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TA 4319-PAK
**Determinants and Drivers of Poverty Reduction and
ADB's Contribution in Rural Pakistan**

Social Structures in Rural Pakistan

Shandana Khan Mohmand and Haris Gazdar

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Preface

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) and Pakistan have been development partners for almost 39 years. Assistance has averaged close to $1 billion a year since 2004 supporting good governance, sustained pro-poor growth, inclusive social development, and targeted investment projects to reduce poverty and generate employment.

ADB has an active research agenda on economic and social development issues. A technical assistance titled 'Determinants and Drivers of Poverty Reduction and ADB's Contribution in Rural Pakistan,' was approved by ADB in March 2004. It supported a detailed study of both chronic and transitory rural poverty and sought to identify appropriate policy and implementation measures to promote sustained poverty reduction. It was financed on a grant basis from the Poverty Reduction Cooperation Fund (PRF). The PRSP Secretariat of the Ministry of Finance, Government of Pakistan, was the Executing Agency of the technical assistance.

The thematic papers presented here are interim outputs of this project. They are based primarily on fieldwork carried out by the authors and their research teams in diverse regions of rural Pakistan between June 2005 and March 2006. The fieldwork included three types of data collection: (a) qualitative research at the village level, (b) extended household survey of selected villages, and (c) cross-village rapid surveys in selected districts.

The innovative "drivers of change" approach to poverty reduction focuses on long-term structural drivers and determinants as well as on impediments to pro-poor change. Poverty-reduction correlates with higher economic growth, more equal distribution of assets and opportunity, higher real wages, better social indicators, improved governance, better access to resources, level playing field in markets, socio-economic mobility, and pro-poor delivery of public goods and services.

The thematic papers are being made available to support and enrich the debate on poverty reduction and economic growth. Comments and feedback received are appreciated.

Peter L. Fedon
Country Director
ADB Pakistan Resident Mission

Abbreviations

ADB — Asian Development Bank

NWFP — North West Frontier Province

PPP — Pakistan People's Party

PRM — Pakistan Resident Mission

NOTES

The analysis in this paper is up-to-date until January 2006 when the study was completed.

GLOSSARY

ashar	the practice among Pukhtoons of harvesting each other's land
autak	(in Sindh) male reception area in a village, normally owned by the leading landlord
baithak	(in Punjab) male reception area in a village, normally owned by the leading landlord
begaar	free labor
biraderi	clan
chak	(in Punjab) village
deh	(in Sindh) the lowest-defined geographic unit functioning as a revenue village
dera	farmhouse constructed by a landlord near his cultivated lands; can also refer to male reception area in a village, normally owned by the leading landlord
goth	(in Sindh) hamlet: a consolidated geographic settlement that is normally but not necessarily smaller than a revenue village
hamsaya	euphemistic term for a nonowner (of land) resident; literally translated as "neighbor"
haq meher	an Islamic custom according to which the bride is entitled to a certain sum of money from the groom on marriage
hujra	(in NWFP) male reception area in a village, normally owned by the leading landlord
jirgah	tribal council: decision-making body most commonly operational in parts of NWFP
julaha	weaver
kachha	construction in material other than burnt brick in cement, mortar, and concrete
kammi	an often derogatory term for a nonagricultural service caste
khaani	(in NWFP) landownership
khan	(in NWFP) landowner
khairaati	(as) charity
lohar	blacksmith
mahar	a Pukhtoon custom according to which the groom gives money to the bride's parents
masher	village elder
mauza	(in Punjab and NWFP) the lowest defined geographic unit functioning as a revenue village
mohallah	(in Dir) an area of land or cluster of houses inhabited by close relatives, taken to mean "neighborhood" in most other areas
naik	village headmanship
naib nazim	deputy mayor: convenor of local government council; takes over from nazim when he or she is away
nazim	mayor: elected head of local government

panchayat	tribal council: decision-making body most commonly operational in parts of Punjab
paro	distinct neighborhood or compound, usually demarcated by thorny bushes or boundary walls
purdah	the segregation of women from men who are not family members
qabza	occupancy
qaum	endogamous kinship group
swaara	the practice of giving women in marriage to rival families to settle feuds, especially in murder cases
tarbur	patri-lateral parallel cousin
tola	unit of weight roughly equivalent to 11.7 g; usually used to measure gold
tul	patrilineal segmented family in Pukhtoon society
wadero /wadera	tribal council: decision-making body most commonly operational in parts of Sindh
zaat	endogamous kinship group
zamindar	(in Punjab) landowner
zamindar	(in NWFP) tenant

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1 Introduction

This paper provides an account of social structures in rural Pakistan with reference to qualitative and quantitative data from seven villages spread across distinct sociocultural and agro-economic zones in the country.[1] The objectives of this paper are twofold. First, it attempts to provide a conceptual framework and empirical content to explain societal patterns and social organization in rural Pakistan. The two accompanying thematic papers on rural livelihoods (Gazdar 2007)[2] and governance (Cheema 2007)[3] use the categories defined and discussed in this paper as exogenous variables that influence economic and political outcomes, respectively. Second, the paper aims to offer fresh insights into the dynamics of social exclusion and social change in different parts of contemporary rural Pakistan.

The paper takes, as its point of departure, the scoping paper for the project, which argued that an analysis of the determinants and drivers of poverty reduction needed to be placed within the context of long-term patterns and trends, and relations of power in the rural economy. The framework proposed in the scoping paper was "structuralist" in the sense that explanations for current economic, political, and social outcomes were sought in "exogenous" factors—primary among them being the prevailing social structures. The scoping paper acknowledged, however, that social patterns were not rigid and that agency and the dynamics of change were very much part of the story of poverty reduction (or resilience).

The paper attempts to explain social structures in rural Pakistan by presenting a snapshot of seven villages in seven districts, and then using a comparative analysis to determine the impact of social structures on determining and maintaining poverty. Since the description presented is, essentially, a snapshot, the paper does not consider the historical evolution of each type

of social structure. Nevertheless, it remains cognizant of the fact that social structures are not static entities but are instead the result of dynamic processes of evolution. The empirical focus is on specific villages and communities, and relations of power, hierarchy, and solidarity among groups in these villages and communities. A necessary cost of maintaining this micro-level perspective is, obviously, that broader trends and processes—e.g., changes wrought by global events, the international and regional environment, and the media—make an appearance only if they have a direct and conspicuous bearing on events in the survey sites.

Section 2 of the paper elaborates the conceptual framework for the study. A detailed description of the social structures found in the seven primary survey sites is provided in Section 3. The material presented in this section supports the analysis of livelihoods and governance, respectively, in the two accompanying thematic papers. Section 4 identifies some of the main dimensions and delineations of social exclusion in the survey sites. A more dynamic picture of power relations, agency, and change in the survey sites is provided in Section 5. Patriarchy as a social structure is discussed in Section 6. The final section offers concluding observations.

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1   For details of the selection process, refer to the overview note accompanying the four thematic papers for this study.
2   Gazdar, H. 2007. Rural Economy and Livelihoods in Pakistan. Thematic paper prepared under TA4319, Determinants and Drivers of Poverty Reduction and ADB's Contribution in Rural Pakistan. Asian Development Bank (ADB), Islamabad.
3   Cheema, A. 2007. Governance Impediments to Pro-Poor Change in Pakistan. Thematic paper prepared under TA4319, Determinants and Drivers of Poverty Reduction and ADB's Contribution in Rural Pakistan. ADB, Islamabad.

2 Conceptual Framework

Two approaches within the study of social structures are brought together in this paper. Section 4 adheres to a structuralist approach that allows us to identify patterns and forms in order to understand the snapshot of each district surveyed. Section 5 moves beyond this static picture to consider relations of power that are inherent within such social structures; it demonstrates how members of specific social structures are not just "well-socialised role-occupant(s) unwittingly executing the functional imperatives of society" [*sic*] (Prendergast and Knottnerus 1994),[4] but that they respond to specific hierarchies and power dynamics that exist and are maintained through various processes of livelihood generation and governance. This approach not only allows a neat point of conjunction between Gazdar (2007) and Cheema (2007) (footnotes 2 and 3, respectively), but also helps understand that such systems are maintained through certain processes that also lead to and determine the poverty of entire communities.

Insofar as social structures are defined as comprehensive social systems that determine and dictate behavior that is specific to their members (Redfield 1961),[5] there is a remarkable variety of such systems to be found across Pakistan. While considerable literature exists on social structures in Pakistan, most of this undertakes a national level analysis that looks at and considers the impact of social alignments based on ethnicity and religion. There is a much more limited literature available on class and clan. However, when it comes to a village level analysis of social structures, there is a real dearth of such studies having been undertaken in Pakistan and the literature is extremely limited.

This has severely limited the understanding of the impact of social structures on poverty in Pakistan—while the world of many rural, poor citizens is limited to the boundaries and dynamics of their villages, the understanding of social structures that affects policy usually generalizes across regions through a national-level analysis. For example, while ethnicity is an extremely important social structure that has received a lot of attention in literature as a driver of poverty in Pakistan, its utility as a tool of analysis at the level of a village is extremely limited. While there are some cases where ethnicity forms the broadest social cut through the fabric of a village, there are far more potent dynamics at play, which have a stronger causative link with poverty and social exclusion within these rural communities, that do not show up in a national level analysis. Similarly, religion is an extremely important determinant of both social structures and hierarchies and has, again, received a lot of attention in the literature. However, once again while it informs village-level work in some regions, it is unable to explain hierarchies and exclusion that exist in religiously homogenous villages.

At the village level then, given that much more subtle processes of social ordering are at play, what is required is a micro-level analysis that unpacks and analyses the concepts of community and social networks as they apply in rural Pakistan. This is exactly what this paper undertakes by first providing a snapshot of rural village communities and then undertaking an analysis of the processes of power and subordination that create and maintain poverty.

2.1 The Connection between Social Structures and Poverty

The concept of social exclusion is central to the link between social structures and poverty. The term is difficult to define and various definitions abound, but all seem to agree on some basic tenets:

(i)   Social exclusion describes a multidimensional disadvantage that includes deprivations of political, economic, and social opportunities

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4   Prendergast, C., and J. D. Knottnerus. 1994. Recent Developments in the Theory of Social Structures: Introduction and Overview. In *Current Perspectives* in *Social Theory.* Supplement 1, edited by C. Prendergast and J. D. Knottnerus. UK: Jai Press Incorporated. p. 4.
5   Redfield, R. 1961. *The Little Community: Peasant Society and Culture.* Illinois: University of Chicago Press.

and rights;

(ii) it is closely associated with social inequality that results from certain deprivations, such as employment, education, and healthcare (and is therefore self-reinforcing);

(iii) there is a high correlation between social exclusion and poverty;

(iv) social exclusion occurs because of factors beyond a person's or household's control, such as color, ethnicity, clan, caste, or religion;

(v) it is a relative and not absolute concept;

(vi) it concerns notions of agency and is a concept imposed by certain entities on others; and

(vii) it can be a cross-generational problem and is not specific to a family at any particular time only.

Percy-Smith (2000)[6] defines seven "dimensions" of social exclusion: (i) economic (e.g., long-term unemployment, workless households, and income poverty); (ii) social (e.g., homelessness, crime, and disaffected youth); (iii) political (e.g., disempowerment, lack of political rights, and alienation from or lack of confidence in political processes); (iv) neighborhood (e.g., decaying housing stock and environmental degradation); (v) individual (e.g., mental and physical ill health, and educational underachievement); (vi) spatial (e.g., concentration or marginalization of vulnerable groups); and (vii) group (the concentration of the above characteristics in particular groups, e.g., the disabled, elderly, or ethnic minorities).

The University of Oxford identifies "deprivation factors" that can lead to social exclusion in the following list: "income deprivation, employment deprivation, health deprivation and disability, education, training and skills deprivation, housing deprivation, geographic access to services, crime and physical environment."[7]

Both these lists are extremely instructive for the analysis presented in this paper, and it uses them to identify the extent of exclusion in each village. It does this at two levels: (i) it asks whether there are socially excluded groups within each village, and (ii) it asks whether entire villages can be considered excluded as a whole. In order to do this, this paper uses a modified list of deprivation and social exclusion indicators in Section 4 to examine the situation in each village and in the main groups within these villages.

This focus on social exclusion is important because, along with the inherent social inequality it implies, it forms the central link between social structures and poverty. Essentially, the reasoning that this paper follows is that social structures create certain divisions and hierarchies that can be based both on wealth and social status, such as the hierarchies based on religion, color, caste, tribe, residential location, family, and *biraderi* (clan). These hierarchies and inequalities create social stratification that is then maintained through specific practices and informal institutions, which limit the access of certain groups to livelihood options, social services, and political empowerment. This lack of access creates social exclusion, which recreates itself within the community and village, and is usually expressed as an integral part of the social structure itself—as part of culture and tradition itself. Therefore, in trying to elicit responses to why certain groups are excluded within villages, it is not unusual to be told, "because this is how things are here—it is our way".

Economic relations, especially the relations of economic dependence of one group on another, are central to this analysis, since they mediates the ability of certain groups to become upwardly mobile through changing circumstances. Economic control translates very easily into political control of the village community

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6   Percy-Smith, J., ed. 2000. *Policy responses to social exclusion: towards inclusion?* Open University Press. Available: www.mla.gov.uk/documents/social-inc05.doc

7   Available: www.europace.org/s2net/docs/wp6/DiscussiononSocialinclusion.doc

and can, therefore, allow richer groups to control and regulate access of poorer groups to services provided by the state. More specifically, the economic dependence story also allows us to understand how women are usually the most socially excluded group within any community, even richer ones.

Essentially, the paper examines the noneconomic and nonpolitical factors that keep people in rural communities poor. The analysis will start by defining the visible inequality within the communities (Section 3), link this to restricted access to certain resources, and consider the type of social exclusion created (Section 4), which will then allow a comment on the power dynamics and consequent situation of poverty within the village (Sections 5 and 6). The analysis recognizes the fact that, given the approach of viewing social structures as social relations and institutions that are the result of dynamic processes and various external stimuli, the study of social structures becomes central to state policy and actions aimed at reducing poverty. However, this paper does not make recommendations for state actions that could mitigate the impact of social exclusion and reduce social and economic inequality, leaves those instead for the final report.

2.2 Kinship as a Traditional Social System

If there is to be any way of generalizing across Pakistan's diverse social structures, the most instructive is the analysis provided by Hamza Alavi (1971), who pointed out that, "the pivotal institution in the "traditional" social structure of Pakistan (...) is (...) the kinship system." [8]

Kinship describes a social structure that is collective in nature but whose fundamental unit remains individual, with the family forming the basis for the creation of any extended kinship structures (Malinowski 1930).[9] At a basic level, the role of the family is one of procreation governed by the rules of kinship, such as those governing patrilineal or matrilineal descent. Furthermore, it is also the family that acts as the first and fundamental channel for socializing and training individuals to understand the wider rules governing society. However, family and kinship structures cannot be equated, or be said to perform similar roles (footnote 9, p. 28). Kinship includes legal, economic, and ceremonial functions, and cannot be defined in purely genealogical or biological terms. While the rules governing membership within a kin group are often determined by factors such as marriage or descent, kin networks also incorporate a wide range of cultural practices, most commonly observed in the various rituals and ceremonies that serve to reinforce kin solidarity (footnote 9, p. 25).

