

Role of Biraderi in Politics: A Case Study of Voting Behaviour in Jhok Bodo Village, District Dera Ghazi Khan

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Abstract

In social organization of the rural Punjab, biraderi plays a pivotal role. It is a group which broadly refers to the position of a given class in rural hierarchy, based on occupational caste. Economic resources and social status of dominant biraderis allow them to deal with the state and achieve common objectives. Biraderi is a strong unit of identity in a village. It is the basic unit of association, social backing and collective action. It adapts to the individual behaviour and choices into collective ones. In rural Punjab, the social institution of biraderi has a corporate structure along with political and economic functions. The effectiveness and power of biraderi is based upon the economic power and social status. It determines unity and cohesion among the members of biraderi. The landlords always suppress the collective action of the landless rural poor, not against the peasant proprietor. So under this premise, in present paper 'the role of biraderi in politics with special focus on voting behaviour of the Jhok Bodo village' is discussed.

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Biraderism

Biraderi is the most important determinant in defining the social structure of rural Punjab. Social organization of the rural Punjab is complex. The family constitutes its basic unit. Next to family in social organization is *biraderi*. It is group of families which descend from an immediate common ancestor. The next group to *biraderi* is *quom*; a confederation of several *biraderis* having a common ancestor several generations up. These *quoms* and *biraderis* are status groups which broadly refer to the position of a given class in rural hierarchy, based on occupational castes.

These *biraderis* and *quoms* are endogamous. In South Asian context, these groups of *biraderis* and *quoms* in rural Punjab are different from Hindu caste system. Functionally *biraderis* are *gotras*, *quoms* are *Jatis*. These are inherited, primordial identities which are related to occupation.¹

In most of the villages in Punjab, the social structure is divided into three *quoms*. The *zamindar quom*, having ownership of land is at the top of the economic and social position. This can be further divided into two groups i.e. landowners and tenant cultivators. In the village social structure *kammi*² *quom* performs non-agricultural services. They work traditionally under *seyp* relationship; a work contract between different groups. These work contracts

1 Hamza Alavi, "The Politics of Dependence: A Village in West Punjab", *South Asian Review* 4, no. 2 (January 1971): 111-28. Also see Saghir Ahmad, *Class and Power in a Punjabi Village* (Lahore: Punjab Adbi Markaz, 1977); Alain Lefebvre, *Kinship, Honour and Money in Rural Pakistan* (Surrey: Curzon Press, 1999); Muhammad Azam Chaudhary, *Justice in Practice: Legal Ethnography of a Pakistani Punjabi Village* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1999); Stephen Lyon, *An Anthropological Analysis of Local Politics and Patronage in a Pakistani Village* (Lampeter: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2004); Shandana Khan Mohmand, *Patrons, Brothers and Landlords: Competing for the Vote in the Rural Pakistan* (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Sussex, 2011).

2 It is a derogatory term, used for those who are actually engaged in the collective service of the village. *Kammis* included carpenters (*Tarkhan*), potters (*Kumhar*), blacksmiths (*Lohar*), cobblers (*Mochi*), backers (*Machi*), weavers (*Julaha*), barbers (*Nai*), bards (*Miraci*), drummers (*Pirhain*), and sweepers (*Mussali*).

revolve around the occupational specialties of families and once created, continued over generations. The obligations between landlord, farmer and service provider were binding. The work provided by *kammi* for the *seyp* was not necessarily paid for money, nor was an account for labour maintained. Each part to a *seyp* keep general tabs on the reciprocity but this was not discussed between the *seypi*.³

Next to this group is Muslim Sheikh or landless labourers. They are the poorest and the most exploited group of the village. In this hierarchical ordered social association, between different *biraderis* of landowners and menials commensality is limited. There are very limited inter-*biraderi* marriages between the landowners and the artisans. As compared to *gotras* in India, the *biraderis* in Pakistan are fluid and mobile. With the change in income and wealth status, the people change the names of their *quoms*.⁴

