adjudication. Such governance structures have existed since the time of the Mughal Empire, a central Asian dynasty that ruled from the early fifteenth to the nineteenth century. The present day form of the *dharra* emerged during the colonial era. The British appointed a *numberdar* or administrator, who was officially responsible for tax collection and the management of land records. This individual was usually a prominent local landlord, a tradition that continues today. Given his official position, the *numberdar's* informal role was to facilitate local dispute resolution, mostly involving land disputes. That is, the *numberdar* became the defacto village head with powers that were enshrined in colonial administrative law. The *numberdar's dharra* then became the site of local governance and also the point through which to access institutions of the state. While the *dharra* itself was an informal space, through the position of the *numberdar*, it became institutionalized.

## 2.1 LOCAL ACTORS

Since Pakistan's independence and the establishment of parliamentary systems, there are a multitude of local leaders. While the numberdar remains an important position locally, today he is no longer the main representative of the state. The role of arbitrators has fallen to landlords who are heads of landowning kinship groups. As discussed above, kinship-based boundaries in Pakistan have historically been defined based on access to land.<sup>i</sup> Hamza Alavi, an anthropologist, outlines four categories of kinship groups: 1) large landowners, 2) small landowners, 3) service-based groups or *kammis*, and 4) peasants who work the land (Alavi 1972). While there are dozens of kinship groups, they mainly fit into these four categories. These categories broadly correspond to the land distribution policies of the British colonial administration. Supporting this point, Andrew Wilder, a political scientist, identifies four kinds of land grants to: 'peasant proprietors' who received one square of land (28 acres), 'yeoman farmers' who received four to five squares of land, and the landed elite or 'hereditary landed gentry' (Wilder 1999: 39). The fourth category was grants given for the breeding of camels and horses for the military.

Wilder argues that with these grants to the landed gentry, the British administration hoped to revitalize a landed class, which had diminished in the nineteenth century due to subdivisions of land inheritance caused by inheritance laws and the slow rise of the middle class in the towns. The colonial administration had a political and economic rationale to revitalize the landed gentry. The British considered the rural elite to be more stable and easier to control. Establishing a political infrastructure through the landlords in rural areas, where the majority of the population lived, allowed the British administration greater political control through strategies that relied both on coercion and patronage (Caton 2004; Gilmartin 2003; Gilmartin

1988). In addition the British administration established alliances with local-land-owning families to address the challenge of providing food for an expanding population. In this way, the land allocation process supported the dual need for political supporters and agricultural producers.

This period of British rule was especially important in defining the boundaries of kinship groups. First, the British helped to create a sense of social order based on the dominance of single-lineage kinship groups. The British rewarded groups that were loyal to them and undermined the ones that they considered political threats. For example, Gilmartin notes that the British granted the Hayats and Tiwanas, currently two of the largest landowning families in Pakistan, large parcels of irrigated land to reward them for their loyalty in defeating the Sikh rulers in Punjab (Gilmartin 1988). Such land grants enabled these families to assume political and economic control of vast swaths of land. On the point of social control, Brian Caton writes:

Punjabi responsiveness to the material rewards of British programmes produced increasing flexibility in the definition of the social categories administrators sought to define more narrowly, yielding an historically evolving discourse through which Panjabis and government struggled to secure control over property and social order (Caton 2004: 35).

Second, the establishment of the canal or agricultural colonies opened 2.5 million acres of irrigated land for cultivation, which presented a tremendous opportunity for social mobility. The availability of this additional arable land allowed the British to substantially shape the quality of rural leadership (Caton 2004; Wilder 1999). For example, Caton discusses how heads of particular kinship groups gained status by agreeing to pay land revenue to the crown, which earned them their status of landlords (Caton 2004).

Building on Alavi, Muhammad Chaudhry, a legal anthropologist, identifies several competing theories regarding the structures of kinship groups. According to Chaudhry, *biraderi*

(kinship group) or *quom* (people) are the broadest units of analysis. The term *quom* is used more commonly in Pakistan to refer to kinship group, while *biraderi* is most often associated with kinship groups from the Punjab province. According to Caton, these lineage groups certainly predate the British colonies and he cites that the Indian subcontinent was known to have ‘unilinear kin’ with some corporate decision-making systems since the Mughal rule (Caton 2004). The tradition of kinship groups is not visible through a corporate decision-making system alone, but also through narrative genealogies of historical figures and families, supporting the diffuseness of the groups (Caton 2004). Kinship groups are also identified by geography especially as there was significant migration following partition, and particular groups splintered and adopted a geographic identity. The literature is not clear regarding the size of kinship groups, but suggests that these networks are quite large, possibly extending across the country or even internationally. They are difficult to map, as in many cases the network lies dormant and the relationships are not meaningful unless they are activated, for example through politics. Chaudhry also discusses the sub-structures under the overall kinship group that are based on patrilineal connections called *sharika*. Chaudhry notes that the distinctions between the sub-structures are not always clear and broader kinship identities may be activated only during particular times of the year, such as during election season or during a dispute (Chaudhry 1999).

Based on my fieldwork, these various groupings of kinship networks remain valid. However, their validity depends on the context and the issues being discussed. For example, the concept of *sharika* is most commonly visible in social affairs. As Abdul Hameed, an influential member of the Gujar family in one of my field sites, exclaimed:

. . . what do you mean by *biraderi*? All that really matters is *sharika* . . . Your father’s brothers, their children, family – these are the people who will come to your aid in times of need . . .

In line with Caton's discussion, when asked about the origin of their castes, the interviewees drew on mythical figures. When asked about his *biraderi*, Hameed cited that they descended from a group of ancient wrestlers, who wielded a club known as the *guaarez*. The kinship group derives its name from this mythical weapon.

The term *quom* was also synonymous with *biraderi* or kinship network, which was invoked in describing relationships between people as well as with the state, suggesting that it depicted the larger political order. This observation is especially relevant to examining the intersection of kinship with politics. As I will discuss below, my fieldwork confirmed that heads of kinship group are often elected as legislators of the provincial and national assemblies, a trend confirmed by earlier studies of electoral systems in Pakistan (Wilder 1999; Waseem 1993).

The hierarchy of kinship groups is not monolithic and there is often fierce competition within a particular group for overall leadership. However, leaders who hold formal positions within the government become the defacto head of the kinship group, at least while their formal tenure lasts. This idea of competition within kinship groups provides insights about the power relations within kinship groups, a point that I will return to during my discussion of democracy. As the heads of kinship groups, they respond to claims made by local kinship groups and mediate local dispute resolution. They usually delegate other members of their kinship group to address the day-to-day concerns of the village, adding to the hierarchy and creating a circle of local agents. However, for serious cases, such as ones involving murder, kinship heads will be called upon to mediate directly or to use their influence with institutions of the state. In essence, these heads of kinship groups assume de facto legislative and judicial authority at the village level.

## 2.2 THE STRUCTURE OF THE DHARRA

As an outsider to village, it is impossible to miss the *dharra*, as it is the space where all visitors are received. The *dharra* is usually located away from the living quarters of the landlord and refers to the open common area in front of his house as well as a private greeting room. As I will discuss further below, the dichotomy between these private and public spaces reveals the dual function of the *dharra*. On one hand, *dharras* are structures that are accessible to villagers for a variety of purposes, including dispute resolution—a public forum of sorts. On the other hand, the *dharra* also serve as the site of backroom political deals mediated by the landlord. While I only had access to the former, my interviews revealed the more private dimensions that I will discuss below.

How well the space is appointed speaks directly to the influence of the landlord and reveals the dynamics of the role of *dharras* within the political socialization process. For the purpose of this thesis, political socialization will be discussed on two levels: 1) how kinship structures shape the social identity of their members, particularly their role in the larger kinship group and 2) how kinship structures shape the relationship between their members and political institutions of the state. The role of the *dharra* in political socialization also points to the performative nature of the socialization process. One of my first experiences at the *dharra* in a rural community reveals these dynamics. Initially to visit a particular village, I was going through a trusted mediator, a local journalist from the area, but he dropped out at the last minute, as he was busy (one of the few instances where we didn't have a local guide). My assistant and I decided to try the snowball sampling approach. We drove to the center of the village, where we found a group of men smoking a pipe under a tree, a rather typical occurrence as we discovered, and asked them to direct us to one of the prominent landlords. Our aim in this village was to

speak to a range of households, from landlords to ordinary villagers, in order to learn about their role in the last election. The men under the tree seemed somewhat nonplussed at our request and were reluctant to point us in any direction. After some consideration, we were directed to the largest house in the village, where we were asked to wait in the *dharra* while they summoned the landlord.

The landlord's *dharra* was simply arranged with white wrought-iron chairs and a fan. The only ornament was a religious calendar on the wall. Shortly after we arrived, the landlord received us. With him were half a dozen additional villagers, who presumably joined us at the behest of the landlord. The receiving party was directly visible to street dwellers, as I later learned was typical of the performance at the *dharra*. That is, even a private transaction, such as my request to interview the landlord, was an occasion for a public performance that reaffirmed the importance of the landlord—in this case, as someone important enough to be interviewed by an “American scholar.” I had made every effort to dress “appropriately,” wearing the traditional clothes women are expected to wear: *shalwar kameez* with baggy pants and a shirt, as well as a scarf to cover my head. Still, the sight of a woman in such a public space was such an anomaly that people often assumed I was some kind of foreigner.