Nevertheless, kinship is most commonly defined in terms of descent, with the rules of membership and interaction often being linked to rules governing exogamy and endogamy (footnote 8, p. 115). In addition to notions of common male ancestry and, hence, descent (Lefebvre 1999),[10] structured kinship is based on the amount of control exerted by men over women in terms of marriage (Alavi 2001).[11] Bearing in mind the fact that nearly all kinship systems are based upon notions of patrilineal descent, with even polyandrous societies placing importance on the identification of fathers in order to prevent children from being subjected to social ostracism, (footnote 9, p. 24), control over women and marriage logically serves to perpetuate systems that rest upon notions of patrilineal descent. It is for this reason that extended kin networks place an almost legalistic emphasis on the role of descent from the father.

In fact, the process of contracting marriages serves to differentiate between elementary and complex kinship systems, with elementary structures being extremely rule-governed in questions of marriage, and complex ones leaving

8   Alavi, H. 1971. The Politics of Dependence: A Village in West Punjab. *South Asian Review* 4 (2): 111–128. See p. 114.
9   Malinowski, B. 1930. 17. Kinship. *Man* (30): 19–29. See p. 23.
10   Lefebvre, A. 1999. *Kinship, Honour, and Money in Rural Pakistan: Subsistence Economy and the Effect of Internal Migration.* Surrey: Curzon Press. See p. 45.
11   Alavi, H. 2001. The Two Biradiris: Kinship in Rural West Punjab. In *Muslim Communities of South Asia: Culture, Society and Power.* 3rd edition edited by T. N. Madan. New Delhi: Manohar. See p. 66.

spouse selection to economic and psychological factors that do not necessarily become subjected to set rules (Levi-Strauss, as quoted in Alavi 2001, p. 68 [footnote 11]). While complex kinship structures are actually characteristic of weakening kin networks, rule-governed kinship structures generally assume two major forms, namely (i) those that function on purely exogamous principles, and (ii) those that are endogamous in nature (footnote 11, p. 70–72). Within exogamous kin networks, the circulation of women is controlled through a process of reciprocal exchange, whose rationale is that "by forbidding access to women from within their own kin-group, men make available to themselves a greater number of women from within the system itself" (footnote 11, p. 70–72). Interestingly, endogamous systems work on a principle of appropriation, whereby women from within a kin group are deemed acceptable while those from outside are foregone. Kinship groups based on exogamy and endogamy exist as binary opposites, and kinship structures rarely incorporate elements of both (footnote 11, p. 70–72). Hence, within an exogamous kinship system, men within a subclan can marry women from other subclans within the tribe, while in an endogamous system, the opposite would be true.

Within Muslim societies, it is largely recognized that kinship structures assume the form of endogamous units, with patrilineal parallel cousin marriage (marrying one's father's brother's daughter) forming the basis for the creation of kin networks (footnote 11, p. 25-26). In fact, Alavi (2001) uses this to contrast the Hindu caste system with the caste system identified in Muslim groups in Pakistan. Whereas the former is characterized by the rules of exogamy highlighted above, *biraderi*-ism (clanship) in Pakistan is based on "lineage endogamy" within which specifically defined kin groups, linked through descent, form endogamous parts of larger kin structures (footnote 8, p. 116), with "notions such as blood purity also playing a tremendous role in defining the boundaries of the group" (footnote 10, p. 46).

Another very important feature of kinship networks is that they assume a corporate structure that performs political and economic functions (footnote 8, p. 117). This plays out most importantly in evolving specific patterns of authority and leadership that convert individual behavior and choices into collective ones. Leadership of these kinship groups is characterized by the vesting of authority in the hands of a head selected on the basis of virtues prized by the kin network, such as the ability to effectively participate in the business of the kin group (footnote 8, p. 117). The submission to traditional authority, often reinforced by the role played by the group's leadership in making marriage decisions (footnote 10, p. 46) and the social ostracism resulting from failure to adhere to any decisions made (Wakil 1970, p. 704),[12] ensures that the network operates as a corporate collectivity. This collectivization can also mediate access to social services and livelihood opportunities, while also incorporating economic exchanges and support mechanisms between kin members, an example of which is the ritual exchange of gifts at ceremonies such as marriages (footnote 11, p. 46–47; and footnote 10). While this reciprocal exchange of gifts serves to strengthen ties between different members of a kin group, it also serves as a social support system of sorts, providing material help to disadvantaged group members in times of need.

It is within such a social structure that other, more specific types of social ordering are analyzed in the various villages, such as biraderis, *zaats* (endogamous kinship group), and tribes. However, the main contention of this analysis is that, besides the more obvious social divisions provided by structures such as ethnicity and religion, these are essentially variations encompassed within the kinship system, and that they all adhere quite closely to the basic rules set forth by the rules governing the kinship group.

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12   Wakil, P. A. 1970. Explorations into the Kin-Networks of the Punjabi Society: A Preliminary Statement. *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 32 (4): 700–707.

3 Social Structures in the Census Villages

This section lays out the social structure of each of the seven villages sampled for this study, but without providing a detailed discussion or analysis. Many of the social structural issues that are mentioned here are taken up later in the paper, while most of the economic and political issues are discussed in Gazdar (2007) and Cheema (2007) (footnotes 2 and 3, respectively).

The seven districts visited included:

(i)   Upper Dir (North West Frontier Province [NWFP]);

(ii) Mardan (NWFP);

(iii) Chakwal (northern Punjab);

(iv) Toba Tek Singh (central Punjab);

(v) Muzaffargarh (southern Punjab);

(vi) Sanghar (central Sindh); and

(vii) Thatta (coastal, southern Sindh).

3.1 Upper Dir

Dir was by far the most anomalous district surveyed because the level of land inequality was relatively low compared to the other six districts. This was further reinforced by communal ownership of forests and pastures, leading to a social structure that was relatively more equal and which had led to stronger social capital than was witnessed in any other district. However, whereas land does not form the basis of social stratification within the Pukhtoon groups that inhabit this area, it does form the most basic level of ethnic segregation between the agriculturalist Pukhtoons and the pastoralist Gujjars.

The local way of describing Pukhtoon ethnicity is by pointing out that a Pukhtoon owns land while a Gujjar does not, although key respondents were quick to point out that, in the lower, more accessible areas of Dir, economic wealth and remittance income has allowed Gujjars to acquire land. Over the years, however, this traditional ethnic division and social hierarchy, which places a Pukhtoon much higher than a Gujjar, has been reduced to a great extent in the entire union council by the fact that ,in the revolt against the last Nawab of Dir, in the 1960s, the Gujjars had supported the Pukhtoons, and were, therefore, now referred to as "brothers and equals." This is an interesting example of the fact that social structures are not static entities, and are, instead, susceptible to change. Nevertheless, even now, a Pukhtoon will never sell milk because it would make him look too much like a Gujjar.

Besides this ethnic division, class divisions based on land ownership, remittance income, and proximity to a main road also exist to some extent, but wealth does not directly translate into any overt loss or gain of status. Instead, social status is based on attributes that are held to be socially desirable. Hence, age (translated to mean "wisdom"), piety, education, a sense of fairness, and the ability to protect a tribe's honor form the primary criteria upon which an individual can gain influence and social power. While an influential person might also be economically powerful, the acquisition of wealth is not necessarily accompanied by a commensurate rise in social stature.

Within the Pukhtoons, society is divided along tribal lines and then within each tribe, along the lines of kinship groups that share common ancestry—the patrilineal segmented family, locally called a *tul*. The village in Dir has four tuls, each of whom started out with an equal amount of land that has fragmented through inheritance over time, and each of whom is residentially segregated from the others. Each of these kinship groups has a leader selected on the basis of the criteria listed above. Bearing in mind the relatively low levels of inequality in Dir, what we see is that, in any given village, it is impossible to identify one overwhelmingly influential person. It is for this reason that dispute resolution of almost any sort invariably involves the formation of a *jirgah*

(tribal council), which essentially entails a process in which the conflicting parties select men of high social standing to form a council of sorts that then passes judgments that are binding. Jirgahs can be held within a specific kinship group, and can also be held between different kinship groups by including representatives from both sides.

Another division, in some cases even within the same kinship group, is based on political party support and political competition between the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) and the Jama'at-e-Islami. Based on the social structure described above, voting remains largely independent and is party-based, with influential members of the village playing an advisory role, at best. Indeed, there were no reported instances of coercion being used to gain economic or political support and, instead, voting seemed to be a lot more dependant on whether or not a particular candidate or his party had ever done anything for the uplift of the village.

Kinship groups in Dir, however, are not solid structures; loyalties, solidarity, and animosity can all exist within the same clan at different times. This is based on the concept of *tarbur*, which literally refers to the patri-lateral parallel cousin, who is both one's most important ally and bitterest rival. The close relation provides the basis for mutual support and cousins are natural allies against any external threat, but in the absence of that, rivalry over the common grandfather's land provides the basis for bitter, often very violent, conflict. Individuality is highly valued, in that all sons are expected to take up separate residence upon marriage, but strictly within the neighborhood. Land is also inherited at this point. This need to remain financially independent while being dependent on land within the same limited neighborhood as the tarburs creates a bitter rivalry.

Sale of land is also restricted to brothers and first cousins as the first-choice buyers, and only in extreme circumstances can it be sold to external parties. This means that upward mobility through land acquisition is also limited, and extra land can be acquired only by challenging brothers (who are the fathers of future tarburs) or the tarbur. According to Lindholm (1996), the existence of tarbur rivalry and the formation of blocs based on this principle usually leads to strong support for two opposing political parties within the same kinship group,[13] a principle witnessed in Dir.

The village in Dir and other such relatively remote areas[14] remain an anomaly, in that, while violence within and between clans is extremely high, with three incidents reported just during the fieldwork period, there is also a concerted effort to maintain a high level of social equality. Dowry payments during weddings are fixed at a level that can be afforded by all and that are adhered to by the whole village. Royalty from forests are distributed not just within the village that owns that area but are also distributed to other villages and to the Gujjars to maintain equality. As far as community cooperation is concerned, there was variation within tuls. All community groups loan money to each other in times of need and make sure that no one goes hungry. On the other hand, while some tuls admitted to *ashar*—harvesting each other's land—and building each other's homes, others insisted that such incidents of reciprocal labor disappeared when "paper money" replaced the traditional barter system. Now, labor is hired for these tasks if required but this comes from the poorer members of the same tul or family and not from outside the village.

Bearing in mind the patrilineal nature of descent within the tribes of Dir, the position of women is one of extreme subordination, with religion and custom combining to ensure a general state of economic, political, and social disempowerment. As a general rule, women do not inherit property or land. The only exception to this rule is with widows who, nonetheless, do not control any of the land they might inherit from their deceased husbands. Instead, control passes to

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13   Lindholm, C. 1996. *Frontier Perspectives: Essays in Comparative Anthropology*. Karachi: Oxford University Press.
14   It is important to flag the issue of access because the situation in the more accessible region of Lower Dir is very different.

their sons or other male relatives, leaving widows dependant on their husbands' families. When girls get married, they receive dowries from their parents, although the items included in dowries are generally intended for domestic use and are not of significant value. Women also receive livestock from their own family at the time of marriage or during later visits, and the ownership for this remains with them if they are nonincome-generating. Any decision to sell such livestock cannot be taken without the permission of the woman's husband, although the money from the sale is rightfully hers. At the time of marriage, the groom gives some money to the parents of the girl; this amount is called "*mahar*" and part of it is used to pay for the cost of the wedding. The Islamic *haq meher* is largely nonexistent, although there were some references to it having been given in rare cases. Marriages take place within the tribe, although they can be contracted outside the village and, in some cases, even outside the tribe to people known to the family. All such decisions are made by men, and even the future mothers-in-law have no say in choosing their children's spouses. In fact, women were quick to ask, "If we had any decision-making power, would we not have sent our daughters to school?"

The mobility of women is extremely restricted and they can travel in groups only within the village. In any trip outside the village or even down to the main road *mohallahs* (neighborhoods), they are invariably accompanied by men and must observe strict purdah. The market is especially considered off-limits to women and men shop for all supplies, including women's clothes and accessories. Interestingly though, women travel great distances in groups to collect firewood, which is completely their responsibility, and very basic purdah is observed during these trips. Women do not possess identity cards and have never voted. In fact, the perception among women was that voting was a strictly male activity and not something that women did anywhere. The men refused to allow their women to vote on the grounds of religion and culture, and the fact that women would be expected to visit a public space.

The custom of *swaara* also exists, which is the practice of giving women in marriage to rival families to settle feuds, especially in murder cases. The basic idea behind this is that, once two families are related through such a marriage, no further retaliation can take place. These women are looked down upon and used as domestic labor by their new families; their husbands almost always remarry and they are completely discriminated against in every way. Due to their excessively low status within the family and society, many have committed suicide in this area.

While the social structure of this village is characterized by various types of divisions and an extremely high level of violence, there is no evident social hierarchy that allows certain groups access to social services while marginalizing others. Social exclusion within communities is low, although it is high for the village and region as a whole. While there was a deep sense of being poor, there was no real sense of social inequality within the village, other than the deep-rooted gender inequality.

3.2 Mardan

Ethnographers of Pukhtoon culture and society have claimed that it has a basic tendency towards the maintenance of equality and individualism, which is connected closely to the maintenance of a social order that is not characterized by the economic dependence of one group on any other (footnote 13). Such ethnographic studies become redundant when one moves out of the mountainous north to the agricultural heart of NWFP where society, although still characterized by kinship groups as the main form of social organization, is highly unequal. This inequality is based largely on land ownership.

While individual landholdings in Mardan are small (on average about 30 acres for a large landowner) and do not compare in size to those found in Punjab and Sindh, the difference between those with land and those without is sufficiently pronounced to create a considerable amount of social stratification. Hence, the identi-

fied village head was also the largest resident landowner or, more specifically, the eldest brother of the largest landowning family. This trend recurred in other villages of the district as well. In nearly all the areas visited, the vast majority of villagers were tenants (*zamindars*)[15] on the lands of these landowners (*khans*). Basically, there is a very high dependence of the entire village on one landowning family. Although, as in Dir, respondents claimed that social influence was not necessarily determined by wealth or land, and personal qualities were often cited as the main reason people were accorded social status, the correlation between social status and economic wealth was very high. In fact, village headmanship (*naik*) is inherited, since it is connected to landownership.

As in Dir, the structure of society in Mardan is based on tribes and kinship groups, with entire villages making up one kinship group with a common ancestry. The most obvious societal division is once again ethnic, that is, the difference between Pukhtoons and the nomadic Gujjars who visit from the mountains during the winter months and go back during the summers. Large landowning families construct special quarters for these nomads, in return for which the Gujjars supply milk, fertilizer for the fields, and labor during harvests. Some Gujjars have chosen to settle permanently in the village, and form the lowest strata of society because of the ethnic difference.

