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Abstract:

Pakistani politics are characterised by strong corporate social links through kinship and caste that impose reciprocal obligations and rights. Marital maps enable allow for accurate prediction of allegiances and decision making and contribute to a transparent assessment of political processes in the country. While much of the focus on reciprocal relations has understandably been on descent relations (dynasties), the complex network of marital alliances that cut across lineage and sectarian divides helps explain notable levels of stability despite the fragility of the state and other public institutions. Using the example of one of the most successful political dynasties in post independence Pakistan, we show the extent of cross lineage, region and even party alliances that shape this political kinship network.

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TIES THAT BIND

MARITAL NETWORKS AND POLITICS IN PUNJAB, PAKISTAN

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Pakistani politics are characterised by strong corporate social links through kinship and caste that impose reciprocal obligations and rights. Marital maps enable allow for accurate prediction of allegiances and decision making and contribute to a transparent assessment of political processes in the country. While much of the focus on reciprocal relations has understandably been on descent relations (dynasties), the complex network of marital alliances that cut across lineage and sectarian divides helps explain notable levels of stability despite the fragility of the state and other public institutions. Using the example of one of the most successful political dynasties in post independence Pakistan, we show the extent of cross lineage, region and even party alliances that shape this political kinship network.

Key Words: Politics, marriage, Pakistan

Introduction

Pakistan has borne the brunt of an increasingly hostile international media and political rhetoric from prominent politicians around the world that paint Pakistan as a duplicitous, unstable country teetering on the brink of collapse. Pakistan has supposedly been teetering on the brink of collapse for many decades, however, and the doom and gloom is beginning to look a little repetitive. The country has seen repeated military regimes, but they have thus far not managed the entrenched hold over the state characteristic of places like Qaddafi's Libya or Saddam's Iraq. Zia ul Haq, perhaps the most notorious and brutal of these military rulers, tried to cling to power beyond his welcome period and was blown up for his tenacity. The excesses of the political elites are beyond question, though, as are the gross inequalities

in the distribution of resources within the country. In many respects, Pakistan should be a failed state, but evidently it is not. There is a remarkable level of continuity and stability in the country despite all of the media reporting that reminds us that there are suicide bombers, violent gunmen, intolerant and violent crowds in Pakistan. The civil service, for all of the accusations of corruption and incompetence (much of which is undoubtedly true), persists in carrying out the bureaucratic functions one associates with the civil service. Pakistan has managed to retain a civilian, elected government since the 9th of September 2008, despite extremely serious allegations leveled at several high ranking office holders. Despite evidence that the party in power (whichever party that may be) is prone to abusing its power to quash dissent, the opposition parties seem capable of holding in check many of the extreme measures that get proposed. In this article we examine some of the reasons for this continuity and stability. Our goal is to understand Pakistan's capacity to maintain state institutions successfully in the face of the adversity and violence that have led to the catastrophic collapse of regimes in other parts of the world.

Nonetheless, there are, indeed, parts of Pakistan's state that appear to have failed. Some peripheral regions have never really been under the control of either national or provincial state institutions, but have been regulated according to local social institutions, which reportedly are now dysfunctional. While these regions fall outside the scope of this article, we believe that part of the explanation for their relative lack of coherence and stability may come from the reverse of the phenomena with which we are concerned—the role of marriage networks in forming powerful political families. In their case, the dysfunction stems from the lack of marriage networks binding key political players together across regions.

Robustness and Resilience

Cultural and political systems that survive over time demonstrate certain characteristics that allow them to remain recognizably the same while also ensuring sufficient flexibility to adapt to external shocks. The dynastic politics of South Asia are well known for producing political groups linked by descent, which effectively allow a small set of families to reproduce their political positions. These dynasties provide considerable robustness to the system, thus ensuring that, whether we look at the political landscape in 1975 or 2015, we see similar patterns and shapes in the form of the sons, and occasionally daughters, in positions of power and authority. The problem with systems when they are overly robust, though, is that they can be brittle in the event of severe shocks to the system-- something reasonably frequent in Pakistani politics.