The gathering also provided insights into the hierarchy within the *dharra* and the role it plays in the political socialization process. What was clear from the gathering was the hierarchical nature of the group. The landlord took the lead in responding to the questions and moderated the participation of the larger group. This interview suggested to me a trend that was repeated throughout my fieldwork, where the *dharra* and how it was physically appointed and adorned served as a metaphor for the hierarchy of the village. In addition, even though I had not requested to meet with additional individuals, the landlord brought a retinue. While the

gathering arranged by the landlord was a public performance for me, it also seemed to be a public performance for the villagers. That is, such public performances emphasize the hierarchical role of the landlord who is empowered to mediate with others (especially outsiders) on behalf of the village. Such gatherings also privilege the collective identity over the individual, and serve as a part of the socialization process. Further, this exchange takes place within the central space of the *dharra*, where it is visible for the larger community, reinforcing the notion of hierarchy. As I will explore through cases below, kinship boundaries and relationships among members are shaped by such public performances.

The *dharra* is neither a formal structure, nor is it monolithic. In most instances, there are at least two *dharras* in a village level affiliated with the major landlords. These two *dharras* sometime serve in opposition to one another. As one of my interviewees described, “for every lobby, there will also be a counter lobby.” When I asked on what basis the anti-lobby is formed, I was told there are a myriad of reasons. At times, there is a natural alliance between landlords because their land is adjoining or they have to share access to the same water source. Supporting that point, he added: “I have water and people need me for water . . . this is not the kind of set-up where you can survive alone.” In other cases, the grouping has to do with political rivalries that have existed for generations. These rivalries might be due to an underlying competition between kinship groups, a concept called *anna*, which evokes a sense of honor or status shaped through competition. I will discuss this concept in greater detail below. In some situations, where there are multiple landlords belonging to the kinship group, members will frequent the one that is considered to be the most influential—a status that fluctuates based on: 1) whether the family has ties with the government or the local administration; 2) the availability of the landlord; and 3) ties established through prior history. The quality of the ties between the members of a kinship



group and a local landlord depends on capital he has cultivated by being available or performing small favors for the members. In some instances, if a landlord has moved to the city, his *dharra* will not be frequented and his influence will wane. In other words, the importance of a landlord partially depends on his local presence and relationships that are cultivated through the physical/symbolic space of the *dharra*, which again underscores the performative nature of the kinship ties.

While the *dharra* is an informal structure, a careful protocol is maintained. That is, facts such as who is given a seat, the order in which people are served, and the language used is regulated by and reflects the larger hierarchy of the village. During my field visits, the *kammis* or the service-providing groups would often sit on the floor instead of on the chairs with the other landlords. Alternatively in more informal gatherings, the *kammis* were sometimes given chairs, but separately from the gathering, so that no mistake could be made that the *kammis* were in fact part of the same conversation as the landlords. Further, depending on who was visiting, the landlord would arrange for tea, snacks, and dinner to be served. The complexity of the meal refers back to the importance of the guest as well as the influence of the landlord. That is, a landlord will be considered influential if he is in a position to serve food to his visitors, and in part, he will attain his position and even the economic means through the public acknowledgement he receives at the *dharra*. Finally, Urdu has varying levels of formality that shape the use of particular pronouns, verb conjugation, and proper nouns, and the level of formality will be shaped substantially by who is present—again, language and the presentation of the *dharra* are important aspects of performance.

David Morgan's discussion of family practice is relevant to exploring the performative nature of the *dharra*. Morgan notes that practices or performances are constantly made within a

family to maintain ties (Morgan 2011). For example, Morgan discusses how certain practices, such as exercising, may be performed to set an example for other members of the family, serving as a form of socialization. Morgan's discussion of family practice has three important implications for the study of the *dharra*: 1) it introduces the idea of how practices translate into membership; 2) it links performance to socialization; and 3) it points to the importance of studying practices through a collective rather than an individual lens. Drawing from Bourdieu, Morgan notes how social structures shape practice. For Bourdieu, the location of one's class position shapes dispositions or *habitus* and associated practice. In effect, Morgan argues that particular practices determine the wider social parameters of a group or membership. Practice is a critical topic in light of the *dharra*, as a particular kinship background may grant you access, but membership is based on actively cultivating ties or participating in rituals, such as weddings. That is, not only is practice shaped by social position, but also engaging in the right social activities may redefine an individual's social position. In addition, as the performance of particular practices illustrates the social ties between members and the processes through which they are established, it also reveals elements of socialization. For example, as interaction with the landlord above suggested, hierarchy of kinship was shaped by the ability of particular members to undertake performances. Therefore, studying those performances can reveal how socialization takes places. Finally, as performances and socialization seek to reinforce boundaries between social groups, it is necessary to study kinship groups through a collective lens. The case material that I will introduce below seeks to elucidate how dimensions of performance and socialization helps us to understand the structure of kinship in Pakistan and the link between social structures and practices.

### 3.0 EXPLORING SOCIAL CAPITAL THROUGH A STUDY OF PRACTICE

The existing patron-client literature on Pakistan neglects a discussion of practice in examining the social structures of the country and focuses on understanding the societal hierarchy purely through an institutional analysis. My analysis instead examines the social structures by examining interactions, many of which take place in the *dharra*. Goffman's work on stigma and interaction also has useful implications for the study of the Pakistani kinship groups. While like Bourdieu, Goffman acknowledges the linkages between structure and interaction, he also highlights that there may be contradictions between the structural and interactional order, emphasizing the importance of studying the dynamics of micro exchanges (Goffman 1983). In my field sites where there was a dominant kinship group, there was no doubt that there was a clear hierarchy within the village. As exemplified in the interview of the landlord discussed above, the hierarchy within the kinship groups can be examined through the landlord's performance in the *dharra*. In contrast, by focusing the interactional order, my fieldwork also suggests that in spite of the structural hierarchy, relations among kinship groups also have reciprocal elements.

Based on my interviews, sources revealed that a landlord cannot maintain his position if he ignores his members or members of other the lower kinship groups. The sources suggested that while the position of the landlord is linked to his land resources, his economic means are not enough to maintain his social position. This point underscores the importance of understanding

social structures through interactions. As I followed landlords during the day, I learned that in spite of their obvious position, they invested heavily in maintaining local ties. These interactions suggested that even a high-ranking landlord must maintain ties even with *kammis* or the service-providing groups to maintain his position and legitimacy. A structural analysis alone obscures the reciprocal nature of the ties between kinship groups. An important landlord will provide regular hours to his *dharra*, usually in the evenings or the weekends, unless it is election season – in which case, he can be found there more frequently. A woman I interview exclaimed: “During election season, my husband was so busy at the *dharra* that he gave up his day-time job.” This interview confirmed the idea that individuals take their roles at the *dharra* very seriously. Supporting this point, a landlord from the Jat kinship group explained to me the lengths he has to go to keep the villagers satisfied. Jats are one of the larger landowning kinship groups commonly associated with Hindus and Sikhs, who converted to Islam in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century. While describing the role of kinship structure and the *dharra*, this Jat landlord emphasized that problem-solving was a large part of the role. Problem-solving included undertaking dispute resolution for his own kinship group, but also for other kinship groups. It also involved providing small favors, such as providing a job reference. When the landlord hears of an issue affecting the community, he explained, he doesn’t wait for people to come to his *dharra*. Rather, he seeks out the parties involved and offers to mediate. He said, “If you don’t resolve the dispute, people will get away from you.” He implied that if a landlord is not actively engaging in people’s lives, his position will be undermined over time.

Bourdieu’s concept of social capital provides a useful theoretical framework to examine the reproduction of relationships within the *dharra*. According to Bourdieu, distinctions in social position cannot be understood only materially. For Bourdieu, the elite have access to

capital that can have political, economic, and social dimensions. This idea of capital can be thought of as a form of currency that is transferable and can be used by the classes to maintain position. As will be revealed in the discussion on elections below, for the landlord to use his *dharra* as a mobilizing structure during elections, he has to develop a particular kind of social capital in between election years, where he entertains the requests of the villagers and allows them access to his *dharra*. He will often leverage that social capital during election year to gain votes for himself or for one of his affiliates. If he is successful, the political capital will be used to develop further patronage by diverting state resources at the village level.

Capital is a useful concept to consider the relationships within kinship groups, as it allows us to explore the temporal and spatial dimensions of an exchange. That is, capital is not only created based on an immediate transaction but may be considered an investment for a future exchange. For example, one of the common ways that people build capital in the village is by attending weddings and leaving a small monetary gift. Often the gift is in the sum of the money they might have received for a similar social function; however, to further build the relationship, they would even have to add to the value of the gift—an investment in a future relationship. The guests attending the wedding may not have an ulterior motive in paying the host the courtesy of attending. However, if members don't attend at all, they would find it difficult to ask that host for a favor in the future. There is a high value placed on physically showing up to the wedding. Sending a cash envelope without physical presence would again constrain the relationship to a mere transaction. In the examples discussed above, the performance involved in gift-exchange disguises the transaction and affirms ties between the receiver and sender.