Other than this division, social stratification, based primarily on landownership, defines the social structure of this village. Social status is determined by landownership and the ability to maintain a lack of economic dependence on others, which is believed possible only through the ownership of land, although there were many cases of landowners who were unable to remain financially independent because of land fragmentation. Nevertheless, the social influence that comes with being a landowner, a khan, as opposed to a tenant, is significant. Therefore, in the analysis of social structures in Mardan, class-based stratification comes to assume considerable importance. While a high level of exogamy is practiced by the village, with marriages into other Pukhtoon tribes being usual practice (although ethnic endogamy is maintained), no marriages are allowed between the family of a khan and that of a zamindar. This is all the more striking when one considers the fact that these villages are made up of extended families that share common ancestry, and that most tenants are directly related to their khan.

These familial connections do not, however, mitigate the impact of oppression and exploitation. Economic dependence was observed to be severe, and based primarily on the fact that the khans owned all the land of the village, including homestead land, and allowed people to reside on these lands rent-free. In return they claim and expect *begaar*, which is the local term for free labor, and which is used and exploited in all sorts of ways. The general response in the village was that begaar could be demanded at any time of the day, in any form, and that a refusal of any sort could lead to immediate eviction. Also, as in Dir, the expectation is that sons will take up separate residence upon marriage. However, the ability to do so is based entirely on the khan granting the family additional land. Based on this control over homestead land, perceived inequality and vulnerability is very high in the village and the dependence of tenants on their landlords is almost complete.

The power of the khan and class divisions are maintained further by the institution of the jirgah, which is just as strong here as it is in Dir, and its decisions are just as binding and final. However, the major difference between the two jirgahs is that, while in Dir the jirgah is fluid and its constitution determined by the case at hand, with no restriction on membership except sex and age, in Mardan, only a khan can be a member of a jirgah. In fact, the villagers saw this institution as yet another form of control since they were unable to bypass it to approach the police direct-

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15   Not to be confused with the use of this term in Punjab, where it means "landowner."

ly and were restricted to using the jirgah to settle any and all matters. Other forms of control and oppression include the fact that guns, being expensive, are owned only by khans, which led respondents to point out that a poor man would never pick a fight with a khan. Another form is the restriction of the right to cut firewood for cooking, even if the tree grows in the courtyard of the tenant's house, since all land and, therefore, all trees, belong to the khan. The withdrawal of this right can virtually starve the family and is, therefore, a very effective way for the khan to maintain control of his tenants and agricultural servants. Besides this, the khan does not settle labor accounts immediately, and instead, maintains books and accounts and settles only after a period of time, and if asked directly. This involves a certain level of begging and a power dynamic that maintains hierarchies within the social structure.

As in Dir, it is the immediate family (nuclear plus first-cousins) that forms the most readily available support system, and family members actively loan each other money in times of need. Because familial ties cut across class divisions, communities come together for weddings and funerals, and socialize with one another regularly. Beyond that, however, cooperation with one another within a community is low and the tradition of ashar is no longer common. Although community members offer one another help, it has to be paid for. However, there have been instances where people have offered free labor and help to families that they know cannot afford it otherwise.

Women in Mardan are rarely given control of any land, with this extending to widows as well. Even in the rare instances where ownership passes to a woman, it is almost immediately transferred to a male relative, such as a brother or son (in the case of a widow). Widows themselves are generally dependant on their brothers and fathers for support after the death of their husbands. They are also considered the poorest people in the village because (i) they do not have any direct source of income (dependence on a son is considered worse than that on a husband) and (ii) based

on their vulnerability, landlords exploit them more than others in their demands for begaar. Women do not contribute to family income and do not even work on the lands since this is considered inappropriate for Pukhtoon women. Gujjar women, however, form a major part of agricultural labor and are also more mobile around and outside the village. For Pukhtoon women, purdah is observed, and the mobility of women outside the village is strongly discouraged. All decision-making power rests with men and, while female voting is not barred or forbidden, it remains very low. One female explained, "We did not vote because no one asked us to."

Dowry and haq meher are both reportedly given at the time of marriage although the amount given, in the case of the former, is not fixed and is dependant on the wealth of the family concerned. In the case of the latter, when it is given, it never exceeds more than two to three *tolas* (about 23.4–35.1 g) of gold. The old tradition of bride price is no longer practiced and while the groom's family still pays for the wedding expenses, they do not transfer any money or gifts to the bride's family. This led many women to point out that, although they used to command some value before, they are now given away *khairaati* (as charity) and that this has had a negative effect on their status.

The social structure of the village in Mardan is characterized mainly by a high level of dependence of tenants and agricultural labor on the resident landlord and by the consequent inequality and control. In fact, despite Gujjars occupying the lowest rung of the social ladder, many Pukhtoon tenants thought that these nomads were luckier and better off than them because their constant movement allowed them a certain level of independence that the Pukhtoons could not enjoy. Having said this, it has to be pointed out that land fragmentation has made *khaani* (landownership) a financially unviable livelihood option, and that, out of each landowning family, only a few sons remain in the village while others have migrated and opted for education and jobs.

3.3 Chakwal

In the village surveyed in Chakwal, biraderi and caste emerged as the most important markers of identity, with differences in class being masked by allegiance to a particular kin group or family. As is the case in other parts of Punjab, social status and power was strongly linked to the position of a person's caste in the biraderi ranking system, and although there was no clear correlation between wealth, property, and biraderi, the differences in economic power between the landless and landed were sometimes concurrent with a commensurate difference in social power. Hence, while there was no single economically dominant biraderi, the village in Chakwal gave evidence to support the notion that biraderis that had been historically marginalized in rural Punjabi society (primarily the occupational, landless castes) were still at a disadvantage vis-à-vis those biraderis with greater access to land and political power.

Bearing in mind the importance of biraderi as a form of collective identity in Chakwal, it is not surprising to see that leadership within the surveyed village is largely based on biraderi divisions, with each biraderi having a leader of its own. What is interesting is that, although considerable importance and value is attached to the specific personal virtues and qualities of a leader, leadership could not be envisaged without potential leaders also possessing considerable economic and political clout. Hence, while respondents gave considerable social importance to traits such as piety and philanthropy, they admitted that it was more important for a candidate to be affiliated with political parties and to be strong enough to get things done. This was evident from the fact that many respondents identified the ability to be able to deal with the police effectively as being crucial to decisions on whom to respect as a leader. Similarly, it was found that, in the absence of material wealth, no man, no matter what his personal qualities might be, could ever hope to be taken seriously as a biraderi head or village influential.

What is interesting to note is that, despite the emphasis on biraderi in the surveyed villages, biraderi mobilization was found to be relatively low. There was no evidence of community support networks beyond the token help extended by biraderi members to one another at the time of harvest. Biraderis were said to come together at times of festival or grief, but there was almost no evidence of biraderi members coming together to aid one another financially or in times of economic hardship. At best, family level cooperation and support was found to be high, and wealthy families within the villages (regardless of biraderi) were cited as being primary sources of credit. There was also little formal *panchayat* (tribal council) activity, with most disputes and conflicts being resolved by local biraderi leaders, political activists, influential village members, and local level state functionaries. In the absence of a suitable settlement, people often approached the police with their problems. This weak, local conflict resolution system could explain the emphasis placed on choosing local leaders based on their ability to act as mediators between villagers and the police.

The situation of women in the surveyed villages was relatively better than in many of the other surveyed districts. The right of women to inherit property was recognized in all the villages, although this right did not necessarily translate into actual practice. More often than not, women inheriting land would immediately transfer it to their brothers or other male family members. Nonetheless, there was evidence that some women controlled, and even cultivated, their own land. Very strong caste and village endogamy is practiced in Chakwal. The dowry given in the villages surveyed ranged from household items to livestock (in the case of richer families; in instances where livestock was given in dowry, women were found to have some say in deciding whether or not to sell it. The right to receive haq meher was also recognized, and while the amount decided on tended to be negligible, it was generally paid in cases of divorce. Women were also comparatively more mobile in Chakwal than in any other district, even using public transport to visit

the city in small groups. This was not permissible in any other district surveyed. Women were also involved in agricultural labor on their families' lands and a relatively larger number of girls were enrolled in school than in other villages surveyed.

Inequality did exist in this village in Chakwal and was based on differential access to land and property combined with the inherent social hierarchy of biraderi-ism. Respondents pointed out that the people considered poorest were those without land. Nonetheless, this appeared to be connected only to a sense of social inequality because the perceived level of economic inequality was low. Much of this was based on the fact that many people were involved in public sector employment outside the village, especially in the army, and therefore their dependence on land as a primary means of survival was low. While the occupational biraderis were found to be more disadvantaged economically than the stronger landowning biraderis, this difference in economic power did not result in any overt social exclusion or discrimination in terms of education and employment opportunities. Nevertheless, the social aspects of a biraderi-based hierarchy were evident in cases of "lower" biraderis having changed their caste names. The contestation over caste names is an interesting aspect of Chakwal's social structure and will be discussed in detail later.

3.4 Toba Tek Singh

Social divisions based on biraderi become visible as soon as one enters Punjab, but nowhere is their impact as strong or pervasive as in central Punjab. This is obvious in the case of the village surveyed in Toba Tek Singh, where a de facto caste hierarchy means that a person's kinship affiliation is linked both to social power and economic status. While class was found to be important in that poverty cut across different biraderis and

social groups, and was defined in terms of access to property and economic opportunity, it was possible to discern a caste-class nexus whereby members of the dominant biraderi in the area could, on average, be expected to have a higher degree of access to land and political power. Similarly, those belonging to castes occupying a lower rank in the social hierarchy could be expected to have a commensurate level of economic and social disempowerment. This social hierarchy forms the central feature of the social structure of rural Toba Tek Singh and much of the rest of central Punjab; while not endorsed explicitly as a clear-cut ranking mechanism, the hierarchy is understood as part of the natural order of things.

The dominant social group at the top of the social hierarchy of the villages surveyed in Toba Tek Singh is the Araeen biraderi, while *kammis* (service caste) and Muslim Sheikhs (or Musallis)[16] were, not unexpectedly, found to be the most underprivileged and socially disempowered. Keeping in line with the fact that land is one of the main and "traditional"[17] boundary markers between different biraderis, landownership in Toba Tek Singh is very concentrated, with the Araeen biraderi, along with other landowning biraderis such as the Jatts, having almost exclusive ownership of the available agricultural land. Land inequality is hence extremely high, and the vast majority of kammis and Muslim Sheikhs are, therefore, extremely dependant on the landowning biraderis, either as tenants or agricultural laborers. In fact, there was limited evidence of bonded labor, in that there were some people serving on the resident landlords' lands because they were trying to pay off loans taken from their landlord a long time ago.

The dominance of the Araeen biraderi is, therefore, a combination of both the traditionally endorsed prestige of their social position and

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16 The term "Musalli" is considered derogatory and, like the *kammis* of Chakwal, the members of this group now refer to themselves as Muslim Sheikhs. However, since the connotation of "Musalli" has slowly carried forward to this term too, many Muslim Sheikhs are now choosing to call themselves a host of different names in various parts of central Punjab.

17 Keeping in mind the dynamic nature of social structures, many authors have a problem with the term "traditional," especially in the case of biraderis in the canal colony region, where many believe that the separation between biraderis was strengthened by the pattern of land settlement carried out under the British colonial government.

power, and their land-based economic power. This also hints at the fact that social power may have been less resilient over time, had it not been reinforced and endorsed by a significant economic dominance that held others in a position of economic subservience. The economic aspect of caste-based dominance is alive in Toba Tek Singh, and the Muslim Sheikhs are involved in a relationship of complete economic dependence with the Araeen. This was verified by the fact that, in nearly all the villages surveyed, people identified the village head as the person with the most economic power and political connections, and not simply because of his biraderi. Similarly, the replacement of village heads and socially influential people was also taken to be a function of economic power, with persons possessing the necessary amount of land and economic leverage being considered as logical replacements for existing leaders, although the village leaders in this case had inherited their position. Having said that, there was also evidence to suggest that, while social status is linked to economic power, disadvantaged members of a dominant biraderi are likely to have a higher social status than persons of a similar economic standing from a lower ranked biraderi. Therefore, while economic power is required to reinforce biraderi-based dominance, membership of a dominant biraderi can help mitigate some of the effects of being economically poor. As one respondent put it, "the poorest Jatt is still better off than the richest kammi." Another added, "Kammis and Jatts are both poor; the difference is that a kammi will beg but a Jatt will never beg."

Biraderi forms the main social division in these villages as well as the foundation of most village activity. Each biraderi is headed by a leader from within who negotiates the relations of the biraderi with the rest of the village. Since many biraderis inhabit each village, no respondent was able to identify a single leader with overwhelming political, economic, or social clout. However, those named as strong leaders possessed a proportionately greater amount of land and belonged to a dominant biraderi. No leaders were ever identified from any of the "lesser" biraderis, even in

instances where the members of these biraderis constituted a numerical majority. Hence, even members of disadvantaged biraderis would turn to the leaders of dominant biraderis for dispute resolution and economic support. This is primarily because these leaders are the major resident landlords, and thus key sources of credit and patronage for their tenants and laborers.

Political mobilization also occurs at the level of the biraderi and the process is negotiated by the biraderi leaders, who form the main link between potential candidates and voters. In the case of this village, there are two political factions that cut across biraderi divisions, and are, therefore, both led by Araeen leaders. It is interesting that, despite the fact that biraderis generally include elements of group solidarity, they can and do split along factional lines. Conflict resolution is also these leaders' domain, since it occurs through panchayats on which only they are represented, and the decisions of which are binding. Strong factionalism that cuts across biraderi lines and is led by dominant biraderi leaders has also resulted in weak social networks in the villages surveyed in Toba Tek Singh, with very little evidence of community self-provision and mutual help. Indeed, even within particular biraderis, solidarity appeared to be low, with individual members generally fending for themselves in times of crisis and need, although there was some evidence to suggest that the extended family could be relied on for support.

Although it was acknowledged in Toba Tek Singh that women had a religious right to inherit land, in reality they are rarely allowed to do so because it is believed to be against customary practice. In the few instances where female ownership of land was reported, control of this land lay inevitably in the hands of male relatives, such as husbands, brothers, or sons, although in the case of one biraderi leader, his sisters had retained rights to their inherited land.

Similarly, even though widows inherit land on the death of their husbands, this land is almost always given away to their brothers or

sons. At the time of marriage, dowry is generally given in the form of household items and, at most, jewelry. Land is never given in dowry, and the family of the groom does not generally give anything to the family of the bride. Haq meher is almost non-existent and few people are even aware of the concept. In the few cases where it reportedly existed, the amount agreed on was nominal. Only women of the lower biraderis engage in income-generating activity, working as agricultural labor and some also stitching garments at home. Despite this, however, decision making in nearly all aspects was found to be the domain of men. Purdah was observed in all the villages surveyed, and female mobility was found to be extremely low.