The concept of *biraderi*, provided the most significant principles and idioms of social organization in rural Punjab. *Biraderis* are strong units of identity in a village. It is the basic unit of association, social backing and collective action. Economic resources and social status available to dominant *biraderis* allow them to use the means of informal organization to deal with the state and achieve common objectives. In rural Punjab, the social institution of *biraderi* has a corporate structure. The individual and the group both get material as well as psychological support from the *biraderi*. Through its definition of rights and duties, it also offers social security. It also adapts to the individual behaviour and choices into collective ones. It also performs political and economic responsibilities.⁵

3 Alavi, *Contributions to Indian Sociology*; Ahmad, *Class and Power in a Punjabi Village*; Zekiye Eglar, *A Punjabi Village in Pakistan* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2010).

4 Alavi, "Politics of Dependence"; Ahmad, *Class and Power in a Punjabi Village*; Lyon, *Politics and Patronage*, Mohmand, *Patrons, Brothers and Landlords*.

5 Alavi, *Contributions to Indian Sociology*.

Biraderi cohesion and unity is maintained by *panchayat*. *Biraderi* in the case of defiance or other non-cooperation use social exclusion as the most effective sanctions, which are considered harmful by the group, such as breaking ranks during important events.⁶ *Biraderis* which lack strong leadership are more likely to split. Members of the *biraderi* may be divided due to internal conflicts relating to division of property, marriages of the children etc. *Biradari* leaders are not always clan leaders, but rather “mature, middle aged men who have time and energy to run about attending to lineage business”.⁷

Background of the Study

Biraderi played an important role in electoral politics in the Punjab throughout the twentieth century. Colonial policies that distinguished along the basis of *quom* and *biraderi*, such as the Land Alienation Act of 1900, served to strengthen their political significance. *Biraderi* was also taken into account by colonial administrators while drawing district and sub-district administrative boundaries.⁸ These were often designed to create local strongholds for landed elites and tribal and *biraderi* leaders, who were co-opted to maintain political stability in their areas of control. A single member constituency electoral system was subsequently grafted onto these pre-existing administrative boundaries.⁹ Even some of the first modern Muslim organizations in the subcontinent were formed on the basis of *biradari*. Some scholars

6 Alavi, “*Politics of Dependence*”; Lefebvre, *Kinship, Honour and Money in Rural Pakistan*; Parvez A. Wakil, “Explorations into the Kin-Networks of the Punjabi Society: A Preliminary Statement,” *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 32, no. 4 (1970):700-707.

7 Alavi, “*Politics of Dependence*”, 117.

8 Imran Ali, *The Punjab Under Imperialism, 1885-1947* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1988); Andrew Wilder, *The Pakistani Voter: Electoral Politics and Voting Behaviour in the Punjab* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1999); Mohammad Waseem, *The 1993 Elections in Pakistan* (Lahore: Vanguard Books Pvt. Ltd., 1994).

9 Waseem, *The 1993 Elections*; Hassan Javid, *Class, Power and Patronage: The Landed Elite and Politics in Pakistani Punjab* (London: PhD. Thesis, London School of Economics and Political Science, 2012).

discussed the role of *biraderis* in making of Pakistan with reference to Muslim politics of the Punjab especially their role in the victory of Muslim League in elections of 1946.¹⁰ During post-independence period, Inayatullah conducted his research on local government elections in the Punjab and discussed the role of *biraderis* in making of voting behaviour in the rural Punjab.