The space of the *dharra* itself represents a particular symbolic capital. That is, even though the landlords do not have extensive economic power in present day Pakistan due to the

slow transformation from the agricultural-based economy to an industrial and service-oriented one, they still have a symbolic capital that allows them to command respect and attention. As the barber of one of the villages that I worked in grumbled: “When the Chaudhry’s [or the landlords] call, we have to come.” While the barber remarked in earshot of the Chaudhry, he was compelled to leave his tasks for the day to respond to the Chaudhry’s request. While the Chaudhry’s may be as cash poor as some of the service kinship groups, the *dharra* as evokes the grandeur of the feudal era. Often, landlords can be found at the *dharra* with their pipes, smoking in the middle of the day – an image that evokes men of leisure, and allows them to use the *dharra* to draw symbolic boundaries between themselves and the working class, or *kammis*. Building on Bourdieu’s idea of capital, Michèle Lamont introduces the idea of symbolic boundaries to elucidate how particular national cultural patterns have evolved. She also uses this concept to illustrate how cultural production—in this case pipe smoking--leads to social exclusion (Lamont 1992). The nomenclature for service providing groups itself is indicative of the symbolic boundaries between kinship groups. To this point, the word *kammi* can be translated two ways: 1) as someone who works and 2) as someone who is lacking—both of which reinforce the symbolic boundaries between land-owning and service-providing groups.

While kinship boundaries are reproduced fairly stringently through the institutions of marriage and inheritance, the notion of capital does not reveal the nuances of the exchange between the landlord and the barber. The fact that the barber was grumbling in earshot of the landlord, and followed this with a quip about how the landlords are fat because they rarely get out of their chairs, suggested that there was some space for the *kammi* to protest against the landlord. Again, structural accounts of kinship alone do not explain the space for resistance.

One explanation could be that the barber has accumulated sufficient moral capital, as he labors for the landlord, the year around. James Scott's discussion of everyday acts of resistance as strategies employed by peasants is also instructive. Scott suggests that peasants have some space for resistance as long as the overall "symbolic order" is not questioned (Scott 1985). In this case, through the use of humor, the barber is able to garner some space for criticizing the landlord in a way that does not challenge the landlord's position.

The landlord's role of mediation discussed above has moral and social dimensions. That is, by playing the role of mediator, landlords set themselves apart for their moral qualities, such as their altruistic spirit and social service, both of which include elements of trust. However, by doing so, landlords are also drawing boundaries, or setting themselves apart from the villagers in whose matters they provide judgment. Such roles were strategically developed over generations. One of the landlords that I interviewed, who is hoping to run for parliamentary election in 2013, mentioned how the tradition of mediating disputes in his family started with his father in the 1960s. This landlord belongs to a small land-owning kinship group. He readily admitted that this kinship group does not have a good reputation; often his kinship group is associated with gangs. Others I interviewed also confirmed this impression. One of the underlying issues that the landlord alluded to was that his family is one of the native groups of the area, who were displaced by kinship groups migrating from India. Migrants referred to these natives as *Janglis*, or wild people, perhaps due to the fact that they did not practice Islam; although many have now converted. The discussion by the landlord of how his father sought to improve their image by his acts of social service refers to a kind of moral capital. Again this capital has multiple dimensions: first, the landlord's father developed capital with individuals that he helped. Second, the father was seen to be undertaking social work publically, a performance that also

helped improve his reputation. In fact, this landlord suggests that his father's role in dispute resolution helped improve the position of his kinship group, a tradition he continues today, and perhaps that is what has allowed him sufficient capital to enter into politics.

As dispute resolution was a significant function of the *dharra* and seen to be integral to the creation of social capital, I will present a case of dispute resolution related to me by the Cheema family of the Jat kinship group. I will use the concept of social capital to explore how it shapes ties among the larger kinship group.

### **3.1 THE HISTORICISATION OF THE MISSING COW TRIALS**

I selected the case of the cow hunt, as the theft of a cow is rather common occurrence in a Pakistani village. In fact, as I later learned, the story of the cow hunt was a common motif in dispute narratives in the Indian Subcontinent. David Gilmartin discusses how crimes of this nature were ubiquitous among villages during the British era. Gilmartin notes that such crimes were often handled through the local dispute resolution mechanism, as a way to maintain the kinship group's autonomy against the British administration. Along those lines, I will use this case to examine conceptions of social capital, collective identity, and political socialization.

I met Sheraz, a landlord of the Cheema family, part of the Jat sub-caste, through his cousin, Ali, who was a lawyer and had served as the President of the Faisalabad bar association from 2004-2008. Sheraz was one of Ali's local agents, as Ali had shifted to the city to pursue a professional career. However, as Ali had political ambitions, he needed someone from the family to maintain local social relations in his stead. Sheraz was asked to look after the family's



political and economic interests at the village level. I had unusual access to Sheraz's *dharra*. My assistant and I spent over six hours interviewing Sheraz and members of his kinship group, and observing the claim-seekers that came in during that time. In spite of the restrictions of my gender, I think my high level of access could be explained by the fact that I had gotten a reference from the head of the kinship group. Further, Ali had a very different background from the other kinship members we interviewed. He was a lawyer and someone who had spent time as a political activist, and did not seem to draw the same gender boundaries.

One of Sheraz's roles is to undertake dispute resolution for his kinship network. A recent case that came to him involved the theft of a cow, a fairly important crime, as a cow represents a significant monetary investment. To respond to the aggrieved party, Sheraz first asked a *khoja* or local investigator to make inquiries. According to Sheraz, the successful handling of this case involved several meetings. Before the *khoja* had even concluded his investigation, Sheraz convened the representatives from each side and gathered important members from his own family. In this case, the aggrieved party was from the larger Jat kinship group; however, he was from a different sub-caste. The fact that the case was brought to Sheraz is itself important and suggests that the sub-caste has faith in him. According to Sheraz, the boundaries of the Jat sub-caste seem to be fairly closed. As it is a large kinship network and there are a large number of sub-castes, the sub-caste identity seems to be more salient than the wider kinship identity. The large number of sub-castes can partially be linked to the diverse geographic origins of the Jat families who migrated from all over India to present-day Pakistan. So, the fact that this case came to Sheraz as opposed to a landlord from the same sub-caste suggests his political capital. Even though Sheraz had high levels of political capital, his influence was not enough for the

decision to have merit. His decision had to be backed by his larger kinship group, emphasizing the group's collective identity.

After the initial collective meeting, Sheraz summoned the accused to the *dharra*. The accused, however, pleaded innocent. As a sign of his innocence, he was taken to a local mosque with both parties present where he swore on the Quran that he had not stolen the cow. However, his symbolic gesture was insufficient. His kinship group also had to collect funds to cover a purchase of a cow and deposit them with a trusted third party as a form of insurance for a limited period of time. If there were no challenges to his innocence, the funds would be returned to his kinship group.

This case provides several insights regarding the role of the *dharra* in the construction of social capital. First, the landlord has convening power to summon the necessary actors to the *dharra*. Sheraz says: "If people don't accept [my] authority, we will compel him. Biraderi has weight. For example, if the man who is suspected of stealing a cow does not appear at the *dharra*, we can provide false testimony against him to the police." In contrast to what the interview implies, several interviews with the villagers described, Sheraz has a positive reputation as being fair in such cases, which is why people agree to come to the *dharra*. Part of the success of the landlord was also that he could rely on the necessary agents, such as the *khoja*, to solve the case, who added credibility to the landlord's decision. The *khoja's* performance, which consisted of following the tracks of the cow, all while the village was at his heels, was a necessary performance to invoke trust. Sheraz's social capital also continued to be built through the performance of the trial as well with his attempts to build consensus with both kinship groups. Finally, the *dharra*, which serves as the symbol of the landlord's power further gave legitimacy to the verdict. In this case, trust was maintained through several dimensions

including: 1) the reputation of the landlord; 2) participation and buy-in from the various networks; and 3) the historical significance of this space.

Gilmartin discusses the historical role of the *dharra* by addressing how the *panchayats* or dispute resolution councils were convened in the *dharra* during the British rule to address the theft of the cows. The British considered the convening of these local trials partly an act of defiance by the landlords, as the landlords chose the customary system over the British civil court system. The trials at the *dharras* allowed the landlords not only to exert the autonomy of their kinship groups, but it also allowed them multiple legal avenues in the case that the local trial did not go in their favor. In part, these trials were preferred as it allowed the cattle thieves, who at times belonged to rival groups, some political cover. Finally, these councils also pointed to the salience of kinship networks. Gilmartin notes that when cattle were stolen from their pens on private property, the police were summoned. In contrast, when cattle were grazing on common land, the jurisdiction lay with kinship networks (Gilmartin 2003). Gilmartin suggests that invoking customary law through the *dharra* when the dispute concerned the common grazing ground (as opposed to the private space governed by the state) promoted the legitimacy of the kinship structure itself. While Gilmartin is writing about kinship networks in the early part of the twentieth century, his larger point about the competition between state and kinship structure continues to be relevant today as will be discussed below. Further, as Gilmartin suggests, the trial itself reinforced the collective identity of the kinship group, as it presented opportunities for the larger kinship group to convene. Both individuals were not represented in their individual capacity but through their kinship groups. Further, the fact that even the landlord presiding over the case needed the backing of his kinship group to bolster his own legitimacy, suggests that the kinship identity is much more salient as compared to the individual identity.