3.5 Muzaffargarh

In keeping with the social structures of Punjab, biraderi was an important marker of identity in Muzaffargarh as well, but unlike in Chakwal or Toba Tek Singh, biraderis here were residentially segregated from one another. Biraderis in Muzaffargarh were subject to a specific social hierarchy that determined the amount of social influence wielded by members of a particular community. Syeds and Jatts, for example, were at the top of the ranking system, while Mirasis and Katanay possessed the least social status and power. Caste once again mapped neatly onto economic power in this village, in that biraderis with higher social status also tended to own more land and be more economically powerful than their landless counterparts. Although, of course, it was possible for members of dominant biraderis to be landless as well, this landlessness did not translate into lower social status. In fact, the most interesting thing about this village was the fact that access to the open labor market had acted as an economic leveler between the Syeds and kammis.[18] Nevertheless, the equalizing economic power did not reduce the deference and respect that a kammi still had to publicly display towards a Syed.

Every biraderi in the village has its own leader, with leadership being determined by a combination of personal qualities, wealth, and political connections to local and regional level state functionaries and politicians. While large landowners from the dominant landowning castes inevitably command considerable respect and power because of their hold over tenants, cases such as that of the Syeds illustrate how even leaders with smaller landholdings can wield considerable social power because of their position within the caste ranking system. Hence, at the village level, even though each biraderi tends to have its own leader to fulfill social roles such as dispute resolution within the biraderi, larger village-level influential people can be identified on the basis of wealth, political influence, and social position.

While there was evidence to suggest that people came together at the biraderi level to help one another at times of harvest and celebration, poverty was often cited as the main reason for such collective action being much rarer than it could potentially be. Credit, therefore, was rarely obtained from any member of the biraderi, with shopkeepers and large landlords, for example, becoming the primary source for loans and financial assistance. In terms of dispute and conflict resolution, biraderi leaders held considerable importance, although, in the absence of any formal panchayats, most conflicts (especially those related to money, land, and water) were generally taken to the larger local landlords, with many tenants turning to their landlords for support in monetary disputes rather than to their biraderis.

Generally, women in the area were found to inherit land and property from their husbands and fathers. Inevitably, however, such inheritance was often willingly turned over to their brothers, sons, or other male members of the family, and any land given to a woman was controlled by the men in her family. Dowry was a common tradition and was given according to social status and ranking, with items given as dowry including beds, quilts and sheets, clothes, and jewelry. Sometimes, marriage conditions dictated that the

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18   This is covered in more detail in Gazdar (2007) (footnote 2).

grooms give money/land to the bride or her family. In the case of land, it usually remained under the groom's control. Haq meher was given in some cases, although in the case of divorce, most women were turned out empty-handed. Widows did inherit property, but the land remained in the control of their in-laws. In most cases, if they chose to move back to their parents, they would lose their inheritance.

Since this area falls within the cotton belt, women form a vital part of the workforce. Cotton-picking is done mostly by women and farm animals also remain under their care. In this area, women were relatively mobile because of their involvement in agriculture and farm activities, although this was limited to the women of the landless biraderis. Syed women never work in the field, observe strict purdah, and can never be seen out in the open or in a public place.

The clearest divide observed in the surveyed villages was between the landless and those who owned significant amounts of property, while the other important divide was the social difference between a Syed and a kammi. Despite this, Muzaffargarh forms a good transition point for moving from the study of social structures in Punjab to those in Sindh because various market-based economic changes have started to equalize inter-caste relations within the village to such an extent that the biraderi system is losing some of its inherent hierarchy and is becoming more of a corporate kinship group.

3.6 Sanghar

In rural Sindh, as in Punjab, the primary unit of identity appears to be biraderi. Loosely defined in terms of kinship and notions of a common descent, biraderi blocs in Sindh, like their counterparts in Punjab, form an important means through which people come to identify with one another.[19] What is noticeably different from Punjab, however, is the fact that there is no social

hierarchy assigning ranks to the different biraderi groups that exist. Hence, while biraderis in Punjab were historically ranked according to ownership of land and occupation, no such overt differentiation seems to exist in rural Sindh. On the surface, all biraderis appear to enjoy equal social status; a slight exception is the biraderis of the old ruling families of Sindh, the Mirs,[20] who are ranked higher than their traditional servants, the Khaskhelis, for example. There is also a subtle division between the indigenous Sammat Sindhis and migrant Baloch tribes.

Despite their apparent equality, however, segregation between different biraderi groups remains high and, much like their Punjabi counterparts, biraderi groups in Sindh are largely endogamous units. Hence, intermarriage between two different biraderis, while not overtly forbidden, is strongly discouraged. Indeed, the differences between biraderi groups can even be highlighted by the settlement patterns of villages, with different biraderis living in separate settlements, called *goths* (hamlets) which are often at considerable physical distance from one another. Even in larger settlements with several hundred households, there were clear distinctions between the different biraderi groups, with people from one biraderi rarely venturing into areas inhabited by other biraderis unless absolutely necessary.[21] Residential segregation, which plays an important part in providing a sense of identity, privacy, and autonomy even to relatively poor biraderis in a village, is also often cited as the primary reason for it being difficult to organize self-provision at the village level.

Biraderi, therefore, forms the most important means through which collective action and mobilization can be undertaken by a specific community. Within the biraderi, individual family units enjoy extremely high levels of solidarity, with such units often comprising a group of households inhabited by several brothers. Even on a wider scale, however, people from the same

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19   The terms *zaat* and *qaum* are also used locally to refer to these mostly endogamous kinship groups.
20   "Mir," like certain other biraderi names in this paper, is used as a pseudonym to preserve the anonymity of the villages surveyed.
21   The distinct neighborhoods or compounds known as *paro* (singular) are marked out by thorny bushes or boundary walls.

biraderi often come together at times of harvest and provide an important source of support and help at ceremonial occasions such as weddings and funerals. However, different biraderis show different levels of solidarity and cooperation, and while some dominant biraderis had self-provided services such as electricity poles and sanitation drains, others demonstrated very low levels of community support.

Each biraderi has a head, called a *wadero* (singular), whose position is often hereditary and who is chosen for personal attributes, such as his ability to manage the affairs of the biraderi and manage relations with other biraderis. Panchayats exist and are central to the process of conflict resolution. They are led by the *wadera* (plural) and are informal in nature but their judgments are binding. What must also be borne in mind, however, is that class plays a tremendous role in determining influence and power. While wadera are ostensibly chosen for their personal "qualities," many of them tend to be better off economically than the majority of the community. Hence, many biraderi heads are landowners with significant holdings, and with a large number of tenants and members of their own biraderi dependant on them for livelihood. The influence of these men also derives from the fact that they interact with larger, more influential landowners and with state functionaries on behalf of their biraderis, and their continued influence is, to a large extent, dependent on their ability to move the goth forward economically. In this sense, the wadero comes to be viewed as a support mechanism, and an important source of patronage for the disadvantaged members of his biraderis in times of need. Having said that, the social power of the biraderi head is far less than the economic power of the landowner. Hence, while biraderi heads form a channel through which members of a biraderi can potentially have many of their needs met, a tenant's landlord (even of a different biraderi) is much more likely to be approached to resolve issues of an economic or even political nature. More often than not, the role of the biraderi heads is restricted to resolving disputes of a more social and domestic nature.

In Sanghar, the position of women is also, to some extent, linked to their biraderi. While women do work in the fields and, more rarely, even engage in home-based income generating activity, such as stitching garments, there remain severe restrictions on their mobility, with purdah being enforced across the board. What is interesting, however, is that mobility for women within the confines of a particular biraderi settlement is relatively higher. Hence, while women are generally expected to travel in groups or with men when venturing outside the village, mobility within a biraderi settlement is high. In terms of ownership of property, however, and control over decision-making, the position of women remains subordinate. Little or no land is ever transferred to women (although they do work on it alongside men), and women remain economically dependant on their husbands or, in the case of widows, on other male members of their family.

Finally, when analyzing social structures in Sindh, it is necessary to analyze the position of the Hindu minority, the Bheels, who are the most marginalized segment of society. All Bheels are landless, and are considered the poorest group, as well as the most severely segregated. The notion of ritual pollution informs the relationship between the Muslim biraderis and the Bheel. Additionally, there is a strong sense of vulnerability among the Hindus themselves, they being reluctant to take any sort of action that could potentially antagonize their Muslim neighbors. However, the Bheels have robust and wide social networks with other Bheels living across and beyond the district. There is a well-established system of connections, as well as traditional forms of leadership within the group. A local political powerbroker, for example, approaches the Bheels only through their own local community leader, even if the purpose of the interaction is to threaten and bully the Bheels into voting for a candidate backed by their landlord.

3.7 Thatta

Within the villages surveyed in Thatta, land ownership was found to be highly unequal although this had little impact because (i) there is very little cultivable land in the area and (ii) the primary sources of livelihood for the majority of the population are fishing and manual labor. Consequently, social stratification in the villages, as a result of ownership of land or property, was found to be almost nonexistent, with the vast majority of the population living in almost equally high poverty and deprivation. At the same time, communities in the area were found to be extremely differentiated on the basis of biraderi and kinship, with different lineage groups identifying themselves as focal points for the creation of group identities. This was most clearly reflected once again in the existence of segregated goths inhabited by only one biraderi. A basic social hierarchy did, however, exist, and was based on the ability of a group to have transitioned to an alternative source of livelihood generation in a rapidly declining village economy. Therefore, the old agriculturalists had retained their position of social influence by transitioning to retail, while the prestige of the traditional Mallah biraderi, or fishing community, had increased as more and more biraderis turned to their occupation in the absence of agriculture.[22]

The strength of the biraderi as a form of identity was also reinforced by the fact that each biraderi within the village has a clearly identifiable wadero who wields considerable social and even political influence. While there was some evidence to suggest that wealth was a factor taken into account when determining who would lead a biraderi, this was not a major determinant of status simply because of the low inequality found in this village—even the richest members of a community live in conditions not too dissimilar to those of their less privileged kin. Hence, with wealth and property not forming the main criteria for the selection of a socially influential person, personal qualities and even education were found to be extremely socially desirable when selecting a leader. While many leaders of the communities surveyed were found to have inherited their positions, it was also made clear that, if the heir to a position of social influence were to be found wanting in terms of character or quality, he could be replaced by an individual closer to the ideal envisaged by the community.

The wadera were also identified as the main channel of conflict resolution, as there was no formal panchayat system, but the ability of a community head to actually enforce a decision was found to be relatively limited, simply because of the head's apparent lack of any significant economic clout. Indeed, in the event of these informal methods for dispute resolution failing, it was common for people to go to the police. Similarly, while biraderi was emphasized as an important marker of identity, this was not seen sufficient to guarantee a strong support network or mechanisms for social cooperation. There were no instances of self-provision and there was little evidence of mutual help at times of harvest and celebrations such as weddings. While one obvious reason for the lack of solidarity at the village level is the presence of different, segregated biraderis, the extreme poverty that exists within this village is also responsible for people's inability to assist one another in times of need.

The position of women in this village was found to be one of relatively high economic disempowerment. Land is too limited and invaluable to be inherited and used productively, and dowry is small because of the high level of poverty. The groom's family is not expected to give anything to the bride's family at the time of marriage. Haq meher is given, but the amount is negligible. Decisions within the household are the exclusive domain of men despite the fact that many women are involved in a home-based embroidering cottage industry. However, since the market for these embroidered clothes is limited to the village itself, this involvement in income-generating activities does not translate into a more powerful

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22   The details of this transition and its social impact are dealt with in Gazdar (2007) (footnote 2).

role within the family or within decision-making processes. The mobility of women is also limited to the extent where they did not vote in the 2005 elections because no polling station was set up on this village island.

There is no one group targeted for explicit social exclusion in this village in Thatta, primarily because the level of poverty is extremely high on the whole. With little development work having been carried out here by the state, access to government schools and health services, for example, is extremely limited for all.

4 Parameters of Social Exclusion

The social structures that govern rural life in Pakistan produce certain deprivations that lead to the creation and maintenance of social exclusion. This social exclusion is closely linked to social inequality and, as such, limits access of certain groups to livelihood options, social services, and political empowerment, and therefore leads to poverty. The list of deprivations on which this section bases its analysis are: (i) landlessness or lack of access to main resource; (ii) unemployment; (iii) income poverty; (iv) violence and crime; (v) political disempowerment; (vi) poor and segregated housing conditions; (vii) lack of healthcare; (viii) lack of education and educational facilities; and (ix) lack of other services, such as electricity, gas, sanitation, water, and roads. Gazdar (2007) provides detailed quantitative reporting of a number of aspects of deprivation and exclusion (footnote 2). The aim of this paper is to identify patterns across different forms of deprivation and link these to the description of social structures provided in Section 3.

Social exclusion is a relative concept, in that certain groups that are considered socially excluded as a whole can have within them smaller groups that are more socially excluded than others (based on occupation, religion, or recent migration). Within those excluded groups, certain members are more excluded (e.g., women or poorer group members), and even within those (such as poorer families), certain members are more excluded (women in poorer families). Exclusion can, therefore, be viewed as a nesting series of deprivations. This section looks at degrees of exclusion, starting from the level of entire villages that can be considered socially excluded, and working its way down to specific groups within these villages.

4.1 Social Exclusion of a Village

Access to social services provided by the state is the main indicator of whether or not a village is socially excluded. It is also the central determinant of the extent of progress and change that a village has undergone, or can be expected to experience. As indicated in Gazdar (2007), the provision of public canal irrigation systems has been the main force behind the better standard of living in the four high-productivity villages in Mardan, Toba Tek Singh, Muzaffargarh, and Sanghar (footnote 2). In fact, the most dramatic changes in the development of all these villages (and regions) were brought about by the construction of canal networks. It is thus possible to say that the resource endowment of a village economy at any given time is endogenous to public investment choices of the past.

Other more recent public investments, such as those in roads, electricity, and other physical or social infrastructure have played a similar role in the relative mobility of villages. Improved road access, for example, had led to significant reductions in transaction costs in the surveyed villages, and in a number of villages, improved road access had immediately resulted in closer market integration with nearby urban centers. Conspicuous developments included more of the landless poor seeking nonfarm work in towns, increased marketing of dairy products, and investments by local residents in public transport vehicles.

There were also cases of downward pressure on the economy of entire villages due to environmental degradation/public investment choices. The surveyed village in Upper Dir was in a forested area where logging had been an important source of income and employment for the local population. Unsustainable logging practices, however, had led to a ban on forestation and thus limited the livelihood options of the poor and nonpoor alike.

The most striking case of downward economic mobility affecting an entire village was that of the surveyed village in the Indus delta in Thatta. Until around 50 years ago, the village had been a prosperous community boasting not only robust agricultural output but also a thriving

commercial and nonfarm economy. The construction of large dams upstream had led to a steady decline in the availability of fresh water flows in the delta. The commissioning of every successive irrigation project upstream had dealt a direct blow to the delta economy. Shortages in the river system due to drought conditions from around 1999 onward had virtually annihilated crop farming. The poor and nonpoor alike had migrated out of the village in large numbers.