After 1970 national elections, the role of *biradari* in electoral politics in rural Punjab was replaced with class approach. Scholars analyzed it as a result of popular politics of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto with tilt towards Socialism and popular slogan of '*Roti, Kapra aur Makan*' [Urdu: bread, cloth and Shelter]. According to Jalal, Pakistan People's Party won 1970 elections on the slogan of *Masawat-e-Muhammadi* (literal meaning equality). It got popular support by 'cobbling together a loose coalition of divergent social and economic interests' that included among others, "the Punjabi rural unprivileged — small landlords cum tenant farmers, landless field labourers, and menials."¹¹ The elections "threw up elements from the lower and middle strata who, having been radicalized by the politics of exclusion and economics of functional inequality (under Ayub Khan)."¹² She further wrote about the policies of Z. A. Bhutto that "small peasants, proprietors, tenants, and field labourers believed that Bhutto had released them from the grasp of oppressive landlords who, while managing to evade the PPP's land reforms, had nevertheless been focussed to 'part with some of their feudal perks' and 'overlords mentality', which was 'by no means a small achievement."¹³

10 David Gilmartin, *Empire and Islam: Punjab and the Making of Pakistan* (London: I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd., 1988); I. A. Talbot, "The 1946 Punjab Elections", *Modern Asian Studies*, 14, no. 1(1980): 65-91; Wilder, *The Pakistani Voter*.

11 Ayesha Jalal, "The State and Political Privilege in Pakistan," in *The Politics of Social Transformation in Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan*, ed. Myron Weiner and Ali Banuazizi (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1994), 162.

12 Jalal, "The State and Political Privilege", 63.

13 Jalal, "The State and Political Privilege", 63.

Jones presented his detailed analysis about the role of *biraderi* in the elections of 1970. In this election, in his analysis, for the first time in history of the country people in Punjab voted along class lines defeating kinship and caste. He mentioned that “PPP leaders... claimed to have finally ‘shattered’ the *baradari* system, at least in so far as its customary political functions are concerned....the 1970 elections did show strong ‘horizontal’ patterns of ‘party-voting’ that broke through ‘vertical’ *baradari* identities.”¹⁴

In 1977, when Zia-ul-Haq came into power, he banned political parties, repressed all party based political activities and started a campaign to depoliticise the society. In comparison with the main focus of Bhutto in politics as empowerment of marginalized groups, Zia’s focus was on Islamization. In this way he focused to get support from urban middle and lower middle classes of traders and merchants. Zia held local government elections in 1979 and 1983, both on non-party basis. In the absence of political parties, candidates once again turned towards traditional networks of *biradaris* and landed elite. Same became stronger at upper level when in 1985 national elections were conducted by Zia regime on non-party basis. In which “the representative character of the National Assembly was far away from impressive. In the absence of parties, only local issues could come to the surface, while national issues, such as foreign policy, economic programme, federal politics, provincial autonomy and various aspects of Islamization were conspicuous”.¹⁵ Resultantly, a parliament dominated by landed elites in which “ties to clan, tribe, or *biradari* and feudal social basis in particular, largely determined the outcome of elections.”¹⁶ Same is the opinion of Ayesha Jalal about Zia regime. She states that in “a country where parties

14, Philip Jones, *The Pakistan Peoples Party: Rise to Power* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2003), 331.

15 Mohammad Waseem, *Politics and the State in Pakistan* (Islamabad: National Institute of Historical and Cultural Research, Quaid-i-Azam University, 2007), 398.

16 Rasul B. Rais, “Elections in Pakistan: Is Democracy Winning?”, *Asian Affairs: An American Review* 12, no. 3 (1985): 47.

had never managed to strike roots, the Zia regime's systematic campaign to discredit politicians and politics gave renewed significance to the old personalized networks of *biraderi* or clan-based ties".¹⁷ Writing about the 1988 and 1990 elections, Anwar H. Syed mentioned that, "The *birardri* connection...and the expectation of specific benefits once again became the dominant consideration for most voters. The Muslim League was known to be more skilful in manipulating the *birardri* networks".¹⁸ Wilder in his research on 1993 elections writes "*biradari* still seemed to be a more important determinant of voting behaviour than in 1970 elections, but a less important than was commonly believed. In general, the importance of *biradari* is greater in central and northern Punjab than in southern and western Punjab, in rural than in urban constituencies, and in local than in national elections".¹⁹ About *biraderi* politics in North and central Punjab, Waseem states, "during the 1990s, party politics has generally focused on mobilization of *biradri* loyalties in the rural areas....(even) among the settler communities in south Punjab also, caste/*biradri* occupies a significant position in electoral politics."²⁰