The case also reveals elements of the political socialization process. As discussed above, performance plays a large role in the socialization process. First, the successful resolution of the case required the performance of a number of characters. Aside from Sheraz as the central arbitrator, the *khoja* was key in convening the legitimacy of the trial, as he literally created a physical trail of evidence throughout the village. The performance of both of these individuals emphasized the legitimacy of the Sheraz's *dharra* as the site of the trial. Second, as discussed above, the case emphasized the collective identity of kinship groups, and ultimately both the individuals were subjected to the decision of the collective. As the victim and the accused called upon their groups as a show of strength during the trial, they in turn were bound by whatever agreement their kinship group negotiated. The kinship groups also assumed collective responsibility for the incident. That is, by collecting funds as a form of insurance to buy the good name of their kin, they assumed some risk on behalf of the accused. If he was later found to be guilty, they would lose their funds and the incident would affect their reputation as well. The willingness of the group to assume the risk provides evidence of the social cohesion of the group, similar to what Tilly calls a trust network, a topic discussed further below. The guarantees were provided both on a symbolic as well as monetary level. The accused swore upon his innocence in a mosque, a commitment known as a *halaf*—this public performance was critical in allowing Sheraz to dismiss the charges against the accused. As Sheraz later admitted to me, the individual was probably guilty. But Sheraz's job is better served by keeping peace in the village.

### 3.2 JAMAL'S DHARRA

Examining the nature of dispute resolution also reveals the structure of kinship in the village, the underlying values, as well as how kinship structures intersect with institutions of the state. In another village where I conducted interviews, I spent several days with the local *numberdar*, Jamal. Jamal was a close friend of the local mediator mentioned in the methods section who facilitated access to several kinship networks. Jamal was distantly related to my contact's wife. However, he said that over time he has become part of Jamal's family to the extent that he could go into Jamal's house even when Jamal is not there—implying that it was acceptable for him to associate with the women of the house without Jamal, a practice that is rare in the village. On a few occasions when we stopped by Jamal's house and he was not at home, I could enter, but my research assistant had to remain in the public part of the *dharra* lest he compromise the reputation of the women. My contact added that he was able to cultivate this level of closeness, as he “had helped Jamal” out over the years, such as helping to raise resources for the wedding of Jamal's daughter and son. Further, any time anyone needed travel arrangements, my contact arranged the details. In part, he was able to play this role, as he lived in the city, whereas Jamal lived almost entirely in the village. Their relationship suggests that kinship ties persist even over significant geographic distance. However, it is important to note, as this example reveals, the ties have to be maintained. My contact's introduction to Jamal suggested that he had been able to construct a close kinship-based relationship through active participation in Jamal's life.

Jamal's *dharra* was located near his *haveli* or where his animals were kept, a space that overlooked his fields, providing any visitors unequivocal evidence of his position in the village. As it was a particularly hot, humid day, Jamal had convened an informal *dharra* on the roof of the *haveli* with a view of the village and his lands. Jamal epitomized a local landlord in

Faisalabad. While there is a clear hierarchy in the village and Jamal is better settled than most, his holdings are relatively small. He owns approximately 28 acres and he struggles to make ends meet, especially when he doesn't get a good harvest. During the time of the interview, Jamal was worried about this year's harvest given his inability to irrigate his fields with the constant power failures. During the summer of 2012, for every hour of power, there was an hour of what the government called "load shedding" or power failures. Jamal claims that with his yield, he is able to fulfill his local commitments, such as providing grain to his *kammis* that help him farm and make a down payment for the resources needed to plant the following years crop. *Kammis* are not paid a wage, but instead are provided with grain and living quarters. Given the precariousness of Jamal's economic circumstances, the labor of the *kammis* is significant for him to make ends meet.

I met four of the *kammis* that work for Jamal. When we arrived, they were feeding the cattle, and he immediately asked them to leave what they were doing, go to his house – a good 30 minutes away by foot – get tea and cookies. Following tea and several hours on his roof, Jamal arranged for lunch to be served near one of his tube wells, where he had created a water pen for his buffaloes. The *kammis* were again responsible for running to Jamal's house to get the food that he had had prepared, which consisted of curry, as well as *rotis* or bread, that had to be bought from the center of the village. This exchange revealed that the *kammis* don't serve as simply agricultural workers, but are also employed by landlords to attend to a wide range of personal business. Jamal's relationship with the *kammis* suggested a proprietary aspect to their relationship—that is, he determined how they spend their time. This aspect of Jamal's relationship with the *kammis* seems to evoke Weber's discussion of patriarchy where power dynamics seen in the household level, for example, what I witnessed among the women in

Jamal's family, were recast in the larger public sphere (Charrad 2011). At the same time, Jamal is also intimately involved in feeding them, providing them loans, and attending their weddings. In spite of the hierarchy, there was a sense of camaraderie between them, as one *kammi* joked that Jamal would often steal his lunch. Jamal confirmed this, drawing from his pocket a rolled piece of flatbread with butter and sugar. This exchange evoked the interaction between the barber, and the landlord discussed above, reinforcing the notion that humor is often a strategy that *kammis* used as a form of protest. But, it was impossible to ignore that, despite these release mechanisms, a rigid hierarchy dominates. After we ate lunch, Jamal gave the leftovers to the *kammis*, who sat on the floor by his feet, spooning out the gravy leftover from the meat Jamal had already eaten.

While we were at the *dharra*, Jamal provided an account of a case of dispute resolution regarding a *kammi* that had come to him recently. This case proved to be instructive in regards to the ability of the *kammis* to access the *dharra*. Recently one of the *kammis* had been accused of stealing a cow, underscoring the ubiquity of the cow case. When I asked whether Jamal had taken on the case, he exclaimed, swearing: “[ ] who would support a *musali* (another phrase for *kammi*)?” He described his great hesitation in supporting the case initially, as he thought that his involvement would not help the situation and may even compromise his social standing—that is, social capital is not maintained by defending *kammis*. This example suggests that while *kammis* have some access to the *dharra*, it is through the back-door and there is no guarantee that the local landlord will help them. However, in this case, Jamal said that as he felt some sense of responsibility, he decided to accompany the *kammi* to the Police Station House Officer (SHO). In contrast to the first case, where the parties had come to the landlord first, the accuser had gone directly to the police, perhaps as he belonged to a different kinship network.

When Jamal and the *kammi* entered the SHO's office, Jamal saw the accuser, who was from a different land-owning kinship group known as the Rana. The Rana was sitting with the SHO along with other members of his kinship group. As there was no sitting room, Jamal and the *kammi* found themselves forced to stand in a corner—emphasizing the boundaries between the groups. While Jamal and the Rana were of an equal rank, the Rana had placed himself in a position of influence by invoking the police. The SHO asked Jamal what the matter was and he replied, “I guess the matter is all resolved judging by the fact that you're all sitting together.” The case had an unexpected ending, as the SHO decided not to get involved in the kinship dispute, and dismissed the case. According to Jamal, the SHO brokered a dispute resolution to avoid a larger feud between Jamal and the Rana. The *kammi* was released.

This case is useful to consider in terms of understanding the structure of the village and how state institutions intersect with kinship dispute resolution mechanisms. One fact that is evident is that the *kammi's* political identity is inextricably related to Jamal. That is, without Jamal's support, he had no other recourse. It seems quite unlikely that the charges would have been dropped if it weren't for Jamal's intervention. This analysis is consistent with other interviews that I conducted that emphasized the *kammis'* dependency on their landlord. In this case, the Rana decided that convicting the *kammi* would not be worth the political capital it would take to oppose Jamal, so he dropped the charges. This case is unusual because the *kammi* that Jamal defended did not work with him, so getting involved in his case would not have any immediate benefit to Jamal himself. He suggested that his involvement in the case could be attributed to a moral responsibility towards the *kammi* given his position as *numberdar*. That is, at the risk of having another landlord from a rival kinship group charge someone from Jamal's village, his loyalty, although at some personal cost, was with the *kammi*.



The case is also important as it reveals the intersection of the state's administration with the kinship structure. As Jamal mentioned, the SHO summoned both parties to the police station and resolved the case. Historically, the police force has been one of the few state institutions that have had a presence on the ground, and thus have been engaged in a range of activities beyond their official purview. Pakistan has experimented with local government three times during its history; however, as these councils have been disbanded in several points in history, they do not have much legitimacy, and the police have remained the de facto local representative of the state. Evidence from the field research pointed to the fact that the police are often connected to local kinship networks. First, there is a high likelihood that the SHO will belong to one of the prominent kinship networks. As several local government officials revealed to me, the local parliamentarian will request a SHO from his own kinship network, ensuring that when there is police work, he is able to invoke his own patronage networks. Second, members of kinship networks often use the police as a tool for their own local feuds. For example, several sources mentioned that kinship groups would lodge false cases against their rivals, as a means of harassment. Supporting that claim, many interviewees also asserted that facilitating such police matters has become one of the most common functions of the local kinship networks, suggesting that kinship heads are often called upon to mediate between their communities and the state, an issue that will be discussed further in the next section.