Read (2005) used data from Netsilik Inuit social organization from the 1920s to illustrate the importance of both resilience and robustness in any sustainable system. Beginning with a serious dilemma of food shortages in harsh winter environments, Read argues that Netsilik social relations maximized the reproducibility of the group while ensuring sufficient resilience to adapt to difficult times. In order to maximize the members of a group who hunted and fished (men) in relation to those who ate (women+men), the Netsilik developed cultural notions of personhood that permitted female infanticide prior to the naming of a newborn. This resulted in a marked sex imbalance that potentially rendered marriages more problematic because of each family's desire to retain the food producer (the man) in a

context where there were significantly fewer women than men. The solution to the problem of an imbalance in the sex ratio was to practice close cousin marriage, so that the new couple remained close enough to their parental households to continue to contribute to them. In turn, this triggered problems for winter hunting, which required the cooperation of a large number of hunters. The potential fragmentation generated by close cousin marriage and residential groupings was addressed through an additional, extra-kin social group called Seal Partnerships. Seal Partnerships were created at the birth of a boy and defined the exchange relationships of seal meat for life. The partnerships ensured that during the lean months of winter, when a particular household may face extended periods of unsuccessful hunting trips, they would nevertheless be given some seal meat to survive. Thus the social organization of the Netsilik Inuit exhibited robust forms of kinship through close cousin marriage, which reproduced recognizable related households over time, but also created durable, yet flexible and resilient bonds *between* these close kinship units that maximized survivability in times of scarcity.

Pakistani kinship, existing as it does in economically and politically diverse and contested contexts, unsurprisingly exhibits, like the Netsilik case, both robustness and resilience, but *within* the kinship system in their case. Strongly patrilineal rules of descent and transmission of *nasl* (roughly translated as the character or type of a person) result in strikingly successful political dynasties. Most of today's prominent leaders come from politically successful families of the past. This fits with other models of authority and power transmission in South Asia. The network of *sufi* shrines demonstrate classic assumptions of charismatic transference from father to son and from master to pupil. The *khilafat*, or franchise system of the Chishti order of Sufism, for example, is based on both patrilineal descent (from the family of the Prophet), as well as instruction from a recognized Chishti master. Overreliance on descent, however, introduces potential vulnerabilities in the event of serious shifts in political power. Marital alliances are a way to link households in a manner similar to the links provided by descent relations. Thus, marital alliances incur mutual expectations of support and resource exchange. They also, to some extent, implicate households in one another's public reputations. So while the most important people affecting a household's honour, or *izzat*, remain those linked by common descent, everyone connected to the household can impact the *izzat* in some way. Thus, marriages outside unilineal descent groups not only extend political networks, they also increase the number of households who have a shared interest in maintaining the positive public reputations of all linked households.

Systems like this vary in their level of complexity. Marriage constitutes one of the more interesting and fundamental cultural systems in Pakistan. Marriage follows identifiable patterns that legitimize and reproduce certain kinds of social relations. These social relations merge domestic and public spheres in ways that demonstrate both resilience (capacity to respond effectively to shock) as well as robustness (capacity to reliably reproduce the system across generations).

Marriage in Pakistan

Marriage practices in Pakistan are not uniform. There is a great deal of diversity in the strategies employed across different families and over time for arranging marriages.

Arranged marriages are frequent and there appears to be cultural consensus on the criteria used for selecting marriage partners. Though not an elementary kinship system in Lévi-Strauss's (1969) terms, there are clearly many more positive guidelines about who young people should marry than one would find in a complex system largely defined, according to Lévi-Strauss, by whom one should *not* marry. Donnan (2010:23–34) and Fischer (1994) describe marriage strategies that explicitly cite a preference for marriages based on similarities. Marriage partners should be very similar to each other, should come from the same *zat* or caste, have similar education levels, and their families should have relatively similar income levels. They should have grown up eating the same types of food and listening to the same children's stories and songs. They should share the same religious outlook on life, and so on. This, people will say, leads to more stable and happier marriages, not only for the couples, but for the extended family members who must accept the new spouse into their homes.

One widespread strategy for ensuring that like marries with like is to arrange marriages between cousins, though they need not be within the same patrilineage (*biradari*). If a single cousin connection is good, then a double cousin connection is even better. Lyon's host in a village in northern Punjab boasted of having a double first cousin connection to his wife (Lyon 2004). Lyon (2013) discusses the importance of cousin marriages as an inheritance strategy. He argues that such strategies are neither monolithic nor exclusive. He analyzed marriages from a 200 year time period in a single village in northern Punjab and concluded that a single landowning family¹ had a split marriage strategy. One part of the family tended to marry unrelated village outsiders, while another part appeared to prefer arranged marriages to close cousins within the village. These two strategies continued for more than 100 years, but then changed around the time of Pakistan's independence from Britain and separation from India. These two strategies provided increase resilience in the face of political and economic uncertainty, but when the political landscape became more predictable, the strategies converged into a more cooperative and mutually beneficial pattern of intermarriage between previously distinct lineages.