Scholars are of the opinion that with the advancement of mechanization and in its result, the social structure has changed. Rapid population growth, improved infrastructure, connecting the towns with rural areas, and rapid urbanization led to political mobilization in rural Punjab.²¹ The autonomy

17 Ayesha Jalal, *Democracy and Authoritarianism in South Asia: A Comparative and Historical Perspective* (Lahore: Sang-e-Meel Publications, 1995), 105.

18 Anwar H. Syed, "The Pakistan People's Party and the Punjab: National Assembly Elections, 1988 and 1990," *Asian Survey* 31, no. 7 (July 1991): 584.

19 Wilder, *The Pakistani Voter*, 187.

20 Waseem, *The 1993 Elections*, 103.

21 Arif Hassan, *The Unplanned Revolution: Observations in the Process of Socio-Economic Changes in Pakistan*. (Karachi: Oxford University Press 2009); Rasul B. Rais, "Can Punjab show the way?" *Daily Times*, February 20, 2007; Nicolas Martin, *Politics, Patronage and Debt Bondage in the Pakistani Punjab* (London: PhD. Thesis, London School of Economics and

of voters increased but it did so within vertical relationships with local landed patrons that moved the political system towards clientele. Many voters also started to organise more horizontally, but they did so not on the basis of voluntary affinity but rather on the basis of ascriptive kinship based affinity towards a political system defined by *biraderi*-ism.

After brief overview of the literature on politics of the Punjab, it can be deduced that the role of *biraderi* as a political organization for collective action is significant. To explore its role in politics and voting behaviour in this study following questions have been analyzed. Why do rural citizen vote in the form of political organization of *biraderi*? Do the citizens in rural western Punjab are passive victims of *biradari*? How much inequality, social structure and status influence the agency of the rural people? How much has changed about the rural electoral politics and voting behaviour of the citizens of the Punjab?

Politics in Jhok Bodo

Jhok Bodo village lies some 33 kilometres in South West of tehsil town Taunsa Sharif. This along with nearby small hamlets is also a *mouza* [revenue unit]. It is almost five kilometres in East of Sulaiman range. It is administratively part of the settled area of the Dera Ghazi Khan District.

The population of the village comprises approximately 6,000 people. It consists of almost 750 households. The inhabitants of the village are divided into two main *quoms*²²; *zamindars* [landowners] and the *kammis* [artisans]. Almost 85 percent of the village population comprises *zamindar quom*, *Qaisrani*, a tribe of the Baloch, while 15 percent of the village population comprises *kammi quom*.

These both *quoms* are further divided into different *biraderis*. The division of *zamindar quom* into further *biraderis* is—the initial settlers of the village land

Political Science, 2009); Mohmand, *Patrons, Brothers and Landlords*; Javid, *Class, Power and Patronage*.

22 Hierarchically ordered endogamous status groups that involve a notion of occupational castes.

owners—Village Proprietary Body²³ *biraderis* and the later on coming—landless tenant *biraderis*. As there is only Baloch Qaisrani *zamindar quom* living in the village, so the different extended families form groups called themselves *biraderis*. The village proprietary body consists of twelve landowning *biraderis*. They form nearly 70 percent of the village population.