This case also introduced the concept of *anna*, which again is defined as honor or status achieved through competition, a concept that was used to describe relationships within kinship networks as well as between kinship groups. Rana had accused someone from Jamal's village partly as a personal affront to Jamal, Jamal suggested, as they both belonged to different kinship groups. This level of competition was frequently cited during interviews to describe tension

within relationships. For example, my local contact described a case where two households were fighting as one woman had spilled dirty cleaning water outside her neighbor's house. The squabble persisted until their husbands were involved. As a show of strength, one of the neighbors asked ten men from his village to come to town to intimidate the other family. In retaliation, the other family summoned its relatives, which led to an armed standoff. The escalation of this event over literally spilled water can be attributed to the concept of *anna*. That is, once the neighbors were embroiled in a feud, it was impossible for one to stand down without losing face. *Anna* is also used to describe competition within kinship groups as well and seems to underscore the performative aspects of maintaining kinship boundaries as well position within kinship groups. I will build on the discussion of *anna* in the next section where I explore social cohesion within kinship groups by employing Tilly's concept of trust networks.

#### 4.0 TRUST NETWORKS AND CONNECTIONS TO THE STATE

This last section will examine how the *dharra* and institutions of the state intersect through elections. It will draw on Tilly's work on trust networks to elucidate how the intersection of kinship networks and the state may shape citizen and state relationships. This section will also pose some ideas on how the study of the *dharra* could provide insights into the quality of local democracy in Pakistan.

Tilly argues that the formation of trust networks and their relationship with the state reflects the quality of governance and the level of trust within a society. Tilly defines trust networks as privileged networks where there is a high commitment to being a member and where individuals absorb risk for the larger network. One of the examples employed by Tilly includes the Waldenesians, a Protestant group that criticized the excesses of the Catholic Church in France in the twelfth century and went underground after being prosecuted. Other examples of trust networks include kinship groups and particular transactional networks, such as credit networks that emerged in Britain in the sixteenth century. It is useful to examine kinship groups through the framework of trust networks. Trust networks are social structures with strong ties. As kinship networks are also identified as having strong ties, trust networks provide a useful framework to evaluate the mechanisms through which kinship ties are maintained and the underlying values (Tilly 2005). In exploring the construction of social ties Tilly employs a transactional lens to explain how networks develop trust—he writes: “transactional accounts take

interactions among social sites as their starting points, treating both events at those sites and durable characteristics of those sites as outcomes of interactions” (Tilly 2005: 24). In other words, Tilly emphasizes that trust is an outcome of interaction, not the cause. Given the discussion above of how practice and performance are important elements of kinship groups, Tilly’s use of transactional approaches to delineate trust networks seems highly relevant for Pakistan.

Tilly’s discussion of the connections between these trust networks and the state suggests that such connections can shape both the character of the networks, their social connections, and their overall stability of the state. He notes that over time rulers have tried to coopt trust networks into state institutions and the policy-making process, as access to trust networks can improve the legitimacy of the state. In addition, through this process rulers may be able to access additional resources available to the trust networks, including material resources as well as the means of social control. Integration into the state also influences the nature of the ties within trust networks. As local networks rely on states for services, such as dispute resolution, it may change the role and position of local actors. (Tilly 2005).

Tilly discusses how there are a range of top down and bottom up strategies through which trust networks and the state interact. As the discussion above with the police station revealed, one common bottom up tactic employed by kinship groups to interact with the state is clientage. Tilly defines clientage as invoking favor and acquiring protection with more local authorities, such as the police, to avoid detection by higher authorities like the court system. As Jamal’s case implied local kinship groups curry favor with the local police force, as such connections allow the groups the opportunity to build capital and augment their resources. Relationships with the police can allow landlords to better resolve local disputes, especially involving inter-kinship

disputes. Relationships with the police station may also link kinship groups with wider resources, such as influence within the higher-level court system.

The mechanisms of clientage in Pakistan differ from Tilly's discussion to some extent. He notes that clientage helps local networks conceal themselves from higher authorities. In contrast, in Pakistan, the connections between kinship groups and authorities are only able to exist because of the access that kinship groups have to higher-level patrons, such as national politicians. For example, in many interviews, sources stressed that their ability to gain help from the local police force was shaped by their access to national level politicians whom they supported during elections. In this way, kinship groups seem to be tightly integrated within the institutions of the state—such that it may be difficult to differentiate between the purview of the kinship group and the state institution. For example, as the British colonial administration created particular local state institutions, such the office of the *numberdar* or local revenue officer, for the rural elite to govern, it is difficult to separate the boundaries of the state and the kinship groups. In such cases, integration is a legacy of the British colonial administration. This section will consider how trust networks negotiate with the state by examining the interactions between the *dharra* and the state (Tilly 2005).

At times, the relationship between kinship groups and the state is more akin to what Tilly refers to as “active integration into an existing regimes’ available niches,” which is a more top down strategy (Tilly 2005: 104). As the next case will suggest, through elections, the *dharra*s are integrated directly into the state by national actors, such as political parties. However, even in these cases, kinship groups have some agency to negotiate with institutions of the state. Through the election's example, I will consider both bottom and up top down strategies

regarding how kinship groups are integrated within institutions of the state. This discussion also has important implications for the quality of local democracy.

#### 4.1 THE DHARRA AND ELECTIONS

The link between kinship networks and elections is well documented in the literature. Stephen Lyon, an anthropologist, notes that following the establishment of the Pakistani state in 1947, kinship networks were embedded within political institutions. He documents how kinship groups mediated between central institutions of the state to gain access to resources. For example, local leaders often used kinship ties to gain access to a range of functions from getting a telephone exchange in a village and negotiating with the local police, to gaining jobs. This anecdotal evidence portrays how kinship groups enhance their local positions by integrating with institutions of the state. Some times the links between kinship networks and political institutions are even more direct. For example, local landowners run for local and national elections, supported by both their kinship groups and the *kammis* that worked for them.<sup>ii</sup> In exchange for electoral support, the elected kinship head would direct state institutions to his kinship group. Supporting this discussion, Talbot, a historian, writes: “Standard accounts (of Pakistani parties) have thus missed some of the real stuff of political activity [such as the role of kinship groups] and have presented parties as too ‘modern’ in their organization and electioneering methods” like modern parties in the West (Talbot 2009: 10).) In fact, however, they rely extensively on the age-old networks of kinship for votes (Talbot 2009).

According to historians, the use of kinship networks to mobilize voters has its particular roots in national elections organized by General Zia-ul Haq in 1985. General Zia-ul Haq entered

politics in Pakistan through a military coup, which resulted in the hanging of Prime Minister Bhutto, the founder of the Pakistan People's Party (PPP). To undermine support for the PPP and build his own legitimacy, Zia held open elections, but banned political parties from participating. Candidates stood for provincial and national election as individuals on their own merit. Through this policy, "Zia attempted to revert to the early colonial mode of district politics in which local influentials got elected into the locality characterized by the ties of tribe, caste, faction or tenurial relations" (Waseem 1993: 51). Further, nationally recognized politicians were barred from standing for election, which reinforced the importance of local ties (Wilder 1999).

Chaudhry Nazir, who successfully ran a local election in 1985 was credited with being one of the first national politicians to use kinship networks to mobilize votes after General Zia's new policy. Chaudhry Nazir has passed away, but his secretary frequented the *dharra* of my research assistant's father, so I had a chance to speak to him. The former secretary claimed that, in preparation for the elections, Chaudhry Nazir, who was from the Araeen biraderi, travelled the length of the province of Punjab connecting with kinship networks to raise resources and votes. While the Araeen biraderi do not dominate any particular locality, they are an influential kinship group, as they are widely networked into the business community and have access to capital. The Chaudhry Nazir's success popularized the kinship model within his own party, the Muslim League, and other parties began to follow suit.

According to Shamsul Naz, a prominent journalist in Faisalabad, as local connections became important to campaigns, politicians, who were also likely to be landlords, started the trend of implementing development projects prior to the elections to strengthen local ties. These investments would provide visual proof of the politician's commitment to the area. Further, the politicians promised that if they were elected, they would continue to direct resources to

particular districts or villages. Prior to 1985, civil service officials were the primary actors to undertake development. However, given the local customs discussed in section two whereby capital is gained from active involvement in people's lives and small favors, provincial and national politicians started implementing development projects out of their own discretionary funds. In other words, development projects served as an effective method of activating and strengthening local ties. Such development projects, which are undertaken even today, included paving local streets, installing natural gas connections, electrification, or bringing in a telephone exchange. These investments also facilitate future access to kinship groups. Roads and telephones, for example, make it easier for members of a kinship group to communicate and congregate. Within this development framework, the *dharra* then became the space through which kinship groups met and determined where the investments would be made. The 1985 election had significant influence on shaping the relationship between institutions of the state, kinship groups, and individuals. By mobilizing kinship groups for votes and investing in small-scale development projects, parties served to tightly integrate kinship groups and the state.