Elite Families

In 1968, Dr Mahbub ul Haq, the then Chief Economist of the Planning Commission of Pakistan, identified 22 Pakistani families in Pakistan who controlled 66% of the industrial assets and 87% of the banking (Bari 2011). These families, he argued, had become both the Planning Commission and the Finance Ministry for the private sector (Haq 1973). In 1974, White (1974) expanded this number to 42 families. In a special pre-election issue of the Pakistani magazine, *The Herald*, Zahid (2013) states that the number of Pakistani dynastic families dominating electoral politics is 597.² Although the exact number of families seems to vary a bit, there does appear to be a small number of families who disproportionately control the bulk of the country's industrial and financial assets. Many of these families are also powerful landowners, so their influence is not restricted to just industry and banking. Though these families include many prominent names that appear in the rolls of the Senate, the National Assembly, government ministries and so on, they are singled out largely for their apparent lack of accountability. Their sin, according to these authors, is not that they have monopolized elected offices, but rather that they hold most of the country's assets.

For the most part, the emphasis, both in Pakistan and in political science analyses, has been on the political and economic implications of familial connections through descent or siblinghood. The Sharif brothers (Nawaz and Shahbaz) have been tremendously influential, both economically and politically, with children who are also active in electoral politics in Pakistan. Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, the son of the Asif Ali Zardari and the late Benazir Bhutto, the daughter of one of Pakistan's most famous politicians, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, is driven by an interest in familial political inheritance rather than simply the accumulation of wealth. The desire to create political dynasties is not unique to Pakistan, or indeed South Asia. Duindam's (2016) examination of historical dynasties around the world suggests that while transmission of political power within families may be discouraged in contemporary Western Europe and North America, such practices are not entirely alien to any part of the world. While the lineage based transmission of political authority and power in Pakistani politics is unquestionably interesting and worth exploring further, the indirect alliances created through marriage are equally important. The factional divisions and rivalries are well-accounted for in a descent-centric model, but this model deals poorly with broader instances of cooperation that underpin initiatives in which there are relatively peaceful transitions between radically opposed regimes. Though descent and lineage connections among party politicians are of interest, we focus here, instead, on marital connections between individuals in order to determine the degree to which these connections cross party lines.

The Marital Networks

Some political families maintain marriages almost exclusively with members of their own *biradari* (lineage) and within their own political party. Even in these cases, however, there are always potential connections that could be formed outside the *biradari* and the party in the form of marriages with currently serving or recently retired military personnel. The armed forces in Pakistan, although ostensibly apolitical, must be seen as a powerful political organization. This is explicit during the times of military rule, but remains true during times of elected civilian governments as well. Some families are more avid instigators than others of cross region and caste marriages that help to create and consolidate province-wide political networks. One of the most famous of these families is the Chaudhrys of Gujrat, but they are far from unique in adopting this culturally meaningful tactic.

The reason we have chosen the Chaudhrys of Gujrat to illustrate the argument is largely a matter of practicalities. They are one of the most successful political families in Punjab, so much of their genealogical and marital data are available in public records. The data used for this paper, for example, have all been derived from newspaper accounts of marriages and obituaries, in which people's fathers-in-law are frequently reported. We have examined other political families' marital records, but these data are more confidential and therefore from more problematic sources. We have the utmost respect for this family and do not present their marriage decisions as either deviant or corrupt in any way.

The Chaudhrys of Gujrat

Gujrat district lies between Lahore and Rawalpindi. Historically, it was not a major center of national or provincial power prior to the creation of Pakistan. Like many districts in Pa-

kistan, it has been landlord dominated and elections have been marked by a sharp emphasis on *biradari* networks and broader patron client networks. This district is distinguishable by a particularly astute family of Jats, who have not only demonstrated considerable political acumen, but have proven, beyond any doubt, that marital alliances can help in the creation of cross regional and cross *quom* or caste political blocs. In the 1950s and 1960s, Chaudhry Zahoor Elahi, a former government official who had become a businessman, contested local elections and became a significant political force. Like a great many civilian politicians in Pakistan, he proved his credentials as an opposition politician under the military regime of Ayub Khan (1958-1968), in part through imprisonment. He was a minister in the caretaker government between the end of Yaya Khan's military government (1968-1970) and the beginning of Z. A. Bhutto's government (1971-1977). He continued his role as a prominent opposition politician during Bhutto's governance. He may possibly have gone on to play a prominent role under Zia ul Haq's military rule (1977-1988), but was assassinated in 1981. His brother, Chaudhry Manzoor Elahi, was successful in provincial electoral politics and served as a Member of the Punjab Provincial Assembly. His sons, the eldest of whom is Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain, and his nephew, Chaudhry Parvez Elahi, have taken up the baton from their fathers and have played a prominent role in Pakistani politics since the mid 1980s. Ch. Shujaat Hussain is now a former Prime Minister of Pakistan and currently a Senator. Ch. Parvez Elahi is leader of the Pakistan Muslim League (Q). The family's political success has risen and dipped over the years, but there can be no doubt that they remain one of the most influential political families in the country.