The politics of the village is based on vote blocs. There are two vote blocs in the village. These vote blocs are led by two big landowners of the village. The first vote bloc is led by Haji Latif Ghazi. He is the fourth eldest son of Haji Muhammad Hussain Ghazi, the largest landowner and the richest person of the village. Haji Latif Ghazi continuing the legacy of his father by leading his Ghazi *biraderi* started taking part in village politics. In early 1990s, he became part of Sardar Amjad Farooq Khosa, MNA's faction in the area. The later was then again elected MNA on the ticket of Pakistan Muslim League (N) in 1997. During Musharraf era, when Muslim League (N) was under oppression, Haji Latif Ghazi supported Khawaja Sheraz in National Assembly elections in 2003 and in 2008. During these elections Khawaja Sheraz was elected as MNA on the ticket of Muslim League Quaid-i-Azam. In elections 2013, realizing the change in national politics, Haji Latif Ghazi supported Amjad Farooq Khosa who was contesting the elections on the ticket of PML (N). Sardar Amjad Farooq Khosa won the National Assembly election. Haji Latif Ghazi also maintained his contact with tribal chief, Sardar Meer Badshah Qaisrani, twice elected MPA. His wife is sitting MPA of this constituency. In Local Bodies elections 2015, Haji Latif on the ticket of PML (N) was elected as *Nazim* (Chairman) of the Union Council Jhok Bodo. In this way, he again has gotten prominence in the village and local politics. He developed his links with different government departments

23 The British, at the time of settlement, for the purpose of village administration, divided the village inhabitants into two categories—*Maalikaan-deh* (Village Proprietary Body) and *Sakinaan-deh* (Village Residents). For detail see Douie, 1974.

especially police and courts. In this way, he plays the role as intermediary between the village people and different government departments and the politicians.

The second vote bloc is led by another big landowner Dr. Riaz. He is doctor by profession and is running his private clinic for the last twenty five years in Tibbi Qaisrani, a small commercial town ten kilometres from the village. His *biraderi*, is largest and one of the rich *biraderis* of the village, is politically active in the politics. He maintains his links with Sardar Meer Badshah Qaisrani.

Biraderism and Voting Behaviour

The village *biraderis*, at every election—general or local body—first gather at their *biraderi* level and then decide to become part of either village level vote bloc or directly contact with the candidate. The dealing of candidates and the vote bloc leaders with the different *biraderis* of the village is based upon their socio-economic position. The socio-economically powerful *biraderis* bargain with the politicians or the vote bloc leaders more forcefully as compared to weak *biraderis*.

Land owning Biraderis and Voting Behaviour

In the village, on the basis of their socio-economic position, land owning *biraderis* can be divided into two groups; rich and middle income *biraderis*.

Rich Zamindar Biraderis

There are four rich land owning *biraderis* in the village Jhok Bodo. In village politics, these *biraderis* act as political factions. In expediency, sometimes they make decisions to become the part of village level vote blocs but mostly they maintain their separate identity. A case study of the voting behaviour of a rich landowning *biraderi* selected through random sampling is focused upon Jamalwali *biraderi*.

Jamalwali Biraderi

This *biraderi* consists of nearly seventy-five households. Their population is almost six hundred people. This *biraderi* is among one of the largest *biraderis* of the village. They

were among the original settlers of the village. Most of the people of this *biraderi* are associated with services sector; landowning and business. Hafiz Abdul Ghaffar, a young man of early forties of this *biraderi* is serving as SSP in Pakistan Police. He patronizes his *biraderi*. His elder brother Iqbal on his behalf remains in touch with local administration and politicians. During researcher's stay in the village, once the District Police Officer (DPO) came to visit the village, and he presided over the *khhulli khachehry* [open meeting] to listen the complaints of the people against the local police officials and the grievances of the people. In this meeting, the Sub-Divisional Police Officer (SDPO), the three Station House Officers (SHOs) of the nearby police stations were also present. In his address to the villagers, he openly mentioned that Iqbal is just like my real brother. He also advised the SDPO and the SHOs to always be responsive to him. This *biraderi* has three sub-sections. Each section of the *biraderi* maintains its separate identity in their internal decisions. However, in their decision regarding electoral support to any candidate or becoming the part of any village level political bloc, they cannot match the political power of Hafiz Abdul Ghaffar. So they all respect the decision of Hafiz Abdul Ghaffar. At every election, generally all the members of this *biraderi* are informed about the decision of Hafiz Abdul Ghaffar to whom they would support in any election. This *biraderi* is not part of any village level electoral bloc. At every election, they decide according to the situation and announce their support in the last days of the campaign. Hafiz Abdul Ghaffar is in good relations with Qaisrani tribal chief and twice elected MPA Sardar Meer Badshah Qaisrani. He is also class fellow of Khwaja Sheraz Mehmood, twice elected MNA. So, he normally supports at National Assembly elections to Khwaja Sheraz and at provincial Assembly elections to Meer Badashah.