One major issue of social exclusion that applied to every single surveyed village was the lack of quality, affordable healthcare in close proximity. No village had a basic health unit and five out of seven villages were at great distance from a qualified doctor. There were major health-related issues in each village, ranging from hepatitis and tuberculosis to constant fevers and chest infections. The concern was especially great in the case of maternal healthcare and pregnancy-related complications, and was propounded by women's lack of mobility and inability to afford the costs of transport to major hospitals.

A similar concern was that of good-quality education, which ranged from the lack of good or functional schools in Sindh and southern Punjab, to the lack of proficient, state-appointed teachers. The state of education of girls was especially poor in most villages. In fact, the poor quality of education on offer in almost all the seven villages was a major reason for the low enrolment rate in each village, especially in the case of girls. The general feeling was that, since children were not getting a good education anyway, limited household funds were better spent elsewhere.

All the villages lacked gas connections, and two still had no electricity while another two were provided electricity privately through local hydroelectric projects and the purchase of a transformer from the Water and Power Development Authority. Sanitation systems existed in only three villages and there are no water schemes in any village. In fact, in the case of the village in Thatta, where seawater has encroached onto the receding Indus River, water comes from wells that are fast drying up.

Overall, no village is well provided, but some suffer more than others (Table 1). The most excluded village is the one in Thatta, where a collapsed village economy is combined with a complete lack of social services, followed closely by the villages in Sanghar and Muzaffargarh. In both these villages, although the economy is doing well, it has not meant greater access to social facilities and services. These issues and access to social services are further analyzed in Gazdar (2007) (footnote 2).

4.2 Socially Excluded Groups

As mentioned in Section 4.1, although it is clear that none of the surveyed villages were well-provided, some were better off than others on the whole. However, even within these villages, entire groups were socially excluded, so that village level inequality in almost every case, except in Dir and Thatta, was observed to be very high. Even in Dir, villages that were not directly on the main road had unequal access to services and were generally considered socially excluded by virtue of the location of their settlement. As one respondent put it, "our vote goes to anyone who can make it all the way up the mountain to our settlement. We have never received anything because no one can see us up here." Indeed, the remoteness and extremely difficult access route to the village are reflected in the literacy and provision figures of this settlement vis-à-vis the rest of the village, as well as in the level of access they have to public representatives (Table 2).

In terms of the social exclusion of specific groups, Mardan's is the most interesting case. As Gazdar (2007) points out, the surveyed village in Mardan is a high-productivity village with a comparatively high standard of living (footnote 2). However, as this paper has highlighted, the oppression of landless tenants and agricultural workers is also particularly high, with a wealth- and land-based class stratification determining social interaction between people.

This social hierarchy is reflected in the social exclusion of the landless, as reflected in

Table 2. Besides exclusion from social services such as sanitation and education, the landless in Mardan are excluded from the jirgah, and, therefore, from (i) being able to influence the process of conflict resolution, and (ii) other village-wide decisions that are made within the jirgah. This includes political decisions on support for specific candidates, as well as the deals that are negotiated with candidates in return for votes. Since all of this happens within a jirgah led only by khans, tenants and laborers are simply expected to accept a decision and act on it accordingly. In Mardan's case, therefore, class-based stratification has led to the complete marginalization of the landless, and formed the basis for their exclusion from decisions that affect their lives directly.

In the villages of Punjab, social exclusion was interesting because the pattern changed from one based on inaccessibility and class to one based on social stratification stemming from primordial identities. Biraderi is a form of kinship that resembles the Hindu system of occupational caste-based hierarchies quite closely, although with important differences. Essentially, in Punjab, there are three main types of biraderis, each with numerous subcastes of their own. These include (i) the landowning caste, (ii) the service or kammi castes, and (iii) the menial labor castes, such as the Musalli.[23] Because the primary distinction is based on land and occupation, the correlation between biraderi and economic wealth is very high, as is the consequent correlation between economic wealth and political influence.

It is, therefore, not difficult to see that social exclusion in the three surveyed villages in Punjab would be based first and foremost on the social hierarchy dictated by biraderi-ism, with kammis being more socially excluded than the landowning castes in a largely socially excluded village, and Musallis being more excluded than kammis.[24] Table 2 highlights these issues through a comparison of landowning and landless biraderis; the differences in each case are signifi-

cant, except in Muzaffargarh, which has undergone considerable transition due to increased access to the open labor market.

In the case of Punjab, social exclusion means more than deprivation of access to social services. It is a concept closely connected to dignity, status, and social stereotyping that is often derogatory to the lower biraderis. The derision associated with biraderi-based typecasting is evident from the fact that, in many parts of Punjab, kammi and Musalli biraderis have changed their names and either created new ones or attempted to take on the identity of a biraderi placed higher in the social order. For example, the most marginalized group found in the seven surveyed villages, the Musallis of the village in Toba Tek Singh, had become known as Muslim Sheikhs, until this name too had become associated with derision. The community has now adopted the name of an indigenous tribe. The extreme poverty and labor bondage it has experienced is almost completely a result of the community's social exclusion based on its social position. The landowning biraderis of the village took it for granted that Muslim Sheikhs would remain economically dependent and socially subservient.

The kammis too have made a similar effort in Punjab to reduce their association with a typecasting, occupation-related biraderi name. In Muzaffargarh, for example, the traditional weavers, or Paolis, had acquired some agricultural land over the years and insisted that they actually belonged to an indigenous cultivator community and had consequently adopted the name of this tribe. However, the landowning biraderis were quick to point out that they were Paolis and had no claim to their chosen name. On the other hand, Paoli families that lived within the old village and were dependent on the landowners for work and homesteads were less insistent on being called anything other than "Paoli." This is interesting because it suggests that a simple change in economic status does not suffice to accomplish a

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23   The Musalli are the equivalent of the Scheduled Castes in India, and there is still a significant notion of ritual pollution built into the relationship between the Musalli and other castes.
24   There is a further caste hierarchy even within the kammi biraderis, with a Lohar, for example, ranking much higher than a Faqir.

Table 1: Social Exclusion Indicators for Surveyed Villages

Deprivation	Indicator	Dir	Mardan	Chakwal	Toba Tek Singh
Poverty	Overall poverty ratio (poorest 20%)	3.2	3.2	2.6	10
Lack of state-provided healthcare in village	Distance to closest basic health unit (km)	7	3	15	9
Lack of access to good-quality healthcare	Distance to nearest qualified doctor (km)	7	5	30	16
Lack of education and educational facilities	No. and quality of govt. schools for boys	5 (good)	1(good)	1(good)	1(good)
	No. and quality of govt. schools for girls	2 (poor)	1(nonfunctional)	1(good)	1(good)
	Illiteracy: male (%)	24.75	25.06	23.62	19.23
	Illiteracy: female (%)	38.24	45.03	37.69	18.52
Lack of access to social services	Electricity (year of supply)	2000	1958		1992
	Gas connections provided?	No	No	No	No
	Sanitation drains provided?	No	No	Yes	Yes
	Sources of water	Springs, private water supply scheme	Pumps, manual and motor-driven	Manual pumps, wells	Pumps, manual and motor-driven
	Distance to paved road (km)				
	Nearest settlement	0	0	0	0
	Farthest settlement	2	0	2	0

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	Gas connections provided?	No	No	No	No
	Sanitation drains provided?	No	No	Yes	Yes
Lack of access to social services	Sources of water	Springs, private water supply scheme	Pumps, manual and motor-driven	Manual pumps, wells	Pumps, manual and motor-driven
	Distance to paved road (km)				
	Nearest settlement	0	0	0	0
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	Farthest settlement	2	0	2	0

new social standing. It must be accompanied by a change of identity by affecting a vertical move up the caste hierarchy. Similarly, the shoemaker caste, or Mochi biraderi, called themselves Jam Bhattis, while reed cutters, or Katanay, preferred the name Khokhar Bhatti.

However, nowhere was this contest stronger than in Chakwal, where the Mirasi biraderi—the traditional minstrels—had filed a civil suit in court demanding that they be recognized as Janjua Rajput (a traditional warrior-ruler-landowner caste). This group was strongly resentful even of the contrived honorific caste name "Qureshi" that suggested Meerasi origins, much like the new name "Muslim Sheikh" suggested Musalli origins. The main initiator of the name-change move was "GH," a man who had returned to the village after having served in the military. GH claimed to have found documentary proof that he and ten other households of his relatives were actually Janjua Rajputs who had, by mischief or misfortune, been recorded as Mirasi/Qureshi in the village record. These ten families had pursued the court case for several years, and invested thousands of rupees in it. Although they were hopeful of a positive outcome, it would actually do little to change the status quo in the village itself, where every name change claim by a respondent was quickly corrected by a member of a landowning biraderi sitting nearby.

Sindh is less complicated than Punjab, in that the main basis for social exclusion is religion. The Bheels and Kohlis of the entire province are placed at a lower level than the Muslims, but interestingly, unlike in the case of the kammis and Musallis of Punjab, there is far less social indignity associated with their identity. The Bheels, who are officially classified as Scheduled Caste Hindus, and whose economic and social status was comparable in many ways to the most marginalized groups in Punjab were, nevertheless, completely unabashed about their caste or kinship identity. In fact, even while they made clear that their poverty was closely associated with religious identity, the same identity was a source of pride for them. Nevertheless, it contributed strongly to making them feel vulnerable as a minute minority in a mainly Muslim society and country, and this allowed them to become a group that was more easily manipulated and exploited by the larger Muslim landlords as compared to other marginalized, Muslim groups.

Thatta was the other district where, as in Dir, it was difficult to pick a group that could be considered relatively more socially excluded than others. However, while in Dir this was because almost everyone owned some land and the village was doing well on the whole, in Thatta it was poverty itself that acted as a leveling force. Poverty in the Indus delta basin village was so severe, the economy in such disarray, and the village so completely socially excluded as a whole that any community within it had a hard time negotiating basic survival on a daily basis. Although a basic social hierarchy existed on the basis of unequal land distribution—with a Sammat tribe owning the most land—the lack of irrigation water had resulted in such a decline in agricultural productivity that landownership was no longer an important separator between groups. Another muted hierarchy existed on the basis of the Mallah being traditional fisherfolk, which meant that they were experts of an occupation that almost all other tribes had turned to in the absence of agriculture. However, this too did not translate into a significant exclusion of any one group.

Although the villages in Thatta and Muzaffargarh were the poorest and those in Chakwal and Mardan the richest, there exist in almost every village, whether rich or poor, certain groups that have unequal access to economic resources, political influence, and social dignity. This is because these groups are socially excluded on the basis of the social structures that exist within each village. In Dir, social exclusion is based on location; in Mardan, it is based on class and landownership; in Chakwal, Toba Tek Singh, and Muzaffargarh, it is based on biraderi-ism; and in Sanghar, on religion and biraderi. Table 2 uses various indicators to highlight the social exclusion of specific groups in each village and to quantify the discussion presented above. The groups in this

table are divided into "dominant" and "marginalized" in each case, and these classifications are based on *a priori* group status and social influence rather than current outcome conditions, in order to highlight the continuing significance and impact of traditional hierarchies.

4.3 Social Exclusion within a Group

One feature that is common across all these social structures and the social exclusion that they create and maintain, is that within any village and any group, whether it is dominant or socially excluded, women as a whole are far more socially excluded than the men of that group. This is a multifaceted exclusion and takes on various dimensions that are discussed in detail in Section 6. In brief, women in each village are excluded from decision-making at every level, starting from within the family, concerning issues such as the sale of assets and marriage of children, to village level, concerning conflict resolution and political support. No women are represented on the jirgah; in many villages, women do not vote, are not allowed to move around freely or without a male companion, and are dependent on the men of their family in almost every sense.

As far as services are concerned, women's access to healthcare is dependent on the availability and willingness of a male family member, and their access to good-quality education is far worse than that of the men in almost every village. In only two out of seven villages was the quality of the girls schools comparable to that of the boys school, while in four, the girls schools were either not functional or simply did not exist (Table 1). In some villages, widows, regardless of their caste or tribe, form the poorest and most vulnerable group of all, and fall below even traditionally marginalized groups.

Social exclusion is, of course, a relative concept, in that it may be asserted that the woman of a rich family is less socially excluded than a man from a poor, marginalized family. However, if one were to consider the right to political expression, the dignity of being counted as a citizen, or the basic right to mobility, a man from even the poorest family is able to cast a vote, own an identity card, and walk freely through his village. All three of these rights do not apply to a majority of the women surveyed, regardless of social group or village. Women in all the seven villages were not mobile outside their immediate mohallah and the homes of their closest relatives; a majority did not own an identity card and were, therefore, not listed or counted as citizens with unalienable rights; and in Dir, Mardan, and Thatta, along with significant numbers in the other four villages, they did not vote.

5 Social Hierarchy and Power Dynamics

The previous section has emphasized the high level of social exclusion found in the villages surveyed. While some villages are excluded as a whole, almost each village has a group that can be considered more socially excluded than others; and that, further, within these excluded groups, women are more excluded than men. This exclusion is based in large part on the social and economic inequality that exists within these villages and leads to certain power dynamics that maintain this inequality and, therefore, exclusion. This section examines the dynamics of these hierarchies in social relations and the impact that they have on maintaining poverty in rural areas. Some of the most profound impacts of these power relations are experienced by women and, therefore, to allow it a significant discussion, these dynamics are dealt with in a separate, subsequent section.

5.1 Community versus Village

One of the gravest mistakes of much policy and donor work is to believe that the boundaries of the "community" and village coincide. In reality, as Section 3 lays out, there are deep divisions within villages. Any given village is home to a number of communities, the relationship among which can range from tolerance to active animosity. Community cooperation and social networks usually exist within these smaller communities and do not apply to the village as a whole. The basis for the creation and persistence of the separation between these communities is different in each case and will be examined in this section, but what remains constant is that in no case is the village home to one large community characterized by close relations of mutual cooperation among all members.

In Dir, each village is made up of many little settlements, called mohallahs, with the survey village having as many as 14 distinct settlements. Although animosity, such as that between

tarburs, can exist even within a mohallah, the separation between mohallahs is very severe. Each mohallah has one or more *mashers* (elders) of its own who represent it on the jirgah, and women's mobility does not extend beyond the boundaries of their own mohallah. In fact, they visit other mohallahs only for social events such as weddings and funerals as part of a large group from their own settlement. On the other hand, the village is a more distinct settlement with concentrated residence in Mardan, but the separation between landowner, tenant, and agricultural worker is quite significant, despite familial relationship. So, while tenants help each other out in times of need, such help is rarely forthcoming in a non-transactional manner from their landowning cousins. Community, in this case, is strongly based on the concepts of class and occupation. The distinct feature of both these villages in NWFP is that they are made up largely of one tribe, with the Dir village inhabited mainly by the Pukhtoon 1[23] tribe and the Mardan village dominated by the Pukhtoon 2 tribe, although its proximity to an urban centre has meant that a few other tribes have also moved in over the years.