The dynastic network of the Chaudhrys of Gujrat tells only part of the story, however. If they were truly reliant on just the obvious patrilineal descent ties, they would not be part of the evident province-wide political base. Similarly, if they relied primarily on *biradari* politics, then they would soon find themselves losing out against the larger *biradari* across other parts of Punjab and Pakistan (notably the Gujars, who may number as many as 30 million across Pakistan). The key to understanding the tremendous influence that this family has had lies, instead, in a careful examination of their marital alliances.

One of Chaudhry Zahoor Elahi's daughters is married to Major Tahir Saddiq, who comes from a successful political family from Attock District in northern Punjab (see Figure 1). Maj. Tahir Saddiq's father, Sardar Sadiq Khan, and mother, Begum Sadiq, were both elected politicians before him. After leaving the army, he entered politics and served a number of years as Nazim (subdistrict leader) and as a member of the provincial assembly. His son, Zain Elahi (sometimes called Zain Khan), became a member of the National Assembly and their daughter, Eman Waseem, was an Member of the National Assembly (MNA) from Attock District from 2002-2008. One of Chaudhry Zahoor Elahi's younger sons, Chaudhry Shafaat Hussain, is married to the daughter of Gul Hamed Khan Rokri, the son of Ghulam Haidar Khan Niazi, who is from a prominent Mianwalli District political family (see Figure 1). A third son, Chaudhry Wajahat Hussain, is married to the daughter of Akhtar Nawaz Khan, a former provincial minister from Haripur District (see Figure 1). He was, very sadly, assassinated in 2009, and, like many politicians from Khyber-Pukhtunkhwa (KPK) province, flirted with various political affiliations, including the Awami National Party. Akhtar

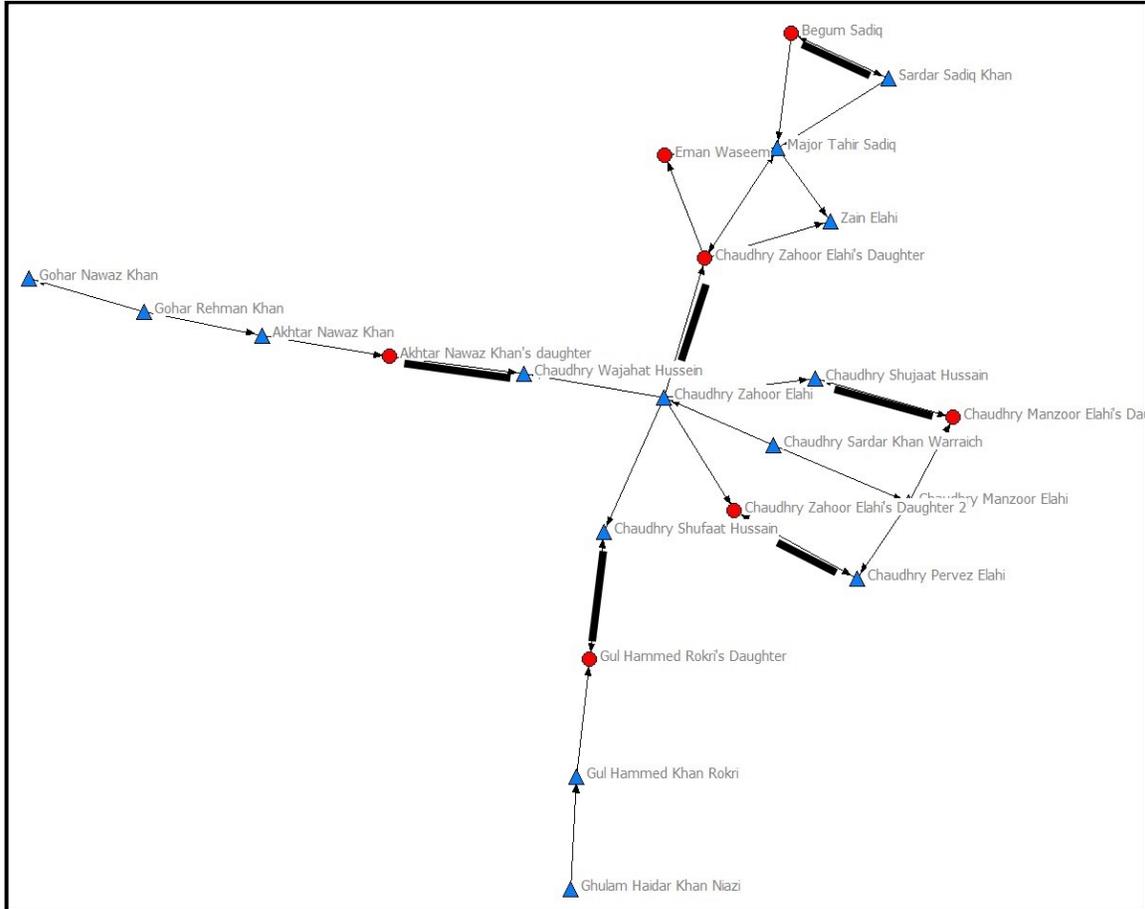


Figure 1: The significant key marriages that join members of separate political families and lineages, as well as being ways in which marriage can be used to consolidate existing political families.