Middle Income Biraderis

In the village Jhok Bodo there are eight middle income land owning *biraderis*. These kin groups although try to maintain their separate identities as different factions but because of

their socio-economic middle ranking position, they strategically establish relations with the village vote blocs. They try to maximize their access to state resources. A case study of politics and voting behaviour of a middle income *biraderi* selected through random sampling is made up of chhandal *biraderi*.

Chhandal Biraderi

This *biraderi* is among the initial settlers of the village. They are part of village proprietary body *biraderi*. This *biraderi* is led by a person Haji Afzal. He and his three other brothers are economically sound. This *biraderi* is divided into two sub-sections. Chhandal *powadhi* (eastern) and Chhandal *pachadhi* (western). These sections maintain their separate identity in all matters. However, politically these groups function under the influence of Haji Afzal. He and his younger brother Haji Akbar are politically active. The family of these four brothers maintain their contacts with religio-political party; *Jamat-i-Islam*. Haji Afzal is *Amir* (incharge) of the village chapter of *Jamat-i-Islami*. Haji Afzal in his political relations with Khawaja Sheraz, got three government jobs for his near relatives. He also got waived off considerable payment of public health funds due for the water supply scheme tube-well of the area of his eastern section of the *biraderi* for the smooth running of the tube well. This *biraderi* also supports Haji Latif Ghazi as he provides them patronage in their local level problems. Here is a case in which Haji Latif Ghazi supported them in solution of their land related problem. Aslam Khomeni is an influential member of eastern Chhandal *biraderi*. He bought five acres of land on Chashma Right Bank canal irrigated area from a person of Mulkani *biraderi* of the nearby village Retra. After some time, there emerged a problem about the construction of cemented water course between Aslam Khomeni and the nearby landowners of the Mulkani *biraderi*. During the process of construction of cemented water course, when the department of water management started constructing the course, it went through the lands of Aslam Khomeni. He objected on the passage of the course and asked the

employees of the department to stop the construction work. He was of the opinion that it would cost him a huge amount as during the course he will have to demolish his constructed room on the planned way of course. The neighbouring landowners were of the opinion that it would be the natural way for the construction of water course. In this way there emerged a serious dispute between the two landowners. Even for one cropping season, the landowners of Mulkani *biraderi*, stopped the canal water to the crops of Aslam Khomeni and he could not sow his crops. Ultimately they contacted different influential persons of the area to solve the issue. Haji Latif Ghazi as being the major landowner and politically influential person of the area was also contacted by both parties to solve the issue. Haji Latif Ghazi through his personal influence and mediation ultimately got agreed to both landowners and solved the issue. In this way, they joined Haji Latif group in village politics.

Landless Tenant *Biraderis*

There are five tenant *biraderis* in the village. They almost form 15 percent of the total population of the village. From the decade of sixties, with the introduction of mechanization and land fragmentation most of the members of the land owning *biraderis* started cultivating their lands themselves. In its effect most of the members of the tenant *biraderis* lost jobs. As they were unskilled and had no money to start their business, they joined village daily wage and field labour force. It severely affected the already poor and benefitted the already established *biraderis* of the village. This economic change elevated the status of the village elite very high and increased their role in the village affairs.