The *dharra* also has an enormous public role at times of elections. During interviews with elected officials, political workers, and local residents, I asked about how individuals would organize in rural areas and what activities were undertaken. All the interviewees suggested that the political parties and politicians relied exclusively on the local kinship networks in rural areas and the *dharras* as a mobilizing structure through which to reach their electorate. "During elections, the political parties come straight to the *dharras* of the local landlords, and they in turn talk to the local people," said one local landlord. Asked whose *dharras* the politicians would come to, the same landlord replied, "people who are in a position to provide tea and food." This answer can be understood on two levels—first, the political parties would come to individuals



who were in a material position to host the party representative. However, having wealth seemed only part of the deal. The answer also suggests that the political parties need someone who has a good relationship with the village or a certain level of social capital – a person who can, in other words, convene the village over tea and discussion. In some cases, the representative of the political party was a local landlord, but even he would need to develop relationships with smaller landlords during the election.

The relationship between the landlord and the politician can be seen as a symbiotic one. On one hand, the politician approaches landlords that have a certain amount of social capital, as discussed above, created by their local presence and their active cultivation of relationships among the village. On the other hand, the landlords' access to the politician also creates capital, a political capital that allows him to access institutions of the state, such as the police. Many local landlords referred to the fact that in exchange for their electoral support, they would provide their influence regarding local police cases or they may provide economic incentives, such as access to land concessions. This symbiotic relationship confirms Bourdieu's discussion of the interchangeability of capital. That is, there is a strong connection between class position and the capital that individuals are able to generate based on their social and political connections.

Following Tilly's discussion of trust networks, the political parties seem to provide the point of access for kinship networks to be integrated within the state. In the run up to the elections, political parties provide tickets to kinship networks. This process of determining to whom tickets are provided can be understood through Tilly's discussion of bartering, where both the party and kinship network are able to influence the outcome. Based on my field research, kinship networks in rural areas are far more influential than in the city in terms of identifying the

appropriate candidates, as politicians do not have direct connections to the people, and thus must go through the *dharras*. *Dharras* also exist in the city, but their purview is somewhat more limited. However, even in the cities kinship networks will determine which kinship networks will receive tickets. For example, in one of my field areas, the Ansari and Malik kinship networks predominated. The exact population from each side is not known, but the winning ticket usually had an Ansari for the member of national assembly and a Malik for the member of provincial assembly. According to a local businessman who has been involved in several campaigns, the heads of the kinship networks tacitly come to a power-sharing agreement prior to the election and agree upon the distribution of seats. He further added that this distinction may change, as the Maliks gain more political experience and numbers. In cities and areas where kinship groups are split, it appears that parties play a larger role in candidate selection. But in rural areas and areas with dominant kinship networks, they have considerable agency in vying for the party ticket.

The role of the *dharra* and the kinship network in nominating candidates for elections is important to consider when examining the democratic character of Pakistan's local institutions. On one hand, the ability of kinship networks to influence the selection of parliamentary mechanisms creates a powerful feedback mechanism for kinship groups to influence national-level competition. Given the importance of the *dharra* as a mobilizing mechanism, a point that I explore more deeply below, politicians rely on these kinship networks, allowing them to have some agency in holding the politicians to account. Further, given the emphasis placed on building consensus and maintaining legitimacy, kinship networks are answerable to their members to some degree. On the other hand, as the cases discussed below will reveal, electoral politics are dominated by land-holding groups, and exclude a large number of individuals from

service-providing groups and other minorities. Any future study of democracy will have to consider the existing local accountability mechanisms as well as examine who has access to such mechanisms.

During my fieldwork in Pakistan during the summer of 2012, elections were anticipated in 2013; however, the mobilization had not yet begun in the villages. I was able to get a sense of the role of the *dharra* by asking people about the 2008 election. Political campaigning in the rural areas, would take place almost entirely within the *dharra*. Politicians would come to the *dharra* for half a day or so, which would be a semi-public occasion. The landlord would prepare a lunch or dinner feast and invite the other important members of his kinship group as well as his allies. Women, of course, were absent from this space and *kammis* would be there to serve, but, again, would be completely absent from the discussion. Once the alliance between the kinship group and the party was solidified, the landlord may hold a rally, which he described as a small or medium sized event where the political candidate would address the group. The point was to affirm the political alliance between the landlord and the politician, rather than serving as an actual political rally. According to the politician, once they have reached an understanding with the landlord, it then becomes his job to collect the votes—his local honor or capital is staked on it.

The role of the *dharra* in elections and the relationship between the local landlords and the politicians can partly be explained by the local culture of gift-exchange. Social scientists writing in the 1950s and the 1970s discuss how kinship ties were activated were strengthened through a gift exchange at appropriate social functions. For example, people would provide gifts during a wedding or the birth of a first male child. Zekiye Eglar, an anthropologist, points out how this gift-exchange explained why ties between some families were stronger than others

(Eglar 2010). Alavi also discusses how the refusal to participate in this gift-exchange can be employed as a tactic to cut-off particular social ties (Alavi 1972). Based on my fieldwork, the kind of exchange that takes places in the *dharra* during elections to some extent replicates this gift-exchange. For example, the landlords dedicate significant resources to hosting the politician. Subtle factors, such as whether the landlord serves lamb instead of the more common (and cheaper meat) chicken will shape the terms of their relationship. This discussion points to how these symbolic gestures shape the dynamics of the relationship and curry trust. Further, based on interviews with the politicians and the landlords, I learned that local landlords rarely provide financial contributions. Instead supporters usually provide gifts, such as election banners, use of a car, or a dinner. In part, the landlords revert to these gifts as they may be cash poor. While landlords have significant wealth, many of them do not have extensive capital resources. However, the nature of the exchange cannot only be explained in monetary terms and the parallels to the local gift exchange are striking. This observation reaffirms the discussion of how social capital is used to maintain local ties. That is, the relationship between local landlords and politicians is more than a professional one. Often the landlord and politician may come from the same family, as seen in the Cheema case, certainly the same kinship group. The campaign contribution as a gift to some extent has more salience than a financial donation, as it emphasizes the social ties between the landlord and the candidate.

While there are some institutionalized relationships between parties and landlords, such alliances can also be very fluid. The alliance between the Cheema family and the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) reveals such dynamics. The Pakistan Muslim League (PML) and the PPP are the two dominant political parties; however, there is no clear-cut ideological or policy difference between these parties. The PML is seen more as an urban-based party that is

supportive of the business community. In contrast, the PPP reaches out both to landlords, as the Bhutto family that founded the PPP has a land-owning background. At the same time, the PPP has also reached out to the peasant class based on socialist ideals. Even though, Ali Cheema and his family are landlords, they have historically been affiliated with the PML, as the party is popular in Punjab. In the 2002 provincial election, Ali Cheema was aligned with the Sahi family, another land-owning kinship group affiliated with the PML. In exchange for this campaigning support, Ali had received Sahi's support to serve as the head of one of the main municipalities. This alliance between the Cheema and Sahi families reveals the multiple layers of patronage. That is, while Ali's family was a patron in their own right, they depended on the political support of a more prominent landowning family from a neighboring district. This example reveals how on occasion there are political ties across kinship networks.

However, these ties are often contentious. According to the Cheema family, Sahi's support wavered, especially due to Cheema's growing popularity and rumors of his interest in contesting for the future provincial election himself. Ultimately, the alliance broke, as Sahi wavered in his support of Cheema in the 2005 local election. According to Ali and Sheraz Cheema, due to Sahi's lack of support, they shifted their party affiliation for the 2008 national parliamentary election to PPP. The concept of *anna* becomes salient to understanding the political rivalry between these two families. As Ali described it, they perceived a slight from the Sahi family as Sahi did not campaign as actively for them, and due to their pride they broke from the PML. An independent candidate from the Sahi family confirmed this narrative as well. While the reasons for changing party affiliation were in all likelihood more complex than relayed to me, it is striking that they were presented in terms of honor. Given the high resources at stake, it is not surprising that there is such competition between groups. In the face of such

competition, kinship boundaries have multiple dimensions, including social and moral, and are strictly enforced. The concept of *anna* speaks to such symbolic boundaries. As Sheraz Cheema admitted, it was painful for him to fly the PPP flag above his house given his long affiliation with the PML, but the honor of their kinship group trumped over party loyalty. This level of local competition also has implications for a study of democracy. As the case suggests, given the high stakes, there is intense competition for such positions. This level of competition, suggests that there are informal accountability mechanisms. I will return to this discussion in the conclusion.

The political fall-out between the Cheemas and the Sahi family not only had implications for the immediate family, but also the political orientation of the larger village. According to Sheraz, “In the village, allegiances are aligned in particular *dharas* that then support particular parties.” The Cheemas revealed that they relied on a variety of tactics to mobilize votes, including relying on the social capital that they build in between election years, coercion, and, on occasion, they also revert to buying votes. According to Sheraz, who was working in the village to rally votes in 2008, he applied social pressure on people to support the preferred PPP candidate of the kinship network. He cited multiple ways to ways to exert control, referring to their “intelligence” networks that he could rely on to learn of families that may be wavering in their commitment. For example, in one of the neighboring villages, he discovered that a local landlord had offered to pave a few streets in the village. The Cheemas feared that if this individual was allowed to have influence, he could undercut their presence. Ali sent his one of his uncles to talk to the villagers. The uncle applied soft pressure and convinced the families that if they had the streets paved, the digging would lower the entrances of their homes, exposing them to flood water during the rains. The uncle admitted with a grin that he had fabricated that

logic, but the family bought his argument and declined to have the streets paved. As Sheraz admitted, “We couldn’t allow for another benefactor to establish himself in this village.” The Cheemas also faced competition from a local PML supporter, who refused to vote for PPP. To deal with supporters, the Cheemas visited that individual every day and applied coercive pressure, threatening him with loss of support if he supported the PML candidate. According to Sheraz, the loss of his support would have devastating effects for the family in terms of future job searches, any referrals that he would need with the local police, and moreover, they could make his life difficult by registering a false case with the police. When I asked why they concerted their energy on one person even though they already had the vote of the majority of the village, they replied that: “if one got away, so can another.”