In the three districts of Punjab, that is, Chakwal, Toba Tek Singh, and Muzaffargarh, community is strongly based on biraderi. The concept of biraderi is closely related to that of the Hindu subcaste that divides society on the basis of occupational groups. Like the subcaste, there are landowning biarderis, service biraderis—within which entire groups are named after and closely associated with their traditional occupation, for example, *lohar* (blacksmith) or *julaha* (weavers)—and biraderis that perform the more menial tasks of village society, called Musallis. However, Alavi (2001) maintains that the similarity between the subcaste and biraderi ends here and that a better translation for the word "biraderi" is simply "lineage" (footnote 11). He bases this assertion on the fact that the subcaste and biraderi function as different social institutions and follow different rules of social interaction, and that the latter is governed by fewer ritualistic requirements than the

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25   Names of tribes have been changed to maintain their anonymity.

former, such as that of ritual pollution. They are also set apart by the rules of exogamy, which is strictly practiced within the Hindu caste system, and endogamy, which forms the central feature of the Muslim biraderi. In this sense, biraderi adheres quite closely to the discussion on kinship groups as set out in Section 2.

However, biraderi in Punjab is just as different from other kinship groups, such as the tribe, as it is from the subcaste, because it retains a very important feature of the latter—that of an inherent, inbuilt hierarchy that governs social interaction. Society is hierarchically ordered with the Syeds at the top, followed by the landowning castes, then by the service castes or kammis, and finally by the Musallis, who occupy the lowest rung of the social ladder. This ordering dictates much of social life in a Punjabi village and is most profound in the notions of community cooperation, where solidarity is strongest within a biraderi. Interestingly, despite its hierarchical ordering and land-based boundary markers, biraderi does not map neatly onto class, and, at least theoretically, one should be able to find rich and poor households within any given biraderi.

Another interesting feature of Punjabi villages vis-à-vis the concept of a community is that biraderis are not always residentially segregated. This is especially true of the *chaks* (villages) in the canal colony areas of central Punjab, and less so of the *mauzas* (revenue villages) of southern Punjab. The chaks are characterized by an extremely concentrated, mixed, residential pattern laid out as a grid. In the absence of obvious boundary markers provided by segregated residence in these villages, it is interesting that divisions, nevertheless, remain just as clearly marked and recognizable as those in segregated settlements. Social visits, especially those by women, are once again limited to people from within the same biraderi and even the fact of being neighbors does not provide enough of a reason to visit one another except on special social occasions. With other social structures such as ethnicity, religion, and mohallah missing, biraderi-ism becomes an especially strong and potent social institution.

The concept of community based on biraderis continues into Sindh but with one very important distinction—the inherent hierarchy is missing. In the villages of Sindh, such as those surveyed in Sanghar and Thatta, biraderis function more like tribes than like the biraderis of Punjab, in that they are horizontally ordered vis-à-vis one another rather than vertically ordered according to a hierarchical structure. However, residential segregation is very strong in Sindh, and each *deh* (revenue village) can have as many as 15 goths, most of which are inhabited by only one biraderi. Even within a goth that houses multiple biraderis, immediate neighbors always belong to the same biraderi. Based on this pattern, social networks between biraderis are extremely weak, as is the mobility of women outside their own biraderi and goth. A community in Sindh, therefore, adheres closely to the biraderi and the goth.

An additional feature that accounts for strong separation between various communities at the village level in Sindh is religion. While a level of separation between different Muslim sects is found in the villages of Punjab, and some villages also have small, separate Christian communities within their boundaries, religion-based community segregation was not observed. However, in Sindh, religion forms one of the most basic and strongest boundary markers, so that, while villages are split along biraderi lines, the first cut of segregation usually occurs between Muslim and Hindu communities. This is based to a large extent on visible differences in dress and rituals, and on a strong sense of being "different," especially given the difference in the way Muslim and Hindu groups define the rules of their kinship networks. While the former are endogamous and run the affairs and politics of their community accordingly—in that they are focused on an introspective analysis of their immediate environment—the latter are strictly exogamous, and this makes them more focused on the affairs and politics of a kinship group that is considered close but is usually geographically spread over three or four different districts. They do not visit one another's homes, although they do visit each other's *autak*

(male reception area) when important decisions are to be taken, and lead separate lives as separate communities even if they live in adjacent neighborhoods of the same goth.

5.2 Community, Hierarchy, and Power

The reason that it is important to clarify that villages are not made up of homogenous communities, but are in fact home to several communities that are usually involved in tense and animus relationships with one another, is to highlight the fact that villages form arenas within which social hierarchies and conflicts exist and are regularly played out. This leads to specific power dynamics that exclude certain communities and aggravate their poverty.

Kinship affiliations are an important determinant of change and stagnation in rural Pakistan. Individuals do not rise or fall on their own—their positions are closely linked to those of their immediate as well as extended families, so that the concept of community and its inherent social networks become central to the process. The support networks that sustain mobility are much wider than individual or even extended families. This is clear, for example, in the case of the Upper Dir fieldwork village from where migrant workers in Saudi Arabia sponsored successive generations of relatives and tribesmen. Groups of families with kinship relations tended to act collectively under the leadership of economic/political entrepreneurs in order to improve their status, or to empower themselves. Conversely, the lack of access to such social networks, or situations where an entire social network existed in uniformly oppressed conditions, were poverty traps.

There were several conspicuous cases in the surveyed villages of castes or kinship groups that were or had been trapped in poverty. The Muslim Sheikhs in the Toba Tek Singh village, the Bheels in Sanghar, and the Katanay in Muzaffargarh were numerically large groups in their respective villages and were universally accepted as being the poorest. To a great extent,

these groups defined the very notion of extreme poverty in their respective areas. The former two (the Muslim Sheikhs and Bheels) were also, arguably, mostly bonded laborers. Other groups that were poor and also socially marginalized, but who appeared to have greater upward mobility, included the Baloch in Toba Tek Singh, the Mirasis in Chakwal, the Khaskhelis in Sanghar, and various kammis such as the Paolis, Tarkhans, and Mochis in Muzaffargarh.

In each case, the poverty of these groups is closely connected to the social structure of the village, and to a specific type of resilient hierarchy that is produced and maintained within it. Although muted in Dir and Thatta—in the former because of a cultural emphasis on producing and maintaining equality, and in the latter as a fallout of a fast declining village economy—social hierarchy was visible and functional in the other five villages. It was particularly strong in the Punjab villages, where caste identity itself was an actively contested domain. As discussed in Section 4, the hierarchy in this case was so closely connected to the biraderi system of kinship, and resulted in such severe social exclusion and indignity, that there was a recurring contest over caste name and identity. In Mardan, social hierarchy was based on class-based social stratification and led to the highest observed level of oppression and exploitation, comparable only to the Muslim Sheikhs of Toba Tek Singh or the Bheels of Sanghar. Although the poor in both these villages are comparatively worse off in absolute terms, the oppression of the landless poor in Mardan appeared more severe and inexplicable because there were no visible social divisions between the oppressed and the oppressors, who were all from the same extended family in this case.

Interestingly, the case of Sanghar also bordered on being one of class-based inequality, barring of course the case of the Bheels. This was because biraderis here lay on a horizontal plane vis-à-vis one another, rather than on a vertical one, such as those in Punjab. This meant that any difference between the various migrant Baloch and indigenous Sammat tribes could not be attrib-

uted to the social identity of their kinship group, but was based instead on economic factors of landownership and tenancy rights. Similarly, hierarchy in Thatta was based on the ability of a biraderi to transition smoothly and successfully from one occupation to another and, in so doing, maintain a stable source of revenue. Therefore, while the traditional influence of the agriculturalist Sammat should have reduced after the decline of agriculture, their transition to retail had allowed them to maintain a position of social power. Although all these hierarchies emanated from different social structures—class in Mardan and Thatta, biraderi in the three villages in Punjab, and religion and class in Sanghar—their impact on perpetuating poverty was very similar.

Another very interesting relationship between poverty and inequality is that agricultural productivity and inequality appear to be inversely related at the village level. Although the relationship does not apply in each case, Table 3 below shows that Mardan, one of the richest villages, is also one of the most unequal, followed closely by the high-productivity village in Toba

ity rises from an inequitable control over agricultural land. It is possible to hypothesize then that, as land reduces in importance as an asset—for example in Dir and Thatta—or as people's singular dependence on it reduces—such as in Chakwal (public sector employment) and Muzaffargarh (open labor market access)—society tends towards greater equality. In areas where land and high agricultural productivity form the singular lynchpin of the village economy, inequality is high.

This finding highlights the fact that most of the high productivity in these villages benefits a specific and small group of people, and that the economic well being of the majority is affected disproportionately by this productivity. By the same logic, it is also possible to hypothesize that the inequality and hierarchy are resilient because they are jealously guarded and reproduced by those that benefit from the status quo. It becomes possible, for example, to understand why a kammi biraderi's claim to a new name would be immediately and publicly discredited by members of landowning biraderis during the fieldwork interviews.

Table 3: Poverty and Social Inequality in the Surveyed Villages

Item	Dir	Mardan	Chakwal	Toba Tek Singh	Muzaffargarh	Sanghar	Thatta
Agricultural productivity	Low	High	Low	High	High	High	Low
Overall poverty ratio (poorest 20%)	3.2	3.2	2.6	10.0	35.6	15.1	53.9
Social Inequality	More equal	Highly	Unequal	Highly unequal	Unequal	Highly unequal	More equal

Source: Authors' fieldwork.

Tek Singh, which also shows high inequality. On the other end of the spectrum, the village in Thatta, suffering extreme poverty, is also more equal than the others, while Dir, with low agricultural productivity also has low inequality. Essentially, high productivity and high inequality appear to be closely related. Much of the inequal-

The processes and institutions that govern political activity within these villages are another channel through which social inequality is maintained and reproduced. The first such informal institution is the jirgah of NWFP or the panchayat of Punjab, and the wadero of Sindh, the primary forum for conflict resolution in these villages. In Mardan, for example, only a landowning

khan can sit on a jirgah. This simple qualification takes on staggering implications when combined with the fact that no conflict is ever allowed to go beyond this institution, and that its decisions are binding. Furthermore, it is also the jirgah that negotiates votes between potential candidates and the entire village, and therefore, also decides the distribution of benefits that accrue from such deals. The majority landless citizens of this village in Mardan are, therefore, completely removed from political decision-making processes, and in many cases, from the benefits of patronage, besides of course being subjected to the consequences of judgments passed by the representatives of only one class. In this case, it becomes very easy to see how social structures would lead to the complete economic and political disenfranchisement of the majority, while also producing the institutions and mechanisms that maintain the poverty of certain groups.

The conflict resolution role of the panchayat continues into Punjab, although it becomes more fluid in its membership, and changes in composition to include representatives of the two parties involved in the conflict. However, what does not change is the fact that village leaders are always represented on these forums and most decisions are also deferred to them. Section 3 explained that, in the villages of both Punjab and Sindh, influential village members belong to dominant biraderis and are comparatively wealthier in both land and assets. Therefore, the role that the panchayat or wadero plays is not very different from the role played by the jirgah in NWFP. In fact, the resemblance becomes stronger in the case of political mobilization, when potential candidates simply contact the council of influential village members to negotiate the votes of the entire village. Once again, a handful of men decide and dictate the voting decisions of the majority. The example of Sanghar is extremely striking in this case, where entire biraderis of PPP voters were forced to vote for the Pakistan Muslim League through the withdrawal of tenancy rights one week before the 2005 local government elections. The village's influential members made it clear that the land would be returned only after the voting had ended and the results announced. The more socially excluded the group, the stronger the intimidation, as revealed in the case of the Bheels, who refused to stand up to any Muslim group because they said they felt too vulnerable in a Muslim majority society to assert their right to political self-determination.

Pakistan is famous for its dysfunctional political system, which is based on a clientelist model of governance. This analysis makes it clear that such a system of patron-client relationships is made possible in large part by social structures that exclude the majority of the village population from independent participation in the political decision-making process and make their political choices dependent on their economic dependence on socially dominant groups. In fact, given this situation, it is difficult to see how any of these groups can effectively challenge their position in the social hierarchy that is currently in existence. In fact, the literature also maintains that social networks and cooperation within economically and politically disenfranchised groups in a hierarchically ordered society are usually weak because their choices and decisions are dictated by other groups.

5.3 Socioeconomic Mobility of Individuals and Families

However, there are signs of change within these villages, and evidence to suggest that upward mobility is possible. If poverty reduction is, ultimately, about the breaking of poverty traps and the erosion of durable notions of social hierarchy, the routes people have tried to take to escape poverty need more careful consideration. The class-caste interlinkage is challenged in two distinctly different ways. The common factor is, of course, that individual or family mobility cannot be isolated from group identity. Social networks and social capital are crucial enough for economic mobility for there to be close association between individual and group mobility. The stories of BK (of the Mochi occupational caste) of

Muzaffargarh and GH (of the Mirasi caste) of Chakwal indicate that, even where the impetus comes from individual advancement (in both cases, public sector employment), the individual or family cannot really move ahead without taking at least part of their wider kinship group along with them. Differences in group behavior are, nevertheless, very instructive. While some poor kinship groups (e.g., in the Punjab villages) resort to escaping their caste identity, for others (the Bheels in Sanghar). that very identity is a channel of collective action and source of empowerment.

The standard account of individual and family mobility (both upward and downward) involves reference to endowments, economic opportunities, and unanticipated changes in circumstance. Economic opportunities might change due to general conditions of economic development and institutional change as well as individual or family-specific changes. Even if the initial distribution of endowments, including assets and other forms of capital, changes relatively slowly, there might be rapid changes in the circumstances of individuals and families through broader economic changes. Downward mobility and vulnerability to poverty are generally found to be strongly determined by adverse idiosyncratic as well as covariate shocks, and the ability of individuals and families to deal with these.

Instances of adverse shock documented in the fieldwork were in line with the findings of existing qualitative and quantitative analyses. A number of types of shocks were identified including (i) illness or death of a breadwinner, (ii) prolonged illness of a nonbreadwinner, (iii) loss of livestock due to disease or theft, (iv) conflict-related loss of savings and livelihoods, and (v) losses due to crime and rule of law breaches. While, as widely acknowledged in the literature, the decline into poverty was often causally linked to such contingencies, it was clear too that vulnerability to these contingencies was correlated in the first instance to initial poverty.

There were two ways in which the poverty-shock linkage worked in the documented cases. First, the poor had a higher probability of facing contingencies such as illness and early death, and, in some cases, even the danger of theft and rule of law violations. Second, those who were poor in the first instance were also less capable of coping with these contingencies when they did occur. Vulnerability to the types of adverse shocks listed here acted, therefore, like a poverty trap. Many of the cases of ill-health and early loss of life documented in the surveyed villages had their sources in the initial poverty of the household. Some diseases were closely related to bad nutrition and poor living conditions. Moreover, poor people suffered disproportionate consequences of health contingencies due to the relatively high cost of treatment.