Change in economic nature of relationship of tenant *biraderis* with the landed *biraderis* also changed the political relationship of the village landed elite and landless tenant *biraderis*. Process of electioneering gave them awareness about the importance of their vote. Especially in last two decades, the holding of elections made them more conscious about their political role. Local landed elite realizing the importance of their vote have changed their

behaviour. Rather than telling them to whom they will have to cast the vote, they come to them and deal with them with different bargaining ways. With this background, a case study of the voting behaviour of a tenant *biraderi* selected through random sampling is of Bhurriary *Biraderi*.

Bhurriary Biraderi

During the field work, the researcher went to a small shop of Baba Khairo.²⁴ He is of Bhurriary *biraderi*. He is at the age of almost 65. There was no electricity. He was sitting outside the shop under the shadow of a small tree. He had put off his shirt and had just worn a *lungi* [a loose miniskirt]. His shop is in the area of his own *biraderi*. In general gossip, researcher asked about the electoral support of his *biraderi*. He told that just a few days back, there was a rumour that local government election were going to be held in next month. Haji Latif Ghazi and Dr. Riaz were expected candidates of the Chairmanship of the Union Council. In their electoral campaign, one day, Haji Hafeez Ghazi, the elder brother of Haji Latif Ghazi came to him. He told about the intention of Haji Latif Ghazi for contesting the election and requested for the support of their *biraderi*. I told him that we are among the poor families of the village. The houses of Bhurriary *biraderi* are in the tale of water supply scheme. Those powerful people, who have their homes in the beginning of water supply line, have installed their taps on the main line, and with the running of tube well they get the maximum water. Even they have planted vegetables and fruits in their compounds. We even cannot get water for our daily requirement. There is acute load shedding. When the electricity comes, the water supply tube well starts functioning, the people who have their taps in the main pipeline; they start storing the water. So when the water reaches to their houses, the electricity suddenly disappears. So, he told Haji Hafeez Ghazi whoever would solve their water problem they will give him votes. He told him that he will convey your message to Haji Latif Ghazi. Baba Khairo

24 A fictitious name.

replied him that he will also convey Haji's message to his *biraderi*. After a few days of that, Saeed Hassani, the younger brother of Dr. Riaz, the other ambitious candidate for chairmanship of the Union Council came to me. He also asked for the vote of the *biraderi* in the coming elections. I replied him the same as I had given to Haji Hafeez Ghazi. He replied that Dr. Riaz can offer you free of cost treatment in case of any illness of any person of your *biraderi*. As far as, the water issue was concerned they could not say anything before election. He said that he will convey former's message to his *biraderi*. Therefore, their *biraderi* decided to give vote only to that candidate who would solve our issue before the elections.

Later on, this local government election was held in December 2015. In this election, there were three candidates. The village *biraderis* in their electoral support for the candidates were divided into two groups. The third candidate, Nazir Leghari, realizing his weak position in the village, won the support of some people by buying votes. He gave this *biraderi*, Rs. 150,000 for the installation of pump and they voted for him.

Artisan Biraderis

There are four artisan *biraderis* in the village. These artisan *biraderis* are *Moochi* [cobblers], *Pauli* [weavers], *Darkhhan* [carpenters] and *Jatt* [camel drivers]. With the introduction of mechanization, the social structure started changing in rural areas. In its effect, economic change altered the position of different *biraderis* in the village. This mechanization also liberated the artisan *quom* from economic dependence. As among them, the cobblers and carpenters having market skills, improved their social and economic position. While in the village, with the introduction of new means of transportation, the *Jatt biraderi*, lost their economic earnings. They have to turn towards daily wage labour in construction and other fields. Same is the case with the members of weaver *biraderi*. So this change affected the already poor and benefitted the already established *biraderis*. Some *zamindar* families excelled in their businesses and have also

made their land resources likewise. It also sharpened the gap between the rich and the poor. In its overall effect, the modernization affected their life. It gave them independence from the traditional *seyp* system. Now they are not dependent upon the landed *biraderis* of the village. Even with the construction of metalled road some changed their professions and became able to earn in some better way.