Similarly, *kammis* seem to have little freedom in their right to vote. The *kammis* working for Jamal revealed that they go with Jamal’s family to vote, and they vote for whomever Jamal indicates. In a different village, I spoke with the family of clay workers who are also considered to be among the service-oriented kinship groups. This family had considerably more means than the *kammis* who worked for Jamal, but the head of the family revealed that during the 2008 election, local landlords or one of his agents approached them in an attempt to influence their votes. He said that they try to remain neutral; however, as the landlord’s intelligence networks are extensive, especially on election day, it hard to preserve their neutrality

In discussing the role of kinship networks during elections, the topic of voter fraud reveals important dimensions of how members of kinship networks assume collective risk. While I did not specifically ask people about electoral fraud, the issue came up in several interviews when I asked about mechanisms through which kinship networks were mobilized around election time. It is not clear how pervasive electoral fraud was in 2008, but the

discussion suggests that some of the mobilization strategies are coercive. Further, the discussion also suggests that kinship groups absorb risk for their members. The practices of electoral fraud accounted by Liaquat, a labor party worker, were far more sophisticated than simple ballot stuffing. Liaquat discusses several methods, including one where the first member from a particular kinship group is tasked with not actually voting, but bringing an empty ballot to give to the party worker or the head of the kinship group responsible for the group of voters. The head of the group then fills out the ballot, passes it on to the next in line, and the practice continues until everyone has voted. The details provided by the Cheema family and Liaquat's evidence on electoral fraud provides a number of important insights regarding the role of kinship groups in political socialization. During times of elections, the relationship between states and citizens is largely mediated through kinship groups. The influence of kinship groups pertains to substantive decisions, including selection of candidates. In fact, kinship networks also control the space where the balloting takes place. According to Sheraz Cheema, "The *biraderi* [kinship group] has complete control in his area, there are no polling agent . . . the vote belong to the local, dominant *biraderi*."

This discussion also points to the nature of the ties themselves, which seem to be in Granovetter's terms to be strong (Granovetter 1973). The strong ties are portrayed in the heavy risk absorbed the kinship group, especially true of the cases involving electoral fraud. The process of vote rigging, described by Liaquat, suggests that the risk is equally distributed between members of the kinship group, serving to strengthen kinship ties. The earlier literature on kinship networks from the 1970s seems to suggest that kinship structures are diffuse in nature, and that membership is only activated based on the decision of members to participate in rituals.



However, the role of kinship groups during elections seems to suggest that the ties are strong and strictly enforced by kinship groups.

Drawing on Tilly's earlier work, Charrad notes that that privileging kinship ties was a common strategy for post-colonial states to establish the authority of the central state. My research points to how national leaders align themselves within local kinship networks to mobilize voters. However, Charrad's approach suggests that such a relationship may be reversed and shape central political institutions. That is, she suggests that the integration of kinship networks into the state also shapes central state institutions. The analysis of how kinship may shape central state institutions is beyond the scope of this project, but would be an important dimension to explore in the future (Charrad 2011).

## 5.0 THE DHARRA AND SOCIAL CAPITAL

This section will reflect on how well the concept of the *dharra* provides helps to elucidate the dynamics of kinships structures at the local level, as well as evaluate how they intersect with institutions of the state. This section will also discuss to what extent Bourdieu's concept of social capital and Tilly's discussion of trust networks are relevant to understanding kinship structures in Pakistan. The idea of social capital helpfully mediates between social structures and social practice. For example, in the discussion of dispute resolution above, landlords develop capital in the village through their role as local mediators. This role not only allows them to gain a certain social position within the village, but during times of election, also allows them to transform this capital into votes. This case points to the importance of identifying the various ways that social capital operates. For Bourdieu, capital referred to the currency that individuals possess that could be attributable to their social position. The social capital that is revealed in this case works on some level to further Bourdieu's argument. That is, in line with Bourdieu's discussion, there is strong evidence that social capital accumulated at the village level translates into votes during election season and allows kinship leaders to attain political office (Bourdieu 2003).

While Bourdieu's discussion of social capital is a useful construct through which to examine the reproduction of social structures, his discussion of the dimensions of social capital itself obscures the mechanisms through which structures are maintained. In Faisalabad, social

capital certainly conforms to the structural parameters of kinship networks, however it is most salient in referring to particular micro-exchanges. In this way, the idea of capital visible in Pakistan deviates from Bourdieu's discussion. Practices, such as gift-exchange, are not only an outcome of social position, but in fact define the parameters of the kinship group. In order to understand the relationship between kinship structure and practice, Goffman's interactional order becomes salient. For example, Sheraz Cheema, discussed above, draws his capital from his position as a landowner as well as his willingness to engage in local affairs and serve as a mediator.

The *dharra* conceptually is critical to understand dimensions of social capital and how it translates politically. First, the *dharra* points to the localness of the landlord's social capital. Second, the *dharra* encapsulates both the structure as well as the practice. In this sense, the *dharra* becomes the physical manifestation of the landlord's position. For example, in my attempt at social mapping in the village of a member of the national assembly, the placement and ornamentation of the landlord's house and *dharra* allowed me to immediately locate him. The space provided by the *dharra* makes the structural differences among landlords tangible. The structural dimension is reinforced through specific practices that will be discussed further below. Finally, the *dharra* also makes explicit the symbolic boundaries between the land-owning and service-providing kinship groups. Landowning groups are seen as men of leisure, served by the *kammis* or the service-providing groups.

The *dharra* reveals another important facet of kinship ties and associated social capital—the salience of performance and transaction. As suggested by the discussion of practice above, performance is integral to social capital espoused through kinship networks. While *dharra*s remain informal spaces and visits are shaped by one's needs, there is a ritualistic aspect that is

important to examine. For instance, when individuals frequent *dharras*, they are subject to a particular hospitality that in Bourdieu's terms reflects the stature of the visitor with tea being the norm and meat cutlets reserved for the political elite or landlords with stature. Another example includes the practice of landlords to commonly have their kin present while they receive guests. Not a single one of my interviews was conducted one on one, even when an explicit request was made. Instead, people seem to prefer my interviews into public gatherings, where my presence (as a foreign researcher) was seen as an occasion to build capital. In turn, perhaps the presence of their network members during my interview was a strategy to build their importance in my eyes. Again, this finding emphasizes the need to study the kinship networks through an interactional lens as well as a structural one.

The concept of the *dharra* also has salience as it is often the point of contact between the kinship networks and both local and national institutions of the state. On a local level, the role of the *dharra* in dispute resolution illustrates how the *dharra* of a landlord becomes the point to access institutions, such as the police and court system. Based on my interviews, the level of access varies considerably. In some cases, the kinship structures are reproduced directly within the institutions of the state—for example the composition of the local police force would replicate the structures of kinship groups with the most dominant kinship groups represented among the top ranks of the police force. In other cases, kinship groups often have to barter with state officials, employing their political capital with elected members of their kinship groups or seeking political favors in exchange for local knowledge or patronage. The next section will use Tilly's framework to evaluate how these alliances between kinship networks and the state shape the character of political institutions in Pakistan.

## 6.0 KINSHIP GROUPS AS TRUST NETWORKS

The concept of a trust network provides a useful lens through which to explore the strong ties both among kinship groups and between kinship and the state. The high levels of risk absorbed collectively on behalf of particular members, the strong ties, and the exclusion of individuals who don't abide by the kinship code of conduct are defining features of kinship groups, as discussed in the case material above. Tilly's discussion of trust networks emphasizes the need to study mechanisms through which these connections are maintained and claims are made. An exploration of mechanisms that maintain networks emphasizes the importance of studying the *dharra* both as a site for claims making as well as the site for reproducing kinship boundaries. Examining the mechanisms of trust networks also points to their efficacy within people's lives. For example, trust networks can reduce transaction costs and provide access to information. In this way, trust networks seem to provide a mechanism to reproduce social capital. This finding is also consistent with the literature that emphasizes how the structure of kinship groups seems to be bounded by practices, such as gift-giving. To this point, examining kinship groups in structural terms that ignore these transactions is not meaningful.

Tilly argues that the relationship of trust networks can have implications for the quality of democracy. To some extent, he argues, trust networks developed to counter the lack of trust within the state. For example, in the sixteenth century, Muldrew discusses how trust networks developed to address the shortage of capital and the increasing financial risk that people adopted

in their private enterprises. Tilly discusses a range of micro and macro strategies that trust networks employ to negotiate with the government and suggests that these connections are useful to consider conceptions of state legitimacy. The deep integration of trust networks within the state provides a certain legitimacy to the state.