Nawaz's brother, Gohar Nawaz Khan, is currently a member of the KPK provincial assembly and belongs to the Qoumi Wattan Party

Even this small cohort illustrates the extent to which political networking has been achieved through marriages. The social network map in Figure 1 shows descent connections with directional arrowed lines (indicating downward generational transmission) and marital connections with bi-directional arrowed lines (rendered thicker for emphasis). All of the named individuals are, or have been, actively involved in electoral politics. We have intentionally not named individuals who have neither held nor run for office.

In Figure 1, the obvious central node, Chaudhry Zahoor Elahi, is arguably the instigator of the marital network. It is his descendants who have married outside of their lineage to hitherto unrelated groups of politically active families in other parts of Pakistan that results in a network that exhibits both resilience and robustness. To the right of Chaudhry Zahoor Elahi, we see his father (Chaudhry Sardar Khan Warraich) with two descent lines emerging connecting both Chaudhry Zahoor and his brother Chaudhry Manzoor Elahi. Following the stated preferential marriage expectations, the children of these two brothers have married one another. Chaudhry Manzoor Elahi's son, Chaudhry

Pervez Elahi, married Chaudhry Zahoor Elahi's daughter. Chaudhry Zahoor Elahi's son, Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain, married Chaudhry Manzoor Elahi's daughter. These two marriages constitute a straight reproduction of the earlier generation and consolidate both resources and kin identity within a single lineage. There are three other strategic marriages that do not conform to the pattern of close, like-for-like marriages, however. We take each of these in turn.

Chaudhry Zahoor Elahi's Daughter and Major Tahir Sadiq's marriage represents not only a break from lineage marriage, but also from marriage within caste. Major Tahir Sadiq comes from a Khattar family. Khattar's are a prominent caste in northern Punjab in Rawalpindi Division concentrated primarily in Attock District and around Taxila and Wah along the Grand Trunk Road. They were influential in the British era and received large land grants at various points in India's history. One of the most notable Khattar politicians was Sir Sikandar Hyat Khan (1882-1942), who expanded his family's already considerable wealth into significant political power before. Major Tahir Sadiq, is therefore part of an extremely influential familial network dating back several generations. We have only included his parents and his son and daughter in this graph, but in addition to active politicians included here, there is an extensive network of Khattar politicians that hold prominent positions of influence at Sub District, District and Provincial levels. This single marital union provides the Chaudhrys of Gujrat a strong, personal connection to one of the most important political networks in northern Punjab.

The second strategic marriage that differs from the expected pattern, is between Chaudhry Zahoor Elahi's second son, Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain and Gul Hameed Rokri's daughter. Gul Hameed Rokri's family caste is Niazi. The Niazis of Mianwali have produced an impressive number of influential politicians (including Imran Khan,