This economic change also affected the political relationship of the village landed elite and landless *biraderis*. Especially in last two decades, holding of elections made the later more conscious about their political rights. Local landed elite realizing the importance of their vote have changed their behaviour. In this context, a case study of voting behaviour of an artisan *biraderi* selected through random sampling is given below.

Moochi (cobbler) Biraderi

This *biraderi* is consisted of fourteen households. They are descendants of a same forefather who came into the village. Unlike most of the families of other landless *biraderis* of artisans or tenants, some families of the cobbler *biraderi* have excelled in business. They are six sons of Ghafoor who have established business not only in the village but also in Taunsa. The businessmen of this *biraderi*, even give credit to a large people of the village in business. They also, in time of trouble, support poor relatives. They also contribute in different philanthropist activities of the village. As the family of Ghafoor has financially made their position better, they maintain their *visakh* [men's place] and normally gather at night over there. Normally in elections, every candidate has to come to *visakh* and request to support him in the elections. As the influential families of this *biraderi* are running their business not only in village but also in Taunsa, so they are close to Haji Latif. They usually remain in contact with the other family members of Haji Latif in business matters, so they normally support Haji Latif's vote bloc. They on the other hand, in lieu of political support get help from Haji Latif in different matters. A few years back, in a business deal of the son of Ghafoor at Taunsa, a big

businessman of Taunsa got registered an FIR for the theft of some goods against the son of Ghafoor. He put pressure through police to pay a huge amount in that deal. As Haji Latif Ghazi and his brothers are influential in business community of Taunsa, so they supported him. With the political involvement of Haji Latif Ghazi through MNA, Khwaja Sheraz this issue was solved. After that they aligned themselves with vote bloc of Haji Latif Ghazi.

In local bodies' elections 2015, there were three candidates contesting for the slot of *Nazim* [Mayor] Union Council Jhoke Bodo. One was Haji Latif Ghazi, the second was Sardar Aurangzaib, and the third was Nazir Leghari. In this election, the rich landowning Bhuraiwala *biraderi* of the village was supporting Sardar Aurangzaib. The cobbler *biraderi* was supporting Haji Latif Ghazi. Karim Bux, a shop keeper of the cobbler *biraderi* in their support to Haji Latif displayed panaflex banner on his shop. A person Zahid from Bhuraiwala *biraderi*, asked Karim Bux to remove that panaflex banner from his shop. On the refusal, he personally removed that banner from the shop and threatened him of serious consequences for not supporting their candidate. When the other persons of cobbler *biraderi* came to know about the misbehaviour of Zahid, they collectively came to the *visakh* of Bhuraiwala *biraderi* and protested on his attitude to the elders. The elders of the Bhuraiwala *biraderi* came to their *visakh* and apologized for the misbehaviour of Zahid to that person of cobbler *biraderi*.

Conclusion

The empirical evidence presented in this paper suggests that the vote blocs which cut across class and caste divisions are the major building blocks of political organization in rural West Punjab. They are characterized by vertical structures of power. They are based upon a loose coalition of individuals, structured around a closely knit kinship based core. They are often held together by multiple, overlapping kinship ties.

In elections, usually *biraderis* make their own village level political factions. These factions, according to the situation, develop their relations directly or through vote bloc. The bargaining power of the *biraderis* with the vote bloc leaders or with the candidates depends upon their economic and social position. The political role of the *biraderis* depends upon the socio-economic position of its members. Socio-economically weak *biraderis* are least cohesive in their political decisions. They are under the influence of landlords. It means that they are unable to create horizontal ties with each other. The *biraderi* solidarity is strong only in economically independent landowners. Their economic position confers them power to decide independently. In this way they make decision in dealing with the politicians. The social position of the village *biraderis* is based on their previous and present landownership, present economic position and their access to state resources. In this regard, the landowning *biraderis* are dominant in the village. In electoral politics of rural West Punjab, *biraderi* and vote bloc play the major role in determining the voting behaviour of the people. The ideological commitment to political parties or programmatic following in politics has very little role in making the voting behaviour of the rural voters of the West Punjab.