Tilly argues that the depth of integration of trust networks within the state and the mechanisms through which they interact with the state shapes the quality of democracy. In order to explore these relationships, Tilly presents a model where the level of integration with the state lies on the vertical axis and the mechanisms that shape the relationship between the ruler and the ruled lie on the horizontal axis. For the Pakistan case, this framework is relevant, as it allows us to build an understanding of the larger political structure through an analysis of institutions and transactions at multiple levels including: 1) provincial and national mechanisms through which kinship groups interact with the state and 2) local mechanisms through which kinship groups maintain kinship boundaries and control. My research was focused largely on the local level and the point of interaction between local and national structures. I show how state institutions use kinship groups to maintain local legitimacy and control, namely by using kinship networks to transfer resources of the state to the village level in exchange for electoral support. Interestingly, in spite of the hierarchy within the system, there are some mechanisms that allow groups to make claims at the national level. For example, a member of the national assembly, who exercises influence on a national level, nonetheless finds it imperative to be available at his *dharra* every Sunday to meet with local constituents. Regardless of his ability to respond to claims brought to him, he feels that it is essential that he at least be there to hear them. He explained that representatives must “they make themselves available to their constituents, give them time, and respond to them politely.” These findings suggest that the relationship between kinship groups

and the state is critical to understanding the mechanisms that guide larger political institutions and the underlying values.

This framework also allows us to see how kinship groups influence the state or bottom-up strategies by playing a role in local governance, as well as through mobilizing votes during times of election. Tilly's schema provides depth to our understanding of Pakistani political institutions by examining the quality of local interactions. As my research has shown, there are a confluence of influences shaping the relationship between villagers, kinship groups, and the state. Some of the exchanges between kinship groups and their members are highly coercive, as the discussion on voting indicated. My research also illustrated that kinship groups cannot rely on coercion alone, but also need to maintain local legitimacy. In some cases, kinship groups maintain legitimacy by directing resources of the state to the local level through the *dharra*. Even in cases where landlords don't have resources to distribute, there is a desire to appear responsive and build consensus. For example, through the discussion of performance, I argue that the influence of the landlords is in large part shaped by their localness and the perception that they are acting by consensus. These examples underscore elements of reciprocity in the local relationships. Such values are also reflected in the national level political systems, as the ability of the elected representative to respond to claims, at least to some degree, becomes critical to electoral success.

According to Tilly's analysis, networks with lower trust integrate into the state more easily than high trust networks, as they have less to lose. The case of Pakistan seems to contradict this trend due to the historical integration of kinship groups in the state. As discussed in the background section, the integration of kinship groups into the state was a strategy employed by several generations of rulers in the Indian subcontinent, most recently the British. Further, several state institutions, such as the office of the *numberdar*, were created explicitly for

particular kinship groups. That is, the institutions of the state itself were built upon kinship networks, so in part, it is difficult to separate between kinship networks and the state. Tilly notes that while the perfect integration of trust networks within the state allows for a measure of legitimacy associated with democracy, if a trust network is too integrated, it undermines consent. In the Pakistani case, as the state relies on kinship group extensively, especially during times of election, it reduces the levels of consent needed from citizens. In doing so, trust networks in Pakistan operate “exclusively and competitively” and make exit difficult, as illustrated by the Cheema case (Tilly 2003: 41). While kinship networks create some measure of responsiveness, my research suggests that exit from kinship networks was not possible, as it would limit members’ access to institutions of the state. The inability of members to exit from kinship networks has an integral effect on the quality of democracy.

For a future study of democracy, Tilly’s framework emphasizes the importance of examining more local transactions. As I have shown, the interaction between kinship groups and parliamentarians is critical to understanding the nature of democracy. While I focused on the most local level of interaction, in the future, it would be important to examine how kinship groups shape decision-making at the national level. Such a study would need to identify national level mechanisms through which kinship groups are able to influence the state. Through my field research, I have shown how kinship networks use electoral mechanisms to gain access to the state. While this was beyond the scope of this study, it would also be interesting to examine how kinship groups shape parliamentary decision-making and specific policies. However, even a macro-level study of political institutions needs to be grounded by a discussion of the localized transactions. This point underscores the notion that democracy operates in multiple spheres. Some of these spheres intersect—for example, practices that shape local



responsiveness, also translate into some measure of parliamentary responsiveness. However, such linkages cannot be taken for granted. At times greater accountability within national institutions does not deepen democracy at the local level, as it may exclude particular actors. Thus, any future study of democracy needs to look at mechanisms and transactions at every level as well as the points at which the various spheres of governance intersect.

## 7.0 CONCLUSION

While the majority of literature on Pakistan focuses on defining the patronage networks within the central state, I discuss the important role played by local kinship groups in influencing election results and the allocation of state resources. This project has filled the gap in the literature on kinship networks by: 1) examining the structure of local kinship networks; 2) employing an interactional approach to studying how social ties are maintained within kinship networks; and 3) depicting the mechanisms through which kinship networks are integrated within institutions of the state. In particular, the thesis has provided an ethnographic description of the *dharra*, as it is a key space through which political socialization transpires. By discussing cases of dispute resolution that are mediated through *dharra*s, the thesis has also revealed elements of collective decision-making. The discussion of dispute resolution also points to a central component of how social capital is created within kinship networks. In addition, the *dharra* is a key institution to explore as it serves as the primary mechanism to link kinship networks with the political structures of the state. That is, the *dharra* is used as a mobilizing structure during times of elections where social capital is transformed into votes.

The research also indicates how well kinship groups are integrated within the state. Using Tilly, I argue that it is helpful to view the kinship groups as trust networks, as it illustrates the high risk and commitment necessary to maintain the trust network. Almost as a backlash to the high commitment required to maintain kinship ties, I examine the concept of *anna* or the

competition within and between kinship groups. *Anna* underscores the intense competition within the leadership of the kinship groups, a dynamic that may result in greater electoral competition. Tilly's discussion of trust networks is also important as it elucidates the various strategies through which trust networks are able to negotiate with the state. Tilly considers the level of integration of trust networks within the state to reflect on the implications for democracy. On one hand, he argues that integration of trust networks enhances democracy, as it increases the trust in and legitimacy of the state. In contrast to existing literature on Pakistan, my research points to reciprocity between local elites and their constituents, suggesting nascent feedback mechanisms. These feedback mechanisms enable representation as they have the ability to divert state resources to local constituencies. On the other hand, where integration of strong trust networks is tightly managed, it results in a loss of consent by the electorate. Further, given the patriarchal nature of the trust networks, their reproduction within the public realm perpetuates the inequalities seen at the local level. Basically, anyone who is excluded from a trust network is marginalized in the public sphere.

My research suggests that government institutions have a great deal of control over kinship-based groups, as they are directly responsible for directing funds to trust networks and often may serve as the head of a trust network. In fact, while my research is not conclusive, it suggests that that it would be difficult to attain a position in government without being embedded in a powerful trust network. However, my research also shows that kinship networks exert considerable pressure over political institutions, such as parties. The Cheema example clearly demonstrated how a kinship group was able to successfully defy a national political party, as it felt that its honor was at stake. This discussion leads me to conclude that part of the problem with the integration of trust networks with the state is in the characteristics of mediators, such as

the landlords. In many instances, the quality of leadership is patriarchal and marginalizes the majority of the population. However, as the discussion on social capital suggests, even such leaders can't take their position for granted and have to invest in developing reciprocal relationships at the grassroots level.

The ethnographic approach employed by this project was successful in studying the micro-dynamics of how kinship networks maintain cohesion and how state institutions intersect with local trust networks. However, undertaking ethnographic research and traversing such trust networks is challenging, as it is difficult to access the trust networks without knowing a gatekeeper. Ultimately, this research would not have been possible without the gatekeepers that I had the good fortune to meet.

The ethnographic approach was also critical to develop an understanding of performance and transaction in maintaining relationships. While early anthropological accounts of Pakistan pointed to transactional mechanisms that promoted social cohesion through the discussion of gift-exchange, this literature had not been updated in over 50 years. The exploration of how social capital is maintained through the *dharra* is a unique contribution to this research. Building on this research, it would be important to explore the links between local and national patronage networks. In particular, it would be critical to examine the link between trust networks and the quality of leadership at national levels, as this research suggests that part of what impedes democracy are the patriarchal characteristics of local leaders. It would also be important to develop the argument regarding how social processes shape stratification and the reproduction of local inequalities at the central level.

## 8.0 APPENDIX

i Both customary and Islamic provisions of inheritance (often competing) also shape the social reproduction of kinship groups. Customarily in Pakistan, the sons inherit their parent's property. According to the Shariat Act of 1948, women may inherit, albeit half of the amount of land inherited by the brothers. In addition, according to the same law, individuals may bequeath up to one-third of their property before death; however, two-thirds of the property must be divided according to the Islamic law. In the village level, customary law prevails often to prevent the subdivision of property between kinship groups. In this sense, inheritance laws reproduce kinship stratification in a similar way as marriage practices (Alavi 1972).

ii In turn, to maintain the relationship, the parliamentarians would often direct state resources to improve the infrastructure of their village or help their kin gain employment through the state. Talbot, a historian, points to two elections in 1962 and 1985 where kinship rivalries were particularly visible. Further, during the 1995 elections, rivalries between the Rajputs, Jats, and Gujars (different kinship groups) were well documented (Talbot 2009).

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