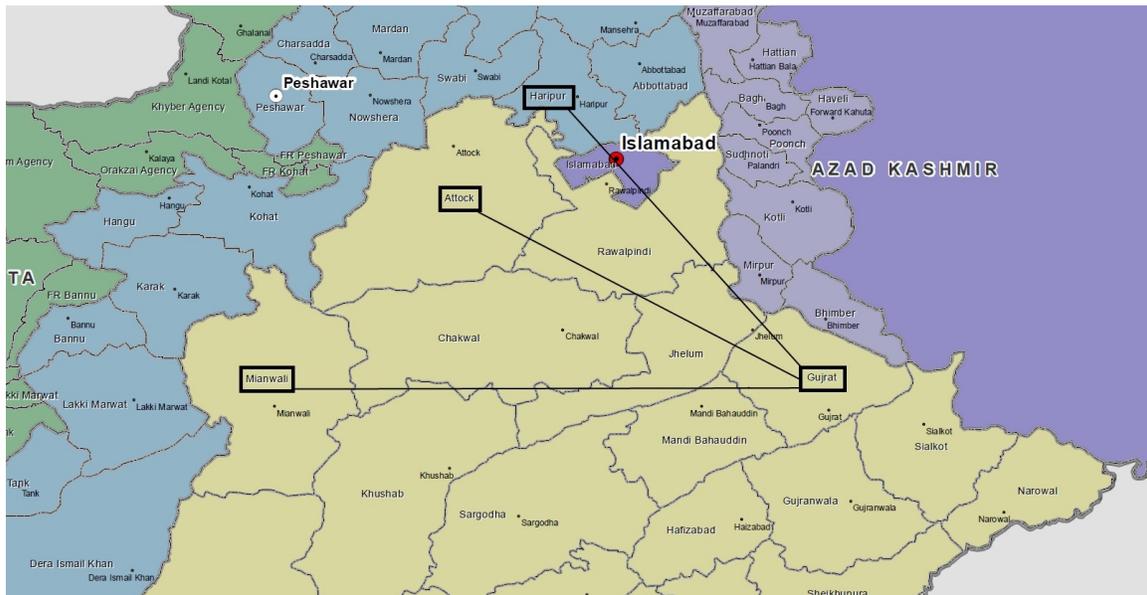


Figure 2: Map of Northern Pakistan showing the locations of the four districts Haripur, Attock, Mianwali and Gujrat. Through marriage, the Chaudhrys of Gujrat have created tangible political connections that bind each of these districts.

though his political base is considerably broader than the usual lineage based politics). He is an important politician who has held a remarkable number elected offices throughout his career. The marriage between his daughter and the Gujrati Chaudhrys represents a potentially powerful alliance of otherwise geographically separated networks. Moreover, his family connections to prominent politicians from other political parties, provides a number of useful channels for informal negotiations that might otherwise trigger undue attention.

The final strategic exogamous marriage included here is Chaudhry Zahoor Elahi's third son, Chaudhry Wajahat Hussain and Akhtar Nawaz Khan's daughter. Akhtar Khan Nawaz was sadly assassinated in 2009, but his family have long represented one of the powerful blocs in Haripur District that borders KPK and Punjab. In addition to providing the Chaudhry family with a direct personal connection to a powerful political family from a different region and province, this marriage crosses political party lines. Akhtar Nawaz Khan was a member of the Awami National Party. His brother, Gohar Nawaz Khan, is a member of the Qaumi Watan Party.

These three strategic marriages provide critical connections to remote districts of Punjab and Khyber Pukhtunkhwa. They provide affinal connections to Attock and Mianwali in northwest Punjab and to Haripur in Khyber Pukhtunkhwa. They link four *biradari*: Jats (from Gujrat), Khattars (from Attock), Niazis (from Mianwali) and Tareen (from Hazara) (see Map, Figure 2).

Not all marriages are arranged with distant political dynasties, of course. The first marriages discussed above joins parallel cousins. Altogether, the Chaudhry's marital networks serve to consolidate the dynastic connections through intra- and inter-*biradari* marriage. However, the importance of these marital connections must not be overestimated. The networks are not inviolable and the individuals involved are capable of disagreeing with one another. What makes the networks effective, though, is that there are multiple channels of communication among the members. In addition to the usual political meetings in which they all jointly participate, the networks provide informal opportunities for strategizing and coordinating political activities.

The same social network is shown in Figure 3 without name labels to make evident the pattern for the marriages making up the network shown in Figure 1. The marriages are labeled as Unions 1 through 6. Of these, Unions 1, 2 and 3 serve as bridging links joining unrelated clusters of political families. Unions 4 and 5 illustrate the repeat endogamous exchanges that are typical in Pakistan. These not only serve purposes of cross generational replication of lineages, they also reinforce bonds between siblings within a generation. Union 6 is not directly relevant for explaining the influence of the Gujrati Chaudhrys, but is included to reflect the extent of the political involvement by the members of that family.

Implications

These data have two key implications. The first involves questions of legitimacy and narratives that authorize individuals to claim political power. The second is more logistical and pragmatic. Such unions provide tangible channels for communication *outside* reliable lineage

networks. The unions created through marriage bind political competitors in ways that facilitate communication in a particularly challenging environment.

Part of the driving force underpinning the particular configurations one finds in Pakistani political lineages is an aspiration for legitimacy. Pakistani politics are riddled with stories of offices or resources taken by force. In the rural areas, the use of force to take either brides or land is referred to as *kabza*. *Kabza*, however, is by consensus a negative way to assert control over others, and so those who engage in these tactics simultaneously develop intricate narratives to legitimize their use of force to achieve their goals. Controlling large tracts of land in rural areas usually requires a combination of actual force, in the form of loyal peasant farmers who are occasionally willing to arm themselves on behalf of their land-