These conditions were found across the fieldwork sites in the very different regions covered. The range of coping strategies found across these villages were also broadly similar. The breakup of the household was the extreme condition of coping failure after a particularly serious contingency. There were even cases where the physical survival of household members became a matter of doubt. The initial adverse shock (e.g., an early death) triggered a series of events leading ultimately to the early death of an additional family member. Other less extreme forms of household disintegration were more common, and these often reflected the prevailing socioeconomic conditions in the village. In the surveyed village in Toba Tek Singh, where landless laborers from a historically oppressed kinship group lived under conditions of dependence and bondage, the illness of a male breadwinner immediately resulted in a young son being separated from his family and placed as a house/farm servant for a landlord against a loan of a few thousand rupees. In this and in other villages, there were numerous instances of a widow returning (often to an inhospitable welcome) to her father's or brother's home after the death of her breadwinner husband.[26]

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26   Another common coping strategy was the lowering of social status. A powerful symbol of this process was that women of a stricken household started working outside the home, on other people's farms or in other homes.

Some of the individual and family routes for upward socioeconomic mobility were familiar ones, such as education, migration, and access to formal sector employment. Judicious and fortunate investment decisions—i.e., decisions that turned out ex post to have been profitable—also played an important part in a number of cases. Moreover, upward socioeconomic mobility was often linked closely with an individual's or family's political enterprise, i.e., quite often, the boundaries between economic and political entrepreneurship were not readily distinguishable. The diverse routes for individual and family mobility are illustrated below with reference to cases from the surveyed villages.

Formal employment in general and public sector employment in particular were perceived in the surveyed villages to be the most important sources of upward socioeconomic mobility. The village in Chakwal was a prime example of an otherwise poor area that had been transformed through access to public sector employment. Over a quarter of all households had at least one member currently in public sector employment, and many more households had a history of public sector employment. The village had well-functioning government schools of long standing, and parents were eager for their children to be educated in order to qualify for public sector jobs. This process had been underway for at least 5 decades. The fact that the contest over caste name was strongest in the village with the highest level of public sector employment hints at the transformative impact of such employment opportunities. By contrast, the surveyed village in Muzaffargarh had no history of government employment, and there were only three local men employed in formal sector jobs. Access to government jobs was seen in this village as a major potential source of economic advancement.

There had been upward mobility for individuals and families in the surveyed village in Upper Dir through the migration of laborers to Saudi Arabia. The socioeconomic position of families with workers abroad had undergone dramatic improvement. In the absence of foreign employment, the village economy, with its limited land resources and dwindling forests, would have been in danger of collapse. Migration had not only prevented economic ruin, it had made many people quite well off. The first person to emigrate was DK, who went to Saudi Arabia in 1975. He was known to be an enterprising man, and was helped by a relative from a neighboring village who was already in that country. DK, in turn, sponsored male members of his immediate and extended families. The process continued and took in ever increasing numbers of families. It was mediated through kinship and personal friendships. The village consisted of several distinct settlements corresponding with respective subclans. The remotest settlement, and one that also happened to be the most distant in kinship terms from DK's family, sent its first migrant in the late 1990s. The "trickle down" of migrant labor opportunities within one village, therefore, took over 2 decades.

There are also individual cases of upward mobility to be found in the fieldwork villages. MH (aged 40) of Muzaffargarh worked as a master mason and petty contractor. Much of his work was in big cities, such as Lahore, where he traveled with a team of workers drawn from his village and surrounding areas. MH belonged to the traditional caste of carpenters. His grandfather had managed to buy agricultural land and moved out of the main village. Although considered of "low status" by the landowners castes, carpenters had acquired a level of autonomy with their move outside the old village. The family had retained their traditional skills and become involved in the construction sector. MH used to work as a mason in Multan where, in 1998, he happened to work with a Lahore-based company. People in the Lahore-based firm liked his work and invited him to take up petty contracts on construction sites in Lahore. MH and his family were now relatively well-off, and his team of workers even included young men from the highest-ranking Syed biraderi.

BK (aged 55) had a small shoemaking shop inside the old village in Muzaffargarh. He

belonged to the traditional shoemaker caste considered to be of low status. BK and his family used to reside in the old village as *hamsayas* (nonowner residents) of the village owners. He saved some money and bought the *qabza* (occupancy) of a small shop from a Syed landlord. BK's family was the first among the cobbler kinship group to have their children educated. One son had done his Bachelor's degree in Multan and been recruited by the military. Another son had trained as a paramedic and applied for a government health worker job. In the meanwhile, he worked as a dispenser in the village. Around 3 years ago, BK had sold some livestock in order to buy 3 acres of cultivated area adjacent to the village. He had now moved his residence to his own plot of land outside the old village, was no longer a hamsaya, and referred to himself as a zamindar (landowner).

There were two strikingly similar stories of upward mobility in the surveyed villages in Sanghar and Mardan. SJ was a landless tenant from a nearby village who had moved to the surveyed village to take up share-tenancy for a local landlord around 40 years ago. He had owned around 100 goats and some buffalos in his original village, which he had sold in order to lease about 40 acres of land from a nonresident Syed landlord form the neighboring district. At the same time, he managed to get a loan from the Agricultural Development Bank of Pakistan to purchase a tractor—one of the first in the area. There is an anomaly in the area in that irrigated land is higher than the canal—SJ began to use his tractor engine not only for plowing but also to power a makeshift water-lift in order to water his leased area. This proved to be profitable. After about 6 or 7 years, SJ bought the land he had leased from the Syed. More land became available as a number of nonresident landowners (some of whom had acquired land through refugee claims) began to sell their land. SJ managed to buy several hundred acres from three such landowners. The last purchase was around 3 years ago. SJ and his family now own a cotton-ginning factory in the city, and are considered to be influential powerbrokers in local politics.

AM belonged to the tribal area of NWFP and came to the surveyed village in Mardan with his family and several other relatives around 70 years ago. They worked as landless tenants on the lands of an influential local landlord called KAM. In the early 1950s, KAM wanted to invest in an agro-processing unit and required cash. He sold some of his land; his holdings then were in several thousands of acres of land. At that time, around six people bought land from KAM locally, among which AM bought 3 acres. In the 1959 land reforms, KAM lost a lot of land in the area surrounding the surveyed village. His power declined and he sold more land. AM was among those who continued to purchase land until he had acquired around 250 acres. This was now divided among his sons and grandsons.

DS (aged 45) was from a landless share-tenant family in Sanghar. They had been tenants of a nonresident landlord, who had acquired land through refugee claims. DS became an active member of a political party in the 1980s. There was political and civil unrest in the area at the time, and nonresident landlords who had previously relied on the state machinery to assert their control over their land (and tenants) were considerably weakened. DS's landlord decided to sell his holdings and was negotiating with another large landlord. DS mobilized a number of other landless share-tenants and filed a case for land adjacent to the village to be sold to local landless residents. Besides the legal case, DS also lobbied politically for a sale favorable to landless families. His political party connections were helpful in this regard, and DS, as well as a number of other landless residents, were able to acquire land (between 10 and 20 acres each) through this struggle. DS was now a smallholder, and a person with local influence, both political and social.

The selected cases presented here highlight a diversity of routes taken by individuals and families for upward socioeconomic mobility. It is possible to identify some key patterns:

(i) Public sector employment is perceived as an important source of upward mobility. Access

to public sector employment opportunities, however, is conditioned by policy and the history of public investments in a particular area or community.

(ii) Education often leads to upward mobility precisely through the access it potentially provides to formal sector employment. The roles of education and public sector employment, therefore, are closely interlinked.

(iii) Labor market opportunities for individuals were often mediated through prior social networks.

(iv) Upward mobility does not necessarily mean structural change, and some of the poor who rise simply occupy positions of dominance previously held by others. The two landless tenants who had acquired substantial holdings (in Sanghar and Mardan, respectively) became powerful and, according to their tenants, oppressive, landlords themselves.

(v) Political entrepreneurship was a significant route to upward mobility.

Although these cases indicate that the resilience of social inequality does not forbid upward mobility, such cases are few and far between, while the majority of the village poor continue to live according to rules dictated by unequal social structures. This section has tried to emphasize the fact that social inequality and poverty are closely linked, as are economic power and political dominance. Control over economic resources is central to social dominance, especially control over land. Dir's relatively equal social structure is due in some measure to the fact that it was affected by the Federal Land Commission Acts of the 1970s, which not only transferred the ruling nawab's land to the people but also granted them homestead rights.

On the other hand, Mardan was not affected by these reforms, and land—both agricultural and homestead—remains concentrated in the hands of one family. This has led to high levels of oppression and exploitation. A comparison to the very similar village in Sanghar proves extremely striking, in that the landlord with 30 acres in Mardan enjoys much greater control over all his tenants and laborers than the landlord with almost 1,000 acres in Sanghar. This is based in large part on the fact that everyone in Sanghar was granted homestead rights in the 1970s, while the villagers of Mardan were not. In the few villages in Mardan where such rights were granted, the situation is markedly different. Besides this, the resource base of the village economy also appears to affect social structures, in that the social ordering of agricultural Mardan and Sanghar is more alike than the structures of the two Pukhtoon villages of Mardan and Dir, or the two Sindhi villages of Sanghar and Thatta.

6 Patriarchy

A social structure that cuts across all provincial and district boundaries, and that has perhaps proved to be the most resilient of all, is patriarchy. If one works according to Alavi's (2001) definition of the term kinship group (footnote 11), it is interesting to note that the entire social structure is based on and defined by the role of women and the control that men exercise over them. As mentioned in Section 2, kinship groups are defined first and foremost by their patterns of endogamy and exogamy, and by the notion of common male ancestry. The maintenance of a kinship group thus defined requires that all members submit to the rules governing marriage. In fact, Alavi (2001) holds that the kinship group is maintained through the exercise of male control over women and their marriage choices (footnote 11, p. 66). This is based on the fact that the kinship system is based on patrilineal descent, even in the case of polyandry, and therefore control over women and marriage logically serves to perpetuate the kin group. The submission of female will to male decision-making is, therefore, central to maintaining the particular identity of a kin group. It is not surprising then that, in a country where social structures are defined as kinship groups that base their identity on common male ancestry, patriarchal values are strong across the variation of kin groups found from NWFP to Sindh.

Not only is the role played by women central to the definition and identity of a kin group, it also helps define and clarify the concept of a community in rural Pakistan. It is certainly true that most social support networks are based on the "community caregiver" role that women play, but there is an additional connection here that needs to be highlighted. Put crudely, a community within a village is the area within which a woman is freely mobile. In most Pakistani villages, the boundaries of a community and the limits of a woman's mobility coincide. Women's mobility, therefore, acts as a boundary marker and this may explain why it is observed, enforced, and guarded so closely and diligently by men at all times. In Dir, a community is defined by a mohallah, and this is also the area within which a woman is mobile. She does not cross the boundary of the mohallah to socialize with the women of another mohallah unless accompanied by a man. In fact, such visits are usually restricted to major social occasions, such as weddings and funerals. In Mardan, on the other hand, the community in question is the entire village, in that it is essentially one large extended family. Women can, therefore, move from house to house within the village.

However, as noted earlier, class is also an important boundary marker in Mardan, even within the same extended family, and this is reflected in the mobility of women. As one respondent put it, "They are our cousins but we do not visit unless they have us called over to help out with something. The khans are different from us." In Punjab, where communities are defined by biraderi, the physical mobility of women within the village is less restricted because of mixed residence patterns. Women can move through the length and breadth of concentrated villages, but they do not freely visit the homes of other biraderis. Social visits are usually restricted to other households of the same biraderi, as are social networks and relations of support and cooperation. In Sindh, on the other hand, communities are formed by entire biraderis that live in separate goths. Consequently, women's mobility too is restricted to the goth of the biraderi, and all visits to other goths are on special occasions and supervised by male companions. This correlation between community boundaries and women's mobility is especially striking in the case of adjacent homes and goths, where families grow up next door to one another without developing social relationships. This dependent relationship between community and mobility makes perfect sense when viewed from the perspective of endogamous kinship groups that need to govern and maintain control over women's marriage decisions and their behavioral patterns in order to preserve and perpetuate the kin group.

It is interesting how these rules do not

apply to men, who socialize freely with one another, regardless of the divisions created by biraderi, tribe, goth, or mohallah. This happens primarily through the institution of the *hujra* in NWFP, the *baithak* or *dera* in Punjab, and the autak in Sindh. This is a meeting space within each village, usually at or adjacent to the residence of an influential village member, where men of different communities gather to discuss the affairs of the village. This space is also where the jirgah or panchayat convenes and where all political decisions are taken. Most importantly, it provides a space for men from all parts of the village to come together to spend the evening and exchange information. In villages of mixed and concentrated residence, men from all communities may be present at these daily gatherings. In segregated villages, this is obviously not possible, but men do, nevertheless, gather at the autak or dera of the local influential villager for major decisions and conflict resolution. Therefore, it is not unusual to find a Bheel man frequenting the autak of an influential villager from the dominant biraderi in Sanghar, but it is improbable that a Bheel woman will visit a woman of the dominant biraderi. Women have no common space within the village where they can come together to exchange news or build networks. Their visits are limited to residential units, and in that, are regulated by the boundaries and limits of their own community.

Although the mobility of all women is significantly restricted when compared to the mobility that men enjoy, there are important variations within and among the villages surveyed. Women from lower classes are much more mobile than those from dominant groups. Across Pakistan, increasing seclusion and purdah mark a move up the social ladder. Therefore, in Sanghar, whereas it is common to see Bheel women working in the fields, women from the dominant biraderis are not seen walking outside the residential parts of a goth. Similarly, in Mardan, a widow's fall in status is reflected by her inclusion in the agricultural labor work force, something a Pukhtoon woman would otherwise not do. In Dir, too, it is considered acceptable for a Gujjar woman to be more mobile, since she has to take cattle to pasture, but it is unacceptable for Pukhtoon women to visit mohallahs just down the road unless accompanied by men.

Also, although in most villages the bazaar is the exclusive domain of men, and women visit only under strict male supervision, variations exist. At one extreme is Dir, where men do all the shopping for women, including personal items and, most significantly, shopping for weddings. From clothes and shoes to makeup and jewelry, men shop for everything and women simply accept whatever they buy. Women might not be satisfied by the purchases or choices made by men, but almost all the respondents could not see how things could be done any differently, considering that "only an immoral woman would step into the bazaar." At the other extreme are the women of Chakwal, who enjoy a significantly higher level of mobility, in that they travel to Chakwal city on public transport in groups of two and three without any male escort. In fact, when asked why they were able to do this, they responded: "We have to buy things for ourselves. You don't expect men to go shopping for women's clothes!"

The explanation for the difference between these two social structures may well again lie in the rules of endogamy and exogamy. The village in Dir practices ethnic endogamy, in that its residents will not marry a non-Pukhtoon, but marry frequently outside their own tribe and village. The people of Chakwal, on the other hand, practice strict caste and village endogamy. In that sense, the explanation could very well lie in the fact that a woman's ability to travel outside her village in Chakwal cannot result in an exogamous marriage without risking a considerable sanction, whereas in Dir, the larger circle within which marriages can be contracted means that the family's "honor" and women's behavior has to be guarded more closely and carefully. The difficulty of arriving at an accurate explanation for such customs lies in the fact that respondents rarely provide an illuminating, incisive answer; the most common response is, "That is just our way. It has

always been like this." The fact that rules of endogamy and accompanying behavioral patterns are practiced without question and could well explain why patriarchy has proved so resilient to all kinds of pressures.