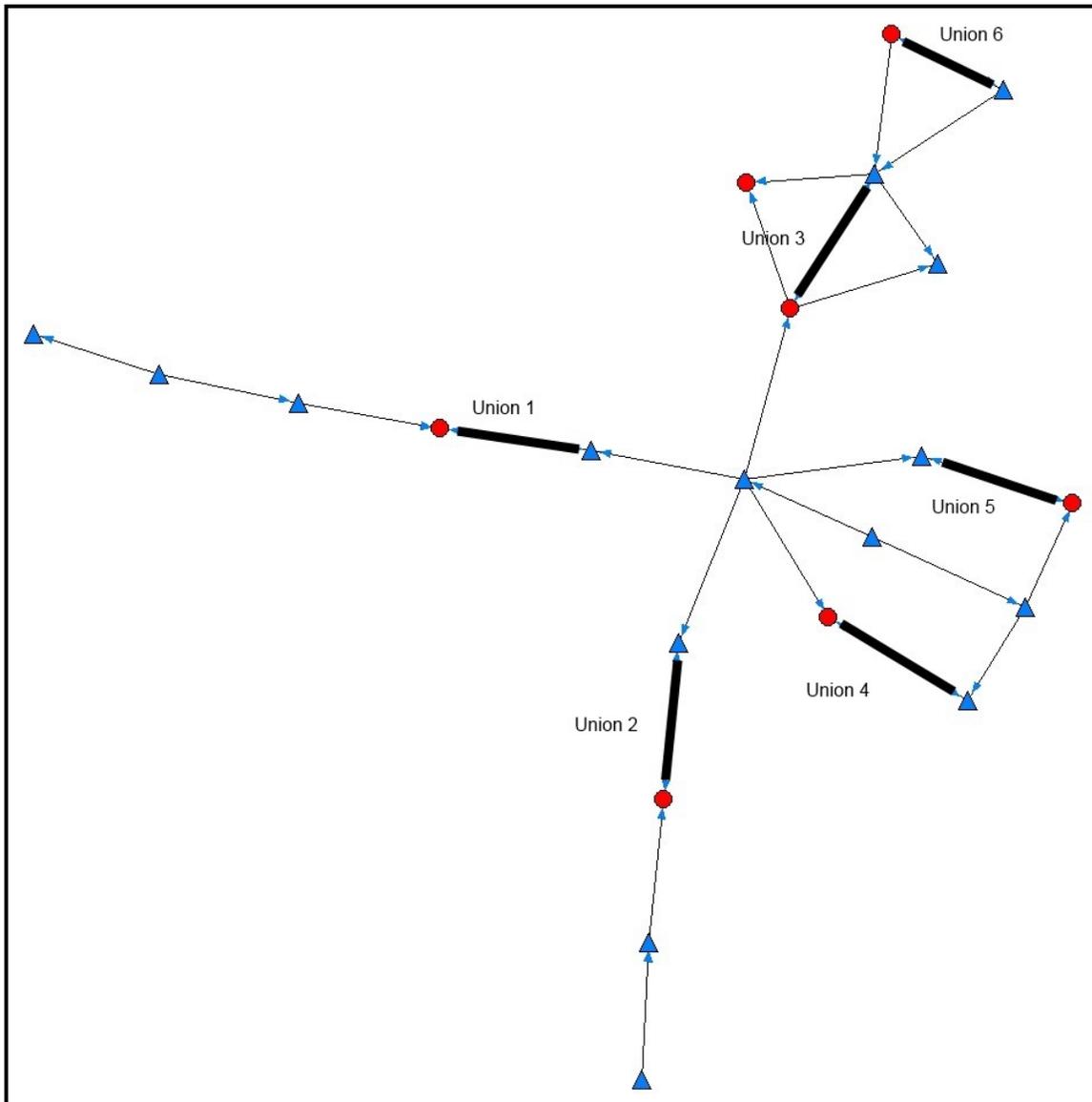


Figure 3: The same network as in Figure 1, but with individual people's names removed in order to focus on the significance of the marital unions.

lord, as well as a genealogical ties to the area and any disputed lands (Lyon 2013). Force, by itself, is inherently unstable and vulnerable. The same is true for the prizes of party electoral politics. One needs a claim that is seen as being legitimate. This is partly achieved through the power of oratory, but is greatly enhanced through strong network connections to those who have succeeded in politics in the past. Among the individuals included in Figure 1, the children of Major Tahir Sadiq draw their legitimacy not only from their father's illustrious lineage (the Khattars) but also from their mother's side (the Chaudhrys). The Gujrati Chaudhrys emerged as a political force more recently, but have been extraordinarily successful under successive regimes, so individuals that can combine recent their national political authority with historically established clout clearly need not work hard to develop narratives of legitimacy. In Sindh, perhaps the most famous Pakistani politician of the 1960s and 1970s, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was undoubtedly a gifted politician, despite his tragic end, but he undoubtedly had added authority and influence because he came from a politically successful family. Imran Khan's anecdotes about his father having been present at the 1940 Lahore Conference, where the Quaid-i-Azam, Muhammad Ali Jinnah became a full supporter of a separate homeland for India's Muslims, are not casual tales. They are assertions of legitimacy.

Narratives of legitimacy that center on lineage are widespread, but should perhaps be considered incomplete. Despite a kinship system that emphasizes paternity, marriage offers a concrete way of establishing meaningful social relations that are not dependent on shared ancestry. Within this this dynastic political landscape we find mechanisms for inclusion of those who lack desirable pedigree narratives. The families we have examined here, for example, illustrate the ways in which a relatively recent politically active family (the Chaudhrys of Gujrat) can form alliances with families that have been politically more active historically. We do not suggest that the Chaudhrys are not from a prestigious caste (Jats are certainly one of the caste considered more noble than many others), but the children of these cross caste marriages benefit from a powerful combination of narratives from distinct lineage connections. Marriage allows connections across families that spread the legitimacy beyond those who, otherwise, are exclusively patrilineally connected (in Figure 3 these are unions 4, 5 and 6), though, as with every other claim for legitimacy, these claims do not go unchallenged by rivals.

In addition to establishing legitimacy, complex marital networks bind together competitive participants in the political process by offering opportunities for negotiation of conflict. Marriage strategies exhibit both resilience and robustness. Robustness comes from preferential marriage patterns in which like marry like, including party affiliation. Within Pakistani marriage systems, resilience is ensured through a few exogamous marriages, both from lineage and party, that bridge party political boundaries. Intra lineage marriages, especially those between the children of siblings, reinforce political alliances that are in fact already *supposed* to be very strong. When siblings compete overtly with one another, the negative reputation that can spread can jeopardize anyone closely associated with any of the siblings. So cousin marriages do little to *extend* networks and therefore provide few, if any, new allies. Inter lineage marriages, on the other hand, offer a less coherent, but more flexible array of allies who can support one another in the event of turbulence or unexpected political turns. In the

normal operations of Pakistani politics, resilience in the face of shocks is not simply a convenience, but is almost certainly a necessity to ensure long term political survival. While this may undermine coherent party ideologies or practices, arguably it provides greater flexibility for crisis management. We argue that Pakistan is not a failed state, but is a state that must frequently deal with crisis, so using marriages to maximize both the group's and the individual's capacity to adapt to changing political and economic circumstances is necessary for survival.

Again the Chaudhry family provide a remarkable lesson in Pakistani political survival. The family has survived the assassination of its founder, and ongoing factionalism within the Pakistan Muslim League between the Chaudhry Shujaat 'Wing' and the Nawaz Sharif 'Wing'. Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain was a prominent member of different governments and found himself on the 'losing' side on more than one occasion, but he and his family, have sustainably recovered from shocks that have destroyed other, less successful, political families. The proof is perhaps to be found in the success of the next generation. While the generation of Chaudhry Shujaat and Pervez Elahi are arguably retired or nearing retirement, their children have proven they can win elections and retain political office.

Conclusion

In Levi-Strauss' useful distinction between elementary and complex kinship systems, there are two opposing strategies for determining marriage partners. In the complex system, the choice is determined by a set of negative rules (who one must not marry). In the elementary system, the choice is made through positive rules (who one must marry). In Pakistan, there are 'soft' rules for who one must or must not marry. In both village level marriages, as in prominent party political family marriages, what we find is that all of these rules are subject to contingent political expediency. The reproduction of preferential marriage 'rules' is underpinned by a pragmatic assessment of what ensures household survival best. Historically, that has frequently led to close cousin marriage, in which resources can be confined with finite group boundaries, however, that results in overly 'closed' networks that lack sufficient links to develop useful cooperation across lineages. As Turner found among the Ndembu (1957), despite clear and agreed rules that supposedly regulate marriage in societies, individuals can and often do make decisions that are in the best interest of the household even if the 'rules' might suggest a different set of decisions. The distinction of elementary and complex is consequently a useful typology, but perhaps should not be applied to real ethnographic situations too rigidly.

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¹ The English term, family, is problematic. Unfortunately, the Urdu and Punjabi equivalents are equally inadequate for describing the grouping with which we are concerned, namely a group of households who self-identify as related and who exhibit the capacity for cooperation on important issues. They are also one another's most serious political and economic rivals. Most members of these households trace their ancestry back to a common ancestor who lived around the late 18th century.

² Though Zahid focussed mainly on members of elected institutions, the data were drawn from sub district, provincial and national levels, so they provide a useful measure of political influence in general.