Patriarchy in all these villages is maintained through a combination of social exclusions that result in women experiencing more severe poverty as compared to men. The need to maintain and preserve male-dominated social structures creates an interesting tension between culture and religion. In almost every village, men agreed that Islam, for example, stipulated certain rights for women, but that their custom was different. Therefore, whereas they recognized the Islamic right of women to inherit a share of land, an absolute minority of women actually owned land because it went against custom (Table 4). In the very few cases where women have actually inherited land because of this religious injunction or because of the death of a husband, the land is managed by male members of the family. In fact, in most cases of inheritance, formal ownership is transferred to a widow's brother almost immediately. Female respondents explained that, although they inherit land in principle, "We forego this right in favor of our brothers because they have families to support while we are looked after by our husbands." This sentiment was common to all seven villages surveyed, although there was a limited degree of variation, in that about 4% of women in Chakwal reported ownership of land while no woman owned any land at all in Thatta. Similarly, the Islamic practice of giving haq meher to the bride is not practiced widely, and where it is practiced, the amount is nominal and certainly does not provide any level of economic security or independence to the woman. The right to divorce is not granted to the woman either.

Cementing the lack of control over economic resources is the fact that not many women are involved in any significant income-generating activity. In Dir and Toba Tek Singh, only 2% of women have an income source of their own. The situation is better in Chakwal and Thatta, because

Table 4: Control of Economic Resources and Income

Item	Dir	Mardan	Chakwal	Toba Tek Singh	Muzaffargarh	Sanghar	Thatta
Women's Ownership of Land (%)	1.62	2.32	4.48	2.88	2.50	1.07	0.00
Employment (No.)							
Self-Cultivator s			10		1	31	
Tenants		4	2			74	2
Farm Help				2			
Livestock Tending	3	6		1	3	16	2
Govt. Employees			1	5			
Retailers				3			
Skilled Workers							2
Casual Labor			1	5	3	41	2
Sewing/Embroidery	3		1		4	8	61
Domestic Help		2					1
Total No.							
Total (%)	6	12	15	16	11	170	70
	2.0	4.1	8.6	2.0	2.4	23.0	14.0

Source: Authors' fieldwork.

of male migrant labor in the former—which has transferred the responsibility of land cultivation to women—and the prevalence of home-based embroidering in the latter. However, the market for this was restricted to the village and it was not, therefore, a major source of earning for women. In Sanghar, however, 23% of women are engaged in income generation, mostly women of the Bheel caste working as agricultural servants in various capacities for their landlords, as well as women of small landowning families that cultivate their fields through family labor. One would expect this income-generating ability to have a positive impact on the status and well being of women in Sanghar but, as the following analysis reveals, this is not so.

This lack of control over economic resources and an independent source of income forms the lynchpin of the patriarchal kinship systems of Pakistan—it represents the almost complete economic dependence of women on men, allowing the latter the power to take over most decision-making processes that concern women's education, mobility, and marriage choices. This dependence is also reflected in the political sphere, where women are 25% less likely to vote than men and do not have any direct contact with political representatives. There are few female councilors, and where they do exist, they are inactive and limited by the same rules of mobility as other women. The major impact of this is that political candidates recognize that women form an inactive and unaware vote bank that votes according to decisions taken by men. Therefore, candidates feel they do not have to be responsive to needs articulated by women despite the fact that an earlier study ascertained that men and women demand very different things. Candidates understand that in order to win a group's vote, they have to cater to the needs and demands of its male members, and not to the different needs and demands of its female members. Essentially, the ability of women to use the political arena to change their marginalized position is severely constrained by the same social structures that restrict their control over economic resources.

An interesting detail of women's low level of voting is that they were not expressly forbidden to vote at the time of the election. Instead, as one woman put it, "We did not vote because no one asked us to." This quote goes a long way in illustrating the impact of patriarchal social structures, in that it highlights the extent of the social subordination of women to the dictates of men. Women cannot make the decision to vote independently, and the act of voting is strongly contingent on being asked by a man to accompany him to the polling station on election day. If no man invites them along, the question of their right to vote never comes up. In Dir, where no woman had ever voted, female respondents were unaware of the fact that women voted anywhere in the country. As far as they were concerned, voting was a strictly male activity. In Mardan, proximity to urban areas meant that women were aware of the fact that they could vote, but would

Table 5: Comparative Voting Data

Item	Dir	Mardan	Chakwal	Toba Tek Singh	Muzaffargarh	Sanghar	Thatta
Women that own an identity card (%)	44.31	28.18	51.67	41.33	27.27	33.48	25.21
Men that own an identity card (%)	56.71	42.57	60.48	50.36	40.31	41.18	47.17
Female voting turnout (%)	3.47	17.55	48.45	35.95	25.11	27.23	6.62
Male voting turnout (%)	26.28	35.06	48.87	42.34	36.43	32.22	44.69

Source: Authors' fieldwork.

not claim the right unless specifically invited to do so by the men. In Thatta, women did vote from time to time but had not done so in the 2005 local government elections because a polling booth had not been set up in their village. The issue of mobility was once again of central concern, in that the idea of women lining up in a public space all day acted as a strong disincentive to voting. As one male respondent in Mardan put it,

levels are lowest in Sindh, the differentials between men and women are highest in NWFP, revealing the significance of the impact of conservative societies on the well being of women. These differentials also reveal that services provided to a village are not equally accessible by all households and groups, but that social structures work to socially exclude certain groups from access—in this case, women.

Table 6: Access of Women to Social Services

Item	Dir	Mardan	Chakwal	Toba Tek Singh	Muzaffar garh	Sanghar	Thatta
Female per 100 males	94.5	90.5	100.4	95.6	93.0	98.0	91.3
Females that can both read and write (%)	8.96	11.21	28.98	45.77	6.19	5.86	3.56
Males that can both read and write (%)	40.37	34.04	57.79	60.86	25.28	22.90	15.11

Source: Authors' fieldwork.

"We know women should vote, and some of them do, but we don't like the idea of them going out in public to do so." Interestingly, the two districts that had the most limited access to large urban centers, Dir and Thatta, had the largest differential between the number of women who possessed an identity card and those that voted (Table 5). This shows that accessibility and proximity to urban centers has some impact on women's propensity to vote.

The social exclusion of women extends beyond the economic and political arenas to include exclusion from social services as well. Going by Sen's (1984) "missing women" phenomenon,[27] the demographic sex ratio in Table 6 reveals that women's access to health services is significantly limited compared to that of men, and that their nutrition and health levels are much worse. Besides this, in almost every village, fewer women can read and write as compared to men, with the situation in Sindh and NWFP looking particularly abysmal. While the overall education

Chakwal stands out as an anomaly in every case of social exclusion discussed above. Although the situation of women is hardly comparable to that of men, women in Chakwal enjoy incomparable levels of mobility outside the boundaries of their village and community; they own the most land and are involved in its cultivation; and, most surprisingly, there is hardly any difference between the number of women that possess an identity card and those that vote. More importantly, the number of men and women that vote is almost exactly the same in Chakwal. However, the most impressive indicator is that the demographic sex ratio is the highest in this district and that it is well above the national average of 92.5. The case of Chakwal seems to indicate a definite correlation between less conservative societies that allow a greater level of mobility to women and the general well being of women and their access to social services. In fact, Chakwal was the only village where there was an example of the upward mobility of women. A girl, AB, from the Lohar biraderi had passed her matricula-

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27   Sen, A. 1984. *Resources, Values and Development*. Oxford: Blackwell.

tion exam and been hired as a teacher at the local school for girls. This public employment and income had caused a significant move up the social ladder for her entire family—whereas earlier they were part of the small minority that did not own land in Chakwal and were thus considered particularly marginalized, AB was now responsible for the education of everyone's daughters and this has afforded her much respect and a social standing within the village.

It is possible that the poverty that results from the social exclusion of women is the most severe of all because women face the implications of multiple levels of social exclusion. They can be excluded within a village because of their ethnicity or religion, then further excluded because of the landlessness of their family, and then even further marginalized within the family from decision-making processes and access to social services. Therefore, the most marginalized person in Sanghar would be a Bheel woman from a family of agricultural laborers; in Mardan, it would be a Gujjar woman from a family of agricultural laborers. In both cases, a man from the same family and ethnic background would enjoy more access to services and a greater role in decision-making processes.

The analysis presented here also reveals that the empowerment of women is not simply dependent on greater control of economic resources or more political representation, but requires instead a combination of both, as well as social acceptance of a more active role in these spheres. Just as a simple move up the economic ladder has not given a kammi more social power vis-à-vis a Syed in Muzaffargarh, simple increases in economic resources do not translate into women's social empowerment. In Sanghar, 23% of women are involved in income-generating activities and yet the district has the lowest proportion of women that can read and write. This directly contradicts the more conventional way of thinking, voiced by one woman in more conservative Dir, "We are uneducated because we cannot make any decisions, because we are dependent on our husbands. If we were not so dependent, we would have sent all our girls to school." The women of Sanghar show that reduced economic dependence does not translate into social empowerment. Neither does it allow a greater voice in politics, as more women in Toba Tek Singh vote than do in Sanghar. Dependence, therefore, is a multifaceted concept that requires a change in social values and not simply a more active role for women outside the home. Similarly, high productivity levels of a village do not translate into better well being for women either, as is evident from the case of Mardan. The village here has very high productivity but the demographic sex ratio is the lowest of all—well below the national average—indicating women's restricted access to healthcare and nutrition.

There seems to be some specific tradeoff between literacy and employment as well. Toba Tek Singh has the highest number of women that can both read and write but the lowest number of women employed in income generation, while Sanghar has the highest number of women

Table 7: Correlation between Literacy and Employment

Item	Dir	Mardan	Chakwal	Toba Tek Singh	Muzaffargarh	Sanghar	Thatta
Females who can both read and write (%)	8.96	11.21	28.98	45.77	6.19	5.86	3.56
Female employment in income generating activities (%)	2.00	4.10	8.60	2.00	2.40	23.00	14.00

Source: Authors' fieldwork.

employed in income generation, but with the worst female literacy numbers. This tradeoff could indicate that educational attainment marks a move up the social ladder, so that women, or rather, the family becomes less willing to send their women out to work in the fields as agricultural or casual labor. The absence of any open market employment opportunities for women basically means that, once they have worked themselves out of the casual and agricultural labor market, there are few other job opportunities available within the limits of their permissible mobility.

Patriarchy is, therefore, a social structure that causes the social exclusion of women at various levels and any attempt to deal with it will have to address the exclusion at all these different levels.

7 Conclusion

Various types of structures—including tribes, clans, biraderis, and castes—exist and actively mediate social relations, hierarchies, and solidarities in rural Pakistan. While the dynamics within these structures vary from one region to another, and even from one village to the next, certain features are robust across locations and sociocultural settings. Kinship remains a crucial building block of social structures of various types, and kinship norms are strongly closely associated with patriarchy. While this "finding" appears trivial and inconsequential to those familiar with rural Pakistan, it is surprising how little attention is paid to this "fact" in policymaking by government, international organizations, and nongovernment organizations alike. The presumption that rural "communities" are harmonious and benign collectivities waiting to be uplifted in an egalitarian manner by development initiatives needs to be confronted with empirical evidence.

Social inequalities and hierarchies, based mainly on ideas of class, caste, and religion are maintained and preserved in the guise of traditions and customs, and include unequal relationships such as those between a Pukhtoon and a Gujjar or a khan and his tenant in NWFP, a Syed and a kammi in Punjab, a Mir and a Bheel in Sindh, and between a man and a woman anywhere in the country. The basic premise of this paper has been that these social inequalities lead to the social exclusion of certain communities, and, in so doing, perpetuate and reinforce the conditions that keep these communities poor. The major driving force behind these causal linkages is the ability of certain dominant groups to maintain their influence and power, and the limited ability of other groups to challenge their subservient positions.

The social exclusion that results from these social inequalities is multidimensional; it encompasses a lack of control over economic resources and also includes political disenfranchisement and disempowerment. In fact, economic dependence is central to the analysis of these social exclusions because of the intimate connection between landlessness and poverty, and the fact that high productivity and economic progress do not "trickle down" to all communities or individuals within a village. The economic dependence of a tenant and agricultural laborer on their landlord, or that of a woman on a man for financial resources, helps maintain the primacy of social structures that work to reinforce these dependencies. Social structures and inequalities, therefore, have a mutually reinforcing relationship with rural livelihood options, and this link is drawn out more comprehensively in Gazdar (2007) (footnote 2).

The same processes also monopolize political power and influence in the hands of dominant groups, and, not surprisingly, help target social services accordingly. Not only does this turn socially marginalized communities into dependent voters but also ensures that these voters do not receive equal benefits in return for an equal vote. Therefore, along with the rural economy, social structures also play a determining role in rural politics, electoral behavior and social service delivery. This relationship is highlighted in Cheema (2007) (footnote 3). These intimate connections highlight the fact that the social exclusion that results from social inequality is resilient because it is multifaceted and self-reinforcing, and that it has an impact on almost every aspect of rural life.

However, there is enough evidence in the surveyed villages to suggest that these vicious cycles of dominance and dependence can be broken. Individuals and entire groups have used certain drivers of change to reduce the inequality in their village and to allow them to improve their social status. The main ones that this paper has highlighted are: (i) the reduction of dependence on land, (ii) the availability of nonfarm employment opportunities on an open labor market, and (iii) education. Another driver of change that this paper has not discussed but that is central to the analysis and is discussed in Cheema (2007) is the role played by party-based political processes of

representation and responsiveness (footnote 3). The kinship group, paradoxically, reproduces hierarchy at one level while providing channels of opportunity and collective action at another.

In conclusion, three sets of implications need to be emphasized:

(i) There needs to be far greater acknowledgement of social structures in policymaking and economic analysis. Structures such as caste, biraderi, clan, and tribe, are inevitably part of the social, economic, and political reality of rural Pakistan. Policies, programs, and analyses that fail to acknowledge and account for these structures are likely to fail to address a key dimension of rural poverty.

(ii) Development and poverty reduction interventions must pay more attention to what happens "inside" communities. This holds true for governance reforms which presume that the devolution of agency to lower levels of aggregation will automatically empower the poor. There are robust forms of inequality—at the very least, inclusion and exclusion—across social structures in rural Pakistan. Pro-poor changes will come about only coincidentally, if at all, unless there is explicit attention to social change. The same is the case for economic policies that presume that the effects of growth will trickle down. The persistence of social segmentation implies that markets might not function smoothly to deliver gains of economic progress to the poor. Likewise, for nongovernment organization interventions, it is not sufficient that the "community" has been reached. Exclusion across and within "communities" can remain impervious to change unless tackled directly.

(iii) A broader discussion is required in Pakistan on the state's attitude toward existing social structures. These structures, underpinned by kinship norms, both limit as well as open up channels of economic and social mobility. Routes out of poverty have included the mobility of individuals within groups and across groups, and also the mobility of entire groups. Once the issue is acknowledged at the political level a range of options—including positive discrimination—are likely to emerge.

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